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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE MIGHTY D AND THE MIGHTY G

“...then Yisrael bowed himself towards the head of the bed” (47:31)

The recent meltdown of some of the world’s most sacred financial gods has shown us once again the truth of the words inscribed on the once Mighty Dollar: “In G-d we trust”.

There is no One else.

Shortly before he passes away in this week’s Torah portion, Yaakov Avinu bows towards the head of his bed. Rashi explains that the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence, rests above the head of someone who is ill.

Why does the *Shechina* hover over the head of an ill person?

G-d’s closeness to us is in direct proportion to our feeling that we are powerless without Him. The more we feel “It’s nice of G-d to give me a Hand — but I can also get by on my own,” the further we are from G-d.

Being ill makes us realize how feeble we really are. Nothing removes our complacency like the inability to function. When we place our lives willingly in G-d’s Hands, we merit a special closeness to Him.

It is for this reason that an ill person’s prayers for himself are more effective than the prayers of someone else for him, because a sick person realizes that ultimately his only help is from G-d.

When Yitzchak and Rivka pray for children, G-d hears to Yitzchak’s prayers more than Rivka’s. Rashi explains that the prayers of someone whose parents are wicked cannot be compared to the prayers of someone whose parents are righteous. Why should that be? Surely

it all depends only on the person himself?

Someone whose parents are unworthy knows that they can’t depend on any hereditary merits. Someone, however, whose forbears were righteous can feel that he or she doesn’t need to pray quite that hard because they are still reaping the spiritual dividends of their forbears. If nonetheless that person prays as though he had no merits whatsoever, because they have overcome their natural complacency, their prayer reaches the highest places.

Rabbenu Yonah writes that a haughty person doesn’t get help from G-d because his pride stops him from being submissive to G-d. Children, on the other hand, realize their total dependence on others, and as a result G-d saves children miraculously all the time. Their lack of self-reliance is their key to receiving Divine intervention.

“G-d is close to all those who call out to Him – to all who truly call out to Him.” G-d listens to every single prayer without regard to our spiritual level, with the condition that when we pray we acknowledge our total and absolute dependence on Him.

The gods of communism, and now capitalism, have dissolved into worthless dross. Only when all the ‘isms’ have joined that same junkyard will we realize that we have no One to rely on except for the Mighty G(-d).

• Source: Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of *Eretz Yisrael* and

the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Efraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

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UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between those who study Torah and those who support them has its roots in this week's Torah portion. On his deathbed the Patriarch Yaakov blessed his son Zevulun that his tribe will be prosperous seafaring merchants. Their wealth would, however, be shared with the Tribe of Yissachar who would dedicate themselves to the study of Torah and serving the entire nation as halachic experts.

This unique symbiotic relationship between scholar and supporter has sustained the Jewish People throughout histo-

ry, whether in their own land or in exile. It is a shame that there are Jews in Israel who fail to appreciate what the *Yeshivot* and *Kollelim* are doing for the country by earning Divine protection for it. They begrudge the Torah institutions the support they receive from the government in the form of deferment from military service.

This is a tragic error because only when all Jews have a share in Torah study – as scholars or supporters – can we be worthy of securing 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*

MACHPELA CAVE – A SECOND PURCHASE

“Behold, I am about to die. Bury me in the grave which I purchased for myself in the land of Canaan.”

This request made by the Patriarch Yaakov of his son Yosef is mentioned in this week's Torah portion as the appeal that Yosef made to Pharaoh.

The Midrash relates that Yaakov paid his brother Esav for his share of the Machpela Cave with all of the gold and



silver that he had amassed during his stay with Lavan.

This marked the second time a purchase was made in regard to this holy site. The Patriarch Avraham purchased the entire cave from the Hittites, and his grandson Yaakov from his own brother in order to enable him to be the last of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs to be interred there.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “*chesed shel emet*” — kindness of truth?
2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn't want to be buried in Egypt.
3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?
4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat...” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?
6. What does *pillalti* mean?
7. What does “*Shechem*” mean as used in this week's parsha? (two answers)
8. Which individual is called “the *Emori*”? Why? Give two reasons.
9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?
10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?
11. What congregation from Yaakov's offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?
12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?
13. What does milk do to teeth?
14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey”?
15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?
16. In Yosef's blessing Yaakov said, “They embittered him...” Who are “they”?
17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.
2. 47:29 - a) Egypt's ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn't make him into an idol.
3. 47:31 - Bow to him.
4. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef's mother, Rachel, in the *Ma'arat HaMachpela*.
5. 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
6. 48:11 - “I thought.”
7. 48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.
8. 48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (*imrei pi*).
9. 49:1 - When *mashiach* will come.
10. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
11. 49:6 - Korach and his congregation.
12. 49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.
13. 49:12 - It makes them white.
14. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
15. 49:20 - Oil-rich land.
16. 49:23 - Yosef's brothers, Potifar and his wife.
17. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
18. 50:5 - From Esav.
19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh's ignorance of Hebrew.
20. 50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the *aron* (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

