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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

A Burnt Papyrus and a Living Scroll

“And these are the ordinances...” (21:1)

The BBC reports that a badly burnt scroll from the Roman town of Herculaneum has been digitally "unwrapped", providing the first look inside for 2,000 years. The document, which looks like a lump of charcoal, was charred by the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79AD and is too fragile to ever be physically opened. But now scientists have used a combination of X-ray imaging and artificial intelligence to unfurl it “virtually.”

Hundreds of carbonized scrolls were discovered in Herculaneum, which like its neighbor Pompeii was buried beneath meters of volcanic ash. In the past, some of the documents, which are made from papyrus, were prized open but they crumbled into pieces. The University of Oxford's Bodleian Library holds several of the scrolls. Thought to be unreadable, they had been left untouched for decades.

But the promise of a hi-tech solution prompted the team to get one of the precious scrolls out of storage. It was placed in a specially made case and taken to Diamond Light Source in Oxfordshire. Inside this huge machine, which is called a synchrotron, electrons are accelerated to almost the speed of light to produce a powerful X-ray beam that can probe the scroll without damaging it.

The scan is used to create a 3D reconstruction, then the layers inside the scroll - it contains about 10m of papyrus - have to be identified. After that, artificial intelligence is used to detect the ink. It's easier said than done. Both the papyrus and ink are made from carbon and they're almost indistinguishable from each other. So, the AI hunts for the tiniest signals that ink might be there, and then this ink is painted on digitally, bringing the letters to light.

Last year, a similar team managed to read about 5% of another Herculaneum scroll.

Its subject was Greek Epicurean philosophy, which teaches that fulfillment can be found through the pleasure of everyday things.

It struck me as ironic that an ancient scroll, which is now lifeless carbon, should glorify the pleasures of this world, whereas another ancient scroll, our holy Torah, which doesn't need electrons accelerated to near the speed of light to make out its message, should teach that fulfillment is be found by the elevating everyday things to a level of transcendence and G-dliness.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Sanhedrin 79-85

A Respectful Reminder

A child should not say to his parent, "You are transgressing a law of the Torah ..."

Thus begins a *beraita* on our *daf* that teaches the manner in which a child should address a parent in a "sticky" situation. Although a person's child has a mitzvah of honoring his parents, if the child sees one of them transgressing, the child nevertheless is not exempt from speaking up — but should be careful not to rebuke the parent directly. Doing so would be the opposite of honoring a parent since it would cause the parent embarrassment and sadness. So, what should the child say?

According to the Rambam, the child should pose a rhetorical question to the parent: "Is what you are doing written in the Torah as being permitted?" This is not *directly* telling the parent that the action of the parent is wrong.

Rashi, however, asserts that even speaking to the parent in this way would be lacking in showing honor to the parent. Rather, the child should say, "There is a verse in the Torah that says such-and-such," quoting a verse that is evidence for the parent's action being wrong. By respectfully quoting a relevant verse in this manner, the parent will understand by himself that his action is wrong and will cease doing so, without suffering embarrassment or humiliation from the child's words.

▪ *Sanhedrin 81a*

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 6)

“The amount of sleep required by the average person is five minutes more.”

Wilson Mizener – American Playwright

The Shema continues: “Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for eternity.”

The Eitz Yosef explains that, after having proclaimed that Hashem is our King, we now offer up thanks that Hashem gives us the opportunity and the honor to serve Him. However, unlike the Shema, which we declare out loud and with great fervor, our verse, “Blessed is the Name...” is recited quietly.

Our Sages offer two different reasons for this custom. The Midrash (*Bereshit Rabbah* 98) relates that, just prior to his passing from this world, Yaakov Avinu wanted to disclose to his twelve sons the date of the Final Redemption, when the Mashiach would reveal his identity. However, as he was about to do so, the *Shechinah* [Divine Presence] left him, and Yaakov understood that he was not permitted to divulge to them that precious piece of information. The Midrash explains that Hashem would not allow the date of the Final Redemption to be revealed because at some point, on hearing just how far into the future the Final Redemption was destined to be, the Jewish People might despair of ever being delivered from the bitter exile.

However, Yaakov Avinu wasn't aware that that was the reason why the *Shechinah* had left him. The Midrash (*Tanchuma Vayechi* 11) relates that when he realized that the *Shechinah* had departed, he was apprehensive, thinking that the *Shechinah* must have abandoned him because one of his sons was not as righteous as he thought. And, if so, he wasn't worthy of receiving the Divine blessings.

In trepidation, he asked his sons, “How do I know whether you are wholeheartedly devoted and committed to Hashem?” And they answered in unison, “*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!*” On hearing their instantaneous and heartfelt reply, Yaakov gave thanks to Hashem and responded, “*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam Va'ed* – Blessed is the Name of His glorious Kingdom for eternity.”

