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DIVREI TORAH

- The opening portion of the sedra is a bit puzzling. The Torah recognized the enormous pressure and emotional tension that a Jewish soldier possesses when he goes into battle. The soldier is attracted to a non-Jewish captive woman and wishes to be with her. Most commentators state that the soldier was intimate with her one time. Rashi and Ramban both state that he was not permitted to be with her even once. The procedure described here are those that need be taken for him to marry her. She tearfully abandons her parents and her former religion, converts to Judaism, and then is permitted to her new Jewish husband. He must treat her as a Jewish wife. If she goes through this process, and then he no longer desires her, he must send her home. She is free, and he is not permitted to be with her. All commentators state that the Torah is realistically addressing his Evil Inclination. The Torah recognizes the strange and new reality in dealing with a fighting Jewish soldier.

- The oldest son is entitled to a double portion of his father's estate, in contrast to the other sons. The concept of being the oldest is absolute. But there are other privileges that accompany being the oldest. This birthright enables this son to lead the family after the father's death. He is the new patriarch, and he is the Kohen Gadol of the family. But these additional privileges were transferable. Consider the birthright that Eisav sold to Yaakov. Or consider that King David chose Sh'lomo, one of David's younger sons, to become David's successor. The other sons were required to honor their oldest brother. Avraham expelled his oldest son, and he chose the younger son to be his heir. Yaakov took away the privileges that were Reuven's. He gave the double inheritance to Yosef, and he gave the kingship to Yehuda, while he gave the religious leadership to Levi. [Note: The law of double inheritance is still binding. We can circumvent this Halacha by adding a paragraph to your will. This paragraph was initiated by the Rama in the 16th century Poland, and is still available today. I did it and included it in my will.]
- If a man commits a capital crime and is stoned to death, (he blasphemed the name of Hashem), his dead body is then hung from a tree. We assume

this is done as a deterrent to the people. The body should not be hung for a long time because it needs to be buried. The practice initiated by the court was to hang the body right before sunset and then immediately take it down to be buried. Hence the act of a deterrent could not have been the main lesson here. When the great Kabbalist in Tz'fat, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero died in 1570, he was eulogized by the Ari, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, and in his eulogy, he mentioned this Torah portion. He stated that Rav Cordovero was without sin, such a righteous person was he. The Torah tells us that the dead body is hung to teach us that every man must die because of the sin with the tree. The reference was to Adam and Eve, who were supposed to be immortal. But once they ate from the forbidden fruit of that tree, they became mortal and so did all their offspring. The tree symbolized that all human beings became mortal and must die.

- Returning a lost object to its original owner is a positive Mitzva that mandates that we should care one for another. Man has a natural instinctive tendency to not get involved in someone else's hardship. But here we are told to suspend our daily personal affairs and involve ourselves in helping a fellow Jew recover his property. We shouldn't hide ourselves; we should involve ourselves. The first couple of times it is hard to

do, but eventually it will become instinctive and we will restore the lost object of our own free will. Use the Torah mandate to train ourselves to want to assist a fellow Jew. Once you have accomplished this Mitzva several times, it will become part of you. It will become your natural response. You won't be able to hide yourself from performing the right act. This is the object reading of this Torah Mitzva: to train ourselves to care about another person (Alshich).

- A man is not permitted the clothing of a woman, and a woman is not permitted the clothes of a man. In the Rabbinical text, Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov states that a woman is not allowed to wear the arms of a soldier for battle. In Talmud (Kiddushin 2b) it says that only men battle in war, not women. This would seem to limit this prohibition for wartime. One rabbi in the 19th century wrote that it is prohibited for a woman to use a sword to cut a thread or a rope. And he proves it by citing the case of Yael who used a tent peg to kill Sisera, the enemy general in the book of Sho-f'tim. The Torah Temima rejects both statements. A woman using a sword to cut a rope is not doing battle. And Yael would have been allowed to kill Sisera with a sword since it was wartime. [Note: This would still leave us with the modern problem of women serving in the Israeli and American armies.]