לע"ו

מרת חיה שרה בת ר' מרדכי ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- What are considered normal and abnormal damages caused by an animal
- The importance of bowing when saying *modim*
- The honor paid to King Chizkiyahu
- Damage caused by animal with its feet or by fowl with its wings or legs
- Damage caused by stones kicked by animal or by the swinging of its tail
- Damages caused by animal eating – what and where
- A squatter who doesn't rent, living in a house not being rented
- Other examples of this same principle
- When owner of animal pays only how much he benefited from what his animal ate from another's produce
- Damage caused by a dog jumping on vessels or causing a fire with a burning cookie
- How to view the damage of fire – as arrow of damager or his possession
- Placing a fire in the hands of an incompetent

SQUATTER'S RIGHTS

Is one who takes up residence in the vacant home of another without his permission obligated to pay him rent? This question takes several forms:

If the owner does not rent out the house and the squatter is not one who normally rents a house, then it is considered a case of no loss and no benefit and there is no obligation to pay.

If the owner does rent out the house and the squatter normally does rent a house, then this is a case of loss (because the presence of the squatter discourages others from renting) and benefit and there is definitely an obligation to pay.

If the owner does not rent out the house but the squatter does normally rent a house, this is a situation of someone

benefiting from another without causing him a loss. This case is debated by the Sages, and the ruling is that there is no obligation to pay.

If the owner does not rent out his house and the squatter does not normally rent a place. While the above three cases are all mentioned in our *gemara*, this one is not. The position of Tosefot is that there is no obligation to pay since the squatter derives no benefit. The fact that his presence caused the owner a loss by discouraging potential paying tenants is considered only indirect damage, for which there is no obligation to pay. This position is challenged by other commentaries who contend that if one derives even a fringe benefit from another's loss he is obligated to pay.

• *Bava Kama 20a*

What the SAGES Say

"The honor which Scripture records was accorded to the righteous King Chizkiyahu when he died consisted of establishing a yeshiva for Torah study by his tomb (for three, seven or thirty days according to different opinions)."

• *Rabbi Natan and Other Sages - Bava Kama 16b*

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JEWISH SELF DEFENSE

From: Todd in Baltimore

Dear Rabbi,
Would you please share any ideas you might have about how the Torah might relate to the current situation with the war against Hamas. Perhaps more specifically, what is the Torah's attitude toward retaliation in self defense?

Dear Todd,

Ideally, a Jew would rather have peace than war. However, not only history, but also the Torah, teaches us that a Jew has to be willing and able to fight - and win. Here are several examples:

1. Abraham's nephew, Lot, was taken captive in a war between four powerful armies against five where the former prevailed (Gen. 14:13-16). Abraham gathered relatively few men in pursuit of such a strong army in order to free his kin from captivity. Against the odds, he fiercely and courageously felled the fleeing army and saved not only Lot, but all of the others who had been taken captive by the oppressors as well.

2. After the Jews escaped enslavement and persecution in Egypt, they were attacked, unprovoked, by the nation of Amalek (Ex. 17:8-13). Moses ordered Joshua to choose people for battle, which he did until "Joshua weakened Amalek and its people with the blade of the sword".

3. There is even a precedent for a pre-emptive strike. The Talmud teaches, "If someone comes to kill you, arise [preempt him] and kill him first" (Sanhedrin 72a). The Shulchan Aruch affirms this Talmudic principle by ruling: "If one sees that someone is pursuing him with the intention to kill him, he is permitted to defend himself and take the life of he who is pursuing him" (Choshen Mishpat 125:1).

4. The Talmud (Eruvin 45a) discusses whether the residents of a city in Israel who come under siege on Shabbat are permitted to violate Shabbat and take up arms in order to defend themselves. The Talmud rules that if the siege is launched with the clear intention of killing the city's residents, they must violate Shabbat in taking up arms to defend

themselves. Maimonides (Laws of Shabbat 3:23) expands this ruling by stating: "It is a mitzvah for all Jews who are able to come and help defend their brethren to do so, and it is forbidden to delay their coming until after Shabbat."

Given the fact that Israel has not militarily provoked Hamas, but rather Hamas has ruthlessly attacked Israel merely for existing, has taken hostages and captives, has every intention to murder not only individuals but also besiege entire cities with the intention of killing as many residents as possible, there is certainly a Torah basis even for preemptive action - all the more so for retaliatory self-defense.

