

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### VISIONS IN THE NIGHT

*"And G-d spoke to Yisrael in visions of the night..." (46:2)*

Remember bedtime as a small child? Remember as your father closed the door you said, "Daddy, don't close the door all the way!?"

What is it about the dark that is so frightening? And why is it that even when we grow up and we know that with a mere flick of the switch we can bathe the room in light, total darkness still can be so disturbing?

In total darkness, we lose contact with the world. In total darkness, we have no contact with our surroundings whatsoever. All that is left is the memory of what the world looked like in the light.

In Hebrew the word for "darkness", *choshech*, comes from the same root as the word meaning "to withhold" (see *Beresheet* 22:12). Real darkness is the withholding of any reality outside us. Deprived of an outside world to give us orientation, we are forced to rely entirely on ourselves.

*"And G-d spoke to Yisrael in visions of the night..." (46:2)*

G-d did not appear either to Avraham or Yitzchak at night. It was only to Yaakov that He appeared. It was Yaakov who had to go into the long night of exile. In exile, a person is detached from his roots, from his surroundings. G-d appeared to Yaakov to indicate that even in the darkness of the long exile of the Jewish People in which we still languish, G-d would never desert us.

The *avot*, the Fathers of the Jewish People, each instituted one of the three prayers daily prayers: Avraham

established *Shacharit*, the morning prayer; Yitzchak founded *Mincha*, the afternoon prayer; and Yaakov originated *Ma'ariv*, the evening prayer; *Ma'ariv* is the prayer of the night, the prayer of exile, the prayer that calls from the depths of disconnection to the Source.

The three prayers also correspond to the daily *korbanot* (offerings) of the Holy Temple. Both *Shacharit* and *Mincha* represent offerings that may only be brought during the hours of daylight. *Ma'ariv*, however, represents the parts of the offering that can be brought both by day and by night.

The spiritual Masters teach that the Divine Presence cannot rest on someone when he is outside the Holy Land unless he had already experienced the Divine Presence in the Land. Yaakov's ability to draw down the Divine Presence to him even when he was outside the Land of Yisrael derives from the fact that the Divine Presence already rested on him while he was in the Land. Thus, his is the service in the Holy Temple, which starts in the day and continues into the night. Yaakov could draw the light of the day into the night. He could draw the Divine Presence while he was in the Land into the night of exile.

Chanukah is the time of year when we celebrate the triumph of the light over the darkness. We are the Children of Yisrael, of Yaakov. To the extent that we see ourselves as the continuation of Yaakov and all he stood for, however deep the darkness of exile might seem, to that same extent will we experience the brilliance of the Light.

• Sources: Based on the *Meshech Chochma* and others.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its

negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE FRUITS

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

### GRAPE - THE FRUIT OF JOY

When Yotam presented his parable to the people of Shechem who had abandoned him and crowned his rival Avimelech as their ruler, he described the efforts of the trees to find one amongst them who would consent to be their king. The grapevine's refusal was based on a reluctance to give up its traditional role of supplying the wine which "gladdens G-d and men." (*Shoftim* 9:13)

Our Talmudic Sages *Berachot* 35a) ask: "That wine gladdens men is understood, but how does it gladden G-d?"

Their answer is that the Levites in the *Beit Hamikdash* only offered their praise to G-d in music and song when the wine libations accompanying the

sacrifices were poured on the altar.

Although there is a general blessing praising G-d as the Creator of fruit which is made before consuming any fruit, even of the seven species, a special blessing is made before drinking wine. The reason, say our Sages (*ibid.* 35b), is because wine is unique in its ability to both satiate and gladden.

Caution must be exercised, however, as to how much gladdening wine, with its alcoholic element, should be allowed to induce. "There is nothing which brings so much sorrow to man," say our Sages (*Sanhedrin* 70b), "as does wine." This is a stern warning against intoxication induced by something with a capacity for bringing joy when used in moderation.



לע"נ

ח'יה צירל ע"ה בת צבי נ"י

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said "Don't dispute on the way?"
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt?"
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *lashon hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave Eretz Canaan.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Canaan.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - Dina *bat* Yaakov.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

## ISRAEL Forever

### PROMISES, PROMISES

As the Israeli parliamentary elections swing into high gear, the voting public keeps hearing promises from the competing politicians how they are going to be saved if they cast their vote for the party which they head. One party is waving the social banner, promising to narrow the gap between rich and poor. Another is projecting itself as the only one which can guarantee Israel's security against its enemies.

