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PARSHA INSIGHTS

## QUANTITY VS. QUALITY

*“...abundant water came forth and the people and their animals drank...” (20:11)*

The Talmud tells of a man who swore never to marry a certain girl who was in every way appropriate for him until Rabbi Yishmael made her beautiful. Asked if this beautiful girl was the one he had vowed never to marry, he answered in the negative. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Yishmael promptly annulled the vow and the man married the girl.

Said Rabbi Yishmael, “Jewish girls are all beautiful, but poverty makes them ugly.”

The poverty of which Rabbi Yishmael was speaking was not physical poverty.

It was the poverty of negative self-image.

When Rabbi Yishmael said that all Jewish girls are beautiful, he was obviously referring first and foremost to their inner spiritual beauty. As it says in Mishlei, “Grace is false and beauty, empty.”

Rabbi Yishmael ‘made’ this girl beautiful by making her aware of the beauty that lay dormant in her. The beauty that was so undervalued.

Everything you can see today in the street is a message to Jewish girls that they are poor. They are poor of the qualities of exhibitionism that the world so greatly admires. They are poor because they are not naturally brazen. In the name of fashion, the Jewish woman has been persuaded that she is poor, that her true value is valueless, that her riches are illusory.

In truth, real poverty is a world that values only the “outside”; a world where plastic surgery accounted for nearly 11 million procedures in the United States last year.

When G-d commanded Moshe to bring forth water from the rock, He said “You shall bring forth for them water from the rock and give drink to the people and their animals.” When Moshe brought forth the water from the rock, the Torah says, “...abundant water came forth and the people

and their animals drank...”

In the first verse the Torah omits the adjective ‘abundant’. In the second verse the dividing pronoun “et” is missing. In other words, the people and the animals are referred to as one category.

What is the message here?

If we do as G-d commands, the physical world will become spiritualized; the spiritual will infuse the physical and we will not need an ‘abundance,’ nor will we fall prey to society’s view of man as a higher form of animal. An insatiable lust for abundance is characteristic of the world in which we live; a world where quantity masquerades as quality; where the outside tries to usurp the inside; where the physical makes the spiritual poor.

We need to know, and when I say we, I mean the major target of the world’s attack, the Jewish woman, that her riches are beyond number, for “a woman who fears G-d, she will be praised.”

A personal note:

*Many readers have written to me to ask about my sister who was involved in a tragic accident almost a year ago, and I thank you for all your concern and prayers. Please carry on davening for my sister Chaya Esther bas Rochma who is still in a coma. We pray that Hashem in His mercy will send a miracle and she will open her eyes and be restored to full health very soon.*

*We are looking forward to celebrating the Bar Mitzvah of our oldest son Avraham Zev next week. The reception is at Ulamei Beit Yisrael in Jerusalem on Thursday June 28th from 8:30PM and Avrumie’s aliyah to the Torah will be at Yeshivat Ohr Somayach, Shabbat Parshat Balak, June 30th. Shacharit is at 8:00am. Kiddush to follow at Ulamei Zwill. We will happy to see you there!*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The laws of the *para aduma* — the red heifer — are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. G-d commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a designated rock so that water will flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of G-d's mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the rock

produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, G-d tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. *Bnei Yisrael* resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to Eretz Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him 30 days. Sichon the Amorite attacks *Bnei Yisrael* when they ask to pass through his land. As a result, *Bnei Yisrael* conquer the lands that Sichon had previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

## ISRAEL Forever

### NO PARTNER FOR PEACE

Israel's ongoing struggle to find a partner among the Palestinians with whom to bring an end to the terrorist threat seems to echo a similar situation faced by our ancestors thousands of years ago.

In this week's Torah portion we learn of the peace-seeking message sent by our people to Sichon, the Emorite king, asking for permission to pass through his land on their way to Eretz Yisrael. Not only did they assure him that no harm would come to his country but they even suggested that his people would derive economic benefit from the purchases

that would be made.

Sichon not only refused but even went to war with the Israelites, a war in which he lost his land.

