

Rabbi's Column

In case you missed my question the other week, since it was at the bottom of my note, here it is again: Where, other than the synagogue, would you like to see the Rabbi be available for answering questions and engaging in general conversation?

In general, good things take time. Time itself showing up in the first place might not have - not many who were there are currently talking about it.

One of the verses in last week's portion has God tell Moses, "Tell the people that they are to become a kingdom of priests, a set-apart nation." A question that could be easily asked when connecting that verse with this week's portion: If we're to be so special, how come there are all these rules about slaves and capital punishment?"

Today we are aware that not only is the servitude which existed back in Egypt is wrong (it also existed up until quite recently, and is still practiced in some parts of the world), so is the track record of knowing for sure who is guilty of a capital crime. However, both those things were part and parcel of the world at the time (and for very long thousands of years afterwards), so the issue is not, "Did the Torah talk about owning slaves?" but "What changes did the Torah make in what was normal practice for owning slaves?"

The rest, as they say, is commentary. Now, please study.

In other news, the Israeli Cabinet Ministers approved a compromise position concerning the Western Wall. Since the Wall and the area surrounding it was liberated from Jordan, the area has over time become the equivalent of an Orthodox synagogue. Separate seating/standing, and quiet prayer only from the women's side. Orthodox women began the process of enabling women to have group religious experiences (all following Orthodox halacha, which does allow for Women's minyanim). A while after this began, some people wanted to hold more progressive style services (you know, where your wife can keep you from falling asleep), and were given an area that I have been told is difficult to get to. Some people have also mentioned that the difficulty in getting there is the best part of the whole experience.

So what are the big changes which are proposed (assuming that the revenue sources all follow through)?

All people will approach the area through a single entrance, and then from there go into one of three sections - men's, women's or mixed. The women's section will be in the middle. The mixed section is slightly smaller than the men's and women's combined sections.

Good things take time. This step took decades to arrive. Attaining the ideal within the country will probably take even longer. With God's help, Israel will survive long enough to be able to achieve even more of the good things we would all like to see. And the world will follow suit.