

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE WISDOM OF HAPPINESS

“He sent Yehuda ahead of him...” (46:28)

We live in a world where depression has become as common as table salt. Statistics report that between 9 and 10% of American schoolchildren are clinically depressed. That’s an amazing statistic. And that doesn’t include those who are just above the cutoff point of what’s called clinically depressed. And it also doesn’t take into account those who haven’t sought professional help because their symptoms aren’t recognized. And we haven’t even started to talk about their parents.

Why, in spite of a level of physical comfort of which our great-grandparents could only dream, are we more and more subject to depression?

During the reporting of the Nixon/Kennedy Presidential elections, 40% of “sound bytes” (an uninterrupted monologue by a reporter) were one minute or longer. By the time Bush took on Dukakis, a sound byte had shrunk to 9.8 secs, and not one was as long as a minute.

I have the distinct feeling that since George Bush Senior strode the telewaves as President the national attention span has not exactly increased. (Are you still reading this?)

An instant society of drive-thru-everything teaches that haste is a virtue in its own right.

Western society educates our children to be impatient. If it takes me longer than a minute it ain’t worth it.

No being in the universe has a bigger *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) than a baby. A baby is all self. A baby is quite happy to wake up a continent at the most distant rumble of hunger in its tummy. Being a baby has everything to do with having no patience. In the long and difficult ascent to adulthood, we certainly don’t need society’s help in keeping us babies.

Being unable to see beyond the end of our nose, of not being able to see the big picture, is both a cause and an effect of depression.

So how do we combat this?

A movie film consists of hundreds and thousands of still pictures. When presented with separate images in rapid succession, the brain ceases to discern them as separate images and links them together. This anomaly is called “the persistence of vision.” The result is the illusion of movement, motion pictures. Persistence of vision accounts for our failure to notice that a motion picture screen is dark about half the time. A bit like day and night.

In other words, the reality of the movie does not exist in the film itself, it exists in the mind of the beholder connecting separate moments into one flowing existence.

To a small child, every moment is a different world, a different existence. There is no direction in things, no assembly leading towards an overall reality. First this moment happens, then this moment, then this. Being small, however, isn’t limited to being a child.

In Hebrew the word for small is *katan*. *Katan* comes from the word *katua*, meaning “cut”. Someone who is small, or whose perception of the world is small, cuts life’s flow into small segments and treats each of those segments as though that was the whole of reality.

The definition of maturity is that we perceive our entire life as a whole single direction. We take all the disparate events of life – its ups and downs - and unify them into a single cogent direction. Every frame of existence is joined together into the film of our life.

The Hebrew word for adult, *gadol*, comes from the root meaning, “that which continues” (*Bereishet 49:19*). The wisdom of happiness tells us that things are joined together. That’s being an adult. Despite our problems we perceive everything as single system, a single route map, a single film. Happiness means having persistence of vision.

Similarly, during the week in our weekday prayers we say of our Creator “How many are Your works.” On Shabbat we say “How great are Your works”. We take all the separate “manys” of the weekday world and unify them into one

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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 conse-

quences, 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.

ISRAEL Forever

WHO IS A JEW? – WHO IS A HEBREW?

The influx to Israel of so many immigrants under the Law of Return who are not considered Jews according to religious law has been the catalyst for the great debate as to "Who is a Jew?"

Perhaps the time has come for a serious discussion as well as to "Who is a Hebrew (Ivri)?"

In last week's Torah portion we find Pharaoh's chief butler referring to the imprisoned Yosef as "a young Ivri". Yosef earlier heard himself described as an Ivri when the wife of his master Potiphar falsely accused him of misconduct. Because he did not deny his roots despite the Egyptian contempt for Hebrews he merited something which even Moshe did not – his bones were buried in the land of the Hebrews, Eretz Yisrael.

Avraham, of course, was the first to be called by the name "Ivri". One explanation offered by the Midrash for this title based on the word *eiver* (side) is that while the

entire world was on one side in its pursuit of idol worship, Avraham was fearlessly on the other side promoting monotheism.

