

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHIOT VA'ETCHANAN - EKEV - RE'EH - SHOFTIM · SPECIAL SUMMER ISSUE 5763 /2003 · VOL. 10 NO. 43

PARSHA INSIGHTS

VA'ETCHANAN

A LITTLE SHABBAT SONG

"Guard the Shabbat to sanctify it." (5:12)

Everything we do in Judaism has deeper levels of meaning – even a little Shabbat song. Imagine the Shabbat table of the holy Chafetz Chaim — as close an approximation to the next world as this world gets! Rabbi Elya Lopian writes of such an experience:

The Chafetz Chaim starting to sing the well-known *zemer* (Shabbat song) *Kol Mekadesh* (The English translation, unfortunately, is as pedestrian as a policeman on the beat):

"Whoever sanctifies the seventh day as befits it, whoever safeguards the Shabbat properly from desecrating it – his reward is exceedingly great in accordance with his deed."

The Chafetz Chaim stopped singing and said: "There are two kinds of *Shomrei Shabbat* (people who keep Shabbat). There's the person who "sanctifies Shabbat as befits it" — someone who sanctifies his Shabbat with purity and holiness, with a higher, more sanctified level of prayer, with Torah learning of greater insight and depth, a person who sets aside more time for introspection and self-examination. On the other hand, there's the kind of person who "safeguards the Shabbat properly from desecrating it." He makes sure not to profane Shabbat by breaking its laws but no more. His

Shabbat is still lacking something. It lacks the experience of the holiness of Shabbat, and the delight of Torah and serving G-d. Rather he sleeps his Shabbat away, resting from his weekday toil.

However, when the song says: "...his reward is exceedingly great in accordance with his deed," it is referring to both types of people. For even the person who merely "keeps" Shabbat will receive a huge reward for not profaning it. The song continues, however, "Every man in his own camp, every man under his own banner." In the world of truth, these two will dwell in very different "camps." They will sit under very different banners. And certainly the *shomer Shabbat* will not be able to enter the portal of the one who is *mekadesh Shabbat*, one who makes the Shabbat holy.

Shabbat is a most precious gift of G-d. A day when we can be close to Him. That's what holiness means. A day that is a precise reflection of the "world that is entirely Shabbat". To the extent that we make our Shabbat a reflection of that world, so too will our eventual experience of that world mirror that reflection.

And all that in a little Shabbat song.

Source:

• Based on *Lev Eliyahu*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

VA'ETCHANAN

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvot*. Hashem refuses. Moshe reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on *Bnei Yisrael* that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins *Bnei Yisrael* to "pass over" the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in

Eretz Yisrael they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to Hashem.

Moshe designates three "refuge cities" to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

THE SILENT NEPHEWS

Rabbi Tarfon was very upset with the behavior of his nephews who sat before him and failed to carry on any discussion of Torah. In order to stimulate them he startled them by quoting the Torah passage which states that “Then again Avraham took a wife and her name was Keturah” (*Bereishet 25:1*), but deliberately substituting the name “Yochani” for “Keturah”. His strategy worked for they quickly challenged him on this misquotation and a dialogue began.

Disappointed that it had taken so long for them to say any words of Torah he chided them for behaving like the “children of Keturah” which Rashi explains as meaning that they were like descendants of Avraham, but not like the offspring of Yitzchak and Yaakov.

But if Rabbi Tarfon wanted to chide his nephews for the lack of true Jewishness they demonstrated in failing to discuss Torah with him why did he not go two generations further and criticize them for behaving like the “children of Esav”?

Maharsha refers us to the ruling of Rambam that the children of Keturah were obligated to circumcise themselves just as were all of Avraham’s male offspring. Rabbi Tarfon’s cutting remark was that even though his nephews were circumcised they were no better than the children of Keturah who were also circumcised but ignorant of Torah. In addition he did not wish to insult his brother-in-law by referring to him as the wicked Esav. Referring to his sister as Keturah, on the other hand, was not insulting because that name of Avraham’s wife is a tribute to her righteousness, as our Sages explain that her actions were as fragrant as the *ketoret* incense offered upon the altar.

• *Zevachim 62b*

HANDS ONLY

The first indication to Shimshon that Heaven had blessed him with superhuman strength was his encounter with a young lion on his way to arrange a marriage with a Philistine woman. As the dangerous beast roared at him “a heavenly spirit descended upon him and he tore it in two as one would a kid goat” (*Shoftim 14:6*).

This passage is cited by our *gemara* as an explanation of the meaning of the word *veshisa* used in the Torah’s instructions on preparing a fowl offered as an *olah* burnt sacrifice for its placement on the altar. The *kohen* performing these preparations was commanded to take the slaughtered body of the fowl and tear it apart without separating the two halves. This had to be done by hand and not through the use of any instrument. The proof is that the same term for such a tearing apart is found in regard to Shimshon who also used only his hands.

