

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

MY OWN SPACE, MAN!

“Send forth men, if you please...” (13:2)

If I were to ask you to conjure up in your mind’s eye a picture of the archetypal untrustworthy salesman, you’d probably imagine a greasy-looking character with enough oil on his hair to fry chips. He’d be wearing a Prince-of-Wales check suit loud enough to be heard from the middle of next week. His mouth would be dripping with superlatives. And what would he be selling? Probably a used car. My apologies to the legions of upright used-car salesmen in the world, but gentlemen, your trade has a bad rep.

“No, no, sir, that brown color is not rust. It’s the original paintwork. It’s called French Ochre. No, no, sir, the tires aren’t bald, G-d forbid! These are special treadless treads. They cost a fortune new.” “No sir, 100,000 miles on a jobby like this is practically brand new! They go on forever!”

Nothing goes on forever. We’re in this world for a very short time, and while we’re here we have to make some pretty important decisions. If we’re Jewish, we’re going to have to decide if our Jewishness will define our lives and our relationship with G-d, or if it will be just another cultural affinity on a par with belonging to the Seattle Large Format Camera Club.

One of the clarion calls of the generation in which I grew up was that everyone wanted “their own space (Man).”

This may come as something of a surprise to the

“Love” generation (and its current heirs) that, on an ultimate level, G-d created the world for us to have our own space.

In this week’s Torah portion, it seems that G-d lets the Jewish People make a terrible blunder. He tells them “Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan.” The journey of the spies led to the biggest debacle in Jewish history when Israel spurned the Land of Israel and were punished so severely that we feel the repercussions of that blunder to this day.

In fact, G-d never told Israel to send spies. The opening of this week’s *parsha* is a response to the request of the Jewish People of Moshe at the beginning of the Book of Devarim (1:22). There it clearly shows that the Jewish People instigated the idea. They clamored around Moshe in confusion and concern. He told them that the Land was a good Land, an excellent Land. The Jewish People then treated Moshe like the first used-car salesman in history. Not content with his word, they demanded to send spies to verify his claims. And G-d acquiesced. He didn’t command them to send spies. But He agreed. Why?

Because G-d wants to give us the space to succeed.

But being able to succeed also means that we must have the possibility to fail.

That’s what having “our own space” really means.

• Sources: Rashi, Ramchal

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to reconnoiter Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass

away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on G-d's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challa*, a gift for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

ISRAEL Forever

MISPLACED CONFIDENCE

In this week's Torah portion we once again focus on the tragedy which befell our ancestors as a result of following the spies sent by Moshe to study the land promised to them.

Our commentaries point out that these spies gave an accurate report. The problem was that they added a "but", implying that there was no way that the formidable nations occupying the land could be conquered.

This was the result of believing only in their own abilities

and failing to appreciate that G-d could grant them victory.

This misplaced confidence in their own power resulted in an entire generation losing its right to enter the land.

One lesson we can certainly learn from this is that despite the need to do everything we can to defend our land in a natural way, our confidence in ultimate victory over our enemies must be directed towards G-d who promised it to us 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

NECHEMIYA – THE GREAT FORTIFIER

When a delegation of Jews from the community of returned exiles in Eretz Yisrael reported to Nechemia the troubles that these returnees faced from their hostile neighbors he took action on two fronts. First of all, he prayed to G-d for success in using his influence with the Persian king for whom he served as a top aide. Then



he took advantage of this king's inquiry about the sad look on his usually cheerful face to pour out his heart about the sad plight of his brothers in Eretz Yisrael. G-d blessed his efforts with success and he was able to go to Jerusalem with the king's backing and fortify the city's walls as a defense against the enemy and to aid Ezra in spiritually fortifying the community.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land"?
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the *meraglim* bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?
6. Why did G-d shorten the *meraglim's* journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Calev quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim's* report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the Land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Calev and Yehoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" G-d is referring to the 10 *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challah* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challah* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the *meraglim* (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for *lashon hara* (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - G-d knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed. Therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jewish People were afraid of Amalek because Amalek had once attacked them.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Calev wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - G-d caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av (Tisha B'av). This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Iyov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael* began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challah* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments - i.e. idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

