

PARSHA INSIGHTS

A SIGN FOR OUR TIMES

“And it [tefillin] shall be a sign upon your arm, and an ornament between your eyes, for with a strong hand G-d took us out from Egypt.” (13:16)

There was once a child prodigy who, at the age of three, could play Rachmaninoff better than the best. A concert was arranged for her to play in public. Months before, posters and TV advertisements proclaimed that she would perform for one concert and one concert only.

In order that this once in a lifetime event would not be forgotten, special mementos of the concert would be sold. For example, a tiny white concert piano on a bracelet, or a tiara with a piano on it.

The morning after the concert, the newspapers fell over themselves trying to find superlatives to describe the performance.

About a month later, a couple of louts who had missed the show turned up at the child’s home and demanded a “command” performance.

“Yeah, we know everyone says she was great. We read the newspapers and all, but we don’t believe it. If you bring her down from her room now and get her to perform here in your sitting room on this grand piano, then we’ll believe she’s as good as everyone says she is; if not we don’t believe...”

When G-d created the world, there was no doubt that it was He who had brought everything into existence, that He knew all that was going on in the world and that He was involved in the smallest event that happens in this world.

From the time of *Enosh*, Adam’s grandson, people started to make mistakes about G-d. Some people denied that there was a G-d at all.

Others conceded the existence of a Divine Power, but said that He was so removed and exalted that He only had knowledge of the spiritual realm, but didn’t know what was going on down in this world.

Yet a third group admitted that G-d knows what is happening in the lower realms, but He isn’t interested in what

we do. In other words, He created the Universe, and then, as it were, went off to play golf.

G-d decided once and for all to quash these mistakes. He would bring a series of miraculous events that would show, by altering the course of nature, that He creates nature.

Not only this, but He would take a nation out of the midst of another nation and make them His people. This would show that not only is He aware of what transpires in this world, but He cares and interacts with Mankind.

G-d would do this only once, because by performing these miracles He would remove the ability of man to have freedom of choice to believe in Him or not, and the purpose of Creation was the existence of a being, Man, who has free will to believe or not.

This is the story of the Exodus. G-d took the Jewish People out of Egypt to prove that He is alive and well and the world is living in Him!

In order that we should not forget this once-and-once-only re-orchestration of nature, He gave us souvenirs of the “concert” such as a *mezuzah* to put on our doors and *tefillin* to bind on our arms. Someone who has these reminders will go through his life as though he had a string tied around his pinkie and will never forget.

Not only that, G-d made it incumbent on every generation to *pass-over* — to recreate the events of this great concert of nature in every generation at a *Seder* so that each generation would know that it had actually happened. Parents don’t lie to their children about things of importance.

For this reason, G-d will not perform at the whim of every boor who comes along and claims that he doesn’t believe there was a concert at all. There are millions of fans who still have their tiny white concert pianos carefully handed down from generation to generation to prove the others wrong.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned. G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too. Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the first-born, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again

hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month. The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the first-born of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating *chametz* on Pesach. Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first-born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the first-born son) and *tefillin*.

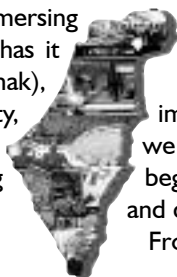
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

MIKVEH OF THE ARYZAL

Visitors to Tzfat usually make a point of immersing themselves in the "Ary's Mikveh". Tradition has it that Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, (Adoneinu Rav Yitzchak), the great kabbalist who lived and died in that city, promised that anyone who immersed himself in that mikveh would not leave this world before repenting his sins.

But why is it called the Ary's Mikveh?



His disciple, Rabbi Chaim Vital, reportedly wrote the following:

"Our master, of blessed memory, commanded us to immerse his body in the mikveh after his passing. When we took his body there and immersed it in the water, we begged him to forgive us. He then straightened himself up and did the immersion by himself."

From that day on it was called the "Ary's Mikveh".