The only problem with this proof is that the fraction of the passage appearing in our text fails to indicate that Shimshon had no weapon and relied only on his hands. But if one takes the time to refer to the source quoted he will see that following the above-cited words the passage states that “there was nothing in his hands”.

This is a classical example of how one enriches his understanding of the *gemara*’s use of a scriptural passage by bothering to consult the source. It may be argued of course that even without this added information it would be obvious that Shimshon did it with hands alone because of the comparison to the sundering of a kid for which no instrument is required, and because this incident is mentioned as a demonstration of Shimshon’s prowess which is valid only if he had no weapon in hand. Nevertheless, the proof is far more convincing when the passage itself explicitly tells us what we need to know.

• *Zevachim 65b*

1. "And I prayed to Hashem at that time." Why "at that time"?
 2. What characteristic trait is represented by Hashem's "strong hand"?
 3. What is *ha'levanon*?
 4. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
 5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the *mitzvot* properly?
 6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
 7. What is hinted by the word *v'noshantem*?
 8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
 9. "You'll serve man-made gods." Is this literal?
 10. Why is east called *mizrach*?
 11. "Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you."
- When had Hashem previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
 12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
 13. What is meant by "Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is One"?
 14. What are two meanings of loving Hashem "with all your might"?
 15. How well-versed must one be in Torah?
 16. Where does the word *totafot* come from?
 17. Who is fit to swear in Hashem's name?
 18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
 19. When someone serves Hashem with love, how many generations receive reward?
 20. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

Answers to Va'etchanan's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of *Eretz Canaan*, Moshe thought perhaps Hashem had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - *Ha'levanon* means the *Beit Hamikdash*, which makes "white" (*lavan*), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The *gematria* of *v'noshantem*, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines (*mizrach* means shining).
11. 5:13 - Before *Matan Torah*, at Marah. (*Shmot 15:25*)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (*Shmot 15:25*).
13. 6:4 - Hashem, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether Hashem treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - *Tot* means two in Caspi. *Fot* means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves Hashem and reveres His name.
18. 7:7 - *B'nei Yisrael* are the humblest nation.
19. 7:9 - 2,000.
20. 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

THE MIRACLE OF ALIYA

Each and every Jew who has succeeded in realizing his dream to settle in *Eretz Yisrael* has his own special story to tell. *Aliya* to the Holy Land has always presented a challenge, and many *olim* describe their triumph over the obstacles as a miracle.

This week's Torah portion supplies the source for these miracles with the very first word which also serves as the title. The *gematria* – mathematical equivalent – of the Hebrew word *Va'etchanan* is 515. This word describes Moshe's prayers to G-d to be permitted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, and its *gematria*, say our Sages, indicates that Moshe offered a total of 515 prayers for this purpose.

Were the prayers of Moshe an exercise in futility after G-d had categorically denied him entry into the land because of his

actions in the "waters of dispute"?

It is a principle of Torah philosophy that no prayers ever go to waste. Even if they do not achieve the personal objective of the one offering them they have the power to help others with the same need. Only G-d knows where to apply this power.

Moshe was aware that millions of other Jews throughout the centuries would also wish to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. His 515 prayers created 515 different ways for them to achieve this goal which eluded him.

While credit must be given to all who encourage and assist the *aliya* of Jews from abroad, it must always be remembered that it was Moshe's prayers that make the miracle happen for Jews to come to Israel forever.

LOVE HAS NO BECAUSE

“...what does Hashem, your G-d ask of you...and to love Him. (10:12)

Do you know the most frightening thing in the world? Do you know the thing that frightens more people than the nine o'clock news, than a call from the IRS or their mother-in-law?

Love.

Love is the most frightening thing in the world. Because love means letting someone else inside. Love means connecting, connecting to something outside myself, to my spouse, to my family, to G-d. Nothing is more frightening than connecting – and nothing is more essential.

For love is the essence of the creation. G-d created the world because He loves us. Why does He love us? Because He loves us.

Everything in this world has a reason, everything in this world has a cause — except for love. Love is its own reason. Love is its own cause, its own effect. The reason you love someone is because – you love them. If there's a reason why you love them, that's not love. When the reason goes away the love goes away. So really it wasn't love at all.

When you build a building you start with the smallest indivisible part — a brick.

When you build the world, you start with its smallest

indivisible part — love.

Nothing is more indivisible than something where cause and effect are identical – like love. Love is the smallest indivisible part of the Creation. That's why the world starts with love.

