

Light Insight

The Sin Of The Cheese Danish

“An Ammonite or Moabite may not enter into the congregation of G-d; even to their tenth generation they may not enter into the congregation of G-d forever. The reason is that they did not come out to meet you with bread and water on the way, when you were leaving Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 23:4-5)

What was so terrible about Ammon and Moab not coming out to meet the Jewish People with bread and water on their way out of Egypt? Just because they didn't rush out to meet the Jewish People with “cheese Danish and coffee?” Is that such a terrible sin?

Even an Egyptian may convert, and, after three generations,

marry a Jew. Their ancestors enslaved Jewish children to build their palaces and mausoleums! Just because of a lack of hospitality, an Ammonite and a Moabite can never join the Jewish people?

The reason is that the Ammonite and the Moabite nations owe their very existence to the Jews. For it was the Patriarch Abraham — the father of the Jewish People — who rescued Lot from being killed when Sodom was destroyed. Lot was the father of Ammon and Moav. Were it not for Abraham, there would never have been an Ammonite or Moabite People. When the people of Ammon and Moav didn't come out to greet the Jewish People, the descendants of

Abraham, they showed the essence of their character — lack of gratitude.

Ingratitude cannot be allowed to infiltrate the Jewish People, because to give thanks — to admit that one is beholden — is the essence of being Jewish. The word *Yehudi* is from the root to give thanks, to be grateful.

When looking for a spouse, this can be a yardstick for us: If chronic ingratitude makes a person unfit as a marriage partner, then the greatest ‘catch’ is someone who is always grateful.

It is impossible to make an ingrate happy. But someone who is always grateful, who sees everything as a gift — that's the easiest person in the world to make happy.

That's the ideal spouse.

LOVE of the LAND

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

Indirect Vandalism

The elimination of idol worship in the Land of Israel was a responsibility delegated to the Jewish People upon their entry into the Land. They were commanded to destroy the idols, smash

the altars and wipe out any trace of idol worship.

This command is followed by the warning “You shall not do thus to your G-d.” The simple understanding of this passage is that we are warned not to do to the sacred items connected with G-d that which we are instructed to do to those of the idol worshippers. Our Sages conclude from this that one who smash-

es even a stone from the Sanctuary or the altar, or one who erases even one letter of the Holy Name has violated this prohibition.

Rabbi Gamliel, however, sees another dimension in this warning: Of course Jews are not suspect of destroying their holy altars, says Rabbi Gamliel; rather, the Torah is warning us not to imitate the idolatrous ways of the heathens and cause our Sanctuary and altar to be destroyed by them as a Divine punishment for our sins.

ETHICS of our FATHERS

“...All your actions should be directed to Heaven.”

One should take steps to be healthy and strong in order that he should have a spirit capable of knowing G-d. It is impossible to understand wisdom if one is hungry or ill, or

distracted by physical pain. If a person lives in a way, and his motive is always to achieve the wellness of body and spirit required to know G-d, he is constantly serving G-d, even in the mundanity of his business activities and daily life. If he sleeps in order to rest his mind and body and thereby avoid illnesses that prevent him from serving G-d, even his sleep is considered an act of Divine service.

Solomon wisely put it: “Know Him in all your ways”.

Response Line

Simon Max wrote:

I am a firm believer in Judaism, the Torah and of course in G-d. But the other day someone asked me a question that I had trouble answering. Can G-d make a rock so heavy that He Himself cannot lift?

Dear Simon,

My 5 year old son asked me a similar question: “Daddy,” he said with a devilish grin, “can G-d make this fork to be that it never was?”

The answer to his question, and to yours, is: No. G-d can't do something that is a contradiction.

G-d can't divide 5 evenly by 2, can't win at chess if He starts with only a king, and can't spell “table” correctly using only 4 letters.

The reason G-d “can't” do

these things, is because we have not specified a thing to do; we have contradicted ourselves in the description. “A rock too heavy for the Almighty” is a self-contradiction, because the Almighty is...All Mighty! Therefore, by definition, such a rock can't exist. So your question boils down to: “Can G-d create something which cannot exist?” Of course not; that's a self contradiction. G-d's “inability” to do such a thing does not indicate a lack in G-d; rather, it indicates our failure to define what it is we are asking.

Judith Finkelstein wrote:

I attended a Jewish funeral today, and the rabbi had each person shovel 3 shovels-full of dirt into the grave. The tradition included his instructions specifically to put the shovel back in the dirt when finished and let the next person

proceed. Is there a certain significance in “putting the shovel back into the dirt” instead of passing it directly to the next person in line (the next person to shovel dirt)?

Dear Judith,

There are two reasons for the custom not to pass the spade from one person to the other. The first is that on the day that a person is buried, it is not considered correct behavior for a person to pass something to another. One of the messages to the participants at a funeral is to understand that on the day of death we are all equal. This idea is amplified by placing the spade into the earth and not passing it straight to the next person, as it denotes a certain dominance over the person who is receiving the spade. The second reason is that the time of the burial is a time of great anguish and to pass the spade from one to the other would be symbolic of passing the anguish.