

SCHEDULE

שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos	4:26 PM
Friday Night Learning (w/ Chulent)	7:30 PM
Shacharis— Followed by Kiddush	8:30 AM
<i>Sof Zman K"ס</i> גר"א 9:03 גר"א 9:39	
Mincha- Followed by Shalosh Seudos	4:20 PM
Maariv	5:33 PM

Sunday

Shacharis	8:30 AM
<i>-Followed by Shiur</i> יורה דעה, חולין <i>New Topics from</i>	
Mincha / Maariv	4:30 PM
TYA Shiur for high school boys	7:30 PM
<i>-Followed by Maariv at 8pm</i>	

Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

Monday—Friday

Shacharis	
Mon, Thurs	6:40 AM
Tues, Wed, Fri	6:45 AM
Dirshu Halacha Program	7:30AM
Additional daily minyan (Mon - Fri)	8:10AM
Mincha	12:45 PM
Mincha / Maariv- NO WINTER MINYAN	
Open Beis Hamedrash	7:00 PM
Rabbeinu Yonah Shaar Rishon	9:30 PM
Nightly Maariv (Mon-Thur)	9:45 PM

Thursday Night Shiur by Rabbi Teichman
After Maariv

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Volume #70

RABBI'S MESSAGE

... and Carry a Big Stick !

Almost two months ago on שמייני עצרת we beseeched הקב"ה to provide us with rain of blessing. In the תפלת גשם a reference to this week's פרשה is made where we ask ה' to remember the merit of יעקב אבינו when he traversed the Jordan river with his staff, **זכור טען מקלו ועבר ירדן מים**, *remember the one who carried his staff and crossed the Jordan's water*, a sentiment based on the פסוק **כי כן במקלי עברתי את הירדן**, *for with my staff I crossed the Jordan*. This is an allusion to his great righteousness that brought about the miraculous splitting of the ירדן that allowed him to pass through.

Why the emphasis on the "מקל"; the staff? Was this a "magic wand" that gave him great powers? What message lies in the stressing of his carrying a "staff"?

The תרגום אונקלוס translates "כי במקלי" as **ארי יחידי**; "alone", without any possessions, just "himself", as the מדרש reports that אליפז emptied him of all his belongings. The בעל הטורים points out that "במקלי" is indeed the numerical equivalent of "יעקב", 182, thus expressing the idea he was left with just his essence! This intensifies the mystery even more so. Why would the Torah choose to portray his status of being bereft of any material as symbolized by his carrying specifically only his "מקל"?

The מדרש reveals that the מקל, the מטה, the staff of יעקב, was the same one that was mentioned by יהודה in the episode with תמר, by משה and אהרן in מצרים and the מדבר and by all subsequent Kings until the חורבן בית המקדש, and will eventually be handed over to the מלך המשיח and through it will he rule over the nations of the world. What is the secret of the מקל that began with this incident at the ירדן with יעקב אבינו? Even more intriguing is the appearance of this staff of "מלכות", in the story of יהודה and his tryst with תמר precisely in his moment of weakness?

The סנהדרין relates how שלמה המלך descended from his dominion over even the heavenly spheres to reigning in succession only over humanity, ישראל, ירושלים, his bed and finally, אלא על מקלו, "ruling" only over his מקל, his staff! How does one "rule" over his מקל?

The great Rosh HaYeshiva of Mir, HaRav Chaim Shmulevitz זצוק"ל taught us that in the roller coaster of life the gravest danger lies not in the lowly conditions we sometimes descend to, but more so from the loss of equilibrium that results from the fall from our having been on a "high plateau" to suddenly finding ourselves in a "deep pit". The חז"ל describe how after ערפה makes the fatal decision to depart ways with נעמי, that very night she was ravished by a troop of a hundred men and committed a act of depravity with a dog! Had she changed so drastically in one day? Surely not. It was the lost sense of self worth caused by her abrupt drop from the stature she had attained to the reality of her future that threw her into a swift downward spiral that led her to such despicable behavior.

א מקל; a staff helps one maintain stability on uneven ground. שלמה המלך despite his failures never lost sight of who he was. He forever maintained the dignity of מלכות. It was a מלכות that was never contingent on the number of subjects or places to reign over. He ruled over his מקל, never losing his "balance", never allowing himself to be subject to desperation or hopelessness, always maintaining a resolve to continue. One can indeed rule over one's מקל!

יעקב אבינו despite having been left destitute, continued to preserve his steadfastness in continuing his striving for greatness. He held on tightly to his sense of self represented by the tool of stability, the מקל.

יהודה could have easily lashed out angrily in his confrontation with תמר, but it was his sense of "royal character", that kept things in the proper perspective motivating him to state so nobly, **צדקה ממני**; *she is right, it is from me!*

בלעם in his moment of embarrassment during his frustrating encounter with his donkey, lashes out, **ויך את האתון במקל**; *and he struck the donkey with his staff*. A מקל has two functions, it can be used to strike outwardly with anger at the objects of ones irritation, or it can serve to stabilize our foothold of who we truly are and strive to be, allowing us to respond with the appropriate balance becoming of our stature.

Our true moral fiber is tested in moments of weakness more so than in moments of greatness. We are all בני מלכים; nobility in the image of the אבות. We must always retain our "firm footing", never succumbing to the clutches of "defeat"!

We may not always be able to "walk softly", but we can always "carry a big stick"!

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