

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE HOUSE OF FEAR

“I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery.” (20:2)

A bright sunny day at the beach; everything is quiet and peaceful. Suddenly in the distance you see a wall of water the height of a building rolling inexorably towards you.

One can only guess how it must have felt to be sitting in a deck chair seeing death approaching. A person who believes in G-d placed in such circumstances certainly understands what it is to fear G-d in a way that few of us will ever experience.

Our relationship with the Creator of the world can only be based on one of two things. Either fear or love. Those are the two channels that the Creator has chosen for us to relate to Him. Take it or leave it.

Nowadays fear is pretty much out of fashion. It's non-PC to fear G-d. G-d is a nice G-d. He's my friend. We go for walks together. Nowadays we want to hang-out with G-d. We want to “chill” with Him. We're not even sure whether we should spell ‘Him’ with a capital ‘H’ anymore. After all, that puts a kind of barrier between us (or should it be ‘Us’.)

If a person has no fear of G-d, he also has no love for Him. By fear of G-d, I mean that a person is very careful with his relationship with Him. Any relationship where what I do has no consequences to that relationship is really no relationship at all. No marriage in the world can survive the total indifference of one partner to what the other wants. G-d told us what He wants. He wrote it down in the Torah. If we ignore what He wants, can we still claim to have a relationship with Him? What kind of

relationship is that?

In Hebrew, one of the words for an idol is *elil*. *Elil* is the diminutive form of the word *E'l* (a name of G-d). In other words, idolatry is bringing G-d down to my level, to make “Him” into just “him”.

Fear of G-d means living in a fashion that I understand that G-d can and will do anything He chooses – and that what He chooses to do is in direct response to what I do. That's called having a relationship.

But the relationship doesn't stop there. Fear of G-d is just the beginning of the relationship, but it is not its end. The end is love.

For when I introspect on the fact that all G-d wants is my good – and no being understands what that good is better than Him – the feeling that emerges from that contemplation is called love.

The whole time that the Jewish People were in Egypt, their relationship with G-d was one of fear. Their daily fear was that they would never escape the crushing oppression of Egypt. After they left, however, and that fear was removed, their relationship with G-d was one of love, for they recognized the great kindness that He had done in freeing them from their crushing enslavement.

Someone who serves G-d just out of fear is like a slave who fears his master. The relationship is real but it is lacking a higher level. Someone who serves G-d out of love, however, is like a son who loves his father.

“I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from house of slavery.” By taking the Jewish People out of Egypt, G-d also took them out of the “house of slavery.” They became like sons who serve out of love, not just out of fear.

• Based on *Kedushat Levi*

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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 thunder and light-

ning, 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

AN AMERICAN ECHO OF A MIDIANITE PRIEST

When the Midianite priest Yitro decided to join the people of his son-in-law Moshe, we are told in this week's Torah portion that he rejoiced upon learning all the kindness shown by G-d to His chosen people.

The relationship between Jews and their G-d made a great impression on another great statesman more than 3,000 years later. As an example of how wise men of all nations viewed Israel's role forever, we offer these excerpts from a letter written in 1806 by John Adams, second U.S. President, to F.A. Van der Kemp:

"I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other Nation. If I were an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had

ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the Nations. If I were an atheist of the other sect, who believe or pretend to believe that all is ordered by chance, I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization... They are the most glorious Nation that ever inhabited this Earth. The Romans and their Empire were but a bauble in comparison of the Jews. They have given religion to three-quarters of the Globe and have influenced the affairs of Mankind more, and more happily, than any other Nation, ancient or modern."

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

MAGIC MICHAEL

What is an Orthodox immigrant from Baltimore, U.S.A. doing with a case full of balloons, musical instruments and all sorts of gadgets in a hospital for kids in Jerusalem?

The answer is that Michael Tulkoff (aka "Magic Michael") has arrived at Alyn Hospital, the national pediatric and adolescent rehabilitation center, to do his weekly session of entertaining the kids. Proudly billing himself as the "only medical magician in the Middle East", Michael also helps out with his endearing clown-like antics in the general pediatric wards of Dana Children's Hospital in Tel Aviv and the Safra Children's Hospital at Sheba in Tel Hashomer.

The hospital staffs are very enthusiastic about Michael's impact on the youngsters. As he wanders through the wards

he greets every patient by name. Not all of these incapacitated patients are capable of returning the greeting but they acknowledge it with widened eyes.

Just one example of what he achieves is the story of his encounter with a 17-year old victim of cystic fibrosis, a living skeleton attached to a respirator, who used a communication board to spell out that he wants to die. Michael told him a story he liked and then proceeded to build up his self-esteem and raise his spirits with a variety of magic tricks. Before leaving, Michael placed his hand on the youngster's curled fingers as a sort of handshake.

Michael felt good when a visitor sitting next to the boy told him, with tears in his eyes, that this was the first time this unfortunate boy had actually smiled.

