

OHR NET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

CHILDREN OF THE FATHERS

“He encountered the place...” (28:11)

Rashi: “He (Yaakov) instituted the prayer of Ma’ariv.” (Talmud Bavli 26b)

A true story. Reuven decided after his Bar Mitzvah that he would never *daven* (pray) without a minyan (quorum of ten men). Returning home one night at 3:00am from an out-of-town wedding, Reuven fell into bed exhausted. As soon as he had turned out the light, he realized that he hadn’t prayed *Ma’ariv*, the evening prayer. With tremendous effort, he dragged himself out of bed and started to dress.

Where to find a minyan at this time of the morning?

No problem. As anyone who lives in Jerusalem can tell you, day or night, you can *always* find a minyan at the *shteibelach* in Zichron Moshe.

That night there was a miracle.

Zichron Moshe was totally deserted; no one was there; nary a hobo, *nada*.

Taking out his cellular phone, he dialed the number of a large taxi company.

“Hello! Can you please send five taxis to the *shteibelach* in Zichron Moshe?”

“*Adoni* (my dear sir)! It’s three o’clock in the morning! You think I have FIVE taxis? What do you think I am, a magician? ...I only have four.”

“Okay. So send four!”

He dialed another number. “Hello, please send five taxis to Zichron Moshe...”

Within twenty minutes, there was a procession of nine taxicabs parked neatly outside the *shteiblach*.

“*Adoni*,” said one of the drivers, “Why do you need *nine* taxis? There’s no wedding here, no Bar Mitzvah, nothing.”

“I want you all to turn your meters on and come inside with me. We are going to pray together the evening prayer — *arvit*”

Dusty *yarmulkes* (skullcaps) emerged from the glove compartments of the taxis, some woken from a hibernation that stretched back to their owner’s own bar mitzvah.

It wasn’t easy. Despite being obviously fluent in Hebrew, the drivers had no idea how to pray: what and when to answer; when they should pray aloud and when in silence.

It took them quite a while.

When they had finished, everyone went out to the taxis; the meters in the cars were pushing upwards of 80 shekels. The drivers turned off their meters and Reuven pulled out his wallet.

“How much do I owe you?” he said to the first taxi driver in the

line.

“*Adoni*, what do you take me for? Do you honestly believe I would take money from a holy Jew like you who just gave me such an opportunity? Do you know how long it is since I prayed?”

He moved down the line to the second driver. Identical reaction. And the third and the fourth, all the way down the line to the ninth...

Not one would take a penny.

However distant a Jew may be from his or her heritage, there’s a little Jewish spark that never goes out.

Why?

Judaism is not just a religion; Jews are a people. Our faith is not just intellectual, it’s hereditary; it’s in the genes. We are the children of the children of the children... of those Jews who came out of Egypt, who received the Torah. Ultimately we are the children of three fathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

According to one opinion in the Talmud (*Berachot 26b*) it was the Fathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov who instituted the three daily prayers; they are prayer itself, and prayer was their bequest to us.

The Hebrew word for father, *av*, is an interesting word – it connects the first two letters in the Hebrew alphabet – *aleph* and *bet*.

The Torah begins with the letter *bet*: “*Bereshit bara Elokim...*” “In the beginning...”

Why doesn’t the beginning begin with *aleph*? Why does the beginning of the Creation start with the second letter of the alphabet, with *bet*? Wouldn’t it be more appropriate to start the world with the first letter of the alphabet, with the *aleph*?

The *aleph* is always beyond.

The numerical value of *aleph* is one. There is only one Existence that is truly One, and He is infinitely beyond.

This world begins with *bet*.

A father is someone who connects the *bet* to the *aleph*. The Fathers are prayer itself, for what is prayer if not to connect; to connect to the *aleph*; to connect to beyond?

That was their bequest to us; that is the spark that lives in the heart of the children throughout all the generations.

So next time you see a line of deserted taxicabs in Jerusalem with their meters running outside a *shul*, know that the children are alive and well and still connecting to the Fathers... and beyond.

