

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TISA · 18 ADAR I 5776 - FEB. 27, 2016 · VOL. 23 NO. 21

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE NAME ESCAPES ME

“Moshe pleaded before G-d...Repent from Your flaring anger and reconsider... Remember for the sake of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, Your servants... and You told them ‘I shall increase your offspring like the stars of the heaven’.” (32:11-13)

When the Torah speaks of the Patriarchs, the appellation of choice is nearly always, “Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.” Why here does the Torah use the name “Yisrael” instead of the nearly ubiquitous “Yaakov?”

When Moshe was trying to appease G-d after the incident of the golden calf, he claimed that G-d could not annihilate the Jewish People, because He had already promised the Patriarchs that their seed would become a great nation. G-d rejoined that He would fulfill His promise to them by making Moshe’s offspring a great nation instead. To which Moshe replied that when G-d changed Yaakov’s name to Yisrael, at that same time He promised to make him “a nation and a congregation of nations,” (Ber. 35:11). The spiritual masters explain that

“a nation” refers to Binyamin who was yet to be born, and “a congregation of nations” means Menashe and Ephraim, who in the future would come from Yosef.

Had G-d destroyed the Jewish People (G-d forbid), and fulfilled His promise to the Patriarchs through the offspring of Moshe, He would have still left unfulfilled His promise about the tribe of Binyamin and the tribe of Yosef, from which came Menashe and Ephraim. For this reason G-d could not rebuild the Jewish People from Moshe’s descendants.

This is why Moshe, at this crucial moment in Jewish history, mentioned the name “Yisrael”, to “remind” G-d of the pledge He swore to Yaakov at the time He changed his name to “Yisrael”.

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 79 - 85

Rabbi Eliezer permits one who divorces his wife to give her a get and say to her, “You are allowed to marry anyone except for Ploni (he names a specific man)”, whereas the Chachamim (majority of the Sages) forbid this... What should he do (according to the Chachamim)? Take back the get and give it again and say, “You are permitted to marry any man.”

The *gemara* proves that this is the correct intent of the *mishna*, which uses an “unusual” word for “except for” — “*ella*” — instead of the seemingly clearer word “*chutz*”. The *gemara* teaches that this dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the Chachamim, as to whether the husband must say that he permits her to now marry *any* man in order for the get to effect divorce, is based on how to understand a verse in the Torah (the Sages cite two possible sources: Devarim 24:2 and Vayikra 21:7).

The halacha is according to the Chachamim and is codified in Shulchan Aruch Even Ha'Ezer 137:1.

The *gemara* also clarifies why he must *take the get back* and then return it to her while saying the correct words for the divorce to be valid. The *gemara* asks later (84b) why he must give it to her a second time, and not just correct his statement? In other cases, such as if he gave it to her while she slept, it is enough to say these words to her when she awakes, and he does *not* need to take the get back from her and give it a second time (78a). The *gemara* answers that when he gave her the get and said this incorrect wording she gained a type of ownership of the get, despite the giving of the get not causing an actual divorce. In the words of the *gemara*, “she acquired it to become forbidden to a *kohen*”. Therefore, if he didn't take it back the get would not effect a divorce, but it was hers in a sense with the first giving, causing a different outcome of only being forbidden to marry a *kohen* (Rashi; the Aruch Hashulchan 137:3 explains this concept in detail, especially why the same get may be given twice.)

• Gittin 82a

Rabbi Yehoshua said to them, “You cannot ask questions on the lion after his passing.”

This statement of Rabbi Yehoshua concludes a *tosefta* in which four different Sages posed four different challenges to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer that is taught in the *mishna* (see Tip #1 above). As the *tosefta* states, these Sages posed these refutations to Rabbi Eliezer — “the lion” — only after his passing from this world. Rabbi Yehoshua seems to be saying to them that this is something that should not be done. If Rabbi Eliezer were still with them in this world, perhaps he would be able to answer them convincingly (Rashi). In fact, the much later Sage Rava states in this *sugya* that he considers each of their challenges to have a flaw, except for the question posed by Rabbi Elazar ben Azariya.

An interesting note, adds the *gemara*, is that the Sage who said *not* to ask these questions after Rabbi Eliezer's passing — Rabbi Yehoshua — also taught in a *beraita* that he too has a different question on Rabbi Eliezer's ruling. The *gemara* answers that Rabbi Yehoshua was including himself in what he told the other Sages, “Whether it be me, or whether it be you, questions should not be asked on the lion after his passing.” (A student once asked me why the *gemara* didn't answer that Rabbi Yehoshua taught his own question while Rabbi Eliezer was still alive in this world. I replied that, if so, then Rabbi Yehoshua would have certainly have recorded Rabbi Eliezer's answer to his challenge.)

