

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TEITZEI · 9 ELUL 5760 · SEPT. 9, 2000 · VOL. 7 NO. 49

PARSHA INSIGHTS

STONEWALL

“He cannot give the right of the firstborn to the son of the beloved one ahead of the son of the disliked one, the firstborn.” (21:16)

One of the greatest men who came into this world was an unassuming rabbi who was born in Russia and lived most of his life in New York City. There are enough stories about Rabbi Moshe Feinstein to fill many books. Here is one small story which is enormously revealing.

When a Jew finishes speaking to his Creator in the *amidah*, the standing prayer, he takes his leave by walking backward three paces as a servant would take his leave of a great king. If someone is standing behind you and is still praying this prayer, the *halacha* forbids you to back up into a space four *amot* (approximately two meters) in front of the person still in prayer. One day, Rabbi Feinstein had just finished praying in his Yeshiva on Staten Island, New York. As it happened, someone was still praying behind him. As he waited patiently for this person to conclude so that he could take three paces backward and complete his service, someone told him that there was a call from Israel, a matter of extreme importance that demanded his attention. Rabbi Feinstein continued to wait for the fellow behind him to take three steps backward. Nothing happened, so deeply was this fellow immersed in prayer. The person who had brought Rabbi Feinstein the news of the call started to become agitated:

“Please, Rosh Yeshiva, *Eretz Yisrael* is waiting. It’s very important!”

“What do you want me to do?” replied the great Rabbi, “There’s a wall behind me.”

We live in an era where, for many people, the Ten Commandments have become the Ten Suggestions. A

mitzvah is not a suggestion — it is a reality. We may not be able to see that reality, but that doesn’t make it any less real. When Rabbi Feinstein said he couldn’t back up, he meant that he *couldn’t*. Not that he didn’t think it was a good idea, but that the spiritual reality of the situation placed a barrier behind him as solid as any structure of brick and mortar.

This is the way a Jew must relate to his Judaism.

This week’s *parsha* teaches us about a man with two wives, one he loves, the other he dislikes. They both bear him a son. The unliked wife bears first. As her son is the firstborn, he is entitled to a double portion in the inheritance of his father. The Torah stipulates that the father may not transfer this double portion to the son of the beloved wife.

This commandment is phrased in a puzzling way. The Torah tells the father: You will not *be able* to endow the beloved son to the detriment of the disliked son. It doesn’t say “You are not *allowed*...” It says “you are not *able*.”

Similarly, when a person finds a lost object, he is required to take steps to return it to the owner. The

Torah says that a person cannot just ignore the article and assume that someone else will deal with it. “You shall not shirk your obligation” (22:3) says the Torah. Here again, the literal translation is “you are not *able* to shirk.”

The Torah doesn’t just demand a code of behavior from us, it demands that we become a certain kind of person. It is not enough that we don’t perform favoritism. It is not enough that we return lost objects. The Torah requires that we become the sort of people that would find it *impossible* to allow such behavior, that we ingrain G-d’s will in our heart and mind until we see spiritual walls as being walls of mortar and stone.

Sources:

Ibn Ezra, Avi Ezri, Rabbi Mordechai Perlman, Rabbi Mordechai Pitem

“The Torah requires that we ingrain G-d’s will in our heart and mind...”

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah describes the only permissible way a woman captured in battle may be married. If a man marries two wives, and the less-favored wife bears a firstborn son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is stoning. A body must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had housed a holy soul. Lost property must be returned. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs. A fence must be built around the roof of a house. It is forbidden to plant a mixture of seeds, to plow with an ox and a donkey together or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads — *tzitzit* — on its corners. Laws regarding illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. An escaped slave must not be returned to his master.

Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden. *Bnei Yisrael*

are not to make vows. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting. Divorce and marriage are legislated. For the first year of marriage, a husband is exempt from the army and stays home to rejoice with his wife. Tools of labor may not be impounded, as this prevents the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease *tzara'at* is forbidden. Even for an overdue loan, the creditor must return the collateral daily if the debtor needs it. Workers' pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, converts and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court may impose lashes. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing. It is a *mitzvah* for a man to marry his brother's widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate and used honestly. The *parsha* concludes with the *mitzvah* to erase the name of Amalek, for in spite of knowing about the Exodus, they ambushed the Jewish People.

