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PARSHA INSIGHTS

ONE MESSAGE WITH ONE VOICE

“If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother.” (21:18)

Three of the essential ingredients in raising happy, well-integrated children are “The Three F’s” — Firm, Fair and Friendly.

Firm: Children need to know where they stand. They like nothing more than clearly defined limits. A parent who makes a demand and then backs down gives a child a sense of insecurity, for the child never knows exactly where the boundary is. Children push the limits precisely because they wish to know that there are limits. When we are firm, we give our children a defined world in which they can establish their relationship to the world at large rather than a vast expanse of frighteningly unknown possibilities. Of course, as parents we should therefore limit our demands to those things over which we are prepared not to back down. We must choose our battlefields wisely.

Fair: A child has a sense of what’s fair and what’s not. True, children are somewhat biased in their view of what fair consists of, but they are the first to recognize uneven-handed treatment. As parents, we must be unstinting in guarding against any kind of favoritism, either to siblings or to our own agendas.

Friendly: The correct proportion of positive interaction to negative interaction should be 80/20. In other words, every interaction that requires disciplinary words or action should be balanced by four times as many positive and loving experiences. In addition, however exasperating children can be, it’s always more effective to oblige them in a friendly man-

ner. When they need correction, it should be done in a friendly tone of voice. Shouting certainly makes one feel better, but it’s nearly always counterproductive in the long run. It shows weakness and insecurity.

Apart from The Three F’s, there’s a fourth ingredient that is equally as important.

Consistency.

Consistency is necessary not just in the behavior of each parent, but between the parents themselves. We learn this message from this week’s Torah portion:

If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother...

A child is considered to be in the halachic category of *wayward and rebellious* only if he does not listen to the voice of his father and his mother. Among other things we learn from this verse is that both the father and the mother must have similar voices. The deeper meaning of both the parents having similar voices is that they must both speak with one voice, that they should not contradict one another in what is expected both of themselves and the child. The message that is broadcast in the home must be consistent, for without this keystone in child-rearing the child cannot be considered at fault.

• Sources: Based on Rabbi Noach Orlowek

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah describes the only permissible way a woman captured in battle may be married. If a man marries two wives, and the less-favored wife bears a firstborn son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is stoning. A body must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had housed a holy soul. Lost property must be returned. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs. A fence must be built around the roof of a house. It is forbidden to plant a mixture of seeds, to plow with an ox and a donkey together, or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads — *tzitzit* — on its corners. Laws regarding illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. An escaped slave must not be returned to his master.

Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden. *Bnei*

Yisrael are not to make vows. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting. Divorce and marriage are legislated. For the first year of marriage, a husband is exempt from the army and stays home to rejoice with his wife. Tools of labor may not be impounded, as this prevents the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease *tzara'at* is forbidden. Even for an overdue loan, the creditor must return the collateral daily if the debtor needs it. Workers' pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, converts and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court may impose lashes. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing. It is a *mitzvah* for a man to marry his brother's widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate and used honestly. The *parsha* concludes with the *mitzvah* to erase the name of Amalek, for, in spite of knowing about the Exodus, they ambushed the Jewish People.

ISRAEL Forever

THE REAL "CHOK TAL"

In the days preceding August 1st of this year the nation held its breath in anticipation of what the Israel Knesset was going to do about the issue of drafting yeshiva students into the army or national service.

August 1st was the date when, according to the ruling of Israel's Supreme Court, the legislation in force in recent years would no longer be in effect. This *chok* (legislation) was known as "Chok Tal" because its chief architect was former Supreme Court Justice Zvi Tal, and it recently came under attack for being too generous to yeshiva students.

Nothing happened on August 1st nor in the weeks afterwards despite the clamor of anti-religious elements to adopt

draconian legislation which would even include prison sentences for those who refused to leave the yeshiva.

The halacha states that for one who forgot to mention *tal* in his *Shmone Esrei* there is no need to repeat the prayer. This is so because even without our prayer G-d will never withhold the *tal* (moisture) that is indispensable to human existence. We may add that "Chok Tal" or similar legislation with provisions for undisturbed Torah study is also indispensable to human existence.

It is our prayer that the Knesset will understand this and enable Torah study to continue protecting Eretz Yisrael and the world.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE LAND OF IDEAL CLIMATE

It is difficult to find places in the world with year-round climates as pleasant as what one finds in many parts of Israel. But even when this weather can be a little trying the lover of the Land doesn't complain.

Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi were two Talmudic Sages who moved from sun to shade when it got a little too warm for their Torah learning, and from



shade to sun when it got a little too cool. From the explanation they gave for their moves it is clear that they could have managed to continue their studies despite the discomfort. They nevertheless devoted some precious minutes to moving to avoid the temptation to be critical of the weather in the Eretz Yisrael they so respected and loved.

PARSHA Q&A?

1. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house?
2. What fraction of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother? b) two brothers?
3. What will become of a *ben sorer u'moreh* if his parents don't bring him to court?
4. Why is it a degradation to G-d to hang a criminal's body on the gallows overnight?
5. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
6. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
7. Why does the Torah link the mitzvah of sending away the mother-bird with the mitzvah of making a railing on the roof of your house?
8. What mixture of wool and linen is permitted to be worn?
9. What three things happen to a man who falsely slanders his bride?
10. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
11. Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
12. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
13. What is the groom's special obligation to his bride during their first year together?
14. When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?
15. What type of object may one not take as collateral?
16. "Remember what G-d did to Miriam." To what event does the Torah refer?
17. If a poor person finds money, the one who lost it receives a blessing. From where do we derive this?
18. Who has the primary obligation to perform *yibum*?
19. Which two people in this week's *Parsha* are required to speak in *Lashon Hakodesh*?
20. How does the Torah describe those who cheat in business?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 21:13 - So her captor will find her unattractive.
2. 21:17 - a) 2/3 b) 1/2
3. 21:22 - He will eventually rob and kill to support his physical indulgences.
4. 21:23 - Because humans are made in G-d's image, and because the Jewish People are G-d's children.
5. 22:2 - Sell it and save the money for the owner.
6. 22:5 - It leads to immorality.
7. 22:8 - To teach that one mitzvah leads to another, and to prosperity.
8. 22:12 - Wool *tzitzit* on a linen garment.
9. 22:18 - He receives lashes, pays a fine of 100 silver *selah*, and may never divorce her against her will.
10. 23:8 - Because they hosted Yaakov and his family during the famine.
11. 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come.
12. 23:21 - Three; two negative commandments and a positive commandment.
13. 24:5 - To gladden her.
14. 24:5 - When he remarries his ex-wife.
15. 24:6 - Utensils used to prepare food.
16. 24:9 - G-d punishing Miriam with *tzara'at* for speaking *lashon harah*.
17. 24:19 - From the mitzvah to leave the "forgotten bundle" for the poor.
18. 25:6 - The eldest brother.
19. 25:8 - The *yavam* (brother-in-law) and the *yavamah* (his childless brother's widow).
20. 25:16 - "An abomination (*to'evah*) to G-d."

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Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

BERACHOT 30 - 36

“If you are falsely suspected by someone of something which you did not do, you must inform him of your innocence.”

This advice of Rabbi Elazar is based on the confrontation between the Kohen Gadol Eli and Chana, the mother of the Prophet Shmuel. When Eli saw her silently praying to G-d for a son, he misinterpreted her mumbling as a sign of praying while intoxicated. She responded by vigorously denying any intake of intoxicating drink and explaining her difficult emotional situation.

• *Berachot 31b*

“If you have been guilty of falsely accusing someone of wrongdoing you have an obligation to not only apologize but to also offer a blessing.”

This advice is based on the response of Eli Hakohen to Chana after hearing her explanation: “May the L-rd G-d grant you your wish.”

• *Berachot 31b*

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EARTH-QUAKED

From: Judith

*Dear Rabbi,
With devastating earthquakes taking place around the world, and warnings of the possibility of serious earthquakes taking place even in Israel, how are we to understand this phenomenon? Does G-d control natural events such as earthquakes, and why would He cause them?*

Dear Judith,

As Jews, we look for meaning in everything that happens in our lives, and it is in that light that I would like to suggest the following.

The Mishna in Berachot (54a) says that when one sees an earthquake one should recite the blessing "Blessed be He whose strength and power fill the world." This clearly expresses the belief that G-d controls earthquakes, and causes them so that we can experience His might and power. Why do some need to experience it now and why do some have to experience it more than others? I do not think that anyone can know for sure why other people experience earthquakes. But we can try to find meaning and purpose for ourselves as individuals.

