

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE WOLF AND THE FOX

“...recalling the sins of the fathers on the children...” (14:18)

Once there was a ravenous wolf that was about to devour a fox. The fox said to him, “What good is my skinny carcass going to do you? Look over there at that nice juicy human with his body so laden with meat and fat! Better to eat him. He’s much more of a meal than I!” The wolf answered, “It is forbidden for us to eat humans. In the end I will get punished for it.” “Don’t worry about it!” replied the sly fox, “You won’t get punished. Only your children will get punished, as it says *“The fathers ate sour grapes, but it is the teeth of the sons that are set on edge.”* (Jeremiah 31:28)

Instead of being highly surprised and somewhat cautious of a fox that could quote Tanach by heart, the wolf instead fell for this line of reasoning and, licking his lips, he made off towards the man. No sooner had he taken a few paces, than he fell into a carefully concealed trap and found himself plunging towards the bottom of a deep pit. Following the bitter cries of the wolf, the fox made his way carefully to the edge of the pit. The wolf wailed up at the fox “You liar! You

said that only my children would be punished and not I! Answered the fox “Fool that you are! This punishment isn’t because of what you did. It’s because of what your father did before you.” The wolf cried out in a bitter voice, “How can that be possible? I have to suffer for the sins of my father?” Replied the fox with a wry smile, “You were prepared to devour a man though you knew your children would suffer for it in the future, so why should you complain for getting punished now for what your father did before you?”

With this parable from the book “The Parables of Foxes,” we can perhaps understand a difficult verse in the weekly Torah portion. For where indeed is the justice in G-d “...recalling the iniquity of the fathers on the children?”

Even if the children perpetuate the misdeeds of their fathers, shouldn’t they be punished for their own sins only, and not for those of their forbears? Why should they be responsible for their fathers’ behavior?

However, if the children understand that their misdeeds can cause their own children to suffer, they can have no complaint when they themselves must pay for the sins of their fathers.

Source:

• based on *Pardes Yosef* in *Mayana Shel Torah*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d’s permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea’s name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people’s spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe’s fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts’ false report

pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on G-d’s original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challa*, a gift for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING?

A recent survey revealed that a shockingly high percentage of Israeli youngsters see their futures as being outside of Israel.

In reality this should not come as much of a shock when we consider how many hundreds of thousands of Israelis are already living abroad.

Is this phenomenon an echo of the failure of our ancestors to appreciate the gift of Eretz Yisrael following the slanderous report of the spies sent by Moshe that we will read about in this week's Torah portion? The difference seems rather obvious. Those who had never yet experienced the "land of milk and honey" promised to them by their Creator could be duped by spies who misrepresented it. But how could Jews who experienced the fulfillment of the age-old

Jewish dream of living in Eretz Yisrael so readily abandon it?

The answer is that most of those who left or are planning to do so never really experienced Eretz Yisrael in the manner that was intended by G-d when He gave us this land. They may have been citizens of a "Jewish National Homeland" but they were not educated in the sacred values of Judaism which cause a Jew to relate to this as the "Holy Land".

National pride is hardly a value that can stand up against economic difficulties, and the illusion of a "refuge for persecuted Jews" fades away before the threat of terrorism. It is only an appreciation of Eretz Yisrael as a holy land where a Jew can live a fuller Torah life that can keep Jews in Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A MONUMENT TO CARING

"I feel so terrible that I can't sleep at night," cried the widow to Rabbi Aviezri Auerbach, the rav of the Jewish community in Halberstat, Germany. "Not only did I lose my husband but I couldn't afford to put a marble monument on his grave and had to settle for a simple gravel one."

The rabbi thought for a moment how he could comfort this broken widow so upset at not having properly honored her husband. In a flash of inspiration he took a sheet of his rabbinical stationery and wrote on it a Will instructing his

children to place on his own grave after his death a monument made of gravel and not of marble. He then read this document to the heartsick widow and thus assured her that her husband's memory would suffer no dishonor.

The rabbi's instructions were faithfully followed when he passed away. When the residents of the city, Jews and non-Jews alike, expressed wonder at seeing such a simple monument atop the grave of such an illustrious spiritual leader, they learned what a Torah leader was ready to do to comfort a widow.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

ROAD TO REWARD – THE WORLD TO COME

Three merits are mentioned by Rabbi Yochanan (*Mesechta Pesachim 113a*) as entitling one to the afterlife of *Olam Haba* (World-to-Come). One of them is living in



Eretz Yisrael. Implied in this, however, is a warning regarding the gravity of sins committed in such a holy place, which can place serious obstacles on that road to reward.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land"?
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the *meraglim* bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?
6. Why did G-d shorten the *meraglim's* journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the Land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Calev quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim's* report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Calev and Yehoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" G-d is referring to the 10 *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challa* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challa* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the *meraglim* (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for *lashon hara* (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - G-d knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed; therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jewish People were afraid of Amalek, because Amalek had once attacked them.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Calev wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - G-d caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av (Tisha B'av). This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Iyov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael* began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challa* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments - i.e., idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

TAKE FIVE FOR A NEW MITZVAH

Three gifts to the *kohen* come from a Jew's sheep. If it is a male firstborn, it must be given to the *kohen* who offers it as a sacrifice and eats its flesh. When a sheep to which the *kohen* is not entitled is slaughtered, certain portions of it go to the *kohen*. And, finally, when a Jew shears his sheep he must give the *kohen* a portion of the wool.

