

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

FAME, I'M GONNA LIVE FOREVER

“And the staff of Aharon swallowed their staffs.” (7:12)

When Aharon's staff swallowed the staffs of the magicians and remained as slim as before, Pharaoh started to fear that the staff would “swallow him and his throne.”

If the staff would swallow him, why would he be concerned that his throne would be swallowed? Is his throne more than his own life? Not only that, why would he care? He wouldn't be around to see the staff swallowing his throne anywhere.

Maybe we can answer this with a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley:

*I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read,
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:*

*Look upon my works ye Mighty, and despair!”
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”*

A Jew works his whole life for *Olam Haba*, the World-to-Come. Someone who doesn't believe in a World-to-Come has to come to terms with the frightening finality of his earthly existence. How does he cope with this? By trying to create artifacts of his brief walk in this life. His hope is that he will achieve a kind of eternity because others will remember his name. He was the man who painted such-and-such; who dreamed up the world's most advanced mousetrap; who murdered the world's most famous pop star as he emerged from his limo. As the words of a famous (for how long?) pop song would have it, “Fame, I'm gonna live forever.”

To Pharaoh there was one thing worse than dying — that his throne, his fame, everything that he would leave in this world would die with him.

• Source: *Midrash Rabba*

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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 smaller 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.

TALMUD *Tips*

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

YOMA 51 - 57

"When the Jewish People did the will of G-d, the keruvim ("cherubs" in the Holy of Holies) faced each other; but when the Jewish People did not do the will of G-d, the keruvim faced away from each other.

This teaching is found in Bava Batra 99a and seems to contradict what we learn on our current *daf*. Here we are taught that when the pagans destroyed the first Beit Hamikdash they brought out the *keruvim* from the Holy of Holies in an attempt to show that the Jewish People had been worshipping these idols.

However, our *gemara* seems to run counter to the *gemara* in Bava Batra since here at the time of the destruction the *keruvim* were found embracing and facing each other — a sign of the Jewish People fulfilling the word of G-d. But the destruction was a punishment for them not fulfilling His will! Numerous answers are offered by the *Rishonim* and *Achronim*. One is that when the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed the Jewish People sincerely took to heart that they needed to repent and return to the way of G-d — and they did.

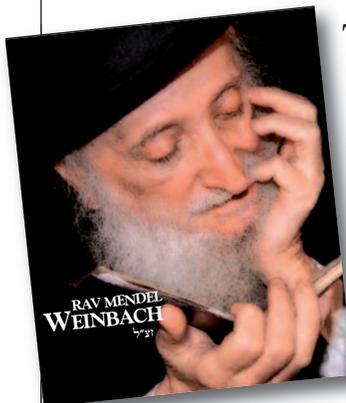
• Yoma 54b

"Come see what is written about the Jewish People: 'G-d dwells with the Jewish People in the midst of their tumah (defilement, ritual impurity and transgressions)'."

Rabbi Chanina states this on our *daf* in rebuttal to a claim by a *tzeduki* heretic that G-d does not dwell with the Jewish People when they are in such a downfallen state of *tumah*. He cites Vayika 16:16 as proof that G-d continues to dwell amongst with the Jewish People even then.

• Yoma 57a

A Memorial Tribute on the First Yahrzeit



THE MEMORIAL TRIBUTE BOOK FOR RAV WEINBACH ZT"l is available in print at Ohr Somayach* as well as in PDF format on www.ohr.edu

* Suggested minimum donation for the printed version is 36 nis.

Proceeds will be used for the Gemach Charity Fund established by Rav Weinbach, zt"l to assist Ohr Somayach students.

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 (*pittem*) 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.

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Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT VAERA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In this Parsha, after the sixth plague of boils, the Torah tells us that G-d “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” and he refused to free the Jews. The problem is that by hardening Pharaoh’s heart G-d appears to be taking away his free will. If so, how can Pharaoh be held responsible for refusing to free the Jews?

