

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

WAITING TO RUST

“Then Rachel and Leah replied and said to him, ‘Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father’s house? Are we not considered as strangers... so whatever G-d has said to you, do.’” (31:14-16)

There’s a widespread misunderstanding about why people are religious. It runs something like this. Okay, I’m prepared to sacrifice something of my pleasure in this world so that I can get a piece of the action in the next. I don’t mind refraining from the occasional BLT or McDonald’s because I believe the Big Mac’s are bigger on the other side.

Even those of us who like to think of ourselves as religious, if questioned, may subscribe to this line of thinking.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

A person should feel that he is giving nothing up of this world — because this world has nothing to give him.

Let me give you an example:

Tuesday morning. You finally get the call. You’ve waited for two full months. And now it’s here. Your champagne-metallic luxury turbo diesel 4x4 has arrived at the car dealer. Your heartbeat leaps to 120 beats a minute. Your mouth dries up. You jump into the nearest taxi and sit there lost in the glow of expectation. You arrive at the showroom. The car dealer hands you the keys. This is the moment you’ve been waiting for. You slide behind the wheel. The smell of leather and “new car” is more potent than the latest Paris perfume. You turn the key and the engine purrs into life. You ease the car out of the parking lot and cruise down the main drag of the city real slow.

Riding a wild set of wheels at an easy pace.

Phew!

A couple of months later, you’ve already scratched the champagne metallic paint in more than a few places, and the front fender shows the battle scars of a shopping expedition

to the mall.

Why can’t new cars stay new? What happens to that smell of ‘new-car’? Does the factory send out a fragrance recall on it? And what happens to the *feeling* of new car? Why does it always turn into a gas-guzzling insurance-eating rusting heap?

Nothing in this world that is solely of this world brings you real happiness.

Compare this to the feeling that comes from praying, even with a little bit of concentration. Most of us, at some time or another, have had this beautiful experience. And that feeling is second only to the feeling of learning Torah — that’s the most exquisite experience in the world. And it’s a genuine pleasure that stays with you. Not like this week’s new purchase that fills you with pride and desire and then comes to collect from you a heavy debt, both physically and spiritually.

“Then Rachel and Leah replied and said to him, ‘Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father’s house? Are we not considered as strangers... so whatever G-d has said to you, do.’”

You could very easily misunderstand what Rachel and Leah meant by the above statement. You could very easily think that they were saying that the only reason to do what G-d said was because they had no share or inheritance in their father’s house, that they were considered as strangers, but if that were not the case, then Yaakov should not do what G-d said!

What Rachel and Leah were really saying was that they understood that leaving their father’s house was in no way a sacrifice for them. For they felt estranged from everything that Lavan’s house represented.

Life’s true pleasure is to be close to G-d, everything else is like a pile of steel waiting to rust.

• Based on Lev Eliyahu

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

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven,

Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by Hashem not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

ISRAEL Forever

ANGELS, PLACES AND TIMES

The Patriarch Yaakov, we learn in the Torah portion which Jews will read this Shabbat throughout Eretz Yisrael and the world, had a most dramatic experience as he was on the verge of leaving the Holy Land in order to find his mate in the foreign land to which his parents had directed him. He spent a night on the mountain where the *Beit Hamikdash* would someday stand and, explains the Midrash, he was exposed to a prophetic vision of its construction and destruction.

How does this implied vision of the future connect with the vision which the Torah so explicitly describes of a ladder reaching to Heaven with angels climbing up and down on it?

The angels descending, say our Talmudic Sages, were the ones who escorted Yaakov in Eretz Yisrael and now returned to their Heavenly base once their mission was completed, and they were to be relieved by other angels descending to escort him outside of the Holy Land. Every

angel has its own special mission and is not charged with more than one. The protection that Yaakov required while in Eretz Yisrael was not the same as what he required outside the land. Since the experiences of the Patriarchs are an indication of what their descendants would endure, it is safe to say that the dangers which Jews face, physical and spiritual, are not the same in Eretz Yisrael as they are elsewhere, and Heaven provides us with the protecting angels we need in each place.

