

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT MISHPATIM · 25 SHVAT 5772 · FEB. 18, 2012 · VOL. 19 NO. 18

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR AWAY

*"...and you will bow down from a distance." (24:1)*

We perceive G-d in two ways. We believe that He is pre-existent, the Cause, the Creator and the Sustainer of all reality. He is far beyond and above. Ultimately distant. He precedes all beginning and transcends all ending. No creature can fathom Him, for what can the painting know of the Painter? He created thought so no thought can think of Him. He is utterly separate and distant beyond all concept of space and time.

And yet He is very, very near. He fills the world. There is no place or time where He is not. For if He were not there, that place could not be, that second would never take place. He fills all worlds and encompasses all worlds.

G-d is both transcendent and immanent.

It is the unique privilege of the Jewish People to proclaim these two seemingly opposite aspects of our perception of G-d. Many religions have a concept of G-d being supremely elevated above all. But they falter in their recognition of His imminence. They fail to understand that He is here right now. He sees all, knows the secrets of every living thing, and is interested in their every move.

When the Jewish People rise during their prayers and proclaim like the angels the *Kedusha*, this is how they praise the Creator: "Holy, Holy, Holy, G-d, Master of Legions. The whole world is filled with His Glory." "Blessed is the glory of G-d from His place."

The first statement depicts our relationship with G-d as immanent — the universe is "filled with His Glory." No place

or time can be devoid of Him. The second statement expresses G-d's transcendence, His utter separation and elevation from this world — "from His place."

This is also the deeper meaning when the prophet Isaiah says "Peace to afar and to close at hand' says G-d." To the righteous who are faithful to these two beliefs, G-d radiates a constant stream of heavenly influence.

These two aspects also express themselves in the awe of Heaven on the one hand and the love of G-d on the other. A person is only awed by that which is above and beyond him. That which is near at hand doesn't strike fear into his heart. It's too close. On the other hand, love only flourishes in closeness. It's difficult to love when there is no contact.

*"...and you will bow down from a distance."*

The hidden meaning of this verse in this week's parsha is that bowing — fear and awe are the natural partners of distance — implies G-d's transcendence.

Another understanding of this verse is that bowing intimates the drawing down of Heavenly energy into all the worlds. It is for this reason that we bow in the prayer *Aleinu* when we say "And we bend our knees and bow." Our physical actions give substance to a spiritual reality, the drawing down of holiness. Thus Moshe is telling Aharon, Nadav, Avihu and seventy of the elders of Yisrael that they will bring down the lofty spiritual influences into all the worlds by their bowing.

• Sources: *Kedushas Levi, Arizal*

NEW! FROM RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR  
THE COLOR OF HEAVEN  
POWERFUL TORAH LESSONS  
AND INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

ORDER ONLINE AT WWW.OHR.EDU

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Jewish People receive a series of laws concerning social justice. Topics include: Proper treatment of Jewish servants; a husband's obligations to his wife; penalties for hitting people and for cursing parents, judges and leaders; financial responsibilities for damaging people or their property, either by oneself or by one's animate or inanimate property, or by pitfalls that one created; payments for theft; not returning an object that one accepted responsibility to guard; the right to self-defense of a person being robbed.

Other topics include: Prohibitions against seduction; witchcraft, bestiality and sacrifices to idols. The Torah warns us to treat the convert, widow and orphan with dignity, and to avoid lying. Usury is forbidden and the rights over collateral are limited. Payment of obligations to the Temple should

not be delayed, and the Jewish People must be holy, even concerning food. The Torah teaches the proper conduct for judges in court proceedings. The commandments of Shabbat and the Sabbatical year are outlined. Three times a year — Pesach, Shavuot and Succot — we are to come to the Temple. The Torah concludes this listing of laws with a law of kashrut — not to mix milk and meat.

G-d promises that He will lead the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, helping them conquer its inhabitants, and tells them that by fulfilling His commandments they will bring blessings to their nation. The people promise to do and listen to everything that G-d says. Moshe writes the Book of the Covenant, and reads it to the people. Moshe ascends the mountain to remain there for 40 days in order to receive the two Tablets of the Covenant.

## ISRAEL Forever

### THE HALF-SHEKEL MESSAGE

This Shabbat a second Sefer Torah will be taken out of the Aron Kodesh for the reading of *Parshat Shekalim*. We are thus reminded of the contribution which every male adult Jew gave for the construction of the *Mishkan* Sanctuary and every year for the purchase of animals to sacrifice on the Altar.

