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PARSHA INSIGHTS

TRANQUILITY BASE

“Yissachar is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries. He saw tranquility that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant, and he bent his shoulder to bear and he became an indentured laborer.” (49:14)

Every year people pay over \$300 billion for prescription drugs. Tranquilizers, sleeping pills, antidepressants and other Central Nervous System drugs account for an estimated \$76 billion of those sales. Approximately 10% - 20% of the world's population use tranquilizers and sleeping pills. Over the age of 60 years, the figure rises to 30%. Of this age group, many had tranquilizers prescribed at a much younger age and have become “accidental or involuntary addicts”.

In the world in which we live, the price of tranquility is very high.

“He saw tranquility that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant, and he bent his shoulder to bear and he became an indentured laborer.”

Something doesn't quite make sense in this verse. If Yissachar saw that tranquility was good, why should he have “bent his shoulder to bear,” why did he exert himself? If tranquility is so great, then why not take it easy? Kick back! Chill!

Obviously then the kind of tranquility of which Yissachar was thinking was not physical tranquility.

If we base our equilibrium on our physical well-being, we will always be a hostage to circumstance.

Imagine. You get to the airport and find that your flight has been delayed eight hours. When you finally board the plane, you discover that there's not enough

food for you. You are sitting in an aisle seat and a quarter of an hour into the flight you discover that the person sitting next to you is suffering from chronic in-flight *wanderlust* (nasty, but fortunately not contagious). This person gets up and down from his seat on average about six times an hour. You arrive at your destination feeling like a *shmatte*.

If our tranquility depends on our physical repose, life becomes a myriad of minor inconveniences sprinkled with some real bummers.

However, if we find our equanimity through bending our shoulders to bear the task of being better people closer to G-d, then we will have found our true tranquility base.

If our tranquility depends on our physical repose, life becomes a myriad of minor inconveniences sprinkled with some real bummers.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of *Eretz Yisrael* and

the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Efraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

ISRAEL Forever

TIME FOR A CHANGE?

One of the hottest topics of discussion in Israel these days is whether the time has come for a change in the system of government. The recent upheavals in the traditional political parties have cast a gigantic question mark on the viability of the parliamentary system which has existed since the beginning of statehood.

A major criticism leveled against politicians in Israel is that they insist on holding on to their seats of power long after the time has come for them to step down. A reminder of this tendency is found in the commentary of Ramban on this week's Torah portion.

In his deathbed blessings to his sons the Patriarch Yaakov promised that the "scepter of royalty" shall never depart from the Tribe of Yehuda. When the Hellenist

Greeks were conquered by the Hasmoneans these kohanic descendants of Levi assumed the role of kings of the Jewish nation. They were indeed saintly Jews who saved their people from religious oppression but their failure to relinquish power to the tribe of Yehuda brought upon them the tragedy of Herod's wiping out the entire family.

Political power is a great responsibility. When *Mashiach* arrives it will transfer back to him as the descendant of Yehuda. Until then it should be in the hands of the people best qualified to use it for the benefit of the people and not for their own ambitions. We certainly hope that Heaven will guide the people in choosing the right leaders to hold the fort until *Mashiach* arrives to lead Israel forever.

לע"נ

מרת חויה שרה בת מרדכי ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “*chesed shel emet*” — kindness of truth?
2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn't want to be buried in Egypt.
3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?
4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat...” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?
6. What does *pillalti* mean?
7. What does “*Shechem*” mean as used in this week's parsha? (two answers)
8. Which individual is called “the *Emori*”? Why? Give two reasons.
9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?
10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?
11. What congregation from Yaakov's offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?
12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?
13. What does milk do to teeth?
14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey”?
15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?
16. In Yosef's blessing Yaakov said, “They embittered him...” Who are “they”?
17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.
2. 47:29 - a) Egypt's ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn't make him into an idol.
3. 47:31 - Bow to him.
4. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef's mother, Rachel, in the *Ma'arat HaMachpela*.
5. 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
6. 48:11 - “I thought.”
7. 48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.
8. 48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (*imrei pi*).
9. 49:1 - When *mashiach* will come.
10. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
11. 49:6 - Korach and his congregation.
12. 49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.
13. 49:12 - It makes them white.
14. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
15. 49:20 - Oil-rich land.
16. 49:23 - Yosef's brothers, Potifar and his wife.
17. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
18. 50:5 - From Esav.
19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh's ignorance of Hebrew.
20. 50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the *aron* (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