HAFTARAH

YESHAYA 54:1 - 10

AN ORPHAN PRAYER

"Sing out, O barren one, who has not given birth...for the children of the desolate outnumber the children of the inhabited." (54:1)

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"Rabbi. I prayed and prayed, but my prayers weren't answered." "Yes, they were," said the Rabbi. "The answer was no."

No prayer ever goes unanswered. Every prayer makes an impact in the higher spiritual realms. When a prayer seems to have fallen by the way, we look at it as worthless, and yet it makes an awesome impact on the very fabric of reality.

Beyond our comprehension, in the loftier spheres that little prayer is moving worlds.

This is the meaning behind the verse in this week's *haftara*, "Sing out, O barren one, who has not given birth...for the children of the desolate outnumber the children of the inhabited." The children of the desolate, those "orphan" prayers, are changing the universe beyond the limited view of our physical eyes.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"Don't wear *shatnez*, a mixture of wool and linen. (22:11)

If there is a long fabric (a blanket, for example) with wool and linen mixed together at one end, it is forbidden to cover yourself even with the other end.

• *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 301:3*

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

RISHON LETZIYON

Established by Russian Zionists in 1882 not far from what was to become Tel Aviv, its name was taken from the words of the prophet Yeshaya (41:27) "The first (*rishon*) in Zion (*letziyon*) they will be...and I will make them a har-

binger of good tidings for Jerusalem." The Carmel Wine Cellars were established here in 1887 through the generosity of Baron Rothschild and served as an important factor in the development of the agricultural settlement into a major urban center.



NILE DENIAL

From: Shana in Daytona Beach, FL
<shanalovebug@cs.com>

Dear Rabbi,

Hi, I am attending a community college in Daytona Beach before I go to Berkeley, and I have a couple questions concerning the angle my humanities teacher takes. He states that there was no great Exodus out of Egypt for the Jews because archaeologists could not find trash in the desert enough for the "supposed" thousands of Jews migrating out from Egypt. He also states that the Jews were not slaves in Egypt. He admits to there being a small caste of Jews that were slaves, but not on the popular belief scale. I am the only Jew in class because he asked any Hebrew to raise their hand and mine was the only one that went up, so I stand alone when I ask him and question him. If you could give me any information about this I would feel better about the subject. These are only a few of the things my teacher has said that has made me anxious and on guard. Thank you.

Dear Shana,

Your teacher is mistaken on two counts.

First of all, he is simply ignorant of the overwhelming amount of historical evidence, archeological and otherwise, that there is for the Exodus. I'll mention some of this evidence later.

Secondly, even if there were no archeological evidence to prove the Exodus, that would not necessarily disprove it.

The only way to disprove something is either to find evidence against it, or to find a lack of evidence that should be present and for which there is no plausible explanation for its absence.

But simply to say that something was not proved is a meaningless statement. For instance, the fact that they didn't find a harp with David's name on it or a pair of shoes with the name "Moses" written in them does not disprove these people's existence.

Now, not finding trash could be "evidence against" the Exodus if the archeologists knew exactly where such trash should be. But how would they know that? Do they know the exact route that we traveled in the desert? How exten-

sive was their digging?

And exactly what kind of trash were they looking for? Candy wrappers? The manna that fell from Heaven wasn't wrapped in candy wrappers. Were they looking for human waste? The Talmud says that the manna was miraculous food that was totally absorbed by the body; a person didn't have to go the bathroom after eating the manna. Perhaps, then, they expected to find worn out clothing? The verse says, "Your clothes did not wear out from upon you these forty years (Deuteronomy 8:4)."

Now, an archeologist may say, "But I don't believe in these miracles; I'm looking for evidence of a purely natural Exodus."

In other words, the Jewish version of the Exodus is rejected at the outset; instead, evidence is sought for a different event, an event which we never said happened.

