

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Humility In Action

SAM SHAFFER
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

THIS WEEK'S PARASHA, VAYESHEV, IS PACKED FULL of events that would end up having profound reverberations throughout Jewish history. One of these events, perhaps difficult to understand, is the story of Yehuda, his three sons, and Tamar. I would like to explore a question posed by my sister-in-law, the answer, and the lessons of humility contained within.

The Torah recalls how Yehuda married the daughter of Canaani man who bore him three sons. The language of the Torah when the first two sons were born is *vatahar*, "and she conceived." When the third son is born the Torah does not mention that she conceived, why does the Torah now leave that out?

The *Tur* asks this question and answers that the last two sons were twins. This raises a complicated question. What was Yehuda saying when he told Tamar to go and wait in her father's house while his third son grew older before Yehuda would give him as a husband? Yehuda's first two sons died while married to Tamar. By the rules of levirate marriage, the next son in line should also have been married off to Tamar. If they were twins, they would be the same age and there would be no reason to wait for the third son to grow older. The *Tur* asks this as well, and answers that they were in fact the same age and Yehuda was stalling.

This explanation makes the lessons of this event all the more poignant. It is easy to com-

miserate with Yehuda. How far would we go to protect our children? Still, one can imagine the humility Tamar must have had. She knew that Sheilah should have been given to her, but she still went to her father's house, hoping that right would be done by her.

When Tamar saw that Yehuda was not going to give his third son to her as a husband, she contrived to conceive by Yehuda. When Yehuda found out that Tamar was pregnant, he called for her to be punished. Tamar proved that her conception was from Yehuda, and he too showed an extreme level of humility.

How powerful a display of humility is Yehuda's response to Tamar, "And he said she is more righteous than I for I have not given her to Sheila my son." The *Ohr HaChaim* understands what Yehuda meant was that she is not only more righteous than I, but her actions were also the correct course to take. Yehuda said she was right at great embarrassment to himself. Yehuda publicly announced what he did wrong and why it was wrong. It is certainly not easy to publicly say one is wrong. It would have been easy for Yehuda to try to justify himself. After all, he was trying to protect his last living son. What an amazing lesson. And just to prove the rewards for being humble, the progeny of Yehuda and Tamar eventually led to King David, one of the greatest figures in all of Jewish history. 🕊

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

There is a custom cited in *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 670:1) that women refrain from doing housework while the Chanukah candles are burning. What is the reason behind this *minhag* and why are many people unfamiliar with it?

There are several different reasons brought down by the *Poskim*. Women have always felt a special affinity for the *Yom Tov* of Chanukah since a woman—Yehudis, the daughter of Yochanan the *Kohen Gadol*—played a prominent role in the defeat of the Greeks. In addition, Jewish women suffered from the Greeks more than the Jewish men did (KSA 139:3).

Therefore, there are two basic reasons why women chose to refrain from doing work as an expression of their special observance of Chanukah:

- 1) To serve as a reminder that it is forbidden to benefit from the Chanukah candles. Refraining from work while the candles are burning reinforces the idea that Chanukah candles are not to be used for any other purpose but as a reminder of the great miracle that took place
- 2) To highlight the fact that Chanukah is indeed a *Yom Tov*. Therefore, women refrained from doing "work"—as they refrain on *Yom Tov*—as long as the candles are burning.

Most *Poskim* seem to go with the first explanation above and hold that the custom only applies to the minimum length of time that the candles must burn, which

➡ CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ➡

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

What phrase found only in this week's sidra is used in a popular song in Hebrew?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕊

Sponsorship & feedback:

parasha@cincynollel.org

Sponsored l'iluei nishmas

Michael Eliezer ben Yacov Gutman (Michael Behrman)
on the occasion of his first yartzeit by his grandchildren.

Cincinnati Torah

is distributed weekly
to local shuls
and the community
e-mail list.



A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED


is approximately one-half hour after the stars appear (MB 670:4).

There is also a debate in how to define “work” in regard to this custom. The consensus amongst the *Poskim* is that that only work which is forbidden on *Chol Hamoed*, such as doing laundry and sewing, are prohibited, while cooking, baking, and light housework would be permitted [R’ M. Feinstein (*Moadei Yeshurun* p 8) and R’ Y. Kamenetzky (*Emes L’yaakov OC 670 note 584*)].

I heard from R’ Moshe Heinemann that, based on the above, we now can understand why this *minhag* is not so well known:

1) Since we have established that this custom applies only for the first half hour, that time usually passes quickly while lighting, singing, playing dreidel, and so on.

2) We all light with a *shamash*, which makes it more difficult to violate the prohibition of benefitting from the light of the *Menorah*.

3) The only types of work that are forbidden are laundry, sewing, and the like, which can easily distract someone from the *mitzvah* and, due to the fine detail that they entail, may lead to deriving pleasure from the candles. Today, sewing is not commonplace amongst many women, and since washing machines operate with the touch of a button and do not require the concentration and focus that washing used to require, the *Poskim* allow laundry to be done as well (R’ S. Kaminetzky p 74). 



Connecting at Partners




7th grade learning at night!

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

RABBI DOVID GOLDWASSER TELLS A STORY ABOUT a man who entered his office one day and gave him a large amount of money to be used towards the charitable causes of his choice. Rabbi Goldwasser asked the man what prompted him to give this large amount, seemingly out of the blue, to *tzedakah*. The man replied that he had a daughter that was now in *shidduchim*, looking for her match, and had visited several matchmakers, with no results as of yet. “Hashem is the real One who brings people together. I decided that I should give a donation to ‘pay’ Hashem to give my daughter


her *shidduch*.”

Several weeks later the man’s daughter was in fact engaged and he shared the news with Rabbi Goldwasser. The man followed up with a visit to Rabbi Goldwasser in person, again with a large check. “What’s this donation for?” Rabbi Goldwasser questioned. “It’s again for the *Shadchan*,” the man replied. “But you gave the *Shadchan* already.” “Maybe if I was dealing with a human being it would be enough, but if the *Shadchan* I’m giving to is the Creator of the world, beyond the best *Shadchan* there is, maybe I owe Him more!” 

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Rabbi Avraham Yosef Rice (Reiss) of Germany arrived in America in 1840 as the very first ordained Rabbi of America. Until that point (and continuing past then as well) the situation was described as “Here a man... ordains himself; he is own college... He is what he claims to be.” He took a position in Baltimore and threw himself into strengthening Jewish life in his new home. Although he made some progress, he was largely frustrated in his efforts and in the year 1849 resigned from the Rabbinate, figuring that he might have more influence as a layman instead of Rabbi. One episode from his time as Rabbi was a funeral where, following the traditional Jewish service, members of the masonic and odd fellows lodge that the deceased had been a part of began to administer their traditional last rites. Rabbi Rice vehemently protested, and many left the funeral in a huff and started a different synagogue. When a friendship formed between Rabbi Rice and Isaac Leiser of Philadelphia, publisher of the Jewish newspaper *The Occident*, it gave Rabbi Rice a medium to reach a broader range of American Jewry and allowed him to become a prominent voice of traditional Judaism. 

SOURCE: Taback, Israel. “Rabbi Abraham Rice of Baltimore: Pioneer of Orthodox Judaism in America.” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1965, pp. 100-120.

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

Please remember the Kollel with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.



CREATE YOUR JEWISH LEGACY