

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT YITRO · 22 SHVAT 5770 · FEB. 6, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 17

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

*"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests..." (19:6)*

A couple of months ago I was on a flight to London. A few seats in front of me a Jew in full Chassidic garb prepared to take his seat. Before this, however, he removed from his bag sections of a brown cardboard with elastic straps attached to them.

At first it crossed my mind that he was going to distract himself from the unblinking salacious eye of the video monitor in front of us by constructing a model train or car. However, I quickly dismissed this idea as I have yet to see a Chassid make a toy model at the age of forty-five.

He started to grapple with one section of cardboard, stretching its elastic over the back rest of the chair in front of him creating a cardboard wall that rose above the seat a good fifteen inches. then he attached two side panels of equal height to this first piece, completing a booth that gave

him total privacy from the undesirable images and sounds that were leaching from the video screens around him, and from the atrociously low standard of decorum of the ladies' attire in the plane.

"Kol HaKavod! (Well done!)" I thought, "I wish I had the guts to do something like that."

*"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests..."*

Being a priest means that you have to be prepared to give up on some things.

Being a priest means that sometimes people will think you're 'over the top'.

Being a priest means that sometimes you're going to do things that are incredibly uncool — and not care a tinker's cuss about it.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hearing of the miracles G-d performed for *Bnei Yisrael*, Moshe's father-in-law Yitro arrives with Moshe's wife and sons, reuniting the family in the wilderness. Yitro is so impressed by Moshe's detailing of the Exodus from Egypt that he converts to Judaism. Seeing that the only judicial authority for the entire Jewish nation is Moshe himself, Yitro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice. *Bnei Yisrael* arrive at Mt. Sinai where G-d offers them the Torah. After they accept, G-d charges Moshe to instruct the people not to approach the mountain and to prepare for three days. On the third day, amidst thunder and light-

ning, G-d's voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain and He speaks to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments: 1. Believe in G-d, 2. Don't worship other "gods", 3. Don't use G-d's name in vain, 4. Observe Shabbat, 5. Honor your parents, 6. Don't murder, 7. Don't commit adultery, 8. Don't kidnap, 9. Don't testify falsely, 10. Don't covet.

After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay G-d's word to them. G-d instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.

## ISRAEL Forever

### AN INSEPARABLE BOND

Torah and Eretz Israel are precious gifts from G-d to His beloved people and we became worthy of them, say our Talmudic Sages, only because of suffering.

As we read in this week's Torah portion of the receiving of the Torah at Sinai, we recall what was mentioned in an earlier chapter about the suffering in Egypt that prepared our people both for Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

I will bring you up from the affliction of Egypt, promised G-d, to a land flowing with milk and honey. It was that affliction which, like a furnace, purified and solidified our people and qualified them for receiving the gifts of Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

Torah and Israel are inseparable and recognition of this bond is what will secure 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

### TSEFAT – THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

The recent earthquake in Haiti recalls the earthquake that virtually destroyed Tsefat in 1837 and claimed the lives of some four thousand residents.

In a eulogy for the victims of that earthquake,



Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the rav of Pressburg and author of *Chasam Sofer*, suggested that this tragedy occurred because Jews for close to a century had chosen to live in Tsefat rather than in Jerusalem and "it was the envy of Jerusalem which caused this."

