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

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PARSHAS NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH – STANDING BEFORE HASHEM

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

On the day that Moshe Rabbeinu prepared to take leave of this physical world and bid farewell to his beloved flock, he addressed the entire nation. "You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d: the heads of your tribes, your elders, all of the men of Israel; your children, your women, your proselytes…from the hewers of your wood, to the drawers of your water for you to pass into the covenant of Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 29:1-3). Why did Moshe deem it necessary to specify each category of people from the leaders to the water carriers? Why did it not suffice to say all of you – every single one?

Rav Yaakov Galinsky explains that Moshe enumerates the different categories to indicate that each category represents people with different skills and different personalities. Hashem recognizes that every person has different capabilities and proclivities. Nevertheless every one of them did accept the very same covenant to keep the Torah and all of its Mitzvos. The leaders of the tribes, the elders, the men, the women and water carriers can all fulfill the covenant even though their ways of fulfilling all the tenets are not precisely the same. Additionally, not everyone has the same Mitzvos. Kohanim, Levi'im and Yisraelim have different Mitzvos. Men and women have different Mitzvos. Hashem fashioned a Torah and a Shulchan Aruch that can be faithfully fulfilled in different ways and degrees.

Rav Galinsky cites another example. Those who have the means intellectually, financially and emotionally to learn Torah day and night, will be expected to learn day and night, employing every free minute they have. Those who do not have these means, can fulfill the pasuk "Vehagisa bo yomam valaylah" by setting aside some time to learn every day and every night. (See Yoreh De'ah 246:1)

Rav Naftoli Amsterdam once remarked to his Rebbi, Rav Yisrael Salanter, "If I had the head of the 'Shaagas Aryeh', the heart of the 'Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avoda' and the middos of Rebbe, I would be able to serve Hashem properly." To which Rav Yisrael answered, "You are expected to serve Hashem with your head, your heart and your middos!" And then there is the famous comment of Reb Zusha of Anipoli: "They won't hold me accountable for not being Avraham Avinu. They will hold me accountable for not being Zusha."

In the pasuk cited at the beginning, Moshe was referring to a new covenant established in the Plains of Moav. However, with a little imagination it could well be describing Rosh Hashana. Let's quote it again with a slight emendation: "You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d… to pass before Hashem your G-d to be judged." In this scenario, too, we all come as very different people. Hashem will not hold us all to the same standard. But He will expect that each of us is striving to become who we are supposed to be.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: May one make devil eggs on שבת?

ANSWER: A common way to serve hard-boiled eggs is to cut the eggs in half, remove the yolks, crush them and then mix them with oil, mayonnaise, salt etc. to form a stiff paste. This paste is then put back into the egg white halves. To make this mixture is an action of kneading/לש. When it comes to the מלאכה of לש, both the adding of the ingredients together and the mixing have to be done with a שינוי. This is one of a few מלאכות that are מותר when done with a שינוי. If one wants to use oil, then it should preferably be made before שבת, since even the pouring is potentially לש as it starts to bond the contents immediately. If one forgot or insists on making it "fresh," then one would need to put the oil in the container before the eggs (this is a שינוי.) and then mix it with crisscross strokes. (If one is peeling the eggs, one may only do so סמוך לסעודה or otherwise it would be בורר.) The preferred manner to make these eggs is with a stiff binder like mayonnaise, as that avoids any issue of לש when adding the mayonnaise. The only point of לש will be when mixing the mayonnaise into the eggs, which is מותר when done with a שינוי like with a crisscross action.

עי' סימן שכ"א סעי' ט"ז ומ"ב ס"ק ס"ח ושער הציון אות פ"ד.

FAKE FORGIVENESS

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Chaim and Dovid lived on the same block and had been close friends for years. Then something happened. Maybe it was a parking issue, maybe a money issue, but whatever it was, it turned into a major machlokes. The argument became public, and so did their anger. Dovid told Chaim, “After what you did to me, I am never going to forgive you.” Chaim shot back, "Good. I don’t want your forgiveness, and I am never going to ask you for it!” It was painful to watch. Two former friends were no longer speaking to each other, and both had publicly declared that they had no interest in making peace.

