

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT BO · 6 SHVAT 5776 - JAN. 16, 2016 · VOL. 23 NO. 15

PARSHA INSIGHTS

TRADITION!

“...And so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son... that you know that I am G-d.” (10:2)

It seems that Maxwell House may have made an unwitting contribution to the perpetuation of Judaism. How many Maxwell House *Haggadot* have graced the Seder tables of families for whom the Seder is all that is left of their Judaism?

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 85a) teaches that “Anyone who is a *talmid chacham*, and both his son and his son’s son are *talmidei chachamim*, the Torah will never depart from his progeny.” The medieval commentaries of the Tosefot explain that this promise refers only where they all see each other and are able to speak and converse together. The Chida and the Nachal Kadmonim say that this is the meaning of the above verse in this week’s Torah portion: When is it that you will know that “I am G-d”? When you “relate in the ears of you son and your son’s son”. When all three see and communicate with each other, then the train of transmission becomes immutable.

And even amongst Jews who are far from being *talmidei chachamim*, that chain of generations is often a last holdout against total Jewish oblivion.

At a typical Pesach Seder there could be at least three generations at the table: a grandfather, a father, and a son. Let’s say that the average gap between the generations is

30 years. So a typical Seder represents a span of 60 years of Jewish history: 30 years between the grandfather and the father, and a further 30 years between the father and the son. However, the grandfather sitting at our table was a grandson at his grandfather’s Seder. And similarly, our grandson will be a grandfather at his grandson’s Seder. So really, there aren’t three generations represented at the table, but seven.

So our Seder could span as much as $7 \times 30 = 210$ years.

If you divide 210 years into the time elapsed since the first Seder (approx. 3,300 years ago), you come out with an amazing number:

$$3,300 \div 210 = 15.714285$$

In other words, we just shrank the vast expanse of 3,300 years of history into just 16 *Sedarim*. That’s all that separates us from the experience of leaving Egypt — 16 *Sedarim*.

“And you shall tell your son on that day... (13:18)”

The whole of Judaism is founded on 16 fathers passing the experience of the Exodus to 16 sons, witnessed by those 7 generations that each Seder spans.

Tradition is 16 *Sedarim* long.

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land — may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

GITTIN 37 - 43

Rabbah said, “On account of these three things ba’alei batim lose their wealth: they free their Canaanite slaves (and thereby transgress a positive mitzvah — Rashi), they check their properties on Shabbat (to know what needs fixing during the week — Rashi) and they set their meal-times on Shabbat at the time of the Beit Midrash (when the Sage teaches the public on Shabbat, and they should have planned their meals to be either earlier or later — Rashi).”

What is the connection between these three negative behaviors and these people losing their wealth?

Freeing his Canaanite slave shows utter disregard for the wealth that G-d granted him, by discarding at least part of his wealth in a manner that transgresses a commandment of the Torah.

Checking his properties on Shabbat to see what needs to be fixed during the week is a forbidden activity and a forbidden thought. Therefore, when he works during the week on his properties to actualize these forbidden thoughts, his work will be in vain — measure for measure.

Having Shabbat meals at the time for Torah study shows a person’s priorities. One whose highest priority is learning Torah will receive financial blessing from G-d. One whose priority is eating his meals instead of attending the communal Torah lecture does not merit a Divine financial blessing. (Maharsha)

• Gittin 38b

“We (the Beit Din) force his master to make him a free person...”

The *mishna* teaches about how to deal with a case of a Canaanite slave who is “half-free”; for example, he was owned by two partners and one partner freed him while the other one didn’t. Initially Beit Hillel taught that he could alternate working for himself and for his remaining master, while retaining the status of half-slave/half-free. Beit Shammai, however, questioned the merit of this arrangement, since the person’s current status does not allow him to marry or procreate. Therefore, Beit Shammai avers that the best solution is to force his master to free him, a solution that Beit Hillel concurs with at the conclusion of the *mishna*.