Just as there is a difference between one place and the other there is a difference between one time and another. The challenges Jews face when they have no *Beit Hamikdash* are not the same as those they faced when they had one. Yaakov was therefore shown the challenges which his progeny would face in each era, comforted by the Heavenly guarantee of protection through His guardian angels which would be with Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

ERETZ CHITAH... U'DVASH — A LAND OF WHEAT... OF OLIVE OIL AND HONEY

Eretz Yisrael is praised in the Torah as a land rich in seven varieties of grains and fruits: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

Because of their connection with the land these items of food require a special blessing after they have been consumed, even if they grew outside Eretz Yisrael.



Our Talmudic Sages also saw in each of these seven items mentioned a hint to some halachic tradition which Moshe received at Mount Sinai but is not explicitly stated in the Torah.

We thus see in these "special seven" the triangle which is formed by the Torah of Israel, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "Hashem remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's Parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

BONUS QUESTION ?

When Yaakov left to Charan he was 63, and had learned Torah all his life; first from Avraham and later from Yitzchak. Why then — despite his father's directive to find a wife — did he suddenly need to delay 14 years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever?

BONUS ANSWER !

Noach's son Shem survived the Flood. Before the Flood, he had lived amongst the most wicked of peoples, yet he remained righteous. Now that Yaakov was leaving the righteous influence of his father, Yitzchak, and going to live with the wicked Lavan and his like-minded countrymen, Yaakov needed Shem's teachings to show him how to remain righteous in evil surroundings.

• Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky in *Emes L'Yaakov*

LOAVES AND LAMBS WAVING AND LIFTING

On Shavuot in the Beit Hamikdash there was a special service in which two loaves of bread were lifted by the *kohen* along with two lambs which were offered as *shlamim* sacrifices.

Two issues are discussed in our *gemara* in regard to this lifting. The first deals with the question of which was on top – the loaves or the lambs. There seem to be conflicting signals in the passage describing this service. On the one hand the passage states “You shall lift them (the lambs) on the bread” which would indicate that it is the lambs which were on top. But the passage concludes its instructions regarding the loaves with the phrase “on the two lambs” (*Vayikra* 23:20) which indicates that the loaves were on top of the lambs.

The conclusion of our Sages is that it is the loaves which were on top because this is the order we find in the initiation of the *kohanim* described elsewhere (*Shmot* 29:22-24). That same chapter is also the source for clarification of the second issue – the methodology of the lifting. This lifting is there summed up as “that which was waved and which was lifted” (*ibid.* 29:27).

The *mishna* (*Zevachim* 61a) describes this as waving forward and back, and lifting up and lowering. What this waving in four directions and lifting symbolizes is given two different explanations. Rabbi Yochanan saw in it an expression of recognition of G-d’s mastery – waving in all directions to the One to whom all those directions belong, and lifting and lowering to the One to whom Heaven and earth belong. The Sages in Eretz Yisrael saw the waving as a protection against the dangerous winds which might come from those directions, and the lifting as a safeguard against dangerous precipitation from above.

The Sage Rabba pointed out that this same waving and lifting is done with the four species on Succot and with the same symbolism.

• *Menachot* 62a

THE COUNTING THAT COUNTS

The mitzvah of counting the days and weeks between the festivals of Pesach and Shavuot which we know as *sefirat ha’omer* is traditionally performed by every male Jew at the conclusion of his *Ma’ariv* evening service. An interesting question arises as to whether one Jew can do the

counting by declaring how many days and weeks have passed, and another Jew can fulfill his obligation by simply listening to his declaration. This is what is done in regard to the Shabbat and Festival *kiddush*, and in regard to other blessings, with one saying the words while others fulfill their obligation through the rule that “listening is equivalent to saying”. Whether this rule also applies to *sefirat ha’omer* depends on how we understand the *gemara’s* interpretation of the Torah passage in which this mitzvah appears.