לענין
הרב חנא מנחם מנדל בן ר' יחזקאל שרגא זצ"ל
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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

Love of the Land, TalmudTips, What's the Right Thing to Do? and The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zatzal
Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

© 1992 - 2013 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makat bechorot* took place at *exactly* midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at *approximately* midnight?
6. Why did the first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
8. G-d told Moshe, "...so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
9. Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what two *mitzvot* involving blood did G-d give to the Jewish People?
12. Rashi gives two explanations of the word "*Pasachti*." What are they?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makat bechorot*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makat bechorot*?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael*?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose first-born is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
6. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
7. 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
8. 11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
9. 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
10. 12:5 - One year.
11. 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
12. 12:13 - "I had mercy" and "I skipped."
13. 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of his home.
14. 12:31 - "Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?"
15. 12:32 - So he wouldn't die, for he himself was a first-born.
16. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matzah was dear to them.
17. 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between the parts" was decreed.
19. 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
20. 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.

LISTEN NOW TO RABBI SINCLAIR'S PARSHA PODCASTS

at <http://ohr.edu/podcast>

SHABBAT 107 - 113

“Change your clothes in honor of Shabbat.”

This is based on the *gemara*'s interpretation of the words of the Prophet Yeshayahu:

“You shall honor the Shabbat.”

How do we know that clothes are an expression of honor?

The answer lies in the way which Rabbi Yochanan referred to his clothes:

“My clothes bring honor to me.”

• *Shabbat* 113b

“Avoid running on Shabbat and even during the week.”

When Rabbi Ami asked Rabbi Yishael bar Yossi whether taking large steps on Shabbat is considered as disrespect for the holy day, the response was that running should be avoided even during the week. The reason is that taking large steps can cause a person to lose one five-hundredth of his eyesight. This loss can, however, be replenished by drinking the wine of kiddush on Shabbat eve.

• *Shabbat* 113b

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE WRONG CLASS

When a new student arrived at Ohr Somayach with the intention of doing some Torah study before beginning his residency for being licensed as a physician in the U.S., he was assigned to one of the Ulpan classes for beginners with limited knowledge of Hebrew.

He walked into the Ulpan class taught by Rabbi Avraham Zuroff and soon realized that he had wandered into the wrong class. It turned out, however, to be the right class in another sense when Rabbi Zuroff asked him his name. Upon hearing the family name Rabbi Zuroff commented that his child's pediatrician in Kiryat Sefer had the same name. The

student turned pale upon hearing the full name of the doctor and then explained why.

About 20 years ago this young man's parents were divorced in Russia. He went to the U.S. with his mother and heard rumors that his father eventually came to Israel. During several trips to Israel he made unsuccessful attempts to locate his father, even enlisting the services of a friend in Army Intelligence. Only now, by coming to Ohr Somayach and entering the wrong Ulpan class did he finally succeed in being reunited with his long-lost father.

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY IS PROUD TO PRESENT

THE ESSENTIAL MALBIM

K O H N F A M I L Y E D I T I O N

COMING SOON! VOLUME THREE - VAYIKRA / BAMIDBAR / DEVARIM!

PUBLISHED BY ARTSCROLL - MESORAH

AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.OHR.EDU

TRUE TORAH

From: Joel

*Dear Rabbi,
How do we “know” that the Torah was given by G-d at Sinai and not man-made? And even if it was given by G-d, how do we know that all the teachings ascribed to the Torah were given by G-d as opposed to the rabbis having made much of it up?*

Dear Joel,

Regarding your first question, the author of Kuzari, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, presents what is often called “The Kuzari Principle”. The argument goes as follows: Judaism’s claim to truth is that, unlike the claims of any other religion, G-d appeared to an entire nation, revealing His will that they fulfill a most exacting system of beliefs and practices. Since the entire religion is predicated on this mass-revelation, no one could ever convince an entire nation to accept the religion based on a purported experience that no one ever had.

