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PARSHA INSIGHTS

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER MIRACLE

“...and G-d moved the sea with a strong east wind...” (14:21)

As long as anyone can remember, the sun has risen in the east and set in the west. Gravity tirelessly stops us from flying off the face of the globe, and waterfalls, with singular determination, flow only downward. Water wets. Fire burns.

The list of faithfully unchanging phenomena in this world is nearly endless.

But it was not always so.

In the six days of primordial creation, nothing was fixed. Every day brought a revelation and a revolution to the previous day's existence. Another day, another miracle. On the first day, there was no Heaven — the whole of creation was changed when Heaven was miraculously created on the second day; on the second day there was no earth, no vegetation; on the third day there was no sun, no stars; on the fourth, there were no living creatures; on the fifth, no man, and on the sixth, no Shabbat.

A miracle is no less than a new creation. Thus, for a miracle to happen *after* the first six days, the world has to return to that primordial era, and through the revelation of those ancient forces, the miraculous can take place. Any time that nature is changed, it is as though we are transported once again to that *□*poque.

“...and G-d moved the sea with a strong east wind...”

In this verse, the Torah hints of this reality. *East wind* can also be translated as a *spirit from ancient days*. When the sea split in front of the Jewish People, they were witnessing a new chapter in a story as old as the world itself.

And don't think that miracles are a thing of the past. We're surrounded by miraculous events every day — we just don't see them because they're hidden. “*How can a miracle be hidden?*” you will ask. If no one recognizes it, where is the miracle?

I'll give you an example.

Take Joe Cohen. If you'd looked at Joe's *mazal* (birth chart), you would have seen that he was due to pass from this world as the result of an unspectacular lung infection at the age of sixty. In his forties, however, Joe started to give very large amounts of *tzedaka* charity, with the result that G-d changed his *mazal* and Joe lived till a very ripe age. In other words, Joe lived a miraculous existence for nearly thirty years. No one saw the miracle, but a miracle nonetheless it was.

Nothing looked out of the ordinary; there are many who live to even riper ages than Joe. Nevertheless, Joe's extended lifespan was no more than a re-writing of world history, a return to the spirit of ancient days.

Another day, another miracle.

• Sources, *Kedushat Levi, The Ramban*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the Pelishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days' travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In

Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

ISRAEL Forever

WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?

“Then the chiefs of Edom were shocked; the mighty men of Moav trembled; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.”

This Shabbat Jews will be standing in respect while hearing these words from the song sung by our ancestors upon witnessing the drowning of their Egyptian pursuers.

After the Six Day War the Rosh Hayeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Rabbi Chaim Schmulevitz, *zatzal*, dramatically applied these words in a public lecture to the shock-waver that swept the Arab world in the wake of Israel's astounding victory over a collection of

Arab armies.

Years later came the Arab intifadas with their demonstration of Arab fearlessness as their youngsters threw stones at Israeli soldiers and went on to suicide bombings.

Where did we go wrong?

Perhaps this is a question everyone in Israel should ask himself. A little soul-searching and a lot of improvement will certainly go a long way to restoring that fear which our enemies once had of us and thus secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

BEROR CHAYIL – THE SECRET SIGNAL

The name of a kibbutz in the northern Negev recalls two milestones in Jewish history. Beror Chayil was the seat of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai who negotiated with the Romans for the survival of the Sanhedrin in Yavneh at the time of the destruction of the Second *Beit Hamikdash*.

It was there too where Jews, banned by the Romans from circumcising their sons, came up with a



way to secretly publicize a *brit milah* feast. They would light some candles in their windows during the day or an excessive amount at night to let their neighbors know of the celebration. It thus became common knowledge that if there is “Ohr Haneir b’Beror Chayil” (the light of a candle in Beror Chayil), there is going to be a feast there.