The foundation of the whole Torah is love. Loving G-d isn't just an individual mitzvah (“And you will love Hashem, your G-d...” Devarim 5:5), it is the root of all the mitzvot, the foundation of Creation.

The Torah is G-d's love-letter to the world. It is the way He connects with us, and we with Him. When we learn Torah we are connecting. When we stop learning, the connection breaks. Learning Torah in stops-and-starts isn't Torah. Torah is the eternal connection. It cannot cease. When we stop and start our learning we distort the nature of Torah itself. For Torah isn't knowledge, it's love. When you really love someone, you don't turn the love off and on.

Torah isn't like other learning. When you learn science or French or photography, once you've learned what you need to know, you can stop learning. But Torah isn't knowledge – it's love.

When you stop learning, you stop the connection.

You stop the love.

Source:

• Pirkei Avot 5:16; based on Da'at Torah

PARSHA OVERVIEW

EKEV

If *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those “minor” mitzvot that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer *Eretz Canaan* little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in *Eretz Yisrael* is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was Hashem who gave

them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael's* righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites; for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe. Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the 10 Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon's passing is recorded as is the elevation of the *levi'im* to Hashem's ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping mitzvot and the curse that results from non-observance.

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a. wonders b. strong hand c. outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by Hashem?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving Hashem with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to Hashem"?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ekev's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 - The: a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 - Since they served in the Temple, thus they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

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WHEN ONE IS ENOUGH

Everyone who daily prays in the morning is familiar with Rabbi Yishmael's 13 rules for interpreting laws from the Torah which are not explicitly mentioned. One of these is the *kal v'chomer*. The basic premise of this method is that if the Torah revealed a certain feature in regard to a subject which is *kal* – of a less serious nature – then that feature should certainly apply to another subject which is *chomer* – of a more serious nature.

Although the *kal v'chomer* is widely mentioned throughout the Talmud, we find in our *gemara* a limitation to its application. It is *dayoi* – sufficient – that we extend the feature of the *kal* to the *chomer* but we cannot endow it with greater proportions.

The source for this limitation is the *kal v'chomer* which G-d mentioned in His response to Moshe's plea to heal his sister Miraim from the leprosy-like *tzara'at* with which Heaven had afflicted her as punishment for slandering her brother. Had her father rebuked her, G-d pointed out, she certainly would have deserved the shame of isolation for seven days, and so He decreed that she should be quarantined for seven days (*Bamidbar 12:14*).

Using the logic of *kal v'chomer*, say our Sages, should have led to the conclusion that if disrespect for a human father deserves seven days of isolation then double that amount of days should be the punishment for disrespect to G-d who appointed Moshe as His prophet. But since we can extend to the *chomer* only the dimensions of the *kal*, the conclusion was seven days only.

Why does the *gemara* suggest that the affront to G-d should be twice that of a human father? *Tosefot* cites a *gemara* (*Mesechta Nidah 31a*) which states that a newborn receives from each of his parents five components

of his being and ten others from G-d. Since G-d endows man with twice as much as the father it would follow that the sin against him is of double gravity and deserves double punishment if not for the limitation of *dayoi*.

• *Zevachim 69b*

THE BEHEADED ATONEMENT

The carcass of an animal that died not through *shechita* is a *neveila* which imparts *tuma* – ritual impurity – to one who touches or carries it. An exception to the rule is the carcass of the *egla arufa* – the calf which is beheaded in connection with an unsolved murder.

The Torah prescribed a ritual for the city nearest to the body of a man found murdered and the identity of the assailant is not known. The elders of that city beheaded a calf and declared that they were not negligent in providing the victim with food and escort and thus bore some responsibility for his death (*Devarim 21:1-9*).

One phrase used by the Torah in this chapter led the Academy of Rabbi Yannai to conclude that the carcass of that beheaded calf is not considered a spiritually contaminating *neveila*. "You will be forgiven for this bloodshed" promises G-d to those who perform this ritual. This usage of a term for atonement is found elsewhere in the Torah in regard to sacrifices whose purpose is to achieve atonement for a sinner. Just as an animal which is offered as a sacrifice does not have the status of a *neveila*, so too does the beheaded calf – albeit that it has not been ritually slaughtered – enjoy the same exemption from being a source of spiritual contamination.

• *Zevachim 70b*

רפואה שלמה עבור
לאה בת אלמה
בתוך שאר חולי ישראל

THE APPRENTICE

“You are children to Hashem, your G-d ...and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for a dead person.” (14:1)

Once there was a prince who was sent by his father the king to a distant village. The king wished him to learn there the ways of kingship. The prince spent many years in the village. Finally the king was satisfied that his son had extracted the maximum from his experience, and he summoned the prince to return to the palace. After his departure, the villagers' eyes filled with tears and they sat down and cried. There was one villager amongst them, however, who was amazed at their behavior. “Why are you crying?” he said, “Is he not the king's son? Has he not returned to the palace?”