They had a mutual friend, Eli, who could not hear seeing them this way. Eli remembered how Chazal describe Aharon HaKohen as oheiv shalom v’rodef shalom, one who loved peace and pursued peace. Aharon HaKohen would sometimes approach two people who were fighting and help each one believe that the other truly wanted to reconcile. But Eli knew that would never work here. Chaim and Dovid were too angry. If Eli told Dovid, “Chaim really wants to make peace,” Dovid would probably answer, “I don’t care.”

Then Eli came up with another idea. Eli happened to be an excellent imitator. One day, he picked up the phone and called Dovid. “Dovid,” he said, perfectly imitating Chaim’s voice, “this is Chaim.” Then Eli began to cry. “I know you are very angry at me, but I can’t handle this anymore. Please forgive me. I am begging you. Please find it in your heart to forgive me for what I did.”

Dovid was stunned. At first he resisted. “I told you already. I wasn’t interested in making peace.” But “Chaim” kept crying. Finally Dovid softened. “Okay,” he said. “Honestly, I wasn’t planning to forgive you. But you called me yourself, and I can’t bear hearing you cry like this. If it means that much to you, I forgive you.”

Eli hung up thrilled. He had done it! Dovid had actually said the words, “I forgive you.” Eli later told Chaim that Dovid had forgiven him, although he did not explain exactly how he had obtained the mechilah.

But as Yom Kippur approached, Eli began thinking about what he had done. Chazal teach that Yom Kippur does not atone for sins between one person and another until the person who was hurt is appeased. And then Eli remembered Dovid’s exact words. Dovid had not simply said, “I forgive Chaim.” He had said, “Because you called me yourself, because you are crying, and because you are begging me to forgive you, I forgive you.” But none of that had actually happened. Chaim had never called. Chaim had never cried. Chaim had never asked Dovid for forgiveness. It was all Eli.

Now Eli had a serious dilemma. Perhaps the mechilah was still valid. After all, Dovid clearly knew whom he was forgiving, and he explicitly said that he forgave Chaim. Or perhaps the forgiveness was based entirely on a false impression. Had Dovid known that Chaim had never called him at all, maybe he never would have forgiven him. And if Eli now told Dovid the truth, he might reignite the entire machlokes he had worked so hard to settle.

Was Dovid’s mechilah valid even though Eli obtained it through deception? Or must Chaim now approach Dovid himself and ask for genuine forgiveness before Yom Kippur? What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim Page 704

Regarding last week’s question about the person who accidentally appointed two people to bid for Chasan Torah, Rav Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed Nedarim Page 687) answered that the minui shlichus, the appointment of the second person as his agent, was not valid. He had forgotten that he had already appointed someone else, so the second appointment was made under a false impression. Therefore, the second person’s bid was not valid, and he should only have to pay the amount that the first shliach bid above the rest of the shul.

WHO DO YOU WIPE FIRST, THE RAV OR THE GEMARA?

Rav Moshe Fensterheim was the first talmid at Yeshivah Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The rosh yeshivah of Torah Vodaath at the time was Rav Dovid Leibowitz, who would later lead his own yeshivah in Queens.

Each Friday night, the talmidim of Torah Vodaath would visit the home of Rav Leibowitz, who would regale the young bnei Torah with divrei Torah.

One Friday night, the boys arrived at the Leibowitz home to find none other than Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, the great gaon and son of Rav Chaim Brisker, seated next to their rosh yeshivah. (Rav Soloveitchik had been Rav Leibowitz’s rebbi back in Europe.)

Large tomes were opened in front of the Torah giants, who were engaged in a spirited Torah discussion, with glasses of hot tea on the table. At one point, one of the glasses of tea was knocked over. The hazel-colored beverage drenched Rav Soloveitchik and the Gemara before him.

Not wasting a moment, Rav Fensterheim ran into the kitchen and returned holding a rag. He stood there for a moment, unsure of what to do. Was he to first wipe off the Gemara? Or was he to initially wipe up the liquid that had spilled on Rav Soloveitchik?

Rav Leibowitz immediately sensed Rav Fensterheim’s unarticulated quandary. In an instant, he took the towel and began to wipe off the tea that had spilled on Rav Soloveitchik, explaining, “Ehr iz ah lebedige Sefer Torah (He is a living Sefer Torah).”

As much as the latter lesson remained with Rav Fensterheim, he was equally moved by how quickly his rosh yeshivah had picked up on his tacit dilemma.

From Food For Thought Two, By Rabbi Yitzchok Hisiger with permission from Table Talk.

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Good Shabbos!