- The status of an animal designated as an atonement for an action which might have been a sin after the discovery that there was no sin
- Bringing a mincha offering other than the one pledged
- When one must provide a mincha offering more than what he pledges
- When one pledges more of a mincha than one vessel can contain
- The amounts of wine one can offer for libation
- Can oil alone be offered as a sacrifice
- When one is not certain of the amount he pledged
- The unusual sacrifice of wood
- When the donor fails to specify which of his animals he is offering as a sacrifice
- The designated sacrifice which became disqualified
- The *kohanim* of Beit Chonyo
- Learning Torah as a virtual sacrifice

AN UNUSUAL SACRIFICE

Throughout the last two *mesechtot* we have learned about sacrifices consisting of animals, fowl, flour and wine. All of these are edible items. There is, however, another sort of sacrifice which is not edible – wood for the fire on the altar.

What is the source for wood being considered a sacrifice which one can voluntarily offer?

Our Sages refer us to a passage in *Sefer Nechemia* (10:35):

“And we have cast lots among the *kohanim*, the Levites and the people for the wood offering... at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the L-rd our G-d as it is written in the Torah.”

With the construction of the second *Beit Hamikdash* there was a lack of communal funds and it became necessary to impose on individuals to contribute the wood needed for the altar fire. Lots were cast to determine which date in the year each donor would make his contribution of this unusual sacrifice.

Once it is established that wood is considered a sacrifice, say our Sages, it is subject to all the rules pertaining to regular sacrifices. This includes salting, bringing it into contact with the southwest corner of the altar like a mincha offering, making *kemitza* on its shavings and even providing kindling wood to start the fire.

• *Menachot 106b*

What the SAGES Say

“Torah scholars who study the laws of the sacrificial service are considered as if the *Beit Hamikdash* was built in their days.”

• *Rabbi Yochanan - Menachot 110a*

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JUDAISM – NO PASSING FAD

From: Avraham

*Dear Rabbi,
I am currently learning at a beginning level in a yeshiva for ba'alei teshuva. I have graduated college and decided to take time out to catch up on Jewish learning before continuing to prepare for a profession (although I don't know what that would be). My parents aren't thrilled. They are asking me where this will lead me and what practical benefit it will have. They also claim that I have always had fleeting interests that pass, and that my interest in Judaism is just another fad that won't last. They say that for all these reasons, I should just give it up and "get on with life". How would you suggest I respond to them?*

Dear Avraham,

It's interesting that you're having these problems since your name is Avraham. The "original" Avraham's family was also not thrilled, to say the least, in his new-found interest in G-d. But he persevered, and became a spiritual father of Nations. So you're in good company.

First of all, I would suggest you share with your parents your sincere, heart-felt appreciation for raising you with the good values and Jewish awareness that came to serve as the basis for your interest in Judaism as an adult. Many people nowadays lack true, solid values, and, unfortunately, so many Jews are so far removed from their unique heritage that some people have come to refer to this mass assimilation as "The Silent Holocaust". Express to them that your interest in Judaism does not conflict with the good upbringing they gave you but rather complements it.

That being said, explain to them that you have found Judaism to be a vast repository of wisdom, guidance and inspiration whose truth not only engendered world religions and enthralled billions of mankind over the millennia, but is just as relevant, if not more so, in today's modern world. As much as your parent's contributed to your Jewish education, there's so much more to learn and you feel that you need to take time off to catch up on what you've missed.

Emphasize that this in no way will prevent you from

pursuing a profession later on, but will most likely benefit you both personally and professionally. And the truth is, many young people take time off after college to do a great variety of things. Whether educational, experiential or recreational, these expeditions are all viewed as beneficial and rewarding. Insofar as what you're doing is educational, it's certainly no less important than what lots of other people who take time off are doing. In fact, I've been told that Law Schools, for example, actually look favorably on a Yeshiva experience's contribution to developing analytical skills and legal-minded thinking.

In addition, you can also explain to them that since Judaism is so multidisciplinary, you are actually becoming enriched in many fields: Theology, Philosophy, Logic, Ethics, Law, History, Language, Mysticism and even Music and the Arts. The unique Jewish approach to all these fields, together with the interaction Judaism has had with other approaches throughout World History, will certainly contribute to your well-rounded education, maturity and value as a member of society.

