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PARSHA INSIGHTS

FLASH MEMORY

*"... you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven
– you shall not forget!" (Devarim 25:19)*

Nothing is more hidden than a forgotten memory. Memory is an evanescent storehouse. How often do we struggle to locate a name, a face or a phone number in the dusty databanks of our gray matter, while at other times, a specter will arise before our eyes unbidden, unexpected — and often unwelcome — in brilliant clarity!

Memory is a slippery customer at best.

This week is a special Shabbat. Its name is Shabbat Zachor. The Shabbat of Remembering. On this Shabbat we perform the Torah mitzvah to remember Amalek's attack on the Jewish People after our exodus from Egypt. We are bidden not to forget to erase "*the memory of Amalek from under the heaven.*"

Ostensibly, the idea of Shabbat Zachor is self-contradictory. If the mitzvah is to obliterate the memory of Amalek from the world, why do we dredge it up every year at this time? Isn't that helping to perpetuate his remembrance rather than eradicate it?

There's another day of "memory" in the Jewish calendar — Rosh Hashana. The Torah calls Rosh Hashana Yom Hazikaron, the Day of Memory. Rosh Hashana is a day of judgment because on that day G-d "remembers." He compares how the world looks as compared

to His original conception of how it should look. That comparison is, in essence, judgment. It's as though G-d thinks "Is this the world that I had in mind when I created it?" That judgment call extends to each and every part of G-d's creation. To each one of us. Have I done with my time on this planet what G-d had in mind when He created me?

Remembrance is, in essence, judgment.

The gematria of *Amalek* is 240, which is also the gematria of "*safek*" — doubt. The doubt that Amalek engenders in this world is existential doubt. His is the voice of denial that lurks in the heart. The voice that says, "Can you be sure there's a G-d *without a doubt?*"

Amalek's attack took place immediately after the event that removed all doubt about G-d's existence: the ten plagues and the miraculous Exodus of the Jewish People from Egypt.

Amalek, and the doubt he tries to sow in our hearts, cannot be annihilated by mere forgetfulness. Amalek's power cannot be assuaged by allowing it to fester in the darker recesses of our collective memory, for there it becomes more powerful. Like all decay, it thrives in dark crevices.

Our remembrance of Amalek is his obliteration, for we are able once again to remember who he is and what he stands for, and that G-d's dominion over this world will never be complete until Amalek's is truly forgotten, and never to be remembered.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

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.

ISRAEL Forever

THE NEED FOR PURITY

In front of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, stands an impressive reproduction of the Menorah, a gift from the British people to the Jewish State in whose establishment their government played a role.

This week's Torah portion begins with the command to light the lamps of the menorah in the *Mishkan* Sanctuary with "pure olive oil". The insistence on the fuel for the menorah being of the finest quality is a reminder of this candelabra's purpose to generate a spiritual light for illuminating the world with sanctity and wisdom.

In a time when so many of the politicians in the Knesset are under investigation for corruption, it is ironic to see out-

side that stately building a menorah representing purity rather than power.

The *maftir* read this Shabbat begins with the word *zachor* and contains the Torah command to recall the utter corruption of the Amalekite nation and the need to eliminate it. Even if we are as yet unable to carry out this order, we are expected to eliminate whatever corruption exists in our own circles.

Not only the leaders but also the people who elect them must seek to eliminate corruption and to learn the lesson of purity expressed by the menorah in order to secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

THE "CHOSH" – FOR A SACK OF RICE

If Manhattan has its legend that it was purchased from the Indians for \$24 worth of trinkets, so too does Jerusalem have its tale of a great bargain.

A Hungarian Jew named Zadok Kraus reportedly approached the Arab owner of a plot of land in what eventually became known as



the Armenian Quarter. The plot did not have much value in those days and was apparently used as an animal pen — "chosh" in Arabic. What did have great value was food, so Kraus offered the Arab a sack of rice, which was considered a fair exchange.

"Reb Zadok's Chosh", as it was known for a long time, became the site of Jewish homes and synagogues.

חג פורים שמח
Wishing our readers a happy and meaningful Purim!

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*.