Simply put, if mass-revelation never happened, no one could ever use it to convince others that it did. This is certainly true if the fabrication was directed to that generation itself, since no one could convince others that they experienced something they didn’t. But it’s even true if the claim was made regarding the experience of an earlier generation. Because if it was purport-

ed to have happened to the nation’s forefathers, why didn’t anyone ever hear of it?

This is a sound basis for the premise that G-d gave Torah to Israel at Sinai. But you ask, how do we know that the Torah that we have is what G-d gave? Maybe the rabbis added to it in G-d’s name.

To this I would offer two replies:

First, the religious leaders in all times, such as the prophets or the Sages of the Talmud, were G-d fearing people who revered the Torah and dedicated their lives to preserving its integrity. In addition, given their great and numerous teachings demanding impeccable ethical standards in general, and in particular extolling truth and abhorring falsehood, it is nearly unthinkable that they would intentionally falsify the Torah, clothing their own agenda in the mantle of G-d.

Second, the Talmud, for example, goes to great lengths to painstakingly differentiate between Torah Law and rabbinical legislation. It is true that the Talmud invokes the authority to add laws and customs from Torah verses, and often seeks Torah-basis for these decrees, but it always clearly demarcates the distinction between what’s from the Torah and what is from the prophets or Sages. So rather than falsely presenting their legislation as Torah, we find that the Rabbis actually stress the difference between theirs and that of the Torah.

These are some of the major reasons why the Torah as explicated by the Talmud is considered the True Torah.

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.OHR.EDU

FROM THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY

QUESTION MARKET

VOLUME ONE - THE KLEIN EDITION

Relevant, informative, and thought-provoking answers to contemporary questions on Jewish law, customs, and ethics

Joshua Ford
San Francisco, CA
Mechina Program

Joshua fancied himself a “half” Jewish (through his mother) who viewed Judaism as elitist and ignorant, Torah as 10 dumb, unimaginative commandments, and prayer as no more than a disordered making of sounds that no one understands.

His uncle, a Rabbi from Ohr Somayach’s Ohr LaGolah Program, found out that Joshua had been saving up for a trip to study Buddhism in China and convinced him that it would be cheaper to go through Israel. Joshua couldn’t argue and

joined the next JLE trip with plans to continue, after his two week vacation in Israel, to China. Those two weeks were pure confusion: prayer, Torah, Hebrew, G-d... Yet, he enjoyed the fact that the Rabbis encouraged his challenging questions and he wanted to extend his trip to see how far his questions could go.

Six months later Joshua still loves the ride at Ohr Somayach. Judaism has all the perks of Buddhism plus the evidence and total life fulfillment to back it up. He says that persistence and proper prioritizing with a healthy dollop of trial and error have helped him climb the mountain of Jewish wisdom.

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

CAN I JOIN THE CELEBRATION?

Question:

A friend of mine is about to complete learning an entire *mesechta* (tractate) of the Talmud and has invited me to participate in a *Seudat Siyum* (festive meal) he is making in honor of this achievement. Is there any point in my celebrating even though I did not achieve this goal myself?

Answer:

The source for celebrating a *siyum* is the account in the Talmud of what the Sage Abaye did when one of his disciples completed an entire *Mesechta* (*Mesechta Shabbat 118b*). He made a feast for all his disciples.

Based on this precedent the halachic authorities have

ruled that the celebration of a completion of a *mesechta* is a *seudat mitzvah* for all who participate, even if they did not achieve that goal themselves. Abaye took a cue from King Shlomo who made a feast for all of his servants when he was granted superhuman wisdom by the Creator. The achievement of greater wisdom of Torah is a cause for all Jews to celebrate.

The massive celebrations which recently took place with the *Siyum HaShas* in the Daf Yomi cycle were an expression of this idea. Even though only a fraction of those celebrating had actually completed the study of the entire Talmud, it was a joyous occasion for all the men, women and children who honored the addition to the world of Torah wisdom.

NEW! FROM RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR
THE COLOR OF HEAVEN

POWERFUL TORAH LESSONS
AND INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

ORDER ONLINE AT WWW.OHR.EDU