The Torah’s use of the plural form in the command of “You shall count” (*Vayikra* 23:15) led our Sages to conclude that each and every Jew must do the counting. Some commentaries understood this to mean that in contrast to other *mitzvot* performed through speech, the rule of listening being equivalent to speaking does not apply to this counting and everyone must do the counting by himself. Other commentaries, however, contend that this mitzvah is not an exception to that rule and one can fulfill his obligation by listening to another do the counting.

Why, then, according to this approach did the *gemara* stress that every Jew must do counting based on the plural form of “you”? The answer is that in regard to counting the years leading to the Jubilee Year the Torah used the singular form in “You shall count” (*Vayikra* 25:8) to indicate that this is the responsibility of the Sanhedrin and is not incumbent on every individual Jew. In order to stress that the mitzvah of *sefirat ha’omer* is indeed incumbent on every Jew the Torah used the plural term.

It should be noted that this debate deals only with the actual declaration of the day and week counted. In regard to the blessing made before the counting, however, there is a consensus that, as in the case of all blessings, one can fulfill this by hearing the one leading the service or any other Jew make that blessing. The widespread custom nevertheless is for every individual Jew to fulfill this *mitzvah* which reminds us of the *omer* service in the Beit Hamikdash by himself making the blessing and doing the counting.

• *Menachot* 65b

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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TORAH AND “MAKING A LIVING”

From: Scott in Dallas, TX

Dear Rabbi,

I was told that according to Jewish law a person must work for a living. If so, how do those people who only study Torah all day justify their lifestyles?

Dear Scott,

At first glance it would seem that what you were told is correct. Maimonides strongly criticizes one who relies on charity to support full-time Torah study: “Anyone who decides to study Torah and not work, making his living from charity, desecrates G-d’s name and disgraces the Torah...Any Torah that is not accompanied by work will lead to its own undoing and cause sin”.

However, elsewhere Maimonides appears to contradict this statement. While teaching that the Tribe of Levi has a special dispensation from laboring for their living he adds: “And not only the Tribe of Levi [is exempt from working], but any person whose spirit moves him to separate himself and stand before G-d, to serve Him in order to know Him...behold he has become sanctified as the Holy of Holies, and G-d becomes his portion, his inheritance forever. And G-d will provide his basic necessities for him in this world, as with the Priests and Levites”.

The “Brisker Rav” resolves this apparent contradiction based on the fact that both of these lifestyles are taught in the Talmud. Rabbi Yishmael teaches that the study of Torah is to be accompanied by earning a livelihood, as in the verse “And you shall gather your grain”. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, however, contends that when Israel is sincerely dedicated to

learning Torah, G-d sees to it that others will do their work. Abaye remarks that many did like Rav Yishmael and succeeded in both working and learning, while most of those who did like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai did not succeed in either.

The Brisker Rav explains that Abaye intends to clarify that Rabbi Yishmael’s path is for most people, while Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai’s approach is appropriate for only a few, determined individuals. Therefore, the first statement of Maimonides which encourages working, is referring to the masses. The average person’s commitment will not stand up to the demand of full-time Torah study. However, the second statement exempting Torah scholars from labor is directed to those individuals who are able to fulfill such a commitment.

Rabbi Moshe Isserlis (Rama) states that ideally one must work to support himself and family, but only to provide for the basic essentials, while the rest of one’s time should be dedicated to learning Torah. He notes, however, that the custom of “all places in Israel” is that Torah scholars are supported by the community. Rabbi Israel Meir Kagen (Chafetz Chaim) adds that nowadays anyone may learn Torah full-time, since it is so difficult to simultaneously devote oneself to a livelihood and also master the Torah.

Sources:

- Maimonides, “Yad Hachazaka”, *Talmud Torah*, 3:10
- *Ibid.*, *Laws of Shemita and Yovel*, 13:13
- Rabbi Yitzchak Ze’ev Soloveichik (Brisker Rav), “*Maran R.Y.Z. on the Torah*”, *Parshat Chayei Sarah*
- *Talmud*, *Berachot* 35b
- Shulchan Aruch, *Laws of Talmud Torah*, 246:21, Rama
- Rabbi Israel Meir Kagen (Chafetz Chaim), “*Mishna Berura*”, *Laws of Berachot* 231:1, *Biur Halacha*

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

DEFACING THE WALLS

Question: I live in a religious neighborhood of Jerusalem and whenever I stand in one of the bus shelters provided by the municipality I am shocked to see its walls disfigured by all sorts of private announcements advertising sales, services or events. Is it right to exploit public property for such private purposes?

