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PARSHA INSIGHTS

ROOM AT THE TOP

“...now, you have acted foolishly.” (31:28)

More words exist in the Hebrew language for foolishness than for wisdom. Maybe this is because wisdom is simple whereas foolishness makes its appearance in numerous motley shades.

Of the great follies that beset mankind, few are as pervasive as the love of status.

Two Jerusalem garbage collectors were ‘working the bins’ outside the Mir Yeshiva. One worked at street level, the other stood on top of the truck receiving the bins from the other.

As they were working, Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, *zatzal*, passed by. He recognized the garbage collector who was working at street level and greeted him. The garbage collector whispered confidentially to him, “I just want the Rosh Yeshiva to know that I usually work on the *top* of the truck.”

Along with jealousy and lust, *kavod*, the love of status, removes a person from this world.

To be sure, everyone needs some sense of self-respect, some feeling that his life is significant. Without that we wither and die. But the love of, or rather the lust for status, is a pernicious poison that lurks in the heart long after every physical desire has atrophied.

Honor does not belong to flesh and blood; it is the exclusive prerogative of the Creator

“...the Beneficent One fashioned honor for His Name...” (from *Yotzer Ohr*, morning prayers) Everything G-d created in this world, He created for His honor.

In goes without saying (and therefore needs to be said) that G-d does not need us to honor Him; rather He created everything for one reason — to bestow good on us. We earn that good by honoring Him.

Honor is not something that can be prefabricated. It cannot be ordered up like a takeaway meal. Honor that is forced from someone is no honor at all; it is the reverse.

It is the greatest insult.

The essence of honor is that it is voluntary. Honor’s precondition is the ability to deny it. Not only this, but the *inclination* to withhold that honor makes the honor all the greater when given.

Thus, the greatest honor that G-d can receive is where there exists the maximum potential contempt and rejection.

That place is this world.

Freedom of choice dictates that this world contains the utmost capability to do the opposite of what G-d wants.

Thus it is the place that can give G-d the greatest honor.

When we do what G-d wants, we honor Him, and when we do so, He elevates us far higher than the top of the world’s tallest garbage truck.

- Sources: Based on Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch and others, and a story heard from Rabbi Chaim Salenger

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Eisav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Eisav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Eisav. That night Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Eisav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason why it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Eisav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Eisav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his fami-

ly intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement. However, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *brit mila*. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Eisav's descendants.

ISRAEL Forever

ANNAPOLIS DÉJÀ VU

As Israel prepares for the historic meeting of nations in Annapolis we cannot help recalling the preparations made by the Patriarch Yaakov for his critical meeting with his archenemy Esav.

Jews throughout the world will this Shabbat hear the reading of the weekly Torah portion that describes these preparations.

Diplomacy was certainly one of those preparations and it came in the form of lavish presents and expressions of submissive humility. Backing up this effort was a preparedness to wage war for survival.

Both of these steps are certainly being taken by Israel's

leaders. While there may be sharp differences in Israel about how many concessions must be made because of American pressure, there is certainly a consensus that negotiations must be tried before resorting to arms.

It is the third component of Yaakov's preparations that is perhaps missing. Our forefather realized that ultimately his survival depended on Heavenly assistance and so he prayed to G-d to save him from Esav's murderous intentions.

It is hoped that the prayers of all Jews concerned with the security of Israel will protect the Jewish State from setbacks in Annapolis and will gain Heavenly protection for Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

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

ALMA- TOMB OF RABBI ELAZAR BEN AZARIAH

When a replacement was sought for the role of head of the Sanhedrin by the Talmudic Sages for the temporarily deposed Rabban Gamaliel, the choice was Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah because of



his extraordinary qualifications despite the fact that he was only eighteen years old at the time.

His tomb is reported to be in the village of Alma about 5.6 miles north of Zefat.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Eisav?
2. Why was Yaakov both “afraid” and “distressed?”
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Eisav?
4. Where did Dina hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?
6. What was the angel forced to do before Yaakov agreed to release him?
7. What was it that healed Yaakov’s leg?
8. Why did Eisav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Eisav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word *nisa* in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Eisav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the daughter of Leah and not as the daughter of Yaakov?
13. Whom should Shimon and Levi have consulted concerning their plan to kill the people of Shechem?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. What does the name Binyamin mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
16. The Torah states, “The sons of Yaakov were twelve.” Why?
17. How old was Yaakov when Yosef was sold?
18. Eisav changed his wife’s name to Yehudit. Why?
19. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
20. What is the connection between the Egyptian oppression of the Jewish people and Eisav’s decision to leave the land of Canaan?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so that Eisav wouldn’t see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.
6. 32:27 - Admit that the blessings given by Yitzchak rightfully belong to Yaakov.
7. 32:32 - The shining of the sun.
8. 33:4 - His pity was aroused when he saw Yaakov bowing to him so many times.
9. 33:7 - To stop Eisav from gazing at her.
10. 33:12 - It means “travel”. It does not mean “we will travel.” This is because the letter *nun* is part of the word and does not mean “we” as it sometimes does.
11. 33:16 - They slipped away one by one.
12. 34:1 - Because she was outgoing like her mother, Leah.
13. 34:25 - Their father, Yaakov.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 35:18 - *Ben-Yemin* means “Son of the South.” He was the only son born in the Land of Israel, which is south of Aram Naharaim.
16. 35:22 - To stress that all of them, including Reuven, were righteous.
17. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
18. 36:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
19. 36:3 - One who converts to Judaism, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
20. 36:6 - Eisav knew that the privilege of living in the Land of Israel was accompanied by the prophecy that the Jews would be “foreigners in a land not their own.” Therefore Eisav said, “I’m leaving — I don’t want the Land if it means I have to ‘pay the bill’ of subjugation in Egypt.”