Interestingly enough, right next to Kibbutz Beror Chayil is Kibbutz Ohr Haneir.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling?"
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

- The timely rains of earlier generations and the lesson they taught
- The circle and prayers for rain of the Sage Choni HaMeigel
- Choni's 70-year slumber and the value of friendship
- The extraordinary behavior of his grandsons Abba Chilkiyahu and Chanan Hanechba
- The special power of the Eretz Yisrael Sages Rabbi Yonah and Rabbi Yitzchak ben Eliyashiv
- Rabbi Yossi of Yokrat putting concern for Heaven above family
- The generosity of Elazar of Birta and the miracle he refused to benefit from
- Merits which brought rain and reasons for its being withheld
- The Sage Chanina ben Dossa and the *Kohen Gadol's* Yom Kippur prayer for rain
- The righteousness and miracles of Chanina and Rabbi Elezar ben Padot
- The difference between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer in praying for rain
- When rain comes before end of fast
- The *ma'amadot* – universal participation in sacrifices
- When the blessings of the *kohanim* take place
- How the *kohanim* were divided up into family watches
- The fasts, prayers and Torah readings of the *ma'amadot* participants
- The donations of wood to the *Beit Hamikdash*
- When complete and partial Hallel are recited
- The five tragedies which occurred on 17 Tammuz and 9 Av
- Destruction of First and Second *Beit Hamikdash* temples
- Activities forbidden in days leading up to Fast of 9 Av and on that day
- The holiday of 15 Av and six explanations for its source

A TALE OF TWO MONTHS

What possible connection can there be between the sad month of Av, in which we fast for the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* and other tragedies which took place on the ninth day of that month, and the happy month of Adar in which we celebrate the Purim miracle which saved Jewry from the genocidal plot of Haman?

The outline of an answer to this question is supplied by one of the Sages in the name of the great Sage Rav:

“Just as we reduce our activities of joy with the arrival of the month of Av, so do we increase our joy with the arrival of the month of Adar.”

A deeper understanding of the equation presented in this statement can be gained when we recall a scene that almost everyone has experienced or observed.

A father takes a child along with him when he goes shopping. As he enters one establishment where children are not welcome he asks his child to wait outside for a minute while he takes care of something inside. That minute stretches into

many more and the child begins to weep hysterically. Psychologists say that there is no greater trauma than that of a child who feels he has been abandoned by its parent, and this youngster is loudly demonstrating the truth of that observation. Then the father comes out of the door and the child rushes happily into his arms. If the fear of abandonment is the ultimate tragedy in the child's life, then the reunion with his father is the ultimate joy.

Recalling the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* in the Month of Av awakens in us that sense of being abandoned by our Heavenly Father Who is really only “hiding His face” from us as he allows our enemies to harm us in order to stimulate us to mend our ways. The Month of Adar, on the other hand, recalls our happy reunion with our Heavenly Father Who saved us from the destruction of our people with the miracle of Purim.

Now the equation is clear. Only by reliving the intense trauma of abandonment in Av can we appreciate the ultimate joy of reunion in Adar.

• *Ta'anit* 29a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“Whoever mourns for the destruction of Yerushalayim will merit to share in the joy of its reconstruction; whoever does not mourn for Yerushalayim will not share in its joy.”

• *The Sages in a Beraita - Ta'anit* 30b

MEETING THE FAMILY

From: Stephanie

Dear Rabbi,

I have been dating to marry for a while. I finally met a guy who seemed like it could be it. We were serious enough to meet each other's families. After I met his parents, he broke it off and told me that I didn't act nicely around them since I kept putting him down in front of them. Now, it's true that I was joking around with them a little bit at his expense, but is that any reason to break off an otherwise promising relationship?

Dear Stephanie,

You may have fallen into a trap that many of us fall into even after marriage, and it's important for us to be aware of what's going on behind the scenes in order to manage our relationships as smoothly and with as much blessing as possible.

Whether we like to admit it or not, most of us are insecure about ourselves and the way we relate with others. This usually comes across by our being subtly or even openly defensive without even realizing it. Sometimes, when we're really feeling the underdog, we might be outright offensive in order to mask our feelings of insecurity or inferiority behind others' "faults".