How to relate to the promises of politicians, in Israel and throughout the world, was expressed by Yehuda in the Torah portion we read this Shabbat. In his confrontation with his

brother Yosef, disguised as an Egyptian potentate, he angrily declares that "you are like Pharaoh". The midrash quoted in Rashi's commentary explains this as meaning, "Just as Pharaoh makes promises and does not fulfill them, you too made promises and fail to fulfill them."

If Yehuda made this denunciation of foreign politicians, we have the right to expect Jewish politicians to be more faithful in keeping the promises they make to their own brothers. Not only will such fulfillment improve the lot of the electorate but will serve as a merit to secure Israel forever.

- When a barrier makes things tougher
- Adjoining backyards of varying sizes
- Combining elevated earth and a fence to create a wall between courtyards
- The wall between courtyards which fell and the opening which became closed
- Status of the courtyard which became open to the *reshut harabim* (public domain) during the weekdays or on Shabbat
- Roof edge serving as wall
- Carrying under the bridge
- *Tefillin* found in the field on Shabbat
- Is there a mitzvah of *tefillin* on Shabbat?
- Women performing *mitzvot* in which they are not obligated
- Determining the kashrut of found *tzitzit* and *tefillin* and checking of *tefillin* from a non-expert
- Rescuing *tefillin* found in the field and the baby born there
- Carrying water beyond the *techum* limit
- The sacred scroll that rolled into the street
- Status of shelf protruding from wall of house into the street
- Standing in one domain and performing activity in another
- Water dripping from drain and cistern or garbage pile in the street

## RESCUING TEFILLIN ON SHABBAT

If someone finds *tefillin* boxes in a field outside the city on Shabbat, he must make an effort to rescue them from being disgraced without violating the prohibition of carrying on Shabbat. A few different scenarios are described in the *mishna* at the beginning of this *perek*.

If the boxes have the proper knots and can therefore be assumed to be kosher *tefillin* and not some charm, the finder must put them on his arm and head and thus bring pair after pair into the safety of the city. Wearing the *tefillin* in this way is not considered carrying.

If there are too many pairs of *tefillin* for him to be able

to complete this rescue effort before the end of Shabbat and he will have to come back after Shabbat, he should remain at the site of the *tefillin* until Shabbat is over and then carry all of the pairs to the city in regular fashion.

If he is afraid to wear the *tefillin* as prescribed in the first case because the government has banned the performance of the mitzvah of *tefillin*, he must cover the *tefillin* to prevent them from lying in disgrace and he can then leave them there and go home.

If he is afraid to remain guarding the *tefillin* until Shabbat is over as prescribed in the second case because bandits may attack him at night in this lonely spot, he must then make an effort to transport them to safety in a manner which does not constitute a violation of Torah Law. Two options are available:

The *tana kama* (first Sage) in the *mishna* states that he should carry them by making a full stop before he has moved four *amot* and then continue in that pattern of stopping and starting. Since carrying in the public domain is forbidden by Torah Law only if one carries the distance of four *amot* between his start and stop, he is violating only the rabbinical restriction on carrying even a shorter distance, a restriction which is waived in order to rescue the *tefillin*.

Rabbi Shimon suggests a different solution. The finder must try to organize a human chain with each member handing the *tefillin* to the other until they reach their destination without anyone carrying them the distance banned by Torah Law.

What is the logic behind each of these solutions?

The first opinion favors the finder doing the job by himself in order to avoid the involvement of many people and a public scene which violates the spirit of the Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon, on the other hand, hesitates to recommend a single person starting and stopping for fear that he may forget to make the stop in time and will be guilty of violating Torah Law.

• *Eiruvim* 97

## WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“Lest we assume that there is a mitzvah of *tefillin* on Shabbat and Holidays, we are taught by the Torah that ‘It shall be a sign upon your arm.’ (*Shmot* 13:9) We need a sign (to demonstrate the bond we have with G-d’s Torah) on regular days but not on days which are themselves signs (of the bond between G-d and His people).”