The soul in this world is like a prince fulfilling an apprenticeship in a distant village.

We are here solely to learn the ways of the King. In this world, we are clothed with a physical existence. However, our entire focus and desire must be to return

to the palace.

The Torah forbids us make a bald spot between our eyes to grieve for a dead person as was the custom of idol worship. Interestingly, in that same place in the Torah we are commanded to place the *totafot*, the *tefillin* on the head. The Torah teaches us that when wearing the *tefillin* we must never remove our concentration from them. Similarly, we must never remove our focus from the purpose of this world, and turn the place of the *tefillin* into a bald and empty space by grieving too much for someone who has returned to the palace.

We must not mutilate our bodies in grief, for the body is no more than our clothing. It is not us. This physical world must never divert us from our apprenticeship in this world, whether through pleasure or through grief. The entire purpose of this world and our existence here is to be able to return to the world of truth having perfected ourselves.

If we remember this we will always be happy. For all life's vicissitudes will be seen as no more than part of our apprenticeship.

Source:
• *Sfat Emet*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

RE'EH

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be shechted anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to

death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee Year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from Hashem?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of Hashem and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “to Him (Hashem) you shall cleave.” How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the “source” of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under Hashem’s “special protection”?

Answers to Re'eh's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it; his descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate Hashem's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

THE MIXED BAG DILEMMA

The flesh of a *chatat* sin offering is eaten by the *kohanim* while the flesh of an *olah* burnt offering is completely consumed by the fire of the altar. An interesting problem develops when parts of a *chatat* become mixed up with those of an *olah*. There is no simple solution to burn all of them because the Torah prohibited burning on the altar anything which has remained for eating after a part of it has already been offered on the altar. Since the fatty innards of the *chatat* have already been offered on the altar the remaining flesh cannot be offered. The need to burn the *olah* parts and the restriction on burning the *chatat* parts thus create a halachic impasse.

Rabbi Elazar, however, came up with a solution. The ban on burning the *chatat* flesh is derived from the passage (*Vayikra 2:11*) which, in issuing the ban on offering leavened products or honey on the altar, uses a phrase which hints at a ban on offering anything from which a part has already been offered for burning. In the following passage, however, the Torah reiterates this ban by stressing that “they shall not be offered as a satisfying aroma”. Rabbi Elazar’s conclusion is that the ban on offering the flesh of the *chatat* applies only when the intention is to offer it as a sacrifice – “a satisfying aroma” for G-d – since G-d directed that it not be used for that purpose. If we view the *chatat* flesh as mere wood to fuel the fire of the altar, he contends, this ban does not apply. It is therefore possible to place this mixed bag of *olah* and *chatat* parts on the fire of the altar and to view the latter as mere fuel rather than an offering.

• *Zevachim 77a*

A CLASH OF TASTES

One of the most remembered features of the Pesach Seder, the “Hillel Sandwich”, is mentioned in our *gemara* in reference to the issue of whether different foods eaten together neutralize the

taste of each other. The position of the Sage Reish Lakish is that if one eats three different kinds of forbidden foods mixed together he is not liable for punishment by lashes because it is inevitable that as he chews these foods a portion of one will be combined with a larger portion of another and its taste neutralized. Since we cannot ascertain which of these foods was dominant in the chewing process the warning we issued before eating in order to make him liable for lashes is considered a dubious warning which cannot bring lashes in its wake.

This position is challenged by Rabbi Elazar who states that just as foods eaten in the performance of a mitzvah do not neutralize each other so too do forbidden foods not neutralize each other. The Mishnaic Sage who states that mitzvah foods do not neutralize each other is identified as Hillel. During the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* when Jews ate the flesh of the *Korban Pesach* (Paschal Offering) at their Seder in addition to *matza* and *maror* (bitter herbs), Hillel would make a “sandwich” and eat all three together. He interpreted the Torah command to eat the *Korban Pesach* “with *matzot* and *merorim*” (*Bamidbar 9:11*) as a requirement to eat them all together. This led to the conclusion that the taste of one of these foods did not neutralize the taste of the other and that he fulfilled all the *mitzvot* involved.

Although we have not yet merited to eat the flesh of the *Korban Pesach* at our Seder we do recall what Hillel did in his time by eating a *matzah-maror* sandwich after we have obviously fulfilled the *mitzvot* of *matza* and *maror* by eating them separately.

• *Zevachim 79a*

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PAIN AND GAIN

“Who is the man who has built a new house and has not yet inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it.” (20:5)

Rashi: “*and this thing will pain him*” Rashi’s comment on the above verse cannot mean that the thought of someone else inaugurating his new home will be extremely painful to him. For in the painful thoughts department nothing is more painful than the thought of death itself.

