

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

BURNING YOUR BRIDGES

“...G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, because it was near, for G-d said, ‘Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt.’” (13-17).

Chaim’s fingers hovered over his iPhone. He had already blocked ninety per cent of the contacts in his address book, put in place a hermetic filter from his Internet Service Provider, and now he was ready for the ultimate sacrifice. He walked up to a total stranger on the street and said, “Please would you key in a seven character string of letters or numbers or a mixture of both?”

The stranger looked at him a little strangely, but decided he didn’t look like a mugger and entered a string of characters.

“Would you please enter it again in the box below that, and then press ‘Enter’?”

“Thank you very much,” smiled Chaim and briskly walked away. Within a minute Chaim and the stranger were separated by thousands of other rush-hour commuters.

That was it. There was no way he could now undo the changes he had made. He had locked his computer with an unknown, virtually unknowable code. Chaim had burned his bridges.

Why did G-d make it well-nigh impossible for the

Jewish People to return to Egypt? After all, the reason He took them out in the first place was because they screamed and cried for Him to take them out, so if in the future they might decide to go back, why not let them?

Each of us is trapped in our own little “Egypt”. The Egypt of materialism. The Egypt of indulgence. The Egypt of doubt, of depression, of selfishness.

It takes a lot of hard work to get us out of those Egypts. And if we manage to make it out, there will always be a ‘good ole friend’ who will give a call or send us a text, and say ‘Hi, why don’t we hang out together tonight!’ The only way to make sure that ‘good ole friend’ can’t drag us back to Egypt is to burn our bridges so there’s no way back.

G-d knew that the true desire of the Jewish People was – and still is – to be close to Him, but He led us through the sea because He wanted to burn our bridges to make it easier for us to leave Egypt once and for all.

• Source: based on an idea heard from Rabbi Yechezkel Weinfeld

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days' travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In

Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

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

YOMA 65 - 71

“If not for the awesomeness (of G-d), how could this one nation of Israel have survived among the nations of the world?”

The Sage Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi offered this explanation for the “truth” of the *Anshei Knesset Hagedola* returning the description of “Awe” as an appropriate way to describe and praise G-d.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi explains on our *daf* in detail the process and reason for restoring this description of G-d. Moshe Rebbeinu originally referred to G-d as “Nora” – Awesome. However, since G-d did not prevent the destruction of the first *Beit Hamikdash*, the Prophet *Yirmiyahu* decreed that the title of “Awe” not be continued. The *Anshei Knesset Hagedola*, however, subsequently decreed the “truth” to be that the Awe of G-d was indeed evident even during the destruction, since the nations that gathered to destroy the Jewish People succeeded in destroying only the buildings but not the nation. The “one sheep” among the mighty nations was protected by the Awesomeness of G-d.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi further explains that this group of Prophets and Sages who led the Jewish People following the destruction of the first *Beit Hamikdash* was called the “*Anshei Knesset HaGedola*” since they returned “the Crown” (recognition of the awe and greatness of G-d) to its former, original status.

• *Yoma 69b*

“When the Rabbis took leave of one another in Pumpadita they said the following beracha to each other: ‘May Mechayei Chaim (G-d) give you long, good and productive lives.’”

This custom of the Sages of the yeshiva in Pumpadita in Bavel is taught on our *daf* by the Sage Rabba. Why did they refer to G-d by this seemingly unusual name of “*Mechayei Chaim*”, and why did they give each other this particular *beracha* at this time of taking leave from one another and from the yeshiva?

The *Ein Yaakov* explains they were now going home from the yeshiva where they had been learning Torah together. The Torah is a “Torah of life”. Since they were pausing from this study of Torah together, they gave each other a *beracha* and said a *tefilla* prayer that their lives should continue in the best way possible despite their lack of joint Torah-of-life study in the yeshiva. Therefore, they referred to G-d as the “Giver of Life” and expressed their hope that G-d would continue to provide each of them with the very best in the future.

