

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

DOES SHABBAT LIKE YOU?

“Remember the day of Shabbat to make it holy...”

May I ask you a personal question? How’s your Shabbat? Does every Shabbat make you feel suffused with holiness? Does every rock and building and tree whisper to you “Shabbat!” Do you feel so much closer to G-d than the rest of the week?

If the answer to one or more of these questions is no, then you should know you’re part of a very large majority.

Many people find Shabbat a burden: You can’t watch the TV. You can’t go to the ball game. You can’t go shopping. You can’t do this. You can’t do that. When is it going to be dark already?

And even if Shabbat isn’t a burden, and we enjoy the food, the company, the Shabbat nap, but do feel that we have left one reality and entered another world?

Why don’t we feel that *kedusha*, that holiness? Why don’t we feel Shabbat?

Many years ago, I remember a magic Shabbat. I prayed at the Wall and had the Friday night meal at some friends in the Old City. After the meal, as I was walking back to my apartment, I don’t know why, but I stopped for a moment, closed my eyes, took a deep breath, and said very quietly to myself “Ahh Shabbat!” And then I said it again, and again and again. I walked through the magical streets of Meah Shearim. I came upon a small synagogue. I went in and opened up a Talmud tractate and started to learn. I had never been in that synagogue before, and I’m

pretty sure that I couldn’t find it again. Maybe it only existed for that one night. Who knows?

I learned for a while. It could have been a few minutes or an hour. Then I got up and walked home. I got into bed and my last words before sleep overtook me were “Shabbat, Shabbat!”

You might think that Shabbat is a day in the week.

You might think that Shabbat is a 24-hour period of time between Friday afternoon and Saturday night.

You’d be wrong. It’s not.

Shabbat is a being. Shabbat is an existence with feelings and likes and dislikes. Shabbat can choose to come to you once in your life, or every week — or never. Because if you never felt Shabbat, it’s because it never came to you. It didn’t feel comfortable with you.

Because you don’t feel comfortable with it.

Shabbat is very sensitive, and very picky. If it senses that your commitment to it is shaky, then it won’t come to you. You can light your Shabbat lights and make Kiddush and eat your cholent to your heart’s content, but if you aren’t really there for it, Shabbat knows that, it senses that, and passes on down the block.

“Remember the day of Shabbat to make it holy...”

Every week, we have to remember to make Shabbat holy, to exert ourselves and infuse those precious hours with Torah, with spirituality, enthusiasm and *kedusha*, for if we *make* it holy then the Shabbat queen will arrive with all her retinue of blessings to crown our week.

• Based on Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz
in *Da’at Chochma U’Mussar*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hearing of the miracles G-d performed for *Bnei Yisrael*, Moshe's father-in-law Yitro arrives with Moshe's wife and sons, reuniting the family in the wilderness. Yitro is so impressed by Moshe's detailing of the Exodus from Egypt that he converts to Judaism. Seeing that the only judicial authority for the entire Jewish nation is Moshe himself, Yitro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice. *Bnei Yisrael* arrive at Mt. Sinai where G-d offers them the Torah. After they accept, G-d charges Moshe to instruct the people not to approach the mountain, and to prepare for three days. On the third day, amidst thun-

der and lightning, G-d's voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain and He speaks to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments: 1. Believe in G-d, 2. Don't worship other "gods," 3. Don't use G-d's name in vain, 4. Observe Shabbat, 5. Honor your parents, 6. Don't murder, 7. Don't commit adultery, 8. Don't kidnap, 9. Don't testify falsely, 10. Don't covet.

After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay G-d's word to them. G-d instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.

ISRAEL Forever

ISRAEL'S OTHER WAR

As if the war against Arab terrorism were not enough, Israel finds itself today facing another war. This time it is a war against organized crime, a problem that has suddenly received alarmed attention as a result of innocent bystanders losing their lives in the pitched battles between rival gangs.

The police are doing their best with their limited resources to eradicate this plague by cracking down on the suspected crime bosses and their underlings. But something must also be done about getting to the root of the problem.

The oft-quoted cynical remark of one of the secularist founders of the State that "we won't have achieved real statehood until we have a Jewish criminal in a Jewish jail" is hardly a comforting thought for a people whose mission is to be a "light unto the nations". To fulfill that mission we were

given a Torah and heard the Ten Commandments at Sinai, as is described in this week's Torah portion. The two sacred tablets upon which those commandments were etched are the two pillars of responsibility – the first dealing with man's obligation to his Creator and the second with his obligations to his fellow man. They are two units which are interdependent. If one does not respect the first tablet commandments to believe in G-d and the *mitzvot* that flow from that faith, it is highly unlikely that he will respect the prohibitions against stealing and murder on the second one.

