

SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA · 16 SIVAN 5770 · MAY 29, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 32

PARSHA INSIGHTS

A FREE LUNCH

“We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge” (11:4)

It's axiomatic that there's no such thing as a free lunch. Or as they say in Yiddish “Nothing is for nothing.” And yet human nature has a marvelous ability to conjure the proverbial free lunch out of hefty tab.

For a while now, my son has been trying to convince me to invest in about 50 boxes of a certain brand of cereal so that we can be sure of getting a FREE plastic space station. (Of course, he contends that a space station is pretty much *de rigeur* for the average Orthodox Jewish family living in Jerusalem, a notion of which I am not totally convinced.)

The Ibn Ezra says that fish was so plentiful in Egypt that it was virtually free. The Ramban says that in addition to

fish, the Jewish People received fruit and vegetables in abundance from the farmers.

All for FREE!

But was it really so free? It seems to me that being a slave is a pretty hefty price tag no matter how much free fish and veggies there is on offer.

And let us not think that FREE OFFER myopia only affects small Jerusalem children. If we honestly analyze many of our decisions we may realize how many things we do because we have convinced ourselves that we are getting a free lunch.

In life everything has a price. The trick is to know what the price really is.

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.

A LIGHT UNTO THE NATIONS

The wicks in lamps of the menorah of the Beit Hamikdash were arranged in what appears to be a manner that would produce little light. The three wicks on either side of the middle lamp were turned towards the middle rather than straight upwards.

Rashi cites the Midrash which explains that this was to demonstrate that G-d did not need the light of the menorah for His own purpose. Our Sages point out that the light of the menorah was a spiritual generator of

wisdom for the entire world.

When we hear this week's Torah portion read in our synagogues we should think of the menorah described in it as a symbol of the Jewish people and our historic mission as a "light unto the nations". At a time when there is such widespread vilification of the Jewish state we must learn the lesson that neither power nor politics will enable us to fulfill this mission and only the light of Torah wisdom will secure Israel forever.

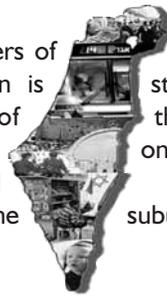
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

MA'ALEH ADUMIM – A BLOODY PAST

One of the areas which have become centers of controversy regarding Israeli construction is Ma'aleh Adumim on the outskirts of Yerushalayim.

The literal translation of Ma'aleh Adumim is "Red Heights". The name is a reference to the color of the



earth in the area, and legend has it that this color stems from the large amount of blood which was shed there by robbers who attacked pilgrims and travelers on their way to Yerushalayim.

Ma'aleh Adumim has developed into a thriving suburb of Israel's capital.

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ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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.

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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

- King David – sin, suffering and vindication
- Prophet Elisha, Na'aman and Gehazi
- The sins and fate of the Generation of the Deluge
- Noach's ark and its inhabitants
- Nachum Ish Gam Zu and the miracle earth
- The Tower of Bavel and its builders
- The sins of Sodom

- The fate of Korach and his company
- The Generation of the Wilderness and the World to Come
- The future of the lost ten tribes
- Who will merit a place in the World to Come
- The city that turned to idol worship and its punishment
- Eliyahu's confrontation and escape

AN IMPORTANT GUARANTEE

The final subject of *Mesechta Sanhedrin* is the severe punishment of a city that has turned to idol worship. Not only are the sinners executed and lose their share in the World to Come, but the entire city is destroyed, never to be rebuilt.

What appears to be such an extreme form of retribution is described by Rabbi Shimon as being equivalent to making a burnt offering sacrifice to G-d. Such an elimination of evil, adds Rabbi Akiva, "causes G-d to turn back from His burning wrath." These words, taken from the passage in *Devarim*

13:18, are followed with the promise that "He will give you mercy and be merciful to you."

The need for this promise, explains the Ohr Hachayim commentary on the Torah, is to allay the fear that carrying out such a cruel mission of slaughter and destruction might turn perpetrators into people without compassion. (As an example of such an effect he cites what he heard from the Yishmaelites responsible for executing criminals that they actually enjoy killing.) Since G-d only shows compassion for those who show compassion for others, it was necessary to promise that since the destroyers of the sinful city are doing G-d's will, they will be granted a Heavenly gift of mercy.

• *Sanhedrin 111b*

What the SAGES Say

"The dove said to G-d, 'Sovereign of the World, may my food be as bitter as an olive but coming from Your hand rather than sweet as honey but coming from the hand of flesh and blood.'"

