

OHR NET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE ESSENCE OF LOVE

“G-d said to Moshe, ‘Why do you cry out to me..?’”(14:15)

No one knew G-d like Moshe. No one spoke to Him “face-to-Face” like Moshe. Why, then, did Moshe cry out to G-d when the Jewish People started to panic at the sight of Pharaoh and his hordes bearing down on them? Surely he, of all people, was confident that G-d would rescue them.

Empathy is the essence of love. What’s important to you is important to me. What concerns you, concerns me. Moshe cried out to G-d not because he had any doubt that G-d would save them, but because he loved the Jewish People so much that he couldn’t bear to see them gripped by mortal fear.

• *Based on the Sfat Emet*

REASONS TO BE MISERABLE?

“G-d will fight for you and you will remain silent.” (14:14)

Since 2000, anti-Semitic incidents in Germany have increased by 69%. Violent anti-Semitic crimes have jumped up nearly 100%. Similarly, Austrian monitoring agencies report that from 2002 to 2003 there was a 70% increase in anti-Semitic attacks and incidents. Of the 313 racist incidents reported in 2002 in France, 193 were directed at the Jewish community, 6 times more than in 2001.

Up until the year 2002, in Australia the annual average number of anti-Semitic incidents was 279. In 2003 there were 481 reports of anti-Semitic incidents, including a notable increase in physical violence and property damage (up 60% from 2002).

It’s easy to become despondent at the state of things. Every year seems to bring yet another downward turn, whether in the growing statistics of world-wide anti-Semitism, or, nearer to home, those who try and demonize Torah Jews with rhetoric that would have made Der Sturmer proud.

We don’t seem to have much going for us at the moment.

However, there’s one reason that should give us great optimism.

When G-d took us out of Egypt, He was, so to speak, duty-bound to protect us against our enemies. He led us out into a trackless wilderness. At that time, as it were, He was “obliged” to hear our pleas.

“G-d will fight for you — and you will remain silent.”

It’s not just when we have the right to petition that G-d will fight our enemies. Even when we have nothing to claim in our defense, when the Jewish People are very far from being able to maintain that they should be saved; when all we can do is to “remain silent” with nothing to say in our defense, even then will G-d save us from our enemies.

• *Based on The Meshech Chochma*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *B’nei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days’ travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces

potable water. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

THE GREATEST WONDER

What do you think was the greatest wonder of the Exodus from Egypt? One could point to the splitting of the sea in this week's Torah portion or to any of the ten plagues described in the preceding chapters. But the great commentator Ramban (Nachmanides) surprises us by insisting that the greatest wonder of all was the fact that Pharaoh, against all reason, pursued our ancestors into the sea where all his forces drowned.

Here was the leader of a superpower who had suffered the pain and humiliation of ten plagues before pleading with his Hebrew slaves to leave his country. Here was the witness to the most spectacular display of Divine intervention in the form of a highway in the sea for his intended victims. How was it possible then for him to insanely issue the suicidal order to charge into those deadly waters?

The answer has been provided by the wisest of men,

King Solomon, who wrote (*Mishlei 21:1*) that "the heart of the king is in the hand of G-d, and He can direct it however He wishes."

While individual man has free will to choose good or evil, the same freedom is not allotted to the ruler whose decisions affect his entire nation and sometimes others as well. When the time came for Pharaoh to serve as an historic lesson of what happens to a despotic ruler who stubbornly ignores the warnings of G-d's Prophet, his reason is removed from him and he rushes towards his own destruction.

This offers us a perspective on all of the puzzling decisions made by rulers throughout history. It also offers us hope for a Divinely orchestrated change of heart in our current enemies which will guarantee the security of Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE VICE PREMIER

There is an interesting story connected with the new Vice Premier of Israel, Shimon Peres. The source for the story is Rabbi Yisroel Gellis, a renowned Jerusalem educator and historian.

About 15 years ago he arrived at the Jewish cemetery of the city Volozhin during a visit to Lithuania. His group paid a local gentile to clean away the debris which covered the tombstones. In the course of examining the now-visible monuments, Gellis noticed that one of them marked the grave of Rabbi Meir Persky. This was the man who was responsible for reopening the famed Volozhin Yeshiva after it had been closed by its heads as a result of the interference of the Russian authorities in its educational program.

Upon his return to Israel, Gellis wrote to Shimon Peres (born Persky) about the discovery of his grandfather's grave. Peres invited him to a meeting in which he revealed to him

that his parents had lived in the town of Vishniva near Volozhin and asked Gellis to join him on his next diplomatic visit to Russia in order to direct him to his grandfather's grave.