• Gittin 83a

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

GUSH CHALAV — TOMB OF THE “AKDAMUT” AUTHOR

One of the highlights of the Shavuot morning service is the melodic chanting of *Akdmut*, a beautiful Aramaic poem that praises G-d, and describes the reward for the righteous in the World-to-Come.



The author of *Akdmut* is Rabbi Meir ben Yitzchak, a twelfth century *shaliach tzibur* (prayer leader) for his German community, and his tomb is in Gush Chalav, about 2.5 miles north of the Meron Junction on Route 89.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many “geira” are in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called “malachim?”
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbat is a “sign.” What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, G-d says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did G-d show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'at* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between G-d and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from G-d!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say “Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people.”
16. 32:34 - Whenever G-d punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. G-d commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

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Abarbanel

ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

Ki Tisa

G-d's Reaction to the Sin of the Golden Calf

G-d spoke to Moshe: “Go, descend, for your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt have become corrupt. They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf, prostrated themselves to it and sacrificed to it, and they said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt’.” G-d said to Moshe: “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. And now, desist from Me. Let my anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them, and I shall make you a great nation.” (Shemot 32:7-10)

Abarbanel finds numerous difficulties with G-d's response. Why does He tell Moshe to go down from Mount Sinai? Shouldn't he remain there and be spared from seeing the destruction of this people? The Hebrew word for “corrupt” in our verse is actually more correctly translated as “causing others to become corrupt”. If so, who is corrupting whom? Why does G-d say “your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt?” This is entirely superfluous. The simple expression “the people” would have sufficed. Why does G-d describe their actions in such great detail? Why does the Torah say, “G-d spoke to Moshe” twice? What is the meaning of the expression “stiff-necked people”? He should have described them as did the prophet Isaiah (1:4): “They are a sinful nation, a people weighed down by iniquity — evil offspring, destructive children!” Why does G-d tell Moshe to leave Him alone? What harm could Moshe possibly do? Finally, why does G-d tell Moshe that He will make him a great nation? It is illogical to think that He was bribing Moshe into accepting His decision to destroy the people.

Moshe's descent from Mount Sinai is really a descent from his lofty spiritual level. He attained that level only in order to lift up the nation by giving them the Torah. Now that they have transgressed so blatantly, there is no longer a need for Moshe to remain on that level. G-d then tells Moshe that it was the “mixed-multitude” of Egyptians who accompanied the Children of Israel out of Egypt who enticed them into worshipping the golden calf. The entire nation would have to suffer, since it did not stand up to reprove the instigators. These Egyptians are called “Moshe's people” because their connection was to Moshe,

not to G-d. The Children of Israel understood that they were brought out of Egypt by G-d; the mixed multitude never had a strong belief in G-d. Rather, they were simply followers of Moshe who had converted them. The transgression is described in detail because the nation transgressed in three ways: against Moshe, against G-d and against themselves. Through their actions they humiliated Moshe, their leader. They rebelled against G-d by straying from the path which they were commanded to follow. They can be compared to a bride who is promiscuous with another man in the midst of her wedding ceremony. They transgressed against themselves by undermining their own honor by worshipping a creation of their own hands, and serving it ways that should have been reserved for their Creator.

The verses are broken up into what appears to be two separate speeches because G-d “paused” in order to see if Moshe would respond to His reproofs. However, Moshe was silent, overwhelmed by shame and unable to respond. G-d then refers to the nation as a “stiff-necked people”. This expression is actually metaphorically comparing them to animals, which follow their immediate needs and are incapable of seeing future consequences. G-d created man and animals with eyes facing forward so that they could avoid the dangers in front of them. But in order to protect them from the dangers behind them He created them with *flexible* necks that could turn from side-to-side. But the nation, in this case, demonstrated that it was *stiff-necked* and incapable of taking into account future consequences, as they could not “look behind them” to see what would happen afterwards — i.e., what they would leave behind. G-d is essentially telling Moshe that there is no purpose in reproving or punishing them.

As a result, G-d then tells Moshe to “leave Me alone” to carry out what I have decided is the proper judgment. He then tells Moshe that his own honor and spiritual loftiness will not be diminished, as the nation will be rebuilt through him. This is indicated by the verse in Parshat Va'etchanan (Deuteronomy 4:7), “For which is a great nation that has a G-d Who is close to it, as is the L-rd, our G-d, whenever we call to Him?” This relationship is not due to the merits of the forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, but rather due to the merit of Moshe.

