

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

GETTING SMALLER

“...Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” (3:11)

It was David's first flight in an aircraft. He could hardly contain his excitement. For although many times during his five tender years of life he had gazed skywards at airplanes soaring into the blue, he had never actually made a journey in one of these wondrous flying machines.

Even though the thrill of the takeoff was extremely exhilarating, the moment David was waiting for had not yet arrived. Expectantly he sat in his seat. He waited for ten minutes, for twenty minutes. It didn't happen.

After half an hour he couldn't wait any longer and so he turned to his father and said, “Daddy? When do we get small?”

When you look up at an airplane in the sky it looks like a little toy, so small and insignificant, even though it is immensely powerful.

From the Jewish point of view, few things are more flawed in a person's character than conceit. The secular world, however, preaches the reverse. If you've got it — flaunt it.

The contorted face of jubilation when someone scores the winning goal, dropping to his knees, or punching the air

with a victory salute (always reminded me of the Third Reich), or showering the crowd with a bottle of Perrier-Ricard Perrier-Jouet after winning the Le Mans Grand Prix; the Grecian world of sport and performance loves the winner — and the winner loves himself.

The Torah tells us that G-d chose Moshe because he was the most humble of all men (Vayikra 12:3). In this week's Torah portion, Moshe tries repeatedly to persuade G-d that he is unworthy of the task of taking the Jewish People out of Egypt.

The Chafetz Chaim once selected one of his Torah scholars to be the Rabbi in a certain remote town. This fellow said to the Chafetz Chaim he didn't believe himself to be adequate for the job. The Chafetz Chaim asked him if it would be better to send someone who was convinced that he was adequate for the job.

G-d loves humble people and he hates bigheads.

Maybe David's question is something we should all keep in mind, “When do we get small?”

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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

A PROMISE FOR ALL TIME

“I shall be as I shall be.” (*Shmot* 3:14) This is what G-d instructed Moshe to answer to the enslaved Jews in Egypt who would ask what is the Name of the G-d who sent him to them with a promise of liberation.

Rashi explains that this double phrasing of the Divine Name was intended as a message that G-d would be with his chosen people in the present exile and would be with them in the future exiles as well.

This promise should serve as a source of comfort for Jews in our own time when we face such a shocking increase in anti-Semitic acts throughout the world and an escalation in the danger to Jews in their own land.

We must never lose sight of the promise which G-d fulfilled for our ancestors in Egypt and in subsequent exiles and must strengthen our faith in the inevitable fulfillment of His promise to 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*

KEFAR BIN-NUN – TRIBUTE TO A CONQUEROR

Near the city of Ramleh there is a *moshav* called Kefar Bin-Nun which was founded in 1952.

Its location in Emek Ayalon, where Yehoshua



Bin-Nun succeeded in conquering the Canaanite armies, endowed it with the name of this great leader who succeeded Moshe and led the invasion and conquest of *Eretz Yisrael*.

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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.

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BAVA BATRA 142 - 148

- Designating an unborn child as recipient of gift
- Age versus wisdom
- A gift made simultaneously to a qualified recipient and to an unqualified one
- How to divide a gift made to a wife and children or to children whom he calls sons
- Who benefits from improvements made in the undivided estate by the older heirs
- A father's wedding gifts to his oldest son
- When one of the heirs gains income from a government position
- The reciprocity of wedding gifts
- Relative importance of *mishnah* and *gemara*
- Who is considered the poor man whose days are unfortunate
- Wedding gifts from husband to wife's family
- Distribution of estate by a dying man
- The signals of the altar smoke
- Retraction of a dying man's will

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

A strenuous effort is made by the *gemara* to find some source in Scripture for the rabbinical decree that the oral instructions given by a dying man for the distribution of his resources has the same force as a written will.

One of the attempts focuses on the last will and testament of the royal advisor Achitofel who joined the rebellion of Avshalom against his father King David. His counsel was not followed by Avshalom and the rebellion failed. In his frustration he went to his house, gave instructions to his family

and hung himself (*Shmuel II 17:23*).

Although there is a hint that these instructions had to do with the distribution of his estate, the *gemara* rejects this as a source for the aforementioned rabbinical decree because those instructions dealt with other matters. In support of this a *beraita* is cited which relates that two of Achitofel's final instructions to his sons were based on his own bitter experience.

"Don't get involved in disputes," he told them, "and don't rebel against the royal House of David."

• *Bava Batra 147a*

What the SAGES Say

"Every student of Torah is dependent on the 'master of the wheat' – the Gemara scholar."

• *Beraita - Bava Batra 145b*

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TO THE BETTER END

From: C.

