

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

JUST DO IT!

“... you shall eat it in haste – it is a Pesach-offering to G-d.” (12:11)

You can always recognize the Negative Drive. His is the voice that says, “Just do it! Don’t think about it so much! JUST DO IT! Just say that spiteful word! Just eat that ice cream sundae without checking the *hechsher* (certification of kashrut). Just do it!

Any time the little voice inside you says “Just do it!”, say to it “Sure I’ll do it... but not right now. I’ll do it in another couple of seconds. I promise!” (Don’t forget to cross your fingers behind your back!) The Negative Drive is very powerful, but he also suffers from ADD. Distract him for a few moments and the chances are that he’ll leave you alone, at least for the time being.

Being a fully-realized Jewish person means moving through life with much thought and care. However, there’s an exception to this.

Who hasn’t had the feeling of wanting to be a better

person? Whether it’s standing in shul on Yom Kippur, or when faced by the reality of our own mortality and realizing how little we have accomplished in our lives. All of us have moments of spiritual awakening, flashes of insight and inspiration.

When those flashes burst across our consciousness, we must act on them immediately, concretize them in

some small but oft-repeated action. If we are moved, say, to be more generous, we should undertake on the spot to give a small amount to charity every day. On the spot. (Only oft-repeated actions have the power to change who we are. The impact of the grand gesture fades as quickly as a firecracker.)

“... you shall eat it in haste – it is a Pesach-offering to G-d.”

The first moments of commitment to a greater contact with G-d must be done with zest and alacrity just like the eating of the Pesach-offering in Egypt. Just as the Jewish People left the fleshpots of Egypt with great haste, so too when we are inspired to be greater, more spiritual people, we must seize the moment and just DO it!”

• Based on Reb Tzadok m’Lublin

All of us have moments of spiritual awakening, flashes of insight and inspiration.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned. G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too. Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the first-born, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again hardens

Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month. The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the first-born of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating *chametz* on Pesach. Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first-born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the first-born son) and *tefillin*.

ISRAEL Forever

CAST A TINY SHADOW

In the "land of unlimited opportunity" there is something called "Groundhog Day". According to popular legend the groundhog emerges from its winter-long hibernation on February 2nd to see what sort of a shadow it casts. This will determine for this creature, otherwise known as the woodchuck, whether the sun is warming the earth enough for it to come out of its hole or whether to return to it.

Powerful leaders are frequently like the groundhog, casting a tiny shadow while imagining themselves as giants. In this week's Torah portion we see the Egyptian ruler Pharaoh acting in such a manner as he defies the power of G-d even after being smashed by nine plagues.

There are some despots in the world today who ignore Divine authority and laugh at world opinion. The Iraqi dictator now standing trial for crimes against humanity is perhaps the prime example of power-drunk rulers who only realize how tiny a shadow they cast when they are militarily defeated and face execution. There are others like him whose hatred of Jews and Israel has led them to a confrontation with the free world that will inevitably lead them to the same fate.

Leadership spells responsibility, not an ego trip of imagined giant shadows. Like the groundhog these villains will eventually return to their holes and leave Israel at peace forever.

In Honor of
YOSEF KAPLAN

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS BAR MITZVAH

A special Mazel Tov to his parents
YAAKOV & JULIE KAPLAN
and the entire Kaplan and Baron Families

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makat bechorot* took place at exactly midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at approximately midnight?
6. Why did the first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
8. G-d told Moshe, "...so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
9. Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what two *mitzvot* involving blood did G-d give to the Jewish People?
12. Rashi gives two explanations of the word "*Pasachti*." What are they?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makat bechorot*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makat bechorot*?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael*?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose first-born is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
6. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
7. 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
8. 11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
9. 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
10. 12:5 - One year.
11. 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
12. 12:13 - "I had mercy" and "I skipped."
13. 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of his home.
14. 12:31 - "Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?"
15. 12:32 - So he wouldn't die, for he himself was a first-born.
16. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matzah was dear to them.
17. 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between the parts" was decreed.
19. 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
20. 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.

- Do liquids become ritually impure and contaminate others by Torah Law?
- The exception made for the liquids in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Which sort of water or blood makes food susceptible to ritual impurity
- The function of the *tzitz* (*kohen gadol's* headband) in counteracting effect of ritual impurity on sacrifices
- The examination of the *kohanim* by the Prophet Chagai
- Rabbi Yehuda's position and retraction re status of liquids
- The cow that drank contaminating water of purification
- How Rabbi Akiva interpreted a passage to extend effect of spiritual contamination
- The special susceptibility of liquids to spiritual contamination
- When contamination of one item in a vessel affects everything in it
- The needle found in the flesh of a slaughtered animal
- Mysterious saliva in Yerushalayim
- How the flesh of the sacrifice became susceptible to contamination
- A second look at the burning of *chametz terumah*
- Till when can one feed an animal *chametz* or sell to non-Jew
- Source for the prohibition of benefiting from *chametz* and other forbidden foods

SELLING THE CHAMETZ

The selling of *chametz* to a non-Jew before Pesach is familiar to Jews who observe the Torah Law forbidding possession of *chametz* on Pesach. But there is no indication in our *gemara* that the sale was structured in the manner which we do it, which is to buy the *chametz* back after the holiday.

