

OHR NET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

"And there arose a new king over Egypt..." (1:8)

Rabbi Leib Chasman was the *mashgiach* (spiritual mentor) of the Chevron Yeshiva in the 1930s. A certain problem faced the Yeshiva and it was decided that the issue should be decided in a general meeting of all the rabbis. One of the speakers, a venerable man in his late eighties, rose to the podium. His advanced years and fragility necessitated the help of two of the younger rabbis. Finally, he cleared his throat and began to speak. "My esteemed and honored colleagues hear my words! My body is weak and old. The natural desires of youth no longer affect my judgment. Nothing clouds my judgment any longer. All life's temptations have no taste for me anymore. Hear my words, and be guided by me!" Rabbi Chasman jumped to his feet and pounded the table. "Not true. All desires may wane with age except one, and that gets stronger and stronger – the attraction to status and honor."

Our internal negative impulse is an opportunist. He's always looking for an opening. When one door closes on him, he pushes even harder to get in the other.

"And there arose a new king over Egypt..."

The people of Egypt came to Pharaoh after Yosef's death to organize themselves against the Jews. Pharaoh wouldn't hear of it. "We only live because of them. How can we turn on them?" Their reaction was to depose Pharaoh. He became a mere commoner, no longer enjoying the position of king and the honor that goes with it. After cooling his heels for three months, he suddenly saw the light, did a 180° about-face, and embraced the will of the people. Thus the Torah writes, "*And there arose...*" — meaning that the former Pharaoh "arose" from his deposed position.

Such is the power of status. Our deepest convictions can be held to ransom by an offer we can't refuse.

Sources:

- *Da'at Zekeinim miba'alei Hatosfot,*
- *Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shmot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to be his nursemaid. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev

(Mt. Sinai) Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, the land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: Transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

BLESSED FAMILIES OR PROBLEMATIC ONES?

“Behold, the people of the Children of Israel are more and multiplying than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them lest they multiply...”

— Pharaoh, King of Egypt (circa 2362)

“We should encourage families with three children to have a fourth and families with two children to have a third, but not families with nine children to have a tenth because this is a formula for poverty and is common to the Third World.”

— Avraham Poraz, Israel's Minister of the Interior (5763)

(Poraz is the one who sent congratulations to the Dutch government for banning *shechita* in Holland.)

In this week's Torah portion the Egyptian ruler declares a state of emergency because Jewish mothers are giving

birth to six children at a time. Poraz echoes the concern when it comes to religious families, and publicly admitted at a meeting with the members of the Foreign Press Association that the government cuts in child support payments were specifically aimed at the religious sector which his Shinui Party is battling on every front.

The truth is that the large “blessed families” in the religious sector are the best bulwark Israel has against the demographic problem posed by the population growth in the Arab sector. The time has come for people like Poraz and his Shinui partners to put aside their hatred of Torah and encourage Jews to have more and more children in order to guarantee the future of Israel as a Jewish state 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 RECHAVAH – THE SPACIOUS LAND

In the second blessing of our Grace After Meals which expresses our gratitude to Heaven for the gift of Eretz Yisrael we refer to it not only as a “desirable and good land” but also as a “spacious” one.

“Spacious” has both figurative and literal connotations. When the Torah relates the conflict between the shepherds of the Patriarch Yitzchak with the Philistines over ownership of two vital water sources it records in subtle, prophetic manner that there was no dispute over the third one uncovered by Yitzchak's men and they named it “Rehovot”. This term of spaciousness



referred to the end of restrictive conflict which made it possible for “us to be fruitful in the land” (*Bereishet* 25:22), but was also a hint to a time in the future when local conflicts, with our neighbors and among ourselves, would come to an end and allow us to multiply and prosper.

In the literal sense “spacious” refers to the Divine promise (*Devarim* 19:8) when “Hashem, your G-d, will expand your borders as He swore to your ancestors and give you all the land which He promised to give to your fathers.”

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt?"
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro's daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d's promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
14. "And Hashem was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16,18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother, Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

BONUS QUESTION ?

Why did Moshe risk the spiritual and physical dangers involved in bringing his wife and children to Egypt?

BONUS ANSWER !

Moshe wanted to give hope and encouragement to the Jewish People. By bringing his wife and children, he showed them his confidence that Hashem was going to redeem the Jewish People very soon.

• Meshech Chochma

THE DAY WITH THE MOST

When were the most communal sacrifices offered in one day? The answer to this question is relevant to a ruling in our *mishna*. Should a Jew make a vow to supply oil or wine for the *mincha* flour offerings and libations which accompanied communal sacrifices, but cannot recall the amount to which he committed himself, he is obligated to supply the maximum amount of these ingredients that are ever needed in one day.

The *gemara* identifies this day as the first day of Succot when it falls on Shabbat. This serves as an invitation to go back to our *Chumash* and make a calculation of how much oil and wine this adds up to.