The Midrash teaches that when the Romans executed Rabbi Chananya for teaching Torah in public they wrapped him in his Sefer Torah and set it alight. To prolong his agony, they packed water-soaked wool around his chest. Rabbi Chananya said, “The parchment is consumed, but the letters fly up in the air.” The Roman executioner was deeply moved by Rabbi Chananya’s holiness and asked, “If I remove the wool from around your

heart, will I have a share in the World to Come?” Rabbi Chananya promised him that he would. The Roman then removed the wool, added wood to the fire to curtail Rabbi Chananya’s agony and jumped into the flames and died. A Heavenly voice proclaimed, “Rabbi Chananya and the executioner are about to enter the World to Come.” One thought of teshuva repentance can undo a life of sin.

And one thought of sin can undo a lifetime of teshuva.

The most important moment in a person’s life is his last moment. At that moment he has the potential to fix a lifetime’s wrongdoing. What a waste to spend that last moment immersed in the cares of this world rather than one’s gaze on eternity.

That’s what Rashi means when he says “*and this thing will pain him.*” How great will be this man’s pain should he spend his last moments thinking about his real estate rather than preparing himself to enter the world of truth.

Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem’s altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *sifrei Torah*, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn’t become haughty. Neither the *kohanim* nor the *levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel; rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains

how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided for an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased’s family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept “seek out a good *beit din*”?
5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of “*chazeh, shok, and keiva*.” Which ones?
11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to “prepare the way” to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
15. “Through the mouth of two witnesses....” What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four “scare-tactics” the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Shoftim’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof...*”
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, something told to another prophet, or prophesies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don’t understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - a. Clanging their shields b. Making their horses stomp and whinny c. Shouting d. Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 21:9- He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

DOING IT WITH DIGNITY

The sacrificial service in the *Beit Hamikdash* was performed with the dignity which is expected of a subject serving his king. The rule of thumb which the *gemara* here and in a number of other places applies is how one would approach an earthly ruler.

The Prophet Malachi rebuked the *kohanim* in the Name of G-d for showing disrespect for the sacrificial service. He accused them of conspiring to offer as sacrifices animals which were blind, lame or ill, and rhetorically challenged them.

“Please try offering it to your governor. Will he accept it and will he grant you your wish because of it?” (*Malachi 1:8*)

This criterion of what is fitting to offer an earthly ruler is applied in our *gemara* to an unusual situation. If an animal which has been designated as an *olah* burnt offering runs up to the top of the altar it is slaughtered there. Its carcass is flayed there and its body cut up for burning. A problem arises, however, in regard to its innards which have food wastes in them. These innards cannot be offered for burning while these wastes are in them because no one would dare bring such an excrement-laden gift to an earthly ruler. They must therefore be taken down from the altar, cleaned and only then returned for burning along with the rest of the sacrifice.

• *Zevachim 85a*

THE LONG NIGHT

Jews who include in their morning prayers the recital of the chapter of “tithing the ashes” which is at the beginning of *Parshat Tzav* are familiar with this ritual which initiated the daily service in the *Beit Hamikdash*. A *kohen* would take a shovelful of ashes from the altar where the parts of the *olah* sacrifice burned through the night and place them on the floor, east of the altar ramp.

When this was done depended on circumstances. The Torah states that the *olah* parts can be placed upon the altar for burning “all through the night until the morning” (*Vayikra 6:2*). Rabbi Yochanan calls attention to this apparent redun-

dancy and concludes that this is a subtle reference to the tithing of the ashes mentioned in the following passage. It is as if the Torah is telling us that this tithing can take place at the time when “dawn serves as the morning of the night” and even at an earlier “morning” during the night.

Since the Torah did not specify when that earlier time was our Sages fixed a timetable according to the circumstances. On an ordinary day this service would be performed around the time of the “crowing of the cock” – dawn. On Yom Kippur, when this service, like all other services of the day, had to be performed by the *Kohen Gadol*, his heavy work schedule for the day necessitated beginning at midnight. During the Three Festivals, when Jews made their pilgrimage to the *Beit Hamikdash*, there were so many sacrifices to offer that by the time the cock crowed the *Azara* courtyard was filled with Jews anxious to have their sacrifices offered from daybreak. Since it was impossible to then perform the tithing and there was much to do in preparing the altar for this multitude of sacrifices this ritual was conducted by a *kohen* at the end of the first third of the night.

• *Zevachim 86b*

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

We have news for you – that there is nothing new about the problems which Israel faces today in regard to its security and its economy.