• Based on a story heard from Rabbi Adam Heavenrich

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven,

Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and, in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

ISRAEL Forever

GATEWAY TO HEAVEN

Many a visitor to Israel makes a point of going to the Kotel in order to say farewell to the Holy Land before leaving.

This is perhaps an echo of what our forefather Yaakov experienced before leaving Eretz Yisrael for a long sojourn with his uncle Lavan in a foreign land. At the very site where someday would stand the *Beit Hamikdash* he had a prophetic vision of G-d speaking to him from atop a ladder upon which Heavenly angels ascended and descended.

"How awesome is this place!" he exclaimed. "This can

only be the House of the L-rd and this is the gateway to Heaven."

This sense of holiness which every Jew has when he is at the only remnant of the House of the L-rd which once stood behind the Kotel is unfortunately left behind by most visitors when they return to their homes in Israel and abroad. Yaakov took this holiness with him and it enabled him to survive the negative influence of Lavan. It is to be hoped that reading about Yaakov in this week's Torah portion will inspire Jews to make Kotel holiness an integral part of their daily lives and thus secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

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

TEL RECHOV – BEE HONEY IN THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

Although the Torah's description of Eretz Israel as the "Land of Milk and Honey" was a reference to the honey-like date fruit rather than bee honey, it may well be that honey-making from beehives was once a local industry.



Recent archeological excavations at Tel Rechov in the Bet She'an Valley uncovered the oldest known beehive colony in the Middle East. According to Carbon-14 calculations these beehives date back close to 3,000 years.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "G-d remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

לע"נ

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

- Preventing the husband's control of property owned by a woman he is about to marry
- Money or property inherited by wife
- Expense incurred by husband in caring for wife's property
- The inheritance of a widow awaiting *yibum*: Who inherits her *ketubah* upon her death, and who is responsible for her burial?
- The *ketubah* of the *sotah* whose husband died before her test
- The guarantee which the husband must provide for *ketubah* payment
- Competition between the *yavam* and the other brothers over property of the deceased
- Status of the *yavamah* divorced by her *yavam* and subsequently remarried
- The husband who waives his right to wife's property and the partner who waives his share of a jointly owned field
- Conditions made in transactions which are counter to Torah law
- When there are three claimants to limited funds left by the deceased
- Degrees of credibility

WHO HAS THE PRIOR CLAIM?

A man dies, leaving behind money due to him that is in the possession of others, either as the result of a loan that is due or funds that he deposited for safekeeping. Claiming these limited funds are three people – the widow claiming payment of her *ketubah*; a creditor to whom he owes money; and his heirs who wish to inherit the money. Who has the prior claim?

The position of Rabbi Yochanan is that priority is awarded to the widow in order that a favorable attitude towards marriage will result. Rashi's explanation is that in order for women to have a favorable attitude towards

marriage it is important for them to know that in the event of divorce or death, they will have a prior claim on the husband's resources for collection of their *ketubah*.

Tosefot cites the explanation of Rabbeinu Chananel that presents an entirely different angle. The widow is given priority so that she will acquire the funds that will make her a more favorable prospect for marriage.

These perspectives on priority relate to Rabbi Yochanan's explanation of Rabbi Tarfon's position. Rabbi Akiva, however, rejects the idea of introducing merciful considerations into the legal process and rules that the money goes to the heirs until the other claimants take an oath to verify their claim.

• *Ketubot 84a*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"If someone tells a buyer to pull towards him the cow he is purchasing but insists that this transaction be finalized only thirty days later, the buyer acquires ownership when that time comes even if the cow is out pasturing at the time."

• *Rabbi Dimi in the name of Rabbi Yochanan - Ketubot 82a*

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TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE

From: Balint in Grinnell, Iowa

Dear Rabbi,

I have the following question that no one could answer yet: Why is honey kosher? I thought that the product of non-kosher animals was not kosher as well. Bees are not kosher, so why is honey kosher? I appreciate your time and hope you know the answer. Thank you.