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.

BEYOND CONCEPTION

When Ruth conceived a child who was to be the grandfather of King David, an unusual term is used in describing this development. Rather than the usual “she conceived” found elsewhere in Tanach, the passage in the Book of Ruth (4:13) relates that “G-d granted her *harayon* (conception)”.

In our *gemara* the Sage Mar Zutra calls attention to the *gematria* – numerical value of the letters – of the word *harayon*. The letters of this word add up to 271 and this is understood to be a hint that this is the number of days in a full-term pregnancy.

In his commentary on Ruth, the Malbim offers an interesting explanation of this unusual terminology. Boaz was a very old man when he married Ruth. The Midrash states that he passed away the morning after his wedding. Ruth had not borne any children in her earlier marriage to Machlon who was a young man. For her to now conceive from such an aged husband was not natural and this is what is meant by the stress on Divine intervention expressed in G-d granting her the ability to conceive the child who would be the progenitor of the royal House of David.

• Niddah 38b

THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF IMPURITY

Neveila – the flesh of an animal which died – causes ritual impurity for the one who touches or carries it. When it comes to the *neveila* of a fowl which would be permitted to be eaten had its death been caused by *shechita* (ritual slaughtering), the only way that it causes ritual impurity is by being eaten.

This seems paradoxical for if the *neveila* of an animal can cause ritual impurity even through external contact, it would seem logical for it to achieve the same effect if this contact were internal through eating. One passage in the Torah, however, serves to eliminate the possibility of the *neveila* of an animal having this power.

In prohibiting one who ate *neveila* from eating from sacrificial flesh, the Torah states “He shall not eat from it to become ritually impure because of it.” (*Vayikra* 22:8) The fact that the passage stresses eating as the manner in which this impurity is caused is seen as an indication that it is referring only to the *neveila* of a kosher fowl, and not to the *neveila* of an animal which can cause such impurity even through touching or carrying. But even an attempt to extend this rule about eating thus stated in regard to fowl to include animals as well is eliminated by the concluding words “of it,” which strictly limits impurity caused by eating to fowl alone.

• Niddah 42b

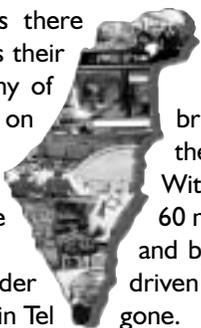
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

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

A HEAVENLY SIGN

The German forces under General Rommel were advancing towards Eretz Yisrael and Jews there feared that they might face the same fate as their brothers in Europe. In the summer of 1941 many of them gathered at the grave of the Ohr Hachayim on the Mount of Olives. They chose to do so on the day of his Yahrzeit in order to give greater power to their prayers for Heavenly deliverance from the threatening Nazis.

Among the worshippers was the Chassidic leader Rabbi Yisrael of Hasaytin who had set up his court in Tel



Aviv a few years earlier. The crowd was stunned as he suddenly cried out, “The wicked will not come. They will not enter Eretz Yisrael!”

“I have just seen the Divine Name of G-d shining brightly,” he explained. “This is a Heavenly sign that the enemy will never enter the land.”

Within a year Rommel was stopped at El Alamein only 60 miles west of Alexandria on the Israel-Egypt border, and by the beginning of 1943 the German forces were driven so far back that the threat to Eretz Yisrael was gone.

לע"נ
ר' יחזקאל יצחק בן ר' אליעזר ליפא ז"ל
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

URIM AND TUMIM

From: Janet in AZ

*Dear Rabbi,
I have been studying scripture and came to the “Urim and Tumim”. What exactly were they and what was their exact purpose? Thanks in advance.*

Dear Janet,

The *urim* and *tumim* are associated with the breastplate worn by the High Priest. This breastplate had twelve precious stones, arranged in four rows of three, upon which the names of the tribes were engraved: “The stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve in their names, engraved, each person with his name on it, for the twelve tribes” (Ex. 28:21). A later verse instructs, “And you shall place in the Breastplate of Judgment the *urim* and the *tumim*, and they shall be on Aaron’s heart when he comes before G-d, and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before G-d, always” (Ex. 28:30).

While the High Priest’s wearing of the breastplate atoned for the Court’s mistakes in judgment, the *urim* and *tumim* inside the breastplate dispensed judgment of their own. Rashi explains that when the Jewish People needed to know something of great import, the *urim* and *tumim* could be consulted to reveal the will of G-d, as in the verse, “Before Elazar the priest, [Joshua] will stand and seek from him the judgment of the *urim*” (Numbers 27:21). *Urim* and *tumim*, Rashi explains, refers to a special name of G-d that was written and placed in the fold of the breastplate through which the breastplate illuminated and clarified its message. This, the Talmud explains, is the source of its name: *urim* being related to ‘or’, the Hebrew word for light; *tumim* being related to ‘tam’ meaning perfect (Yoma 73b).