The sum of the contribution was a half-shekel and it was standard for all, rich or poor. Many interpretations have been suggested for the insistence on such standardization and the amount involved. One of these is very relevant to the current situation in Israel. When a Jew contributes half a

shekel he senses that he needs another half-shekel – the effort of a Jew like himself – in order to be complete. This fosters a sense of unity which is crucial to Jewish survival.

It is sad that although the “silent majority” of Jews in Israel shares the basic values of Judaism, there is a noisy minority which promotes dissent and even hatred. Perhaps the message of the half-shekel will remind even them that we need not wait for war to unite our people but to rather practice the unity which will make us worthy of peace in Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### HAIFA – THE BEAUTIFUL COAST

It takes only one look at the lovely seashore that adjoins the city of Haifa to appreciate what the Torah scholar Rabbi Ishtori Haparchi suggested



might be the source for its name. “*Hof Yafeh*” is Hebrew for “beautiful coast” and Haifa may well be a combination of those two words.

## PARSHA Q&A?

1. In what context is a *mezuzah* mentioned in this week's parsha?
2. What special mitzvah does the Torah give to the master of a Hebrew maidservant?
3. What is the penalty for wounding one's father or mother?
4. A intentionally hits B. As a result, B is close to death. Besides any monetary payments, what happens to A?
5. What is the penalty for someone who tries to murder a particular person, but accidentally kills another person instead? Give two opinions.
6. A slave goes free if his master knocks out one of the slave's teeth. What teeth do not qualify for this rule and why?
7. An ox gores another ox. What is the maximum the owner of the damaging ox must pay, provided his animal had gored no more than twice previously?
8. From where in this week's parsha can the importance of work be demonstrated?
9. What is meant by the words "If the sun shone on him"?
10. A person is given an object for safe-keeping. Later, he swears it was stolen. Witnesses come and say that in fact he is the one who stole it. How much must he pay?
11. A person borrows his employee's car. The car is struck by lightning. How much must he pay?
12. Why is lending money at interest called "biting"?
13. Non-kosher meat, "*treifa*," is preferentially fed to dogs. Why?
14. Which verse forbids listening to slander?
15. What constitutes a majority-ruling in a capital case?
16. How is Shavuot referred to in this week's parsha?
17. How many prohibitions are transgressed when cooking meat and milk together?
18. What was written in the *Sefer Habrit* which Moshe wrote prior to the giving of the Torah?
19. What was the *livnat hasapir* a reminder of?
20. Who was Efrat? Who was her husband? Who was her son?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 21:6 - If a Hebrew slave desires to remain enslaved, his owner brings him "to the doorpost *mezuzah*" to pierce his ear.
2. 21:8,9 - To marry her
3. 21:15 - Death by strangulation.
4. 21:19 - He is put in jail until B recovers or dies.
5. 21:23 - 1)The murderer deserves the death penalty.  
2)The murderer is exempt from death but must compensate the heirs of his victim.
6. 21:26 - Baby teeth, which grow back.
7. 21:35 - The full value of his own animal.
8. 21:37 - From the "five-times" penalty for stealing an ox and slaughtering it. This fine is seen as punishment for preventing the owner from plowing with his ox.
9. 22:2 - If it's as clear as the sun that the thief has no intent to kill.
10. 22:8 - Double value of the object.
11. 22:14 - Nothing.
12. 22:24 - Interest is like a snake bite. Just as the poison is not noticed at first but soon overwhelms the person, so too interest is barely noticeable until it accumulates to an overwhelming sum.
13. 22:30 - As "reward" for their silence during the plague of the first-born.
14. 23:1 - Targum Onkelos translates "Don't bear a false report" as "Don't receive a false report".
15. 23:2 - A simple majority is needed for an acquittal. A majority of two is needed for a ruling of guilty.
16. 23:16 - *Chag Hakatzir* — Festival of Reaping.
17. 23:19 - One.
18. 24:4,7 - The Torah, starting from Bereishet until the giving of the Torah, and the *mitzvot* given at Mara.
19. 24:10 - That the Jews in Egypt were forced to toil by making bricks.
20. 24:14 - Miriam, wife of Calev, mother of Chur.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

