

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TAVO · 18 AV 5770 · AUG. 28, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 47

PARSHA INSIGHTS

TO THE LIFEBOAT

“All these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you will not have hearkened to the voice of the L-rd, your G-d, to observe His commandments and decrees that He commanded you.” (28:45)

Once asked my Rabbi why I, alone among my friends, had chosen to return to the faith of our fathers. My friends, almost without exception, had married non-Jews and were busy parenting non-Jewish children.

He replied to me with two words in Hebrew “*Zechut avot.*” The merit of the fathers. “The Torah must have been very dear to someone in your family,” he said. “Someone, your grandfather, your grandmother, *davened* very hard that they should have Jewish grandchildren.”

Imagine you just bought a refrigerator. It turns up in a wooden crate. You take out the fridge and throw away the wood. Imagine you’re on a sinking boat with the same refrigerator. You take the wood and throw away the refrigerator. When most of the Jewish World was

reaching for a new fridge — someone in my past was hanging on to the wood for dear life.

It is our plank of wood in a stormy sea. It’s not so much that the Jewish People have kept the Torah — rather the Torah has kept us.

“It is a tree of life to those who hold onto it, and its supporters are praiseworthy.” We say these words from *Mishle* (The Book of Proverbs) every time we put the Torah back into the Holy Ark. Maybe we say them then as we are putting the Torah away and out of sight to remind us what the Torah really means to the Jewish People.

It is our plank of wood in a stormy sea. It’s not so much that the Jewish People have kept the Torah — rather the Torah has kept us.

The month of Elul is a time when we rededicate ourselves to the Torah and its values. We must hold onto it for dear life. For it is our only unsinkable lifeboat.

• Sources: Rabbi Moshe Newman

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

When *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in the Land of Israel, the first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the *kohen* in a ceremony expressing recognition that it is G-d who guides Jewish history throughout all ages. (This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Passover Seder.) On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year *shemita* cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this *mitzvah*, Moshe concludes the commandments that G-d has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in G-d's ways because they are set aside as a treasured people to G-d. When *Bnei Yisrael* cross the

Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, and they are to be covered with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim and half on Mount Eval, and the *levi'im* will stand in a valley between the two mountains. There the *levi'im* will recite 12 commandments and all the people will say "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon *Bnei Yisrael*. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. But if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

ISRAEL Forever

WE KEEPING KOSHER – KOSHER KEEPING US

In the *tochacha* warning of the curses which will befall the Jewish People which dominates this week's Torah reading, we read this among the Heavenly punishments they will suffer for abandoning their observance of the Torah:

"Accursed will be... the offspring of your cattle." (*Devarim* 28:18)

Perhaps we can see a fulfillment of this dire prediction in the current international campaign to ban *shechitah* or at least discourage it. Not only has New Zealand joined some Scandinavian countries in banning halachic *shechitah* altogether, but now the European Parliament has joined this anti-Semitic bandwagon by proposing that all kosher meat

must be labeled as coming from animals that have been slaughtered without stunning. Since a large percent of each animal slaughtered according to halacha ends up being used by the non-kosher market, this will have a very negative impact on the kosher food industry.

Is this another message from Heaven that we must, as a nation, pay more attention to our observance of kashrut laws? After all, the Torah elsewhere (*Vayikra* 11:45) reminds us that G-d freed us from Egyptian bondage on the condition that we sanctify ourselves through observance of kashrut laws. Only the holiness of our people can truly secure Israel forever

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

WADI ARA – ECHOES OF THE PAST

A 2000-year-old round bronze tablet discovered 13 years ago in the Nachal Iron area popularly known as Wadi Ara may be a clue to the location of a major battle recorded in *Sefer Shoftim*.

Archeologists studying this tablet suggest that it was part of a linchpin that held the wheel to a war



chariot sent to battle against the Jews by the Canaanite general Sisera.