לע"נ

מרת רחל בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Sources for the number of men called to the Torah on regular and special days
- Who can be called to the Torah and details about *maftir*
- Things that require a minyan
- How many passages must be read and rules about skipping
- Why the one called for *maftir* leads the Mussaf service
- Light for the blind and *kohanim* unfit to bless
- Improper attitudes to prayer and to wearing *tefillin*
- Improper prayers and interpretations of Torah
- Torah and Prophets readings which are not translated for public
- What is done with funds received from selling synagogues and sacred objects
- Was Jerusalem divided among the tribes
- Taking down one synagogue to build another and selling one Sefer Torah to buy another
- Comparative sanctity of a place of learning and a place of prayer
- More rules governing sale of a synagogue
- Merits that gained long life for a number of Sages
- How to relate to a synagogue in ruins
- Contrast of Sages in *Eretz Yisrael* and those in Babylon
- Of eulogies, funerals and the Divine Presence with Jews in their exiles
- The four special Torah readings in the Purim-Pesach season
- The Torah and Haftara readings on holidays and special days
- The voice from Heaven
- Rules regarding the rolling and lifting of the Sefer Torah and the blessings made by the one called to the Torah

WHEN TORAH STUDY IS PUT ASIDE

Burying the dead is such an important mitzvah that it, like making a wedding possible, requires one to even put aside his Torah study in order to fulfill it.

This rule, which appears both here and in an earlier part of our *mesechta* (*Megilah* 3b), raises a question in regard to the following story related in one of the minor tractates (*Mesechta Derech Eretz Zuta*, Chapter 8).

Rabbi Akiva once came upon a Jewish corpse in a place there was no one around to bury it and no place to do so in a nearby cemetery. He therefore carried the body the distance of four *mil* (approximately four kilometers) to a Jewish cemetery.

When he subsequently related his experience to his teachers, Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer, they criticized what he assumed was a heroic deed.

“Every step you took,” they told him, “was equivalent to shedding innocent blood!”

On the surface it seems that their criticism was directed at his taking off so much time from his Torah study. But this would be counter to what we quoted above from our *gemara*.

Tosefot solves the problem by pointing out that although Torah study may be put aside to play a necessary role in the burial of any dead Jew, even when the death took place in a populated area, there is a special rule in regard to a *met mitzvah*, a corpse found in an unpopulated area. That body need not be transported to a distant cemetery and should be buried where it was found.

Rabbi Akiva was thus not at fault for taking time from his Torah study but for failing to accord that body the honor it deserved of being buried where death had taken place.

• *Megilah* 29a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The Houses of Prayer and Houses of Torah Study in Babylon (and everywhere else – Maharsha) will eventually be relocated in *Eretz Yisrael*.”

• *Rabbi Eliezer Hakapar* - *Megilah* 29a

THE EVIL “I”

From: Dave

Dear Rabbi,

I find myself looking at what others have and being covetous about why they have it and I don't. I realize I am judging other people and that this is a bad thing, but I find it very difficult to control. Can you please give me some practical advice about this? Thanks.

Dear Dave,

It is certainly “natural” to want good things, even if they belong to others. G-d created us with a desire to acquire. However, of course, G-d intends that this impulse be harnessed for good, in order to be able to provide for ourselves, raise a family and fulfill their needs — all in the context of Torah and *mitzvot*. It is for this reason, then, that G-d forbids coveting the belongings of others.

The first thing to remember is that everything is from G-d. We are allowed and encouraged to strive to attain what we think is good and appropriate within the realm of Torah. However, what each person actually receives is up to G-d, and G-d, seeing the whole picture, knows best. After one has decided that it acceptable from a Torah point of view to have a certain thing, he may try to obtain it. If he is not able to acquire it while someone else is, he must view this as a sign that it is not G-d's will that he have it right now. Questioning why others have it and he doesn't is tantamount to disagreeing with G-d.

A second point to consider is that it's not good for us to look into another person's plate. A person has to be

concerned and satisfied with his own portion in life. Thus our Sages taught, “Who is truly happy? One who is satisfied with his lot.” Again, this doesn't mean that one can't try to improve difficulties in his life, but he should be concerned with evaluating his own portion, and not the portions of others. This will ultimately make a person happier and more content with his own life. So for purely pragmatic reasons, it's better not to focus on what others have because doing so causes anguish, while focusing on one's own plate makes a person more content with his own lot in life.

A third tactic to keep one's eyes off others belongings is to deflect the judgments of the courtroom in our minds back to ourselves. When we find ourselves scrutinizing why others have what we want, we should immediately ask ourselves, “Do I deserve what I have? Why do I have these things when others don't?” Just asking these questions about ourselves can discourage us from judging others for two reasons: one, we wouldn't want other people to be asking these questions about us (so we shouldn't be asking them about others); two, we'd hardly be comfortable thinking that in fact we don't deserve what we've got such that it should be taken away.