© 1992 - 2012 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

- The prohibition against exchanging an animal consecrated for sacrifice
  - The role of the heir in regard to such exchange
  - The sacrifice of a non-Jew
  - Which violations are punished with lashes
  - False oaths, needless ones and proper ones
  - If an action forbidden by the Torah has any impact
  - The challenges to the views of the Sages Abaye and Rava
- on this issue
  - What may be done about donating a blemished animal to the Sanctuary
  - Usury forbidden by Torah law and Rabbinic law
  - The *temurah* exchange made by a *kohen*
  - The son of a *kohen* who got mixed up with that of a slave woman at birth

## THE HIDDEN “NO”

“**L**eimor” is one of the most commonly used terms in the Torah. The standard translation of this term (which appears at the beginning of the chapter (*Vayikra* 22:17) dealing with the requirement for an animal offered as a sacrifice to be unblemished) is simply, “saying”.

Our *gemara*, however, sees it as having an additional meaning in the context of this chapter. The Torah’s directive that a blemished animal is not acceptable as a vow-offering but may be used as a donation is understood as meaning that such an animal can be given to the Sanctuary for the general use of *bedek habayit* but not for sacrificing on the altar. The

inference is that only because it is blemished can it be demoted to the lower status of *bedek habayit*, but if it is unblemished it cannot be relegated to this status but must be consecrated for sacrificial purposes.

We thus find that there is a positive command to consecrate an unblemished animal only for sacrifice. How do we know that one who does donate such an animal for *bedek habayit* is guilty of violating a prohibition? The answer given is that the word “*leimor*” at the beginning of this chapter can be split into two words “*lo omur*” which means a “no” has been said in regard to such action.

• *Temurah 8b*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The *mishnah* which states that all – men and women – can exchange an animal designated for sacrifice does not mean to say that it is permissible to do so, but rather that the other animal also becomes sacred and the perpetrator is punished with lashes.”

• *Rabbi Yehuda - Temurah 2a*

AVAILABLE AT JEWISH BOOKSTORES & WWW.OHR.EDU

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY PRESENTS

THE WASSERMAN **TALMUDIGEST** SERIES

*A tantalizing gateway to the incomparable wealth of intellect and guidance contained in the Talmud*

VOLUME ONE - THE COGUT EDITION  
VOLUME TWO - THE WINKLER EDITION

## HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

**From: Anonymous**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*A friend of mine and myself lead learning sessions and talks to students who are newly interested in Judaism. I feel a certain sensitivity about who goes first or who seems to get a better reaction from the audience. I know that competitiveness can play a role in increasing Torah knowledge, but I can't help from feeling guilty for having these thoughts while teaching Torah to others. Do you have any insights on the issue?*

Dear Anonymous,

You're both doing a great thing for the Jewish People and for the sake of Heaven by introducing Jews to the beauty of Torah. And a little healthy competition is generally an accepted part of learning and teaching Torah. But your intention in the "competition" should be limited to making yourself better than you are, not better than him. Every person has unique talents and strengths, so you each reach different people in different ways, and ideally you should complement each other.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 102a) discusses an interaction between G-d and the great scholar-king-gone-sour,

Yeravam ben Navat, who misled Israel away from the Torah. G-d beseeches Yeravam, "Retract from your evil ways and I, you and David will dwell together in Heaven." Yeravam replied, "Who will be at the head?" G-d answered, "David". "In that case", said Yeravam, "I won't retract". From here we see that even if a person has the opportunity to attain tremendous spiritual reward, he may likely forfeit it all if he feels others will receive more. This seems utterly ridiculous, but we're all prone to such bad traits and we must be aware of the danger lurking within such an attitude.

Two great Torah scholars of recent times, Rabbi Akiva Eiger and Rabbi Yakov of Lisa, were traveling together to Warsaw for the purpose of strengthening the Jewish community in Torah study and observance. As they approached town, some individuals in the enthusiastic crowd unhitched the horses that were pulling the carriage and started to draw the carriage in their stead. When Rabbi Akiva Eiger realized this, he determined that such honor must be for his colleague, and so he alighted and joined the elated crowd in pulling Rabbi Yakov. However, at the same time, Rabbi Yakov came to the same conclusion regarding Rabbi Akiva Eiger, and so alighted from the other door. When the carriage finally arrived at the town square, to the astonishment of the gathered crowd, it was vacant of both honored rabbis, each of whom had previously stepped down in order to honor the other.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### REJECT AND SUSPECT

**Question:** I try my best to observe the laws of *lashon hara* by not only guarding my tongue against gossip and slander but also guarding my ears against accepting what people tell me about other people. How am I to react to a report that someone gives me about a fellow who intends to do me harm?

