

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

OVER THE SHOULDER

"And when the aron traveled..." (10:35)

Every person who believes in G-d faces times in his or her life when their belief is challenged. Something happens that makes us feel that G-d has deserted us; that He's not there anymore or we've done something to cut ourselves off from Him.

If you look at this week's Torah portion in a Sefer Torah you'll find a message of hope for all of us who have ever felt like that.

Even if you can't read Hebrew you'll notice that there is a small passage separated from the rest of the text by two upside down letters. Nowhere else in the Torah will you find inverted letters. What is the hidden message of this anomaly?

The inverted letters are "noons". Noon is the first letter of the word "nafila" which means "fall."

"And when the aron traveled..." (10:35)

When we go against the Will of the G-d, we fall spiritually. G-d then distances Himself from us: Our withdrawal provokes his withdrawal. He "travels" away from us. The traveling of the Ark symbolizes G-d 'traveling' away from the Jewish People when they sin.

When you invert a letter, it points in the opposite direction. It looks back. In the The Song of Songs, G-d is

compared to a deer: *"My Beloved is like a deer." (1:9)*

When a deer runs away, it always turns to look back. When G-d "runs away" from us, He, like the deer, is always "looking back" to see how we are. He is always looking out for us even as He distances Himself from us.

This is the symbolism of the backward-facing noons. Even in a time of *nefila*, of spiritual decline, G-d is looking backward "over his shoulder" watching out for us.

Similarly it says in the Song of Songs that *"G-d is watching us from the windows, peeking out at us from between the cracks." (1:9)* When someone watches you from a window, not only can they see you, but you can see them. When they look at you from between the cracks you don't see them.

There are times when we can't see G-d in our lives, when we feel that He has "run away". However, we should know that He is still peeking out from between the cracks of this world, watching and guarding our every move.

Sources: Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz in *Ahavat Yonatan* as heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter

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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.

ISRAEL Forever

THE ARK MOVES ON

“When the Ark would journey, Moshe said, ‘Arise, G-d, and let Your foes be scattered; let those who hate You flee before You.’” (Bamidbar 31:35)

This passage from this week's Torah portion is familiar to all Jews who recite it when the Torah is taken out of the Ark for the purpose of public reading.

When we consider how the Jewish People and their state are treated by the nations of the world, we can appreciate the difference between the above-underlined enemies. “Foes,” say our Sages, refers to the concealed enemies, while “those who hate You” are the active pursuers.

Throughout history we have been forced to defend

ourselves against our obvious persecutors, but also to guard ourselves against those who easily turned against us when it suited their needs.

There is, however, another dimension to the hatred shown towards Jews. Moshe was addressing G-d when he spoke of “those who hate You.” This led our Sages to conclude that whoever hates Jews really hates the One Who created the world.

Perhaps there is an important message in the fact that these words accompanied the journey of the Ark. The people chosen by G-d to receive the Torah contained in that Ark may suffer from open and concealed enemies, but the Ark continues to move on – forever!

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

EZRA – THE FOUNDATION OF ALIYA

When a Jew today thinks of making aliya to Eretz Yisrael, or even visiting, all he has to do is get on a plane and arrive in a matter of hours. But when Ezra the Scribe laid the “foundation for aliya” (*Ezra* 7:9) by leading a large number of Jews from Babylonian exile to



Eretz Yisrael it took him four months until he arrived in Jerusalem. This is how this historic foundation is described:

“For Ezra prepared his heart to see the Torah of G-d, to do it and to teach the People of Israel the statutes and laws.” (*ibid.* 7:10)

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 battlefront.
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

TALMUDigest

MENACHOT 94 - 101

- The baking process of the two loaves of Shavuot and the weekly showbreads
- The time and place for such baking
- Whether the showbreads are affected by the movement of the camps
- The preparation of the *minchat chavitin* of the *kohen gadol*
- The placing of the showbreads on the table
- The miracle of the showbreads
- Dimensions of the altar
- The staves of the Holy Ark and the *parochet*
- The table of Moshe and those of Shlomo
- The golden table and the marble one at the entrance to the *heichal* sanctuary
- The importance of Torah study
- Consumption of the two loaves and the showbreads
- Redeeming mincha offerings which became contaminated

TORAH AND DERECH ERETZ

“The study of Torah should not be considered as a pressing obligation but you must also realize that you cannot be free of the obligation.”

This seemingly paradoxical statement emanating from the yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael is interpreted by the commentaries in different ways.

Rashi explains that this is a warning against one's viewing Torah study as a burden which he hopes to be rid off with just token study.

Tosefot suggests that this is a guideline for striking a

balance between Torah study and working for a livelihood (“Torah and Derech Eretz”). One should not view Torah study as something he must do to the exclusion of all else, but one cannot free himself of the obligation to study Torah.

It is interesting to note that the approach of Tosefot to the words emanating from the yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael are consistent with the position taken by Rabbi Yishmael himself (*Mesechta Berachot* 35b) who interprets the Torah passage *Devarim* 11:14 “that you may gather in your grain” as an indication that one should combine his Torah study with an earthly occupation.