לע"נ

הרה"ח ר' דוד בן ר' אהרון ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Yitro had 7 names. Why was one of his names *Yeter*?
2. News of which two events motivated Yitro to come join the Jewish People?
3. What name of Yitro indicates his love for Torah?
4. Why was Tzipora with her father, Yitro, and not with Moshe when *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt?
5. Why does verse 18:5 say that Yitro came to the desert — don't we already know that the *Bnei Yisrael* were in the desert?
6. Why did Moshe tell Yitro all that G-d had done for the Jewish People?
7. According to the *Midrash* quoted by Rashi, how did Yitro respond when he was told about the destruction of Egypt?
8. Who is considered as if he enjoys the splendor of the *Shechina*?
9. On what day did Moshe sit to judge the Jewish People?
10. Who is considered a co-partner in Creation?
11. "Moshe sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moshe...." What bothered Yitro about this arrangement?
12. Why did Yitro return to his own land?
13. How did the encampment at Sinai differ from the other encampments?
14. To whom does the Torah refer when it uses the term "*Beit Yaakov*"?
15. How is G-d's protection of the Jewish People similar to an eagle's protection of its young?
16. What was G-d's original plan for *Matan Torah*? What was the response of the Jewish People?
17. How many times greater is the "measure of reward" than the "measure of punishment"?
18. How is it derived that "Don't steal" refers to kidnapping?
19. In response to hearing the Torah given at Sinai, how far backwards did the Jewish people retreat in fear?
20. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 18:1 - Because he caused a parsha to be added to the Torah. *Yeter* means addition.
2. 18:1 - The splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek.
3. 18:1 - Chovav.
4. 18:3 - When Aharon met Moshe with his family on their way down to Egypt, Aharon said to Moshe: "We're pained over the Jews already in Egypt, and you're bringing more Jews to Egypt?" Moshe, hearing this, sent his wife and children back to Midian.
5. 18:5 - To show Yitro's greatness. He was living in a luxurious place; yet he went to the desert in order to study the Torah.
6. 18:8 - To draw Yitro closer to the Torah way of life.
7. 18:9 - He grieved.
8. 18:12 - One who dines with Torah scholars.
9. 18:13 - The day after Yom Kippur.
10. 18:13 - A judge who renders a correct decision.
11. 18:14 - Yitro felt that the people weren't being treated with the proper respect.
12. 18:27 - To convert the members of his family to Judaism.
13. 19:2 - The Jewish People were united.
14. 19:3 - The Jewish women.
15. 19:4 - An eagle carries its young on top of its wings to protect them from human arrows. So too, G-d's cloud of glory separated between the Egyptians and the Jewish camp in order to absorb Egyptian missiles and arrows fired at the Jewish People.
16. 19:9 - G-d offered to appear to Moshe and to give the Torah through him. The Jewish People responded that they wished to hear the Torah directly from G-d.
17. 20:6 - 500 times.
18. 20:13 - Since it is written immediately after "Don't murder" and "Don't commit adultery," it is derived that "Don't steal" refers to a crime carrying the same penalty as the first two, namely, the death penalty.
19. 20:15 - They backed away from the mountain twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2000 cubits).
20. 20:22 - The altar was created to extend life; iron is sometimes used to make weapons which shorten life.

## BAVA BATRA 170 - 176

- How ownership of a loan document is transferred
- Which witnesses validate such a document
- When the debtor certifies the signature of the witnesses but disclaims responsibility
- Can a lender who receives partial payment insist on borrower settling for a receipt
- When the date on the loan document is one when it could have been written
- Writing a future date on a loan document
- The division of the estate between a rich heir and a poor one
- The problem of two people with the same name
- The responsibility of a guarantor
- King Solomon's advice to a guarantor
- Guarantor of a *ketubah* who suspects a swindle
- From what property can a lender collect if the debtor fails to pay
- The limitations on responsibility of a guarantor

### THE ADVICE OF THE WISEST

In his search for a Biblical source for the responsibility of a guarantor, Rabbi Yitzchak cites some passages in *Mishlei* (6:1-3), which guide us in two areas of interpersonal relationships.

"My son," cautions King Solomon, "if you have served as a guarantor for a friend and have given your hand to a stranger, or if you have been ensnared through the words of

your mouth, then do this, my son, and rescue yourself."

The wisest of men then goes on to advise the steps to be taken in dealing with the obligation assumed as a guarantor and making peace with someone who has been hurt with words. Rabbi Yitzchak's interpretation of this advice is that in the case of guaranteeing a loan there is no alternative to paying money to the lender. In regard to hurting another through what you said, his advice is to beg forgiveness even if it means getting friends to help you renew the relationship.

• *Bava Batra 173b*

### What the SAGES Say

"One who wishes to gain wisdom should devote himself to studying the laws of financial matters for they are like an ever-flowing spring."

• *Rabbi Yishmael - Bava Batra 175b*

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## KALLAH ACCOLADE

**From: Mike**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I understand that we're supposed to compliment the bride to the groom by telling him how pretty and pious she is. I have two questions regarding this. Should we be looking at her in the first place such that we know that she's pretty (particularly if she is)? And what if she's not pretty, are we supposed to tell an untruth?*

Dear Mike,

You are right. The Sages tell us that one has a special mitzvah to praise a kallah to her chatan. This is described as "the" reward at the wedding festivities (Berachot 6b). The Sages also said specifically that the praise one should say is that the kallah is "na'ah" – attractive and "chasuda" – pious.

