

Cincinnati Torah מס'ני

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Mattos-Mas'ei

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA Is Trying Worth It?

RABBI ZALMY EPSTEIN



These are the journeys of the Children of Israel, who went forth from the land of Egypt... (33:1)

THERE'S AN OBVIOUS QUESTION: WHY DOES THE Torah dedicate a whole segment of this week's reading to the travels of the Jews in the desert? Why all the detail?

One of many lessons we can learn from this is that each and every stop the Jews made in the Wilderness was just as important as their final destination. Our Sages tell us that each stop had a purpose; there was a reason why each place was chosen. The journey was just as significant as reaching its goal.

We live in a society that tells us: "Work hard, and one day you'll be able to relax and enjoy life." The years people spend working to achieve their goals aren't necessarily the most enjoyable. People leave early in the morning, work long hours, and come home late at night. But they push themselves to work that hard in the hope that, in the end, they will succeed, and they will be able to retire comfortably.

What happens if, unfortunately, a person

is not able to reach the end goal that he envisioned? He may end up feeling dejected. After all, he just spent his whole life trying to reach a goal which is now elusive.

But it is not so in the world of Torah and mitzvos! Hashem set up *sachar v'onesh*, a system of reward and punishment, in which we get paid not only for the end result of finishing a mitzvah, but also for trying to do that mitzvah. The more effort we put into our attempt to do a mitzvah, the more reward we'll get—even if we don't succeed in executing the mitzvah. Hashem gives us *sachar* just for trying.

In a similar way, if we are tempted to transgress a Torah law, but we overcome the challenge, we will get *sachar* for that—even if we later fall into the Evil Inclination's trap and violate that same mitzvah! The first time around, we didn't do the *aveirah* (sin), and Hashem will reward us.

Let's keep this in mind the next time we attempt to do a mitzvah, or try to stop committing a transgression, but don't succeed. Remember that Hashem acknowledges the fact that we've tried! 🕊

A HALACHA FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Reading through last week's and this week's Torah portions, we become familiar with basic Torah laws (*halachos*) of inheritance—for example: If there are sons, daughters don't inherit anything from their parents, and wives don't inherit their husbands' estates.

Today, however, husbands usually wish to leave their estates to their wives, and parents often want their daughters to have equal shares of their inheritance. Alternatively, someone may want to create a special legacy and donate a portion of his estate to charity.

One cannot simply stipulate that he wants his wife and/or daughters to inherit him, because stipulations which contradict the Torah rules of inheritance

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THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On 27 Tammuz, 5683 (1923), Albert Einstein gave his Nobel lecture in Gothenburg, Sweden. He had been awarded the 1922 Nobel Prize for Physics (which was actually the 1921 prize, given a year late), but when he was unable to receive the award in person, he had postponed the customary lecture. Einstein was honored for his work in theoretical physics and, specifically, for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect, which contributed to the finding that light behaves like both a particle and a wave. This discovery led to such things as telecommunication networks, solar cells, and imaging, and it helped explain photosynthesis. At his belated lecture, Einstein spoke about his theory of relativity, which gave the world the famous equation, $E=mc^2$. (According to legend, if people on the street asked him to explain "that theory" of his, he would respond, "Pardon me—sorry! Always I am mistaken for Professor Einstein.") 🕊

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42 Mattos-Mas'ei:
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GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

YOUNG ELIEZER'S EXCITEMENT TURNED TO dread, when he found himself on his new yeshiva campus. The hallowed buildings felt so vast and cold; the older boys who walked in the hallways seemed so huge and so busy... The thirteen-year-old tried to enter the bais midrash, but he turned back as he felt hot tears streaming down his face.


He ran to his room and tried to compose himself. After washing his face, Eliezer walked back toward the beis midrash.

Suddenly an eleventh grader approached him and put an arm on his shoulder. "Hi! My name is Efraim. I think I recognize you from my neighborhood. Looks like it's been a rough start."

"No," Eliezer quickly responded, blinking back the tears, "it's just these allergies I have."

"I have allergies, too. Many people here do. Let's go for a walk and talk about it."

As they walked, Efraim shared his memories of showing up in ninth grade, reminiscing about how frightened and homesick he had felt. He showed Eliezer around the campus. He introduced him to his friends.

And so Eliezer's journey through yeshiva began. He found his place, and he remains attached to the yeshiva decades later—all because an older boy made him feel at home. 

A RIDDLE FOR YOU


You fulfill a mitzvah when it becomes yours—but not if you acquire it through inheritance.

What is it, and what is the mitzvah?

The answer will appear next week.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:

Q You may not give me this honor twice. What honor is it?

A The honor of *Sandak* (holding a baby boy during circumcision) should not be given to the same person twice by one father. (Y.D. 265:11) 

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EVERY WEEK

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Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....

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Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....

Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

 **Daf Yomi**

Rabbi Meir Minster.....

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Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

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in the Annex Library

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A HALACHA FROM THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

are invalid—when a person dies, his estate automatically belongs to his halachic heirs!

This leaves us in a quandary. How can a person distribute his estate to non-halachic heirs, such as a wife, a daughter, or charity, without violating the law?

The Talmud, in a variety of contexts, presents the notion that *deena d'malchusa deena* ("the law of the kingdom is law"), which obligates us to follow civil laws such as paying taxes and obeying traffic rules. However, the Rashba writes (*T'shuvo*s 6:254) that this principal applies only to external matters, such as taxes and the functioning of the country—not to internal matters, between Jews. Thus, the rule of *deena d'malchusa* would not apply, generally speaking, to inheritance.

This opinion of the Rashba is accepted as normative *halacha*; it is cited by the *Beit Yosef* and followed by the *Rama* (369:11). Therefore, if someone were to bequeath his estate to anyone other than his Torah-designated heirs, and didn't take the necessary measures, he would be taking money away from his halachic heirs and giving it to people who aren't entitled to the estate—and Torah law would view this as theft! (See Rabbi Akiva Eiger, C.M. 26:1).

Rav Moshe Feinstein, however, disagrees:

It appears, in my humble opinion, that such a [secular] will, which will definitely be put into effect by the civil authorities... does not require [any additional transaction to be in compliance with Jewish law], for there is no greater *kinyan* (transaction) than this. Therefore, since [an additional transaction] is unnecessary, the legatees [of the secular will] are halachically entitled to the property left to them in the will—and the [otherwise] halachic heirs are not. This is a significant basis for the practice [of observant Jews] in this country [the United States] to rely on such [secular] wills. (*Ig'ros Moshe*, E.H. 1:104)

Some authorities and Jewish courts follow and uphold this opinion, while others won't hear of it.

However, going without a secular will is also not an option. State laws of intestacy (statutes which govern how assets will be distributed if there is no valid will) almost always contradict the Torah's directives for distribution of an inheritance. So every Jew should have a secular will and, according to some rabbinic authorities, take additional steps—which we will discuss next week, G-d willing. 