

MOST FAVORED NATION

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

The portion of Yisro contains perhaps the most popular of all Biblical treatises The Ten Commandments. But the portion contains much more than commandments. It also contains Hashem's elocution defining his people as the most treasured in the world. What makes Jew chosen? Before giving the Torah to them, Hashem enunciates the prerequisites. "And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My covenant, you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world" (Exodus 19:5). Note: Judaism's exclusivity is not dependant on birthright alone. It is dependant on commitment to Torah and Mitzvos. It is not a restricted club, limited only to those who are born as Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; it is also exclusive to those who commit to observe, whether, of Asian, African, or European descent. Thus, the Torah clearly states that those who hearken and observe the covenant are worthy to be a beloved treasure.

What needs clarification is the final statement, " for Mine is the entire world." What difference does that make in the context of commitment, and Hashem cherishing those who choose His path?

An old Jewish Bubba Ma'aseh serves as a wonderful parable.

Sadie Finkelstein lived in an apartment on New York's Lower East Side for about 50 years. Her son, David, had made it big in the corporate world as cosmopolitan businessman, wheeling and dealing, traveling to places as far-flung as the Himalayas and Russia's Ural Mountains. Of course, he shopped the finest Paris boutiques and European stores on his excursions to the more civilized portions of the world.

For his mother's 75th birthday, David decided to send her a gift of the finest Russian caviar and France's most exquisite Champagne. From his hotel suite in Paris he had the items shipped with one-day delivery, the Champagne and caviar on ice!

A few days later, David called his mother up. "Ma," he asked, "did you received package?"

"Sure, I received package," his mother said. She did not seem impressed

"Well how was it?" David asked in anticipation.

All he heard was a sigh. Then a pause. "To tell you truth ," said Sadie "The ginger ale was a very sour and the blackberry jelly tasted to salty."

What makes a treasured item? What defines glory? If one is locked in his apartment and sees not

the world, his treasures may be relegated to crackers and shmaltz herring. One may say, the Jews think that their culture is Divine, but they live in a myopic world. Hashem says, "No!" "You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world"

In proclaiming the Jewish people as the most beloved treasure, Hashem adds, "I know every culture, I saw every diamond, I own all the gold and all the precious jewels, and yet there will be no greater treasure to me than they who observe my laws and commandments!"

In choosing His people, the Almighty explicates, that he has proverbially tasted all the world's delicacies. He has seen all the world's glory. He has seen every fascinating custom and gazed at every civilization. His celestial palate has taste for the most Heavenly and Divine delicacies. Then He defines the Jews as the greatest treasure in a world that belongs solely to Him! That means we are a treasure among whatever archeologists, historians, sociologists, feel is priceless. We are a treasure amongst treasures!

The Almighty who lacks for nothing enjoys nothing more than the joy of His dearest people those who are chosen because they have chosen.

Good Shabbos

Dedicated in memory of Esther Hammerman by Shayne and Marty Kessler

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