- **ZACHOR, LO TISHKACH:** Remember what Amalek did to you. Don't forget. Our Sages say that Remember means to declare verbally. Don't forget means in our hearts. We fulfill the Mitzva of Remember when we read the Torah on the Shabbat before Purim. (And I would add that you fulfill it when we read the Torah on Parshat Ki Teitzei. And you only have to read it once a year.) But how about the Mitzva of destroying Amalek? Rabbi Yisroel Zev Gustman (1908-1991, Poland, America, Israel. I had the privilege of learning with him in Israel) fled Vilna with his wife and daughter when the Nazis invaded in World War II. He escaped into the forest. There he was discovered by a Nazi soldier. He fought the Nazi and killed him with his bare hands. He would say to us, in reflection that he was able to fulfill the Biblical commandment to blot out Amalek from this world!

- **MIDRASH.** Midrash Rabba D'varim 6:13. What is the meaning of O God, I beseech You? (When Moshe asked Hashem to heal Miriam who had become m'tzora after speaking ill about Moshe.). Rabbi Abba ben Kahana said: This can be compared to a doctor's assistant who was consulted by a woman suffering from nausea, and he brought her to his teacher. The assistant said: Sir, you have already taught me the complete

list of remedies. If you will heal her, all is well. But if not, I will cure her. Similarly Moshe said: Master of the Universe, You have long ago taught me the complete treatment for the plagues. If You will heal her, all is well. But if not, I will heal her.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. What must the Jewish soldier do if he desired and later disliked the captured non-Jewish woman after her month of ugliness? (21:14)
2. What does the firstborn male son get that is special from his father's belongings? (22:17)
3. Why should one send away the mother bird before taking the chicks or eggs? (22:6,7)
4. How does the Torah describe a GET? (24:1)
5. A newly wed man is exempt from the army for the first year of his marriage. What is he to do in that year? (24:5)

From Rashi

6. Why are the first three Halachot in the Parsha linked together? (21:11)
7. What does Rashi add to the idea that you can be rewarded with a long life for shooing away the mother bird before taking its eggs? (22:7)

8. The Torah prohibits being late in paying his pledge to Hashem. What time period defines “being late”? (23:22)

9. Are you permitted to delay payment to a non-Jewish worker? (24:14)

10. Is there a Levirate marriage if the brother (Yavam) is born after his older brother, the husband died? (25:5)

From the Rabbis

11. Who does wear Shaatnez and is permitted and required to do so?

12. Why is a divorce document called a GET in Hebrew? (the GR"A)

13. Where do we know of a case where a woman from Moav married a Jewish man?

Midrash

14. How many lashes does a sinner receive? (The Torah says 40)

Haftara - Yishayahu

15. In the beginning of the Haftara, to whom is Yishayahu talking?

Relationships

a) Machli - Mooshi

b) Nachshon - Itamar

c) Bilha - Dan

d) Yosef - Orde

e) Adam - Enosh

ANSWERS

1. He must set her free (because he made her suffer.)

2. He gets double whatever any other son received.

3. Because Hashem said so.

4. A bill of “cutting off”.

5. He is to make his wife happy.

6. If the Jewish soldier marries a captive non-Jewish woman, he will likely end up hating her, and they will likely have a rebellious son.

7. If long life is the reward for an easy Mitzva which entails no hardship nor financial loss, imagine what reward there is for a difficult Mitzva.

8. If Three Pilgrimage Festivals pass.

9. No, you may not.

10. No.

11. A Kohen while working in the Temple and someone who has real Techeilet (blue wool threads) for his linen Tallit.

12. Because nowhere in all of TaNaCH is there the letter GIMEL followed by the letter TET.

Ed. note: I would also point out that In Yechezkeil 22:25 there is a word that ends in a GIMEL and the following word ends in a TET (SHO-EIG TOREIF, an interesting comment on what leads to some divorces), so there is a break between GIMEL-TET, which is what a GET accomplishes.

13. Ruth married Boaz

14. 39!

15. To Yerushalayim

Relationships

a) Brothers

b) Uncle & Nephew

c) Mother & Son

d) Uncle & Nephew

e) Grandfather & Grandson