If children are taught at an early age that religion is more important than materialism and even nationalism, there is hope that they will develop the proper respect for parents, teachers, classmates, and neighbors which will eliminate violence and crime from our society and sanctify Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE BANK SHARES THE WEALTH

In the highly competitive business of banking it is common to see these financial institutions spending large sums of money on advertising to attract new clients. But it certainly came as a surprise to the radio audience in Israel to hear a commercial from Bank Discount appealing for people to bring to its branches throughout the country old winter coats, sweaters, heaters, blankets and any other items which the bank would distribute to needy families "so that everyone would enjoy a warmer winter".

The bank did a great job of collecting the requested items as Jews once again demonstrated their generosity – and their inability to simply discard an item no longer in use. But when

it came to distributing the items the bank official in charge of the project realized that the best channel was a "G'mach" used-clothing center catering to the financially strapped large families in the chareidi sector. The director of the "Begged Yad Leyad" network of used-clothing centers was pleasantly surprised to hear a man from the bank call her to ask if he could deliver a large shipment to her central branch. She couldn't help but laugh when she recalled that upon hearing the commercial appeal she had wondered how a bank was going to handle distribution. Now that she got her answer she gladly welcomed the opportunity to help the bank share its new kind of wealth with the needy.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Yitro had 7 names. Why was one of his names *Yeter*?
2. News of which two events motivated Yitro to come join the Jewish People?
3. What name of Yitro indicates his love for Torah?
4. Why was Tzipora with her father, Yitro, and not with Moshe when *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt?
5. Why does verse 18:5 say that Yitro came to the desert — don't we already know that the *Bnei Yisrael* were in the desert?
6. Why did Moshe tell Yitro all that G-d had done for the Jewish People?
7. According to the *Midrash* quoted by Rashi, how did Yitro respond when he was told about the destruction of Egypt?
8. Who is considered as if he enjoys the splendor of the *Shechina*?
9. On what day did Moshe sit to judge the Jewish People?
10. Who is considered a co-partner in Creation?
11. "Moshe sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moshe...." What bothered Yitro about this arrangement?
12. Why did Yitro return to his own land?
13. How did the encampment at Sinai differ from the other encampments?
14. To whom does the Torah refer when it uses the term "*Beit Yaakov*"?
15. How is G-d's protection of the Jewish People similar to an eagle's protection of its young?
16. What was G-d's original plan for *Matan Torah*? What was the response of the Jewish People?
17. How many times greater is the "measure of reward" than the "measure of punishment"?
18. How is it derived that "Don't steal" refers to kidnapping?
19. In response to hearing the Torah given at Sinai, how far backwards did the Jewish people retreat in fear?
20. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 18:1 - Because he caused a Parsha to be added to the Torah. *Yeter* means addition.
2. 18:1 - The splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek.
3. 18:1 - Chovav.
4. 18:3 - When Aharon met Moshe with his family on their way down to Egypt, Aharon said to Moshe: "We're pained over the Jews already in Egypt, and you're bringing more Jews to Egypt?" Moshe, hearing this, sent his wife and children back to Midian.
5. 18:5 - To show Yitro's greatness. He was living in a luxurious place, yet he went to the desert in order to study the Torah.
6. 18:8 - To draw Yitro closer to the Torah way of life.
7. 18:9 - He grieved.
8. 18:12 - One who dines with Torah scholars.
9. 18:13 - The day after Yom Kippur.
10. 18:13 - A judge who renders a correct decision.
11. 18:14 - Yitro felt that the people weren't being treated with the proper respect.
12. 18:27 - To convert the members of his family to Judaism.
13. 19:2 - The Jewish People were united.
14. 19:3 - The Jewish women.
15. 19:4 - An eagle carries its young on top of its wings to protect them from human arrows. So too, G-d's cloud of glory separated between the Egyptians and the Jewish camp in order to absorb Egyptian missiles and arrows fired at the Jewish People.
16. 19:9 - G-d offered to appear to Moshe and to give the Torah through him. The Jewish People responded that they wished to hear the Torah directly from G-d.
17. 20:6 - 500 times.
18. 20:13 - Since it is written immediately after "Don't murder" and "Don't commit adultery," it is derived that "Don't steal" refers to a crime carrying the same penalty as the first two, namely, the death penalty.
19. 20:15 - They backed away from the mountain twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2000 cubits).
20. 20:22 - The altar was created to extend life; iron is sometimes used to make weapons which shorten life.

LEARNING A LANGUAGE

How long does it take to determine whether a student will succeed in the career course he is pursuing? In contrast to one opinion that it takes five years, a view based on the maximum training period assigned by the Torah to the Levites for their functioning in the Mishkan Sanctuary, it is the opinion of Rabbi Yossi that three years is the cutoff point.