לע"נ

מרת לאה בת יצחק אייזיק ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Sitting on a tree and carrying under its branches
- Walking on grass
- Marital relations and learning from animals
- Locking and opening doors
- Making partitions in a ship
- Difference between *Beit Hamikdash* and outside in regard to restoring door which fell off a hinge, resetting a bandage and tying harp-string
- Removing a blemishing growth and which rabbinical restrictions are waived for purpose of a sacrifice
- A bandage for a wounded *kohen*
- Salt on the altar ramp and water drawn with a pulley
- Knocking on the door and other forms of making sound
- The special well
- Ridding the Sanctuary of a contaminating dead *sheretz*
- Entering the Sanctuary for purpose of repair
- Leeway in calculating *techum* limit

CHILDBIRTH AND CHILD-RAISING NO CHILD'S PLAY

As atonement for the sin of the first woman in eating from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge all women were destined to suffer in regard to bearing and raising children. Three different states of suffering are mentioned in the Torah (*Bereishet* 3:16) which Rabbi Yitzchak bar Avdimi identified as raising children, pregnancy and birth.

Marharsha raises a question in regard to this order since raising children is chronologically the final stage and should have been mentioned last and not first.

We may find somewhat of an answer to this in the words of Moshe (*Bamidbar* 11:12) when he complained to G-d that he was overwhelmed by the responsibility of leading his difficult people. "Was I pregnant with this entire nation," he cried, "and did I give birth to it that You tell me to carry it in my lap like one who raises a baby!"

In his commentary on the Torah, Ramban thus explains Moshe's reference to childbirth:

A woman is capable of enduring the pain of raising her children by recalling how much she suffered with them in pregnancy and birth. But Moshe had no such experience with the people whom he was asked to lead like a mother.

Even though the pain of raising children comes after pregnancy and birth, it is perhaps mentioned first in the atonement prescribed for Chava and her female descendants because the intensity of this suffering will be mitigated by the memory of the two stages which came before.

Doesn't the man also suffer the pain of raising children? asks Maharsha. Although our Sages' statement (*Sanhedrin* 19b) that Yaakov redeemed Avraham from the pain of raising so many children indicates that a man shares in this suffering, the brunt of the pain is still borne by the mother.

• *Eirubin 100b*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Why does the Prophet Micha compare the best of our people to thorns? Just as thorn bushes are planted at an opening to a field to protect the field against intruders, so do the best of our people protect the entire nation."

• *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania - Eirubin 101a*

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IN FEAR AND LOVE

From: Mike

Dear Rabbi,

When reciting the kavanah before putting on tallit, tefillin, etc... it says, "For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His Presence, in fear and love..."

Can you explain what the "fear and love" means here? The word for fear here is not yirah, which I know is fear/awe, but d'hilu. The yirah kind of fear makes sense to me, and that is certainly my kavanah when davening. But I'm not sure what this other kind of fear is. I usually tend to think of fear as a bad thing, or an impediment, or at best the most base possible reason to do something good (i.e. fear of punishment). In some ways I'd rather fear G-d than anything/something else, but mostly, fearing that which I love most would seem to be torturous. I'd also rather my intention be in awe/yirah and love/ahava than the wording used in this prayer. The word for love here is also different; is r'himu from rahamim/mercy?

I've been thinking about the effect of fear in my life in general, so this is important beyond this particular context for me too. I looked in Derekh G-d and Mesillat Yesharim, and

both talk about yirah but not d'hilu.

Dear Mike,

Your question is a great question! I think that the answer lies in the words of the Rabbis who teach us that both fear and love are essential ingredients to our becoming closer to G-d. Even though we always assume that fear is something negative the rabbis teach that, when used properly, fear is a very healthy dimension that allows us to retain a balanced perception of G-d. Yaakov Avinu uses the phrase Pachad Yitzchak (the Fear of Yitzchak) in describing his father's relationship with G-d, (see Genesis 31:42), and the commentaries all try to explain what it was about Yitzchak that connects him with fear. The Ibn Ezra writes that the fear of Yitzchak was good for Yaakov as it balanced his relationship with G-d (which was based more on love). Rav Moshe Sternbuch, however, writes in Ta'am v'Daat that Yitzchak's whole approach to worshipping G-d was through the dimension of fear and it was exactly because of that that Yitzchak's connection to G-d grew greater every day.

