

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYETZE · 7 KISLEV 5772 · DEC. 3, 2011 · VOL. 19 NO. 7

PARSHA INSIGHTS

WAITING TO RUST

“Then Rachel and Leah replied and said to him, ‘Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father’s house? Are we not considered as strangers... so whatever G-d has said to you, do’.” (31:14-16)

There’s a widespread misunderstanding about why people are religious. It runs something like this. Okay, I’m prepared to sacrifice something of my pleasure in this world so that I can get a piece of the action in the next. I don’t mind refraining from the occasional BLT or Macdonald’s because I believe the Big Macs are bigger on the other side.

Even those of us who like to think of ourselves as religious, if questioned, would probably subscribe to this line of thinking.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

A person should feel that he is giving nothing up of this world, because this world has nothing to give him.

Let me give you an example.

Tuesday morning. You finally get the call. You’ve waited for two full months. And now it’s here. Your champagne-metallic luxury turbodeisel 4x4 has arrived at the car dealer. Your heartbeat leaps to 120 beats a minute. Your mouth dries up. You jump into the nearest taxi and sit there lost in the glow of expectation. You arrive at the showroom. The car dealer hands you the keys. This is the moment you’ve been waiting for. You slide behind the wheel. The smell of leather and “new car” is more potent than the latest Paris perfume. You turn the key and the engine purrs into life. You ease the car out of the parking lot and cruise down the main drag of the city real slow.

Riding a wild set of wheels at an easy pace.

Phew!

A couple of months later, you’ve already scratched the champagne metallic paint in more than a few places, and the front fender shows the battle scars of a shopping expedition to the mall.

Why can’t new cars stay new? What happens to that smell of ‘new-car’? Does the factory send out a fragrance recall on it? More. What happens to the *feeling* of new car? Why does it always turn into a gas-guzzling insurance-eating rusting heap?

Nothing in this world that is solely of this world brings you real happiness.

Compare this to the feeling that comes from praying, even with a little bit of concentration. Most of us, at some time or another, have had this beautiful experience. And that feeling is second only to the feeling of learning Torah. That’s the most exquisite experience in the world. And it’s a genuine pleasure that stays with you. Not like this week’s new purchase that fills you with pride and desire and then comes to collect from you a heavy debt, both physically and spiritually.

“Then Rachel and Leah replied and said to him, ‘Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father’s house? Are we not considered as strangers? ...So whatever G-d has said to you – do!’ ”

You could very easily misunderstand what Rachel and Leah meant by the above statement. You could think that the only reason they were agreeing to leave their father’s house was because there was nothing for them there anyway, that they were considered as strangers.

What Rachel and Leah were really saying was that leaving their father’s house was in no way a sacrifice, for nothing in Lavan’s house held any real value for them. *“So whatever G-d has said to you – do!”*

Life’s true pleasure is to be close to G-d, everything else is like a heap of steel waiting to rust.

• Source: Based on Lev Elijahu

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation, and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons:

Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and, in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. G-d finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

ISRAEL Forever

WHEN IT IS EASY

“The ground upon which you are lying, to you will I give it and to your descendants.” (*Bereishet* 28:13)

This was the Divine promise to the Patriarch Yaakov that his people would inherit the entire land which He miraculously folded under his resting place.

Our Sages see this as a way of communicating to Yaakov that Eretz Yisrael will be conquered by his descendants as easily as one takes possession of the four cubits of land upon which he rested.

The fulfillment of this promise was the miraculous man-

ner in which Yehoshua led his people to an easy triumph over the 31 kings and their armies who lived in the land promised to the Patriarchs.

In our own times we have witnessed the difficulties involved in returning to our land and in living in security. This must be seen in the light of the words in this week's Torah portion which precede the above-mentioned promise: “I am the L-rd, G-d of Avraham your father and G-d of Yitzchak.”

Only when Jews properly relate to the G-d of our forefathers can they look forward to inheriting with miraculous ease a secure Israel forever.

