



The Greater Washington Community Kollel SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Presented by Rabbi Menachem Winter, Rosh Kollel
From our archives

The Ten Commandments serve as the foundational mitzvos of the Torah and include among them the critical directives of belief in G-d, keeping the Shabbos, and the prohibition against murder. The last commandment of "Do not Covet" does not seem to fit the above criteria. Although important, it hardly seems to be a cornerstone of faith. Perhaps we could better understand this with an answer the Ibn Ezra gives to another question posed regarding this commandment. It is understood that the Torah could insist that we don't steal or murder - for it is certainly in our control not to commit those acts. How could the Torah, however, proscribe someone from coveting? It's a feeling that is beyond one's control!

The Ibn Ezra shares with us a brilliant insight. When we acknowledge that it is G-d that apportions His bounty to us, and each person is allotted a share that is particular to him according to G-d's plan, we should have no inclination to desire that which belongs to another. It is only when we believe that possessions are acquired haphazardly that we could think jealously of our friend's good fortune. Certainly, a healthy perspective on G-d's mastery of world affairs is within our control.

For this reason, the commandment not to covet is a foundation of our faith. It is predicated on the cardinal belief that what we have in this world is not random and capricious. Rather, our wealth is determined by G-d who directly guides the world with His Divine wisdom and allots to each and every person according to his unique and particular needs.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

See, I have taught you chukim (statutes) and ordinances, as Hashem, my G-d, has commanded me, to do in the midst of the land to which you come to take possession of... For it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the people, who shall hear all these chukim and say, "Surely a wise and understanding people is this great nation." (4:5-6).

This is chukas (the statute of) the Torah... (Chukas 19:2)

The nations of the world taunt Bnei Yisrael and say, "What is this commandment? What is the reason for it?" (Rashi)

Do the *chukim* evoke feelings of respect from the other nations towards Bnai Yisrael or taunting?

Parsha Riddle

Which word in this week's parsha is not Lashon Hakodesh? What other words in the Torah are not Lashon Hakodesh?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Tisha B'Av is always the same day of the week as which Yom Tov?

Answer: The first day of Pesach

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

From our archives

Parashas Va'Eschanan (5:6-18) includes the second version of the "Ten Statements." This is how the Torah itself, as well as the Rabbinic tradition, refers to them, but in English they are generally referred to as the "Ten Commandments." This latter formulation is, however, problematic, as some of the Statements may contain more than one commandment, and whether the very first Statement - "I am Hashem your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" - constitutes a commandment at all is a matter of dispute. The Rambam does indeed consider it a commandment, and he counts the imperative to believe in G-d as the very first of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos.

The Ramban (Shemos 20:1), too, counts belief in G-d as a positive commandment. R. Hasdai Crescas, however, considers this an "evident error" and logically incoherent, since the notion of a commandment fundamentally presupposes the existence of a known commander (Or Hashem, Hatzaah). The Abarbanel concedes this basic point and explains the subject of the commandment according to the Rambam to be not the basic existence of G-d, but rather the absolute perfection of His existence and the fact that it is necessary, not contingent (Rosh Amanah, Ch. 17).

R. Crescas further argues that commandments only apply to aspects of human behavior subject to will and choice (as opposed to beliefs, which are not acquired by will and choice). Here, too, the Abarbanel concedes the basic logical point, and explains the commandment to refer to the intellectual preparations - the study, investigation, examination and acquisition of relevant facts - that lead one to belief. "There is no doubt that these preparations are an activity of will and choice and are acquired over time. For it is up to each person 'to perceive, learn, teach,' and know those things which necessitate and give birth to belief in his soul" (Rosh Amanah ibid., Prof. Menachem Kellner's translation. Cf his introduction pp. 41-50, and Otzar Yisrael Vol. II p. 81).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am morning and evening.
2. I am on your eyes.
3. I bear testimony.
4. I was said by Yaakov and to Yaakov.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am what I am on.
2. I am for the gate.
3. I am for the door.
4. I am slanted for many.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Og (I am a giant, I am the refugee, I am not a cake, I am from the fallen ones.)

#2 Tisha B'av on a Sunday (I delay Havdallah, I end the third meal early, I give the nine two days of rest, No queenly escort.)

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