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PARSHA INSIGHTS

RUNNING ON EMPTY

“...they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually.” (27:20)

When we look at the world around us, it's easy to become despondent. For the most part, the world seems to be a very unspiritual place. Rampant materialism and the pleasures of the flesh seem to be the dominant messages of our society. The Jewish People, who brought the idea of love and the rights of man to the world, are relegated to the backwaters of spirituality. A Jewish spiritual seeker nowadays is more likely to travel to Katmandu than to Bnei Brak. And Jerusalem is seen as a subject for dissection on the operating table of nationalism rather than the world capital of spirituality.

For all the material benefits that our modern society affords, we grow spiritually more bereft from year to year. Our hope that G-d will send us very soon the redeemer that He has promised us seems so far removed from lives as to be almost like a dream.

And yet, against all the neon noise of anti-spirituality, a little glimmer of hope has never been extinguished from our hearts.

In the days of the Holy Temple, every evening the *kohanim* would refill the lamps of the Menorah. Even though the summer nights were much shorter than the long nights of winter, the *kohanim* always poured the same amount of oil into the lamps. Thus, during the summer months, they would return in the morning to find oil still left in the Menorah.

One of the Menorah's lamps was quite unusual. Its

name was the *ner ma'aravi* – the Western Light. The *ner ma'aravi* received no more oil than its fellows, and yet, even after the longest nights of winter, the *kohen* would return in the morning to find it still burning. That evening he would rekindle the other lamps from the *ner ma'aravi*. In fact, there is an opinion that the *ner ma'aravi* was lit but once a year.

The miracle of the *ner ma'aravi* was a sign that the Divine Presence dwelled amongst the Jewish People. It continued to burn until the *Kohen Hagadol*, Shimon HaTzadik, passed from this world.

One year, the olive harvest in Eretz Yisrael was extremely meager and there was but a tiny fraction of the oil needed to kindle the lights of the Menorah. The *kohanim* wept, taking this deficiency to be sign of Divine displeasure. However, instead of the lamps spluttering into darkness in the middle of the winter nights, G-d made as even bigger miracle: Not only did the *ner ma'aravi* burn throughout the night - but it was joined by the other six lamps as well and they all burned brightly throughout the night with a totally insufficient amount of oil.

The Jewish People are like the lamps of the Menorah – running on empty, but still burning with a quiet powerful flame.

G-d sent us into exile some two thousand years ago. His displeasure was well-deserved, as a reading of prophets like Yirmiyahu so clearly portrays. Even though we have eaten the bitter harvest of exile these two thousand years, G-d has performed a miracle unparalleled in the history of mankind, for the light of the Jewish survival still burns miraculously in a world which gets darker daily.

• Based on the Midrash

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G-d tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the *menorah* in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments): a breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices,

dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil. G-d commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the altar in the *Mishkan*. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. G-d commands that an altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this altar every day.

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

In their advertising appeal to a socially-conscious consumer public, the manufacturers of high-priced suits are fond of stressing the old cliché that “clothes make the man”.

Most of this week’s Torah portion is dedicated to the clothes worn by the *kohanim* in the performance of their sacred service in the Sanctuary. The Torah points out that these sacred garments served the special purpose of investing those chosen to be the priests offering the sacrifices with the dignity their position deserved. Our Sages note that they also served as atonement for a wide range of the sins committed by the Jewish People. This was achieved in some mystical manner through the sacrifices offered while wearing those garments, and perhaps by the impact of those gar-

ments on the souls of the *kohanim* and through them to the entire nation.

The principal of a secular high school in Jerusalem to whom a yeshiva dean once complained about the immodest dress of her female pupils taking a shortcut through the yeshiva campus countered with the proud declaration that “we teach our pupils independence in everything, including independence in dress”.

With such an attitude on the part of educators, is there any wonder why there is so much violence in Israel’s secular schools?

Clothes do indeed make the man – and the woman. Imitating the immodest, irresponsible dress of the western world is a serious threat to the soul of Israel forever.

A SEARCH FOR TEFILLIN IN KATMANDU

How do you get a hold of a pair of *tefillin* in Katmandu? This was the dilemma facing a young American Jew who sent an e-mail to Rabbi Yaakov Lubow, an outreach director at Yeshivat Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Lubow met Jonathan at a Jewish Learning Exchange program in Connecticut last summer. When he called him a few months later he learned that the young college student who had so recently been introduced to his Jewish roots was planning “to visit Nepal and the Far East to study the Tibetan exile in view of our own.” The

response of the rabbi was “they say that the further you remove yourself from Judaism the closer it brings itself to you.”

Jonathan’s communication confirmed the wisdom of Rabbi Lubow’s words. The only trouble was that he thought it was a simple matter to borrow *tefillin* wherever he would be, so he left his own pair at home “thinking that they were too expensive and delicate to attempt to travel with”. With nothing but a *kippa* and a *siddur* for his spiritual nourishment, he appealed to Rabbi Lubow for any idea of how he could find a pair of kosher *tefillin* in that part of the world.