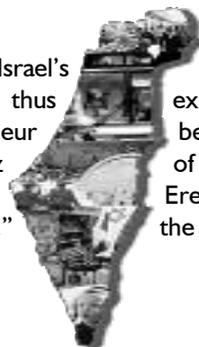
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

ERETZ HACHAYIM - LAND OF THE LIVING

After prophesying the utter destruction of Israel's foremost enemies the Prophet Yechezkel thus promises, in the Name of G-d, that the grandeur which was theirs will be bestowed upon Eretz Yisrael:

“I shall establish My glory in the land of the living.” (*Yechezkel* 26:20)



Our Talmudic Sages (*Mesechta Ketubot* 111a) explain that Eretz Yisrael is called the “land of the living” because it will be the scene of the eventual resurrection of the dead. The remains of those buried outside of Eretz Yisrael will be transported in miraculous fashion to the “land of the living” for a return to life.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "G-d remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason son Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

© 1992 - 2011 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

- When two elements with conflicting status are mixed together
- If a nursing animal is assumed to have already given birth
- Will an animal nurse the offspring of another
- Caution required in slaughtering a firstborn animal
- The ban on shearing the hair or wool of a firstborn
- How long the owner of a firstborn today must care for it before giving it to the *kohen*
- The problem of a *kohen* helping in the granary or slaughter house
- When does the first year of the firstborn end
- Bringing the firstborn for inspection after slaughtering it
- Responsibility of a judge who errs in his ruling
- Rabbi Tarfon on the womb-less cow
- Accepting payment for rabbinical ruling
- Refraining from buying from someone suspected of ignoring the law

WHO FED THE DOGS?

“The cow is *treif*.” This was the ruling given by Rabbi Tarfon to a Jew who brought him a cow whose womb had been removed. The reason for the ruling was that an animal missing one of its vital organs is *treif* and is rendered unfit for consumption.

The *mishna* relates that as a result of his ruling Rabbi Tarfon fed the cow to the dogs. But when this case came before the Sages in Yavneh (the seat of the Sanhedrin high court), they ruled that the cow was kosher. They did so based on the information they had from a physician named Todos who reported that a cow can survive without a

womb. The proof was that the cattlemen in Alexandria, Egypt would not export one of their cows before removing its womb so that the purchasers would not be able to breed such superior animals to compete with them.

Although it appears from the language of the *mishna* that Rabbi Tarfon himself fed the cow to the dogs, it becomes clear in the *gemara* that it was the cow’s owner who did so. This emerges from Rabbi Akiva’s comforting of Rabbi Tarfon that he was free from compensating the owner for the loss of the cow. Since Rabbi Tarfon had erred in his judgment his ruling was reversible and the owner was negligent in feeding the animal to the dogs before bringing the case to review before the Sanhedrin.

• *Bechorot 28b*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The stupid Babylonians who live in a dark land make statements which are unclear.”

• *Rabbi Yirmiyahu (an Eretz Yisrael Sage) - Bechorot 25b*

NEW
FEATURE!

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students

Rabbi Howard Hirsch

London, UK

Ohr Lagolah (1995-1996), Ohr Somayach (1991-1993)

In a 1970s sitcom, rehabilitated “Gabe Kotter” returns to his old high school to teach its under-privileged students. In a very loose parallel, Rabbi Howard Hirsch does the same.

As a youth, Howard attended Europe’s largest Jewish day school, the Jewish Free School of London, a school sporting all trappings of an upscale English private school: tennis courts, dance studios, music tutors and more.

Howard’s Jewish identity took a more serious turn in university. After law school he attended Ohr Somayach and

later “Ohr Lagolah”. Then he returned to teach in his alma mater, and today heads the Judaic studies department.

A small percentage of his 2,000 students observe Shabbat. Some have one Jewish parent. Yet, he hesitates to call his work “*kiruv*.”

“It’s trying to make Judaism as dynamic, inspirational and relevant as possible for kids who’d rather be doing math.”

His greatest influence, he feels, may be in the “informal education” such as setting an example and helping organize student visits to teachers’ homes for Friday night.

His educational philosophy: “The heart of man reflects the feelings in the heart of his fellow man.” (Proverbs)

“You’ve got to feel for the students.”