In the *haftarah* we hear of Yiftach's sending a message of peace to the Ammonite king, reminding him of this encounter with the Emorites and its consequences.

Throughout history our people have seriously sought partners for peace only to discover that they really had no one but G-d to rely on to 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

### AL KIYUMI – TOMB OF THE RABBI YOSI OF YOKERAT

**O**ne of the less accessible historical tombs of Talmudic Sages is that of Rabbi Yose of Yokerat. It lies between Zefat and Meron, on the side of the road and up a hill.



The Talmud describes this Sage as one who was so concerned with anything which might be considered as a disturbance to G-d that as a result he brought about the early death of a son and daughter who are buried nearby.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. "Take a perfect *para aduma* (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" — *temima* — mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a *para aduma*?
3. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
4. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the *para aduma*; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
5. Why was the *mitzvah* of the *para aduma* entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?
6. Why does the Torah stress that *all* of the congregation came to *Midbar Tzin*?
7. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of *para aduma*?
8. During their journey in the *midbar*, in whose merit did the Jewish People receive water?
9. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second time?
10. When Moshe told the King of Edom that the Jewish People would not drink from the well-water, to which well did he refer? What do we learn from this?
11. The cloud that led the Jewish People leveled all mountains in their path except three. Which three and why?
12. Why did the *entire* congregation mourn Aharon's death?
13. What disappeared when Aharon died?
14. Which "inhabitant of the South" (21:1) attacked the Jews?
15. For what two reasons did G-d punish the people with snakes specifically?
16. Why did the Jewish People camp in Arnon, rather than pass through Moav to enter *Eretz Canaan*?
17. What miracle took place at the valley of Arnon?
18. What was the "strength" of Ammon that prevented the Jewish People from entering into their Land?
19. Why was Moshe afraid of Og?
20. Who killed Og?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 19:2 - Perfectly red.
2. 19:2 - Two.
3. 19:14,15 - The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
4. 19:21 - a) Remains *tahor*; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts *tumah*; c) He and his clothing contract *tumah*.
5. 19:22 - Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the golden calf.
6. 20:1 - To teach that they were *all* fit to enter the Land; everyone involved in the sin of the spies already died.
7. 20:1 - To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous.
8. 20:2 - Miriam's.
9. 20:11 - After he hit it the first time, only a few drops came out since he was commanded to speak to the rock.
10. 20:17 - To the well that traveled with the nation in the *midbar*. This teaches that one who has adequate provisions should nevertheless purchase goods from his host in order to benefit the host.
11. 20:22 - *Har Sinai* for receiving the Torah, *Har Nevo* for Moshe's burial, and *Hor Hahar* for Aharon's burial.
12. 20:29 - Aharon made peace between contending parties and between spouses. Thus, everybody mourned him.
13. 20:29 - The clouds of glory disappeared, since they sheltered the Jews in Aharon's merit.
14. 21:1 - Amalek.
15. 21:6 - The original snake, which was punished for speaking evil, is fitting to punish those who spoke evil about G-d and about Moshe. And the snake, for which everything tastes like dust, is fitting to punish those who complained about the manna which changed to any desired taste.
16. 21:13 - Moav refused them passage.
17. 21:15 - The Amorites hid in caves in the mountain on the Moabite side of the valley in order to ambush the Jews. When the Jews approached, the mountain on the *Eretz Canaan* side of the valley moved close to the other mountain and the Amorites were crushed.
18. 21:24 - G-d's command, "Do not harass them" (*Devarim* 2:19).
19. 21:34 - Og had once been of service to Avraham. Moshe was afraid that this merit would assist Og in battle.
20. 21:35 - Moshe.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