Our Sages ask, (*Pesachim* 56a), “Should we say these words in our *Tefillot* because Yaakov said them?” They answer, “Yes. But, on the other hand, Moshe did not transmit it to us, for it is not found in the Torah. Therefore, we should say it quietly.”

A different reason for saying it quietly is found in the Midrash (*Devarim Rabbah* 2:36). The Midrash relates that when Moshe ascended to the Spiritual Realms to receive the Torah, he heard the angels singing “Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for eternity” to Hashem. The experience was so beautiful that Moshe taught it to the Jewish nation after his return. However, because of its intense spirituality, we – not being angels – do not say it aloud

as the angels did. There is, however, one day of the year when we allow ourselves to proclaim it out loud, and that is on Yom Kippur. Because, on Yom Kippur, it is as if we have elevated ourselves to the level of angels by spiritually cleansing ourselves through Teshuvah.

“*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam Va’ed.*” Such sublime words! Words that remind us that Teshuvah can be done at any time. That we don’t have to wait until Yom Kippur to begin the process. And, perhaps, this is one of the reasons why we recite the Shema before going to sleep. As we have learned together in the first two parts of this series, before retiring for the night, a person should make a *cheshbon hanefesh*, to reflect on what they have done throughout their day. In effect, we are beginning the process that will turn our tomorrow into something even better than today. Or, in the words of Albert Einstein, “Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.”

To be continued...

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Jewish People receive a series of laws concerning social justice. Topics include: Proper treatment of Jewish servants; a husband's obligations to his wife; penalties for hitting people and for cursing parents, judges, and leaders; financial responsibilities for damaging people or their property, either by oneself or by one's animate or inanimate property, or by pitfalls that one created; payments for theft; not returning an object that one accepted responsibility to guard; the right to self-defense of a person being robbed.

Other topics include: Prohibitions against seduction; witchcraft, bestiality and sacrifices to idols. The Torah warns us to treat the convert, widow and orphan with dignity, and to avoid lying. Usury is forbidden and the rights over collateral are limited. Payment of obligations to the Temple should not be delayed, and the Jewish People must be Holy, even concerning food. The Torah teaches the proper conduct for judges in court proceedings. The commandments of Shabbat and the Sabbatical year are outlined. Three times a year — for Pesach, Shavuot and Succot — we are to come to the Temple. The Torah concludes this listing of laws with a law of *kashrut* to not cook or mix meat and milk.

Questions

1. In what context is a mezuzah mentioned in this week's parsha?
2. What special mitzvah does the Torah give to the master of a Hebrew maidservant?
3. What is the penalty for wounding one's father or mother?
4. A intentionally hits B. As a result, B is close to death. Besides any monetary payments, what happens to A?
5. What is the penalty for someone who tries to murder a particular person, but accidentally kills another person instead? Give two opinions.
6. A slave goes free if his master knocks out one of the slave's teeth. What teeth do not qualify for this rule and why?
7. An ox gores another ox. What is the maximum the owner of the damaging ox must pay, provided his animal had gored no more than twice previously?
8. From where in this week's parsha can the importance of work be demonstrated?
9. What is meant by the words "If the sun shone on him"?
10. A person is given an object for safe-keeping. Later, he swears it was stolen. Witnesses come and say that in fact he is the one who stole it. How much must he pay?
11. A person borrows his employee's car. The car is struck by lightning. How much must he pay?
12. Why is lending money at interest called "biting"?
13. Non-kosher meat, "treifa," is preferentially fed to dogs. Why?
14. Which verse forbids listening to slander?
15. What constitutes a majority-ruling in a capital case?
16. How is Shavuot referred to in this week's parsha?
17. How many prohibitions are transgressed when cooking meat and milk together?
18. What was written in the Sefer Habrit which Moshe wrote prior to the giving of the Torah?
19. What was the livnat hasapir a reminder of?
20. Who was Efrat? Who was her husband? Who was her son?