• *Yoma 71a*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

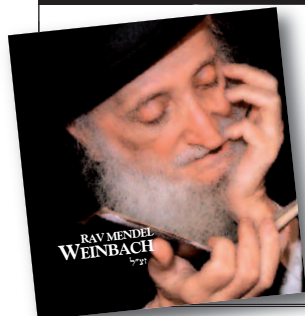
PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as He provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

A Memorial Tribute on the First Yahrzeit



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is available in print at Ohr Somayach* as well as in PDF format on www.ohr.edu

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Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT BESHALLACH

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

The Parsha begins with the words, “It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people that G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, though it was near, for G-d said, ‘perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt.’” After escaping from Egypt, the direct route to the heart of the Land of Israel would have been along the Mediterranean coast which would lead them directly into Philistine territory after a relatively short journey. Abarbanel, and other commentaries as well, explain that the Torah is telling us that having had no experience with warfare and assuming that no nation would allow such a multitude to pass peacefully through its territory, the people would prefer to return to Egyptian enslavement rather than risk death at the hands of Philistine warriors. Also, the Midrash tells us that previously some members of the tribe of Ephraim had managed to leave Egypt prematurely and were soundly defeated by the Philistines. The people would encounter the bones of their slaughtered brethren and would be frightened into returning to Egypt. By taking them on a much longer, circuitous route, G-d would give them time to overcome and avoid that fear.

Another possible explanation is that since the Torah is emphasizing that “Pharaoh sent out the people” we have to keep in mind that Pharaoh had sent them out only to celebrate a festival to G-d that would require a three-day excursion into the desert. If G-d led them directly on the short route toward Philistine territory, Pharaoh would realize that Moshe had lied to him and was seeking to escape permanently. Initially, then, G-d led them in a way which appeared to be consistent with Pharaoh’s intentions.

However, Abarbanel states that the most logical explanation for

not going directly to the Land of Israel was to provide the opportunity for the splitting of the sea and the drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. The news of this final, overwhelmingly miraculous deliverance would spread throughout the region, instilling the fear of G-d in every nation and emboldening Bnei Yisrael to confront the powerful inhabitants of the Promised Land. After leaving Egypt, G-d gives Moshe specific instructions to turn back and encamp in such a way that they would give the appearance of not knowing where they were going. When Moshe had consistently asked permission to lead a three-day excursion, Pharaoh had assumed that Moshe had a specific place in mind and would go there directly. Now that they had turned back as a result of apparent confusion, Pharaoh suspected that Moshe had deceived him all along and as a result decided to pursue them. Even though G-d says, “I shall strengthen the heart of Pharaoh and he will pursue them”, Abarbanel makes it clear that G-d is not depriving Pharaoh of his free will. Rather, He is manipulating specific circumstances so that Pharaoh will feel compelled on his own to change his mind and pursue.

Abarbanel’s approach to the phrase “I will strengthen his heart”, which appears several times in the narrative of the Exodus, is consistent. He bases his approach on the verse in Proverbs (21:1) “Like streams of water, so the hearts of kings are in G-d’s hands.” G-d doesn’t simply put ideas in their hearts and words in their mouths against their will. Rather, just like farmers direct rainfall into reservoirs, canals and irrigation ditches, G-d directs events in such a way that kings and rulers are compelled to take the kinds of actions that will make a lasting imprint on history.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

“G-D OF MEIR, ANSWER ME!”

When the great Sage Rabbi Meir went to redeem his sister-in-law from her forced confinement to a Roman house of ill-repute, the bribed guard on duty expressed reluctance to cooperate for fear that he would be executed by the authorities who had placed her there.

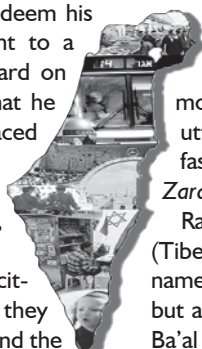
“Whenever you are in danger,” Rabbi Meir assured him, “just utter the prayer ‘G-d of Meir, answer me’ and you will immediately be saved.”