Since the master is transgressing a mitzvah by freeing him completely — “they (your Canaanite slaves) will serve you forever” (Lev. 25:46) — how can we force the master to commit a transgression in order to benefit him by allowing him to marry and procreate? In fact, the Talmud in a number of places states rhetorically, “Can we say to a person ‘Transgress!’ in order to help another person?” The Rishonim seek to understand how the conclusion of our *mishna* does not contradict this other principle, one which is also cited as halacha in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 328:10, Rema.

Tosefot here offers two possible answers. One is that a person may transgress to benefit another if the other person did not act negligently, and needs to be helped from a problematic situation which was not of his doing. Another answer is that for the sake of the fulfillment of a great mitzvah this principle is overridden and we allow a transgression. For a comprehensive treatment of this topic I recommend “Avotot Ahava — Kiruv Rechokim B’Halacha” (*chelek 4 perek 1*), authored by Rabbi Moshe Newman and Rabbi Mordechai Becher and published by Feldheim Publishers.

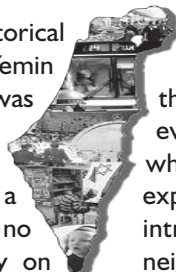
• Gittin 42a-b

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE WINDLESS WINDMILL

One of Jerusalem’s most famous historical sites is the large windmill in the Yemin Moshe neighborhood. This windmill was sent to Jerusalem from London by Sir Moses Montefiore to enable the Jews of Batei Yehuda Touro to grind their own wheat and to earn a livelihood by serving other Jews who would no longer be dependent on the Arab monopoly on



wheat grinding.

Despite the good intentions behind its establishment, the windmill had a very short lifespan. It soon became evident that there was not enough of a steady wind where it stood and it could therefore not live up to the expectations of those who saw it as the first attempt to introduce economic self-sufficiency into a Jerusalem neighborhood.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makat bechorot* took place at *exactly* midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at *approximately* midnight?
6. Why did the first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
8. G-d told Moshe, "...so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
9. Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what two *mitzvot* involving blood did G-d give to the Jewish People?
12. Rashi gives two explanations of the word "*Pasachti*." What are they?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makat bechorot*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makat bechorot*?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael*?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose first-born is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
6. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
7. 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
8. 11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
9. 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
10. 12:5 - One year.
11. 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
12. 12:13 - "I had mercy" and "I skipped."
13. 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of his home.
14. 12:31 - "Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?"
15. 12:32 - So he wouldn't die, for he himself was a first-born.
16. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matzah was dear to them.
17. 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between the parts" was decreed.
19. 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
20. 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.

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Abarbanel

ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

Bo

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Moshe and Aharon warn Pharaoh that a plague of locusts will descend on Egypt the following day. Moshe and Aharon leave, but Pharaoh's servants, fearing the total destruction of Egypt, convince Pharaoh to bring them back. The Torah relates the following exchange between Moshe and Pharaoh: "So Moshe and Aharon were returned to Pharaoh and he said to them, 'Go and serve G-d, your G-d; which ones are going?' Moshe said, 'With our youngsters and with our elders shall we go; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flock and with our cattle shall we go, because it is a festival of G-d for us.' He said to them, 'So be G-d with you as I will send you forth with your children. Look! The evil intent is opposite your faces. Not so; let the men go now. Serve G-d, for that is what you seek.' And he drove them out from Pharaoh's presence." (Shemot 10:8-11)

Abarbanel finds the exchange very confusing and offers a number of different ways to interpret both Moshe and Pharaoh's words. From verse eleven it is clear that Pharaoh was willing to let the men go. By asking which ones are going he may have been referring to a select group of men. Abarbanel is puzzled by Moshe's response. Instead of listing every group he should have simply said that *everyone* is going. Abarbanel answers that Moshe was unsure of what Pharaoh actually meant. He may have been referring only to the males, or perhaps he was asking if females were included as well. Similarly, he may have been distinguishing between adults and children. Finally, he may have been distinguishing between the people and their animals. As a result, Moshe had to enumerate each specific group. Abarbanel initially interprets Pharaoh's response, "So may G-d be with you as I will send you forth with your children" as a sarcastic rejoinder, meaning "I have no intention of sending your children, and certainly none of the other groups either!"