When they arrived at the grave, Gellis relates, Peres put a *kippah* on his head and recited a few psalms of *Tehilim*. He also recounted to Gellis that when he was seven years old, his grandfather took him on a half-day's journey in a horse-drawn carriage to the sainted Chafetz Chaim in Radin. Like any Jewish grandfather, Rabbi Persky asked the Chafetz Chaim to bless his grandson to become a *gadol* in Torah, a great Torah scholar. The blessing that Peres remembers receiving was that he become a *gadol*, a great man.

"I indeed became a *gadol*," confesses Peres, "but not a *gadol* in Torah."

לע"נ
 מרת חויה שרה בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish people died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish people "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling?"
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the Parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's Parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

There is a statue in the town of Enterprise, Alabama in the U.S. honoring the boll weevil. This was the predatory insect which one year destroyed the entire cotton crop of that southern state whose entire economy was built on that product. Although it was initially viewed as a catastrophe, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise for it forced the people to diversify their economy by raising peanuts and livestock. In appreciation of the boll weevil's role in improving the state's economy the grateful citizens honored this erstwhile terror with a statue.

This was a modern version of what Rabbi Yosef teaches us in the meaning of the passage "I will praise you G-d for showing anger toward me. Your anger has been turned away and You have comforted me." (*Yeshayahu 12:1*) He offers a parable to teach the lesson of hidden blessings conveyed by this passage:

Two people set out to conduct business ventures. One of them sustains an injury from a splinter in his flesh which prevents him from embarking on a sea voyage which promised great profits. He instinctively begins to curse his bad fortune. Some days later he learns that the other fellow's ship has sunk. Now realizing that his injury saved him from a similar fate, he thanks and praises G-d.

The Talmud and Midrash are filled with stories of Sages who viewed every apparent misfortune as a blessing in disguise. A particularly striking one concerns a very generous contributor to charity by the name of Abba Yehuda who suffered a setback in his fortunes. He nevertheless gave away to the Sages collecting for a worthy cause half of his last remaining field. They prayed for his recovery and their prayers were soon answered. As he was plowing his last remaining earth, his cow fell into a pit and broke its leg. As he descended to raise it, his eyes were opened by Heaven to see a buried treasure. He then exclaimed what became the motto for all such discoveries: "It was for my benefit that my cow's leg was broken."

• *Niddah 31a*

VOICES AND LOOKS

Why, asked the disciples of Rabbi Dostai, is the voice of a woman so much more pleasant than that of a man? The answer he gave was to refer them to the source of each. Woman was created from the rib of man and when a rib is struck it emits a musical sound. Man was created from earth which emits only a dull thud when struck.

What follows this explanation in bringing this third *perek* of *Mesechta Niddah* to a close is a quote from *Shir Hashirim* where the beloved woman is thus praised: "For your voice is pleasant and your appearance beautiful" (*2:14*).

The commentaries differ in their explanation of this particular quote. Tosefot takes note that when the beloved man in this dialogue of lovers is praised, it is for being of a "clear and ruddy complexion" (*ibid. 5:10*) with no mention of the quality of his voice.

Maharsha understood that Tosefot intended to prove from the contrast between these two passages that a woman's voice is more pleasant than that of the man. He rejects this approach for two reasons. First of all, the obvious difference between the voices of the two genders needs no support from Tanach. Secondly, the passage pointing out the superior quality of the feminine voice should have been quoted by the disciples in their question rather than appear as part of the response. He, therefore, concludes that this passage is not related to the dialogue but merely appears as a nice way of ending the *perek*.

Another commentary, Iyun Yaakov, understood that Tosefot was attempting to answer a question which could arise from the dialogue between Rabbi Dostai and his disciples. Why, we might ask, did they not ask their master why a woman's looks are more pleasant than those of a man? The reason they did not ask this, suggests Tosefot, is because the man is also praised for his appearance and it is only in regard to the voice that a difference is made.

• *Niddah 31b*

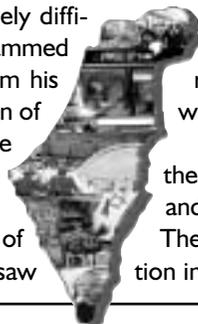
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

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

THE DESPOT'S DREAM

Life for the Jews in Jerusalem became extremely difficult when a ruffian by the name of Mohammed Farouk took control of the city in 1625. From his fortress in the Citadel of David he conducted a reign of terror which included arrests, floggings and torture in order to force the community to enrich him with ransom money.