Accordingly, it seems that we must reevaluate what fear is. When applied to living here in this physical world it does not normally add a positive dimension to a person's quality of life, but, when applied to fulfilling the Commandments properly and trying to achieve even greater spiritual heights than previously reached, it can be one of the most important and exhilarating emotions available.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

BAD NEIGHBOR POLICY

Question: A friend of mine is planning to buy an apartment in a particular building. I am aware that his immediate neighbor in that building is a very difficult person. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The Talmudic Sage Netai of Arbel counsels in *Pirkei Avot*: "Place a distance from a bad neighbor." One of the commentaries calls attention to the fact that this Sage did not say "Stay away from a bad neighbor" which would have sufficed as advice for personally avoiding a problematic neighbor. By instead phrasing it as he did, another

message was intended – place a distance between your friend and a bad neighbor!

There is no need to hesitate doing so out of fear that you may be transgressing the laws of *lashon hara* because it is not only permissible to reveal something which may harm another but is even the right thing to do.

As regards your friend's hesitation to accept your warning, our Sages have already ruled that even if one refuses to believe a bad report about another person, he must nevertheless exercise the caution such a warning warrants.

LOOKING AT LAWYERS

While once walking with a guest, the rav of the Latvian community of Dvinsk, Rav Meir Simcha Hacoheh, was asked who owned a magnificent mansion they had just passed.

The reply was that he was the most expert lawyer in the country.

"Are you not the greatest expert in your profession?" asked the guest. "Why is it that you don't own such a beautiful home?"

The rav, who was considered one of the great Torah scholars of his generation, modestly replied:

"It is the conflicts among Jews which supply the income for lawyers while my livelihood depends on their good deeds. We all know which there are more of!"

The Chafetz Chaim once wished to offer a blessing for a lawyer who was very helpful to the Jewish community. This is what he told him:

"I cannot bless you to win every case, for justice may be on the side of the party you do not represent. I will therefore bless you that every party that is indeed in the right should hire you as his lawyer."

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE FRUITS

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

FIG - THE TORAH SYMBOL

When King Shlomo compared Torah to the fig (*Mishlei 27:18*), he conveyed an important message about gaining and retaining Torah knowledge.

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba quoted Rabbi Yochanan (*Eiruvim 54a*) as to why the comparison was made:

"Just as one constantly finds figs when he approaches the tree (since they do not all ripen at the same time, there are always some available for eating- Rashi), so too will one always find a new taste in the Torah he is studying."

If this message about gaining Torah knowledge is derived from the comparison to the fig tree itself,

there is another message from the words of this passage regarding the protection of that fig tree which yields fruit for its protector.

"One who sees a fig tree in a dream," say our Sages (*Berachot 57a*) "it is a message from Heaven that his Torah knowledge is retained and protected in him."

The fig tree thus conveys the double message of gaining Torah knowledge by appreciating the new thrill which comes with every step of learning, and the need to retain and protect that knowledge through constant review so that we can enjoy the fruits of our study even if we are not lucky enough to see a fig tree in our dreams.



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Can a Jewish New Yorker Root For The White Sox?

BY RABBI YEHUDA ALBIN

Saved by an angel. Or should I say The Angels. Once again, after just two years, I would have been in a bind, as now, instead of the Cubs, the White Sox had looked like they might play the Yankees in a post season match-up.

Two years ago, I wasn't sure who I'd be rooting for, Chicago or New York. But now, with age, perhaps a bit more conservative, my position would have been clear. I would have been rooting for the Yankees.

It's not just because I was raised in New York and was always a Yankee fan. (I still remember the feeling of ecstasy, in 1978, when NY's short stop, Bucky Dent hit a three run homerun against Boston at Fenway lifting the Yankees to a 5-4 victory in a one game playoff. How many of you remember that Bucky was an ex-White Sox player?)

But now, as a Jewish parent, a Sox-Yanks series would have had new meaning for me.

So as I describe the potential tensions in my home I don't mind if you're trying to "steal the signs" and guess what my pitch is going to be.