There are two interesting and interrelated facets of the above-mentioned war with Amalek. The first is that the attack is attributed to the Jews' own departure from G-d. This removed G-d's protective providence such that Israel's denial of G-d was immediately followed by, "And Amalek came to battle Israel in Refidim". The second is that the military leader, Joshua, and the soldiers were chosen not just for their physical might, but also because they were G-d-fearing, thereby meriting Divine intervention on their behalf. This exemplifies Judaism's two-pronged approach to warfare: military prowess and faith in G-d.

In Biblical times individual Jews simultaneously embodied both physical and spiritual strength. However, as a result of physical and spiritual exile, these traits rarely co-exist in individuals nowadays. Those with great physical strength and military prowess usually lack spirituality, while those of great spiritual stature usually lack bodily strength. The ideal can only be obtained, then, through the uniting of these different parts of Israel into one collective body of the Jewish People comprising both strengths.

Let us increase Torah study, prayer and the performance of *mitzvot* to stir Divine favor for the protection of all Jews in general, and in particular for those under siege and for the soldiers risking their lives to protect Israel and its inhabitants. In addition, each of us should think how we can help, either monetarily, politically, through solidarity or in any other way. And may the political and military leaders, as well as the soldiers, be inspired to factor G-d into the equation of success by merely reciting the *shema* or putting on *tefillin*, for example, or any other way of connecting to Judaism and to G-d.

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A TIME FOR PROTEST?

Question: The irreligious son of observant parents was determined to have prayers and kaddish said in honor of his deceased mother, and hired a minyan of Jews to perform this service in his home. When the leader of the group noticed that the mourning son was not putting on *tefillin* like everyone else, he politely invited him to borrow his *tefillin* and join the service. The son adamantly refused to do so and the entire minyan left the house in protest. Was this the right thing to do?

Answer: There is a case to be made that they should have stayed despite the son's refusal because it was in honor of his observant mother that they had consented to come. On the other hand, the son's flagrant demonstration of contempt for religion did warrant a protest.

Without revealing the position taken by a prominent halachic authority in this matter, it would be interesting to hear what our public has to say about this matter.

Let us know what you think was the right thing to do.
ohr@ohr.edu

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE ANGELIC MIDWIFE

A tough decision had to be made by the young Torah scholar as he prepared for the Pesach Seder. He had been approached by members of an organization involved in outreach to come to a Seder being held in Bnei Brak for Jews who were showing an interest in returning to their roots and to deliver one of his famed talks to them.

Although this meant sacrificing his own Seder he consented. His plan was to first come home to perform all the *mitzvot* and to then go deliver his inspiring talk. But when he came home he saw his pregnant wife suffering from labor pains. As expected, he accompanied her to the hospital where they found many women preparing for birth and only

a single midwife on duty. He was reluctant to leave his wife but she insisted that there was nothing he could do to help her. She insisted it would be wiser for him to go deliver his talk and rely on Heaven to take care of her and all the other expectant mothers.

When he returned from the talk, his wife had given birth to a healthy child. She told him that as soon as he left, a woman in white entered the room and took care of all her needs and then disappeared. When she took a look at her face she recognized her as a *rebbitzin* who had passed away a few years earlier.

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WHEN ALL JEWS ARE ONE

Reflections on the Current Crisis

RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

As Jews in the south of Israel frantically race to find shelter from the deathly missiles fired by the terrorists in Gaza, and the Israel Defense Forces battle to put an end to this terror, Jews throughout Israel unite in their thoughts, prayers and actions.

No matter where a Jew lives in Israel he or she feels deeply for the residents of those communities under fire — sympathy for the families of victims, and empathy with those suffering from the trauma of sirens and their aftermath. At the same time there is a sense of profound gratitude to Heaven for the fact that despite the intensive bombing there has been very little damage to life and limb.

Prayers abound in all synagogues both for the

safety of the endangered communities and for the success of the IDF to quickly bring an end to this danger.

—

We join all of Jewry in praying to Heaven for the safety of our soldiers courageously battling a vicious enemy in order to provide permanent safety for our embattled brothers and sisters in the south.

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Actions on behalf of the endangered communities express the kind of solidarity that characterizes Israel, and all of Jewry, in times of conflict. Families throughout the country have offered hospitality to those residents who want to temporarily leave the dangerous areas and a wide range of actions have been taken by both public and private elements to raise the morale of those remaining.

We join all of Jewry in praying to Heaven for the safety of our soldiers courageously battling a vicious enemy in order to provide permanent safety for our embattled brothers and sisters in the south.