• *Menachot* 99b

What the SAGES Say

“The second tablets and the broken fragments of the first tablets lay in the Holy Ark to teach you that a Torah scholar who has forgotten his learning should not be shown disrespect.”

• Rabbi Yosef - *Menachot* 99a

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THE G-D IN LIFE

From: Howard

*Dear Rabbi,
Can you help me feel more appreciative towards G-d?
I want to feel G-d more directly in my life, but I'm
having difficulty figuring out how.*

Dear Howard,

Your question is on the one hand very complex and personal, but on the other hand so basic and universal. Since I can't address it on the former, I'll have to suffice with the latter.

We have absolutely so much to be thankful and appreciative to G-d about. Since you mention feeling G-d directly in your life, let's talk about just that: Ways in which G-d imparts within you life and maintains it every moment.

This is in the spirit of Job who proclaimed, "In my flesh I behold G-d" (Job 19:26). This spiritual giant maintained a palpable awareness of G-d in his life by being constantly aware of the ways in which G-d was literally "in his life".

We inhale and exhale about every 4 seconds. That's 15 breaths a minute, 900 an hour, 21,600 a day. That means we breathe over 20,000 breaths a day, effortlessly, without even thinking about, even while we sleep. And it's a good thing we breathe automatically; otherwise, with all we have to do, we'd probably forget. But G-d imparts within us the ability to breathe in the background so we can do everything we need. What a kind gift! And what's more, air is amply abundant, and free for the taking. And despite the fact that what we exhale in "uninhalable", G-d ingeniously recycles our

CO2 waste for reuse. The problem is, this microcosmic and macrocosmic respiratory system is so sublime, and runs so smoothly and automatically, that we forget to credit G-d for it. But King David did not! He proclaimed, "Every soul (*neshama*) will praise G-d" (150:6), which our Sages explained to mean, "With every breath (*neshima*) we shall praise G-d" (B.R. 14).

What about our hearts? The heart simultaneously receives "old" blood from the body and "new" blood from the lungs, first into the right and left atria, which then contract and direct the blood into the respective ventricles. The ventricles then contract, pushing the blood through special one-way valves such that the "new" blood goes to the body and the old blood is sent to the lungs. In the meantime, new "old" and "new" blood has arrived to the atria from the body and lungs respectively and the cycle is repeated. This all takes place in less than 1 second. That's more than 60 per minute, 3600 per hour and 86,400 per day! Again, if we had to think about making our heartbeat, we'd never keep up. Consider that there are people who pay their whole life savings for a properly functioning heart, and often this is only to prolong life for a relatively short time. Yet G-d gives us a perfectly functioning heart for free, which, if we care for it as we should, in the vast majority of cases will work wonderfully for an entire lifetime! Perhaps with this in mind we can more fully understand King David's observation, "My heart is steady with G-d, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises" (57:8).

So in just a few paragraphs, I've noted over a 100,000 reasons to appreciate G-d's direct presence in your life on a daily basis around the clock 24/7. And I'm just a layman of Science - imagine how the experts must feel!

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E-MAIL, SEE MAIL

Question: I work in a large office with numerous staff members. I am in charge of downloading e-mail messages and putting them in the appropriate trays. When the name of the addressee appears clearly at the top there is no problem. But often the only way to find out whom they are for is by scanning the message. I have no wish to read other people's mail, but I must get the mail delivered. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The *cherem* (ban) instituted by Rabbeinu Gershom a millennium ago against reading another's mail was intended to protect the privacy of the people sending and receiving letters. In situations where it is obvious that they have no interest in protecting this privacy this ban can hardly apply. It is for this reason that a case has already been made for

exempting postcards from this ban because the very nature of their exposed contents indicates that the writer had nothing to hide from the eyes of others.

Although it is clear from the above that you have no reason for concern about reading the e-mail messages that come to your office in order to determine whom they are for, there is one caution that must be exercised. There is a natural curiosity about what is doing in other people's affairs, which must be controlled even when you are not in outright violation of any ban. When one becomes too "nosey" in a legitimate situation it can become habit-forming.

In conclusion, it is a fair assumption that none of your bosses has any interest in downloading e-mail messages by themselves, and will be very pleased to have you read as much as you need in order to know if the e-mail is for them.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE PRAYER PACT

"Years have passed since we were married and we still have not been blessed with a child." This was the tearful lament that the head of a yeshiva in Jerusalem heard from a former student of his now living in the north of Israel.

"I have a suggestion for you," the Rosh Hayeshiva replied. "I heard a story about someone in your same predicament who went to consult a rabbi in his community. The rabbi told him that he has a son with the same problem, and suggested that he make an arrangement with his son that each of them pray for the other to be blessed with children. This fellow understood that this suggestion was based on the Talmudic

dictum that one who prays for another and is in need of the very same Heavenly response is answered even before the one he prays for is answered. He therefore rushed to the home of the rabbi's son and came out of it in a short time with an agreement of mutual prayer. A year later both of them were blessed with children."

"There is another childless former student of our yeshiva in your town," continued the Rosh Hayeshiva, "and I suggest that you make such an arrangement with him."

Sure enough, hardly a year went by and both couples celebrated the long-awaited birth of a child.

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