1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

The learning for the month of Elul has been dedicated by the Matityahu family in memory of Mordechai ben Carmela a"h & Dorit Rivka bat Leah a"h.
May their neshamos have an aliya!

PARSHAS SHOFTIM – GETTING IT RIGHT

Rabbi Caplan on the Parsha

"You shall do according to the word that they (the Sanhedrin of 71 scholars) will tell you…you shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you to the right or to the left" (Devarim 17:10 -11). The Sifrei explains that this means, "Even if it appears to you that they are saying that left is right and right is left, you must listen to them."

We must follow their rulings even if we believe that they are wrong. The Torah states that regardless of who is right, we must listen to them. The Rishonim assert that there are two separate rationales for this obligation. Firstly, since one is consulting the leading Torah authorities of his generation, he should assume that they are right and he is wrong. They have received the oral tradition directly from their masters, they are steeped in Torah knowledge and its methodology, and they live lives guided by strict adherence to Halacha, not by their passions or whims. It may take some degree of humility to concede, but the odds are overwhelming that they are right.

Secondly, even if we were to know with certainty that they are mistaken, we must abide by their ruling. Once the Torah was given by Hashem to Moshe and by Moshe to us, all decisions must be made down here. The Torah itself demands that we follow the opinion of the majority of the scholars of the Great Sanhedrin. If this were not the case, everyone would follow his own opinion, and we would not have one Torah but many Torahs. The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 496) asserts, "It is far better to suffer one mistake and have everyone submit to their reasoning, than to allow everyone to do as he sees fit, leading to a chaos that would destroy the religion and the entire nation."

The Rambam explains in the introduction to his Yad Hachazaka that at the time that Rav Ashi and Ravina concluded the Babylonian Talmud, a multitude of major Torah scholars convened together and approved their work. This united decision, endorsed by the nation at large, has the same authority as the Great Sanhedrin and is binding on all of Klal Yisrael. We may not stray to the right or to the left even if we were to know for sure that they were wrong.

However, after the era of the Talmud we no longer have a Bais Din or posek who can dictate a binding decision on all of Klal Yisrael. Nevertheless, the scholarship of the leading poskim of all the generations from the Gaonim (up until the ninth century), the Rishonim (until the 15th century), and the Acharonim up until the present day demands that we consider the rationale that they are almost certainly right and if we differ, we are wrong. The very fact that the Rishonim rarely differed with the Gaonim and that the Acharonim refuse to differ with the Rishonim speaks volumes about this perspective. They acknowledged the cavernous gap that exists between their levels of proficiency.

We today are Lilliputians compared to the Gra, Reb Akiva Eiger, the Chasam Sofer, the Chofetz Chaim and Rav Moshe Feinstein (to name just a few). Their vast knowledge of both Talmuds, Medrash, Rishonim, Shulchan Aruch and their toil and concentration are inconceivable to us. If we were to assert that they are telling us that which is left is really right, it is only because we ourselves have confused left and right.

Rav Yaakov Galinsky suggests a mashal to demonstrate how we can confuse right and left. Imagine that you walk up to someone and ask him for directions. As you face him, he tells you to go to the right (north) so you go to your right (south). You did as you were sure of what he meant, but you still got lost. Your right was his left. It is his right that is right. Get it?

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: May one rip toilet paper on שבת?

ANSWER: Ripping paper on שבת in a constructive way is the מלאכה of קורע. Ripping toilet paper to use is a constructive ripping and is אסור. Ripping apart a plastic bag in a destructive way to reach the contents is מותר since it is for a צורך היתר by קורע. Paper towel on a roll also may not be ripped to use as that would be a constructive ripping. If one needs some aluminum foil to cover a pan, it is אסור to rip off a piece. Since one may not rip these items on a roll, they then become מוקצה since they have no use. Most people do not unroll the entire roll and use it, so even if you have a big spill and would want to use an entire roll of paper towel, you should not do so since it is מוקצה מחמת גופו. In a situation of כבוד הבריות where one is stuck without any tissues, and no גוי around to rip some toilet paper with a שינוי, the best would be is to use the toilet paper without ripping it, and then when flushing the toilet, the paper will rip on its own. If this won't work, one may rip the toilet paper not on the perforations and with a שינוי, like with the back of your hand or with your elbow.

עי' סימן ש"מ סעי' י"ד. ע"י גוי בשינוי הוי שבות דשבות במקום כבוד הבריות – גרמא נמי מותר בכבוד הבריות ר' ש.ב. כהן – שבות מותר בכבוד הבריות עי' מ"ב שי"ב ס"ק כ' שער הציון שכ"ב ס"ק י"ב - שש"כ הישן כ"ג, ט"ז

HE GOT IT WRONG… AND RIGHT

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Ronit, an Israeli woman who grew up in a wealthy non-religious family became frum as she got older and developed very different priorities from those she had grown up with. When she reached marriageable age, her father told her, "Soon you'll be looking for a husband. It is important to us that you marry someone from an important, wealthy family like ours." Ronit smiled. "Abba, I really don't care whether he is rich. What matters to me is that he is someone who sits and learns." Her father took her words seriously. The only problem was that he was unfamiliar with the frum shidduch world. So he contacted a matchmaker he knew and explained, "My daughter is looking for someone who sits and learns." The matchmaker immediately replied, "I have the perfect person!" He suggested a young man named Chanan.

