

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### ME AND MY SHADOW

*“I Shall Be As I Shall Be” (3:14)*

Just as every movement, every flexing of our limbs and muscles is motivated by the living soul inside us, likewise all the powers of all the worlds, all their movements and their influences are motivated and affected by a vast chain reaction starting with man's actions in this lowliest of worlds and ascending to the highest places.

In the book of Tehillim (Psalms) it says, “G-d is your shadow.” In other words, G-d mirrors our actions like a shadow. It was His Will that everything that happens in creation be governed by man's behavior; the spirituality that radiates from the highest levels of existence shadows our individual choices. Every kindness we do ascends through all the worlds to the loftiest places. There it triggers a flux of positive spiritual energy that descends again through all the worlds until it arrives back in this plane. Every mitzvah rises to its highest spiritual source and causes a life energy that radiates throughout all the creation.

G-d is our “shadow.” He has committed Himself to run the world in synchronization with our actions.

In this week's Torah portion, Moshe asks G-d. “Behold, when I come to the Children of Yisrael and say to them, ‘The G-d of your forefathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His Name?’ – what shall I say to them?” G-d answers Moshe, “I Shall Be As I Shall Be.”

If G-d is our Shadow, if He responds to us measure for

measure, logically, His answer to Moshe should have been, “I Shall Be As You Shall Be.” I will shadow your behavior.

In truth, G-d relates to us in two ways: He mirrors our actions and radiates spiritual energy on this world in concert with our actions. Yet He is not tied to this mode of action. If G-d chooses He can override this principle and bestow positive energy even without man's awakening from below.

Speaking of the final redemption, the Prophet Yishayahu says, (60:22) “I am G-d, in its time I will hasten it.” How can the redemption come in its time *and* be hastened?

The answer is if we deserve it, G-d will accelerate the process. He will be our ‘shadow.’ However, if we don't, G-d is not constrained to respond only to our behavior, for He will deliver us eventually whether we deserve it or not.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shmot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt.

Sinai) Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

## ISRAEL Forever

### WHAT'S IN A NAME

“The U.S. first destroyed our great country, the Soviet Union, then they destroyed our economy, and now they are sending us this horrible young woman to destroy our souls.”

This is what was said by one of the protesters against a Madonna concert held in Moscow last September. She was one of about a hundred demonstrators organized by the Orthodox Standard Bearers Union, a group combining religion and nationalism.

Despite this protest the two concerts of the pop artist were sold out, an indication that the West has conquered Russian culturally.

When we read in this week's Torah portion of the begin-

ning of the exile of our ancestors in Egypt, we are struck with wonder that they did not succumb to Egyptian culture despite being in the corrupt society for more than two centuries.

The answer lies in the name of this portion and the entire Chumash that it headlines. “*Shmot*” means “names”. Our Sages tell us that one of the merits our ancestors had for redemption was that they did not change their Hebrew names.

This should serve as a reminder to Jews in Israel and elsewhere to retain their Hebrew names as a safeguard against succumbing to the culture of Madonna and a guarantee for Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

### YAD RAMBAM – A NAME WITH TWO MEANINGS

Near Ramleh in western Eretz Yisrael is a settlement called Yad Rambam. While the second half of its name is a reference to the great Torah scholar Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (Maimonides), the first part has a double meaning. The Hebrew word *yad*, which is applied to the names of other places in the country, is used in the sense of a monument (as in the Yad Avshalom of



Shmuel II 18:18). But in regard to Rambam it has another meaning as well.

The most famous of all of Rambam's many works is his massive compilation of all Torah Law formally titled *Mishneh Torah*. Because it contains 14 volumes it is also referred to as *Yad Hachazakah* (literally “The Powerful Hand”) because the numerical value of the Hebrew word *yad* is 14.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt?"
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro's daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d's promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
14. "And G-d was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16,18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

לע"נ

פרת לאה בת ר' יצחק אייזיק ע"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- When we start mentioning the praise for rain
- The Divine power expressed in rain
- The three keys – rain, childbirth and resurrection of dead
- Learning from lulav or from water libations
- Why dew and winds don't have to be mentioned in our prayers
- Clouds and winds before and after rain
- Sensitivity of the Torah scholars
- Those whose requests were improper
- When we begin and end praying for rain
- The *yoreh* and *malkosh* seasons of rain
- The awful famine in days of Prophet Yoel and its happy end
- Jerusalem's twin in Heaven
- The many dialogues between Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Yitzchak
- The parable of blessing a lifesaving tree
- The three stages of *reviah* rain and their significance
- What constitutes Heavenly withholding of rain
- The blessing on the first rain
- How great is the day of rain
- The importance of partners for Torah study
- Why Torah is compared to water and other liquids
- When rain is withheld as punishment
- Why some people find learning difficult
- The confrontation with the serpent in the end of days
- The importance of faithfulness
- When both plague and drought strike on which to focus our prayers
- The pros and cons of rain

## THE DANGER OF DECEPTION

When Eliezer, the trusted servant of the Patriarch Avraham, went on his mission to find a wife for his master's son Yitzchak, he made himself a test by which to determine which young woman had been designated by Heaven for this role. He would ask for a drink from the water she had drawn and if she would generously offer to provide water for his camels as well that would be the sign he needed from Heaven that she was the right soul-mate for Yitzchak.

In our *gemara* there is criticism of Eliezer for making such a sign. What if the young lady he approached would be missing a leg or was otherwise physically flawed but supplied the right answer, would this be a proper *shidduch* for his master's son?

On the surface there seem to be no grounds for such criticism. Eliezer would ostensibly notice whether the girl he

saw fetching water walked with a prominent limp and not consider her as a candidate for his self-designed test. Why, then, was he wrong?