## TALMUDigest

## YEVAMOT 51 - 57

- The roles of *ma'amar* (*kiddushin*) and *get* (divorce) in the *yibum* process
- The position of Rabbi Akiva that there is no validity to a marriage with a prohibited partner which is punishable only by lashes
- The improprieties which the Sage Rav punished with lashes
- The propriety of a *ma'amar* before *yibum*
- When *chalitzah* is not enough and whether conditions made in a *chalitzah* agreement are valid
- Unintentional relations with the *yivamah* which are considered valid *yibum*
- The degree of contact which is considered cohabitation in regard to *yibum* and forbidden relations
- Forbidden aunts and the difference between them
- Wife of sister or brother who are related to him only through a common mother
- The child-loss dimension of the *karet* punishment for relations with forbidden partners
- In which cases the widow of a *kohen* is entitled to eat *terumah* after *yibum*
- The violated woman who remains married but loses the ability to ever marry a *kohen*
- The violated woman whose marriage ends and the penalty for continuing it
- Forbidden marriages which disqualify the daughter of a *kohen* from ever eating *terumah*
- Two questions which received only one answer
- The status of converts in regard to marrying a *kohen*
- Does *chupah* alone disqualify a forbidden woman from eating *terumah*

### THE SAGE WHO MADE A COMEBACK

When Rabbi Yochanan posed a question to his teacher Rabbi Oshea he received no reply. But when Reish Lakish (Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish) asked the same Sage a different question he received an answer. Puzzled by the silence which greeted the question of the former, Rabbi Yehuda the Nassi asked Rabbi Oshea: "Is Rabbi Yochanan not enough of a great man to also deserve a reply?"

To which Rabbi Oshea responded that the reason for his silence was that there was no answer to Rabbi Yochanan's question.

This account of Reish Lakish studying Torah with Rabbi

Oshea, the teacher of Rabbi Yochanan, is cited by *Tosefot* as support for the position of the *Tosefist Rabbeinu Tam* (*Bava Metzia* 84a) that Reish Lakish had been a Torah scholar before his famous encounter with Rabbi Yochanan. He had abandoned his Torah way of life, however, and became a bandit leader. By promising him his extraordinarily attractive sister in marriage, Rabbi Yochanan succeeded in persuading him to return to his Torah studies, first as a disciple and then as a colleague who often disputed his halachic opinions.

The incident related in our *gemara* took place in the first phase of Reish Lakish's colorful life when he studied Torah in the presence of Rabbi Yochanan's teacher. It was years later that the encounter with Rabbi Yochanan took place that set the stage for the second, glorious phase as one of the outstanding Talmudic Sages.

• Yevamot 57a

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"What is considered 'dozing off' as opposed to sleep in affecting the act of *yibum* and other matters? It is a state in which one is neither fully asleep nor fully awake and responds to being called. When asked where he placed something he is unable to recall, but if asked whether he placed it in a particular place he is capable of answering yes or no."

• Rabbi Ashi - Yevamot 54a

## STIR IT UP – TIE IT DOWN

From: Nate in Norfolk

Dear Rabbi,

I have become more interested in Judaism as of late. I am very enthusiastic and eager to learn. However, at the same time, I am also concerned that I may lose this interest at any time because of all the distractions I have in my normal, non-religious daily life. Do you have any advice as to how I can maintain my interest?

Dear Nate,

It's really amazing that you feel so strongly about your interest in Judaism that you're already concerned about losing it. I understand that this is not because you are unsure about how you feel about Judaism, but rather because you value so much what you've found that you want to make sure you don't lose it.

One way of making sure you can maintain, preserve and even increase your relationship with Judaism is to treat it in a similar way to cultivating and maintaining a relationship with a person. Just as when you meet someone new, whom you really appreciate and value, you think of things to say and do in order to let that person know how you feel so as not to lose that valued friendship, so too with Judaism you must think of ways to keep the flame burning.

In order to maintain a friendship, you have to put aside time from your busy schedule to spend quality time with the person you care for. Similarly, it is very important that you make time in your routine to continue pursuing your interest in Judaism by reading books or hearing lectures. Nowadays this is easier than ever. Jewish bookstores are full of quality, authentic material on any aspect of Judaism that interests you. Alternatively, if you don't have access to a good Jewish bookstore, almost any book can be ordered on-line; and there is a wealth of material on the many orthodox websites (see [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu) for starters) as well. Similarly, there are a tremendous number of free Torah

lectures for listening on-line and for download that you can take with you anywhere.