This is like saying: "If the Jews crossed the Red Sea, they must have had boats. If we don't find these boats, it disproves their story." But this won't disprove our story; we never claimed we crossed the Red Sea in boats! So, too, our version of the Exodus does not imply necessarily that we would have littered the dessert with all sorts of artifacts.

As I said in the beginning, there is overwhelming historical evidence, archeological and otherwise, for the Exodus. For one, we have an unbroken historical record of these events. Our record is both a written record, recorded in our Torah, and an oral record passed on by word of mouth from parents to their children (like we do the night of Passover). See our "Historical Verification of the Torah" at <http://ohr.edu/ask/ask158.htm#Q1>

I'll mention here just one piece of archeological evidence, the Ipuwer papyrus. Found in the early 19th Century in Egypt, this document describes events which parallel remarkably events described in the Book of Exodus: Violent upheavals in Egypt, starvation, drought, escape of slaves with the wealth of the Egyptians, and death throughout the land. See it on our website at:

<http://www.ohr.edu/special/pesach/ipuwer.htm>

Finally, let me suggest a few books that bring extensive archeological evidence for the Exodus: The best book on the subject is *Israel in Egypt* by James Hoffmeier. See also *Biblical Personalities and Archaeology* by Leah Bronner and *Permission to Receive* by Leib Keleman.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

My older brother is my twin. Although he is perfectly healthy in every way, he will not fast this year on Yom Kippur, although I will. Why?

Answer next week...

WHO KEEPS THE KERCHIEF?

In order for any transaction or commitment to be finalized halachically, a *kinyan* must be made. A *kinyan* serves as the legal instrument of acquisition or obligation from which there is no backing out.

The most common form of *kinyan* is *chalipin*. First mentioned in the Book of Ruth, this *kinyan* consists of the party wishing to acquire an object or a commitment from another party giving him some useful item; this in turn obligates the other party to transfer ownership of the object being sold or given, or to fulfill the commitment.

The item mentioned in the Book of Ruth is a shoe, but the most common item used throughout history has been the *sudar* — the kerchief — and the *kinyan* of *chalipin* is frequently referred to in the Talmud as *kinyan sudar*. Most everyone has seen such a kerchief *kinyan* performed at a wedding when the groom assumes the responsibility to his bride for all of the financial obligations recorded in the *ketubah*. It is also a familiar sight before Pesach when we use this as an instrument for transferring to the rabbi the right to sell our *chametz* to a non-Jew.

What happens to the kerchief after the *kinyan* is complete?

Anyone who has participated in such a *kinyan* or observed one knows that it always ends up back in the possession of its original owner. Is this because it was intended only as an instrument of *kinyan* and therefore must be returned, or does the one making the transfer or commitment have the right to keep it?

There seems to be a dispute on this point between Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Ashi. Rabbi Nachman contends that the seller cannot keep the kerchief, and he cites this as support for his view that something can be transferred to someone solely for the purpose of momentarily serving as an instrument of *kinyan*. Rabbi Ashi challenges this support by contending that if the seller wishes to keep the kerchief, it is not certain that he would not have the right to do so.

Ran points out that even Rabbi Ashi concurs that the kerchief cannot be kept, and that he was only offering a challenge to Rabbi Nachman as regards the conclusiveness of his premise. He bases this on a statement made by Rabbi Ashi himself in another *gemara* (*Mesechta Kiddushin 6b*). Even though Tosefot there disagrees with this interpretation of Rabbi Ashi's statement, Tosefot does agree that it is the universal custom for the kerchief to be returned to its original owner.

• *Nedarim 48b*

THE SECRETS OF THE SAGE'S WEALTH

From a humble beginning as an ignorant shepherd, Rabbi Akiva developed into a Torah giant and a very wealthy man. His Torah scholarship made him the teacher of 24,000 disciples. To dispel any notion that his wealth resulted from having so large a student body, points out Maharsha, the *gemara* informs us that he received no payment for teaching Torah but became wealthy from six different sources.

In connection with two of these sources there are fascinating stories only hinted at in our *gemara*.