Dear Balint,

The Mishna in Tractate Bechorot states:

“That which comes from something which is *tameh* [non-kosher] is *tameh*, and that which comes of that which is *tahor* [kosher] is *tahor*.” So you are right, Balint — the product of a non-kosher animal is not kosher. So why is bee-honey kosher?

The Talmud in the same Tractate quotes a *beraita* (an halachic teaching from the time of the Mishna) which says: “Why is bee-honey permitted? Because even though bees bring honey into their bodies, it is not produced by their bodies”. What does this mean? How do bees make honey?

Honeybees use nectar from flowers to make honey. With long, tube-like tongues they suck the nectar out of flowers and they store it in special “honey stomachs”. This honey stomach serves as a nectar backpack in which the honeybees transport the nectar back to the

hive.

There, the honeybees pass the nectar on to worker bees. These bees suck the nectar from the honeybee’s special honey stomach, process it and then spread the nectar throughout the honeycombs where water evaporates from it, making it a thick syrup. The honey is then stored until it is eaten. [In one year, a colony of bees eats between 120 and 200 pounds of honey!]

Therefore, since honey does not come *from* the body, but rather *through* the body of the bee, Maimonides codifies bee-honey as being kosher, as does the Shulchan Aruch.

You may wonder: How could one even think that bee-honey is not kosher? The Torah refers to the Land of Israel as “a Land flowing with milk and honey”! Certainly the Torah would not choose a non-kosher product as a means for describing the beauty of the Land of Israel! This may come as a surprise, but the honey mentioned in the verse about “milk and honey” is not bee-honey, rather it is fig-honey. Another excerpt from the Talmud Tractate Berachot interprets the verse, “It is a Land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates, a Land of olives and honey” — as referring to date-honey.

Sources:

- Tractate Bechorot, pages 5b, 7b.
- The Codes of Maimonides, Laws of Forbidden Foods 3:3.
- Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 81:8.
- Tractate Megillah, page 6a, Rashi.
- Chumash, Book of Devarim, 8:8.
- Tractate Berachot, page 41b, Rashi.

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MISSING FROM THE “WALL”

Question: During a recent visit to my local Jerusalem synagogue I took the last *siddur* (prayer book) left on the shelf and when I opened the cover I saw written in it that it was the property of the Western Wall authority. Was I permitted to use it for prayers and do I have an obligation to return it to its rightful owner? What is the right thing to do?

Answer: You had a right to use that *siddur* even if it did not belong to your synagogue because we may assume

that the Western Wall authority would be pleased to have their property used for this mitzvah. As regards returning it to the rightful owner, you should check with the synagogue trustees how such a *siddur* got to where it is. If it turns out that someone mistakenly brought it there after a visit to the Kotel, it is your responsibility as the finder of a lost object to return it to its owner. With so many people regularly visiting the Kotel, it should not be difficult to find a neighbor who will do you the favor of taking it to the Kotel on his next visit.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

A PRIZE PECK OF PEPPERS

A non-observant pepper farmer in the south of Israel developed an interest in the Torah command to refrain from agricultural labor during the Shemittah year. Although they were not Sabbath observant he and his family could take some time on the Day of Rest to read some passages from the Torah. When they came across the promise given by G-d to bless those who take a seventh year “Sabbatical” from agricultural labor with a bumper crop in the sixth year, they were intrigued. The farmer’s wife is a mathematician and she quickly decided to make a calculation of their sixth year harvest as compared to previous years. To the surprise of all, their fields had yielded twice as much that year than usual.

Thus reassured, the farmer planned to come to Jerusalem and consult with rabbinical authorities on how to properly observe the Shemittah laws. Then came the next surprise. The main market for his pepper is Spain and he faces stiff competition from another pepper exporter for this choice market. No sooner had the decision been made to observe Shemittah then our farmer got a telephone call from the Spanish importer.

“Send me all the peppers you have,” he said. “Your competitor’s pepper crop was ruined by a dangerous insecticide and since you are my only source I am willing to pay you five times the regular price if you let me have your entire crop.”

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