To prove the potency of the prayer Rabbi Meir incited some nearby man-eating dogs to attack him. As they approached he cried out “G-d of Meir, answer me” and the

dangerous dogs retreated.

The guard then released the young lady but was eventually discovered and sentenced to death by hanging. As he mounted the gallows he recalled Rabbi Meir’s promise and uttered the prayer “G-d of Meir, answer me”. In miraculous fashion he was released by his executioners. (*Mesechta Avodah Zara 18a*)

Rabbi Meir’s tomb is assumed to be located in Teveria (Tiberius) and is one of the more popular places for prayer. His name lives on not only in his countless statements in the Talmud but also in the many charities which bear the name “Rabbi Meir Ba’al haNess” – Rabbi Meir the Miracle Worker.



CALCULATED QUIP

From: Anthony

Dear Rabbi,
I have found Torah study to be very interesting and challenging. I have told my parents that I would like to take a year off from school in order to study in a yeshiva. They are opposed. They say that that as far as the Torah is concerned, I am required to honor their wishes. They also say that their opinion, being that of two people, outnumbers my one. What do you suggest I say to them?

Dear Anthony,

Obviously, your parents disagree not out of spite, but out of a sincere concern for your future. They want to see you professionally successful and financially self-supportive. I'm sure this is for good reason – they want you to be happy and to be able to support a family. That's all fine and they're right.

Perhaps serious thought should be given to postponing a year at yeshiva until after you graduate. In the meantime, you could learn at yeshiva during your summer and winter breaks, which could amount to close to year of study. If you feel it's urgent now, after acknowledging the validity of your parents' concerns, you should express to them why you nevertheless want to take a year off, and how that will benefit you in the long run.

Regarding your parents' point that you are required by Torah to honor their will not to learn Torah, this is technically incorrect. A person is required to honor his parents' wishes within the parameters of Torah. But if parents command one to transgress Torah, or to refrain from observing it, one is exempt from obeying them, since both he and they are obligated by the will of G-d, and His will takes precedence.

But since the paths of Torah are peaceful it shouldn't have to come to anything like that and I'm sure that with mutual respect, sensitivity and patience you should be able to find some mutually acceptable solution.

Your parents' point about your being outnumbered reminds me of a similar anecdote involving Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, of blessed memory. A father, mother and their son came before the rabbi with a similar story: The young man wanted to go to yeshiva, whereas the parents objected. The father cleverly cited the Torah teaching that there are three partners to a person – his father, mother and G-d. The father reasoned to Rabbi Feinstein, "I'm sure that as a rabbi representing G-d, your part would support our son's going to yeshiva. But you're only one third. Since my wife and I object, our parts outnumber yours."

The rabbi quickly quipped, "Your calculation is mistaken. Both you and your wife each have three parts, two of which oppose yeshiva, making four; but one of which, making two, support it. On the other hand, all three parts of me support it. That makes five for and four against. So in fact, it's you who are outnumbered in favor of your son's going to yeshiva..."

NEW!

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Talmud Navigator – "Excel" in Talmud

The Talmud, often referred to as "The Sea of the Talmud", is vast both in breadth and depth. The *gemara* (Megillah 18b) describes the difficulty of maintaining a hold on all the Torah you learn, quoting Proverbs (23:5): "When you lift (or close) your eyes from it – and it disappears".

Chazal (Eruvin 54b) prescribe a method for gaining a true understanding and making a lasting acquisition of all the material you learn. Rav Chisda is quoted as saying, "The Torah can only be acquired with signs."

Talmud Navigator is an attempt to organize the Talmud in database form, mapping and charting the Talmud by tagging the various components and building blocks of the according to type and hierarchy. It is based on the system outlined by the Ramchal in

Derech Tsvunos.