• *Rabbi Akiva - Eiruvim* 96a

## THANK G-D IT'S SHABBAT

**From: I. Licht in Miami**

*Dear Rabbi*

*Why did G-d rest on the seventh day? Was he tired??? Did he leave the world incomplete intending to return to it? How do we know the details of Creation? G-d was presumably alone, yet the account is written in the third person. Is this one of the things he told Moses?*

We normally think of Creation as follows: There was nothing, then for six days G-d created Heaven, Earth and all they contain, after which He “rested.” This understanding poses serious problems though. G-d is Infinite, transcending time, space and matter which are all finite creations. How can anything finite exist simultaneously within infinity? Mathematically speaking, any sum added to infinity necessarily yields a sum total of infinity. When the Infinite created the finite, the finite should have imploded back into infinity.

Judaism reconciles this tension with the notion of “*yesh m'ayin*”, the mystery of G-d’s having created something from the primordial nothingness of anything other than G-d. Kabbalistic teachings refine this concept further with the notion of “*tzimtzum*” in which the Infinite is hidden within the finite. Again, mathematically speaking, this can be compared to the fact that there are an infinite number of points within a finite segment. Alternatively, Creation may be considered as a finite spectrum in the gamut of infinity.

What emerges from this is that Creation was not a proactive or creative process per se from which G-d had to rest. Rather, it was a refraining from expressing His Infinite Essence; a constriction or concealment of Himself within the finite. Accordingly, during the six days of Creation G-d progressively held back Infinity; His “rest” was a reversion back to Infinity. Shabbat, therefore, represents the re-fusion of the finite, multiplicity of Creation back into the Oneness of the Infinite

Creator.

In fact, since Creation was the beginning of time and space, pre-Creation was a state of “perfect” or absolute infinity. And since Creation commenced on the evening of the first day [as in the verse, “It was evening, it was morning, one day”] the period of pre-Creation corresponds to the perfect Shabbat. G-d’s “rest” on the seventh day created a venue for the Creation itself to reconnect with that primordial Shabbat of Infinity. The six days of the week relegated for creative activity are like rungs in a ladder enabling us to climb back up to the Shabbat of Infinity, and then act as partners with G-d to draw that Infinity back down into the finite of the coming week.

Interestingly, according to this, G-d did not, as you put it, leave the world incomplete intending to return to it. Materially speaking, the world was basically complete: “And the Heavens and the Earth and all of their hosts were completed”. Rather, in reverting to Infinity, He left it incomplete in a spiritual sense, intending that it should return to Him through the sanctification of Shabbat, and in turn be sanctified by Shabbat.

You note that the Creation is conspicuously in the third person. What we know of the event, as you say, was dictated by G-d to Moses at Sinai. So why didn’t He dictate to Moses, “In the beginning, ‘I’ created Heaven and Earth...”? One reason is to communicate G-d’s humility; He has to reveal how existence came into being, but He doesn’t have to be egocentric about it. In addition, if He had dictated in the first person, we would not know who “I” is.

But the idea goes deeper than that. If G-d had said “I”, we might mistake Creation as a manifestation of His true, Absolute Essence. Yet Creation is finite and He is Infinite. G-d therefore refers to Himself as Creator in the third person by the name “*Elokim*”, related to the attribute of “*gevurah*” or self-control. This intimates the inner dimension of Creation that we explained above. Namely, G-d’s creating was not proactive as understood from our perspective within the paradigm of the finite. Rather, it was an “act” of withholding Infinity in order to create that paradigm, followed by a “rest-stop” called Shabbat on the way back to Infinity.

## Hi, Old Buddy!

**Question:** Someone whom I haven't seen in years came up to me the other day with the big smile and warm handshake one gives a long-lost friend. Although he remembered me, I could not recall his name and was afraid to ask him in order not to embarrass him. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Almost everyone of us encounters such a situation and different people have different solutions as to how it is possible to carry on a conversation without revealing that they don't remember their greeter's name.

Perhaps the best thing to do is to be perfectly frank

and confess that the passage of time has caused you to forget who your greeter is despite the fact that he seems so familiar to you. This will almost always elicit a reaction of pride in the fact that he remembers you although you have forgotten him. Once he tells you his name it will invariably trigger memories about him which will enable you to ask the right questions expected from one whom he hasn't seen for so many years.

