

Light Insight

Mousterpiece

Once there was a tailor. He was known far and wide as an artist who could take mere thread and turn it into apparel fit for a king.

One day, a wealthy businessman came to him with a special job. While traveling in the East, he had given a king's ransom to buy a bolt of pure Cathay silk — the finest of its kind in the world. The tailor's eyes lit up. Never had he seen such fabric. He measured the businessman and a price was struck for the work.

The very next morning, the tailor set to work with relish. He worked with extra-special care, trying not to waste a single thread.

A week of finger-breaking work followed. It was about two in the morning when the tailor stitched the last button onto the suit. He snipped off the thread and sat back to admire his work. Here was a suit the likes of which had never been seen!

He yawned, picked up his tired bones and made his way to bed. The businessman would be coming bright and early the following day to collect his suit. The tailor left the room and closed the door. Then, unable to resist, he turned and opened the door again for a final peek. There it was in all its glory, bathed in a shaft of moonlight.

He closed the door with a soft click. Silence. And then the sound of rustling. Two little dark eyes squinted out from a crack in the wall. A furry nose twitched from side to side expectantly, and a tiny mouse suddenly scuttled into the center of the room.

He was followed by another, and another and another. Scores of mice came pouring out, all with a single objective — the suit.

It was all over in ten minutes. All that was left were a few pieces of cloth with tell-tale teeth marks.

When the tailor came down the next morning and saw what had happened, he was distraught beyond words. He stood in the middle of his workroom with tears welling up in his eyes and sighed in resignation.

Looking up, he saw the business man standing over him, beaming with expectation and blissfully unaware of what had happened to his priceless Cathay silk.

With measured tones, the tailor told him how he had worked so hard on his suit; how it was a creation unmatched in all his years of tailoring; of the long loving hours he had devoted to it; and finally, what had happened last night after he had left the workroom.

“But,” continued the tailor, “I would like you to pay me what we originally agreed, because even though you don't have the suit, I did put my heart and soul into making it.” The businessman's face turned green. “It's enough I don't sue you for the price of my Cathay silk! You bungling oaf!” And with that, he stormed out of the house.

There is no job in the world which pays for effort alone. Even if you put your heart and soul into your work; if you produce nothing, that's what you get paid. Nothing.

With one exception — learning Torah. If a person really tries, and puts his heart and soul into his learning, he receives reward, even he ends up understanding nothing.

Even if he comes away with just a few tattered pieces of material where others have stitched a suit.

LOVE of the LAND

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

Ashdod

One of the five major Philistine cities, Ashdod was the site of the temple of the idol Dagan, where the Holy Ark was brought after its capture from

the vanquished Israelites. In Samuel I there is a description of the disgrace visited upon the idol, and the suffering of the city's inhabitants, as punishment for their treatment of the Ark.

This perennial thorn in the side of Israel was the object of many prophetic curses, and was finally conquered by King Uzzia of Judea.

Modern Ashdod, established in 1957, contains one of the country's major ports alongside some large industries. It is a growing city with a large immigrant population, religious communities and yeshivot.

Response Line

Olive Branch of Peace

Barry Pogrud wrote:

We often talk about the dove and the olive branch as symbols of peace. Is there any Talmudic source for such a notion, and if not from where do we arrive at the contention that the dove and the olive branch are symbols of peace? Many thanks for your wonderful and elucidating series.

Dear Barry,

There's no reference in the Talmud identifying the dove or olive branch as symbols of peace.

However, Noah's flood is compared to a "war" between G-d and Mankind. This idea is seen in the symbol of the rainbow. After the flood, G-d showed Noah a rainbow as a sign that there would never again be a world-wide flood. The rainbow looks like an archer's bow pointing up towards heaven. Nachmonidies explains that the "upside-down bow" symbolizes that G-d will no longer "shoot arrows" at

the earth in the form of a flood, just as a warrior turns his bow towards himself as a gesture of peace.

In this sense, the dove returning to the ark could be seen as peace symbols, indicating that the "war" between G-d and Man had ended.

By the way, the "olive branch" is a misconception. The dove returned to Noah with an olive leaf in its mouth, not a branch.

Angelic Names

David Levy wrote:

The other day my friend and I were chatting about angels, their names and their functions or duties. Where can I find out the names of angels and what they do? Could you tell me some of their names? Thank you.

Dear David,

The word angel comes from the Greek *angelos* a translation of the Hebrew word *malach* messenger. According to traditional Jewish sources, angels are the powers which fulfill the will of G-d. There are

many such entities, each with its own unique function.

For example, our Sages say there are four angels who continuously accompany man and protect him. Michael on his right, Gabriel on his left, Oriel in front of him, and Rafael behind. There are four "fields" in which one needs constant help, and man receives this help via these angels, which serve as the channels by which G-d governs everything that happens to a person in life.

Michael, which translates as "who is like the merciful G-d?" is the representative of the attribute of mercy. Gabriel — "my strength is G-d" — represents the attribute of power and judgment. They reside on the right and left side of a person respectively, in accordance with the idea that the right side is indicative of mercy and the left side of justice. Oriel — "my light is G-d," represents the attribute of knowledge by which man wishes to know what lies ahead and how to act accordingly; thus, Oriel "stands before" a person to show him the way. Rafael — "my healer is G-d" — is the attribute by which G-d heals any ill which befalls a person; that is why he "stands behind" man.