Dear Rabbi,

I am compelled to ask a question about my mother. She has been a person who during her lifetime has had periods of depression. As a child, I remember when her father had a heart attack and I was about 6 years old, she went through a severe depression that scared me and I never forgot it. Now she is 82 and has broken two hips, been in rehab, and since my father died, had once again been so depressed that she has hurt herself on purpose. She believes in G-d but never goes to services. She is entirely selfish at this point, consumed with her maladies. I have helped her all through this past year of broken hips and rehab, and now assisted living. It has taken its toll on me physically and emotionally, but spiritually, I feel blessed that G-d has given me the opportunity through her to do good deeds. I really have nothing to gain other than spiritual uplifting. What will happen to my mom when she dies? I talk to her about some of the mystical beliefs of Judaism, but she is only superficially interested. Will she be happy in the afterlife? I have spent my life trying to make her happy, (impossible). I feel sorry for her now, and yet on some level I wish she would just leave me alone. Am I wrong to think that? I will still be here for her (even though I have set boundaries) until the end. Yet I pray the end won't be drawn out for all our sakes. Is there anything I can do to make sure she dies and goes to heaven or is it out of my ability?

Dear C.,

I greatly empathize with your mother's suffering, and how difficult it must be for you on so many levels, as is palpably felt in your emotion-charged question.

You raise several different points, and I'll try to address them one by one.

It sounds like your mother has been plagued by depression for much of her life. So much so that it seems to have become a source of trauma for you as well. The reasons for depression are many: some physiological or psychological, others spiritual. The former should be treated professionally – medically or with therapy. The latter are nearly impossible to know exactly what the cause is or why. Only, in general, the more a person is connected to G-d, the healthier a person will be emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. I'm impressed how your own strong faith in G-d seems to be helping you through these very difficult times. So stay strong and G-d will see you through it.

Of course, you can't fault her for being preoccupied by

her maladies and consumed in her suffering. Certainly it would be better for her on all planes if she were able to maintain a more positive attitude, but given her disposition and age, that would simply be expecting too much. So as difficult as it may be for you to be around her, you should still try to distract her from her suffering as best as you can. This might include taking walks, doing activities, reading stories, doing crafts, showing her pictures of the family (particularly of children) and anything else she enjoys. I feel it important to note that this is not for what you gain from it, and not only for the opportunity to do good deeds of *chesed* (lovingkindness), but primarily because you are obligated to care for your mother – period.

There is really no way of knowing what it will be like for any individual after death. I understand you'd be comforted to think that the afterlife would put an end to your mother's suffering. In general, that's true. But suffering in this world and in the next has a purpose and is ultimately beneficial for a person. Every soul needs to undergo spiritual purification, and that process is not always pleasant. Still, you should try, as it seems you do, to orient her toward belief and even practice. This would certainly ease her return back to G-d. Perhaps you can encourage her to perform even simple *mitzvot* like saying the Shema, giving charity, and lighting Shabbat candles.

Regarding your feeling on a certain level that it would actually be better if she were to die, that is a very normal and natural feeling. You should not feel guilty for entertaining those thoughts and feelings. Still, of course, Judaism prohibits doing anything to shorten life, and you should not even pray that G-d release her from life here. We have no idea what G-d's reasons and plans are regarding how and how long one's sojourn here is. You must let things run their G-d-given course, while praying for her well-being.

What is in your ability is to help ensure she "goes to heaven" when she passes over by doing the type of things I suggested earlier. And when the time comes, do your best to ensure that her journey progresses according to the Jewish laws and customs concerning death, burial and mourning. These are Divinely-given and inspired practices that are precision-designed to set the soul on the right course toward goodness, tranquility and joy with G-d. And just as important as all that is, you should realize also that your relationship with your mother greatly increases in magnitude once she has passed over, and that every good deed and *mitzvah* that you and her other descendants do elevate her soul higher and higher to the better end.

THE LONG WAIT

Question: I often find myself at a wedding at which I and most of the guests are anxious to dance with the *chatan* even if we don't expect to stay throughout the wedding meal. To our dismay we are forced to wait for what seems to be an endless period of time till the photographer finishes taking pictures of the *chatan* and *kallah* in their *yichud* room. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: You have every right to approach the parent who

has invited you to attend his child's wedding and urge him to hurry up the long-awaited exit of the young couple from their privacy. At the same time, try to understand that this is the only opportunity for the photographer to take pictures of the couple together in their fine wedding attire before they become slightly disheveled from the subsequent dancing. So try to strike a balance between understanding and impatience.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

REAL AND MOCK TRIALS

If a Jew is really serious about observant Shabbat in the USA it seems that no trial is too difficult to weather. High school students in America are very eager to compete for the National High School Mock Trial Championship. But when the students of the religious Maimonides School in Boston discovered that their mock trial was scheduled on

Shabbat, they waged a legal battle that succeeded in getting the date of their trials pushed forward.

This precedent eventually led to the change in official policy of the American Mock Trial Association. In 2010 scheduling will be done in a manner that accommodates Jewish students who observe Shabbat.

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