You are also right that Judaism teaches that in order to preserve the dignity of a woman and maintain her integrity by focusing on her internal value and not her external beauty, a man is not supposed to gaze at a woman with the intention of enjoying her looks other than for the purpose of marriage.

So how do the Sages instruct us to compliment the bride's beauty?

One answer is that a person should say the praise in the name of a woman he knows. For example: "My wife said your kallah is very pretty, which wasn't a surprise for me since you're so handsome". Or, "I heard from my mother/sister/daughter that the kallah is quite attractive – and you should know that my mother etc. has good taste". Another answer is that in order to enhance the chatan's appreciation of his kallah, one is allowed to glance at her for this purpose, where one's intention is not to enjoy her beauty but to increase the chatan's value of it.

That being said, another approach to answering the ques-

tion you raise is based on the idea that "na'ah" here is not intended to refer to her physical appearance, but rather to her disposition and deeds. Accordingly, the praise we're instructed to say would be akin to: "Your kallah looks very sweet and kind; as well as being very righteous. I've heard wonderful things about her from everyone who knows her".

Many people are accustomed to fusing both approaches by saying something like: "My wife thinks your kallah is adorable. She really does look very kind and gentle. We've both heard really wonderful things about her love of Torah and mitzvot. With the help of G-d, the two of you should make a great couple."

Of course, since every new bride or groom has some uncertainty about this major choice in life, as well as some insecurity, not only is it a mitzvah to praise the kallah to the chatan, but it goes the other way around as well. And people should tell the kallah about what a special chatan she's marrying. But in all cases, a person must praise in good taste and with tact, considering what is or is not appropriate for each case. For example, if the kallah is really exceptionally attractive and the chatan is clearly aware of it, and one also knows the chatan is sensitive to people looking at her, then one should omit any mention of her looks and emphasize only matters of character and Torah values.

What if there doesn't seem to be much to praise on either front, did the Sages intend us to tell an untruth? The answer is that nevertheless we are to exaggerate (within plausible bounds) and, for several reasons, this is not considered being untruthful. For one, if the couple is getting married, each obviously found and finds favor with the other. When you praise, then, you are reinforcing whatever good things they see in each other. In addition, people generally don't see the full good in others. We have a tendency to sell other people short of what they really are. Therefore, exaggerating a little likely brings us closer to the truth of who he or she really is. And last, since it is G-d's desire to increase appreciation, harmony and love in marriage, enhancing the couple's joy is His Truth.

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# QUESTION MARKET

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## BELATED CONDOLENCE

**Question:** A colleague of mine recently lost his father and circumstances prevented me from paying him a condolence visit. When I meet him for the first time after his Shiva mourning period what is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** The halacha (*Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah* 385:2) states that in the case of a deceased parent, you can offer

condolences during the entire year following the death wherever you meet him. (In regard to relatives other than parents this applies only to the first 30 days.)

You should, however, avoid taking the initiative of greeting him with "Shalom" during this period but you may respond to his greeting.

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

### RETURNING A LOSS UP IN THE CLOUDS

“**M**azal Tov and best wishes for your future.” Thus responded the venerable rabbi to the young man who approached his seat on the flight from New York to Israel and informed him that he had become engaged in the States and was now returning home.

After giving him this blessing the rabbi asked him if by any chance he or anyone in the family accompanying him had lost some keys. The ring of keys had fallen from someone during the passport checking upon arrival in New York and was picked up by the rabbi without knowing to whom it

belonged. Anxious to fulfill the mitzvah of returning a lost object, he fervently prayed for Heaven's help in locating the loser.

The young man, who had been on the same flight with the rabbi both coming and going, suddenly realized that he had indeed lost his keys. Imagining the trouble his family would have had by coming home late at night after an exhausting trip only to find a locked door, he profusely thanked the rabbi and expressed gratitude to Heaven for this providential experience.

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**"...on this day they came to Mount Sinai."** (Shemos 19:1)

"Words of Torah should be as fresh to you as if they were given today."

• Rashi