In conclusion: 1] We should accustom ourselves to realizing that everything that a person has or doesn't have is from G-d. 2] Constantly looking at what others have will make us unhappy, while focusing on what we have will make us happier. 3] If one is going to evaluate, let him evaluate and judge himself — he'll either realize it's not worth judging, or he'll be thankful for what he has since he probably doesn't even deserve what he's got, let alone what he doesn't have, or he may even come to improve himself when he becomes aware of his own shortcomings!

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

BELATED CONDOLENCES

Question: A friend of mine recently lost his mother and I was out of town during the week of his *shivah* mourning period. I will almost certainly run into him in the near future and am confused as to how I should relate to him. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Although you were unaware of the passing of your friend's mother and probably did not even have the opportunity to relay your condolences by phone, you still have a chance to somewhat fulfill the mitzvah of *nichum aveilim*.

In *Shulchan Aruch Orech Chaim* (285:2) we find that if one meets a mourner for any relative during the first thirty days after death he should express his condolences. When the mourning is for a parent, as in the case you mentioned, such condolences can be offered up until 12 months following death.

Even if the above-mentioned time periods have passed one may still make an indirect expression of sympathy without directly mentioning the deceased relative.

May we all be spared from having to apply these rules.

HOW MANY SENATORS MAKE A MINYAN?

Little did Senator Dianne Feinstein (D.-California) realize that her Jewishness would become a matter of debate when it was publicized that the new U.S. Senate had a minyan of Jews in it.

Hilary Leila Krieger wrote a Jerusalem Post article about the 13 Jewish senators and 30 representatives in the new Congress, which she titled “A Minyan in the Senate”.

This brought a letter to the editor from Daniel Rubin of

Napa, California, who wrote that the senator from his state, Dianne Feinstein, was born to an Episcopalian mother and a Jewish father and therefore cannot be considered Jewish “by most Jews who do not recognize patrilineal descent”.

Ms. Krieger’s reply was that Feinstein describes herself as Jewish in the official Congressional Guide, and even if she is discounted that leaves 12 male Jewish senators, more than enough for a minyan.

Persia, Purim and Peace

A Torah View of the Iranian Threat

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

“An atomic shelter is to be constructed near the entrance to Jerusalem which can accommodate tens of thousands of the capital’s residents and visitors without proper shelters.”

This report in the local media brought home the threat of nuclear attack to the Israeli public perhaps more effectively than all of the ranting of the dangerous dictator in Teheran about “wiping Israel off the map”.

Persia – the Iran of today – is very much on our minds these days, not only because of that country’s continued development of a nuclear capacity in defiance of international pressure. Ancient Persia was the power base of the Amalekite Haman who plotted to wipe all of Jewry off the map of the 127 countries of that world-spanning empire. We recall that genocidal plot on Purim as we celebrate the Divine miracle that foiled it.

In order to learn from the Persian problem of old as to how we can solve the Persian problem of today, we must follow the lead of those Talmudic scholars who asked their teacher, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, why Jews in the time of Mordechai and Esther deserved to be faced with a threat of extinction.

The students suggested that this was retribution for the sin of the Jews in Shushan participating in the feast of King Achashverosh that trumpeted the heathen hope that the *Beit Hamikdash* would not be rebuilt. The teacher, however, offered a much more encompassing explanation based on the perfidious bowing of an earlier generation to a pagan statue.

The bottom line of this Talmudic dialogue is that believing Jews do not seek political explanations for the troubles that confront our nation. They try instead to analyze where they have gone wrong in their relationship with G-d.

This was the reaction in days of old to the “final solution to the Jewish problem” proposed by Haman and approved by a conspiring monarch. Queen Esther asked Mordechai to gather all the Jews for fasting, prayer and repentance, and this is what achieved the miracle we celebrate on Purim.

The encounter with Haman was not the first confrontation with the Amalekite nation. On the Shabbat before Purim we read those few sentences in the Torah known as Parshat Zachor, which call upon us to recall the treacherous attack perpetrated by Amalek on our weary ancestors on their way out of Egypt.

This attack too, say our Sages, was the result of our ancestors slipping in their faith in Divine Providence. We won that war with Amalek only because the uplifted arms of Moshe inspired his people to look upwards to Heaven and place their fate in the hands of G-d.

Amalek is the very personification of evil and G-d has commanded us to wipe that nation off the map of the world. This will only be achieved with the coming of Mashiach. The current threat from Persia must be viewed as a Heavenly reminder to analyze where we, as a nation and as individuals, have gone wrong and to return to G-d. Only then will Jews in Israel and everywhere else be truly secure and able to live in peace.