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PARSHA INSIGHTS

WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY

"And all the souls that descended from Yaakov..." (1:5)

"Hi Rabbi! We wanted to tell you that very soon Arthur is going to be Bar Mitzvah and we are so looking forward to him getting Maftir and Haftarah in our synagogue."

"Rob and Beth! I'm happy to share this joyous occasion with you but I think it's better if we make a post-Shabbat celebration for Arthur. We call it a *Melave Malka*."

"But Rabbi, we set our heart on Maftir and Haftarah!"

"Look Rob and Beth, I know that you are very attached to Arthur, but Arthur is, after all, a bull terrier. I cannot give a dog an *aliyah* – even in this shul."

"But Rabbi, we didn't tell you that after the Bar Mitzvah we are going to go on a special Bar Mitzvah cruise to the Bahamas and then on to Mediterranean. We'll be visiting Paris and Rome and Athens and the Pyramids, and we so wanted you and your family to join us, but it doesn't seem that's going to be possible now."

"But Rob and Beth, why on earth didn't you tell me before that Arthur was Jewish?"

At the end of last week's Torah portion Yaakov makes

Yosef swear not to bury him in Egypt. Why was Yaakov so insistent in this request?

Yaakov knew that Egypt — the most materialistic of cultures — was the matrix of all the exiles of the Jewish People, and that his actions were laying down the spiritual DNA for our survival in exile until this day.

Yaakov was sending a message to the Jewish People: "I may have lived in exile, but I am not going to be buried here. I belong in Eretz Yisrael – dead or alive."

However much a Jew gets caught up in the mentality of exile — that money is everything, that my son the doctor will net a good three million dollars this year (and go on his own Mediterranean cruises) — inside us all there's a little spark of Yaakov Avinu that longs for spirituality, for the Land of Israel

and all it stands for.

Inside every Jew there is the subconscious knowledge that even though there may be places that money talks loud enough to even buy your pet mutt an *aliya* — there are some things that even money can't buy.

• Sources: Story heard from Rabbi Yehoshua Pupko



However much a Jew gets caught up in the mentality of exile, inside us all there's a little spark of Yaakov Avinu that longs for spirituality, for the Land of Israel and all it stands for.



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PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shmot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt.

Sinai) Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

ISRAEL Forever

MILK AND HONEY

When Moshe was instructed to bring the message of redemption from Egyptian bondage he was told to convey the Divine promise to bring the people "up from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey".

This poetic description of *Eretz Yisrael*, which will be heard in synagogues this week, has an interesting explanation offered by the great commentator, the Ramban.

He sees a connection between the first part of the

description and the second. Not only is it a good land with a pleasant climate and desirable features, but it is also a spacious land with adequate living space. Such a land will produce healthy animals that will provide plenty of milk and fruits rich and sweet as honey.

Even today we can appreciate the special blessings of our homeland and pray that we be privileged to enjoy 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*

JERUSALEM – A FINAL DESTINATION

Many Jews throughout the centuries have chosen Jerusalem as their final destination – the place where they wish to be buried.

For centuries the only cemetery in the Holy City was on Har Hazeitim (Mount of Olives). In more



recent times, especially after the Jordanian control of that mountain, Har Hamenuchot (the Mountain of Rest) became the main cemetery along with a smaller one, Sanhedria, in the center of the city.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt?"
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro's daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d's promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
14. "And G-d was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16,18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

לע"נ

פרת חיה שרה בת ר' מרדכי ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- The dog, the burning cookie and the fire
- Inciting a snake or a dog on a victim
- What gives an ox the status of *mu'ad* – a habitual gorer for whose damages full payment must be made
- Liability for damage done by ox in the victim's domain
- The limits of the *kal ve'chomer* method of interpreting the Torah
- How this method applies to certain laws of spiritual impurity
- The responsibility of a man for damages which he causes

- rather than his animal
- A series of statements by the Sage Rabbah on a wide range of subjects
- Placing an obstacle in the public domain
- Little pitchers and big ones
- When one can take the law into his own hands
- Responsibility for cleaning the public domain of the water or shards from a broken vessel
- Whether renouncing ownership of damaging item affects responsibility

CONSECUTIVE AND SUCCESSIVE

During the winter months we mention in our very first blessings of the *Shmoneh Esrei* a praise of G-d as the One Who provides rain. But once Pesach arrives we omit this since rain is hardly a blessing during the summer season. Should one mistakenly mention this praise of rain he must repeat the blessing if he has already completed it. If one is uncertain as to whether he made this error, he must assume for the first thirty days that he has said what he is accustomed to and must make the correction.

Since it takes thirty days to make the omission of this praise habitual, the *Shulchan Aruch*, (*Orach Chaim* 114:9) offers an alternative. On the first day of Pesach one can say the words of the second blessing 90 times, each time omitting the praise of rain. This number corresponds to the number of *Shmoneh Esrei* prayers said in a 30-day period and therefore is consid-

ered as having achieved the same habit-forming effect.

