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PARSHA INSIGHTS

A PACKAGE DEAL

“The Keruvim shall be with wings spread upward, sheltering the cover with their wings with their faces toward each other...” (25:16)

Rabbi, who is better? Someone who is scrupulous in observance of Jewish ritual, has Grade-A *tefillin*, is super-careful what he puts in his mouth, but when it comes to what comes out of his mouth he's not so vigilant — he can be hurtful and angry; sometimes he speaks malicious gossip,

Or,

Someone who drives to golf on Shabbat but just endowed an entire wing in the hospital and is universally loved by everyone he meets?

Many people think that you can be a good person without keeping the *mitzvot*. But what does it mean to be a 'good person'. Judaism defines being a good person as someone who does what G-d wants. And what does G-d want? He told us in the Torah. G-d wants us to be good to each other, to care for the sick and the orphaned, to love converts and to protect widows. The human values that society cherishes are long-time Torah gifts to mankind-at-large.

However, for a Jewish person, G-d also wants us to keep Shabbat and to refrain from eating cheeseburgers. These are His desires no less than clothing the naked and visiting the sick. Torah observance is only complete when we commit to both a correct relationship with our Creator as well as our fellow man.

One without the other is only half the picture.

Look above the Holy Ark in any synagogue and you'll notice a representation of the two tablets on which the

Torah was engraved. Why weren't the Ten Commandments written on one tablet of stone? Why did G-d hew two pieces of rock for His contract with the Jewish People?

Obviously you can't say that G-d couldn't find a piece of stone big enough for all ten — a little bit of quarrying is infinitely less than a blink of the eye for He Who carved the Milky Way out of nothingness.

And you also can't say that He made two just in case one got lost — a “Cosmic Data Backup” — because what was written on the first tablet was different from what was written on the second.

In fact, if you examine what is written on the first tablet, you'll notice that the commandments that they contain pertain to the relationship between G-d and man: *“I am Hashem... You shall not recognize other gods in My presence... Don't make a carved image... Don't take the Name of Hashem, your G-d in vain... Remember the day of Shabbat to sanctify it...”*

The second tablet speaks of commandments between man and his fellow: *Don't kill... Don't commit adultery... Don't covet...*

“The Keruvim shall be ... with their faces toward each other...”

The *Keruvim* on the cover of the Ark that contained Ten Commandments symbolize the Torah itself. The fact that they faced each other teaches us that it's impossible to observe the Torah unless our relationship with our fellow man mirrors our relationship with G-d, and vice versa.

One without the other is only half the picture.

For the Torah is a package deal.

• Based on the *Malbim*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d commands Moshe to build a Mishkan (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. The Children of Israel are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the Mishkan's outer courtyard are an altar for the burnt offerings and a laver for washing. The Tent of Meeting is divided by a curtain into two chambers. The outer chamber is accessible only to the *kohanim*, the descendants of Aharon.

This contains the table of showbreads, the *menorah*, and the golden altar for incense. The innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, may be entered only by the *kohen gadol*, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur. Here is the Ark that held the Ten Commandments inscribed on the two tablets of stone that G-d gave to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the Mishkan, are described in great detail.

ISRAEL Forever

SANCTUARIES OF ALL SIZES

The concept of a Sanctuary in the life of our people began with the Divine command we read in this week's Torah portion: "Make a Sanctuary for Me that I shall dwell amongst them."

The first Sanctuary was the *Mishkan* which was inaugurated a year after the Exodus from Egypt. It was a portable structure of gold-covered wooden boards and a ceiling of materials and skins, which served as a Sanctuary for all the years that our ancestors wandered in the wilderness and the early years of their entry into Eretz Yisrael. Stone walls replaced the boards when the *Mishkan* was established at Shiloh. Almost a millennium after the Exodus the *Mishkan* gave way to the permanent structure of the *Beit Hamikdash* in Yerushalayim where it stood for 410 years.

The Second *Beit Hamikdash*, established after the destruction of the First and 70 years of Babylonian Exile, lasted for 420 years until its destruction by the Romans.

