

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIGASH · 6 TEVET 5768 · DEC. 15, 2007 · VOL. 15 NO. 11

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE PROSE AND THE POETRY

*“So Yisrael set out with all that he had and came to Beersheva where he slaughtered sacrifices (Zevachim) to the G-d of his father Yitzchak.” (46:1)*

It's not by coincidence that the Jews are a middle-Eastern people. The Middle East was the cradle of civilization; the major history of the world seems to have been played out around the shores of the Mediterranean.

The further you travel from the center of something, the more deviation creeps in from that central point; the further you travel from the nodal point of the Middle East, the more pronounced become two diametrically opposed worldviews.

To the East you will find the asceticism of India, the rejection of the physical, and the aspiration to escape the material world completely by fasting, meditation, and the abnegation of the body.

In the other direction (geographically and spiritually) is the West. While giving a nod to the world of the spirit, the West is heavily invested in the body and its agenda; 'the good life', a life of ease and toys that please.

East is East and West is West - and the genius of Judaism is that it unites these two extremes.

Judaism sees the body neither as a sworn enemy nor as a temple, but as a wayward child in constant need of cajoling, supervision, and encouragement.

It was not only the Jewish People who brought offerings in the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple); non-Jews could, and did bring sacrifices. However, their *korbanot* were only of one type. They were all *olot*. An *olah* is translated as a "burnt offering" so called because it all goes 'up' (*oleh*) in fire; nothing remains. The non-Jewish mindset is that spirituality demands the total negation of the physical; the physical must go up entirely in a blaze of

fire.

The idea that the *kohen*, together with the one who brings the offering and his or her family, partake of the offering is foreign to the non-Jewish mindset; it seems to smack of a kickback. In fact, the eating of the offering by the *kohen* and the one who brought the offering were no less important to the process than the parts that fire consumed.

*“So Yisrael set out with all that he had and came to Beersheva where he slaughtered sacrifices (Zevachim) to the G-d of his father Yitzchak.”*

The zenith of Yaakov's happiness was this journey to Yosef in Mitzraim. After a life beset with troubles, Yaakov finally was about to experience *yiddishe naches* (parental satisfaction) from all his children.

In Beersheva, the last town before the Egyptian border, he brought *zevachim* to Hashem.

It seems that none of our ancestors brought *zevachim*; they only brought *olot*.

A *zevach* is a shared family experience, an offering in which the entire family partakes. With Yaakov's family circle complete, the stage was set for the Children of Yisrael to become the nation that would proclaim the service of G-d through the uniting of the body and the soul. Thus Yaakov could experience the higher level of Divine service in which even the prose of physical existence - eating and drinking - could be elevated into the Divine poetry of serving G-d.

• Based on Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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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.

## ISRAEL Forever

### RESETTLEMENT, THEN AND NOW

The great debate about resettling Jews in their own homeland recalls something Jews throughout the world will hear when this week's Torah portion is read in their synagogue.

After purchasing for Pharaoh all the lands of the Egyptian citizens in exchange for food in that famine-stricken land, the potentate Yosef resettled the sellers, moving the residents of one city to another "from one end of Egypt to another".

Rashi provides both the obvious purpose of this move and Yosef's hidden agenda. From a political angle this was intend-

ed as a reminder to the Egyptians people that they no longer owned their lands. But the reason why the Torah records this is to show how considerate Yosef was of his father and brothers who had joined him in Egypt as immigrants. Now that all Egyptians were no longer residing in their own cities they could not look down upon these new arrivals.

Disengagement, no matter how important it may seem for political purposes, is an extremely painful procedure for its victims, especially when it is their land which they worked so hard to settle and develop in Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

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

### OIL FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Chanukah is the time when so many Jews are performing the mitzvah of lights with olive oil as a way of recalling the fuel used to light the menorah in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

The Mount of Olives in Jerusalem may not



necessarily have been the only source for the menorah oil but tradition has it that oil from the mountain's olive trees was used for anointing kings, *kohanim gedolim* and *Beit Hamikdash* implements, hence its other name – "Mount of Anointment".