One is about the Roman noblewoman from whom Rabbi Akiva borrowed money to support his disciples. She insisted that Hashem and the sea serve as guarantors for the loan. When the due date arrived, Rabbi Akiva was ill and did not appear to make the payment. She thereupon went to the seashore and said: "Sovereign of the Universe, it is revealed to You that Rabbi Akiva is sick and was unable to pay his debt. You are the guarantor of his loan."

At that moment the emperor's daughter went mad and threw a chest filled with jewels and gold coins into the sea. The chest was then washed ashore at the very spot where the noblewoman sat and she took it home with her. After a while Rabbi Akiva recovered and went to the noblewoman with money to pay his debt. "I have already turned to the guarantor," she informed him, "and He paid the entire debt. Here is the amount which exceeded the debt," she said, whereupon she gave him the remaining treasure.

Another woman connected with Rabbi Akiva's wealth was the wife of the Roman nobleman, Turnus Rufus. One day he came home extremely upset because Rabbi Akiva had embarrassed him in a theological debate before the emperor. She thereupon offered to incur Hashem's anger towards the sage by tempting him. When she appeared before Rabbi Akiva in all her finery, Rabbi Akiva spat, laughed and cried. In reply to her request for an explanation of his actions he agreed to reveal the reason for only two of them. He spat because she was the product of a putrid seminal drop, and cried because such beauty was destined to eventually rot in the earth. The reason for his laughter, which he did not reveal to her, was that he had a Divine revelation that she would convert and become his wife. She was so moved by what he did tell her that she asked if there was a way for her to repent. When he said there was, she took the initiative of converting, married Rabbi Akiva and brought along her great wealth.

• *Nedarim 52a*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house?
2. What fraction of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother? b) two brothers?
3. What will become of a *ben sorer u'moreh* if his parents don't bring him to court?
4. Why is it a degradation to Hashem to hang a criminal's body on the gallows overnight?
5. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
6. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
7. Why does the Torah link the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother-bird with the *mitzvah* of making a railing on the roof of your house?
8. What mixture of wool and linen is permitted to be worn?
9. What three things happen to a man who falsely slanders his bride?
10. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
11. Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
12. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
13. What is the groom's special obligation to his bride during their first year together?
14. When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?
15. What type of object may one not impound as collateral?
16. "Remember what Hashem did to Miriam." To what event does the Torah refer?
17. If a poor person finds money, the one who lost it receives a blessing. From where do we derive this?
18. Who has the primary obligation to perform *yibum*?
19. Which two people in this week's *Parsha* are required to speak in *Lashon Hakodesh*.
20. How does the Torah describe those who cheat in business?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 21:13 - So her captor will find her unattractive.
2. 21:17 - a) 2/3 b) 1/2
3. 21:22 - He will eventually rob and kill to support his physical indulgences.
4. 21:23 - Because humans are made in Hashem's image; and because the Jewish People are Hashem's children.
5. 22:2 - Sell it and save the money for the owner.
6. 22:5 - It leads to immorality.
7. 22:8 - To teach that one *mitzvah* leads to another, and to prosperity.
8. 22:12 - Wool *tzitzit* on a linen garment.
9. 22:18 - He receives lashes, pays a fine of 100 silver *selah*, and may never divorce her against her will.
10. 23:8 - Because they hosted Yaakov and his family during the famine.
11. 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come.
12. 23:21 - Three; two negative commandments and a positive commandment.
13. 24:5 - To gladden her.
14. 24:5 - When he remarries his ex-wife.
15. 24:6 - Utensils used to prepare food.
16. 24:9 - Hashem punishing Miriam with *tzara'at* for speaking *lashon harah*.
17. 24:19 - From the *mitzvah* to leave the "forgotten bundle" for the poor.
18. 25:6 - The eldest brother.
19. 25:8 - The *yavam* (brother-in-law) and the *yavamah* (his childless brother's widow).
20. 25:16 - "An abomination (*to'evah*) to Hashem."