Answers

1. 21:6 - If a Hebrew slave desires to remain enslaved, his owner brings him "to the doorpost mezuzah" to pierce his ear.
2. 21:8,9 - To marry her.
3. 21:15 - Death by strangulation.
4. 21:19 - He is put in jail until B recovers or dies.
5. 21:23 - (a) The murderer deserves the death penalty. (b) The murderer is exempt from death but must compensate the heirs of his victim.
6. 21:26 - Baby teeth, which grow back.
7. 21:35 - The full value of his own animal.
8. 21:37 - From the "five-times" penalty for stealing an ox and slaughtering it. This fine is seen as punishment for preventing the owner from plowing with his ox.
9. 22:2 - If it's as clear as the sun that the thief has no intent to kill.
10. 22:8 - Double value of the object.
11. 22:14 - Nothing.
12. 22:24 - Interest is like a snake bite. Just as the poison is not noticed at first but soon overwhelms the person, so too interest is barely noticeable until it accumulates to an overwhelming sum.
13. 22:30 - As "reward" for their silence during the plague of the first-born.
14. 23:1 - Targum Onkelos translates "Don't bear a false report" as "Don't receive a false report".
15. 23:2 - A simple majority is needed for an acquittal. A majority of two is needed for a ruling of guilty.
16. 23:16 - Chag Hakatzir -- Festival of Reaping.
17. 23:19 - One.
18. 24:4,7 - The Torah, starting from Bereishet until the Giving of the Torah, and the mitzvot given at Marah.
19. 24:10 - That the Jews in Egypt were forced to toil by making bricks.
20. 24:14 - Miriam, wife of Calev, mother of Chur.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Hidden Things

While the Torah makes it clear that a person who lights a fire has personal liability for anything that that fire might end up consuming (Ex. 22:5), the rabbis (Mechilta there and Bava Kamma 60a–62a) adds that if the fire burnt up something that was “concealed” (i.e., not readily visible to the one kindling the flame), then one’s liability is more limited. The Hebrew word that the rabbis used in reference to something “hidden” is tamun. Other words that mean essentially the same thing in Hebrew include safun, tzafun, ganuz, mustar, and ne’elam. In this essay we look at those various Hebrew words for “hidden” things and discuss whether or not these words are truly synonymous. In doing so, we trace these words to their etymological roots and highlight some of their close linguistic relatives.

The word tamun is an inflection of the Biblical Hebrew TET-MEM-NUN, which refers to “hiding/concealing.” In at least eight of the thirty-one instances of this root in the Bible, it refers to laying a “hidden” trap that is unbeknownst to one’s victim (Jer. 18:22, Ps. 9:16, 31:5, 35:7–8, 64:6, 140:6, 142:4). In some instances, this root is used when referring to “burying” (i.e., concealing something in dirt or sand), like when Jacob “buried” idolatrous contraband from Shechem (Gen. 35:4), when Moses “buried” the Egyptian man that he had killed (Ex. 2:12), or when the two spies dispatched by Joshua “buried” themselves in flax (Josh. 2:6). The term hatmanah in Mishnaic Hebrew refers to “embedding” food within a heat source or insulator to keep it warm (see Shabbat 2:7, 4:1–2, Beitzah 2:6, and Eduyot 3:10). Given this view of how declensions of TET-MEM-NUN are used in Hebrew, it seems that tamun in reference to something “hidden” refers simply to anything which is placed within another material that covers it and conceals it from view.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim traces tamun to the biliteral root TET-MEM, whose core meaning he explains as “blocking/impeding.” In Rabbi Pappenheim’s estimation, the main derivative of that two-letter root includes a radical ALEPH to form the word tumah (“impurity”). That term refers specifically to a certain legal “blockage” that stops or forbids a person from taking certain courses of action. In other words, the main ramification of ritual impurity from the Torah’s perspective pertains to what is permitted and what is forbidden. For that reason, eating forbidden foods or engaging in forbidden fornications are branded forms of tumah because they are actions from which one is legally enjoined. Likewise, a state of “ritual impurity” — no matter how it came about — serves to prohibit a person from entering the Temple and eating holy foodstuff. Basically, an impure person is “blocked” from doing things that pure people are open to doing. In this way, Rabbi Pappenheim even writes that the Biblical Hebrew

word tameh (“impure”) is essentially synonymous with the Mishnaic Hebrew word assur (“forbidden”).

The word tamun in the sense of “hiding” relates to this root because when something is hidden, people are “blocked” from being able to reach it or otherwise access it. Other words that Rabbi Pappenheim sees as related to this two-letter root include the Biblical Hebrew atum (“closed/sealed”) and the Mishnaic Hebrew tumtum (that is, a person of ambiguous gender whose genitals are “hidden”). Rabbi Pappenheim also writes that tamun differs from its apparent synonyms in that it usually implies “hiding” something in the ground, which the others words do not.

The term ganuz (“hidden”) is an inflection of the Biblical Hebrew ginzei (Ezek. 27:24, Est. 3:9, 4:7) or ganzach (I Chron. 28:11), and the Biblical Aramaic ginzaya (Ezra 5:17, 6:1, 7:20). All of those words refer to royal “storehouses,” where the king might “hide” some of his most treasured items. Aramaic inflections of this term also appear in Targum when rendering various Biblical Hebrew words that refer to “storage” like otzar (Isa. 39:6), tzrurah (I Sam. 25:29), and pikadon (Gen. 41:36).

