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PARSHA INSIGHTS

BREAKING THE TAPE

"The rabble that was among them (the Children of Yisrael) cultivated a craving..." (11:4)

Many are those who desire to do something great, but how many succeed? How many fledgling novelists get past the opening line, let alone the first chapter; and how many would-be concert pianists end up playing nothing more complicated than an iPod?

Why is it that the nearer we get to the end of something, the more difficult it becomes? Anyone who has run a race knows the feeling of coming round the last bend and searching for the tape through sweat-drenched eyes. Your legs feel like lead, your lungs feel like perforated paper bags — and it's not just natural tiredness. The very act of completion is itself elusive, difficult.

Why?

During the same period that the Jewish People lived in Egypt there was a group of Egyptians that separated themselves from idolatry. Originally, Yosef had circumcised them, and for hundreds of years they lived apart in their own cities. At the time of the Exodus they decided to throw in their lot with the Jewish People and left Egypt with them.

Forsaking the security and comfort of Egypt, they followed the People of Israel into the barren wastes of Sinai. However, it was this same group, the *eruv rav* ("mixed multitude"), who instigated the dissatisfaction with the manna that provoked G-d's wrath in this week's Torah portion.

What went wrong?

There's a verse in *tehillim* Psalms that says, "Who will ascend the mountain of G-d, and who will stand in His holy place?"

Even after we ascend to a higher level of spirituality there remains the greater challenge of holding fast to our new place.

It's one thing to be a spiritual tourist; it's quite another to take up residence.

Despite their good intentions, the *eruv rav* lacked the staying power to complete their spiritual journey.

The Mishna in Avot says, "Be bold as a leopard, swift as an eagle, run like a deer and strong as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven."

Rabbi Yerucham Lebovitz explained that we need four different qualities to succeed. At the beginning we need boldness to instigate a plan; the faint of heart will never have the temerity to start.

Next we need to be swift as an eagle to achieve "lift-off". The early stages of a project require alacrity to bring it from the potential to the actual. Then we must run like a deer. Lethargy is the archenemy of success.

And, finally, when the end is in sight, we need the strength of a lion to cross the finish line. The lion is the strongest of all the animals. His is the strength needed for completion.

The Chazon Ish said that the last two pages of a *mesechta* (volume of Talmud) are the hardest to finish. There exists a negative drive that exerts all its powers to keep us from completion.

It's at that point that we need the strength of a lion to push out our chests, break the tape and cross the finish line.

• Source: Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the first-born, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d commands Moshe concerning the *korban Pesach*. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, allowing a “second chance” to offer the *korban Pesach* one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in the

Exodus — some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. G-d tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. G-d sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. G-d explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

ISRAEL Forever

SEEDS OF REBELLION

The smallest “chapter” in the Torah is familiar to every shul-goer because its two passages are recited by the congregation upon taking out the Torah from the ark and returning it there.

Our Sages explain that this chapter, which is in this week's Torah portion, serves as a break between one sin of our ancestors and another. The second sin is their unjustified rebellious complaint against G-d which is clearly recorded. The first one is hidden in the words “they traveled away from the mountain of G-d” which was sinful in the fact that they were anxious to leave Mount Sinai lest more commandments be imposed upon them — thus acting in the

manner of “the child running away from school”.

The connection between abandoning a relationship with G-d and a rebellion against Him can be seen in the findings of a recent study of classroom discipline in state secular schools in Israel. Over one-third of the 150 teachers interviewed admitted that they do not punish violent students for fear of getting hurt or having their property damaged.

When Torah values are neglected the inevitable result is rebellion against any form of authority. These seeds of rebellion must not be allowed to grow into a threat to Israel forever.

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LOVE OF THE LAND

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the menorah burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the menorah made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*t'nufot*" (wavings) are in the parsha?
5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the menorah and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the menorah was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *para aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show G-d's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the *avoda*; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic - these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

- When two brothers are married to two sisters, and the third to someone unrelated to them, what is the *yibum* situation when two of the brothers die
- The status of the *tzarah* of a *yevamah* whose marriage with or divorce from the deceased brother is in doubt
- Examples of doubt regarding validity of marriage or divorce
- The questionable sale of the temporarily insane *Bar Shatya*
- The problem of the two-time *yevamah*
- The disqualification of *yibum* which lasts forever
- Can one be responsible for two sins with one act
- Consequence of a mistake which caused wife-swapping
- Whether a woman can conceive from first cohabitation
- The sinful husbands of Tamar
- The wife of the Sage Rava who waited ten years to marry him
- Consequences of pregnancy discovered after *chalitzah* or *yibum*
- Rabbinical prohibition on marriage with a divorcee or widow expecting a child or nursing one

A WILL AND A WAY

A father who wishes to circumvent the laws of inheritance can make a will in which he transfers ownership of all his property to his favorite son. Since he still wishes to enjoy the use of his property as long as he lives he stipulates that these assets will belong to his son “from today and after his death”. This means that as long as he lives he is entitled to all the benefits derived from the assets (“*kinyan peirot*”) and the son, who already has principal ownership (“*kinyan haguf*”), acquires full ownership upon the death of his father.