Remember that people generally do not expect you to remember them before they identify themselves since the passage of time changes their appearance and dulls your memory. So go right ahead and excuse yourself for forgetting his name and enjoy your reunion.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING ADVICE

**T**he 24-year old boy studying in a yeshiva in Israel was anxious to get started on shidduchim since almost everyone of his peers was already married. His only obstacle was an older brother back in the States who was still unmarried.

His high hopes for a breakthrough in the situation through a shidduch in which his brother was involved were dashed when a call came from home that once again nothing had come of this attempt to find a marriage partner. He then began to seriously consider passing up his brother despite the pain this might cause him. When he finally decided to do so he phoned his parents to inform them. His father's reaction was to inquire whether he had asked a rosh yeshiva's advice on the matter. Although he was absolutely confident that he would receive confirma-

tion of his decision, he consented to immediately seek his advice.

Since his own rosh yeshiva was officiating at a wedding out of town and he was anxious to fulfill his promise to his father, he decided to consult the head of a yeshiva not far away from his own. After hearing his situation the rosh yeshiva said it was permissible for him to pass up his brother but also asked him for some details about that brother's personality and what type of girl he was looking for. Upon hearing his description the rosh yeshiva told him that he knew a family in the States whose daughter would be an ideal match and gave him their telephone number.

The happy ending was that the older brother became engaged to that girl and our hero's problem was solved by heeding his father's advice to seek advice.

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# ISRAEL UNDER SIEGE ?!

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

The fear of nuclear weapons in the hands of Muslim fanatics in Iran casts a dark shadow on Israel's security. It raises a specter of siege so frighteningly familiar to Jews throughout history.

On Tuesday, January 10, the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tevet, we recall the saddest siege of our history, the one that took place two and a half millennia ago. Each year, on the day when there began the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army led by Nebuzraden, Jews throughout the world fast. Since that two-year long siege culminated in the destruction of Yerushalayim and the *Beit Hamikdash*, the day it was initiated is one of the four days of fasting decreed by our Sages as expressions of mourning for the loss of our sacred Temple.

Dare we compare this siege of yesteryear with the siege of today?

After all, we have no enemy today preventing us from going outside our cities and bringing supplies into them, the usual features of a siege which inevitably trigger hunger and hysteria. And yet the current siege contains an element far more frightening than all the sieges of the past. When the Babylonians laid siege to Yerushalayim, or the Assyrians before them and the Romans after them, there always existed the option of a negotiated surrender. Every student of the Prophets is aware of the debate that raged within the Jewish community of Yerushalayim over whether to surrender to the enemy. Every student of the Talmud and Jewish history is familiar with the sharp conflict between Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and the Zealots over whether to negotiate with the Romans besieging Yerushalayim.

In regard to the siege represented by the nuclear threat of Iran, there is no such option. The president of that country repeatedly denies that there was a Holocaust while he prepares to, Heaven forbid, perpe-

trate a holocaust of his own by developing nuclear weapons to destroy the Jewish state which he arrogantly declares "should be wiped off the map."

What we must ask ourselves as we reflect upon the siege of Yerushalayim while fasting on the Tenth of Tevet is why our people have been subjected to so many sieges in the past – and in the present.

In his introduction to the Laws of Fasting, Rambam explains that the purpose of the fast days decreed by our Sages is to "arouse our hearts and to open the way to repentance. These fasts will focus our attention on our evil ways and those of our ancestors who had similar evil ways, which brought upon them and us the tragedies we recall."

Denying ourselves food and drink is a means of starving the body to feed the soul. This spirituality enables us to carefully study the history of our people's tragedies so that we shall not have to repeat them.

Every Heavenly punishment is inflicted "*midah keneged midah*" – the punishment fits the crime. May we then suggest that since the nature of a siege is to restrict the movement and activity of the besieged, we have suffered sieges as a result of failing to restrict our movements and activities in accordance with the Will of G-d.

It is a pity that the vast majority of our people today do not fast on the Tenth of Tevet nor are they even aware that such a fast exists. If those who do fast are truly aroused to repentance, perhaps they will also be aroused to reaching out to the rest and thus save our people in Israel from the Iranian siege which threatens them.

Mourning for the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* is an expression of our profound desire to see it rebuilt. May our fasting and mourning on this Tenth of Tevet achieve an end to all the sieges we have suffered and bring closer the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the *Beit Hamikdash* very soon. Amen.