Abarbanel begins by quoting the solution offered by the Rambam who says that Pharaoh, by murdering innocent children and imposing back-breaking servitude, forfeited any opportunity for repentance. Therefore even though G-d eventually takes away Pharaoh’s free will, his punishment is a result of his previous murderous free will decisions. Abarbanel has a great deal of difficulty with this explanation since the Rambam himself emphasizes elsewhere that even if one repents one moment before his death, that repentance, if it is a sincere product of his free will, will be accepted. Pharaoh, however, completely lost that free will.

Abarbanel offers three alternative solutions, with his main focus on the third one. The first solution is that the ability of a transgressor to repent even at the last moment only refers to transgressions against G-d. However transgressions against other individuals require their direct forgiveness. Obviously Pharaoh could never be forgiven by the thousands that he murdered or injured. Therefore taking away his free would have no effect on his ultimate fate which was already sealed. The second solution is based on a unique understanding of the concept of repentance. Abarbanel claims that repentance in its broadest sense only applies to the Jewish People. In regard to the other nations of the world, repentance is only possible for those who completely reject idolatry and attach themselves to G-d. Therefore Pharaoh, an idolater who refused to accept the omnipotence of G-d, was guilty whether or not he eventually

lost his free will.

Abarbanel’s third approach is a unique but brilliantly simple solution to the problem. All the other explanations are predicated on the assumption that G-d actually took away Pharaoh’s free will. Here, however, Abarbanel claims that G-d never did so. Thus the question of how Pharaoh could be punished for his actions becomes totally moot. The problem now is how to interpret those verses that state explicitly that G-d “hardened Pharaoh’s heart”. Abarbanel explains that G-d did not harden his heart directly through some metaphysical spiritual influence. Rather, when Pharaoh saw that each of the first several plagues could be duplicated by his magicians or was only temporary, he had no reason to free the Jews. Thus it was the way that G-d administered the plagues that allowed Pharaoh to choose not to free them. G-d chose multiple plagues that ceased short of total destruction instead of one unending calamity in order to demonstrate his power and dominion over Egypt and all aspects of Egyptian life. As G-d says after the plague of pestilence, “For now I could have sent My Hand and stricken you and your people with the pestilence, and you would have been obliterated from the earth. However, for this I have let you endure, in order to show you My strength and so that My Name may be declared throughout the world.” Pharaoh, however, instead of focusing on the multiplicity of miraculous calamities that were striking Egypt, chose to take advantage of the respite between plagues to strengthen his own resolve to defy G-d and not free the Jews. G-d never directly steered Pharaoh’s decision-making. He only presented him with a particular pattern of plagues that left him free to follow his own inclinations. His free will was never compromised.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

RABBI MEIR - THE TANA

“Whoever learns Torah for the pure sake of Torah study merits many things. Not only this, but he is considered as if the entire universe was worth creating and sustaining for him alone.” — Rabbi Meir (Avot 6:1)

The “many things” mentioned here are not the spiritual rewards that are detailed in the long list presented by Rabbi Meir in the continuation of his statement. The reference here is to all of the material blessings, such as children, health and economic security.



Since these blessings are merely instruments for achieving the goal of spiritual perfection, Rabbi Meir refers to them in general terms and is specific only about the goal.

Not only is the entire world he lives in worthwhile because of the existence of this Torah scholar, but also “the entire universe” — the universe from the beginning of time — was created and sustained only for his sake.

• Midrash Shmuel

MATTER OF INTEREST

From: Jonathan

Dear Rabbi,
About 10 years ago, before I became religious, I borrowed a significant amount of money with interest from a Jewish acquaintance. Now that the loan is due I'm prepared to pay back the loan, but the person demands I pay the interest too; otherwise he'll sue me. If he takes me to court I'll certainly lose, in addition to incurring all types of expenses and losing time from work – not to mention the anguish of going through the ordeal of a court case. Since I'll end up paying more than the actual interest anyway, would it be permitted to pay it to the guy and good riddance? And since he's not religious anyway, do I have to be concerned about his taking the interest?