SELECTIVE EDUCATION

From: Bernard

Dear Rabbi,

I am a believer in the importance of supporting Torah study in order to educate our youth and pass Torah education to the next generation. For that reason, I am a supporter of Torah institutions. Recently I found out that one of the programs I donate to is geared for students of only less-than-average or average abilities. I feel I was misled as to the nature of the program, and question whether it's the best application of my resources since the students don't seem to have much promise as future educators. What is your opinion?

Dear Bernard,

It's a wonderful thing that in this day and age people as such as you understand the centrality of Jewish education in the preservation and perpetuation of the Jewish People and are willing to generously support those who dedicate themselves, their talents and institutions to the Jewish needs of our youth.

Someone as yourself, who certainly appreciates education for education's sake, also realizes that this is a need not only of the brightest and talented of youth, but of every single Jew who wants to learn Torah.

In fact, it's arguably no less important, and perhaps even more urgent, to make sure that the Jewish youth of only average abilities receive the education they need to find meaning and joy in Judaism, as they are the most likely to seek fulfillment in less desirable alternatives. Consider how many Jews and corresponding resources would be lost to the Jewish People if the youth you are referring to were abandoned.

I get the impression that you donate to several institutions or programs. Since you are an investor, a spiritual financier investing in the future of the Jewish people, it actually makes sense that you diversify your "portfolio". Just as an investor would not want too homogeneous a portfolio but would rather seek to maximize yields by investing in several sectors simultaneously, so too should you view your investment in the future of our youth. And the success of the Jewish People depends on every individual.

Whose opinion, more than that of our educators, the Talmudic Sages, should we consult on questions of Jewish education? And several of their teachings indicate what we've been saying.

The Talmud (Nedarim 81a) declares, "Take heed of the children of the poor, for from them will issue Torah scholars". There's something about the upbringing of the poor that instills the sense of sacrifice and fortitude necessary to

succeed in Torah study. It's quite possible that among the "average" students in the program you're asking about, there are those who are there because they are from families of average means, but not necessarily because they are of average ability. If so, it is precisely these that will be the future Torah leaders.

Furthermore, our Sages taught (Temurah 16a) that if a person approaches a Rabbi asking him to teach him and the Rabbi agrees, they will both be wise. But if he refuses, G-d will make the Rabbi a fool and make the student wise. This implies that the reason the Rabbi doesn't want to teach the student is because he views this particular student as a "fool" and not worth it to teach him. Yet the Sages note that since the student wants to learn, there's nothing more antithetical to Jewish education than rejecting him. A Rabbi so selective in his teaching is being foolish, and a "fool" so eager to learn will become wise. Seemingly, the Sages would consider the rabbis who run the program in question to be wise; discontinuing your support of them might be considered by the wisdom of our Sages to be foolish.

Finally, perhaps most instructive for our purposes is the following teaching: Rabbi Pereida had a student who needed to have a lesson repeated 400 times in order for him to learn it properly. Once, even after 400 times the student still didn't understand. Concerned for the student's learning, the Rabbi lovingly asked why this time was different than others. The student explained that he had heard someone saying that he needed the services of the Rabbi for a particular Mitzvah and was distracted from learning by the thought that the Rabbi would have to leave. Rabbi Pereida then sat and taught him the lesson 400 more times. A Divine Voice emerged offering Rabbi Pereida the choice of either 400 years added to his life, or merit for the next world for his generation. Rabbi Pereida took the latter, and so G-d gave him both (Eruvin 54b).

Clearly, the student was not the most gifted learner, and seemingly, the Rabbi's time and effort could have been more favorably invested elsewhere. Yet the Rabbi did not forsake him even after hundreds of attempts to teach him, as long as the student was there to learn. We see that the reward that was initially offered him either compensated him for his personal sacrifice with long life; or granted merit to his entire generation, all because of his dedication to one less-than-average student (from which we see the above-mentioned idea that the Jewish education of every individual benefits the entire generation). By the Rabbi's characteristic choice of self-sacrifice for the benefit of the Jewish People he was rewarded both personally, as well as was the Jewish People collectively.

The choice is also yours.

WHEN NOT TO BORROW

Question: May someone borrow money from an individual or from a Free Loan Fund although he has no foreseeable way of repaying the loan and relies only on “borrowing from Reuven to pay Shimon” or on some miracle to provide the money?