**Answer:** There is a fast day in the Jewish calendar related to your question called "Fast of Gedalia". On the third day of the Month of Tishrei Jews fast because on that day about two and a half millennia ago Gedalia ben Achikam, the leader of the Jewish community in Eretz Israel following the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*, and the exile of most of Jewry to Babylon, was assassinated, a tragedy which sealed the doom of hopes for reviving the Jewish presence in their Land.

Gedalia was warned by one of his officers that another officer named Yishmael had been hired by a foreign power to assassinate him, but refused to believe him. This naiveté led not only to his death but also to that of a large group of Jewish pilgrims whom Yishmael murdered after carrying out the assassination for which he gained infamy. The Talmud (*Mesechta Nidda 61a*) quotes a passage referring to Gedalia as the murderer of these pilgrims, placing blame on him for ignoring the warning given to him regarding Yishmael's murderous intentions.

The lesson to be learned from this, says the Sage Rava, is that even though it is improper to give total credence to the bad report we hear about someone else, we have a responsibility to treat it seriously and take the necessary precautions.

**Yochanan Betzalel Liebermann**

North Carolina

UNC – Business Administration Major

Currently a student in the Mechina Program

Saddam Hussein did not build his palace to bring Jews closer to G-d, and yet, when Mr. Liebermann was serving in the US Army in Bagdad, that is where he found a *minyan*, and that is where he prayed to Him for the first time. As the Scroll of Esther teaches us, the unfolding of history reveals the Divine Plan and that everything — good and evil — ultimately serves to connect us back to the Creator.

Before Bagdad, the pressure to keep family traditions

stopped him from asking the tough questions, but after busy bullets and singing shrapnel filled his ears, Liebermann had nothing to lose. His goal was to find — and to live — the Truth. Using all at his disposal he made his way into the Orthodox community. The historical accuracy and intellectual honesty of the Torah studies impressed him. Meanwhile, he married the wonderful Jewish lady he secretly always admired and soon they made *aliyah* together, hoping to grow their “Torah and *Mitzvot* family” with the roots of Holiness in *Eretz Israel*.

Ohr Somayach was waiting for him, and today, Yochanan’s passion for Torah shines infinitely brighter than the most luxurious chandelier in Saddam Hussein’s Palace ever did.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THE MUFFED HAFTARAH

Yossie’s parents looked forward to the Shabbat of his Bar Mitzvah when he would read in their synagogue the Haftara. Blessed with a beautiful voice and musical talent he was certain to do a great job on the Haftara he had so diligently prepared and to thus bring great *nachat* to his proud parents.

But something went wrong. The reading of the Haftara was marred by several off-tune moments and some bouts with hoarseness. As they left the synagogue Yossie’s father noticed that his son suffered no hoarseness at all and asked him why his reading was so characterized by loss of voice and tune.

A friend of mine read the Haftara last week for his Bar Mitzvah, explained the boy, and he did a rather poor job because he has a hard time carrying a tune. Next week

another friend with little musical ability will be reading the Haftara for his Bar Mitzvah. If I would have read the way I was capable of doing because of my musical ability, people would have made the comparison between my beautiful rendition and the poor showing of the others. How could I thus embarrass my friends? I therefore decided to mess up my own reading a bit so that no comparisons would be in order.

It was Yossie’s father who revealed this incident when he spoke at a *Sheva Brachot* celebration for his son almost a decade later. Yossie had met with great success in his learning and in his *shiduch*, and it was his father’s conviction that his nobility as a Bar Mitzvah boy earned him these blessings from Heaven.

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY IS PROUD TO PRESENT

## THE ESSENTIAL MALBIM

THE KOHN FAMILY EDITION

VOLUME ONE - BEREISHET/GENESIS • VOLUME TWO - SHEMOT/EXODUS

PUBLISHED BY ARTSCROLL / MESORAH

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR [WWW.OHR.EDU](http://WWW.OHR.EDU)