Answer: The municipality’s attitude towards this behavior can be seen in the campaign recently launched by the religious mayor of the city to clean up all the polluted bus shelters and to enforce the ban on posting material on them.

It seems that the people who have been using these city shelters for their advertising — the major offenders are the professional sign hangers who work in conjunction with the

printers — have assumed that since they were not prosecuted for doing so (despite the obvious disclosure of their identity), there was tacit permission granted by the city authorities. Add to this the standard excuse that “everyone else is doing it” and you have a pseudo-moral basis for causing so much ugliness.

A great Jerusalem Sage once wisely remarked that the “posters hold up the walls of Jerusalem buildings”. Important as they may be, however, these posters should not be placed where there is an objection from the owner of the space. What you and other citizens should do is petition the city for more public bulletin boards and discourage your neighbors from placing their posters and signs anywhere else!

Colorblind**Re: Parsha Insight for Chayei Sara**

I was reading your most recent parsha insights column when I read “or going for a walk by yourself in a strange city and suddenly realizing that every face you see on the street and on the billboards is black”. It is my understanding of this passage that it is within the context of the author’s description of the dangerous things that youth do and grow out of.

What exactly did the author mean by this passage? Was it the author’s intention to infer that all black people are dangerous?

I look forward to your response.

• C. K. in Winnipeg, CANADA

Ohrnet’s reply:

Thank you for the feedback. In fact a number of readers were intrigued by the example cited in the article. In fact it was very far from the author’s mind to be racist in any way. He was merely recalling a real-life frightening experience as a teenager. Perhaps he could have made the same point by creating a false experience of a youthful escapade such as getting drunk at a

party or playing a prank on someone. Maybe if he had written “or going for a walk by yourself in downtown Jenin with a yarmulke on your head” the point would have been less provocatively expressed. Most importantly to note, of course, is that Judaism is “colorblind” and is based purely on Torah ideals and ethics — color and other such factors being completely irrelevant.

Bat Mitzvah Booklet

I wanted to know if I could have permission to reproduce an article by Rabbi Yaacov Asher Sinclair. Specifically, it his summary of Parshat Lech Lecha. I am currently tutoring a Bat Mitzvah girl and she is putting together an illustrative booklet of different verses in that Parsha and we would like to open the booklet with a brief description of the Parsha. The Bat Mitzvah will be taking place in an Orthodox synagogue.

• Thank you from S.

Ohrnet replies:

Feel free to use whatever you and she feel helpful and Mazal Tov!

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

AN APPETITE FOR LIFE

Many memories of the great leader of Torah Jewry, Harav Elazar Shach, of blessed memory, were recalled the other week on the occasion of the second anniversary of his passing. Among them were touching stories about the wisdom and sensitivity he displayed in helping individuals along with his historic feats of teaching Torah and leading a generation.

One such story concerned an American girl whose severe diet brought her to a dangerous state of anorexia. With a total lack of appetite she was literally withering away, much to the consternation of her family. When medical and psychological aid failed to solve the problem, her father turned in desperation to the Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponevez Yeshiva.

Sensing that the young lady had probably embarked on her destructive diet in order to achieve a figure which might improve her matrimonial opportunities, Rav Shach turned to her with a request that she eat the piece of cake he placed before her and added a promise that if she resumed eating she would be blessed with a good match. After convincing her to thus break her self-imposed fast, he urged her to write him each day what she had added to her eating, once again reassuring her that she would find a good shiduch.

The strategy worked. She recovered her appetite and her health and soon met a fine Torah scholar with whom she established “a faithful home in Israel” thanks to the brilliance of mind and heart of this Torah giant.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...The Ohr Somayach Website – ohr.edu – has just celebrated its 10th anniversary. Innovations in content and presentation are planned for the outset of its second decade.