In Parshat Pinchas we read about the two lambs offered as daily sacrifices (*Bamidbar* 28:3), the additional two lambs offered on Shabbat (*ibid.* 28:9) and the additional number of animals offered on the first day of Succot (*ibid.* 29:13). This last item was comprised of 13 bullocks, two rams and 14 lambs. Although the very next passage spells out how much flour was required for the *mincha* offering accompanying each of these sacrifices, we must search elsewhere to learn how much oil was blended with the flour in these *mincha* offerings and how much wine was poured in the accompanying libations.

For this information we turn to Parshat Shlach where the Torah spells out these amounts – six *lugim* (half a *hin*) of oil and six *lugim* of wine for each bullock, four *lugim* (third of a *hin*) for each ram and three *lugim* (fourth of a *hin*) for each lamb (*Bamidbar* 15:4-10).

From here on it is a matter of simple arithmetic. The total amount of bullocks was 13, which were accompanied by 78 *lugim* of oil and 78 *lugim* of wine. The two rams required 8 *lugim* of each and the 18 lambs called for 54 of each. Since the total amount of oil and wine offered on that day was 140 *lugim* of each, the Jew who does not remember how much oil or wine he made a vow to donate is obligated to supply this maximum amount, which may be what he had in mind.

If you are making a calculation of the number of animals offered on that day your total of 33 based on the above figures will be one shy of the actual amount. This is because on every

Festival a goat was offered as a *chatat* sin offering in addition to all of the above-mentioned sacrifices which were *olah* burnt offerings. A sin offering, however, was not accompanied by a *mincha* or libation.

• *Menachot* 107a

THE TORAH NIGHT SHIFT

“All the servants of G-d who stand in the House of G-d during the nights” is how the Psalmist describes those upon whom he calls to offer a blessing to G-d (*Tehillim* 134:1).

Who are these servants of G-d, and what sort of service are they involved in?

They are the Torah scholars who are involved at night in the study of Torah, says Rabbi Yochanan, and they are considered as if they were performing sacrificial service in the House of G-d, the Beit Hamikdash.

Maharsha explains that Rabbi Yochanan concluded that the passage could not be referring literally to the service performed in the Beit Hamikdash because it stresses the service performed at night, while the principal service in the Beit Hamikdash took place during the day. He therefore applies it to those who study Torah at night.

The reason for stressing the night as the time of Torah study, adds Maharsha, is because most people are too preoccupied during the day and the opportunity to dedicate oneself to learning Torah comes only at night. It may be suggested, however, that the accent on night learning is based on what Rambam writes in his Laws of Torah Study (3:13):

“Although it is a mitzvah to learn Torah day and night one acquires most of his wisdom from learning at night. Therefore, if one wishes to gain the crown of Torah he must be careful in regard to all of his nights and not waste any of them in sleeping, eating, drinking, talking or similar matters.”

Whether it is the minimal learning done at night by the Jew preoccupied during the day mentioned by Maharsha or the special quality of nighttime learning highlighted by Rambam, this Torah study is so precious in the eyes of G-d that He equates it with the offering of sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash.

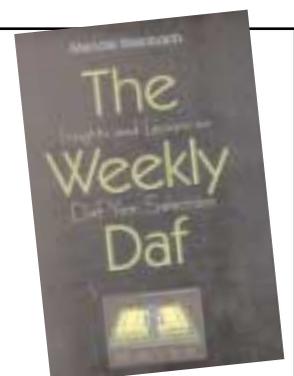
• *Menachot* 110a

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A FRIEND IN NEED

From: Jon in Atlanta

Dear Rabbi,

Sometimes when people ask me for help with something, I'd rather not do it and I try to avoid them. Sometimes I feel it's justified if I really have no time, or if I'm not feeling well. But other times I just don't want to help because I'm lazy, but I'll say I don't have time. Is it against the Torah to not help when I really can't?

Dear Jon,

Your feelings are natural, and we all think this way from time to time. However, like all other undesirable inclinations within us, we must overcome this "laziness" to help others. In these instances, it often helps to remember that we are instructed to "walk in the ways of G-d" — just as He helps others (including us), so must we. Imagine if one day G-d just didn't feel like helping the world along — chaos, disaster. But in truth He helps us tirelessly, giving us health, sustenance, family, and a myriad of other blessings. The least we can do is to help others with what we have, which is anyway a gift from G-d.

The Torah extends this idea to helping even those who we don't get along with. "If you see the mule of someone you hate lying under its burden, and you would rather not help him, you must surely help to unload it" (Exodus 23:5). The commentaries explain that this is not only an issue being humane to animals; it is an explicit commandment to help those in need, even if we don't like them. Overcoming our inertia to aid in such a case is not only a mitzvah; it goes a long way to making peace.