A typical situation in which this occurs is with in-laws, or in your case, with potential future in-laws. Naturally, family relationships are very hard to break into since they are so strong and have developed over so many years. A newcomer feels so out of place, so unsure of where he or she fits into the family dynamic. With future in-laws, this is compounded by the feeling of being scrutinized by the family as to whether the newcomer is worth their child or not. Even if the people are the nicest in the world, judgment is taking place and it doesn't feel good being judged.

A natural sub-conscious response to this situation is to jokingly put down the spouse to the relatives. This is a three-pronged tactic: 1] It creates a "wedge" in the relationship between the spouse and his family, enabling the new-comer a basis upon which to form a new relationship with the family, "without" the spouse. 2] It subtly "makes known" to the family that not only is the new-comer worthy, but that they are actually getting the better end of the deal. 3] It deflects the judgment and consequent need for defense from the new-comer to the spouse.

This brilliant pre-emptive/counter attack is extremely counter-productive and damages or destroys many relationships and marriages.

No family wants to hear their dear child being criticized, even "jokingly", and they certainly are not interested in new relationships based on pushing their loved one out of the picture. In addition, instead of demonstrating the newcomer's superiority over the spouse, this "innocuous" putting down only calls into question in the family's mind whether the newcomer in fact appreciates, and is therefore worthy, of their child. Finally, rather than deflecting judgment, it makes the family all the more critical of the criticizing newcomer.

The correct way for potential/new members of a family to approach this situation is exactly the opposite – by praising the person to the family. We're interested in this person because of a whole bunch of good qualities, and the family is aware of those qualities. Expressing and showing an appreciation of those qualities to the family creates an immediate common ground upon which to develop a relationship with them, *with* the spouse. Far from causing the family to question whether the newcomer is worth their child, praising the spouse only makes one more worthy in their eyes. Finally, there's no better way to deflect negative judgment than to be positive, pleasant and supportive.

If we learn this simple and obvious truth, we'll be able to foster healthy, genuinely fulfilling relationships with the people

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

A DATING DILEMMA

Question: I was recently introduced to a fine young man by a matchmaker and we spent a couple of hours together in the hope of discovering whether we were compatible for marriage. There was something about this fellow that turned me off, but I had the impression that he was rather comfortable with me. I dread the thought of having him call me and my being forced to give an excuse for not meeting him again. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The easiest way for you to escape this dilemma and the kindest thing you can do for the fellow involved is to

quickly contact your matchmaker and ask her to call it off. Be certain to tell her that you two were simply not compatible and to convey this to the fellow along with firm advice not to try calling you.

Although you may be pressed by the matchmaker to be more specific on the grounds that she needs information about the fellow to help find a more suitable girl, you must avoid stressing more than your incompatibility. Anything more than that may very well come under the category of forbidden speech. It may also brand you as being critical and discourage people from suggesting matches.

A BLESSING BY AN ACTOR

“**S**hehakol niheya bidvaro.” A resounding “Amen” came from the audience as Ira from Toronto completed that blessing over a glass of water as his opening gesture. He then went on to inform his listeners that only two weeks ago he wasn’t even aware that such a blessing existed.

Ira was one of the seventy young men from North America and England who recently spent two and a half weeks in Israel learning and touring as part of the Jewish Learning Exchange (JLE) Program of Yeshivat Ohr Somayach. The JLE brings hundreds of such Jewish youngsters each year during the summer and winter college breaks. Those who participated in the last two programs were given that special treat of studying with businessmen and professionals from North America who came on a Mentors’ Mission to teach and interact with these newcomers to Torah life.

What seemed like a dramatic trick by Ira at the reception given by the JLE and the Ohr Somayach staff for these mentors came naturally to this professional man of theater who incidentally bumped into a fellow Torontonion who was a famous juvenile actor and is now a family man studying in Ohr Somayach.

Ira brought along his photographic equipment and asked permission from the Rosh Hayeshiva to film one of the classes he gave. He later explained to one of the JLE staff members that, while he greatly enjoyed the content of the class, he was most interested in recording for himself the almost theatrical methodology of the rabbi in organizing and delivering his lecture. Watching Ira with his glass of water, his blessing and his ensuing story of how he found his way to Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem made the Rosh Hayeshiva feel that he too had learned something about how to reach people.

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