This, then, is the hallmark of the Hebrew. He does not seek to conform to the misguided pursuit of all the "isms" of history which are only variations of the idol worship which caused the original Hebrew to place himself on the other side of universal consensus. As the polls predict a significant increase in the popularity of a local political party whose only platform is combating the religious public, we must ask ourselves whether this passion for turning Israel into a secular, democratic state in imitation of the western world is consistent with the heritage of the Hebrew.

It is to be hoped that an honest evaluation of "Who is a Hebrew" will inevitably lead to a Torah-based definition of "Who is a Jew" and guarantee the Jewish-Hebrew character of Israel forever.

לע"נ
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TWO WAYS TO OVERTURN

The longest *haftara* of the year is the one we read at Mincha on Yom Kippur – an entire *sefer* from the *Trei Assar* collection of twelve minor prophecies. The entire dramatic account revolves around the mission which G-d gave to the Prophet Yonah regarding the sinful Assyrian Empire. After an unsuccessful attempt to evade his mission and a sojourn in the belly of a whale, Yonah finally reached the capital city of Nineveh and announced in the name of G-d that “in another forty days Nineveh will be overturned” (*Yonah* 3:4).

This statement, it turns out from our *gemara*, was a double entendre, a twofold prediction of which the prophet understood only one meaning.

A disciples of Rabbi Chisda stated in the presence of his teacher that a prophet who withholds his prophecy and fails to communicate it to its intended audience is liable for lashes. Rabbi Chisda challenged him that there could be no witnesses to such withholding to issue him the warning, which is a prerequisite for any corporal or capital punishment. To this the Sage Abaye responded that his fellow prophets would be aware of the prophecy and could warn him against withholding. Their awareness of the prophecy of others is found in the words of the Prophet Amos who declared that “G-d will not do anything without first revealing it to His servants, the prophets” (*Amos* 3:7).

The challenges, however, continued. Perhaps the decree contained in prophecy received by that prophet was subsequently annulled by the heavenly host? If that were so, came the answer, G-d would have informed the other prophets of this as well. At this point the experience of Yonah is cited. The decree to overturn Nineveh was annulled, as we read at the end of the *haftara*, and Yonah was not informed in advance!

Yonah, it is finally explained, never received a prophecy of destruction to require informing him when the decree was annulled. He was told that Nineveh would be “overturned” which could also mean that the people of that city would “turn over” their behavior and repent. It was Yonah who mistakenly interpreted it as an absolute prophecy of destruction and the events finally set him straight without the need for a prophecy of rectification.

• *Sanhedrin* 89b

DISOWNING THE UNDESERVING

Avraham had three sets of children – Yitzchak from his wife Sarah, Yishmael from his servant Hagar, and six sons from his concubine Keturah. Before his passing

he bequeathed his entire fortune to Yitzchak and gave the others some gifts (*Bereishet* 25:5-6).

This bit of history was cited by the Sage Gaviha ben Pasisa before the court of Alexander of Macedon to refute the claim made to a share of *Eretz Yisrael* on the basis of being heirs to the patriarch to whom the land was given. In his triumphant argument he pointed out that just as a father has a right to divide up his estate during his lifetime as he sees fit, so did Avraham bequeath *Eretz Yisrael* to Yitzchak and his descendants only.

But, asks Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi in his commentary on Chumash, why did Avraham, who fulfilled all the *mitzvot*, ignore what our Sages say (*Mesechta Ketubot* 53) about the impropriety of disowning one son in favor of the other even when one is good and the other evil (because one can never know what good descendants will come from the evil son)? His own answer to this is that Avraham understood from G-d’s statement to him when Sarah asked him to banish Yishmael from their home, that “your seed will be called those of Yitzchak” (*Bereishet* 21:12), that it was a Divine directive to disown the others.

Maharsha, however, takes a different approach. A child born of a female servant is not considered the child of his father and has no right of inheritance. The children of Keturah were indeed born after she was freed and permitted in marriage but their status as the offspring of a concubine did not entitle them to the equality mentioned by the aforementioned *gemara*.

This insight of the Maharsha helps explain a *gemara* in *Mesechta Kiddushin* (68a) which bases the rule that that a union between a Jew and a Canaite servant woman cannot constitute a halachic marriage on the statement which Avraham made to Eliezer and Yishmael as he approached Mount Moriah to sacrifice Yitzchak. “Sit here with the donkey,” he told them, thus equating them with an animal which has no institution of marriage. While this is generally assumed to be a reference to Eliezer who was indeed a slave, the plural term used by Avraham indicates that it included Yishmael as well.