This system of textual organization serves as a self-help way to outline the *sugya* in a clearer fashion. It assists in promoting a better understanding of the flow of the *Gemara* and in facilitating summary and review. It is also an excellent tool for a less advanced *Gemara* learner to identify and grasp the logical flow and interconnections of its various components.

Each Thursday we will post a PDF file which maps the *gemara* studied in that week's *Daf Yomi* cycle. G-d willing, we plan in the future to make available the Excel file which enables the user to make his own condensed selections of the *Gemara*. For example: Highlighting the main statements, arguments, questions, conclusions or personalized anchor points of the *sugya* determined by the learner to facilitate his own review.

Talmud Navigator is prepared by Rabbi Hanoach Zweig and is available at www.ohr.edu

PRECIOUS WORDS

Due to the length of organized prayer, many find it difficult to concentrate the entire time on the words one says. To stop each time one's attention drifts can make the prayers take longer, and perhaps seem somewhat unbearable. To go back and say the prayers again will probably not help, since it will be equally — and possibly more — difficult to concentrate the second (or third) time. So, what is one to do when he finds himself amidst this dilemma?

Rabbi Eliezer Papo, one of the great Sephardic leaders, answers the above question with a parable:

A man was carrying a chest full of precious stones. He tripped and fell, and with him fell the chest. The man stood bewildered, looking at all his stones scattered across the walkway. People around began to grab whatever they could carry in their hands. The man, watching what was happening, began to panic, but then realized, that he too had better start grabbing what he could, or he would be left with nothing. And so, he began to throw as much as he could back into his chest. When the chaos ended he looked into his chest to find more than enough stones to sustain himself and his family for a long time to come.

This story teaches us what to do when we find ourselves

in the middle of our prayers, unable to concentrate on what we are saying. When distractions come to a person during his prayers, causing all his precious words of prayer to become tarnished by negative intentions, he should remember that even though he has lost part of his prayer, he can still save the rest.

The solution: pause for a moment, and start praying again as though it were the beginning of the prayers. Do not consider what is lost, for the parts you will be able to salvage will outweigh them. G-d knows the inner struggles of man, and will reward a person based on his efforts. Since it takes great effort to say the words of the prayer text with true meaning, the reward for doing so is immeasurable. If one does his best, then in truth nothing is missing.

What does one do when one doesn't understand Hebrew? Despite the fact that it is perfectly fine to pray in English, many Jews choose to pray in Hebrew. When doing so it is a good idea to add one's own prayers in a language one understands. Although these additions are said in one's own words, they should ideally include the following three components: Praise of G-d; one's personal requests; and words expressing thanks and gratitude.

@ OHR *Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students*

by Daniel Keebler

HIGH-YIELD SPIRITUAL INVESTMENTS

Ilya Ishayev
UCLA – Major: Economics
Financial Consultant
JLE Alumnus

Accomplished, determined, and inspired – a fiery combination of traits makes Ilya Ishayev, an immigrant from Uzbekistan, a dazzling JLE alumnus. Far from any Jewish education, Ilya attended public school in L.A. his whole life until he came to UCLA for his major in economics. During breaks between classes, Ilya finally got to discuss Judaism with Ohr Somayach alumnus Rabbi Jacob Rupp.

Amidst discussions with Rabbi Rupp and full-time university studies, Ilya also

worked full-time at a bank. He quickly rose from the starting position as a bank teller to become a Registered Personal Banker who discussed funds with clients. Ilya now works as a financial consultant and is aiming for a Master's degree and title as Certified Financial Planner.

Since his inspiring trip with JLE, Ilya has formulated a *spiritual* plan of his own: Prayers every morning with *tefillin* (received as a gift on JLE), beginning to keep Shabbat, attending the JLE *Shabbaton* in Lakewood, meeting with his JLE Mentor, and a determination to one day send his children to Jewish schools. When asked to put a dollar value on his JLE trip, Ilya said the trip is “a little seed planted in me...How can you put a price on a seed? It's going to grow into a whole tree that bears fruits!”