Ever since then the synagogue has served as a "Minor Sanctuary". But there is another sort of Sanctuary as well. In the above-mentioned Divine command the purpose of the Sanctuary is described in terms of "I shall dwell amongst them". It has therefore been interpreted as meaning that every Jew can serve as a Sanctuary for the Divine Presence to dwell in if he consecrates his life for that purpose.

If all Jews will thus make themselves Sanctuaries we will merit seeing the Third *Beit Hamikdash* built in our days in a redeemed Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE SAGES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

"BE A DISCIPLE OF AHARON – ONE WHO LOVES PEACE, ONE WHO PURSUES PEACE, ONE WHO LOVES PEOPLE AND WHO BRINGS THEM CLOSER TO TORAH"

HILLEL (AVOT 1:12)

Whenver Aharon met a sinful person as he walked along his way, he would greet him. The next day the same fellow, contemplating a sin, would say to himself: "If I do this, how will I face Aharon? I'd be so ashamed after the greeting he gave me." In this way a Jew was prevented from sinning.

When two people had a dispute Aharon would approach each of them separately and say to him: "Look what's doing with your friend.



He's pounding his chest, tearing his clothes and saying, 'Woe to me for how can I look at my friend's face; I am so ashamed because it was I who wronged him'." Aharon would continue in this way until he had completely removed all hostility from him.

The two unsuspecting quarrelers would subsequently meet in the street, embrace each other, and resume their friendship.

• *Avot of Rabbi Natan 12:3*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many types of items were the Jews to donate?
2. The donation of silver for the Mishkan differed from the donation of the other items. How?
3. What property do *techelet* and *argaman* share that *orot eilim m'adamim* do not share?
4. What property do the above three share that *shesh* and *orot techashim* do not share?
5. Onkelos translates "*tachash*" as "*sasgona*." Why?
6. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Egypt?
7. Describe two uses of: 1) oil 2) spices 3) jewels.
8. The *aron* was made with three boxes, one inside the other. Exactly how tall was the outer box?
9. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?
10. What did the faces of the *keruvim* resemble?
11. On what day of the week was the *lechem hapanim* baked?
12. What does *miksha* mean?
13. What was the purpose of the *menorah's gevi'im* (cups)?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the *menorah*?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapestries of the Mishkan?
16. What is meant by "standing wood"?
17. How long was the Mishkan?
18. How wide was the interior of the Mishkan?
19. Why was the altar coated with *nechoshet*?
20. Which function did the copper *yeteidot* serve?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 25:2 - 13.
2. 25:3 - No fixed amount of the other items was required. The silver was given as a fixed amount: a half shekel.
3. 25:4,5 - They are wool; *orot eilim* are not.
4. 25:4,5 - They are dyed; *shesh* and *orot techashim* are not.
5. 25:5 - The *tachash* delights (*sas*) in its multi-colors (*g'vanim*).
6. 25:5 - *Arazim* — cedars.
7. 25:6-7: 1) The oil was lit in the *menorah* and used for anointing. 2) The spices were used in the anointing oil and for the incense. 3) The precious stones were for the *ephod* and the *choshen*.
8. 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half *amot* plus a *tefach* plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the *kaporet*. (The *kaporet* was a *tefach* thick — see 25:17).
9. 25:16 - It testifies that Hashem commanded us to keep the *mitzvot*.
10. 25:18 - The faces of children.
11. 25:29 - Friday.
12. 25:31 - Hammered.
13. 25:31 - Purely ornamental.
14. 25:40 - G-d showed Moshe a *menorah* of fire.
15. 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
16. 26:15 - The wooden beams were to be upright and not stacked one upon the other.
17. 26:16 - 30 *amot*.
18. 26:23 - 10 *amot*.
19. 27:2 - To atone for brazenness.
20. 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.