לע"נ

מרת אסתר רבקה בת ר' בן ציון הלוי ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of oil for the *menorah*?
2. How was Aharon commanded to kindle the *menorah*?
3. What does *tamid* mean in reference to the *menorah*?
4. What does *kehuna* mean?
5. Name the eight garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*.
6. To what does Rashi compare the *ephod*?
7. In which order were the names of the Tribes inscribed on the *ephod*?
8. The stones of the *ephod* bore the inscription of the names of the sons of Yaakov. Why?
9. For what sins did the *choshen mishpat* atone?
10. What are three meanings of the word *mishpat*?
11. What was lacking in the *bigdei kehuna* in the second *Beit Hamikdash*?
12. Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
13. When the *Kohen Gadol* wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the *tefillin* situated?
14. What does the word *tamid* mean in reference to the *tzitz*? (two answers)
15. Which garments were worn by a *kohen hediot*?
16. During the inauguration of the *kohanim*, a bullock was brought as a sin offering. For what sin did this offering atone?
17. Moshe was commanded to wash Aharon and his sons to prepare them to serve as *kohanim* (29:4). How were they washed?
18. What was unique about the bull sin-offering brought during the inauguration of the *kohanim*?
19. How did the oil used for the meal-offering differ from the oil used for the *menorah*?
20. What does the crown on the *mizbeach haketoret* symbolize?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 27:20 - The olives were pressed and not ground; and only the first drop was used.
2. 27:20 - He was commanded to kindle it until the flame ascended by itself.
3. 27:20 - It means that it should be kindled every night.
4. 28:3 - Service.
5. 28:4,36,42 - *Choshen*, *ephod*, *me'il*, *ketonet*, *mitznefet*, *avnet*, *tzitz*, and *michnasayim*.
6. 28:6 - A woman's riding garment.
7. 28:10 - In order of birth.
8. 28:12 - So that G-d would see their names and recall their righteousness.
9. 28:15 - For judicial errors.
10. 28:15 - 1) The claims of the litigants 2) The court's ruling 3) The court's punishment.
11. 28:30 - The *Urim V'Tumim* — the "*Shem Ha'meforash*" placed in the folds of the *choshen*.
12. 28:31 - The fabric of the *me'il* was made only of *techelet*.
13. 28:37 - Between the *tzitz* and the *mitznefet*.
14. 28:38 - 1) It always atones, even when not being worn. 2) The *Kohen Gadol* must always be aware that he is wearing it.
15. 28:40,42 - *Ketonet*, *avnet*, *migba'at*, and *michnasayim*.
16. 29:1 - The sin of the golden calf.
17. 29:4 - They immersed in a *mikveh*.
18. 29:14 - It is the only external sin-offering that was completely burned.
19. 29:40 - Oil for the *menorah* comes only from beaten olives. Oil for meal-offerings may come from either beaten olives or from ground-up olives.
20. 30:3 - The crown of *kehuna*.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

WHERE THE BEIT HAMIKDASH STONES LANDED

What happened to the stones of the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem when it was destroyed? There are various legends connected with them.

In the Talmud there is a mention of a synagogue in the Babylonian community of Nehardoa whose foundation was formed from stones of the Beit



Hamikdash that the Jews took along with them when they went into exile.

This took place in regard to the first Beit Hamikdash. In regard to the destruction of the second one there is a legend that Heaven scattered those stones all over the world and wherever one of them landed a synagogue was eventually built on that site.

THE MYSTERIOUS MASS GRAVE

Sela Beit Choron in Eretz Yisrael had a reputation as the site of an unmarked grave which defied detection because of the broad area which would have to be excavated. Under the ingenious guidance of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania the mysterious grave was found and it was discovered that it was filled with human bones. This mass grave was subsequently identified as “the pit into which Yishmael had thrown all the dead bodies of the men who had been slain by Gedaliah” (*Yirmiyahu* 41:9).

Centuries earlier, Jews had been exiled from their land by Nebuchednetzer, King of Babylon, who appointed a very righteous Jew, Gedaliah ben Achikam, to serve as the governor of those Jews he left behind. Soon joining Gedaliah were soldiers and their officers who had fled into the countryside and now saw an opportunity to draw close to the king's representative. One of these officers, Yochanan ben Kareach, warned Gedaliah that another officer by the name of Yishmael ben Natanya was planning to assassinate him after being bribed to do so by a neighboring king. Gedaliah refused to heed this warning and on the third day of the Month of Tishrei he was indeed assassinated. (This is the day on which observant Jews fast each year to recall this tragedy.)

One of the sad events which followed this assassination involved a group of 80 Jews who reached the headquarters of Gedaliah in Mitzpa. Fearful that they would learn of his crime, the wicked Yishmael put all of them to death except for ten men who bribed him with precious supplies they had stored. It was the bodies of these men, who had set out from Shechem to bring offerings and incense to the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem whose destruction only became known to them while en route, which Yishmael threw into this pit.

If it was Yishmael who murdered them, asks the *gemara*, why does the above passage say that they had been slain by Gedaliah? The answer given is that Gedaliah's failure to heed the warning given him about the impending assassination rendered him an accomplice to a mass murder which could have been avoided.