The Talmud in the beginning of Berachot (5b) says that if someone is suffering they should examine their actions. There must be some way that this suffering can give meaning to, or help one improve, a part of himself or his life. The Mishna in Berachot also mentions that if someone suffers a personal loss they should say: "Blessed be He, the true Judge." This expresses admission that G-d knows best, and it is incumbent upon one to utilize and channel the loss for growth.

There is a wonderful Chassidic story about Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov. He once announced that after the Mincha service on Shabbat he would lecture on the subject of "What I would do if I were G-d." There was much excitement about the topic, and the synagogue was overflowing when the rabbi arrived. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak dramatically made his way to the lectern, and said in an emotional voice: "If I, Levi Yitzchak, were G-d, I would...do...exactly what G-d does. The problem is that I am not G-d, am not all-seeing and all-knowing, and that's why I don't understand so much of what He is doing." Essentially, that is what we mean when we make the blessing "Blessed be He, the true Judge."

As Jews we are ever hopeful that every event, particularly dramatic ones, will bring us closer to a time when G-d's presence is openly revealed. This was voiced by Rabbi Avraham Dov of Avritch who lived in Tzefat at the time of the devastating earthquake there in 1839. He said:

"This catastrophe is a sign of the redemption. The Talmud in Sanhedrin (98a) alludes to the time when the Mashiach will redeem us. He will come when 'This gate shall collapse, be rebuilt, collapse, be rebuilt again and again, until there will not be enough time to rebuild it before the Mashiach comes.' The word "gate" in Hebrew is "sha'ar" whose letters (shin, ayin, reish) when reshuffled spell the word "ra'ash" (meaning earthquake)... May this be the last 'collapsing of the gate' mentioned in the Talmud, and may we soon see the final redemption in our time - Amen." (Safed the Mystical City, Dovid Rossoff, pages 163-164).

So too, may we know no further catastrophes, but rather let us hope that the ground has been broken for the coming of Redemption.

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HONOR VS. SHAME

Question: In the school where I teach, a colleague of mine was particularly upset by the misbehavior of one of his pupils and punished him by demoting him to the class of his younger brother. Is this the right thing to do?

Answer: While there is a precedent in the Talmud (*Bava Metzia 85a*) for motivating a recalcitrant student by offering him honor he does not yet deserve, we do not find a precedent for shaming one as a form of discipline. In fact, we find the opposite. The Sage Rav instructed the great teacher Rabbi Shmuel bar Shilas to patiently allow an inattentive pupil to remain in the classroom in the hope that he would eventually be motivated to fully participate (*Bava Batra 21a*).

There is also a serious danger that severe embarrassment of a pupil may result in his rejection of the school and what

it stands for. The eminent Torah giant Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky of Bnei Brak tells the story of a teacher in the Talmud Torah which he attended as a child who seated his pupils in the classroom according to their diligence. When one of the outstanding pupils once began to slack in his studies, he was placed in the back row, an embarrassment that caused him to abandon not only the school but his faith as well.

Public embarrassment has been equated by our Sages with murder, a warning that we should think twice before using such a harsh action as a means of discipline. Just as a teacher must be careful to refrain from striking a pupil who upsets him, he must also resist the temptation to embarrass him. Your colleague should instead try to come up with imaginative ways of using honor as a source of motivation.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

KEEPING KOSHER IN COSTA RICA

Can you imagine a New York-style kosher deli in far-away Costa Rica? Jeremy Zibell, a 25-year old arrival from Montreal, opened one there after a friend who visited this tiny Central American country told him that not much was happening there as far as Jewish deli food was concerned.

Kosher food in general has been available for only about a decade for the 2,500 strong Orthodox Jewish community established in Costa Rica in the 1930s. Two local rabbis, Rabbi Gershon Miletski and Rabbi Hersh Spalter, established operations for slaughtering and importing meat and poultry.

An Israeli by the name of Gil Aharoni does a big business in kosher foods in his "Little Israel" market and offers an on-line catering service for tourists who observe kashrut rules while visiting the country's jungles and rain forests. A newly opened resort on the Pacific Coast has even set aside a kosher kitchen for its guests.

This is all a far cry from the situation when Rabbi Miletski arrived to become head of the local Israel-Zionist Center: "Ninety percent of the space in the suitcases my wife and I were carrying would be filled with food we were bringing back from our visits to family in Israel."

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