Lastly, regarding their claim that this is likely to be just another interest come and gone, I think you should stress the major difference between what has interested you in the past and Judaism: Namely, your interests in the past were just that – interests; but Judaism is not just an interest, it's an all-encompassing, holistic way of life.

But in any case, whatever happens, you only stand to gain. If it passes, you will still have been rewarded greatly by what you will have learned and experienced, as above. In such case, this experience will be no less valuable than the many other things that have interested you, through which you've grown, and which contribute to what make you uniquely you. However, if, unlike your previous interests, your love for the Jewish way of life doesn't wane, it will only serve to prove that you will have finally found your Truth. And since you'll be truly content, you'll be happy, and that will make your parents happy as well.

And since Judaism doesn't dictate where you live and what profession you choose, these are things that you can work out after your program of study. Anyway, as of yet, you say you haven't committed to a particular field of interest or profession. It seems perfectly acceptable to "take time off" in order to get clarity on this as well. All the best!

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MISPLACED GIFT OF GAB

Question: Often on the buses I ride a gabby passenger gets on and, standing beside the driver or sitting behind him, carries on a running conversation with him, an obvious safety hazard. Although I understand this is against company rules, I am aware that lodging a written complaint will get the driver into trouble. And if I make a remark to the offending passenger, I will probably incur his/her ire. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: If you are convinced that the driver is being negligent in regard to his responsibility towards you and your fellow passengers, you definitely have a mandate to take action. The action you take, however, must be within the guidelines set by the Torah for dealing with people who have harmed you or pose a threat.

Since it is doubtful that the situation you describe is one of a clear and present danger warranting strong preemptive action on your part, it is necessary to offer the driver, the real villain in your scenario, some gentle reproof such as an innocent question as to whether the bus company rules permit carrying on conversations while driving. Only if his

response is a rude rejection of your overture should you resort to the threat of reporting his misconduct to his superiors by asking him for his particulars which he is obligated to provide.

Should your hitherto gentle approach meet with continued resistance all that is left to do is to jot down the route number of the bus (and the bus serial number which usually appears somewhere inside), and the day and hour of the incident. All of this information should be included in the complaint that you write to the company in the hope that it will enforce its own rules.

While on the subject of bus drivers, it is a good idea to reward a considerate one by expressing your appreciation of the service he provided as you are about to leave the bus. A simple “thank you” makes the driver realize you relate to him as a human being and not just an extension of the steering wheel. Relating to a driver in this way will inevitably make him more sensitive to the needs of their passengers and less likely to react in negative fashion when a suggestion is made for him to stop talking and keep his mind on driving.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

A REWARD FROM HEAVEN

“**D**id you hear where Shimon is making his daughter’s wedding? It’s going to be in the most expensive hall in town!” This was the outraged reaction of a neighbor of Shimon upon reading the invitation he received. He shared his shock with another neighbor who had been his partner in collecting money from their fellow congregants in a Bnei Brak synagogue to provide Shimon, an indigent Torah scholar, with the minimum funds required to make a simple wedding. Realizing that more and more people would be surprised at his choice of a hall, Shimon rushed to the rabbi of the congregation to explain what had happened.

Shimon had already contacted the cheapest hall in town and made an appointment to discuss arrangements. Before he left the meeting there was a knock on his door. There stood a stranger who asked to speak to him for a few minutes. He told Shimon that he just got up from the *shiva* mourning period for his father, the owner of a large wedding hall in town. Just before passing away he told his son that during the Holocaust there was a Jew who had saved his life

at the risk of his own. Upon arriving in Israel he was anxious to locate this Jew and somehow show his gratitude. All he knew of him, however, was his first name and the town he came from, and his search proved unsuccessful. Now that he was leaving this world he charged his son with the responsibility of locating that Jew or any heir of his and to repay him the favor he owed him.

During the *shiva* period one of the comforters mentioned the heroism of the mourner’s father and another Jew in surviving the Holocaust. In the ensuing conversation, it suddenly became clear that the mysterious benefactor was the father of Shimon. As soon as the *shiva* period was over he rushed to Shimon’s home and when he verified that he was indeed the son of the man who saved his father’s life, he burst into tears. Upon hearing that Shimon was about to make a wedding he insisted that it be done in the hall he inherited from his father at no expense and would not take no for an answer.

Thus was the mystery solved and Shimon’s reputation reestablished in his community.