Pharaoh then says, "Look! The evil intent is opposite your faces." Abarbanel offers three possible explanations of Pharaoh's

words:

- 1) Pharaoh felt that they simply wanted to flee; that evil intention could be seen on Moshe and Aharon's faces.
- 2) The evil intent that Pharaoh was referring to was his own. He was telling Moshe and Aharon that his anger could very well flare up against them and he would kill them with the sword, as he sensed that the people intended to flee.
- 3) As mentioned above, Pharaoh's rejoinder was sarcastic. He had no intention of sending everyone and he was contemptuous of Moshe's arrogance in including the other groups. His statement, "Look! The evil intent is opposite your faces" is actually directed towards his servants who had urged him to listen to Moshe and Aharon. He is telling them to look at the evil in the dishonest and duplicitous requests of Moshe, and to stop blaming him (Pharaoh) for what had befallen Egypt.

Finally, Pharaoh's last statement, "Not so; let the men go now. Serve G-d, for that is what you seek" also has three interpretations:

- 1) If it is actually true that you have no intention of fleeing, then go with the men only, as this is what I believe you really want.
- 2) Pharaoh's previous statement, "So may G-d be with you as I will send you forth with your children" was actually not meant sarcastically. He did intend to send the children also. However, now, by saying 'Not so' he is changing his mind; only the men can go.
- 3) The entire exchange between Pharaoh and Moshe was similar to a bargaining session between a buyer and seller. Each comes with an extreme position, and eventually they meet in the middle. Moshe starts out by asking that *everyone* go. Pharaoh starts out by referring to only a select group of *men* — no old men and no children. They finally compromise: all the men — young, old and children — can go. Since Pharaoh feels that he has been more than generous, there is nothing more to be said, and he dismisses them curtly.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned. G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too. Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the first-born, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns

Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month. The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the first-born of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating *chametz* on Pesach. Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first-born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the first-born son) and *tefillin*.

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

RETURNING TO ROOTS

From: Menachem

Dear Rabbi,

There is a young man who has been coming to our shul recently who is in the process of becoming a ba'al teshuva. I have become a bit of a mentor for him and he asks me a lot of questions.

My question to you is this: Our shul is regular Ashkenazi and the boy comes from a Sefardi family with no connection to Yiddishkeit. He seems to feel very much at home in a community such as ours, but I'm wondering if I should encourage him to join a Sefardi community instead. And if so, when?

Dear Menachem,

It is true that Jewish family traditions and affiliations should be preserved, and, generally, children should maintain the correct Jewish ways of their parents reaching back to Sinai.

But in this case, since the young man seems to have little background, and this is his first exposure to Yiddishkeit, the main thing at this point is that he should be happy where he is, have close, personal contact with warm and caring people such as you, and feel like a part of a community.

Since it sounds like that's what he's getting now, there's no need to encourage him at this point to make any changes.

In addition, at this early stage, religious distinctions between Ashkenazim and Sefardim are not significant and could be confusing. The main point should be to encourage and help him with general, basic issues of belief and matters of practical observance.

You might at some point mention the subject as part of his growing, general Jewish knowledge, emphasizing the illustrious, rich and unique tradition from which his family comes. You should certainly encourage him to try to find out more about who his ancestors were, where they were from and what role they played in their Jewish community. Often times, such people find there's much to be proud of in their Jewish ancestry.

But since there are observant Ashkenazim that for valid reasons choose to practice as Sefardim, and observant Sefardim

that go Ashkenaz, as long as he's content, growing and feels a part of the community, there's no need for him to change in the meantime.

Once he becomes aware of his being Sefardi, and understands the importance of maintaining such a wonderful tradition, which in his case would mean re-establishing his family's broken tradition, if he would like to pursue that option he should be encouraged to do so. But that doesn't necessarily mean changing suddenly and drastically. Rather, initially he should do both – continuing to enjoy his affiliation with you and your shul, while exploring various options that would familiarize him with Sefardi communities.