Ronit was excited to hear that Chanan spent his days learning, and she agreed to meet him. But when Chanan arrived for the date, Ronit was surprised. He certainly did not look like a yeshiva bachur. As they began talking, Ronit finally asked him, "I hear that you learn all day?" "Absolutely!" Chanan replied enthusiastically. "I study the entire day. I focus on physics, chemistry, and history. I'm a research fellow and spend practically the whole day studying!" Ronit suddenly understood what had happened. The shadchan had meant one kind of "learning." She had meant something entirely different. Ronit and Chanan parted pleasantly, but it was clear that the shidduch was not to be.

For Ronit, that seemed to be the end of the story. But for Chanan, it was only the beginning. Chanan had been deeply impressed by Ronit. He understood why she was not interested in continuing, but meeting her made a powerful impression on him. He began thinking seriously about the kind of life she wanted and the kind of person she was looking for. Eventually, Chanan went to yeshiva. He became religious and grew tremendously in his Yiddishkeit, and over time became a real ben Torah and a tremendous masmid.

Several years passed. One day, Chanan contacted Ronit's father. "Is Ronit married?" he asked. "No," her father replied. Chanan explained how much his life had changed and asked whether Ronit might be willing to meet him again. Her father agreed. Ronit met Chanan and could hardly believe that this was the same person she had dated years earlier. He had become exactly the kind of person she had been hoping to marry, a sincere ben Torah with yiras Shamayim who devoted himself to learning. This time, the shidduch worked. Ronit and Chanan became engaged and eventually married.

When the original shadchan heard the wonderful news, he was thrilled. "I knew it!" he said. "My shidduch worked out after all!" Then he added, "Of course, now both sides owe me shadchanus." The shadcan told this to Ronit and Chanan. Ronit was surprised. "What do you mean?" she asked. "When you originally suggested Chanan, he was completely different from the person I was looking for. In fact, your suggestion was based on a misunderstanding. When I said I wanted someone who 'sits and learns,' I meant Torah. You thought I meant someone who studies academics!" "But I introduced the two of you!" the shadchan argued. "If I had never arranged that first date, Chanan would never have met you. Meeting you inspired him to change his entire life. And ultimately, the very man I suggested became your husband. How can you say I didn't make the shidduch?"

Ronit disagreed. "The person you introduced me to was not someone I wanted to marry. That shidduch ended. Years later, Chanan became a completely different person, approached my father himself, and only then did we begin a new shidduch."

Now they had a fascinating question. Does the original shadchan deserve shadchanus because his introduction ultimately led to the marriage? Or does he receive nothing because the shidduch he originally proposed was completely inappropriate and had ended years earlier? What do you think?

See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim Page 680

Regarding last Weekly's question about the money set aside for a Sefer Torah, Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein wrote that the money may indeed be used for the caravan shul, as long as part of the money is used to buy Sefarim as well as the parchments for a Sefer Torah. He gives three reasons for this psak, which is beyond the scope of this space, and it can be found in Chashukei Chemed, Nedarim 587 for more details.

SOMETHING IS DEFINITELY DISTURBING HIM, AND THAT'S WHY HE SPOKE TO ME

R' Shlomo Lorincz served as a member of the Knesset for Agudas Yisrael from 1951 until 1984. For more than three decades, he was a trusted emissary and confidant of many of the greatest Gedolei Yisrael, carrying their guidance into the halls of government and fighting on behalf of the Torah community. He also served for more than a decade as chairman of the Knesset Finance Committee, becoming one of the most influential frum voices in Israeli public life.

Upon his retirement from the Knesset, R' Shlomo spent his days learning in kollel, becoming a "yungerman" despite his advanced age. He lived in the Mattersdorf neighborhood of Yerushalayim, where he davened at Yeshivah Torah Ore, led by R' Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg. R' Scheinberg held R' Shlomo in high esteem and asked him to sit at the mizrach vant, the front wall of the beis midrash, together with the rebbeim of the yeshivah. Despite feeling uncomfortable about it, R' Shlomo followed the wishes of the rosh yeshivah.

One Shabbos, R' Shlomo arrived early for davening and sat in his seat on the mizrach. After learning for a few minutes, he was approached by a yungerman who rebuked him. "These seats are reserved for the yeshivah's rabbanim and talmidei chachamim, not for askanim," he said. "It is a lack of derech eretz to sit in their seats. Look for a seat among the rest of the mispallelim." Without saying a word, and despite the great embarrassment, R' Shlomo rose and found a different seat among the bachurim and yungeleit.

After davening, R' Shlomo returned home, where one of his sons, who lived nearby, joined him for the Shabbos seudah. R' Shlomo told him what had happened. "I need to ask you for a favor," he said. "Please find the yungerman who addressed me this morning. He is surely not a bad person. He did not act out of malice. Something is obviously troubling him. Maybe it's his shalom bayis. Perhaps he's struggling with parnassah. I don't know. But something is definitely disturbing him, and that's why he spoke to me the way he did. Please find out what is upsetting him so that I can help him. If he is short on money, I'll get him what he needs. Whatever it is, let me know."

R' Shlomo's reaction was extraordinary. Despite being shamed in public, he was able to look beyond his own hurt and ask himself what pain might have caused another person to act that way. Instead of thinking about how he had been wronged, his first thought was: How can I help him? Based on Moments Of Greatness By Rabbi Yitzchok Hisiger from Artscroll. Reprinted With Permission from Table Talk.

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Good Shabbos!