Answer: Borrowing money when you know how you are going to pay it back is an integral part of both business and domestic life. The Torah therefore urges Jews to lend money and one of the beautiful features of observant Jewish communities is the proliferation of Gemillat Chassadim (*gemach*) Free Loan funds.

The borrower who takes a loan from such a fund or from a friend must, however, do so only when he knows how he will pay back the loan and on time! It is a wonderful thing to have faith that “Heaven will provide,” but not at the expense of others.

When Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the great Talmudic Sage and head of the Sanhedrin, challenged his five outstanding disciples to identify the ideal path of human behavior and which path was the one to most carefully avoid, he received a variety of responses. One praised a good eye, others a good heart, a good

friend or a good neighbor, while Rabbi Shimon extolled the virtue of anticipating the outcome of one’s actions. When it came to warning against negative courses each of the first four simply named the opposite of the positive an evil eye, evil heart, evil friend or evil neighbor. Rabbi Shimon, however, did not condemn the one who fails to anticipate the result of his actions as we would have expected him to do, but rather directs his warning against one who borrows but fails to repay.

The explanation offered by the commentaries on *Pirkei Avot* where this advice appears is that Rabbi Shimon’s position was that although it is a very positive thing to anticipate the outcome of one’s actions, it is impossible to condemn one who is not so careful in his planning and relies on his ability to improvise should a crisis result from his lack of caution. Should one, however, borrow money without anticipating how he will repay the loan, such reckless reliance on improvisation will backfire on him, because when he will ever be in need of a loan again he will be unable to get one since he has lost his credibility. We may add to this the reflection that relying on improvisation or miracles at another’s expense is certainly something to be avoided.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

SHARING THE BLANKET

The following story is told by Howard Schultz, chairman and chief global strategist of Starbucks:

When I was in Israel, I went to Meah Shearim, the ultra-Orthodox area within Jerusalem. Along with a group of businessmen I was with, I had the opportunity to have an audience with Rabbi Finkel, the head of a yeshiva there. I had never heard of him and didn’t know anything about him. We went into his study and waited ten to 15 minutes for him. Finally, the doors opened.

What we did not know was that Rabbi Finkel was severely afflicted with Parkinson’s disease. He sat down at the head of the table, and naturally, our inclination was to look away. We didn’t want to embarrass him.

We were all looking away, and we heard this big bang on the table: “Gentlemen, look at me, and look at me right now”. Now his speech affliction was worse than his physical shaking. It was really hard to listen to him and watch him. He said: “I have only a few minutes for you because I know you’re all busy American businessman.” You know, just a little dig there.

Then he asked, “Who can tell me what the lesson of the Holocaust is?” He called on one guy, who didn’t know what to do – it was like being called on in the fifth grade without the answer. And the guy says something benign like “We will never, ever forget?” And the rabbi completely dismisses him. I felt terrible for the guy until I realized the rabbi was getting ready to

call on someone else. All of us were sort of under the table, looking away - you know, please, not me. He did not call me. I was sweating. He called on another guy, who has such a fantastic answer: “We will never, ever again be a victim or bystander”.

The rabbi said, “You guys just don’t get it. Okay, gentlemen, let me tell you the essence of the human spirit.

“As you know, during the Holocaust, the people were transported in the worst possible, inhumane way by railcar. They thought they were going to work camp. We all know they were going to a death camp.

“After hours and hours in this inhumane corral with no light, no bathroom, cold, they arrived at the camps. The doors were swung wide open, and they were blinded by the light. Men were separated from women, mothers from daughters, fathers from sons. They went off to the bunkers to sleep.

“As they went into the area to sleep, only one person was given a blanket for every six. The person who received the blanket, when he went to bed, had to decide, ‘Am I going to push the blanket to the five other people who did not get one, or am I going to pull it toward myself to stay warm?’ “

And Rabbi Finkel says, “It was during this defining moment that we learned the power of the human spirit, because we pushed the blanket to five others”.

And with that, he stood up and said, “Take your blanket. Take it back to America and push it to five other people”.