If and when he starts to take an interest in such a direction, it will be very important that you be personally involved in order to guide him and make sure he gets connected with a reliable rabbi and a community that will be good for him. Even then, you should not just pass him on to the care of others, but should maintain contact with him in order to smooth his transition.

I know a young man whose mother is Jewish but his father was not – obviously he was not raised observant. Eventually, his parents got divorced and his father later converted to Orthodox Judaism. The young man, being Jewish, was inspired by his father's move to Judaism and slowly became religious himself. Once he became fully immersed in Yiddishkeit, he happened to meet a rabbi from a Chasidic group which, while very small now, was one of the largest Chasidic groups before being decimated in the Holocaust. As it turned out, his mother was actually from a prestigious family in that very important Chasidut, which the young man later joined.

In a most hidden and mysterious way, Divine Providence guided this non-religious Jewish young man via the conversion of his non-Jewish father back to the barely remnant, but illustrious family cradle that his Jewish mother rejected, but which he has re-discovered and from which he is continuing in the path of his ancestors.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

THE PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS — PART I

Throughout the ages the prayers of the righteous have shielded the Jewish People from much harm and have served as a conduit for success and salvation for countless individuals.

Moshe Stood Between G-d and the People

Moshe's love for the Jewish People was so great that he even challenged G-d in an attempt to save them. After being informed by G-d that He wanted to destroy the Jewish People and start anew with Moshe and his descendants, Moshe, instead of agreeing, argued on behalf of the Jewish People. How does a human being challenge his Maker? With the purest of motives and genuine love Moshe stood between G-d and the Jewish People, shielding them from Divine retribution with his prayers.

Moshe declared, "And now, if You would please forgive their sin - but if not, erase me now from Your book (the Torah) that You have written (Shemot 32:32)."

The Sun Stood at Givon

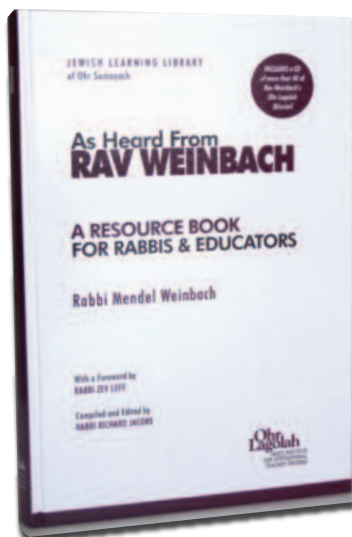
We also find that Yehoshua decreed and G-d answered him, as it is written, "Sun, stand still at Givon, and the moon,

in the Valley of Ayalon. Then the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the people took retribution against their enemies. (Yehoshua 10:12-13)"

Revival of the Dead

So too with Eliyahu Hanavi we find the great power in his words, as it is written:

"The son of the woman, the landlady, became ill. His illness became very serious, until there was no more breath left in him. She said to Eliyahu, 'What is there between me and you, O man of G-d, that you have come to me to call attention to my sins, and to cause my son to die!' He said to her, 'Give me your son.' He took him from her bosom and brought him to the upper story where he was dwelling, and laid him on his [own] bed. He called out to G-d and said, 'G-d, my L-rd, have You brought harm even upon the widow with whom I dwell, to cause her son to die?' He stretched himself out over the boy three times, and he called out to G-d and said, 'O G-d, my L-rd, please let this boy's soul come back within him!' G-d hearkened to the voice of Eliyahu, and the soul of the boy came back within him, and he came to life." (Melachim II chapter 4)



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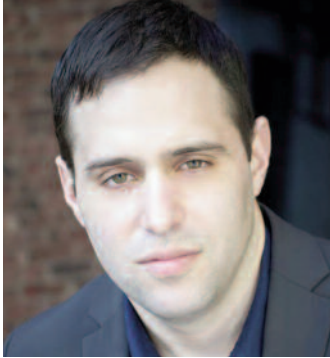
AUSTIN GREEN