Eretz Yisrael, say our Talmudic Sages, is a precious gift from G-d to His people Yisrael, but one with strings attached – along with it comes suffering.

This is clearly spelled out in two passages of the Torah portion we will be reading this Shabbat. “For as a father afflicts his son so does Hashem, your G-d, afflict you” (*Devarim 8:5*) is followed by “For Hashem, your G-d, brings you to a good land” (*ibid. 8:7*).

To understand the purpose of the suffering which accompanies this gift of the land the great Talmudic commentator Maharsha (*Mesechta Brachot 5a*) directs us to the passages which follow. In those passages we are warned not to forget G-d and abandon His commandments, and not to allow our prosperity to

make us conceited to the point that we say in our hearts “It is my power and the strength of my hand that has achieved this prosperity”. (*ibid 8:11-17*)

It is human nature that when things are going well there is a tendency to attribute our security and prosperity to our own abilities and efforts. In order to rescue us from the self-destruction of such an abandonment of G-d “Who is the One who grants you the power to achieve this prosperity” (*ibid. 8:18*), our merciful Father in Heaven has throughout history sent us reminders of our dependence on Him, either in the form of threats to our security or problems with our economy.

So there is really nothing new about these threats and problems. What is needed along with our human efforts to solve them is a return to recognizing the real source of our power and prosperity which alone can preserve Israel forever.

VIRTUAL SELF-DESTRUCTION

After commanding the people that upon entering *Eretz Yisrael* it is their responsibility to smash the altars of the heathens and completely destroy any vestige of idol worship, Moshe warns them that “You shall not do thus to Hashem, your G-d” (*Devarim 12:2-4*).

This warning, which we will hear read this Shabbat, has a special significance for Jews in every generation.

Rashi cites the challenge raised by the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Yishmael: “Is it at all imaginable that Jews would destroy the altar of G-d to necessitate such a warning?” The answer he provides to this rhetorical question is that Jews were cautioned to avoid behaving like the nations they replaced and thus cause the Sanctuary to be destroyed because of their sins.

Here we have a valuable lesson in “virtual destruction” of what is most sacred to us. What sane Jew, no matter how far

removed he is from religious observance, would dream of burning a synagogue? How much more so is the idea of destroying the *Beit Hamikdash* beyond the conception of any Jew.

But how many of those Jews are aware that it was the mistake our ancestors made in imitating the ways of heathen nations that brought about the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*, and it is their perpetuation of this tragic effort to abandon our Torah-true uniqueness in order to be like all the nations which prevents that *Beit Hamikdash* from being rebuilt?

Virtual destruction in the past and virtual prevention of reconstruction today must be replaced with a rededication to a Torah way of life which will merit for us an actual rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash* to sanctify Israel forever.

POWER CORRUPTS

“Power corrupts,” it has been said, “and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Despite the obsession much of the modern world has with democracy as a form of government, it must be remembered that in Biblical times *Eretz Yisrael* was ruled by a king with absolute power. In this week’s Torah portion we learn how G-d, who invested this king with his authority, ensured that this absolute power would not corrupt at all.

The king who ruled the Jewish people was limited in regard to many of the traditional trappings of royalty – women, treasure and horses. In addition, he was commanded to always carry with him a Sefer Torah to remind him of his responsibilities and to ensure that he would not become haughty and let his

power corrupt him.

Although these were specifically rules for a king there is no doubt that even within our democratic system in modern Israel there is a constant danger that the power invested by the electorate in a parliament and government can also cause these bodies to lose contact with the people who elected them and create programs which are insensitive to their needs.

Even if the people in power are not obligated to carry around with them an actual Sefer Torah they must always carry in their hearts the Torah ideals of justice and charity. Only thus will they be certain that their power does not corrupt them and allows them to properly serve their country.

DEPRESSION

From: J. S.

Dear Rabbi,
What's G-d's "take" on depression and what's the Torah's "take" on it as well? Thanks.

Dear J. S.,

First, G-d's and the Torah's "take" are one and the same. In general, when speaking of depression we must distinguish between depression caused by a medical condition, and one caused by things that upset us. The Torah's attitude toward the first type is that just as physical pain, digestive disturbances, and respiratory problems are due to physiological changes that can be corrected by medication, so too biochemical changes which affect the brain and cause depression can and should be balanced by appropriate medication. One must therefore consult the experts to undergo psychotherapy and/or take any of the many highly effective medications they prescribe to relieve clinical depression. We once had an interesting question about this:

Someone who was taking antidepressants asked since while depressed he used to pray with tears but now the medication makes it harder for him to feel the same connection to G-d, perhaps he should stop taking the medicine. Rabbeinu Yonah (Spain, 1200-1263) addressed this issue some 800 years ago: "Although there is a beneficial aspect to sadness – it prevents people from becoming overly joyous over the pleasures of this world – nevertheless one should not pursue the state of sadness, since it is a physical disease. When a person is despondent, he is not able to serve his Creator properly." While it is admirable that this person initially used his depression to feel close to G-d, clearly G-d prefers that he face the new challenge of finding spirituality as a healthy person.