I'm not embarrassed to admit that I'm still a Yankee fan deep down. I heard first hand that one of the world's greatest living rabbis of 90+ years, residing in Israel, until somewhat recently, still smiled inside when he heard that "his old team won."

But it's a kind of funny relationship that I have with the Yanks. You see, I haven't seen them play in person or on TV in over 20 years. I don't even know the current players' names. Although through the occasional radio news reports, where I keep a tab on their record, I still maintain the requisite love-hate relationship with Yankee owner George Steinbrenner.

So what kind of fan am I?

I'm not just a fan because of anti-Yankeeism, which exists in every major league city. My attachment is more positive than that.

I mean, how many people do you know who own a real Yankee Stadium seat (my father bought it for me as a souvenir in 1973 when Yankee Stadium was last remodeled.) Sure it's only collecting dust in my basement storage closet. But I own it. One day I'm going to bolt my stadium chair onto my deck so I can use it. I'm sure at the end of this series I'll say, "Next Year In My-chair-from-the-stadium."

Of course, I still cherish my partially rotted Yankee cap acquired on Hat Day in 1971. It's stored away in mothballs on a high shelf in the back of my clothes closet.

Living in Chicago, I can't say that the Yankees get a lot of play at my house. Of course, once in a while, I visit a friend at his office, and we share a few Yankee thoughts and, deep inside, I feel the warm feelings.

But what about my children? Who will they root for as they mature?

I hope they'll be Yankee fans. I mean, I've got that feeling, you know; it's important to me — when I married a woman from Boston it felt like an intermarriage. (We don't have similar feelings about Bucky Dent.)

Besides, how could my children turn away from the glorious heritage of the Bronx Bombers who have more World Series championships than any other team? And look at the countless Hall of Famers they've produced over the decades. It doesn't take much to

realize that the Yankees should be the chosen team of any fan.

But despite my warm feelings, the hidden dusty moments, the nostalgic conversations in other people's offices, and a glorious history, my children are becoming real Chicago fans. They're rooting for the White Sox.

If I would tell them that I couldn't bear to go to a game with them, where they would cheer for the home team, because I'd feel sick to my stomach, they'd think I was some type of New York fanatic and say, "Dad, people only felt like that back in the old city."

What happened here? How did we get to the point that while I shuddered at marrying a Boston Red Sox fan, my kids are looking forward to marrying a fellow Chicagoan?

Well, all their formative years have been in Chicago. The local papers, mostly read as they pass newspapers for sale on the streets, praise the local squads. And it wouldn't surprise me if they've seen a few Chicago games on TV at a friend's house. And of course, ALL their friends are rooting for the Chicago teams.

Lately, and it's too late, I've wondered what would have been if I had taken them to see all the Yankee games in Chicago, risking our lives to root for the Yankees in the bleachers at US Cellular Field? What if I had brought NY-style franks along, while every one else was eating their Chicago ones? And if I had only allowed the sports sections from NY papers into our home? And if I had bolted that Yankee stadium chair on our porch already? And if I had worn my Yankee cap every time I did the gardening? And what about if we had talked about the Yanks at the dinner table and said at the end of every season, "Next year let's fly to NY for a Yankee game.?"

Surely their allegiance to the Yankees would have been seared into their heart by those experiences — in fact, they'd probably be diehard Yankee fans.

And then, if I told them again and again that it's really important to me that they be Yankee fans, I wonder if I would have had a more sympathetic ear.

So here's my pitch. Make sure you're a diehard fan of our religion.

Take your kids regularly to synagogue, make a succah and sit in it, get your tefillin out of the closet, visit Israel, serve kosher franks, let them know about the amazing history of our people, and the great individual Jews who have contributed to our people and the world, make sure you have enough Jewish and Torah "readables" at home, and be sure to discuss the weekly portion at your table etc. — that's 613 etceteras to be exact.

And most of all, let them know it's really important to you that they be at least as observant as you.

And maybe, one day, when you look at the way your grandchildren behave, even your Jewish core will rejoice, and you won't have to cringe the way I do when my children root for the White Sox instead of the Yankees.

Ohr Somayach alumnus Rabbi Yehuda Albin was born and raised in NY. Besides his BA from Bowdoin College, he received two smichas while studying in Israel for 10 years, and 12 years ago he founded and now directs the local chapter of Ohr Somayach International, where he teaches classical Judaism to people from all backgrounds.