His source is a passage which describes the training which the Babylonian king Nevuchadnetzer assigned to some aristocratic young Jews from Eretz Yisrael he had taken into captivity along with their king Yehoyakim and a portion of the populace. Anxious to exploit the extraordinary talent of this exiled nobility for his own purposes he ordered that the strongest and brightest of them be trained for service in his palace and be “taught the script and language of the Chaldeans... and thus developed for three years” (*Daniel* 1:4-5).

Rabbi Yossi rejects the position that five years are required based on the Levite precedent because learning the laws of service in the Mishkan was particularly demanding and is not representative of other courses of study. But why, it may be asked, were even three years necessary for such capable candidates as Daniel, Chananya, Mishael and Azariah to learn a language?

Malbim, in his commentary on *Daniel*, provides the answer. The language of the masses in Babylon was Aramaic while the intellectuals and royalty communicated in the poetic imaginative Chaldean style. To successfully serve such a powerful king and converse in this language one needed special strength of body, mind and spirit. These were indeed the prerequisites spelled out by the king who insisted that “they have the strength to stand in the king’s palace” (*ibid.*). There was also a need of three years of study, a period which Rabbi Yossi saw as a fair barometer for the maximum

length of time for every other course.

• *Chullin 24a*

SEARCHING FOR THE BONES

Avessel or garment that comes into contact with a spiritually contaminating agent such as a human corpse contracts a state of *tuma* impurity and must be purified in the way directed by the Torah.

Does every vessel come under this category?

The Torah teaches about this subject when it relates the aftermath of the Israelite victory over the Midianites when Moshe and Elazar Hakohen instructed the soldiers how to deal with the spoils they had brought back with them. While explicit mention is made of metal and wood vessels there is none in regard to vessels made of animal bones.

Rabbi Yishmael, the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Brokah, came to the conclusion that such vessels are indeed susceptible to *tuma* on the basis of his analysis of the passage listing such items. “All objects made of animal skins and all things made from goats” are included in this list (*Bamidbar* 31:20).

What exactly is meant by “things made from goats”? It cannot be a reference to garments made from goatskin because they already come under the heading of the previously mentioned “animal skins”. We must therefore conclude that this is a reference to vessels made out of the bones, horns and hooves of goats. The use of the term “all” indicates that this rule extends to vessels made of these parts of other animals besides goats as well.

The question then arises as to why the Torah singled out goats if this rule applies to all animal life. The answer is that the Torah wished to limit this rule about vessels made from bone to animals only and not to those made from the talons of birds which were also used in making vessels.

• *Chullin 25b*

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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TATTOOS

From: Steve in Boston, MA

Dear Rabbi,

I have a tattoo and I heard recently that the rabbis said it's wrong and that I couldn't be buried in a Jewish cemetery. I started asking around and heard it's just as bad to have the tattoo removed because it damages the body. I'm confused about all this, please help.

Dear Steve,

Not only did the rabbis say it's wrong to get tattooed; it's explicitly forbidden in the Torah: "You shall not print any marks in your flesh, I am G-d" (Leviticus 19:28). Our Sages explained this is referring to the scratching of the skin and applying ink so the writing is permanent. Today this is done in a more technologically sophisticated way than the crude methods used thousands of years ago, but the process remains identical in essence. According to the Rambam (Maimonides), the reason for the prohibition is because it resembles the practices of idol worshippers.

Even though getting a "decorative" tattoo is considered a sin for a Jew, it doesn't disqualify him from being buried in a Jewish cemetery. This seems to be a widespread misconception, and many people have asked us this question. Unfortunately, there are many things that Jews do either willingly or unintentionally against the Torah, but that doesn't prevent them from a Jewish burial. Tattooing is one of them.

Regarding having the tattoo removed, the Torah prohibition of tattooing only forbids scratching one's skin to fill it with ink, not scratching in order to remove the ink. There is, however, a separate Torah prohibition against inflicting a wound upon oneself (Deuteronomy 25:3). Would the "wounding" and painful skin-grafting involved in removing a tattoo forbid it?

Someone once asked Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, of blessed memory, about a young woman who wanted to increase her marriage prospects by undergoing cosmetic surgery. He permitted it for the following reasons:

The Rambam writes: "A person is forbidden to inflict a

wound, whether upon himself or upon others. And even...hitting someone in a *hostile or insulting way*...transgresses a Torah prohibition." From here we learn that the prohibition applies only when intended to damage a person, but not when it's for his benefit. Similarly, the Talmud relates how one of the Sages lifted up his cloak when walking through thorns. "Skin heals, clothes don't," explained the Sage. Even though he was scratching his skin, it wasn't done in a *hostile or degrading* manner, but rather in order to protect his belongings. In addition, the mitzvah to "Love your neighbor as yourself" would allow someone to wound another, with his consent and for his benefit, as in a medical procedure.

