

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

LOVELY AS A TREE

A lazy sunny Sunday afternoon in high summer. The dull splash of a cormorant diving for fish in the lake punctuates the chorus of the bees and birds. Butterflies idly wing their way, seeking closed petals for a short rest. The bees, on the other hand, ignore the closed petals and are focused on the open flowers from which they may draw nectar.

In the higher branches a bird is busy feathering its nest, oblivious to a fox that is investigating the trunk as a potential lair. Insects are patrolling the tree's bark, looking for an opening, oozing sap.

Up from the underbrush comes the heavy sound of work boots trudging their way as the woodcutter advances on the tree. His gasoline saw chatters away idly at his side, "pocket-a-pocket-a-pocket-a...." He considers the tree for a few moments and then decides to look for another victim.

A pair of jogging yuppies, toggled in Nike's finest, burst into the glade and decide that the tree will make a perfect spot to shade them for a brief rest.

How many trees do you count here? One or many?

Our Sages teach us "a person is obliged to say, 'The world was created for me'."

This entire world was created for me. The sun shines for me; the trees were created to be of use to me. Everything in this world was put here for me.

What's amazing is that everyone can say that the world is created for them – and they can all be right.

The tree is one tree but it is a myriad of worlds.

Every morning we bless G-d for "preparing the footsteps of man." Wherever we are, G-d orchestrates each moment in our lives. Every aspect of our lives is prepared for us as the backdrop against which we will make the choices that lead us to eternal life, or by wasting those moments, letting them dissolve into black holes of opportunity lost.

And amazingly, each person's world is intertwined with thousands and maybe millions of other people's worlds — and they all provide a unique scenario for each and every one of us.

The Alter of Slabodka writes that each plague that Egyptians suffered was both a punishment and a demonstration of G-d's *hashgacha pratit* (individual providence).

While the Egyptians languished in darkness, the Jewish homes were filled with light. The spiritual Masters recount that during the first plague of blood a Jew and an Egyptian could drink from the same glass and what was blood for the Egyptian was water for the Jew.

Each of us live in our own world. We are all on our own individual monorail. This is why jealousy is both ridiculous and frustrating. I can never be in your world and you can never be in mine. They are both infinitely separate and eternally entwined.

• Sources: Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. G-d commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. G-d punishes the Egyptians and sends plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a small-

er scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only G-d could be performing these miracles. Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

ISRAEL Forever

THE LAND OF THEIR SOJOURNING

Eretz Yisrael is called by many names in the Torah and in tradition. At the very beginning of this week's Torah portion we find an interesting name mentioned only one time in our sources.

"I established My covenant with them (the Patriarchs). G-d told Moses to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojourning in which they sojourned."

What is the significance of this stress on the idea of sojourning, with its connotation of temporary residence?

One of the great Torah commentators, Rabbi Leibush Malbim, explains as follows:

The Patriarchs related to this world as a place in which they were only temporary sojourners, because their true habitat was the world of the spirit. G-d therefore promised to give them a land on earth most conducive to spiritual greatness.

This is the true purpose of Eretz Yisrael, not striving to be just another country. It is this that must be internalized by the state and its leaders in order to ensure that the Heavenly gift to our ancestors will be for their descendants a secure spiritual and physical 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

BEIT HACHOFSHET

When Uzziah, king of the Kingdom of Yehuda, contracted leprosy as a punishment for his entering the *Beit Hamikdash* to offer incense as a non-*kohen*, he spent the rest of his life in a cave on Har Hazeitim.

This cave, carved into stone and containing a maze of halls and rooms, was called Beit Hachofshet, literally translated as the House of Liberation. The Talmud



Yerushalmi explains the name as a reference to the massive graveyard surrounding the cave in which are buried the dead who have been freed from the obligation of *mitzvot*.

Whether the site held by tradition is actually the Beit Hachofshet has been questioned as a result of an inscription discovered there in 1864 declaring that it is the burial place of "the *kohanim* of the sons of Hezer."

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
6. Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel"?
7. After which plague did G-d begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart"?
8. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
9. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
10. How long did the plague of blood last?
11. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
12. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation"?
13. What are "chamarim"?
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
16. What were the Egyptians likely to do if they saw the Jews slaughtering lambs?
17. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
18. The *dever* killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:9 - Although G-d swore to give them the land, they never actually had control over it.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
6. 6:25 - Yitro fattened (*pitem*) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (*pitpet*) at his evil inclination.
7. 7:3 - After the sixth plague — *shechin*.
8. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
9. a. 7:17 - Because the Nile was an Egyptian god.
b. 8:17 - Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and G-d did the same.
10. 7:25 - Seven days.
11. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
12. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
13. 8:10 - Piles.
14. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
15. 8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
16. 8:22 - Stone the Jews.
17. 8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
18. 9:10 - In the plague of *dever* only the cattle *in the fields* died. The plague of *shechin* affected the surviving cattle.
19. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

לע"נ

מרת לאה בת ר' יצחק אייזיק ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Damage caused by spilled water or a thorny fence
- What use can be made of the public domain
- Penalties for environmental offenders and usurers
- Responsibility for collision of two carriers in public domain
- Collision of a running and walking pedestrian
- How Sages welcomed the Shabbat
- Damage caused by chopped wood flying from one domain to another
- When two animals or men damage each other
- Taking the damaging ox as payment for damage caused
- Calculation of payment for damage caused by ox when the victim's carcass has value or is worthless
- The difference between man's responsibility for damage caused by him or by his animal
- Doubts arising as to which animal caused damage
- Is the victim of damage caused by an animal considered a partner with the owner of the damager or only a creditor

WELCOMING THE SHABBAT BRIDE

Every Jew who attends Shabbat Eve services is familiar with the *Lecha Dodi* prayer with which we welcome the holy day of rest.

