



SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA · 11 SIVAN 5768 · JUN. 14, 2008 · VOL. 15 NO. 36

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE TOP OF THE TREE

“And the man Moshe was extremely humble, more so than any man on the face of the earth.” (12:03)

Beryl was a Jewish accountant who had fallen on tough times. Although the title “Count” forms part of the word “accountant”, Beryl’s means were far from princely.

Beryl was at his wits’ end. Try as he might he could not make ends meet. One day while passing the local zoo he saw a sign that Butch, the famous gorilla, had swung his last, and had passed on to the great gorilla cage in the sky. Butch was by far the zoo’s greatest attraction, and the children of the town were very upset by his demise. So much so that until Butch could be replaced, the zoo was looking for a stand-in. They were advertising for someone to dress up in a gorilla suit and sit in Butch’s cage.

Beryl read the ad a couple of times; then he heard a distant rumbling. It was his stomach. He hadn’t eaten a square meal since last Shabbat. He searched his pockets and they were as empty as his stomach. He couldn’t even rustle up couple of dollars for a *latte* and a cheese Danish. Thrusting his hands into his empty pockets, Beryl entered the zoo.

After an hour or so, the gorilla suit really didn’t feel so uncomfortable after all. Beryl sat at the back of the cage, trying to look inconspicuous, when a child threw him a banana. Beryl looked at the banana and heard that distant rumbling again. He loped over to the banana, picked it up, and with a quiet blessing ate the banana with somewhat more delicacy than the previous inhabitant of the cage. The child threw him another banana.

After four bananas, Beryl started to feel a little fuller, picked up the fifth banana, and threw it back to the child. The child loved this and lobbed it back to Beryl. Beryl threw it back again and climbed on to a low branch. Beryl started to really get into the part, and climbed higher and

higher up the tree until, forgetting that he was a middle-aged Jewish accountant in a gorilla suit, Beryl climbed right up to the top of the tree, lost his footing and plummeted into the neighboring cage. He hit the ground with an enormous thump, and found himself face to face with the lion.

“Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokenu, Hashem Echad...” screamed Beryl at the top of his voice.

Equally terrified, the lion screamed back, *“Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto L’olam Va’ed!”*

At which the point, the bear in the next cage shouted, *“If you guys don’t keep your voices down, we’re all going to get fired!”*

When you climb too high in life, you can find yourself back down to earth with a bump.

“And the man Moshe was extremely humble, more so than any man on the face of the earth.”

Humility has a bad rep in the literature of the world. I well remember reading Dickens’ description of Uriah Heep in David Copperfield. The unctuous wringing of the hands and the obsequious fawning to win approval stuck in my schoolboy’s mind as being synonymous with humility.

Because someone is humble doesn’t mean he or she has to be pushover. Moshe was not afraid to stand up to Pharaoh, the greatest living king of the time, nor was he shy about giving rebuke to the entire Jewish people when needed. His humility did not deter him from doing what was unpopular or dangerous when the need arose. Moshe was the most humble man who ever lived because he understood, as no human before or since, that there is no privilege without responsibility. G-d had favored him above all other men and made him equal to the entire Jewish People.

The greater one’s ability, the greater the responsibility.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the first-born, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d commands Moshe concerning the *korban Pesach*. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, allowing a "second chance" to offer the *korban Pesach* one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the

Jewish People in the Exodus — some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. G-d tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. G-d sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. G-d explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

ISRAEL Forever

A NATION OR "MY NATION"

When we reflect on the situation of the Jewish State the big question Jews in Israel must ask themselves is which sort of a nation they wish to be part of — a nation among nations or a distinct Torah nation.

The difference between the two is subtly communicated in the account given in this week's Torah portion about the unjustified grumbling of the nation that kindled G-d's anger and brought forth a fire from Heaven. In his commentary, Rashi explains that the term "nation" refers to

the wicked people, for when Jews behave as they should they are always referred to by G-d as "My nation".

It is painful to see the gradual corrosion of Jewish tradition in secular Israel as evidenced by the proliferation of shopping centers operating on Shabbat and the recent controversy over official permission to sell *chametz* on Pesach.

Only a return to traditional Jewish values can make us worthy of being regarded as "My nation" by the only One who can truly protect 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

YAD AVSHALOM — MONUMENT OR HAND?

A visitor to the Mount of Olives cannot help but take notice of an impressive ancient structure called "Yad Avshalom".

Although the simple meaning of *yad* is a reference to the monument that this rebellious son of King David erected for himself to be remembered by, there is a legend that there was actually a carved hand (*yad* in Hebrew) atop this structure representing



Avshalom's hand. It isn't there anymore, says this legend, because Napoleon fired a bullet which chopped it off. "The hand that rebelled against its father, the king" reportedly declared the great French conqueror, "is hereby cut off."

The only problem with this legend is that Napoleon and his invading army never got past Acco, so it is highly unlikely that he was ever in Jerusalem.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the menorah burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the menorah made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*t'nufot*" (wavings) are in the parsha?
5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the menorah and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the menorah was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *para aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show G-d's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the avoda; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic - these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

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

- Differences in halacha between men and women
- Which women are excluded from drinking *Sotah* potion but lose their right to payment of *ketubah*
- The warning given to a suspected adulteress by her husband
- If the husband dies before the *Sotah* potion is drunk
- Marrying a woman pregnant with a child from a previous marriage
- If the suspected adulterer is a minor or impotent
- Which relations disqualify a woman from eating *terumah*
- When is a woman most likely to conceive
- When the court assumes the husband's role of warning
- The *Sotah* potion's impact on the adulterer
- The various Torah interpretations made by Rabbi Akiva and others on the day that Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah was appointed head of Sanhedrin
- When the bitter waters will not prove anything
- The three disqualifications imposed on an adulteress
- What we learn from *Sotah* regarding a doubt which arises regarding ritual impurity
- Classification of different sources of ritual impurity

WHEN RESTRICTION BREEDS OBLIGATION

A long list of differences in halacha between a male *kohen* and a female one is presented in the *mishna*. Why, asks Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Chayos, does the *mishna* fail to mention that a male *kohen* has an obligation to be involved in the burial of one of his seven close relations even though it causes ritual impurity while there is no such obligation for his female counterpart?