Regarding the second type of depression, caused by things that upset us, G-d's "take" is that it is surely unacceptable. In the Kuzari, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi (Spain, 1075-1141) asserts, "It is not in accordance with the spirit of the Torah to worry and feel anguish throughout one's life; one who does so transgresses the Almighty's commandment to be content with what he has been given, as it says 'you shall rejoice with every good thing which the Lord your G-d has given you' (Deut. 26:11)." Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 1808-1888)

cites a talmudic objection to depression: "Judaism never considered pain, sorrow, self-affliction or sadness to be valid goals. The opposite is true – one should pursue happiness, bliss, cheer, joy, and delight. 'For the Shechina (Divine Presence) does not dwell in a place of sadness; it dwells only in a place where happiness reigns.'" The Zohar goes so far as to say that sadness has elements of idolatry since one's depression proclaims that he gives priority to his own desires over G-d's.

In truth, the Torah promises punishment for "not serving G-d your Lord with happiness and a glad heart" (Deut. 28:47). If we are accountable for sorrow, then it must be in our control. This is implicit in the words of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav who said, "It is a great mitzvah to be perpetually happy, and to overcome and reject feelings of sorrow and melancholy." The question is how to do it?

One way is through external measures. King Saul, who was extremely righteous and actually attained prophecy, felt depressed when the spirit of G-d departed from him. Saul called David to play music to help restore his prophetic spirit and thereby dispel his sadness. "And it happened when the spirit of melancholy was upon Saul, David would play the harp and Saul would feel relieved" (1 Samuel 16:23). While Saul was a spiritual giant and his sorrow was over nothing less than the lack of prophecy, even people on our level can use music to pick up our spirits. In fact, singing, dancing, exercise, engaging in the fine arts or any other healthy, uplifting activity are also good ways to get an emotional "jump-start".

As effective as these external methods may be, they often serve as a relief more than a cure. The most effective way to overcome depression, then, is to address the source of our sorrow by changing the way we think. The Baal Shem Tov noted that this idea is hinted to in the esoteric nature of the Hebrew language: rearranging the letters of the word for "thought" (*machshava*) results in the word "happiness" (*b'simcha*). Here are some examples:

A common source of unhappiness is unachieved goals. This can lead to low self esteem which may doom one to more failures, further erosion of self esteem, causing a downward spiral into the abyss of sorrow. One can prevent this vicious cycle by setting realistic goals from the outset. If sadness has already settled in, one can stop the snowball effect by setting short-term, easy goals that bolster one's confidence and in turn empower one to

achieve longer-term, more significant goals. This will initiate an upward spiral to level ground.

Another source of sorrow is feeling that we don't have everything we want. On this our Sages taught, "Who is truly wealthy? One who is content with his portion." I recently met a successful investment banker who confessed that the more he succeeded the more he felt he lacked until finally he had everything and yet felt he had nothing. On the other hand, a poor man once complained to the Maggid of Mezritch about his poverty. The Maggid sent him to Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli for advice. Rebbe Zusha, who himself suffered dire poverty and poor health, questioned in all sincerity, "I don't know why the Maggid sent you to me, I've got everything I need".

Finally, we often get depressed about bad things that happen. Contemplating the good in the bad helps mitigate one's melancholy. King David's son Avshalom rebelled against him, forcing him to flee: "David ascended the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went" (*II Samuel 15:30*). Nevertheless, David concluded that better the rebel be his son because another man would have killed him. In the end, not only did he not despair, he began to

sing: "A psalm of David when he fled from Avshalom his son" (*Psalms 3:1*). Also, one must realize that everything is from G-d for the ultimate good. An observer unfamiliar with surgery would consider it a most terrible act. The surgeon however understands it's for the patients good, sometimes saving his life. Ultimately there can always be a sudden turn-around. Abraham and Sara suffered being barren for a long time until suddenly, unexpectedly, they were blessed with a child who fathered the entire Jewish nation.

Sources:

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- *Simcha – The Spark of Life*, Rabbi A. A. Mandelbaum
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- *Rabbeinu Yonah*, *Berachot*, Rif p. 30
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- *Zohar*, *Parshat Yitro*, 87a
- *Likutei Moharan*, part 2, ch. 24
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- *Ethics of our Fathers*, 4:1
- *Berachot 7b*

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE RIGHT THING TO SAY

Question: When speaking or writing I often rely on an idea or a statement I heard or read. How important is it for me to cite the source?

