

January 27, 2022

Rabbi Wexler - *Mishpatim*

Last week's Torah portion, *Yitro*, provided drama. This week's Torah portion, *Mishpatim*, provides details. It begins a section of the Torah known as *sefer habrit*, the Book of the Covenant, and presents a litany of social laws necessary for a just society. In the midst of all of these laws we read in Exodus 22:30: "***V'anshei kodesh tihyun—you shall be a holy people.***" Regarding this imperative, Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk, the Kotzker Rebbe, wrote: "be holy in a human way. Be holy while dealing with the temptations of normal people. God already has enough angels." In other words, through the mitzvot, God invites us to refine ourselves, to strive to be holy in all that we do, as human beings, and as individuals. God wants us to be us; our authentic selves. **Be holy by being You.**

I was thinking about this verse and interpretation last night when I learned that Jeopardy winner Amy Schneider's forty-game run finally came to an end. During her winning streak, Amy won well over one million dollars and etched her name in Jeopardy history as the most successful woman to ever compete on the show. She is most certainly a Jeopardy champion, but even more, she has become a champion simply in what it means to be human. She has become one of the most high profile openly transgender people in our society and has trailblazed a path of acceptance and understanding. All the while, she has served as a role model for transgender individuals and their families around the world. In a recent interview, Amy said: "The best part for me has been being on TV as my true self. Expressing myself, representing the entire community of trans people and ... just being a smart, confident woman doing something super normal like being on Jeopardy!" "***V'anshei kodesh tihyun—you shall be a holy people.***" **Be holy by being YOU.** An article this morning in the Washington Post perhaps said it best: "Amy Schneider's gift to America was bringing her whole self to Jeopardy."

Thank you Amy for being you. May we too strive to be our best selves, celebrating our identities, our individuality, and our humanity, and in doing so, may we grow in holiness each and every day.

Shabbat Shalom.