

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT BESHALLACH · 15 SHVAT 5773 - JAN. 26, 2013 · VOL. 20 NO. 16

PARSHA INSIGHTS

AN ACQUIRED TASTE

“Moshe caused Yisrael to journey from the Sea of Reeds...” (15:22)

They say that oysters are an acquired taste. They must be. The thought of swallowing (you don't eat oysters, you swallow them) what looks like a two inch disk of rubber with the odoriferous bouquet of an ancient sea-wreck must, I'm sure, take some acquiring.

There are some tastes, however, that require absolutely no acquiring whatsoever.

In the above verse, Rashi comments that Moshe caused the Jewish People to journey against their will. Let's picture the scene. The Egyptian army is lying scattered across the seashore. The Egyptians had crowned their horses with ornaments of gold and silver and precious stones. The Jewish People were busily gathering these jewels from the sea. Even before Moshe moved them on, the treasure that they amassed from the seashore was greater than the treasure collected when they left Egypt. The seashore probably looked like someone had raided all the storefronts on Fifth Avenue, including Tiffany and Cartier, and dumped it all on the

beach. It's not surprising Moshe had to drag them away from such a bonanza.

What is strange is that in last week's Torah portion (11:2) G-d asked Moshe to tell the Jewish People to ask the Egyptians to give them their valuables. For unless they did so Avraham would have a grievance against G-d. G-d had promised Avraham to bring out his progeny from the slavery of Egypt with great wealth. If G-d asked Moshe to make sure the Jewish People took from the Egyptians, the implication is that without this chivvying, the Jewish People would not have asked the Egyptians for anything at all.

So how come a few days later the reluctant and retiring Jewish People are all over the beach scabbling for jewelry? What happened to their diffidence?

It's amazing how some tastes take absolutely no acquiring whatsoever!

• Source: Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days' travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces

potable water. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

BUILDING A CITY

Omri was the ruler of the Kingdom of Israel for seven years. What distinguished him from his predecessors was not only the manner in which he ascended the throne but the fact that his successors were his own son and grandson.

He came to power as the General of the Army



which crushed the rebellion of a junior officer named Zimri who usurped the throne. During his reign Omri purchased a hill in Shomron and built a new city on it. In the merit of adding a city to *Eretz Yisrael*, say our Sages (*Sanhedrin 102b*), he merited that the scepter of royalty passed on to two more generations in his family (*Maharsha ibid.*).

לע"נ

הרב חנא מנחם מנדל בן ר' יחזקאל שרגא זצ"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as He provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

SHABBAT 114 - 120

“Be careful to eat three meals on Shabbat because you will gain a great reward.”

Various descriptions of this reward are provided by our Sages. One is that he will be blessed with an inheritance without limits while another statement promises that he will be saved from the traumatic events which will take place at the end of days and from the punishment of *Gehinom* in the Afterlife.

• *Shabbat 118a*

“Respect the Torah study of youngsters because they sustain the world.”

When this was said Rabbi Papa expressed surprise and asked the Sage Abaye, “What about our own Torah study?” His response was: “You cannot compare the quality of Torah which issues forth from adults who have sinned to that of children who are still so pure.”

• *Shabbat 119b*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

HAVING AN IMPACT

“We desperately need a kidney donor!” This was what the director of “Chai Lifeline” in New York, Rabbi Sholom Meir, heard from a rather exciting caller. He explained that although his organization dealt with a wide variety of medical and social services in the Jewish community, it did not deal with transplant candidates.

After repeated calls from the same party pointing out the urgency of the situation, the rabbi suggested that he place an ad in the local Anglo-Jewish weeklies asking for kidney donors. Of the dozen responses the most suitable candidate

turned out to be a 60 year-old man. When asked what motivated him to make this offer, he gave the following explanation:

“I never succeeded in becoming a wealthy man and always felt sorry that I could not contribute enough to the various appeals for funds to have any real impact on the cause at hand. Now I feel that I can have a real impact on someone’s life and after discussing it with my wife I decided to offer my kidney.”

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JEWISH TIMES

From: Allison

Dear Rabbi,

All of the “celebrations” surrounding the New Year made me ponder whether there’s a particularly Jewish approach to calculating time. I know Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year, but is there a Jewish number of years? Also, I was wondering whether there are Jewish months, or even Jewish days for that matter.

Dear Allison,

Yours is a very timely question.

According to the civil calendar in use now, called the Gregorian calendar, it is currently the Year 2013. This reckoning of years is based on the purported year of the birth of Jesus. It is for this reason that historically the years of this calendar were referred to as BC (before Christ, Greek for Savior) or AD (Anno Domini, Latin for “year of our Lord”). In modern times, in order to avoid the particular religious connotation of these terms, many customarily refer to these years as BCE (before the Common Era) or CE (the Common Era).

Aside from the obvious aversion to using a system of time that posits Jesus as Savior and Lord, Judaism has its own reckoning of years whose use pre-dates any other calendar and whose starting point reaches back the furthest. Based on the Torah’s chronology of Creation and the stated years of the generations following Adam and Eve, the Jewish calendar is currently in the year 5773 from the year in which these progenitors of mankind were fashioned by G-d. The Jewish calendar, therefore, reckons the beginning of Creation for all mankind and marks the inception of the relationship between G-d and Man.

Since you mention the “celebrations” surrounding the New Year, it’s worth pointing out the difference between the hedonistic way many celebrate New Year’s (which, historically, often resulted in horrific attacks against Jews) as opposed to the Jewish observance of Rosh Hashanah that is imbued with repentance and sanctification as befitting the day celebrating the purpose of Creation.