The irony of this discovery is that engraved on this tablet is the face of an unknown woman. It was a woman, the Prophetess Devorah, who organized the army that defeated Sisera and another woman, Yael, who killed him when he fled from the battlefield to her tent.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When historically did the obligation to bring *bikkurim* begin?
2. *Bikkurim* are from which crops?
3. How does one designate *bikkurim*?
4. Who shakes the basket containing the *bikkurim*?
5. What does “*v’anita v’amarta*” mean?
6. Which Arami “tried to destroy my father?”
7. When during the year may *bikkurim* be brought? Until when are the special verses recited?
8. Someone declaring that he separated *terumah* and *ma’aser* says: “And I didn’t forget.” What didn’t he forget?
9. What were the Jewish People to do with the 12 stones on Mt. Eval?
10. Six tribes stood on Mt. Eval and six on Mt. Gerizim. Who and what were in the middle?
11. Who “causes the blind to go astray”?
12. How does one “strike another secretly”?
13. Eleven curses were spoken on Mt. Eval. What is the significance of this number?
14. Why are sheep called “*ashterot*”?
15. How is the manner of expressing the curses in *Parshat Bechukotai* more severe than in this week’s *parsha*?
16. What is meant by “the Jewish People will become a proverb”?
17. Why did all the curses expressed in 48:16-44 befall the Jewish People?
18. “In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were (last) evening’ and in the evening you will say, ‘If only it were (this) morning.’” Why?
19. To which tribe did Moshe give the Torah first?
20. How long does it take to understand the depth of one’s teacher’s wisdom?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 26:1 - After the Land was conquered and divided.
2. 26:2 - The seven species for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, olives, figs, dates, and pomegranates.
3. 26:2 - When he sees the first fruit ripen on a tree, he binds a piece of straw around it to mark it as *bikkurim*.
4. 26:4 - The *kohen* places his hands under the hands of the one bringing it, and they wave the basket together.
5. 26:5 - Speak loudly.
6. 26:5 - Lavan.
7. 26:11 - *Bikkurim* are brought from Shavuot until Chanukah. The verses are recited only until Succot.
8. 26:13 - To bless G-d.
9. 10. 27:2 - Build an altar.
10. 27:12 - *Kohanim*, *levi'im* and the Holy Ark.
11. 27:18 - Any person who intentionally gives bad advice.
12. 27:24 - By slandering him.
13. 27:24 - Each curse corresponds to one of the tribes, except for the tribe of Shimon. Since Moshe didn’t intend to bless the tribe of Shimon before his death, he did not want to curse them either.
14. 28:4 - Because they “enrich” (*m’ashiro*) their owners.
15. 28:23 - In *Bechukotai* the Torah speaks in the plural, whereas in this week’s Parsha the curses are mentioned in the singular.
16. 28:37 - Whenever someone wants to express the idea of extraordinary suffering, they will use the Jewish People as an example.
17. 28:47 - Because they did not serve G-d with gladness when everything was abundant.
18. 28:67 - Because the curse of each hour will be greater than that of the previous hour.
19. 29:3 - To the Tribe of Levi.
20. 29:8 - 40 years.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

TALMUDigest

AVODAH ZARAH 16 - 22

- Animals that may not be sold to idol worshippers
- What may be built together with them
- Rabbi Eliezer's trial and his contact with a heretic
- Keeping a distance from harlots and heretics
- How a *ba'al teshuva* gained the title of rabbi and gained his eternal reward with one act
- The miraculous rescue of Rabbi Elazar ben Parto
- The martyrdom of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyan
- The miracle of Rabbi Meir and the rescue he performed
- Avoiding heathen entertainment and the danger of frivolity
- Sage advice on how to study Torah
- The magic elixir of Rabbi Alexandrai
- Avoiding showing favor to heathens and selling land to them
- Sights that provoke immoral thoughts
- Keeping Eretz Yisrael land and houses away from heathens
- Other cautions in regard to heathens

THE LADDER OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

When Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto wrote his monumental work on ethics *Mesillat Yesharim*, he chose as the framework for the holy book that would inspire generations the *beraita* of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair cited in our *gemara*. A step-by-step formula for spiritual development was there presented which culminated in Divine inspiration and resurrection.