The answer, he writes, is to be found in the words of

Rambam (Laws of Mourning 2:6):

“What has been said that there is a mitzvah for a *kohen* to be involved with the burial of his close relative applies only to the males because they are forbidden to thus contract ritual impurity through burial of others. Since there is no such restriction on a female *kohen* there is also no obligation for them regarding their close relatives.”

Since the restriction regarding others is so connected with the obligation regarding relatives we can assume that once the *mishna* pointed out that there is no restriction for a woman, it includes the information that there is no obligation for her regarding relatives.

• *Sotah 23a*

What the SAGES Say

“If the husband has not sinned by living with the wife he suspects of unfaithfulness then the *Sotah* potion will have its desired effect, but if he is not free of such sin it will not have that effect.”

Beraita - Sotah 23a

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UPS AND DOWNS IN EDINBURGH

From: Frank in Edinburgh, Scotland

Dear Rabbi,

There's a personal question that I have for the Rabbi. You see, I am Jewish, and I am on a long journey back to being more observant. The problem is that I notice that shortly after things start going well for me, religiously speaking that is, I mean when I really start to feel enthusiastic and passionate about observance, shortly thereafter I feel as though I fall away from it and lose the charge. This frustrates me because I wonder what's the purpose of striving and making progress when it only seems to die down afterward. Shouldn't that enthusiasm be constant and growing? Thanks in advance for your insight, as I need guidance.

Dear Frank,

What you describe experiencing is understandably frustrating, but on the other hand it's so common that the phenomenon is referred by a specific phrase: "yerida l'tzorech aliya" which means "going down for the purpose of going up".

The frustration that people feel regarding this perfectly normal, and even beneficial dynamic stems from a misunderstanding of what it's all about, and from confusing "going down" with "falling". If one understands the nature of this dynamic, rather than being perturbed by it, he would actually be able to capitalize on it for spiritual growth. I'll explain:

In so far as the angels represent the epitome of the service of G-d, we can learn from their example how to serve Him. The angels are described as running toward G-d, then retracting from Him, in the semblance of fire (Yech. 1:14).

The Talmud (Chagiga 13b) compares this to fire leaping from an oven. Rashi explains that just as fire, which is contained within the restrictive walls of an oven, leaps forth when the lid is removed, and then retracts back into the oven, so too the angels, normally restrained in awe of G-d, temporarily become imbued with passion and fervor in His service, leap toward Him in rapture, but then suddenly recoil back to place.

Since everything angels do is service of G-d, not only their rising toward Him, but also their receding from Him, is service. The explanation of the matter is as follows: Just as a rush of fresh air into the oven sends the fire leaping upward, spontaneous inspiration spurs the angels' ascent. But this sudden, intense enthusiasm cannot be maintained constantly. Creations of G-d cannot exist continually close to His presence. Rather, the angels rise in fervor, and then, unable to sustain that elevation constantly, they draw down the divine inspiration as they descend, integrating it into their place.

This, then, is the difference between falling and going down. The former is without control, with nothing to hold on to, and with no way to stop. Going down, however, is controlled, assured by holding on to something, and directed toward a specific place. This describes the dynamic of "going down to go up" which, far from departing from G-d's service, rather directs the enlightenment and inspiration of those special, elevating bursts of fervor into the realm of normal living.

When you experience these ups, then, be prepared for a down. But remember, this is not a free-fall to a lower plane. Rather, as you controllably descend, hold on to the banister of that new spiritual stairway you've created and return to your place — a place within which your new elevation can be maintained, integrated and shared with others. And don't worry; the staircase is bi-directional, remaining there for you to rise even higher next ascension.

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No Dumping Ground!

Question: Upon recently entering the synagogue in which I pray I was shocked to see so many holy books piled up in a corner. Upon asking the *gabbai* what they were he explained that there was not enough room on the synagogue shelves for them and that they would probably have to be removed. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The problem you mention is caused by a number of factors:

- People who have no room on the shelves in their home mistakenly think that these books will be welcomed by the synagogue.
- People forget them and don't return to claim them.

- Authors who contribute a sample of their work without first determining if there is room for them.

While it is difficult to completely control the above mentioned factors, it might be an idea for the trustees of your synagogue to follow the example of others and post a prominent sign stating that no one can leave a book in the synagogue without permission, and a warning that any book left without authorization will be disposed of.

If it is possible to transfer these unwanted books to a fledgling synagogue or school this would be an ideal solution. Otherwise there may be no alternative to using the services of your local *genizah* that disposes of holy books in a dignified manner.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

TWO WAYS TO SPEND MILLIONS

A day before he met a tragic death in a traffic accident, the renowned British philanthropist Benzion Dunner O.B.M. reportedly distributed two million pounds sterling in Purim gifts to the needy.

What a striking contrast with what other wealthy people do with their money!

Take the example of an Arab sheikh in one of the Persian

Gulf Emirates who recently spent \$2.7 million on the purchase of one camel. Reading about this extravagant acquisition one person with a long memory for advertising slogans could not help but quip:

"I've heard someone saying 'I'd walk a mile for a Camel (cigarette)' but I never dreamed someone would pay millions for one."

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