The sale mentioned in the first *mishna* of the second *perek* appears to have been for keeps. It is in regard to such a sale that there is a difference of opinion as to how close to Pesach it can be carried out.

Beit Shammai's position is that *chametz* can be sold to a non-Jew only if there is enough time for him to consume it all before Pesach. The reason for this, explains Rashi, is that Beit Shammai considers it incumbent on the Jewish owner of the *chametz* to assure that it is not in existence anywhere when Pesach arrives.

Beit Hillel, on the other hand, permits the sale of the *chametz* to a non-Jew as long as it is permitted for a Jew to derive any benefit from *chametz*, which is the end of the fifth hour of the day before Pesach. This position is based on the premise that the halacha only prohibits possession of *chametz* on Pesach, and once it has been sold to a non-Jew there is no need to be concerned that it still exists.

Since we rule like Beit Hillel the sale of *chametz* can be done up until the morning before Pesach. The buying back that is done in our day can be done immediately when Pesach ends.

• *Pesachim* 21a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"When the Torah commands us to fear G-d it uses a seemingly extra word in order to include having great respect for Torah scholars."

Rabbi Akiva
Pesachim 22b

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SOUL SURVIVOR

From: Jennifer in CO

Dear Rabbi,
What does Judaism say about what happens to the soul after death?

Dear Jennifer,

The Zohar says that before death a person gets a preview of his portion in the soul world: "When a man is about to die, and judgment hovers about him so he would depart from the world, a supernal spirit is added to him that he did not have during his lifetime. When it hovers about him and cleaves to him, he is able to see what he never saw in his days, due to the additional spirit in him. When the spirit is added to him...his eyes are opened to the sight they have just seen, and...if he has a son, the son should be the first to put his hand over his eyes and close them. As it says, 'And Yosef shall put his hand on your eyes.' for another unholy sight is come before him and the eye that beheld the supernal holy sight must not look at the other sight" (Zohar, VaYechi).

Then the Angel of Death appears: "It descends and stands at his feet with a sharp sword in his hand. The person lifts his eyes and sees the house walls radiant with fire. At the same time, he sees him, full with eyes, dressed in burning fire in front of the man...There are three drops on his sword. When he sees him, his entire body and spirit tremble and his heart does not rest, being the king of the entire body. Then his spirit travels throughout his organs and takes leave from them like a man who takes leave from his friend to go elsewhere...The person shudders for fear and wishes to hide but does not have the capability. When he realizes that he is powerless, he opens his eyes and he has to look at him with his eyes open. He then gives over his life and soul" (Zohar, Naso; Avoda Zara, 20b).

The departed soul is then escorted by angels, departed *tzaddikim*, and departed relatives and friends: "When a righteous man departs from the world, he is accompanied by companies of ministering angels who say 'Come into peace'. When a wicked man perishes from the world, he is met by angels of destruction who say 'There is no peace to the wicked'...When a righteous man departs from this world...G-d says, 'Let the righteous men come from their resting places to go forth to meet him'" (Ketubot 104a). "When a man's soul departs, all his relatives and friends in the World of Truth accompany his soul and show it the place of delight and the place of punishment. If he is righteous, he sees his place, and goes up to sit and take delight in the upper Eden of that world. If he is not righteous, the soul remains in this world, until the body is buried in the ground" (Zohar, Vayechi).

Nearly all souls undergo a gradual, not particularly pleasant, transition between this world and the next called "*chibut hakever*". Thus the Talmud states: "The worm to the dead is more difficult than a knife to the flesh of the living" (Berachot

18b). Since a dead body doesn't feel, this is understood as referring to the anguish of the soul over seeing the dead body. This transition and elevation occurs over several periods: 3 days, 7 days, 30 days and 12 months.

Three days: "The greatest degree of mourning is in the first three days. The body is still intact and the soul hovers around it with the intention to return. When after three days it sees the face has changed and the person is no more, it starts to go away" (Genesis Rabba, ch. 100). The Zohar adds, "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish...three days and three nights' (Yonah 2:1). This resembles the three days that man is in the grave before his bowels split open. After three days, the filth in his bowels is spilt on his face, and says to him: take what you put in me. You ate and drank all day and gave not to the poor; all your days were like feasts and holidays, while the poor were hungry because they did not eat with you..." (Zohar, Vayakhel).

