

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

בס"ד

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Robert Lipton, Reuven Leib ben Mordechai HaLevi. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS NASSO

Jealousy vs. Envy

And a spirit of jealousy passed over him and he warned his wife and she became defiled [...] (5:14).

In this week's *parsha* the Torah discusses the laws regarding a suspected adulteress. Essentially, this refers to a situation where a husband is concerned that his wife may be beginning a relationship with another man and he warns her in front of witnesses not to go into seclusion with that person. If she does indeed go into seclusion with that man, then the husband can charge her with being an adulteress.

If she claims that she was never intimate with the other man, then the husband can bring her before the *kohen* to test her fidelity by undergoing the *Sotah* test that, among other things, consists of drinking "bitter water." If she is guilty her body begins to "explode" (she dies gruesomely and so does her paramour); if she is innocent then she is blessed with fertility. It is important to note that a woman can avoid going through the process by confessing and merely forgoing her *kesuvah* to receive her divorce.

This concept of the Torah catering to a jealous husband requires some explanation. After all, Chazal find jealousy to be one of the more abominable character traits. We find in *Pirkei Avos* (4:28) Rabbi Elazar HaKappar said: "Jealousy, lust, and the [pursuit of] honor remove a person from the world." Though the *Sotah* process is much more civilized and enlightened than other common practices in those times (or even than the pervasive present day practice of "honor killings"), conceding to a husband's jealousy seems to be contrary to Jewish

values.

In fact, we seemingly find a Torah prohibition against being jealous in a pretty prominent place: *Thou shall not be envious of your friend's home, wife, slaves, etc.* – is the last of the Ten Commandments! Yet, according to one opinion in the Talmud, it is a *mitzvah* for a husband to begin this process. Why are we allowing a husband to give in to his jealousy?

In order to understand the concept of *Sotah*, it is important to recognize the distinction between envy and jealousy. Envy is that overwhelming desire for what someone else has. Envy is prohibited at all times. As Ibn Ezra points out in his comment on "*thou shall not be envious*" (*Shemos* 20:14), this prohibition applies even when one pays an exorbitant amount of money to coerce the other person to sell what he doesn't really want to sell. The only antidote to envy is to know who you are and to understand that what someone else has is right for them and most likely not for you. The Ibn Ezra (*ibid*) gives the example: "this is similar to the notion that a common villager does not desire to marry the princess daughter of the king." He knows she isn't right for him.

Jealousy, on the other hand, is the overpowering feeling that comes with the realization that someone is trying to take something that is rightfully yours. In other words, jealousy is the primal instinct to protect what is yours. Jealousy can be experienced in many different situations;



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someone trying to take your love interest, your client, or even your car. It is acceptable to be jealous in any of these situations. After all, you are reacting to the fact that someone is improperly trying to take something from you. Of course, jealousy can also be derived from a figment of one's imagination and own insecurity. While we allow a husband to act in a jealous manner, his wife still has to have gone into seclusion in the presence of two witnesses. In other words, his feelings have to be confirmed by facts in the real world, not just in a jealous fantasy.

Perhaps the most prevalent issues of both envy and jealousy occur in family dynamics. The role of a parent is to give each child a feeling that they have a special place in their hearts, a place that no one can ever take away from them. This gives the child a sense of security as to their place in the family, and alleviates many jealousies. Perhaps as important, a parent must make sure every child is actualized and feels accomplished in their area of specialty. After all, if Hashem saw fit to create them, there is something special and unique about them. Once children are comfortable with themselves and happy with who they are, they won't desire what others have.

Brotherhood of Man

On the second day Nesanel ben Tzu'ar the leader of Yissachar brought his offering; one silver tray that weighed one hundred and thirty (shekolim), one silver bowl that weighed seventy shekalim (7:18-19).

This week's *parsha* discusses in seemingly repetitive detail the very specific gifts that the head of each tribe contributed to the Mishkan on the day of the inauguration of the altar. On this verse, Rashi comments that numerical value of the words "silver tray" is equivalent to 930, which corresponds to the amount of years that Adam lived. The one hundred and thirty *shekalim* that the tray weighed refers to the age that Adam was when he fathered to his son Seth (*Bereishis* 5:3). The numerical value of "one silver bowl" is equal to 520, which was the age when Noah fathered his children (500) and the twenty years that preceded it when Hashem informed him that a flood was coming. The seventy *shekalim* weight of the tray refers to the seventy nations of the world who descended from Noah.

All of these allusions to non-Jews during the inauguration of the altar seems very strange. This event was celebrating the altar of our Mishkan; what does our altar have to do with the non-Jewish world?

Maimonides (*Yad Hilchos Beis Habechira* 2:2) states, "we have a tradition that the

place that the altar was constructed (in the temple) was the place that Avraham built an altar and bound Yitzchak upon it; this was the place that Noah built his altar when he exited the ark; this was the exact spot that the children of Adam, Kayin and Hevel, brought their sacrifices; and was the very spot that Adam was created from. Our Rabbis have taught 'Adam was created from the spot that he receives atonement.'"

Maimonides is teaching us something truly remarkable. All of mankind is connected to this specific place in the universe. We tend to look at our Beis Hamikdash as being something that is only for the Jewish people. Our natural discomfort and distrust of the non-Jewish world, borne out of thousands of years of oppression and suffering at their hands, makes it difficult to comprehend that they too have a connection to the place of our Beis Hamikdash, our capital, our home.

Yet, we conveniently forget that the terrible suffering at their hands was really just Hashem punishing us for our wrongdoings. It goes without saying that

many of them enjoyed the process of torturing and killing us a little too much. But we must never lose sight of the fact that we brought these painful retributions on ourselves. All of it was because we failed in our primary responsibility of bringing the awareness of Hashem into this world. This is the job that Avraham Avinu took upon himself and why he is considered the first Jew. He went on a crusade to make sure that people were aware of Hashem and understood that we owed Him our fealty.

The place of the altar is the place where all of mankind connects with Hashem and is empowered to serve Hashem through sacrifices. In fact, it is our responsibility to make sure that the entire world is aware of Hashem and is able to connect to Him. It is no wonder, then, that the main religions of the western world all feel intensely connected to Yerushalayim. We must remember that, as caretakers appointed by Hashem, it is our responsibility to give the entire world a place to worship Hashem and connect to Him.

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