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- When forbidden matter is combined with permitted matter or absorbed in it
- When *chametz* in the cracks of a vessel must be eliminated
- Dough in those cracks in regard to spiritual contamination
- Determining whether dough has become *chametz* by comparison and by time
- Taking *chalah* on Pesach from dough which became spiritually impure
- Cooking on Yom Tov for tomorrow when it is a weekday or when it is Shabbat
- The concepts of *ho'il* and *eiruv tavshillin*
- How one can be guilty of eight violations with one act of plowing
- How the matzah baking team should operate
- The stage of leavening that constitutes *chametz*
- When Shabbat is the day before Pesach
- Remembering that he possessed *chametz* at home when it is difficult to return and destroy it
- What qualifies as a *seudat mitzvah*
- Choosing a marriage partner
- The problem of the *am ha'aretz* (ignoramus)
- Leaving Yerushalayim with sacrificial flesh
- Yerushalayim and the world of the future
- Restriction on work the day before Pesach
- Some advice on the occupations of men and women

CHOOSING A SON-IN-LAW

Some important pieces of advice for choosing a marriage partner are offered in our *gemara*. One of these is that a man should be prepared to sell everything he owns in order to have his daughter marry a Torah scholar.

The first reason for this given in the *gemara* is one of compatibility. Since this advice seems to be directed principally to a father who is himself a Torah scholar, such a union is compared to the successful blend of grafting one grapevine with another, while taking a son-in-law who is an ignoramus is like making a distasteful grafting of a grapevine with a thorn bush.

The *gemara* does, however, mention a motivation for seeking a Torah scholar as a husband for his daughter which is relevant to any father. This is the lack of consideration for his wife's dignity and feelings to which an ignoramus is susceptible. Rambam (Laws of Forbidden Relations 21:32) adds another dimension to the benefits of every Jew acquiring a Torah scholar as a husband for his daughter that makes it worth investing all he possesses:

"In the homes of Torah scholars," he writes, "there is nothing of an undignified nature and no discord."

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"What is the meaning of the prophetic passage: "And G-d shall be King of the entire universe, and on that day G-d shall be One and His Name shall be One" (*Zacharia* 14:9)? Is He not One today?"

This world is different from the World to Come. In this world one makes a blessing on good tidings — Blessed is the One Who is good and does good to others — while on sad tidings he says 'Blessed is the true Judge'. In the hereafter there will be only one sort of blessing — the one for good tidings — for there will be no sad tidings."

• Rabbi Acha bar Chanina
Pesachim 50a

INTERMARRIAGE: A JEWISH OBSESSION

by Yaakov Botwinik

From: Judy in Las Vegas, NV

Dear Rabbi,

I recently saw on a website the following statistics showing how intermarriage rates are increasing dramatically:

“Before 1965, 10% of Jews who married did so outside the faith.

Since 1985, 52% of Jews who married have done so outside the faith.”

This seems to me disastrous for Jewish continuity and the future of Judaism. I'm sure that many people and organizations are trying to reverse this trend, but do you have special insights into this tragic situation?

Ever do a Google search on the word “intermarriage”? Nine of the top ten results are Jewish sites. It's amazing that although Jews constitute one quarter of one percent of humanity, it seems intermarriage is exclusively a Jewish concern. Whether it's a new book about intermarriage, an upcoming conference or a resource center, you can bet that it has to do with Jews marrying Gentiles. Most cultures exert pressure to marry one's own kind, but for Jews it seems to be an obsession.

This should not be surprising considering that we Jews have lived as a minority in foreign, and often hostile, environments for most of our history. If it weren't for our steadfast desire to continue our progeny as Jews, we would have disappeared as a people long ago.

On the other hand, if you look at today's intermarriage figures, you'd think we're anything but obsessed with “Jewish continuity”; in fact, you'd think we've abandoned ship.

One in every two North American Jews marries out.

So, while intermarriage is a Jewish obsession, most Jews don't seem to be obsessed about it. I was no different and dated a Chinese woman.

Let's be honest. Judaism is much more than a religion. Judaism is culture and ethnicity. It is language and geography. It is a collective mindset forged by a particular set of historical experiences. One can quite easily live one's

entire life as a Jew guided by these influences. But, if one were to strip away these layers, one would discover the core essence of Judaism: our Torah.

