

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

G-D's WITNESSES

*"And Yehuda approached him." (44:18)*

A tramp standing by a traffic light. Suddenly, a big Rolls Royce limousine about half a block long pulls up right next to him. The tramp stands immobile and somewhat alarmed. One of the tinted windows in the back of the limo rolls down with an expensive electronic purr. From inside the car emerges a hand wearing a white cotton glove. The hand is waving a crisp \$20 bill. Silently the gloved hand beckons to the tramp with the money. Like a silent Charlie Chaplin comedy, the tramp does a double take, looks behind him, convinced that the hand must be beckoning to someone standing behind him. Then he realizes the \$20 bill is for him. The tramp cannot believe his luck. He beams from ear to ear, and back again, walks up to the hand, and takes the money. Just as quietly and mysteriously as it arrived, the Rolls Royce glides away from the sidewalk and is soon lost in the traffic. The tramp stands there gazing after it for a long time.

The next day, the Rolls-Royce again draws up next to him. This time, the tramp is somewhat less surprised but no less grateful. Overjoyed, he again takes the money.

The next day the same thing happens, and the next and the next and the next...

This goes on for a month.

One day, the Rolls Royce draws up at the lights but the window doesn't go down. After a few seconds the tramp knocks on the glass, but it doesn't go down. So he knocks harder and then starts to shout, "Where's my twenty dollars! Where's my twenty dollars!"

Gratitude is proportionate to the extent that we understand that we received something that wasn't our due. If we think that something is due to us, why should we be grateful?

*"And Yehuda approached him."*

The name Jew comes from the name Yehuda. We are

Yehudim or Jews. We are not called Jews by coincidence. In Hebrew, a name defines the very essence of a thing. If the name Yehuda means to thank, that must be the essence of being Jewish — that's our name. We are the 'thankers.' The Hebrew for "to thank" is *l'hodot*. However, there is another meaning to the word *l'hodot*. It can also mean "to admit." What's the connection between giving thanks and admitting?

To the extent that we admit we received something and we really didn't deserve it, to that same extent will be our gratitude and to that degree we will give thanks.

*"And Yehuda approached him."*

We are Jews because we thank G-d for everything we have, however big or small. A Jew admits that everything comes from G-d. That is how *Yehuda* — the Jewish People — are able to approach, to come close to G-d.

*"And Yehuda approached Him."*

The job of the Jewish people in this world is to be quite literally 'G-d's witnesses'. (Not to be confused with Brand X who would also like to claim this job as their own). The job of the Jewish People is to testify by the way we live our lives that there is a G-d in the world. As it is written: *"You are My witnesses."*

So if our job is to be the Witnesses, why are we called the Thankers, or the Admitters?

The foundation of all belief in G-d is to admit that life is one gigantic gift. If a person doesn't feel that he was given anything, he will never look for G-d, he will never look further than his own nose.

If I sensitize myself to the gift I will sensitize myself to the Giver.

Atheism is not the root of ingratitude. Ingratitude is the root of atheism.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it

is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### ANOTHER LOOK AT MASSADA

Many legends surround one of the most popular tourist sites in Eretz Yisrael, the ancient fortress of Massada. Visitors to this site hear from the guides about the courageous stand made by Jewish rebels against the mighty Roman army and how they committed suicide rather than fall into the hands of those heathens.

During a recent visit to the yeshiva, one of Ohr Somayach's former students told an interesting story about a visit he made many years ago to Massada together with his father. Ahead of them was a group of Italian tourists



led by a guide speaking their language. The father of our alumnus spoke fluent Italian and when he heard the guide make a certain point, he burst into uncontrollable laughter.

When he finally recovered, he explained to his son how funny it was, after all they had heard from their own guide about the courage of the Hebrew defenders, to hear the Italian guide say to his compatriots of Roman origin as he pointed to one section of the fortress, "This is where we came in."

לע"נ

ר' משה אריה בן ר' יצחק אייזיק ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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

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## PARSHA Q&A?

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers, "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said, "Don't dispute on the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt"?
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *lashon hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave *Eretz Canaan*.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in *Eretz Canaan*.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - *Dina bat Yaakov*.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

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Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

## SHABBAT 79 - 85

*“He is teaching you how to stay healthy and you call that insignificant material?”*

This was the response of Rabbi Huna to his son the Sage Rabbah when he explained his refusal to study Torah with Rabbi Chisda, because rather than teaching him Talmud he gave him advice concerning the way he should relieve himself in the bathroom.

Rabbi Huna reprimanded his son for terming such important health advice “insignificant material” and demanded that he return to study with Rabbi Chisda.

• Shabbat 82a

*“One should never absent himself from the Beit Midrash, even for one hour, because for many years this mishnah was studied in the Beit Midrash and its clarification was not known until Rabbi Chanina ben Akaviah clarified it.”*

This advice was given by Rabbi Yehuda in the name of the Sage Rav in regard to the *mishnah* which discusses the status of a ship in relation to the laws of ritual purity.

• Shabbat 83b

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

## THE MISSING PHOTO

The current craze among Jewish children of collecting picture cards of Torah scholars and leaders will probably remind many of their American parents and grandparents of the days when they collected cards of sports stars. There was, however, one youngster of that generation who collected photographs of great rabbis and pasted them into an album.