*Tosefot* deals with this problem and suggests that it was very possible that a girl wearing a concealed false leg could appear to be in perfect shape and that Eliezer was therefore faulted for not being more careful in his investigation of the physical condition of the candidate for his test.

One of the great halachic authorities of the previous century referred to the point made by *Tosefot* in a halachic response to a question posed to him. Upon discovering that the woman he had promised to marry had a wooden leg, the man decided to end the relationship on the grounds that he had been deceived. The woman claimed that he must certainly have been aware of her handicap since they walked together. The danger of deception presented by *Tosefot* was cited as an argument against her.

• *Ta'anit 4a*

## WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"If you see a Torah scholar get excited over something, it is the Torah which is boiling in him." (He has a sensitivity as a result of his Torah study and therefore takes things to heart more than others, so we are told to judge him favorably. – Rashi)

• *The Sage Rava - Ta'anit 4a*

## MOTHERS-IN-LAW KNOW BEST

**From: Anonymous**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*I don't particularly get along with my daughter-in-law. I have heard that the Torah predicts that this is normally the case. I was wondering if the Torah also teaches how to rectify this situation with practical advice how to improve the relationship between mothers and daughters-in-law. If you choose to publish this, you may. Just keep it anonymous. Thank you.*

Dear Anonymous,

Permit me to open with a joke – please don't take it personally.

A trip for mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law was organized in order to foster friendship and bonding between the two relations. It was decided that mixing the women on the same bus would be volatile, so they ordered one bus for the mothers-in-law and one for the daughters-in-law, with the intention that they would socialize off the bus at the various attractions. As the buses toured the countryside, suddenly the bus of mothers-in-law plummeted off a cliff. While the daughters-in-law cheered jubilantly from above, they noticed one of the women crying. "Don't tell us you actually got along with your mother-in-law", they asked with surprise. "No, that's not it", she replied. "My mother-in-law missed the bus!"

It is true that our sources comment on the notoriously strained relations between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. Obviously, the source for this tension is two-sided. The mother-in-law's feeling of losing her son, and being replaced by another woman, results in her subconscious feeling that her daughter-in-law will never be able to provide for her son what she could. On the other hand, the daughter-in-law's feeling of being an outsider, and her desire for her husband's devotion, results in over-sensitivity to her husband's natural closeness to his mother. Indeed, she notes, he married her, not his mother!

What is the Torah's advice for navigating this delicate situation? The answer is for each to realize her unique sphere of influence.

It is true that a wife will never be able to provide for her husband what his mother did. A wife doesn't birth, nurse and raise her husband as a mother does. That would truly be abnormal. However, if she loves her husband, she must surely recognize his mother's role in making him into the person she decided to marry. By extension, she should be able to love her mother-in-law as she loves him.

Conversely, a mother will never be able to provide for her son the physical, emotional and spiritual fulfillment and realization of his potential as a wife does. That would truly be unnatural. However, if she loves her son, and wants the best he deserves for the way she raised him, she must surely recognize his choice of wife to make him into the person she intended him to become. By extension, she should be able to love her daughter-in-law as she loves him.

As it turns out, then, each play vital and complimentary roles in development of the "man in their life". The mother, through great sacrifice and dedication, constructs the inner sphere of her son, preparing him to become the very best he can be. The wife, with great sensitivity and support, extends this inner potential to the outer sphere, enabling him to actually become his best. These two spheres of influence, when respected and appreciated by both mother and wife, can exist simultaneously and harmoniously when the appropriate and necessary boundaries are honored.

In fact, the dynamic of these concentric spheres of influence are present from the outset of the marriage and are symbolically represented at the wedding ceremony under the *chuppah*. For this reason, the mothers escort the bride seven times around the standing groom. In this way the bride begins to extend her husband's orbit beyond the relatively static state of ingrained potential before the *chuppah*, to the dynamic state of fruition to be realized after the *chuppah*. However, this can only be achieved by a joint effort of mother and wife, as the two encircle the groom conjoined in love and joy.

## SEFER TORAH IN OUTER SPACE

The “Columbia Torah” and the “Atlantis Torah” form the saga of Torah in outer space that began with survivors of the Holocaust and culminated with heroic astronauts.

When the late Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut, boarded the ill-fated Columbia space shuttle in 2003, he took along a small Sefer Torah. The son of an Auschwitz survivor, Ramon felt compelled to borrow this tiny scroll from Professor Joachim Joseph of Tel Aviv University who brought it out from the Bergen Belsen concentration camp where he had secretly held a ceremony for his Bar

Mitzvah.

To honor the memory of her husband and the Columbia crew, Rona Ramon borrowed a small Torah from Professor Henry Fenichel, a physics professor in Cincinnati, a child survivor of the Holocaust, and asked Canadian astronaut Steve Maclean to take it with him on the Atlantis flight.

When the Atlantis returned to earth, a ceremony was held at the Center for Holocaust Studies and Humanity Education in Cincinnati as Maclean, who declared that Ramon was his best friend, returned the Sefer Torah to Fenichel.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### STANDING ROOM ONLY

**Question:** Sometimes I get on a crowded bus with only standing room available. I then notice that one passenger is occupying a double seat with a large bag of groceries next to him. I look enviously at that spot but hesitate to discomfort the fellow by asking him to make way for me. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** According to both common sense and bus company rules that passenger has no right to inconvenience you or any of the other standing passengers by using a sitting place

for his package. You may be tempted to make some cynical remark like asking him if he paid for two seats (which may still not justify using one for a package) but restrain yourself from doing so.

The passenger in question most likely took that extra seat for his package when the bus still had many empty seats and may not be aware that he is now the cause of your discomfort. A polite request that he make way for you by placing his package on his lap or on the floor will almost always elicit an apology and effect a quick solution to your problem.

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# LOVE of the LAND

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