לע"נ

מרת חיה שרה בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Forgiving a debt that one has sold to another
- Who is more interested in marriage – man or woman
- The mitzvah of repaying a debt
- Compelling a reluctant Jew to build a succah
- Delayed action transactions
- When a man may compel his wife to take an oath re her honesty
- When a woman must take an oath in order to collect her ketubah
- The credibility of a single witness
- Two document mystery and the ketubah of a minor
- Two wives and their heirs
- When *ketubat benin dichrin* applies
- Paying a father's debt
- Selling property with or without a guarantee

PAYING POPPA'S DEBT

A debt of 100 zuz was left behind by the deceased, along with only a piece of land, worth fifty, to which his creditor had a claim. When the creditor confiscated this property the heirs paid him fifty zuz to reclaim it. They failed, however, to stipulate that they were purchasing this plot and their payment was therefore understood to be payment of part of their father's debt.

The creditor therefore accepted the money and proceeded to once again confiscate the land. When the case came before the Sage Abaye he ruled in favor of the creditor. The first fifty, he explained, was paid by the heirs as fulfillment of the mitzvah for children to pay their deceased father's debt. The lien that the creditor had on the inherited land entitled him to confiscate it as payment for the other

fifty.

What exactly is the mitzvah for children to pay their father's debt even if they inherited no land with a lien on it and why are they not compelled to do so by the court?

Both Rashi and Tosefot explain that the mitzvah is to show respect for the father by settling his debts. As regards court enforcement, Rashi explains that this is not a mitzvah of explicit Torah origin such as succah and lulav which the court actually compels one to fulfill, and is only of a rabbinic nature.

Tosefot (*Ketubot 86a*), however, considers this mitzvah to be of Torah origin as part of the command to honor parents. The reason he gives for non-enforcement is that the court does not enforce *mitzvot* for which the Torah has explicitly mentioned a reward such as in the case of honoring parents.

• *Ketubot 91b*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Paying a debt is a mitzvah (as the *gemara* in *Bava Metzia 49b* states that your 'yes' and your 'no' should both be honest – Rashi)"

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DOUBLE-YUD

From: Aharon in Monsey, NY:

Dear Rabbi,

Why is the name of G-d written in the siddur as two yuds? In my siddur - "Tefillat Kol Peh" - it is written as two yuds everywhere that I looked, with the exception of shirat hayam (the song at the sea). Why is this so? I suspect that there is more to it than merely an editor's whim.

Dear Aharon,

I'm afraid your suspicions are groundless. The phenomenon is purely a function of your siddur's editor and printer. The double yud is not one of the names of G-d and has no *kedusha* (sanctity). It's simply a substitute for the name of G-d and it appears randomly in various versions of the siddur. Some *siddurim* nowadays have the name of G-d written out fully all the time.

Essentially, the reason for using a substitute is out of respect. The name of G-d has *kedusha* and must not be erased or abused. Since two yuds isn't a name of G-d, it was substituted so that if the siddur became worn out, torn or wasn't treated properly it would be less serious.

Especially today, with the availability of inexpensive printed *siddurim*, *siddurim* aren't treated with the same care and respect with which they historically were treated.

We called Eshkol Publishers, makers of your siddur "Tefillat Kol Peh". We asked them why in some places the name of G-d is written as two yuds and why in other places it's written out fully. They told us that when they put together the siddur they copied (with permission) from various older *siddurim* by means of offset. Whichever way the name of G-d appeared in the old siddur, the new siddur had the same.

Given the reason for a substitute "printing" name of G-d, why two yuds?

The name of G-d is written one way and pronounced another way. It's written with a 'yud', a 'heh', a 'vav' and another 'heh'. However, we pronounce it as if it were spelled 'aleph' 'dalet' 'nun' 'yud'. As you can see, the letter 'yud' appears twice, once in the beginning of the written name and once in the name as pronounced. Since it is a mitzvah to recall the meaning of both names while pronouncing the Tetragrammaton, the two yuds simultaneously remind us that G-d "was" (*ha-ya*), "is" (*ho-ve*) and "will be" (*yi-hi-ye*), and that He is the Master (*Adon*) ruling over all His creation.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 276:1

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THINKING OF THE SPEAKER

Question: While attending a weekday lecture I am often tempted to make some comment to the person sitting next to me about what we have just heard. Since I got a “dirty look” from the speaker the last time I did so I wonder what indeed is the right thing to do.

Answer: A public speaker makes a great effort to prepare and deliver his talk. Seeing someone more interested in talking to his neighbor than listening to him can

be most disturbing. Not only will you be guilty of hurting his feelings, but also you may be compromising his effectiveness in delivering his message.

If you cannot resist the temptation to share your mid-lecture thoughts the best thing to do is to write a note that you can pass to your neighbor. The speaker will generously attribute your writing as an effort to record his words and will not miss a beat in his presentation.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

A FEMALE SANDY KOUFAX

It was a Jewish pitcher who made history back in 1965 by refusing to play in the World Series on Yom Kippur. It was a Jewish karate champion who, 18 years later, made a somewhat similar gesture of Jewish pride by refusing to compete in the U.S. World Championship trials being held on Rosh Hashana.

Sara Rivka Emstoff, then known as Pam Glaser, holder of a fourth-degree black belt in karate, was the reigning U.S. women’s national karate champion. Her refusal

to violate the sanctity of the Jewish New Year ultimately left her out of the squad that went to the World Karate Championship matches in Taiwan.

“Though I was not observant at the time,” explained this karate whiz during a recent visit to Israel, “I felt a sense of Jewish pride and there was no way I would compete on the Jewish New Year no matter what the consequences.”

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