While Jewish culture, Jewish languages, Jewish geography, Jewish mindset have evolved and changed, the Torah has remained unchanged. If there is one factor that is of ultimate value, infinitely profound, and *uniquely* Jewish, it is the Torah. It is the one ingredient without which Judaism could easily, in a matter of a few generations, become unrecognizably transformed or diluted, and eventually vanish in the sea of competing social norms.

While community leaders of all denominations are battling the intermarriage crisis, statistics show that marrying out is lowest among Orthodox Jews who truly believe the Torah to be the immutable Word of G-d and their decisive guide in life.

Believing that the Torah is of Divine origin has most significant implications for how our daily existence is to be consummated, and for our purpose in life. In the absence of this belief, there is no sustainable argument why one (or one's children) should not intermarry.

As was my case, many secular Jews who struggle with intermarriage are walking on thin ice. Their motives for marrying Jewish are tenuous, such as family expectations, which often are overridden once “love” is found. Or, it could be a clannish mindset bordering on racism: “We must not marry Gentiles because they, their culture or religion are different or inferior.” Among often-heard arguments are, “It would kill my parents,” “Because of the Holocaust,” “Because of anti-Semitism.” These reasons are tainted with guilt and prompt the question, Why be Jewish? What is so important about our heritage that we must sacrifice our happiness — refrain from marrying the person we love — for its sake?

All ethnic groups, in trying to curb intermarriage, attempt to instill in their children a greater appreciation of the richness of their heritage. In an increasingly multicultural society, this is proving more and more challenging.

For us, such an approach is essential, and we must get to the core. What has preserved our people through the ages is a deep appreciation of Torah combined with an unfaltering conviction that G-d authored it.

Now, we just need to get more Jews obsessed about Torah.

Yaakov Botwinik is the author of “Chicken Soup with Chopsticks: A Jew's Struggle for Truth in an Interfaith Relationship”.

WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

Question: I have a close friend whom I like but who occasionally is tempted to do something I consider morally wrong. This makes me doubt whether it is worthwhile maintaining such a friendship. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: A popular safety slogan in Israel says: "When you drink don't drive. That's what friends are for."

The Torah take on friendship is a lot broader. Rabbi Yonah of Gerundi, in his classic commentary on *Pirkei Avot*, lists three things that "friends are for".

In addition to the obvious human need to have a friend in whom you can confide and with whom you can

share joy and sorrow, there is the Torah wisdom one gains from studying with a friend, a gain that even surpasses what one receives from a teacher.

It is the third need for a friend that applies to your question. You need a friend to serve as your conscience when you are tempted to do the wrong thing and he is not. This is a symbiotic relationship with you acting as his conscience when things are the other way around.

Don't drop the relationship. Try instead to enrich it by helping one another get over moral lapses.

In conclusion, friends are not for merely driving you home when you get drunk, but to stop you from getting drunk in the first place.

CLOSED AREAS AND OPEN ARMS

"This was a dark period in Tenafly history. If I had one wish, it would be that the Orthodox community was welcomed with open arms."

This is how Joseph Salvatore, a non-Jewish member of the Tenafly, New Jersey Borough Council, summarized the six-year battle over the *eruv* created by observant Jews in his community.

It all began in 2000 when plastic strips were placed on utility poles with permission from two utility companies and the county. Some people in Tenafly were unhappy about the *eruv* – a halachic arrangement of symbolic

enclosure permitting carrying on Shabbat – encouraging an influx of Orthodox Jews. They pressured the Borough to ban the strips, setting off a long legal battle that was finally won by the Tenafly Eruv Association last month.

Not only did the Borough agree by a 5-0 vote to approve the *eruv* strips but even agreed to pay \$325,000 to cover the court costs incurred by the *eruv* supporters.

Now, perhaps, Shabbat observant Jews will be welcomed with open arms in Tenafly.

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