• *Sanhedrin* 91a

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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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.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

RABBI CHANINA – A LOVER'S STONES

The great Talmudic Sage, Rabbi Chanina, is described as demonstrating his love for Eretz Yisrael by picking up stones (*Mesechta Ketubot 112a*). There are two versions of what he actually did.

One is that he removed obstacles from city streets so that the roads of the land he so loved would not gain a bad reputation.

A second version deals with his arrival in his beloved



country from Babylon. The Midrash recounts that in order to determine whether he had finally reached his destination, this Sage kept picking up stones on the way and testing their weight. He discarded the lightweight ones and eventually picked up some stones which had real substance. "These are stones of Eretz Yisrael," he excitedly proclaimed as he kissed them in fulfillment of King David's description of "Your servants desiring its stones" (*Tehillim 102:15*).

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PRAYS WITH PRAISE

From: H. in Philadelphia, PA

Dear Rabbi,
If G-d is so great, why does He need us to praise Him so much in our prayers?

Dear H.,

He doesn't. We do.

Regarding prayers and our relationship to G-d, the commentaries discuss your question at great length. Most explain that the purpose of prayer is not for the benefit of G-d but for the benefit of the person praying.

Here are two relevant quotations, and then I will comment.

Maimonides teaches that "It is a positive commandment to pray every day, as it is written, 'You shall serve the Lord Your G-d with all your heart.' The eighteen blessings are divided into three sections: the first three are praise to G-d, the last three are thanksgiving, and the middle blessings are requests which are major categories for all the needs of the individual and the community..." (*Mishne Torah, Laws of Prayer 1:1,4*)

The Talmud instructs us that "One should always arrange the praise of G-d first, and only afterwards pray." (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 32a*)

In prayer, we first of all state to ourselves to whom we are praying, and to whom we are relating so that we should have no misconceptions and think that we are "changing G-d's mind". This section of prayer is called "Praise".

In the second stage we then reflect upon our dependence on G-d for everything. We reflect upon the uses of the tools that G-d gives us. This stage is called "Requests".

Finally, we express our appreciation that we are happier people, and instilled with humility and gratitude. This final step is called "Thanksgiving".

G-d does not "need" any of the above; rather, it is we who need it. As we pray, we are therefore changing ourselves to some degree (if we do it properly). Being changed means that a new and different Divine providence applies to us after the prayer. On the highest levels, prayer allows a person to reach spiritual heights close to prophecy as the Code of Jewish Law states: "One who prays must think in his heart of the meaning of the words that he says with his lips. He must imagine that he is standing before the Shechina (Divine Presence), and he must remove all thoughts that may bother him until his thoughts and intent are purely [involved] in prayer... the pious Sages of antiquity would meditate and focus on the prayers until they would divest themselves of their physicality, and their intellect would completely overpower [all other aspects of the self], and they would come close to the prophetic level..." (*Orach Chaim, 98:1*)

May all our prayers be answered in the way we would like (if we ask for what is in truth good for us!).

Of course, perhaps the most important message to keep in mind when praying is that G-d understands what we truly need a lot better than we do! There is a very thought-provoking story that amplifies the idea.

Someone once came to Rabbi Kahanaman (the late Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevizch and one of the driving forces behind the revival of Torah in *Eretz Yisrael* after the Second World War) to complain that he prays to G-d but G-d doesn't answer.

The Ponevizcher Rav answered "G-d does answer. The answer is 'No!'"

Or, as the Chofetz Chaim put it, "Be careful what you pray for...you may get it!"

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE PRICE IS WRONG

Question: Reuven wants to buy a house from Shimon but doesn't want to pay the price he is asking. He hits on a plan how he can get Reuven to come down in price. He will get a couple of his friends to approach Shimon as potential customers and when they hear the price he demands they will back out, claiming that this house is way overpriced, and thus influence Shimon to lower his price for Reuven's sake. Is this ethical?

Answer: This is unethical and forbidden by halacha. Two Talmudic examples are cited as the basis for this ruling.