In order to maintain a friendship, it is also necessary to periodically step back from the nitty-gritty details and dynamics of the relationship to regain perspective and remind yourself of why you so value your connection with that person. So too here, it is necessary from time to time to contemplate and recall what you so value in Judaism. This is particularly true when there are other less significant, but more immediate interests or distractions that are vying for your attention. Of course, the path of least resistance and immediate gratification is lure, but one should surely not let a good and close friend go in favor of fleeting, and ultimately disappointing, acquaintances.

In order to maintain a friendship, you must also express your feelings towards and commitment to the relationship in tangible, practical ways. This can include proactively doing things to contribute to the friendship, and also forgoing opportunities or making sacrifices in favor of the friendship. In order to maintain your relationship with Judaism, you should also contribute tangibly to the relationship by actively expressing your feelings and commitment by performing mitzvoth. Conversely, you should be prepared and willing to tangibly forego certain "opportunities" and undergo some sacrifice regarding things that are unacceptable to Judaism. This is the basis for the positive and negative mitzvoth – the do's and the don'ts of Judaism.

This last idea is related to one of the many interpretations of a verse in Song of Songs, the allegorical and quintessential love song between G-d and the Jewish people. The verse states, "If you are stirred up, arouse the love until it is desirous" (2:7). The Hebrew word used here for desirous is "techpatz" which is related to "chefetz" which literally means "object". Accordingly, the verse is giving powerful, practical advice on how to keep the flame burning, the explanation of the verse being as follows: If you are stirred to seek G-d, the way to maintain that arousal is by connecting it to tangible objects and acts – namely by taking upon yourself practical observance of the mitzvoth.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THE BUS DRIVER COMES THROUGH

In Jerusalem there is a group of religious women who daily make an early morning trip to the Kotel on an Egged Company bus to pray at the holy site.

When it came to Israel Independence Day a problem arose because the buses didn't start running until a later hour. The driver informed the group that one of the company buses could be rented on a private basis and sug-

gested that the collection be made among the group members to cover the cost. This was duly done but the amount collected was 150 shekelim short of the required sum. Not willing to lose out on the merit of taking this group on its sacred mission, the driver agreed to supply the missing amount himself!

## A JOB FOR A JEW?

**Question:** As a distributor of books I am sometimes approached by publishers who will allow me to distribute their books on the condition that I agree to also distribute some of the missionary writings that they publish. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** The Chafetz Chaim told the story of a fellow in your situation who gave in to pressure and tried selling missionary books in a synagogue until he was stopped by the local rabbi. When he complained that his livelihood was threatened, he was promised that the next morning

the rabbi would have a new job for him.

Upon arrival that morning the rabbi told him that he had spoken to the local priest who was ready to give him a job ringing the bells in his church.

"Is this a job for a Jew?" complained the fellow. "Do you expect me to work for a church and call Gentiles to prayer by ringing the bells?"

"Foolish fellow," replied the rabbi. "You are so worried about calling Gentiles to their church and you don't hesitate to sell books which will bring Jews to the church! I ask you — is this a job for a Jew?"

## TOP TEN REASONS TO BE JEWISH! \_\_\_\_\_

In recent weeks we have requested that our readers assist us in producing a Top Ten list — Top Ten Reasons to be Jewish. Ohrnet thanks the great number of people who made the effort to send us their suggestions, and we plan on publishing a selection of the responses in this and future Ohrnet issues.

Here is a submission that, while perhaps not the most "serious", won our prize for being the most creative and humorous.



10. Really cool headwear.
  9. We don't have to get down on our knees to pray.
  8. Dancing with a happy bride in a chair over your head.
  7. Somebody has to take the blame.
  6. Knowing you are going to feel guilty and still being able to have fun.
  5. Jewish mother's cooking.
  4. Being chosen (even though most people don't know what that really means).
  3. Being able to tell people, "We started monotheism so shut up already."
  2. Every holiday has great food.
- And the number one reason to be Jewish:*
1. Avoiding the Christmas rush!

• Submitted by Ed Kotzen