THE RED HEIFER

From: Mitch

Dear Rabbi,
What is the significance of the red heifer? How was it different from all the other sacrifices? What role does it play in Messianic Times and the Third Temple?

Dear Mitch,

As rare as it may be, the birth of a red heifer is a natural event, not a metaphysical one. There is no source in Jewish tradition that sees the birth of a red heifer as a sign of the arrival of the Mashiach.

According to the Torah, someone who comes into contact with a dead body becomes halachically “impure”. The Torah describes a very specific process that enables a person to purify himself. This process involves slaughtering a heifer that is completely red, burning it and mixing its ashes with water. Some of this “purifying water” is sprinkled on the impure person twice, over a seven-day period.

This had great practical importance during Temple times, because all participants in the Temple service needed to be ritually pure, and the entire nation needed to purify themselves for the Passover, Shavuot, and Succot festivals. It will have practical significance again when the Temple is rebuilt.

Maimonides writes that from the time of Moses until the destruction of the Second Temple, only nine red heifers have been used to prepare the “purifying waters”. The tenth red heifer, says Maimonides, will be prepared by

the Mashiach.

This can easily be misunderstood. It does not mean that there existed only nine red heifers in history, and that the tenth and last one to be born will be used by the Mashiach. It simply means that the ashes from each heifer lasted a long time, and there was never a need to prepare more than nine. The tenth red heifer process will take place in the times of the Mashiach.

Some years ago, a red heifer born in Israel caused a flurry of interest and speculation about its portending the coming of Mashiach. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, a very great halachic authority of the time, was not overly-impressed. He reasoned, “One of the requirements of the red heifer is that it be at least two years old. What if the Mashiach were to come tomorrow? Would we have to wait two years in order to become pure? No, rather, when Mashiach comes, they’ll find a red heifer that’s two-years old!”

The reason underlying the commandment of the red heifer is considered the deepest secret in the Torah. Even King Solomon, the wisest scholar who ever lived, was unable to fathom the full depth of its meaning. According to the Midrash its meaning will be revealed in the era of the Mashiach.

Sources:

- *Bamidbar (Numbers) ch. 19*
- *Mishna Parah 3:5*
- *Rambam, ibid. 3:4*
- *Bamidbar Rabbah 19:4*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe’s descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately,

threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d’s cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

THE AMIDA — THE “SILENT” STANDING PRAYER

“For which is a great nation that has a G-d Who is close to it, as the L-rd our G-d, whenever we call to Him (in prayer)?” (Devarim 4:7)

“**G**-d appears to us as if He is far beyond our reach, yet in truth there is none as close to us as He is. For Rabbi Levy taught, “From the earth to heaven is a distance of five hundred years; and from the first heaven to the next one is also a distance of five hundred years... so to with each of the (seven) heavens. ...See how far away G-d is from us, yet a person merely enters into the *beit ha'kneset* (house of prayer) praying in a mere whisper, and G-d hears the words of his prayer” (Jerusalem Talmud Berachot 9:1).

Shulchan Aruch 101:2

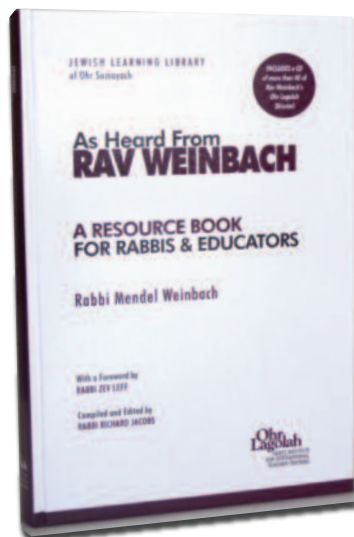
“When one prays he must say the words quietly so that only he can hear what he says. However, if he is not able to concentrate while praying in a whisper, he may raise his voice. This rule applies when one is praying alone, but when one is praying together with the congregation he may not raise his voice since this will disturb the other worshipers.” *Rema*: “It is also permissible for one to raise his voice when praying at home in order for his family to learn from him.”

Many *poskim* (halacha authorities) raise issue with this ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, as it contradicts what he himself

wrote in *Bedek HaBayit*. It states there that according to the Zohar (Vayakhel 202) one should pray silently, moving his lips, *without* even hearing his own words. The Beit Yosef concludes by saying that one should be careful to comply with the Zohar.

The Mishnah Berurah explains that although the Beit Yosef writes to follow the Zohar, others argue with his understanding of the Zohar. They explain that the Zohar could be understood as meaning that one should not let others hear him, but one can, and should, hear his own voice (Magen Avraham; Vilna Gaon). This is also the conclusion of the later Ashkenazic *poskim*, who state that it is better to pronounce the words of prayer loud enough for one to hear himself (Chayei Adam; Shulchan Aruch Harav). All agree that if one did not make his prayer audible he still fulfills his obligation, as long as he moves his lips.