## 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.

לע"נ

מרת יוטא רחל בת ר' יוסף חיים ע"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Eliyahu Hanavi and Rabbi Anan
- The awesome number of disciples of Elisha Hanavi and some of the Talmudic Sages
- Payment for Sanctuary employees and supplies
- Court action to support woman whose husband went abroad without providing for her
- When an individual voluntarily provided such support
- Division between sons and daughters of the deceased's limited estate for purpose of support
- A partial admission which does not require an oath
- The bankrupt father of the bride
- When a signature is inconclusive proof
- The lost road among four surrounding fields
- The borrower turned lender to or purchaser
- Can wife be forced to move to new location
- Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim as choice locations
- The advantages of living in Eretz Yisrael and being buried there
- The blessings of the Holy Land and the love for it shown by the Sages

## THE BANKRUPT FATHER OF THE BRIDE

Where is bankruptcy mentioned in the Talmud? The Hebrew term for one who bankrupts is *poshet regel* which literally translates as “sticking out the foot”. In our *mishneh* we encounter this concept in regard to a man who has promised a sum of money to the one to whom his daughter is *mekudeshet* (betrothed but not yet married and requires a divorce to be free to marry another). He fails to keep his promise and is described as sticking out his foot to his prospective son-in-law as a declaration of his inability or unwillingness to honor his pledge.

Rashi offers two different explanations of this unusual gesture. One is that is his way of saying that he totally disregards the request and offers nothing more than “the dirt

on his shoe”. Another explanation is that it is his way of saying “Go hang me by my foot from a tree because I have nothing to give you.”

Whether the disappointed *chatan* has recourse is a matter of dispute. One opinion is that he can indefinitely refuse to consummate marriage with the daughter unless he receives what he was promised. The Sage Admon, however, rules that she can claim that she is not responsible for her father's promise and can therefore insist that he either marry her or divorce her and not leave her in a state of limbo “till her hair turns gray”.

Whether the father is indeed bankrupt or is only unwilling to pay is discussed by Tosefot as well as why the young man does not sue him in court for payment.

The opinion of Admon is the one favored by the halachic authorities. (*Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer* 52:1)

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“A place where Moshe and Aharon did not merit to enter who says that I will merit to do so.” (*Ketubot* 112a)

- Rabbi Zeira, explaining why he was in such a hurry to cross the river and enter Eretz Yisrael

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THE WASSERMAN

# TALMUDIGEST

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## JEWISH NAME-CALLING

**From: Jeremy Reissman**

*Dear Rabbi,  
When parents name a child, why is it permitted to give the child a non-Hebrew name, such as Yiddish or Middle Eastern names? Thank you.*

Dear Jeremy,

Of course, many people who give their children such names are not doing so because it's permitted per se, but often because they are not concerned, or don't think about it. Therefore, allow me to address your question in the broader context of name giving.

One category of names regards those in transliteration, by which I mean the use of Hebrew names as written/pronounced in other languages. For example: the name "*Mi-cha-el*" for boys as Michel (Fr.), Mikhail (Rus.), Michael (En.); or "*Rach-el*" for girls as Rachele (Fr.), Raquel (Sp.), Rachel (En.). "*Shlomo*" (Solomon) as Zalman in Yiddish or Sulamein in Arabic are two other notable examples. Sometimes the relationship is not readily apparent or well-known such as Jonathan from "*Yehonatan*". Such non-Hebrew forms of essentially Hebrew names, if used by Jews as Jewish names, are clearly permitted.

Another category of names regards those in translation, by which I mean the use of original Hebrew names as translated into other languages. For example: "*Tzvi*" which means deer translated into Yiddish as Hirsh; "*Aryeh*" which means lion translated as Leib; and "*Ze'ev*" which means wolf as Wolf. In the original Hebrew, these names are based on the Torah's comparing Tribes such as Naftali, Yehuda and Binyamin to admirable qualities of such animals (swift, strong, stoic). Therefore, the translation was often affixed to the original Hebrew as in Naftali Hirsh/Tzvi Hirsh, Yehuda Leib/Aryeh Leib or Binyamin Wolf/Ze'ev Wolf.

We find the same phenomenon regarding women's names as well. For example, "*Penina*" (pearl), the name of a righteous woman in Scriptures, is translated as Pearlie. Similarly, "*Shoshana/Vered*" (rose) became Rosie in Yiddish and Warda in Arabic while "*Malka*" (queen) became Reine and Malika, respectively.