This ruling is based on the idea that 90 consecutive times is equivalent to 90 times in succession. In our *gemara*, however, this concept is an issue of debate between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehuda. Since we rule like the latter that, in regard to the warnings required to give an ox the status of a habitual gorer, three times in one day is not equivalent to three days in a row, the question arises as to why in the above-mentioned case we view 90 consecutive times in one day as equivalent to 90 times spread over 30 days.

The answer given by Magen Avraham is that as far as habit-forming, it is logical to assume that the closer together the times are the greater impact they will have. In the case of the ox, however, we cannot assume this pattern because there is the possibility that it gored three times in one day because of a fit of madness on that particular day.

• *Bava Kama* 23b

What the SAGES Say

“The Torah does not hold one responsible for sin committed or damage caused when one has no control of the situation.”

• *General Rule of the Gemara - Bava Kama* 28b

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PHILOSOPHY VS. PROPHECY

From: Mark in Worcester, MA

*Dear Rabbi,
According to my understanding, philosophy addresses a lot of the questions that Judaism does, so what advantage does Judaism have over philosophy?*

Dear Mark,

Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi addresses your question very directly and cogently in his work *The Kuzari* that was written in 11th century Spain. The book is an embellishment of a discourse that purportedly took place between a truth seeking pagan ruler of the Kuzar nation (somewhere in central Asia) and various religious leaders – including a rabbi. Your question is one of the fundamental questions raised by the leader and answered by the rabbi in a dialogue that results in the Kuzar's decision to convert his kingdom to Judaism.

The rabbi makes the following four arguments in favor of prophecy over philosophy:

Philosophy is purely intellectual investigation originating in the mind of a human being in his effort to comprehend matters largely outside himself. Since the process is directed from below toward subjects on high, the level of understanding is, by definition, limited and finite. Revelation, however, insofar as it describes the infusion of truth from Above into the human intellect below, will necessarily reveal truths otherwise occluded by mere intellect alone.

Philosophy is nothing more than speculation. Since its conclusions are based on the guidelines of instruction in

formal logic, analysis, technical terms and mechanical concepts, they are not inherently intuitive or correct. Prophecy, however, is a purely fluid and natural result of spiritual refinement through which, with the grace of G-d, a person becomes privy to existential truths which kindle his soul and intuitively spark inspiration in the hearts and minds of others.

Rarely does one find agreement between philosophers in their views of the supernatural. Even in the physical realm there is often disagreement among them. When they are in accord, it is not because they empirically arrived at the same results but rather because they adhere to the same philosophical school. Prophets, however, despite experiencing revelation in different venues and visions, are seeing essentially the same thing and sharing and disseminating the same message.

Considering their conduct, their knowledge, their ostensible search for truth and their exalted purpose, one might expect that the gift of prophecy would be quite common among the philosophers, and that tales of wonders and miracles would be related about them. However, we find the opposite to be so: true visions are granted to those who pursue truth through spiritual refinement, while those who strive after speculation never attain true prophetic vision. This proves that there is a secret to the Divine Influence that cannot be fathomed by the study of philosophy, nor is it revealed to philosophers.

Sources:

- *The Metzuda Kuzari* pp. 3-12.

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AN ISSUE OF PRIORITY

Question: In better financial times a wealthy Jew decided to allocate a substantial amount of money to a charitable project. Two options had a particular appeal for him. One was to purchase a large plot of land in northern Israel from an Arab owner and give it to an outreach organization for its activities. The other was to build a synagogue for a community that was holding its services in caravans for lack of a proper building. What was the right thing to do?

Answer: When this question was presented to Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, the rav of the Ramat Elchanan com-

munity in Bnei Brak, he unhesitatingly advised that priority should be given to the purchase of the land. The basis for this preference, he pointed out, was the ruling in the Talmud (*Mesechta Gittin* 8b) that if it is necessary to write a bill of sale on Shabbat in order to purchase a property in Eretz Yisrael from a non-Jew, it is permissible to instruct a non-Jew to do the writing. Although the general rule is that a Jew may not ask a non-Jew to do anything for him on Shabbat that he is himself forbidden to do, this case is the one exception because of the importance of redeeming land in the Holy Land from foreign ownership.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

ONLY THE TRUTH

One of the people with a close tie to Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv extended an invitation to him to attend the engagement of his daughter. The rav told him that he would not attend the engagement but hoped to participate in the wedding.

This fellow kept coming back to implore the rav to come to the engagement, and on the day of the engagement even increased the pressure. On that day the rav was ill with fever. Members of his household considered

informing the father of the kallah that the rav was unable to attend the engagement because of his health. When they asked the rav for permission to do so he responded:

“Do not tell him this for it will make him think that it was my illness which prevented me from attending. The truth, however, is that I never intended to come and blaming my absence on my health would be a distortion of the truth.”

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