

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Always Teaching

The man came into the house and unmuzzled the camels.... (Breishis, 24:32)

Rashi explains that Lavan was removing the muzzles of the camels which were used by Eliezer to prevent them from feeding from pasture that was owned by somebody else. This distinguished the camels of Avraham from all others, as most camel owners of that time were not particular about their camels eating from the fields of others and did not seek to prevent such an occurrence.

The Ramban cites a *midrash* that asks a thought-provoking question on this explanation of Rashi. The question is based on a fascinating story that occurred during *Mishnaic* times in the land of Israel. There was a holy sage by the name of Pinchas ben Yair who was known for his great piety. On one of his travels, he and his donkey stayed over at an inn. The innkeeper provided the animal with some barley but the animal refused to eat it. After several attempts to improve the quality of the barley with no success, Pinchas ben Yair suggested that perhaps the barley had not been tithed properly according to Jewish law, thus rendering it unfit for consumption. The innkeeper tithed it and the animal finally enjoyed its meal. The Gemara comments on this incident that Hashem watches over even the animals of the righteous to ensure that they don't sin unintentionally.

This incident, says the Ramban, poses a question on the explanation of Rashi here in this *passuk*. How could it be that Avraham *Avinu* needed to muzzle his camels to ensure that they would not sin by eating from the land of others, but the donkey of Pinchas ben Yair was automatically protected from sin by the intervention of Hashem in the lives of the righteous? Was Avraham *Avinu* not at least an equal to the sage Pinchas ben Yair, who lived thousands of years later?

Many interesting answers are offered to address this question. We will share one answer here from which we can derive an important lesson about our public conduct. The Maharshal explains that, in fact, the camels of Avraham would **not** have eaten from the fields that didn't belong to their masters as a result of that special protection that

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI CHAIM TROPP

Hashem grants the righteous and their animals to protect them from sin. However, Avraham saw this as an opportunity to teach a lesson to his followers and anyone else who would observe his caravan. Those who would see the camels without a muzzle could not have known that they were granted special protection from eating the pasture that did not belong to them and they would not learn about the meticulous care one should take to avoid infringing on the property of others. By muzzling his camels, Avraham – the world's primary teacher about G-d and His values – sought an opportunity to impart this teaching to his generation.

We can take this as a lesson for ourselves that there are teaching opportunities to be had in frequent and varied areas of our lives. Whether we are teachers, parents, or simply *ehrlische yidden*, we have the chance to impart the teachings of Hashem to those around us. If we can do so, we will surely spread the light of Torah and its peaceful and pleasant ways throughout the world.

THE RABBI WAS ASKED
ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHAK PREIS

Q) Eliezer seems to be 'jumping the gun' when he offers Rivka jewelry before determining her family background (24:22-23). And, when he recounts the story to her family, [24:47] he makes it seem like he did the opposite – first inquiring as to her family and afterward giving her the jewelry. Why?

A) Combining Rashi and some of the commentaries on Rashi yields the following: Eliezer has such trust that Hashem was steering him toward success that he could grant the jewelry before further investigating her background. But as Rivka's family would not understand that, he inverted the sequence of events when describing it to them.

Rav Hirsch takes a very different approach noting that the earlier *passuk* (verse) never mentions actually giving the jewelry. It can be translated to mean that he "took out [displayed] ...golden nose-ring, ...bracelets for her hands..." and actually did not yet relay them to her. One can imagine Eliezer recognizing that Rivka was likely to have to "sell" the idea of providing lodging for Eliezer, camels, et al., and potentially the idea of marrying and leaving home, to a skeptical family. Displaying the jewelry would provide Rivka the wherewithal to get her family on board. Once Eliezer heard

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

from Rivka that she was in fact “*mishpochoh*,” he had every reason to believe his mission was being fulfilled. He now gave her the jewelry, anticipating that this would be followed by her becoming Yitzchok’s wife. And this is what he shared when recounting the story to her family. 🕊

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week’s)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

A Yeshiva group was on its way back to the New York area after a road trip to Florida at the end of the summer. As one of the Rebbeim tells the story, they stopped overnight in Savannah, Georgia, and went to daven the next morning at the local shul. The boys were asked if anyone wanted to share a Torah thought after davening. After a moment, one of the boys stepped up to the front, and shared something that, according to the Rebbe, was out of his character to share. “Wherever a Torah Jew goes, especially one who spends his days and nights learning Hashem’s Torah, he leaves sparks of holiness in his wake. When we make blessings here in Savannah, when we pray here in Savannah, we are leaving something behind, a spiritual influence that will linger long after we leave.” The Rebbe thought about what this student of his had shared

at different points along their day of driving up the eastern seaboard. As the sun was on its way

A BA’AL HATURIM FOR YOU

“And Avraham was old and well on in years,” this phrase begins the *passuk* that ends “and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything.” Ba’al Haturim explains the juxtaposition of these two phrases. Once Avraham reached the age of difficulty of movement and of being constrained in his activities due to his age, now he needed Hashem’s blessing, and this Hashem provided. 🕊

down, the caravan of cars pulled off at a shopping center parking lot in Virginia to daven Mincha. When the davening finished the cars pulled out and continued on their way. A few days later, an unfamiliar phone number called the Rebbe’s cell phone. “Hi, my name is Todd, I’m Jewish and I live in Virginia. A couple of days ago I was coming out of a store and I saw your group praying. I have always wanted to learn more about my roots and seeing you all there reminded me about it. I asked one of the boys there that seemed to be done with his prayers already who I could talk to about being Jewish. He gave me your number. Is now a good time?” “Hmm,” thought the Rebbe to himself, “sparks wherever a Jew goes indeed!” 🕊



THE LEGENDARY GOLEM OF PRAGUE (PART IV)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

The first flaw with *Niflaos Maharal* and the very existence of the Maharal’s *golem* is the fact that nowhere in the Maharal’s extensive writings is there any mention or hint that he created a *golem*. A second and more significant problem is that none of the Maharal’s contemporaries or students mention his *golem*, specifically his student, Rabbi Dovid Ganz of Prague, author of the historical work *Tzemach Dovid*. Surely if the Maharal of Prague created a *golem*, his student, the great historian Rabbi Dovid Ganz would have recorded these remarkable events. The lack of contemporary evidence, especially after one has read the incredible stories in *Niflaos Maharal*, is nothing but astounding. In addition, the Maharal’s *matzaivah* (tombstone) in the Jewish cemetery of Prague, which is quite lengthy in describing the prominence of the Maharal, makes no mention of him creating a *golem*.

The lack of contemporary evidence certainly challenges the authenticity of *Niflaos Maharal* in a powerful way. If we are to believe that *Niflaos Maharal* was actually written by Rabbi Yitzchak Katz, we are relying entirely on the credibility of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg.

To verify Rabbi Rosenberg’s credibility, we must first examine another work published by Rabbi Rosenberg. In 1913, four years after the publication of *Niflaos Maharal*, Rabbi Rosenberg published *Choshen Ha-mishpat*. Again, Rabbi Rosenberg claims that it is a copy of a manuscript which was purportedly authored by a rabbi from France who claims that the Maharal himself dictated the story and instructed him to publish it. *Choshen Ha-mishpat* tells the fascinating story how the Maharal of Prague, using mystical powers, managed to recover the 12 precious stones of the *Choshen Ha-mishpat* (The Breastplate of the Kohen Gadol) which were stolen from a museum in London.

To be continued... 🕊