The starting point in this formula is the study of Torah, which leads to caution in avoiding transgressions and to zealotry in performing *mitzvot*. *Mesillat Yesharim* elaborates only on the steps that follow Torah study, on the

assumption that the need for such study is self-evident.

It is worth noting, however, how Rashi explains why Torah is the first step on the ladder to spiritual success. Through the involvement in Torah study, he writes, one begins this climb. In addition to such involvement, continues Rashi, there is the information one acquires in regard to what he may or may not do.

The message here is that the study of Torah is both a spiritual experience that purifies the soul and a source of information on where to apply that purity in climbing that spiritual ladder.

• *Avoda Zara 20b*

What the SAGES Say

"Some people gain their place in the World-to-Come in one moment while for others it takes many years."

• *Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi) - Avoda Zara 17a*

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OUT TO LUNCH

From: Barry

Dear Rabbi,
I recently got a new job that requires that I entertain for lunch, dinner or "happy hour" at the company's expense. Along with this privilege, I also am required to take prospective clients out to lunch (once again company's treat) in order to "wine and dine." My problem is that I keep kosher (i.e., I only eat in certified restaurants and buy only kosher supervised products as well). Obviously, there arises a great conflict between my religious convictions and the norms of the American corporate world.

My question is: Are there good ways to possibly still keep kosher in non-kosher eating establishments? Are there any good resources for suggestions, etc.?

Dear Barry,

It's preferable not to enter a non-kosher restaurant, even if you don't eat anything. Your being there gives the impression to onlookers that the restaurant is kosher. Alternatively, it may cause others to question your observance or that of other Orthodox Jews. They may not realize that you are not eating, or that you have brought your own food.

But if you must attend a non-kosher restaurant, you can manage by eating only fresh, uncooked and uncut fruits and vegetables and kosher drinks. Or bring your own food. But if you do this, you would probably have to clear it with the restaurant beforehand.

Come to think of it, there are kosher caterers, like the ones who supply kosher food on airplanes, who can ship kosher meals almost anywhere overnight. Such pre-cooked meals are also available in kosher markets and even in the kosher section of regular markets. These meals are sealed in a double layer of tin foil and therefore they can be heated in a non-kosher oven. With a little planning ahead, you may be able to arrange with some local restaurants to serve these to you, sealed and on disposable utensils.

In addition, if you choose any of these options, I would suggest you let your guests know beforehand that you keep kosher. I have found that the best way to approach this issue is by being straightforward. Nowadays, people usually are very respectful of someone who adheres faithfully to their religious principles. But if you don't explain yourself, folks will probably wonder why your eating habits are so odd!

An excellent book which contains a section on the topic of non-kosher restaurants is "After the Return" by Rabbi Mordechai Becher and Rabbi Moshe Newman, Feldheim Publishers.

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SHARING NEWS OF ILLNESS

Question: A friend of mine recently revealed to me that he has been diagnosed as suffering from a condition requiring serious medical care. I am torn between sharing this information with others so that they will join me in praying for his health and keeping this matter a secret. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Unless you receive explicit permission from your friend to share this information, you must remain silent. Very

often people are reluctant to have others showing pity to them or are concerned that this knowledge may adversely affect an aged relative who will greet it with unwarranted shock.

As regards mobilizing prayers, if it is possible to just publicize your friend's name and that of his mother for prayer purposes without revealing the family name, you certainly should do so.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

TURNED DOWN A MILLION

“I don't deserve this – an American researcher's contribution to this breakthrough was no less than mine.”

This is how Russian mathematician Gregory Perlman explained his refusal to accept a prize of a million dollars for his solution of a mathematical puzzle known as one of the seven “Mysteries of the Millennium”.

In a press interview Perlman explained that his main reasons for turning down the coveted prize were his criticism of the mathematical community's judgment and the feeling that an American mathematician named Hamilton was equally deserving of the award.

The money he refused to accept will go instead to further scientific research.

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