Dear Jonathan,

This is a question of great interest! Although I intend to offer you an interesting solution, since the laws of interest are very complicated, you may only accept my words as a suggestion. For a definitive answer, you must consult a local expert who can work through all the details with you in person.

First of all, you are correct that a Jew may not collect interest on a loan to another Jew. This applies even if the person is not observant since the Torah Law applies to all

Jews. However, even if you would agree to pay him for the reasons you describe, you are not allowed to since the prohibition of interest applies not only to the lender's collecting, but also to the borrower's paying it.

It's for this reason that when asked a similar question, one of the great experts on these matters, Rabbi Ya'akov Bloi, *zatzal*, answered that a person would have to subject himself to being sued rather than paying forbidden interest of his own volition. However, in one particular instance regarding a long-term loan, when pressed by a *ba'al teshuva* who wouldn't accept this solution, the rabbi referred him to another great scholar, Rabbi Israel Fischer, *zatzal*.

When Rabbi Fischer heard the question, in his typically gruff manner he replied something like, "Those transgressors! You can pay him if you want to".

The person couldn't believe what he heard. He replied, "Excuse me rabbi, I'm just a *ba'al teshuva* and may not understand properly. But even if the lender is not religious, he can't collect interest; and I don't see how I can pay him interest even if I want to".

Rabbi Fischer replied, "Your being a *ba'al teshuva* is exactly the point! You say the loan was made 10 years ago before you became religious. Since then, there has been a *shemita* Sabbatical year which nullifies all loans. And as a non-religious person, the lender certainly made no *prosbul* agreement which would enable the extension of the loan beyond *shemita*. So he's a transgressor by trying to claim a non-existent loan! On the other hand, since there's no loan, there's no interest either, and you can give him as much as you want in order to avoid being sued!"

NEW!

"The Talmud Navigator"

Ohr Somayach presents

an innovative package specially developed to assist learning, analyzing and remembering the Talmud!

What is Ohr Somayach's new and innovative feature for assisting everyone to learn, analyze and remember the Talmud? Especially helpful for those learning Daf HaYomi!

Talmud Navigator – "Excel" in Talmud

The Talmud, often referred to as "The Sea of the Talmud", is vast both in breadth and depth. The *gemara* (Megillah 18b) describes the difficulty of maintaining a hold on all the Torah you learn, quoting Proverbs (23:5): "When you lift (or close) your eyes from it – and it disappears".

Chazal (Eruvin 54b) prescribe a method for gaining a true understanding and making a lasting acquisition of all the material you learn. Rav Chisda is quoted as saying, "The Torah can only be acquired with signs."

Talmud Navigator is an attempt to organize the Talmud in database form, mapping and charting the Talmud by tagging the various components and building blocks of the according to type and hierarchy. It is based on the system outlined by the Ramchal in

Derech Tsvunos.

This system of textual organization serves as a self-help way to outline the *sugya* in a clearer fashion. It assists in promoting a better understanding of the flow of the *Gemara* and in facilitating summary and review. It is also an excellent tool for a less advanced *Gemara* learner to identify and grasp the logical flow and interconnections of its various components.

Each Thursday we will post a PDF file which maps the *gemara* studied in that week's *Daf Yomi* cycle. G-d willing, we plan in the future to make available the Excel file which enables the user to make his own condensed selections of the *Gemara*. For example: Highlighting the main statements, arguments, questions, conclusions or personalized anchor points of the *sugya* determined by the learner to facilitate his own review.