Seven days: "All seven days the soul goes from the house to the grave and from the grave to the house and mourns for the body, as it is written: 'His flesh shall suffer pain for him, and his soul shall mourn for it' (Job 14:22). It goes to sit in the house, and when it sees everybody sad, it mourns too" (Zohar, Vayechi). The Arizal explains that there are two dimensions of the level of soul called "*nefesh*" (see **Soul**): the outer ("*makif*") and inner ("*pnimi*"). Each has seven aspects. The inner remains with the body in the grave. The outer remains in the house of the deceased. Each of the seven days, one aspect of the outer departs from the house of mourning and remains at the grave, until on the seventh day all have been elevated. At this point the gravestone ("*matzeiva*") should be erected, although many have the custom to wait until the thirtieth day, or till the *yahrtzeit*.

Thirty days and twelve months: "After three days, man is judged for his eyes, for his hands, for his legs. And this lasts up to thirty days. During those thirty days the *nefesh* and body are chastised together. For that reason the soul remains down on earth and does not rise to its place, like a woman who sits apart all the days of her impurity" (Zohar, Vayakhel). "During the first twelve months after death, the body has not completely decayed and the soul goes back and forth between the body and the soul world. Afterwards the soul ascends and the body rots in the dust, until the time comes when the Holy One, blessed be He, awakens to resurrect the dead" (Shabbat 152b). Tosafot adds that, nevertheless, even after 12 months the soul can enter this world if it wants.

After this, the soul goes through a purification process within the spiritual realm. This may involve a detour through "Gehinom" which has a lower and upper section, each comprising seven chambers. Ultimately, most souls merit some place in "Gan Eden" which also has lower and upper sections, each comprising seven chambers. Regarding this, our Sages taught: "Every righteous man is given a dwelling in the World to Come according to his merit, and this is like a king with his servants entering a city. They all enter through one gate, but when night comes every man is given a room in accordance with his rank" (Shabbat 152a). And, "G-d makes a separate crown for each and every *tzaddik*" (Megilla 15b).

FOR WHOM TO VOTE

Parliamentary elections were being held in Poland and no agreement had been reached between the religious community and the irreligious socialist “Bundists” to continue their tradition of presenting a united Jewish slate.

The Bundists, who were extremely bitter about the refusal of the rabbis to accept their terms, held a pre-election meeting. Their leader concluded a fiery campaign speech by declaring: “Cursed be the hand that casts a ballot for the Rabbis’ Party.”

When word of this came to the rabbis, a meeting was held at which some participants suggested that a proclamation be issued that a curse be upon anyone voting for the Bundist list. Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, the founder of the Ponovez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, was then the rav of the Ponovez community and

the youngest member of the rabbinical group. “Let them curse,” he told his colleagues, “and we shall bless.” His suggestion was accepted and the meeting ended with a proclamation that anyone voting for the rabbinical list would be blessed.

After this meeting a woman approached Rabbi Kahaneman and told him she really wanted to vote for his list but her husband insisted that she vote for the Bundist list. Aware of the mentality of his people, Rav Kahaneman told the woman that in accordance with the advice of our Talmudic Sages she should vote as he had instructed her. When she later related to her husband the ruling she received from the rabbi, he excitedly exclaimed, “If that is what the rabbi told you we are going to vote for the Rabbis’ List!”

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE FRUITS

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

DATE - THE HONEY-FILLED SYMBOL OF THE RIGHTEOUS

When King David compares the righteous man to the blossoming date tree (*Tehillim* 92:13), the full meaning of this metaphor can only be appreciated by contrasting it to an earlier comparison (*ibid.* 92:8) of the enemies of G-d to the grass sprouting from the earth. In his commentary on this psalm, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra notes that the enemies to which the psalmist refers are the enemies of the righteous man who are likewise considered enemies of G-d. Although these enemies proliferate like blades of grass they are doomed to soon wither like the grass. The right-



eous, on the other hand, are comparatively few in number like the date tree but are blessed with the durability of that tree.

Elsewhere our Sages comment on the psalmist’s comparison of the righteous man to both the date tree and the cedar. Their explanation (*Bava Batra* 80b) is that the comparison to the date tree is to convey that just as that tree yields fruit, so do the good deeds of a righteous man yield fruits of reward for him in the World to Come. And just as the cedar has the ability to grow back after being cut, so the righteous have the ability to bounce back after every setback.

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE IMMUNITY OF COMMUNITY

Question: By nature I am a very solitary person who avoids being involved in communal affairs. I’ve often been lectured that this is a wrong approach to life. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The Sage Hillel offered the following advice (*Pirkei Avot* 2:4): “Do not isolate yourself from the community and don’t have confidence in yourself until the day of your death.”

The simple meaning of the first of these two seemingly separate bits of advice is that one who shares the community’s woes will merit sharing its joys. The second one is a warning that someone can be a pious Jew for most of his

lifetime and yet abandon his faith.

There is, however, another approach offered by the commentary *Tiferet Yisrael*, which views these two bits of advice as being linked to each other.

A man must never be overly confident in regard to his material or spiritual well-being. Life has its ups and downs so that no one can be certain that his present situation will not deteriorate. The best guarantee that one has for retaining his level of material security and spiritual solidity is the support – both material and spiritual – that the community provides.

Follow this valuable advice and do your best to be part of your community – for its sake and your sake.