

Text Study

OJC ECE Re-Imagine Leadership Meeting – July 30, 2003

The Blessing Before Study

To be recited before every text study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַמֶּלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעַסֵּק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'zivvanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.*

**Praised are You Adonai, Ruler of the universe,
Who sanctifies us with mitzvot and commands us
to engage in the study of Torah.**

Mishnah Gittin chapter 8-1, 2,: If one threw a letter of divorce to his wife while she was within her house, or within her courtyard, then she is divorced. If he threw it when she was inside his house or in his courtyard, even if he were with her in bed, she is not divorced; but if into her lap or into her work basket, then she is divorced. If he said to her “Take this bond (of indebtedness)”, or if she found it behind him and she read it, and behold it was her letter of divorce, it is not a licit letter of divorce until he shall say to her “Here is thy letter of divorce”. If he placed it in her hand while she was asleep, and she woke up a read it, and behold, it was her letter of divorce, it is not a valid letter of divorce until he will say to her “Lo, this is thy letter of divorce”. If she were standing in the public domain and he threw it to her, if it were closer to her she is divorced, but if it is nearer to him, she is not divorced; and if midway, she is as one divorced and as one not divorced.

Mishnah Rosh Hashannah chapter 2 - 2, 3: Beforetime, they used to light beacons, but after the Samaritans caused great harm, they enacted that messengers should go forth (for the new moon). In what manner did they kindle the beacons? They used to bring long poles of cedar wood, rushes, pine wood, and tow flax; and a man tied these together with twine. He went up to the top of the hill and set them on fire, and waved them to and fro and moved them up and down until he saw his fellow doing likewise on the top of the next hill; and also similarly on top of the third hill.

Megillat Esther Chapter 8: 8 - 14

And you, write concerning the Jews as is pleasing in your eyes in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for a document which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring may not be recalled. So the king's scribes were summoned at that time, in the third month (that is the month of Sivan), on the twenty-third day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordechai commanded to the Jews and to the lieutenants and the governors and princes of the provinces that are from Hodu to even unto Cush (one hundred and twenty-seven provinces), to every province according to its script, and to every nation according to its language, and to the Jews according to their script and according to their language. And he wrote it in the name of the king Ahasverus, and he sealed it with the king's ring. And he sent letters in the hands of the couriers on horses, riders of the king's finest, and the camels bred of the dromedaries; that the king had granted to the Jews who were in every city to assemble and to stand up for their lives... The text of the document was to be issued as law in every province, publicized to all the nations, and that the Jews should be ready for that day, to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers, the riders of the king's finest, the camels, went forth, rushed and pressed on by the king's command and the law was issued in Shushan, the capital.

Questions:

1. The first mishnah concerns the delivery of a *get* גט, a “letter of divorce”. In terms of delivery (leaving out the technical details of how the *get* should be written), how was the document to be communicated and what made it legal?
2. In some cases the *get* had to be handed to the woman while in other cases it could be thrown. What difference does this make (and why was a verbal statement required?) Do you think a messenger could be used to deliver the *get* (there is a later mishnah on this)
3. In the second mishnah statement, beacons were used followed by messengers. What could the Samaritans have done to disrupt this process? Why was this method preferred versus the sending of messengers?
4. Compare the communication method of the *get* with the communication method of announcing the new month (both before and after the change to messengers).
5. What does the text from Megillat Esther teach us about how messages and information should be communicated? Compare this text to the previous two texts).
6. As we prepare to formally invite the task force to join us and prepare to communicate our activities with the congregation, what lessons can we learn from these texts?