



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

The Secret Of Well-Being

It's tough being wealthy. It takes so much time and effort to protect and embellish your riches. You have to inspect your factories, lunch with lawyers, account with accountants. The Internal Revenue Service has you in its sights. You hardly have time to put out the cat.

By our standards, the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were multi-billionaires. Yet in spite of all their wealth, they never lost sight for a moment of the real value of wealth.

Oil may be called "black gold," but when you live in the desert your entire wherewithal is dependent on "white gold" — water. Without water, you have nothing.

While dwelling amongst the Philistines, Isaac's herdsmen dug a well. The Philistines contested ownership of the well. Facing a long, drawn-out custody battle with potential repercussions amongst the locals, Isaac withdrew his claim, abandoning the well.

He just let it go. He walked away and dug another well. Isaac understood that when there's a fight over wealth, it's just going to take up your time and shrivel away at your peace of mind. What might you gain? More money?

Status? Is it really worth it?

Nothing is equal to the worth of our spiritual goals. Our only lasting possession is our emotional and spiritual growth. When something threatened to shake Isaac off his spiritual path, he walked away from it.

The Philistines argued over the second well that Isaac built, named "Sitnah," derived from the word "to oppose." He left that well also. When the Philistines tried to oppose his spiritual integrity, he walked away. He built a third well.

They say that 'time is money.' Isaac taught us that 'money is time.' All you ever have in life is time. You can spend your life devoted to your wealth, or you can devote your wealth to the proper use of your time.

LOVE of the LAND

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

Rechovot

"They dug another well and did not quarrel over it, so he (Isaac) called it Rechovot (expanses) and he said: 'For now G-d has made room for us and we shall be fruitful in the land.'"
(Genesis 26:22)

After bitter disputes with the Philistines over the right to two wells Isaac's shepherds had dug, the third well was named Rechovot (expanses) to signify that this one was not contested.

The great Biblical commentators, Nachmanides and Sforno, interpret the first two wells as

symbols of the first two Temples, whose histories were marred by internal and external strife, while the third well represents the Third Temple which will be blessed with universal peace.

The story's significance caused Polish emigrants to Israel in 1890 to adopt the name for the settlement which they established, and which has developed into one of Israel's major cities, Rechovot.

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

It was a beautiful spring night and the next day was a non-Jewish holiday, so I was off from work. I said to myself that I can't stay inside on

this warm night, and so I grabbed my jump rope and water bottle and headed to the park. Two days later, at the Friday night Shabbos meal, my brother informed me, "a coworker told me that his wife saw you walking the street late at night carrying a beer bottle and a gun!" I said to him "why wouldn't she think to herself, 'that is Morris, he can't be carrying a gun in the street.'" Instead, she assumed the worst, told her husband who then told my brother (and who knows who else).

Response Line

Miles Levin wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
For fish to be Kosher, the Torah says they need to have fins and scales. I've learned that there aren't any fish or any sea animals which have scales and yet no fins. So why is the qualifier "fins" necessary?*

Dear Miles Levin,

Your question is asked by the Talmud some 1500 years ago. (It's fascinating that our Sages knew this fact.)

Simply to identify kosher fish, it would have been enough for the Torah to simply write "scales," since every fish with scales also has fins. However when looking at these specifications as the reason for the fish being kosher, both are essential. Let me explain:

One aspect of the laws of kashrut is the concept that the soul is influenced by whatever the body eats. The Talmud states that the kosher birds are the ones that are non-aggressive, so that we shouldn't absorb bad character traits by eating them. This could also explain the requirement for kosher animals having split

hooves which are used for fleeing, as opposed to claws used for attacking. Chewing the cud, another requirement of a kosher animal, is the compensation that allows certain species to flee when necessary but still be able to maintain an appropriate intake of food in harsh environments. In a short stay upon a fertile feeding ground they are able to accumulate enough fodder to survive, and they can flee at the appearance of an attacker and digest their food later.

The same applies to fish: the fins aid retreat while the scales act as a protective covering. Together, they are specifications which classify them as the hunted and not as the hunters.

Light Update

The first major event of the new Hemshech Program was held this past summer in Northern New Jersey. Hemshech, meaning 'continuation' in Hebrew, brings

together in America students that previously studied in the Lunch and Learn program in Jerusalem. Hundreds of students each year, on year abroad programs at colleges in Israel, take time out of their week to come to Ohr

Somayach to supplement their college experience with classic Talmudic study. Back in the States, Hemshech maintains contact with the students, offering regularly scheduled reunions with group activities and further learning.