Bs”D

From: Mordechai Kamenetzky <mkamenetzky@gmail.com>
To: Magic.of.Chemistry <mord0018@yahoo.com>
Sent: Fri, 5 November, 2010 16:28:08
Subject: Re: Parsha Parables - Parshas Toldos - Priceless

Thank You.. By the way
Rav Yaakov has the beautiful idea next week regarding how to give mussar, I may rewrite it for the Parables,

On Fri, Nov 5, 2010 at 10:05 AM, Magic.of.Chemistry <mord0018@yahoo.com> wrote:
Bs”D

R' Mordechai Shalom,
Your story reminded me of a story from ***my*** youth -

My birthplace? A small town in eastern Canada – Fredericton, New Brunswick. When I was growing up there, the custom was to try and organize a weekday minyan in shul whenever somebody had a yahrzeit. The morning minyan was usually called for 7:45, but the difficulties in obtaining the minyan often meant that davening didn't start until well after 8:00. Once, when I was a student at the local university, I was called to participate, and gladly agreed to do so - but explained that I had to start on time because I had an exam early that morning. "No problem", I was assured, "I'll make sure the minyan arrives – and starts - on time." To my disappointment (but not to my surprise), that was not the case, and I proceeded to daven, as I knew I couldn't wait. The minyan did eventually form and they started davening, but I continued until I finished, well ahead of the minyan. I took off my tefillin and started to walk out, when the person who had the yahrzeit approached me and asked where I was going. I explained to him that I was leaving, reminding him that I had told him initially about my impending exam. He simply shook his head and said, "You can't leave. We are only 10, and if you go, we won't have a minyan." My protestations were in vain. He wasn't taking no for an answer. - I stayed.
What is the price of a minyan?
Priceless!!!

As you can see, I learned about the importance of community at an early age, and with a lot of help from HaShem, we have been privileged to raise our children and now our grandchildren on those values.

Thank you for re-awakening these memories with your priceless Dvar Torah.
Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai

PS “***I was honest***. I told him that I had permission to leave for New York and wanted to catch an earlier train to save some money.”
Did you think Rav Yakov’s grandson would behave any other way??? Ashreicha!

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From: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky <faxhomily@gmail.com>
To: mord0018@yahoo.com
Sent: Fri, 5 November, 2010 13:47:06
Subject: Parsha Parables - Parshas Toldos - Priceless

28 MarCheshvan 5771
Novemeber 5, 2010

Toldos
Priceless

It was a deal that would have made the sale of Manhattan pale in comparison - at least in the opinion of Yaakov Avinu.

Yaakov simmered a stew, and "Esav (Yaakov's brother) came in from the field, and he was exhausted" (Genesis 25:29). While Esav smelled relief, Yaakov realized that opportunity was simmering.

Esav eyed that soup and Yaakov eyed a greater and much more valuable prize. Yaakov did not want to give away the soup for free, he wanted something in exchange. So Yaakov made a deal, he would sell Esav the soup. The price was simple; he wanted Esav's birthright. "And Esau said, 'Look, I am going to die, so of what use to me is a birthright?'" (ibid v. 32). The deal was made: Yaakov sold the soup for Esav's birthright.

There is a slight problem that is posed by Rav Pinchos HaLevi Horowitz, (1730-1805) the author of the Sefer Hafla'ah. He asks: Clearly the value of b'chorah is far greater than the value of lentil soup. Jewish law prohibits the sale of an item at a price way beyond its value. That prohibition is called ona'ah. In English we call it a "rip-off."
How was Yaakov allowed to offer a paltry bowl of soup for something as valuable as the birthright? It is an outright rip-off. Did he not transgress the prohibition of ona'ah?

The Story

When I a student at the Philadelphia Yeshiva, I had to take a train one afternoon to go home for a doctor's appointment in New York. The yeshiva was located across the street from the Overbrook Station upon which a commuter line ran. In order to get to New York, the students would take the local train to the 30th Street Station, where they would catch an Amtrak train to New York City. The commuter train's fare varied upon the time of day, rush hour costing about a dollar more than the rest of the day.

The Yeshiva davened Mincha in the afternoon and the tefilah normally ended about rush hour. I decided to slip out before the last kaddish to catch the early train to save a buck. The Mashgiach (Dean of Ethics) saw me leaving the Bais Medrash, before the prayer service was finished, and called me over.

"What's this?" he beckoned in his usual language that subtly declared, "I got you!"

I was honest. I told him that I had permission to leave for New York and wanted to catch an earlier train to save some money.

"And how much are you saving?" he inquired.

I shuffled my feet. "About a dollar."

The Mashgiach looked at me. "If you are ready to miss a kaddish to save a dollar, then you just put a value on kaddish of less than a dollar. Do you realize how much you have undervalued one of the most priceless tefilos that we have?"

The Message

Rav Horowitz z"l, explains: A person is not allowed to fool a consumer into thinking that he is getting a steal. But Yaakov saw how readily Esav was willing to sell the b'chorah for a simple bowl of soup. He scoffed by saying, "Behold, I am going to die, and what do I need a birthright for?"

If a person evaluates his prized possession as worthless, then indeed you may purchase it for nothing as well!

Often we underestimate the most valued possessions of life. We put a monetary or, in this case, culinary, value on priceless items. We do too!

How often do we give up the merit of sitting with a chassan in the moments before the chupa in order to indulge on a few delicacies from the smorgasbord which is located near the bride? How often do we miss a part of the davening for a good drink at a Kiddush, or a Kiddush Club? (Whatever that means.)

This week we ought to learn some lessons that Esav missed. But the good people at Mastercard® should have been there to teach them to him. A loaf of bread: two dollars. A bowl of lentil soup: three dollars and seventy five cents. The b'chora? Priceless. © 2010 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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