• *Rabbi Elazar - Sanhedrin 108b*

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DEMONSTRATION

From: Allen

*Dear Rabbi,
I saw in the Israeli media recently (as in the past) demonstrations on the part of Orthodox which involved burning trash bins, throwing garbage in the streets and various forms of violence against the police. How can this be tolerated? Can the rabbis possibly condone such wild behavior? And how can a Jew raise his hand against his fellow Jew? I find this all very disturbing.*

Dear Allen,

I, as well as some 99.9% of Orthodox Jews, agree with your feelings.

While demonstrating in a legal, non-violent way is acceptable, the type of harmful, destructive and violent behavior you describe is certainly unacceptable.

I have never heard any rabbi encourage burning, throwing or fighting as a way of expressing opposition to policies and practices of the national or local governments, despite the fact that these governments often transgress, or are insensitive to, Torah law or outlook.

So who are the people you see in the media doing these things? They are nearly always the most extreme, fringe elements of Orthodoxy that do not represent the vast majority who oppose such behavior. Unfortunately, while these few at least sincerely care and are deeply pained by the issues, others are simply drawn to the action not to demonstrate, but for the thrill and excitement. These are primarily hotheaded youth who care as much about the issues as they care about the damage they cause to Orthodoxy or to the local residents.

You see, it's Orthodoxy that suffers most from this behavior.

First, it creates a horrible image that only serves those who capitalize upon every opportunity to discredit Orthodox Jewry. It also wrongly raises the animosity of the authorities and the general populace against Orthodox Jews at a time when we

need to be building bridges not burning them.

But even more immediately, such behavior doesn't hurt those being demonstrated against; it hurts the demonstrators' fellow Orthodox Jews who live where they come to wreak havoc. While these few irresponsibles burn bins, scatter garbage and play cat and mouse with the police until the wee hours of the night, the residents' households are disrupted such that children who have to get up early for school can't sleep because of the noise, while everybody, including pregnant women, infants and the elderly have to suffer the putrid smell of burning garbage and plastic bins.

And long after the action-seeking hot-heads disperse, the residents continue to suffer as the fires smolder, releasing fumes and smoke throughout the night and the next day, while they and their children have to navigate the garbage-strewn streets amid the foul odor of mounting trash with no bins that lingers for days until it can be properly collected — giving new meaning to the term “collective punishment”.

You are probably asking, “If the residents suffer so, why don't they do something to stop the trouble makers?” As just such a resident, I can tell you that we don't know who they are or where they live. Nor can we stand vigil until they come. And even if we did, it wouldn't stop them. That's something the authorities have the capability and responsibility to do, and even they aren't particularly successful. And once the havoc erupts, we certainly can't be expected to put ourselves in the crossfire.

That being said, observing the methods used by the authorities during these demonstrations, one wonders if it is always their primary interest to prevent or diffuse the violence and damage. Of course I am not an expert in riot control, but watching the way things happen, it would seem there are commonsense, concrete measures that could be taken to prevent people from gathering in the first place. And once things get started, it sometimes seems those responsible for order are just as enthralled by the excitement. Not to mention those suspicious characters that no one recognizes who sometimes seem to lead the provocations.

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Answer: Your sensitivity towards the feelings of your insensitive neighbor is praiseworthy. One solution to your

problem would be to not only state at the time of borrowing that the item must be returned before a certain date, but to also attach a label to it to serve as a reminder. Should your neighbor forget to return the item by that date, you have every right to call him and not be afraid of hurting his feelings.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The fame of the great Torah scholar Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (the Chazon Ish) preceded his visit to the Russian city of Minsk but few people actually recognized him in the early years.

When he entered a local synagogue and took a volume of the Talmud from a shelf for study, he could not know that a *shiur* was soon to be given to a group in that very *Gemara*. The sexton snatched the *Gemara* from his hand angrily saying, "A simple Jew should be reciting the psalms of *Tehillim*; the *Gemara* is needed for the participants in the *shiur*!"

The next morning the sexton approached him to ask his name in order to call him for making a blessing on the Torah. When he heard his name he realized that he had insulted a Torah giant who would someday be the leader of his generation and he profusely apologized for his behavior.

In his characteristic humility the Chazon Ish gently responded:

"Everything you said was perfectly correct. The people in the *shiur* had a priority to the *Gemara* I was holding and a simple Jew should recite *Tehillim*."

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