Since the cosmetic surgery is for the woman's benefit and is done with her consent, it's permitted. Likewise, a person may remove a tattoo, providing that the procedure is done by a recognized and qualified expert.

Rabbi Chanoch Teller relates the story of a young man from a non-religious upbringing who returned to traditional observance of Judaism. Remaining from his former lifestyle was a not-so-modest tattoo that he carefully kept hidden under his shirtsleeves. Before Yom Kippur, this young man went to the *mikveh*, the ritual bath, as is the custom. He embarrassingly tried to hide his tattoo, but slipped on the wet floor, revealing his mark of embarrassment to all. Utter silence, everyone staring at the sight, he couldn't find the strength to get up. Then, an elderly Jew approached him: "Don't be embarrassed," said the old man, lowering his arm to help him up. "I also have a tattoo," as he pointed to the numbers tattooed by Nazis on his forearm.

Sources:

- *Maccot 21a*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 180:1*
- *Rambam, Idol Worship 12:11. Rashi in Maccot says the reason for the prohibition is a "gezerat hakatuv", simply because G-d said so.*
- *Iggrot Moshe, Choshen Mishpat 2:66*
- *Rambam, Hilchot Chovel U'Mazik 5:1*
- *Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, shlita, was asked specifically about removing a tattoo and he permitted it.*
- *Rabbi Chanoch Teller, It's A Small Word After All*

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

ERETZ AVOTEINU – LAND OF OUR FATHERS

In the original version of the national anthem of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel there appeared a phrase about "Hatikvah" – the hope – of Jews to "return to the Land of our fathers".

The origin of this phrase is in the Torah and it twice appears in connection with the Patriarch



Yaakov. The first is when he receives a Divine command "to return to the Land of your fathers" (*Bereishiet 31:3*), and the second is when Yaakov blessed his grandchildren and informed their father Yosef of the gift his tribe would receive when G-d would "return you to the Land of your fathers" (*ibid. 48:21*).

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THE LONG WAIT

Question: Is it right for a *chatan* and *kalla* to take such a long time in the *yichud* room following the *chuppa* while so many guests are anxiously waiting to dance with them in celebration of their wedding?

Answer: While the time spent in *yichud* satisfies both a halachic requirement and an emotional need for the start of a marriage, there is no good reason why the wedding guests should be kept waiting for so long.

The usual explanation points an accusing finger at the

photographers who insist on taking pictures of the new couple before their appearance becomes disheveled in the dancing. One solution to this problem would be to take individual shots of the *chatan* and *kalla* before the *chuppa* so that less time has to be spent on turning the *yichud* room into a photo studio.

Even more important, however, is the need to impress upon the young couple the absurdity of forcing guests who came to share a wedding feast with them to wait for their appearance when the meal is almost over.

PUBLIC DOMAIN _____

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Re: Love of the Land feature in Ohrnet

How marvelous to be drawing attention to the beauty and importance of our Land! In keeping with this, may I suggest that you spell the Land of Israel with a capital "L" (upper case), which will give our Land the honor which it deserves. Though many unfortunately are not sensitive to this matter, it would be fitting for Ohr Somayach to do so! May you have much hatzlacha!

• Tzvia

Re: Name of Ohr Somayach (Ohrnet Vaera)

I read your response to the question about the name Ohr Somayach. I remember a story told by my Rebbe, Rav Shlomo Freifeld, *zatzal* about the name. About the time Ohr Somayach began the Rav Freifeld was in Yerushalayim and spoke to a group of students. He said that one of the eulogizers at the funeral of Rabbi Meir Simcha, the Ohr

Somayach, said that the reason he was so great was that he learned like the house was on fire. The administration realized that that was a good description of our times; i.e. "the house is on fire" and we better start doing something about it.

• M. N. in Telshe-Stone

Nice article about Rabbi Meir Simcha, but what does "Ohr Somayach" mean?

"Happy Light"? I guess it's a play on his name "Simcha," but is this also from a verse in Tanach?

• Stanley N. JLE Israel Summer '88

Ohrnet replies:

The translation of "Ohr Somayach" is "Happy Light".

Although the words are a concept very central to Judaism — light is analogous to the Torah which both brings happiness and is studied with happiness — the phrase "Ohr Somayach" does not appear in Tanach.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... _____

...A president and prime minister of Israel, its chief rabbis and many government ministers and Members of Knesset have been deeply impressed by their visits to Ohr Somayach.