Answer: Plagiarism is vigorously condemned by our Talmudic Sages. "Do not rob the poor because he is poor" (*Mishlei 22:22*), they say, is a warning against robbing credit from the originator, who may not be deprived of the money he anyhow lacks, but is the victim of plagiarism. In his commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim 156*, the great halachic authority Magen Avraham rules on this basis that one who fails to give credit to a source is guilty of a transgression.

There is a positive angle as well in mentioning your source. "One who says something in the name of another," say our Sages," brings miraculous redemption to the world".

The historic example is Queen Esther informing her husband, the Persian King Achashveirosh, of the assassination plot against him and mentioning that Mordechai was the source of her information. This resulted in the miraculous redemption of the Jewish people from the genocidal plot of Haman.

To practice what I preach I will now quote what I once heard in the name of the great ethicist of the previous generation, Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian of blessed memory, as an explanation of why citing a source is a catalyst for miraculous redemption. G-d deals with us in the manner which we deal with others. It is human nature to take credit for some important information and deny it to the source. One who is capable of breaking his own nature by citing the source becomes worthy of the Creator's breaking the rules of nature which He has created and making a miracle.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

JUST IN TIME!

An American youngster who spent a couple of years studying in a Jerusalem yeshiva for foreign students returned home to get married. Neither his family nor that of his *kalla* had sufficient funds to make a respectable wedding or to get the couple started with basic necessities.

The community to which they belonged pitched in to help them. The local synagogue offered free use of its

social hall and a caterer agreed to provide the meal at cost. But with so many startup expenses looming in the very near future there was room for concern.

Two days before the wedding the *chatan* received the good news that the ticket he bought in the raffle sponsored by his former yeshiva as a fundraising effort won the first prize of ten thousand dollars.

Not a bad wedding gift after all!

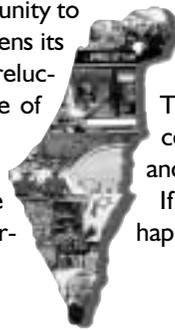
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

A REASON FOR ALIYA

So few Jews today take advantage of the opportunity to settle in *Eretz Yisrael* despite the fact that it opens its arms to welcome them. The reason for this reluctance is often the unwillingness to part with some of the comforts enjoyed abroad.

The prayers of Moshe Rabbeinu to be allowed to enter *Eretz Yisrael* which are mentioned in the Torah portion of Va'etchanan give us a totally differ-



ent insight. Why did Moshe so wish to enter the Holy Land, ask our Sages? Was it to enjoy its fruits and bounty?

The answer given is that Moshe was aware that there are certain *mitzvot* which can only be fulfilled in *Eretz Yisrael* and he longed for the opportunity to fulfill them.

If the goal of *aliya* is spiritual fulfillment, a person will be happy to make the move despite all the problems.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

In the Shabbat Parshat Korach issue of the Ohrnet Magazine our "Human Side of the Story" feature told the story of how Major Yaakov Engelberg was saved from death in a terrorist explosion on the Jerusalem bus he was riding. He leaned down to take out his *Mishnayot* volume for study at the moment that the bomb went off and sent deadly shrapnel flying over his head.

The concluding observation that "Thanks to his move for his *Mishnayot* volume Engelberg got away with only light wounds" seems to have upset Ohrnet subscriber Arie Ben Barouch Zvi from Lima, Peru. In a long e-mail sent to us on July 7th he criticized this approach, questioning the connection made between death and the failure to properly observe *mitzvot* or "not carrying a *Mishna* book". He concluded by declaring his opinion that this is "wrong and thoughtless and finally leads our people to superstition and fetishism".

Less than two weeks later something happened in Arie's native Peru which perhaps should make him reconsider his acerbic statements. Assaf and Boaz Friedman are two

Israeli youths who set out with an international group of mountain climbers toward the Alpamayo peak in the Peruvian Andes, but an illness prevented them from continuing with the group on Shabbat. By lagging behind a day and a half they missed the avalanche that killed two fellow Israelis and seven others.

No one suggests, as Arie mistakenly reads into our account, that all those killed and seriously wounded in the bus bombing were victims because they were any less observant than Major Engelberg. Nor do we dare suggest that the Israeli victims in the Peruvian avalanche died for not observing the Shabbat. Only G-d knows why some live and others die.

We do know what King Solomon taught us (*Kohelet* 8:5) that "one who heeds a *mitzvah* shall know no evil".

There are countless stories told in the Talmud, Midrash and Jewish literature throughout the ages of how the merit of a *mitzvah* tilted the scale of justice for its performer and saved his life. We shall continue this tradition and hope that our Peruvian subscriber will learn to appreciate it.