Ramban describes the phenomenon in greater detail: “[The *urim*, (specifically)] were holy names, by whose power the letters on the stones of the breastplate lit up to the eyes of the priest who was asking for judgment.

For example, when they asked ‘who should lead the way for us to fight against the Canaanites?’ the priest would concentrate on the Divine names which are the *urim*, and the letters would light up to his eyes... [But] he still did not know their correct order, for from the letters which can be ordered ‘*Yehuda ya’aleh*’ (Judah shall go up) it is possible to make of them... ‘*hey al Yehuda*’ (woe unto Judah) and many other words.”

Therefore, Ramban continues, “there were also other holy names called *tumim*, by whose power the heart of the priest was made perfect in the knowledge of the meaning of the letters which lit up to his eyes, for when he concentrated on the *urim* and the letters lit up, he then immediately meditated on the names which are the *tumim*, while the letters were still lit up to his eyes, and there appeared in his heart that the order was ‘*Yehuda ya’aleh*’ (Judah shall go up). This is one of the levels of Divine inspiration, lower than prophecy, and higher than a Heavenly voice...”

The *urim* and *tumim* were often consulted throughout Biblical times. Some noted examples are upon the Israelites’ conquering the Land of Israel from the Canaanites (above), the Tribes’ warring against Benjamin on account of that tribe’s evil deeds (Judges 20), Samuel’s selecting Saul as king (I Sam. 10), and David’s warring against the Philistines (ibid. 23, see also Berachot 3b).

However, the priest was not always able to figure out what the letters were saying. There is a famous account about the High Priest Eli and the barren Hanna, who prayed fervently to G-d for children:

“But Hanna was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, and her voice was not heard, and Eli thought her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her: Until when will you be drunk? Throw off your wine from upon yourself. And Hanna answered and said: No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit...and I poured out my soul before the Lord. Mistake me not as an unscrupulous woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and my vexation have I spoken until now” (I Sam. 1).

As Eli observed her, he read the letters appearing on the Breastplate as Shin-Cof-Reish-Hay: *Shikorah* — a drunken woman. In fact the correct reading was Cof-Shin-Reish-Hay: *Kesheira* — a worthy woman.

Re: Tsunami and Unity (Ohrnet Special Feature Parshat Bo)

In *lashon hakodesh* — the Hebrew language — everything has a singular and plural form. The exception is the word Adam (Hebrew for person). When all people feel a togetherness as if they were a single person they deserve to be called by the singular plural term Adam.

The word *mayim* — water is also an exception as it only has a plural.

• Judah

Ohrnet replies:

Dear Judah,

Thank you for your observation re the word mayim. Bear in mind, however, that water is water wherever it is so that there cannot be a distinction between singular and plural, in contrast with Adam who is both an individual and part of a race.

Baby Phone Booth

In your advice to the woman concerned about *tznius*

(modesty) when nursing her baby, you advised her to use a phone or photo booth. I believe that it should be pointed out that if there is any possibility that she will cause the company to lose money by preventing a customer from using it during that time, she should find another place. In addition, women who have nursing babies need to plan ahead (as much as possible) for the inevitable need to nurse their babies and maintain *tznius*.

• Rabbi E.

Baltimore Ethics and Stories

Dear Ohrnet Rabbi,

Remember me from the Where What When magazine in Baltimore and Silver Spring?

Could we reprint some of Rabbi Weinbach's Ethics questions and answers or stories from the Human Side of the Story? Thanks.

Sincerely,

• Elaine Berkowitz

Ohrnet replies: We grant permission with pleasure, on condition that credit is given.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE "HITCH" IN HICHTAKING

Question: A late night appointment in Jerusalem kept me in the city after the last intercity bus had left. I had no way of getting back to my home in Bnei Brak except for hitching a ride, a fairly common practice in Israel. As I stood waiting for what Israelis call a "tramp" at the informal "*trampada*" hitching station at the exit of the city, a fellow hitchhiker rushed ahead of me to grab the ride in the car which stopped near me. Is this the right thing to do?

Answer: It all depends on what the accepted custom is at the particular site where hitchhikers wait to catch a ride. In his response to this question, Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, the rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Beni Brak, distinguished between places where hitchhikers stand in line and where they each stand a short distance

away from each other. Where there is a queue it may be assumed that the driver offering a lift did not have any individual in mind. It is therefore commonly assumed that the one who waited longest deserves first crack. But if there is no queue and the car stops in front of the "trampist" who arrived last, his acceptance of the offered ride cannot be challenged by those who arrived at the site earlier. It may well be that the driver decided for some reason that he was a more desirable passenger, or that it was the *mazal* of that particular hitcher that the car should stop in front of him.

It should be noted, however, that tragic situations have sometimes arisen from a lack of caution in regard to which rides to accept. So be careful that there is no hitch to your hitchhiking.