Jewish names in translation, despite their more tenuous connection to Judaism, were nevertheless accepted and practiced by all communities throughout the ages. This also applies to names not mentioned in Jewish sources but based on objects or concepts acceptable to Judaism as translated into other languages, such as the man's name Zelig or Sa'id for happy; or the women's names Bluma or Farcha for flower, Sheina or Jamila for beautiful and Shprintza for hope. [Note that the use as names of the Hebrew words for most flowers, or Yafa and Tikva for beautiful and hope as above is a recent trend.]

A third category of names is what I'll call "non-Jewish"

names by which I refer to names that are not Jewish names, but they are not specifically not-Jewish names either. This would include for boys names such as Gary or Stuart or for girls Pamela and Barbara. These "*pareve*" names should be avoided since they have no significant meaning, nor were they traditionally used. In fact, they may not be as "*pareve*" as they seem. Martin, for example, is related to the service of Mars; and Cynthia refers to the moon goddess Kinthos.

A last category of names is what I'll call "not-Jewish names" by which I mean names that are specifically associated with other religions. This would include John (with an "h", not to be confused with Jon, short for Jonathan), Luke, Paul, and Chris (related to savior in Greek) who, of course, were leading figures or concepts in Christianity. The name of the Muslim prophet Muhammad, which means revered, would also be included in this category insofar as it is particularly associated with another religion. Women's names of this type would include names such as Mary (despite its virgin use as Miriam), Theresa and Fatima (the daughter of Muhammad and significant to Islam as the only child through which his progeny was perpetuated). These names were never, and should not be, used by Jews.

Two interesting exceptions of Jews using non-Jewish names were that of Ishmael and Alexander. Regarding the former, despite the Torah's reference to Yishmael's immoral and idolatrous inclinations (Gen. 21:9, Rashi), we find a great rabbi of the Talmud named R' Yishmael who was a High Priest. Sources indicate that he was so great that G-d Himself asked R' Yishmael to bless Him. He was also thoroughly versed with the use of Divine names. Regarding the latter, we find many Jews, including illustrious rabbis from dynastic families who shared the namesake of the great conqueror.

The explanation for this is as follows. According to Torah sources, Yishmael repented toward the end of his life and actually became righteous. This is evident from his giving precedence to Yitzchak at Abraham's burial (Gen. 25:9, Rashi), and the subsequent mention of his own death as being "gathered to his forefathers", i.e. to the righteous Abraham (25:17, Rashi).

Similarly, the Talmud (Yoma 69a) ascribes righteousness to Alexander the Great. Incited by enemies of the Sages, Alexander intended to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem. On the way, he was approached by R' Shimon HaTzadik who headed a delegation of rabbis. When Alexander saw him, he got off his horse and bowed on the ground at his feet. The enemies of the Sages questioned why "The Great" should prostrate before the lowly. He replied that at the head of all his conquests he was led by the image of a righteous man, and this image was the countenance of non other than R' Shimon. The rabbis asked Alexander, "Is it conceivable that your enemies should mislead you into destroying the House in which prayers for your success and for that of your kingdom are offered?" At which point Alexander recalled his soldiers and turned over the enemies of the Sages to the Jews. According to tradition, the Jews accepted several practices to honor Alexander for this event – one of which was to call Jewish children in his name.

## CALL ME AGAIN

**Question:** I recently called a friend to ask for information about a candidate for a position whom I thought he knew. He was somewhat uncertain as to whom I was referring, but promised to check and asked me to call him back in a day or two. Hours later I managed to get the information I required and no longer had a need to trouble my first source with another call. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** You must assume that the first source went to

the trouble of checking on the matter you asked him about. It is certainly proper, therefore, to call him in a day or two and ask him what information he has. Even if he does not add anything to what you have already heard you will give him the feeling that his effort was not in vain. It is also possible that he was too busy to get around to this matter and you can then thank him for his good intentions and inform him that he need not bother because you believe you have another source.

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

### WHEN SKEPTICISM PAYS

**W**hen people read stories like those which appear in this column or hear wondrous tales they cannot be faulted for entertaining some doubt about the veracity of the story.

Once upon hearing a truly marvelous story about a renowned individual the great Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponevez Yeshiva, Rav Eliezer Shach, showed that he did

not fully believe it. When asked to explain his reluctance to believe the story this Torah giant said:

“I fully believe only in those things that I am required by the Torah to believe. Why? Because when I reach Heaven and ask to be rewarded for my faith in G-d, I don't want to be told that I can't get credit for that because I believed everything else.”

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