Based on this, the Sage Rava hands down a ruling that when one hears *lashon hara* – a slanderous report about

another – he should not accept it as true but should nevertheless exercise the caution such information demands.

• *Niddah 61a*

SHATNEZ IN THE SHROUDS

Will there be an obligation to fulfill *mitzvot* even after *techiat hameitim* – the Resurrection of the Dead? This highly theoretical question has a practical application in the here and now. Our Sages in a *beraita* taught that even though it is forbidden to wear *kila'im* (commonly referred to as *shatnez*), it is permissible to make shrouds for the dead from the forbidden combination of wool and linen.

When Rabbi Yosef attempted to infer from this that the Torah commandments will not apply in the hereafter, he was challenged by his disciple, the Sage Abaye, who quoted the opinion of Rabbi Yannai that the *shatnez* shrouds were permitted only during the time of the funeral eulogies. As for the interment itself, those shrouds were not permitted because it would mean that upon resurrection he would be wearing a forbidden garment.

Rabbi Yosef's response was the citing of the conflicting opinion of Rabbi Yochanan that even burial in a *shatnez* shroud was permissible. This was based on a passage in which the psalmist describes his desperate condition as being “among the dead; free from all concerns of the world.” (*Tehillim* 88:6). Rabbi Yochanan's interpretation is that once a person dies he is free of any obligations even after resurrection.

Although Tosefot understands the debate between Rabbi Yanai and Rabbi Yochanan as relating to the time of resurrection, there is another approach. Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet (RaSHbA) insists that *mitzvah* observance is eternal and will be binding even after resurrection. The debate in our *gemara* is whether they are binding on a person in his own afterlife.

The ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 301:7) is that the dead can be buried in *shatnez* shrouds. According to RaSHbA if one's family took advantage of this permission there will have to be a quick change of clothes upon leaving the grave.

• *Niddah 61b*

INDIVIDUALITY

From: H.J. Erner in Lake Worth, FL

*Dear Rabbi,
If Moshe was unable to realize his dream of entering Israel because of one so-called transgression, how are we, who are nowhere near what he was, to aspire to our dreams? I find it hard to believe that he should be judged by a higher standard because of who he was.*

Dear H. J. Erner,

You say Moshe was held to a higher standard. Higher is obviously relative. True, Moshe was held to a higher standard than others. However, Moshe wasn't held to a higher standard than Moshe. That is, the standard of conduct expected of Moshe was a standard of conduct befitting *him*. Each person is judged only according to his or her potential. Regarding this, only G-d is the perfect Judge.

The problem is that we are so distant from the high level of righteousness achieved by Moshe that we can barely understand what it was that he did "wrong". But to say that all people should be judged by the same yardstick is to deny the difference between individuals. Clearly, a person with limited talent or intelligence who puts everything he's got into achieving something mediocre is much more praiseworthy than an intelligent, talented person who puts little into achieving something above average. In fact, while the former is to be lauded, the latter may be held accountable. Even though he has attained quantitatively more, relative to

his potential he's attained quantitatively and qualitatively much less.

Furthermore, a leader must consider not only the propriety of an action, but also how others will perceive the action. People look to a Torah leader as an example of uprightness, and therefore his actions have greater ramifications. Someone as influential and exemplary as Moshe is expected to be all the more careful, refined and correct in his words and deeds. Since Moshe missed an opportunity as the leader to bring the people to greater heights of spiritual awareness, even though his actual "mistake" was quite subtle, he lost the right to be the leader and was buried outside the Land.

There's another reason Moshe was denied entrance into the Promised Land. Moshe symbolizes eternity, as the Torah he passed on is eternal. If he would have brought the people of Israel into the Land of Israel, their physical connection would have been eternal such that they could never be extirpated from it. While this is a desirable condition when the Jewish people are fulfilling G-d's will, it would preclude exile as punishment for wrongdoing. If so, when Israel sinned they would have been destroyed, G-d forbid, instead of being dispersed among the nations. Once the people's physical connection was not irrevocable but rather depended on their merit and G-d's kindness, when it was necessary to correct His wayward children G-d directed His "wrath" against the wood and stone of the Land rather than against the flesh and blood of His children. Rather than destroying His people, He sent them into exile.

"Return us to You, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old" (Eicha 5:21).

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

HELPING COPIERS ON EXAMS

Question: One of my classmates in school has not been very successful in mastering the material we studied this semester and is scared stiff about failing the final exam we will soon be required to take. He will be seated next to me and has asked me to allow him to copy my answers. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Cheating on exams is absolutely forbidden because it constitutes what halacha calls *geneivat da'at* — deceiving someone even when there is no financial gain. The copier is deceiving the person marking the exam by posing as some-

one who has demonstrated a mastery of the subject when this is really not the case. By helping him in this deception you become an accomplice to the sin.

Try your best instead to help your classmate study for the exam and point out to him that he now faces a challenge which will be repeated many times in his lifetime, a challenge which can only be successfully met by realizing that in the long run no one gains anything from doing things in a dishonest manner.

Life is full of tests and how he deals with the one coming up will prepare him for all the rest.