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

"Neither an Ammonite nor a Moabite may marry into Hashem's community...because they did not offer you bread and water on the journey when you left Egypt, and because they hired Bilaam ben Be'or from Aram's Twin Rivers to curse you." (23:4)

Kasha:

The above verse portrays the Moabites as *not* offering food to the travel-weary Jews. But an earlier verse implies that the Moabites *did* offer food. In the earlier verse Moshe asks King Sichon to allow the Jews passage, food, and water "as the Children of Esav who dwell in Seir and as the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for us." (*Devarim* 2:29).

How do you resolve this contradiction?

Answer:

The above verse criticizes the two nations of Amon and Moav for two sins: Denying food and hiring Bilaam to curse. But the verse does not necessarily mean that *both* nations were guilty of *both* sins. Rather, the Ammonites *alone* denied food and water to the Jews, while the Moabites were free of that blemish. The Moabites alone, on the other hand, are the ones who hired Bilaam to curse the Jews.

• *Siftei Chachamim, Devarim* 2:29

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

Re: Going to Potter (Ohrnet Pinchas):

A few months ago, my non-religious, eight-year old nephew arrived in Israel for the first time and stayed with us one week, Harry Potter novel in tow. He was very excited to share his book with his numerous cousins (our children). Within the first half hour of greeting them, he was happily reading aloud to them and showing them the pictures.

It was obvious to me within moments that he should keep this book to himself for private reading time, when our children were in school. I was relieved when my ten-year old whispered to me, "*Imma*, the book he is reading isn't nice!"

Another answer to the person who asked whether we should be reading Harry Potter is this: Why not read something much more inspiring to oneself and one's children? Like Paysach Krohn's phenomenal true stories (the five volume "*Maggid*" series), or the four volume *Visions of Greatness* by Rabbi Yosef Weiss, and numerous others?

When I read these to our children, we all are uplifted by our own potential for greatness, and awed by the *chesed* (kindness), giving, sensitivity, and selflessness of Jews around the world. Why aspire to be a wizard and read about all that violence? It seeps in to one's psyche, everything we read. (please don't print my email address if you use this letter in the Public Domain).

• *Name@Withheld*

You wrote: "There's no specific prohibition against 'wizard' stories, the question is how much time, if any, to spend on them?" Your suggestion does not take into consideration the other contents of the book — it could be licentious, violent, etc.

• *Revs. Helmut & Erika Loeffler,
Metro Manila, Philippines
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Re: Ohr Somayach in the News

I write articles every month for the religious school paper at my *shul*. I was grasping at how to write about Tisha B'av, when I found your site. THANK YOU! THANK YOU! And TODAH!!! I am able to compose a much more thoughtful piece due to your writings. I hope you won't mind if I utilize your site in the future for more writings. Best regards!

• *Debi Burdman-Deutsch
<deutschgirls@earthlink.net>*

Ohrnet Responds: We're glad that you find our site useful! That's what we're here for! If reprinting material from our site, please credit us as follows:

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Thank you!

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

The sight of a steaming pot of beans, potatoes, meat and spices does not usually inspire shock and embarrassment. But it did in the case of...

POT LUCK

Our neighbors, a young couple with children, were getting ready to move, and packing occupied most of their time. I offered to help by doing some of their Shabbat cooking. I made them a *kugel*, a salad, and for the main course a small but full pot of *cholent* (Shabbat stew). My daughter brought them these items Friday afternoon.

Saturday morning I served my own family's meal. Removing one of the little pots from the fire and opening it,

I was greeted with a sight that filled me with shock and embarrassment: Instead of the slice of chicken and the few pieces of squash which were to have been my main course, I saw *cholent*.

How could this be? Wasn't this the pot I sent to my neighbors?

Oh, no! I sent them the wrong pot! Instead of a main course for them and their family, they got a meager, single serving of chicken and a few bites of vegetable.

I would explain it to them later. In the meantime, I could only hope that they read regularly this "**Other Side of the Story**" column, which beautifully teaches about judging others favorably!

• *Submitted by an Ohrnet reader*

Send your stories about judging favorably to info@ohr.org!

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