According to the Sefardic *poskim*, who follow the Arizal in all matters of prayer, it is preferable, for one who is able, to follow the Zohar as understood by the Beit Yosef, especially since this is how it is explained by Rabbi Chaim Vital, the main student of the Arizal (Chida; Kaf HaChaim; Ben Ish Chai). He explains, based on kabbalah, that “impure forces” can attach to one’s prayers when they are not said silently (Olat Tamid).



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Part One: The Early Years — from Africa to Australia

One can fly from Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon in Central Africa, to Tel Aviv, with a stopover in Istanbul, in approximately 18 hours. Yoel took a slight detour. It took him more than 20 years.

Growing up in his grandmother's home in Mbanga, a small town 50 minutes from Douala, the largest city in Cameroon, Yoel was a scion of a distinguished clan in the Bamileké Tribe of Bangangté in West Cameroon. His great-grandfather, Men MaFeun Nga'an (the title "Men MaFeun" literally means "son of the king's mother", or "prince"), had been a ruler in the region, and his grandmother was the honored matriarch of the family. When Yoel was around eleven years old she sent him to his granduncle's home in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, for a better educational opportunities and a bright future. His granduncle was a prominent physician, the owner of a medical clinic in the city, and a serious man who expected his grandnephew to study hard and excel.

Yoel flourished in Yaounde and was a serious, astute student. He also became involved in Catholicism, the religion of most of his family. He loved singing and prayer, and he served as an altar boy twice a day, before and after school and on Sundays, at the city's main cathedral.

When he was fifteen, and in his second year of high school, Yoel's grandmother and other important family members decid-

ed that for the benefit of his further education he should move to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia to live with mother's younger brother who was a businessman there. There he would attend the International School, which was conducted in English. Until this point Yoel spoke French, which is one of the two official languages in Cameroon, along with his grandmother's local dialect, alternatively called Medimba or Bangangté. He enrolled in diploma-level courses in business administration and in architecture. He also attended a Catholic church in Kuala Lumpur, but, being one of the only Africans in the congregation, he did not feel comfortable there. When his aunt who was the pastor of a Pentecostal church in the city invited him to come to her church, he went.



Yoel loved the singing and the familiar melodies, and joined the choir in his aunt's church. He felt more comfortable there. Over time he became more interested in the study of the religious texts. Although the Pentecostal theology was somewhat different from Catholicism, there were enough similarities for him to make a smooth transition. Nearly three years later he left Malaysia with a Diploma in Business Administration and one year of architecture studies, and moved to Sydney, Australia.

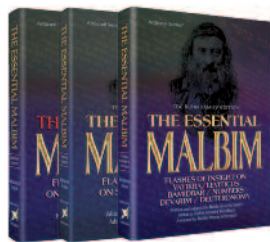
Until this point in his life Yoel had yet to meet a Jew. In fact, he wasn't even sure that Jews actually still existed. To him, Jews were a "mythical people", who had become an accursed nation that sowed conflict and dissension wherever they went. He was soon to learn otherwise.

To be continued...

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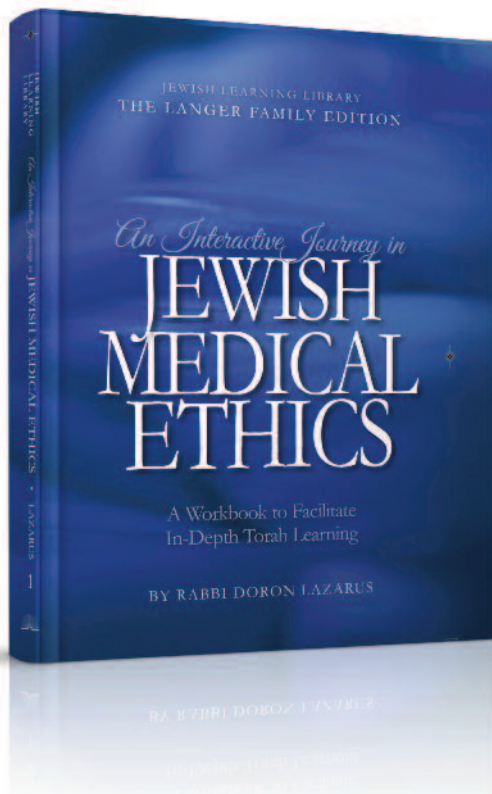
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