To answer your second question: Yes, there are specific Jewish months as well. And here too, they are significantly different than the months of the Gregorian calendar. For one, the names and origins of many of these months are pagan: January=Janus, god of gates; March=Mars, god of war; April=Aphrodite goddess of love; May=Maia, goddess of Spring; June=Juno, goddess of marriage and women. As above, Judaism has a natural aversion to using a system based on unacceptable beliefs.

Another major difference is that the Gregorian calendar is solely solar based, so while it is in sync with the seasons, there is no relationship between the months and the various phas-

es of the moon. This is not the case in the Jewish calendar where the beginning of the month occurs on the new moon, the middle of the month occurs on the full moon and the month concludes at the end of the waning moon. Since there are approximately 29.5 days in the lunar cycle, some months are 29 days and others are 30, but all correspond to the phases of the moon.

However, a purely lunar-based year is also out of sync with the times. This is because twelve 29.5-day moon-months result in a 354-day year, which lags behind the 365-day solar year by 11 days. Over three years, a lunar calendar will lag behind the seasons by approximately a month, and throughout the years, its months will drift throughout the entire spectrum of the seasons. The Islamic calendar is such a system, where, for example, the month-long, day-time fast of Ramadan is sometimes in the short, cool days of winter and other times in the long, hot days of summer. The Islamic calendar is thus the converse of the Gregorian calendar; while its months are in sync with the moon, they are totally out of sync with the sun and the seasons.

Despite its preceding Christianity and Islam, the Jewish calendar ingeniously resolves the tensions that rise from their calendars with a soli-lunar calendar that simultaneously preserves within the seasons of the solar year true lunar months. The way this works is that since a discrepancy of about one month occurs over three years, approximately every three years (specifically, 7 times in 19 years) a second month of Adar is added at the end of the winter in order to fulfill the Torah’s mandate for Nisan, the month of Redemption, to occur in the spring. The intercalation of this extra month ensures that all of the months and their holidays are always in balance with their respective seasons.

Regarding Jewish days, given the antiquity of the Torah, it would seem that the seven-day week delineated in the Torah is the basis for that being the universal standard. However, here again, the names of the days of the week in the Gregorian calendar have their origin in idolatry and paganism where each day is dedicated to a different planet/god: Sunday to the sun; Monday to the moon; Tuesday to Tew, the Norse equivalent of Mars; Wednesday to the god Woden; Thursday to Thor; Friday to Freya, the equivalent of Venus; and Saturday to Saturn.

The Jewish days of the week, based on the wording of the Torah, are simply numbered from one to six (corresponding to Sunday through Friday), as a count-up culminating in the only day of the week referred to by name - Shabbat. This is the day that is to be celebrated as the completion and perfection of Creation. In their attempt to transplant yet imitate Judaism, Christianity and Islam chose respectively the closest day after or before Shabbat as their Sabbath. But according to the source for their choice, the Torah, both days are mundane. Jewish sources describe this choice as a Divinely directed fulfillment of the Torah verse establishing the unique relationship between Israel, Shabbat and G-d.

written by Shimon O'Heron

Joseph Geske
Evenstone, IL

University Illinois, Chicago – Political Science Major

Pesach was no more than “a Second Thanksgiving” for Joseph. His Maimonides Session in University was his first real encounter with Judaism. He was inspired to go on trip to Israel where he tasted gourmet kosher food which before then had been oxymoronic to him. He decided to come on JLE for his gap year at Law School to experi-

ence a real authentic Pesach in Jerusalem (which he did - his Pesach meal finished at 5:00am!). Joseph describes Ohr Somayach as a Shoresch Buffet: philosophy, politics, ethics, Torah, mysticism, all spread before you every day. His year is coming to an end and he leaves, feeling, for the first time in his life, Jewish Pride. He says “Knowledge is Pride.” Joseph had to check an ethnicity box for his University and noticed there was no “Jewish” box. He realized that he has to define Judaism for himself and thanks Ohr Somayach for helping him do so.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

GOING TO THE DOGS

Question:

A fellow in my office, who belongs to some temple practicing what they call “Liberal Judaism”, recently invited me to attend a “Bark Mitzvah” which he is making for his pet dog at their temple. He promises me that it will be a “truly religious ceremony” as is customary in that community, complete with a *tallit* and *kipah* for the dog, a sermon and appropriate gifts. I know this sounds absolutely ridiculous but what is the right thing for me to do in this case?

Answer:

With all respect to dogs and other animals, you are faced with a challenge to redeem a fellow Jew from his association with a brand of “modernization” which is letting Judaism “go to the dogs”. But because such behavior is, as you put it, “absolutely ridiculous”, it provides you with an opportunity to enlighten your inviter as to the folly of his spiritual values and thus open his eyes to true Judaism.

The Midrash teaches us how the Patriarch Avraham used

satire to discourage people from idol worship. A customer entered his fathers idol shop one day while he was minding the store and ordered a shiny new model. “How old are you?” asked the young Hebrew iconoclast. When the client responded that he was sixty, Avraham challenged him as to how a man of sixty was prepared to bow down before an idol only a few days old.

Just as that customer walked out of the shop with a humiliating sense of the absurdity of idol worship, perhaps a similar effort on your part in regard to the “Bark Mitzvah” will cause your friend to abandon such a farce and the movement that sanctions it. But perhaps your best approach will be to inform your friend that you cannot attend a ceremony which is an insult to your own idea and ideal of what a Bar Mitzvah means in the life of a Jew. You may also assure him that his pet dog will not be insulted if he cancels the event and walks out with his tail between his legs because that animal has more sense than the humans who wish to honor him by disgracing themselves.

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