In *Mesechta Succah (34b)* we find that the Sage Shmuel was enraged at the price gouging perpetrated by the merchants selling *hadassim* for use in fulfilling the mitzvah of the Four Species on Succot. He insisted that they lower their prices or else he would issue a ruling that *hadassim* whose tops were missing were also kosher. Since there were plenty of such *hadassim* available, the price of even the perfect *hadassim* would drop.

In his commentary, Ritva notes that Shmuel held that imper-

fect *hadassim* qualified for the mitzvah but that there was a preference to use perfect ones. He was therefore not manipulating the price of the perfect *hadassim* through any falsehood. From this we can deduce that if *hadassim* without tops were indeed not kosher Shmuel would not have made such a threat. The spurious bargaining of Reuven's friends is therefore forbidden both for being a lie and a deception. In addition, Reuven is guilty of transgressing the Tenth Commandment which forbids one against coveting another's home to the point where he tries to pressure him to sell at a price to which he is not agreeable.

The flip side of such unethical behavior is found in *Mesechta Kiddushin* (beginning of Third *perek*) of the Jerusalem Talmud. There we learn of a strong condemnation made by Rabbi Zeira of a fellow who saw someone about to purchase something and offered the seller a higher price, only in order to force the original buyer to make a higher offer.

• Based on the response of Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein, Rabbi of the Ramat Elchanan Community in Bnei Brak

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

MAZAL TOV! ZAKA TO THE RESCUE

Mazal, a 14-year old girl living in the charedi town of Emanuel in the Shomron, was very excited about participating in the wedding of her brother scheduled for late August. But a terrorist attack on the bus she was riding in almost put an end to her hopes.

A little over a month before the wedding the bus she was on was just about to enter Emanuel when a terrorist ambush claimed the lives of nine people. One of the many seriously wounded was Mazal, who went into a coma. When she finally emerged from the coma she begged the doctors to allow her to go and dance at her brother's wedding. Their answer, based on her delicate condition, was negative.

To the rescue came Moti Buckchin, a volunteer in the ZAKA organization. The prime responsibility of this highly respected organization is to identify the victims of terrorist attacks and traffic accidents and to assure that all parts of their bodies are brought to burial in accordance with religious law. The ZAKA volunteers are often the first ones to arrive at the scene of a terrorist attack and to administer emergency medical treatment.

This time, however, a ZAKA volunteer dealt with life rather than death. Moti set up a satellite feed from the brother's wedding to Mazal's bed so that she could virtually participate in his wedding.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

... there are some 600 students in the eight English-language departments of Ohr Somayach and its foreign-language branches?

PARSHA INSIGHTS

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“great” – a view that everything is connected. That’s the “great” of Shabbat. It’s the road map of time.

The essence of taking the wisdom of happiness into the despair of depression is to see that the day and night of our emotions and moods are as connected as day and night itself. Day inevitably follows the night just as night inevitably follows day. Realizing that we have an emotional clock that turns constantly from day to night gives us the perspective to deal with our feelings of disconnection. However black and disconnected we feel, we can remind ourselves that the darkest hour is just before dawn.

For several years I have had the privilege to teach young men who have grown up on a diet of MTV. One of the things that never fail to amaze me is how these same young men who have been trained to have attention span of about two minutes and 43 seconds – the average length of a pop song – can sit down and learn Talmud in depth. Learning the Talmud demands the ability to “*hold kop*” — to hold in one’s head several pieces of information, to compare them and make very fine distinctions between them, the mental

equivalent of juggling balls that are constantly changing their weight, shape and direction. And yet they do it. How?

In this week’s Torah portion, Yaakov prepares to descend into the darkness of exile in Egypt. The light is about to go out and nearly two hundred years of slavery are about to begin. Before Yaakov goes to down to Egypt he sends before him his son Yehuda to open the Egyptian equivalent of a Yeshiva. Everything the patriarchs did is a spiritual beacon for their descendents till the end of time. Yaakov was showing us that even in the blackest spiritual darkness of Egypt, the Torah could still be learned. Moreover, the very nature of Torah learning, the mental effort required to assemble all the pieces together, is the very antidote to the “smallness of mind” that the darkness brings.

Learning Torah allows us to see the big picture. It takes the darkness of depression and transforms it into the wisdom of happiness.

Sources:

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Rabbi David Olesker

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