In Mishnaic Hebrew, the root GIMMEL-NUN-ZAYIN not only refers to a noun for “storage/treasure,” but is also used in the verb form to refer to the act of “hiding” something. Thus, when Hezekiah was said to “hide” the Book of Remedies (Pesachim 4:9), the Hasmonean were said to “hide” the stones of the altar that the gentiles defiled (Middot 1:6), and the Ark of the covenant was said to have been hidden “hidden” (Shekalim 6:1-2), verb forms of ganaz are used.

**To access the full version of this essay and learn more about Hebrew words for “hidden things,” visit us online at: http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/*

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

LENDING WITHOUT INTEREST (Part One)

Mitzvah #68; *Shemos* 22:24 and *Vayikra* 25:335-38

The Torah prohibits lending to a fellow Jew with interest. One would have thought that there is nothing wrong with charging for “renting out” one’s hard-earned money, and that it is even a great act of kindness when the borrower needs the loan and fully consents to the terms. The Torah enlightens our eyes and raises our standard of ethics by issuing no less than six prohibitions against lending with interest, one prohibition against participating in the loan as a witness, guarantor, or scribe, and two prohibitions against borrowing with interest.

We learn more about the severity of this matter from the following Midrash in *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* (§33): Hashem took the prophet Yechezkel to the Valley of Dura and showed him dried-out bones from 600,000 Jews. Hashem caused all the bones to sprout flesh and return to life, except for one set of bones. When Yechezkel asked why, Hashem explained: “He lent with interest; he shall not live!” (*Yechezkel* 18:17). The commentators note that the 599,999 who merited resurrection were not exactly saints either. The total dryness of their bones symbolized their total lack of merit, and they were even guilty of painting images of idols inside the *Beis HaMikdash* (*Sanhedrin* 92b). In fact, it was specifically because of their lack of merit that Hashem instructed Yechezkel to resurrect them at that dismal time in Jewish history, when the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed and many Jews were losing hope, to show that there is always hope for a Jew. Except, that is, for someone who lends with interest (*Noda B'Yehudah Ahavas Tzion* §8). What is so terrible about this sin?

Let us begin from the beginning. Hashem created the world for the sake of kindness, that is, so that Hashem could perform kindness and so that people could perform kindness (*Ahavas Chessed* 2:7; see *Rashi* to *Avos* 1:2). Thus, the Sages teach that anyone who denies that one is meant to perform kindness has denied a principal tenet of our faith (*Kohelet Rabbah* §7). We find a parallel teaching about interest: “Anyone who lends with interest has denied a principal tenet of our faith” (*Sifra* §5). Since lending without interest is an essential kindness that is expected of every Jew, lending with interest is tantamount to the heretical denial of the tenet of kindness. Thus, although the Mitzvah to lend without interest applies to any borrower, the Torah speaks about it in the context of a poor person, for whom it is an essential act of kindness. It says that we must lend him so that he can establish himself financially “and live” (*Vayikra* 25:36). Establishing someone financially is considered the greatest form of charity (*Rambam, Hil. Matnos Aniim* 10:7).

As great a kindness it is to lend without interest, it is an evil to lend with interest. The Torah calls interest, “neshech” (*biting*), alluding to how the interest in a loan appears small and insignificant, but then swells to become equal to the entire loan, the same way a venomous snake bite seems no more than a scratch at first, and then the venom spreads to the entire body. Just as the Primordial Snake tempted man to disregard the venom of his bite, so to speak, a poor person in need of urgent funds is tempted to borrow on interest. As time passes, and the poor man still lacks the means to return the loan, he is tempted to agree to an extension in return for additional interest, and his ability to return the loan grows increasingly smaller. A loan without interest can be lifesaving; a loan with interest can kill a person. Accordingly, someone who refuses to grant life to the poor by lending them money without interest does not deserve to come back to life at the Resurrection of the Dead (*Chida, Kisei David*).

We find another reason for this in the Midrash (*Tanchuma, Mishpatim* §12): just as the lender took interest until it swallowed the principal, the earth “takes interest” from his body until it swallows the principal. We may add that a person who does not emulate His

Creator's abundant mercy in his lifetime does not deserve to be a recipient of the great kindness of the Resurrection, about which we say in the second blessing Shemoneh Esrei, "Who resurrects the dead with abundant mercy." Another Midrash tells us that while the Heavenly Court generally endeavors to find any possible reason to acquit sinners, it does not do so for someone who lends with interest (*Shemos Rabbah* 31:14). We may understand this similarly: since he treats his fellow Jew cruelly, he does not deserve mercy. Conversely, someone who maintains an interest-free loan fund and constantly brings life to the needy merits corresponding mercy from Hashem and life in both worlds.

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