Relief from this tyrant finally came on the 12th of Kislev that year. Farouk had a dream in which he saw



an old, well-dressed man strangling him. When he screamed and asked who his attacker was the response he received was "I am King David and you will surely die if you sleep another night in this city."

When he awoke Farouk loaded several camels with the plunder he had extracted from Jerusalem's residents and left the city, never to be heard of again.

The 12th of Kislev thereafter remained a day of celebration in Jerusalem.

RESURRECTION

From: Chad in Michigan

Dear Rabbi,

A friend of mine from college recently went to a talk by an Orthodox rabbi who made a reference to the Resurrection of the Dead in the context of the class. When he told me about it, I was shocked. I always thought Resurrection was a Christian belief. Does Judaism also believe in it?

Dear Chad,

Many people associate the belief in Resurrection with other religions and are surprised to know that it is an authentic, essential part of Judaism.

There are many references to Resurrection in the daily life and observance of a Jew:

One of the daily morning blessings, "*Elokai, neshama sh'natata bi*", directly refers to Resurrection: "My G-d, the soul which You have placed within me is pure. You created it...and You preserve it within me. You will eventually take it from me, and restore it within me in the Time to Come. As long as the soul is within me, I offer thanks to You...Master of all works, L-rd of all souls. Blessed are You, G-d, Who restores souls to dead bodies."

The second blessing of the *Shemone Esre*, the central prayer of the services recited three or more times a day, praises He Who "resurrects the dead with great mercy...and fulfills his trust to those who sleep in the dust.... Who can be compared to You, King, Who brings death and restores life, and causes deliverance to spring forth! You are trustworthy to revive the dead. Blessed are You, G-d, Who revives the dead."

There are a plethora of references to Resurrection in Jewish sources. Here are some Scriptural and Talmudic passages, as well as the opinion of early, authoritative commentators:

Then He said to me; "Son of man, can these bones become alive?" And I answered, "O Lord G-d, You [alone] know." And He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.' So says the Lord G-d to these bones: Behold, I will cause spirit to enter into you, and you shall live! And I will lay sinews upon you, and I will make flesh grow over you and cover you with skin and put breath into you, and you will live, and you will then know that I am the Lord. Therefore, prophecy and say to them, So says the Lord G-d: Lo! I open your graves

and cause you to come up out of your graves as My people, and bring you home to the Land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and lead you up out of your graves as My people. And I will put My spirit into you, and you shall live... (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

Rabbi Simai says: "Whence do we learn Resurrection from the Torah? From the verse, 'And I also have established My covenant with [the Patriarchs] to give them the Land of Canaan' (Ex. 6:4). The verse does not say 'to give you' but 'to give them.' [Rashi explains that since the Land was given to their descendants, and has not yet been given to them personally,] their future Resurrection is thus proved from the Torah" (Sanhedrin 90b).

An emperor said to Rabban Gamliel: "You maintain that the dead will live again; but they turn to dust - can dust come to life?" Thereupon the [emperor's] daughter said to [Rabban Gamliel]: "Here, let me answer him. In our town there are two potters: one fashions his vessels from water [glass], and the other from clay. Who is the more praiseworthy?" "He who fashions them from water," replied [her father]. She concluded: "If He can fashion man from water [Rashi, from a drop of liquid], surely he can do so from clay" (ibid., 91a).

Chiya bar Yosef said: "A time will come when the righteous will break through the soil and rise up in Jerusalem, for it is written, 'And they shall blossom out of the city like grass from the earth' (Psalms 72:16 and Ketubot 111b). Queen Cleopatra asked Rabbi Meir...when they arise, will they arise naked or clothed?" He replied, "You may deduce the answer by observing a wheat grain. If a grain of wheat, which is buried naked, sprouts forth in many robes, how much more so the righteous, who are buried in their garments" (Sanhedrin 90b).

Rambam summarizes the Jewish belief in Resurrection as follows: "The concept of Resurrection — which is well known among our people and accepted throughout all its circles, and which is often mentioned in the prayers and *aggadic* teachings and supplications (written by the Prophets and the foremost Sages) with which the Talmud and the *Midrashim* are replete — signifies the following: The soul will return to the body after they have been separated [by death]. No Jew has disputed this concept, and it cannot be interpreted other than literally. One may not accept the view of any Jew who believes otherwise" (Discourse on the Resurrection ch. 4). For this reason Rambam concludes his well-known Thirteen Principles of belief incumbent on every Jew with the emphatic affirmation: "I believe with perfect faith that the dead will be brought back to life when G-d wills it to happen".