Your question reminds me of a story I heard. Once a religious Jew was driving on the highway when he saw a man wearing a yarmulke stranded on the side of the road. The driver pulled over, and as he was helping to jump-start the car, he

noticed the other man taking off his *kippa* headcover. The driver asked, "aren't you Jewish?" To which he responded, "No. My mother told me to keep a *kippa* in the glove compartment in case I ever get stuck, I should wear it and someone will surely stop to help". (This doesn't mean that a non-religious Jew wouldn't stop to help or that a religious Jew would stop only for a Jew. Rather the Jew who stopped, despite the inconvenience, did so because he practiced what he learned in the Torah, to help his fellow man with acts of loving-kindness.)

Your question reminds of a touching story about helping others. Once a woman visiting Israel from America was waiting in line in a supermarket. In a rush, and upset that there was no express lane, the woman asked to skip ahead in line, but the cashier refused. Frustrated, the woman decided to leave. Halfway down the block she heard a tremendous explosion; a bomb went off in the entrance of the supermarket. Several days later, the woman returned to the store to thank the cashier for possibly saving her life, only to hear that she had been hospitalized.

At the hospital, the woman thanked the cashier and insisted that if she ever visits New York, she should look her up. The cashier, who had no intention of leaving Israel, graciously took the woman's number. Months later, the cashier needed serious surgery, and her doctors recommended she go to New York. When she arrived, she called to tell the woman about her surgery, but was surprised by her terse response, "I'm very busy now and can't talk, I'll get back to you". What a shock when on the day of surgery, the woman showed up at the hospital, "I've taken three days off from work to help you". As a result of helping the cashier, she was in the hospital on September 11, and not at work in the Twin Towers. This adds new meaning to the adage, "G-d helps those who help (others) themselves".

Sources:

• *Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 90*

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Re: Pets and Judaism (Ohrnet Vayeshev)

The Shulchan Aruch is talking about livestock when it says that animals are *muktzeh*, because livestock is money. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* wrote that pets that are used for *shashuah* (domestic enjoyment) are not *muktzeh*. (Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim vol. 5, #22, par. 21) The lack of *muktzeh* is only for a pet designated for use as a pet. A dog kept purely as a watchdog is considered livestock/money, or a cat kept purely as a rat-ter (as many people were wont to do in agricultural societies, in order to protect grain piles).

I have found that many observant Jews in America still have a very European outlook on many things. In Eastern Europe only the nobility had dogs, and they used to set them on the Jews for "fun". The memory of avoiding dogs is still with many people. (I am a *ba'al teshuva* from Virginia, and I have no such aversion.) When I was learning in New York, one Friday night

when I was walking to my Rabbi's house two wild dogs came trotting down the street. I kept an eye on the dogs, but did not panic. My friends were almost in a panic. Later on I found out that they had picked up a nervous attitude about dogs from their grandparents.

While I am writing about the subject, I will mention that kosher pet food can be an issue. While the pets can certainly eat *neivillah*, many canned pet foods are forbidden from benefit, because of meat and milk and finding something without *chametz* for Pesach in it is even harder.

Bearing all that in mind, one of the benefits of pets is pet therapy, which is a great boon to Alzheimer's patients and critically ill children. I find that even regular children can learn empathy and *chesed* (kindness) from having a pet as well.

I enjoy the Ohr Somayach newsletters greatly.

• A. S.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A GOLDEN GIFT

A holocaust survivor recently passed away in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya. During their condolence visit to his surviving son in Jerusalem the comforters heard a fascinating story which expressed the inextinguishable spirit of survival and faith of the Jewish People.

In a safe in the home of this Jew was a bar of gold around

which was wrapped a note with the following explanation:

“Upon arriving in Eretz Yisrael after the destruction of European Jewry I wished to express my gratitude to Heaven. I therefore used the first money I earned in the Holy Land to purchase this bar of gold which I have dedicated as a gift to the Beit Hamikdash which I hope to see rebuilt in my days.”

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

HOLD THAT TAPE RECORDER!

Question: When I go to hear a public lecture I am in the habit of taking along a tape recorder so that I can record the lecture and listen to it again at home. Is there a need for me to request permission from the lecturer?

Answer: There is a basic principle in human affairs that when someone says something to another person he is not necessarily interested in having that information shared by others. This is why our Talmudic Sages ruled (*Mesechta Yoma 4b* and cited as halacha by Magen Avraham in *Shulchan Aruch Orech Chaim 156*) that it is forbidden for one to relay to others what he has heard from an individual unless that person grants him permission to do so.

Just as there may be reasons unknown to the listener

for the speaker's desire for confidentiality in the above-mentioned case of individuals, there is reason to assume that a lecturer addressing a particular audience may also object to having his statements heard by those outside of that audience. There have been many instances where a remark which was “politically correct” for one audience reached outsiders through a recording and was the catalyst for ugly recriminations.

An additional factor to consider is that many professional lecturers have an arrangement for marketing the tapes of their lectures and view the taping by individuals as an infringement on their enterprise.

In conclusion, come early to the lecture and take the pains of asking the lecturer or his escort for permission to do the recording.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

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