Talmud Navigator is prepared by Rabbi Hanoach Zweig and is available at www.ohr.edu

FINDING FAVOR IN THE KING'S EYES

Come and see how great the lowly of spirit are before the Holy One, Blessed be He.... One whose attitude is humble is regarded as though he brought all the various offerings.... His prayer is not despised by G-d, for it is written: "A broken and crushed heart, O G-d, You will not despise. They cry out and G-d heeds... G-d is close to the broken-hearted." (Talmud Bavli, Sotah 5b).

One of the functions of a king is to provide for his subjects. Since he is responsible for so many, and resources are often limited, not all will be granted their requests. The king must decide to whom he will be gracious, and who will be turned away. There are times when an appeal for mercy can change the mind of the king, causing him to grant a particular request.

G-d also relates to the world as a king. Accordingly, He takes on the responsibility of caring for all of His creations, providing for their every need, as it is written: "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing". Although, unlike a human king, G-d's ability to provide is unlimited, not all requests are granted. One must merit His kindness; otherwise, his request may be rejected. From the teaching quoted above, we see that approaching G-d with

the right attitude is crucial in helping to arouse His mercy, thereby gaining His favor.

This idea can be illustrated with the following story:

One Yom Kippur morning some time ago, a young boy entered the town shul in the middle of the Yom Kippur prayers. He wanted so badly to join everyone in prayer, but he didn't know how. In fact, he didn't even know the entire Alef Beit. As he turned to his left he saw other boys his age who were praying. The boy, feeling helpless, began to cry. With teary eyes, he spoke from the depths of his heart: "Master of the world, I don't know how to pray, I only know part of the Alef Beit." He then said the ten letters that he knew and concluded, "Please accept these letters and make them into a prayer. It is all I know." On the eve following Yom Kippur the town rabbi had a dream. It was revealed to him that the Jewish People were saved from a harsh decree in the merit of that boy's prayer.

What was the great power behind the young boy's prayer? It was his broken heart and his feelings of true humility. Such prayer, which we are all capable of achieving, arouses G-d's mercy, and at times, can even save us from harsh decrees.

@ OHR *Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students*

MAKING SPIRITUAL DEALS

by Daniel Keebler

Elyah Leboff Age: 38 - Kiryat Sefer, Israel
Emerson College – Major: Mass Communications
Freelance Writer
Intermediate Program & Beit Midrash Alumnus

Elyah Leboff was raised in Malden, Massachusetts and knew little more about Judaism than how to read Hebrew. A Jewish bookstore owner made a deal with him and his mother: half-price on tefillin plus free tefillin lessons if Elyah goes to the Orthodox prayer services a month before and two months after his bar mitzvah. Elyah enjoyed the youth services so much that he continued attending beyond his bargain for another two years. Eventually, resistance from parents became too much to withstand and Elyah stopped going to the Orthodox services.

After passing the Orthodox synagogue on his way home from work every day during college, Elyah eventually made a deal with G-d: "Any time I don't have work on Shabbat, I will come to synagogue." To his delight, he was not given work on Shabbat for the following month! Soon after

his deal with G-d, Elyah was offered a position at his dream job, set for Saturdays. It wasn't easy, but he refused.

Right after college, Elyah came to Ohr Somayach where he learned for five years. He then moved with his wife and family to Kiryat Sefer and joined a local English-speaking *kollel* (institution for advanced Torah study). Elyah says that the skills in Talmud and Jewish thought he developed in Ohr Somayach gave him the ability to teach other men in the *kollel* and build their learning skills. These same skills also gave him the ability to pursue a new profession as a translator.

Elyah continues to pursue Talmudic studies as a main occupation. In recent years, as a member of his *kollel* he has been teaching classes in Jewish thought and filling in as teacher for the head of the *kollel* when he is away. As a translator, Elyah has translated Torah works for Metzuda, Feldheim, and Chavrusa publishers, which he finds very fulfilling. In addition, Elyah and his family are regulars at Rabbi Pindrus' yearly Succot party, and his children look forward to it every year, "like going to visit Grandpa."