The source for this is our *gemara* which offers an explanation why a Jew running in the public domain is guilty of damage he causes by unintentionally colliding with a walking pedestrian but is absolved of such responsibility if the purpose of his running is to welcome the Shabbat. Two examples of Sages welcoming the Shabbat are cited.

Rabbi Chanina was in the custom of announcing, "Let us go out to meet the queenly bride", while Rabbi Yanai would stand and say "Come you the bride, come you the bride."

Maharsha thus explains each of these forms of welcome.

Shabbat is the bride of the Jewish people. The Midrash relates that when G-d created the world and ordained a seven-day week, Shabbat came with a complaint that all the other days of the week have mates – the day that follows – while she has none. G-d told her that the Jewish people would be her mate. Since all Jews are considered royalty, their bride is a queen. Just as it is the custom of a groom to move towards his bride at the time of the wedding (see Rashi on *Devarim* 33:2), so too Rabbi Chanina called for going forward to welcome Shabbat.

Rabbi Yanai, on the other hand, invited the Shabbat bride to come to the *chupa* and then to come home just as every bride made that double transition, hence the need to say that invitation twice.

• *Bava Kama* 32

What the SAGES Say

"All who place something in the public domain bear responsibility for any damage resulting from it, and anyone who takes the initiative of removing this damaging item gains ownership of it."

• *Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel - Bava Kama* 30a

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RACISM OR SUSPICION?

From: Ayelet in Jerusalem

*Dear Rabbi,
Living in Israel, and in Jerusalem, like everyone else here, I feel unfortunately too close to terrorism and the possibility, G-d forbid, of there being an attack. Since it seems that it could happen at any time and any place, I feel like I've developed a suspicion and fear of Arabs in general, and even more so now given the situation in Gaza. On the one hand I don't want to generalize or be racist against Arabs; on the other hand I am afraid whenever I see one. What should I do?*

Dear Ayelet,

Your feelings are understandable. And as you say, you are not alone in feeling terrorism is too close for comfort – because in reality terrorism cannot be too close or too far. And it's not just in Israel; the threat of extremist violence is reaching everywhere and is a legitimate concern for everyone.

As far as how you should view a potential threat, it is important to distinguish between what you mistakenly consider racism and taking rational, levelheaded precautions.

Racism is the belief that there is something inherently inferior or wrong about a person or people solely as a result of their being a member of their particular race. Your suspicion of Arabs being potentially dangerous is not because they are Arabs per se, but because of the reality that, given the context of conflict between Arab and Jew in Israel, some Arabs resort to terrorism as a way to champion their cause. Now while this indiscriminate violence is intolerable and must be fought without compromise, not all Arabs are terrorists, terrorism did not start with Arabs and Arabs aren't the only ones who have attacked Jews.

So where does this leave you on how to deal with your

suspicions?

Since terrorism and terrorists exist worldwide, and in Israel it is directed by some Arabs against Jewish civilians, you are completely justified in harboring reasonable suspicion and taking normal precautions to protect yourself from harm. This does not mean that you should hate Arabs or view them all as terrorists or enemies just because they are Arab – that would be racist. But what it does mean is that you should be confident in your right to be wary of people you don't know, be alert to suspicious behavior and avoid potentially dangerous places.

And you are right, this is particularly true during specific times of crisis where even normally non-violent Arabs who may have co-existed or worked with Jews for years might feel themselves victims, become outraged by their view of the situation or lose hope in co-existence. Some do lash out in unexpected anger and violence. There have already been a few such attacks in the current crisis. I know of one victim personally who was brutally attacked by a construction worker he employed for six years (the man is still in a coma), The attacker then managed to stab a young couple as he fled.

This means that even people you normally come in contact with (for example in university or at stores etc.) or don't know but consider to be non-violent (for example 'legal' construction workers etc.) might be harboring a burning fuse inside. You should continue to be polite and civil with the former since you know them, but be sensitive and aware of how they may be feeling inside. And regarding the later, you should go out of your way to avoid them. They don't have to know you've crossed the street or taken another route, and you will have made a reasonable effort to stay out of harm's way.

This is not being racist; it's being realistic about a potential threat that you are not only allowed, but commanded, to avoid, within reason.

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WHOSE BRIT IS FIRST?

Question: A new *oleh* immigrant to Israel approached the rabbi and asked him to arrange a *brit* for his eight-day old son. The rabbi asked him if he himself had ever had a *brit*. When he answered in the negative the rabbi persuaded him, after a strenuous effort, to agree to be circumcised. The only problem was that there was not enough time left in the day to circumcise both father and son. What was the right thing to do?

Answer: When this case was brought before the outstanding halachic authority Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv of

Jerusalem, he ruled that the father should be circumcised that day and his son the next day. Even though this meant that the *brit* of the son would not be on the eighth day as required by halacha, the rav's reasoning went like this.

Since the father neglected having a *brit* for so many years, and it took so much persuasion for him to finally consent to be circumcised, it can be assumed that he has a negative attitude towards this mitzvah. If he should be asked to wait till the next day there is a serious likelihood that he will back out and never have a *brit* for himself at all.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

WHY AREN'T YOU EATING?

A charming story about the great Torah leader and Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak gives us an insight into the sensitivity to others that characterized his entire life.

When Rav Eliezer Shach, *zatzal*, was a little boy at his mother's table he somehow was overlooked when portions were handed out to him and his siblings. Upon notic-

ing that he wasn't eating his mother asked him "Why aren't you eating?"

Rather than embarrass her by pointing out that she had forgotten to give him a portion of the meal, little Eliezer simply replied:

"Because I can't find my fork."

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