One place in that album was left blank and in it was writ-

ten:

“Mordechai, if you learn seriously, some day your picture will be here with the other *gedolim*.”

The youngster took his self-imposed challenge seriously and eventually became the Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshivat Telshe in Cleveland, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter of blessed memory.

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## SINS OF FATHERS AND SONS

**From: Jonathan**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I read that G-d remembers good deeds for thousands of generations. However, the bad deeds of the current generation are carried onward for three or four generations. This infliction on those who are yet unborn or on those who are not directly responsible for the bad deeds does not seem right to me. Perhaps you could provide some positive thoughts. Thank you and best regards.*

Dear Jonathan,

I agree with you that punishing innocents for crimes that others have committed doesn't seem fair. The Talmud in Tractate Brachot (7a) discusses this issue and resolves it in the following way:

Behold one verse says: 'He delivers the sins of the fathers upon the children' (Ex. 34:7) and yet another says: 'And the children shall not die on account of their fathers' (Deut. 24:16). These verses apparently contradict one another, but they can be reconciled by saying that there is no difficulty: one verse is talking about when the children are continuing the evil ways of their parents and the other is referring to when they are not maintaining the evil ways of their parents.

So, according to the Talmud, the verse that is troubling you is referring specifically to a scenario where the children or grandchildren are continuing in their parents' evil ways. In the Book of Samuel II (21:1-11) there is an example of this, which, at first glance, seems very troubling.

We are taught that there was a famine during the reign of King David and that he was told that the reason for the famine was partially due to the killing of the Gibeonites by the house of King Saul. The Gibeonites were a tribe of Amorites who had tricked the Israelites at the beginning of the conquest of Israel into making a treaty with them. They masqueraded as a nomadic tribe from far-away, and the treaty was ratified. Shortly afterward, the Israelites discovered the ruse and responded by making the Gibeonites a

caste of wood-choppers and water-carriers. They chiefly served the Priests. It was when the priestly city of Nov was decimated by Saul for supposed insurrection that the Gibeonites were slaughtered. King David asked the Gibeonites how they could be appeased. They responded by asking that seven members of the house of Saul be hung at his former royal residence. King David complied.

There are many troubling issues that this passage presents, but by far the most troubling is the killing of innocent people for the crime of Saul. The Malbim in his commentary on the Books of the Prophets explains that what actually happened was that after the supposed insurrection at Nov, the Gibeonites became an oppressed class and were continuously harassed, chiefly by the House of Saul. These members of the former Royal House of Saul persisted in the ways of their grandfather and were thus punished. The message was that the harassment would no longer be tolerated, no matter who the perpetrator is, even if he is a member of the aristocracy.

There are many people who feel that they are not responsible for their actions because they were raised in an environment that caused them to do what they did. "It's not my fault. I was born into this neighborhood. I can't be held responsible for my becoming a thief or a murderer."

The Torah tells us otherwise. We make the choices and we are responsible for the outcome. In his book 'Awaken the Giant Within', Tony Robbins mentions that he interviewed thousands siblings from difficult family situations. Interestingly, in many cases, while one sibling became a convict, the other became a successful family man with a thriving business. When he asked the convict how he got to where he is, he answered, "With parents like mine, I had no choice." But when he asked the successful brother how he got to where he is, he also answered "With parents like mine I had no choice!"

We make the decisions. And one who consciously continues the evil ways of his forbearers is guilty on two accounts: upholding the evil ways of his father is tantamount to doing them himself, while the actual acts that he does are held against him on their own right.

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written by Shimon O'Heron

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One year before the Lifschitz family arrived in San Antonio, Texas with their son, the Orthodox Rabbi had arrived with his. As the boys' mothers became friendly, the Lifschitzes soon became members of the Orthodox Shul. Slowly, over the years, the Lifschitz boys, now three of them, were mingling into Orthodox Shabbats,



kosher eating and learning Torah. Suddenly and strangely, Dr. Lifschitz found himself acting as President of the local Private Jewish School and managed to save it by increasing the yearly funding by \$90,000.00! When a special Jewish program came to town, the Lifschitzes shared their first family Shabbats together. When the Rabbi's boys were heading off to Yeshiva, the Lifschitz boys followed.

Today, Dr. Lifschitz has turned his lonesome Daf Yomi into an electric chavruta at Ohr Somayach in Rabbi Rockmill's class in Jerusalem. His boys also live in Israel as profound *talmidei chachachim*. The family continues to grow together and influence the rest of Klal Israel.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### PAYING FOR THE "REST"

**Question:**

I was part of a group that spent a Shabbat in a resort hotel. The beautiful Shabbat we expected was ruined by the unexpected spoiling of all the food, forcing us to subsist on bread and water for our meals. When we intended to leave the hotel after Shabbat without paying for our stay, the hotel owner insisted we pay for the rest we enjoyed in his hotel even if the food bill was not coming to him. What is the right thing to do in such a case?

**Answer:**

Such a case was brought before Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein,

rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak, who ruled that the hotel owner has no claim on his disappointed guests for the rest he affirms having provided them. When a person lacks food he does not enjoy any rest.

As proof of this correlation between food and rest, the rabbi cited the ruling of the *Mishneh Berurah* (582:20) that when Yom Kippur is on Shabbat we delete the phrase in the prayer usually said on Shabbat which asks G-d to "willingly accept our rest". The reason is that when one cannot eat he cannot enjoy a real rest.

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