Age: 34 - Manhattan, NY
Columbia University, BA in Liberal Arts

One could not reasonably predict that a young boy growing up in the affluent and secular Upper West Side of Manhattan would one day become a religious Jew. In fact, the odds are quite long against it. Add to that a private-school education at the Collegiate School of Manhattan — the oldest private boys' school in the United States (founded by the Dutch West India Company in 1628), and the odds are longer still. But that's not even the half of it. Austin Green's mom is a well-known and extremely accomplished photographer, photojournalist and photography professor. She is an artist and belongs to the New York art scene — not exactly a bastion of religious Jewry. After completing his private-school education, Austin entered and graduated from Columbia University in New York. His path to the upper echelons of a secular American society was a paved fast lane. He entered into the field of finance and worked for various banks in New York City, including RBS and Morgan Stanley. He wrote credit policy and was a mortgage underwriter.

While in college he had his first exposure to Yiddishkeit. "I was given a taste of Torah almost a decade ago when I attended the Aish Essentials program for a summer, but knew it was not enough. After I finished college I wanted to return to complete at least a year of yeshiva, but like many of us I mistakenly allowed life to make other plans. After almost a decade of great success in the world of finance I came to Ohr Somayach to deepen my knowledge of Torah and learn the practical applications necessary to lead a fully mitzvah-observant life. The reason I left a fantastic career was because I realized that the constant striving for material success that infuses everything American was making my life, and all that comes with it, a lot worse. The more money I

made, the nicer car I drove, and the older I became, the less intrinsically happy I was. I knew deep down that all of it wouldn't matter in the end anyway, and that wasn't at all what life was really supposed to be about. There was no question that what I really needed was to fast track myself with Torah, and only then would I be able to make the right decisions and live the life we are meant to lead. Only after doing so would I find the happiness in a job, wife and children that I had sought during all the years I let other things come between myself and Hashem.



"For a *ba'al teshuvah* who realizes the truth of Hashem, the immeasurable gifts He has given us, and the ways to further the deepest connection via study of the Oral Tradition, there is hardly a better place than Ohr Somayach. The Rabbis teaching us are of a caliber one would expect at a world-renowned university; in fact several of the teachers are former graduate-level professors. As someone who can finally appreciate the importance and privilege of learning, it is phenomenal that one can find such a quality

Torah education. There is no other place in the world where it is easier for an intelligent *ba'al teshuvah* to find his way. I feel so blessed to have been given the opportunity to learn here as it is paving the way for a newly cemented life that I have been hoping for the majority of my adult years. After sitting on the "sidelines" for so long I am finally on my way to realizing my place in the world to come, and there is literally no better gift than that. Thank you Ohr Somayach!"

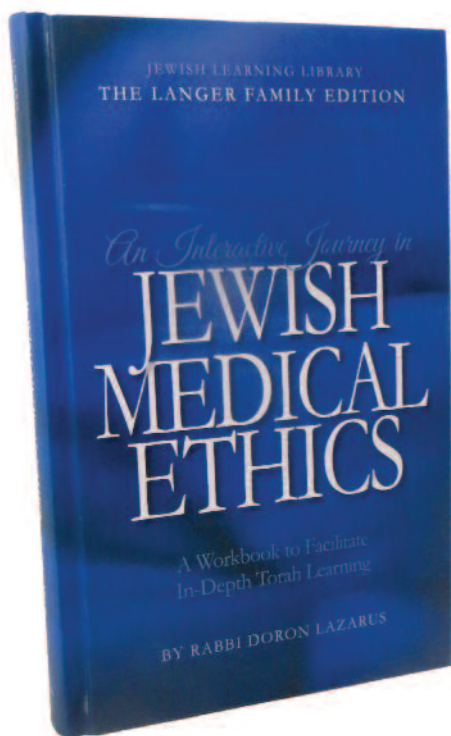
Austin came to Ohr Somayach's Mechina program in December and he is already making rapid progress. He is again on the fast track — the fast track to a life of Torah, *mitzvot* and meaning. We expect great things from Austin and welcome him into the Ohr Somayach family.

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