Re: Israel Forever – Parshat Bo – “A Reminder from Outsiders”

Re: “A Reminder from Outsiders” (Parshat Bo), I quote from a Letter to the Editor of a South Carolina newspaper written by Earl G. Cox:

“Many listeners to my worldwide radio broadcasts have asked me why I am so passionate in my support of Israel and the Jewish people. I support Israel because I believe G-d’s word means exactly what it says. In the book of Genesis the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob says, “I will bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel.”

History clearly shows that every nation and person that has ever come against the people G-d calls the apple of His eye have been wiped off the face of the earth. Great and mighty empires such as the Byzantine Empire, the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire and so on are gone with hardly a trace of their once formidable existence, yet little Israel, a tiny country hard to find on a map, lives on. What G-d’s word says has and will continue to always be true.”

• Rosalie E. Moriah

A Slovak Wedding

I would like to react to the question of one of your readers, who has asked about the right time to arrive to a wedding as the *chupa* usually takes place later long after he arrives. I would like to point out that this person should realize how lucky the U.S. Jewish communities are to have *chupas* at all. I come from Slovakia and, because of the Holocaust, since World War II we have been waiting for decades to have a *chupa* here. So, what

does an hour or two really mean? *Chupa* is a *simcha* and everyone should enjoy it, even if he or she arrives too early. Please make your readers aware of the fact that there are countries in this world which are not as lucky as the U.S. That there are countries where there are no Jewish marriages any more and if there are, then perhaps once in ten years. Please tell all these impatient people that they should enjoy the *simcha* of a *chupa* whenever it happens and not be narrow-minded with time. They should thank G-d for having Jewish couples and marriages at all.

• Maria

Re: Ask! - Baby Maisehs

Regarding a source for refraining from letting a baby look in a mirror, I thought you’d be interested to know the following: My Rav is Rav Yosef Yitzchok Lerner, *shlita*, author of, among other *sefarim*, *Shmiras HaGuf V’haNefesh*. There, in the *miluim* in the back of volume two (2nd edition, page *tuf tuf*), he cites the *Shailos v’Tshuvos Be’er Moshe* of the *Debrinciner Rav*, 8:36, where he quotes his father as saying that one should refrain from showing an infant a mirror until he has teeth/starts talking. He notes that his father was strict about this, and this is apparently in keeping with the *Rashba* that one should not treat lightly a *minhag* until it is known to be wrong. Thus, while there is no classic source for this practice, as you stated, it is not entirely sourceless: both the *Be’er Moshe* and his father are highly regarded *poskim* whose words should not be lightly dismissed.

• E.

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

WHO GETS THE GOLD?

Question: At the peak of their long and warm friendship Reuven took an oath to give Shimon as a present a plot of land that he owned, and even made a *kinyan* to transfer the ownership according to the *halacha*. Their friendship soured, however, before Shimon actually took possession. Reuven realized that he had no way of backing out of his commitment but he did make plans to bring hundreds of workers to remove, under cover of darkness, the gold nuggets which were piled on that plot so that Shimon would be left with only the land. Was this the right thing to do?

Answer: Such a case actually happened between two friends in Bochara half a century ago. When consulted on this matter, Rabbi Dov Ber Wiedenfeld, the *rav* of *Tshebein* who spent his last years in Jerusalem, ruled that the treasure belonged to Shimon. As proof he cited a point made by *Ramban* in his

commentary on the Torah.

When a Jew made his declaration about fulfilling his obligations regarding tithing his produce, he concluded with an appeal to G-d to look mercifully upon His people and the “Land which You gave us in fulfillment of Your oath to our ancestors to give them a Land flowing with milk and honey” (*Devarim 26:15*). In G-d’s oath, comments *Ramban*, we find only that He committed himself to giving them the Land. No mention is made of its flowing with milk and honey. The conclusion then is that since *Eretz Yisrael* was indeed flowing with milk and honey when the oath was made, it is considered as if these ingredients were included in the commitment. In similar fashion, since the gold treasure was on the plot of land when Reuven transferred ownership to Shimon, Reuven has no right to remove the gold which is considered part and parcel of the land which was gifted.