Since both father and son have some hold on the assets neither of them can independently make an outright sale of them. Should the father sell his rights the buyer may benefit from the assets as long as the father is alive. Should the son

sell them the buyer can take full possession only when the father dies. What happens, however, when the son sells the assets and subsequently dies in his father’s lifetime?

Rabbi Yochanan’s position is that the buyer will not have claim to the estate even when the father eventually dies because the *kinyan peirot* he had was powerful enough to prevent such a sale, and the only time he can gain ownership is when the father dies first and his gift to his son is completed.

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish (Reish Lakish) rejects this position and rules that the father’s *kinyan peirot* cannot be considered potent enough to prevent such a sale from being actualized in favor of the buyer.

Although the general rule is that the halacha is like Rabbi Yochanan, this is one of the three cases cited by the *gemara* in which the halacha is like Reish Lakish.

• *Yevamot* 36b

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The Sages sometimes were stricter in enforcing the laws they made than they were in regard to Torah laws.”

• *The Sage Abaye - Yevamot* 36b

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LUCID DREAMING

From: Ben in Austin

Dear Rabbi,

I've recently embarked on a campaign to produce and enjoy lucid dreams. These are dreams in which you are aware that you are dreaming (you are lucid) and therefore you can, if you choose, control the dream. I would like to know if a person is held responsible for actions he takes in the dream world. Is performing a forbidden act in the dream world punishable? Assume that the person is of sound mind and body, and that any action he performs in the dream world would not unduly influence him to do the same in the real world.

Dear Ben,

Stephen LaBerge, a popular author and experimenter on lucid dreaming, has defined it as “dreaming while knowing that you are dreaming.” LaBerge and his associates have called people who purposely explore the possibilities of lucid dreaming “oneironauts” (literally from the Greek ὄνειρος, meaning “dream sailors”). Accordingly, your question is basically: “To be, oneironaut to be”?

First, let me say that ancient Jewish sources speak at length about inducing a type of lucid dream experience, both during sleep and even from an initially normal wake state. I say “a type” of lucid experience because what is referred to in the modern use of this term is only a very limited, relatively insignificant form of what is described in those texts.

The main difference is that the modern phenomenon consists of entirely self-induced and self-directed products of the imagination. The Jewish mystical techniques and experiences, however, employ invoking Divine Names and the names of angels to transport the holy and righteous seeker upon a journey into the supernal realms that he himself directs. This results in a real spiritual experience that can reveal hidden mystical truths, as well as information regarding the past, present and future.

It's worth mentioning that our sources also describe similar experiences that are induced through impure

techniques involving magic, witchcraft, demons and other elements of “the dark side”. Of course, even just the use of these methods is forbidden and punishable, regardless of the content of the experiences they engender, because of their association with the “other side”.

Regarding lucid dreams, since the type of dream and what happens in it are a product of one's own thoughts and imagination, the extent to which one is responsible for what he “does” in the dream will depend on to what extent one is punishable for thinking about doing something without actually doing it.

Accordingly, there would be nothing wrong with controlling a dream to think, feel or do pleasant things that are permissible, even if this includes imaginary thoughts such as flying through the air or whatever else.

Directing the dream such that you do things that would be forbidden in reality, while certainly not as severe as actually doing them, is nevertheless forbidden. The reason for this is that the mere thought of doing prohibited things taints and damages the soul, even if you explicitly think that you would never do it. In addition, even if in the current state you might feel assured that you won't come to do the act, since the thoughts alone are damaging, your fortitude to resist over time might become eroded, in which case you certainly could come to do those acts at a later time, even if only in a lesser degree initially.

The distinction between the severity of only thinking about doing as opposed to actually doing applies in most cases but not all. For example, regarding transgressions related to immorality or heresy, there is an explicit prohibition against mere thinking about these matters without even doing anything. In these cases, lucid dreaming — to the extent that one is fully conscious of, aware of, and in control of his thoughts — would be just as severe as entertaining these thoughts while awake. Similarly, just as a man is responsible for a release during sleep because of thoughts he entertained during the day, so too he would be liable for lucid-dreaming such a release, even though he didn't actually “do” anything to cause it.

Bon voyage, and may you experience only spiritually lucid oneironauting!

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