The difference between them is that the first two gifts apply to even a single sheep while the gift of wool is incumbent on the sheep owner only when he shears at least five sheep.

How do we know that there is a minimum of five when all the Torah says is to give the *kohen* from "the shearing of your sheep" (*Devarim 18:4*) without specifying a number?

The answer lies in a passage (*Shmuel I 25:18*) describing the gift which Avigail, the wife of the wicked Naval, prepared for David to dissuade him from slaying her husband who had so offended the anointed future king of Israel. One component of that gift is described as "five prepared sheep".

The literal meaning of this phrase is that the sheep were prepared for the eating of David and his men. Rabbi Ashi, however, saw in the choice of the word "prepared" a hint that this number of sheep "prepared" their owner with the opportunity to fulfill a mitzvah not previously available to him. This could not refer to the *mitzvot* of the firstborn or gifts of meat because they apply to even a single animal as is evident from the passages dealing with them (*Bamidbar 18:17 and Devarim 18:3*). The passage concerning the wool shearing, on the other hand, speaks of sheep in the plural form, allowing us to conclude that the mention of five which prepares a Jew for a new mitzvah refers to this mitzvah, and that the obligation comes only when one shears at least five sheep.

• *Chullin 137a*

IMMUNITY FROM DANGER

When does involvement in performing a mitzvah provide Divine protection from danger? This is a question that arises from an incident related in our *gemara*. Rabbi Yaakov witnessed a scene in which a father asked his son to climb a ladder to a high perch and there fulfill the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird before taking her fledglings, the commandment which is the central subject of this the final *perek* of *Mesechta Chullin*. The son did as requested and sent away the mother bird. But as he proceeded down the ladder with the fledglings in hand, he fell off the ladder to his death.

How could this happen, asks the *gemara*, when we have a guarantee that those performing a mitzvah are safe from danger both coming and going, and here we have a boy who was doing the double mitzvah of honoring his father and sending away the mother bird?

The answer given is that the ladder used was a rickety one which presented a high risk for anyone climbing it, and when such high risk is involved one cannot rely on the protection of a mitzvah.

The source for this is the response of the Prophet Shmuel to G-d's command to anoint David as King of Israel after His disappointment with the performance of Saul in that role. "How can I go", said Shmuel, "when if Saul hears of this he will slay me." (*Samuel I 16:2*) Although Shmuel was certainly involved in doing the mitzvah of obeying G-d's command, he hesitated to rely on the protection it provided when there was such a high risk. G-d agreed with his caution and provided him with a cover for his mission.

• *Chullin 142a*

A FLASH OF INSPIRATION

I THINK I CAN

"I think I can, I think I can." Remember that little engine that thought he could? What an important lesson for kids to absorb. This week we see how important this lesson is for adults too. The Jews have been redeemed from slavery. They received the Torah at Mount Sinai. They're on their way to the Promised Land and everything looks great. Out of the blue they earn themselves a punishment. Forty years wandering in the desert because of the spies' evil report about the land. There is a key point over here that's important not to overlook. Why

did the spies speak so harshly about the land? Everyone knew that's where G-d was leading them? The answer is very simple. They didn't believe "they could" merit the miracle needed for them to conquer the land. Instead they surrendered to the regret they felt over their passed misdeeds (having made the golden calf). So next time you find your train of thought being interrupted by the "I think I can't's" set yourself back on the right track and remember that you really can.

• *Based on the Chafetz Chaim*

WHERE WAS THE TEMPLE?

From: David in Ann Arbor

Dear Rabbi,

In a recent article you wrote that the mosque of the Dome of the Rock is not necessarily built on the site of the Temple. Would you please explain, because I have always heard that the rock under the golden dome is the "even ha-shatia" or foundation stone which was in the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple. Thank you.

Dear David,

Indeed, the Holy of Holies of both Temples was built around the *even shatia* or foundation stone. Its name refers to the idea that it was from this stone that the world was created, and as such is the foundation from which the world "spread forth". It was on this stone that the Holy Ark containing the Ten Commandments rested in the first Temple, and upon which the high priest placed the holy incense when he entered the Holy of Holies once a year on Yom Kippur (both Temples). When King Solomon built the first Temple, he designed a secret labyrinth of underground passageways and chambers in which King Yoshiyahu later hid the Ark, the Tablets, the staff of Aaron, the *manna*, and the special anointing oil — which remain hidden to this day.

The theory that the Dome of the Rock is built on this stone is well grounded. The famous Jewish explorer Benjamin of Tudela (Spain, 1100's) wrote, "On the site of the Holy Temple, Omar ibn al Katub built a large and beautiful dome". This appears to be the opinion of Rabbi Ovadia of Bartanura (1400's, born in Italy and buried on the Mount of Olives opposite the Golden Gate), who wrote, "I investigated the location of the *even hashatia* and many say it's under the dome built on the site of the Temple". Finally, the renowned sage of the Land of Israel, Rabbi David ben Zimra, (1479-1573) stated explicitly that the rock under the dome is the foundation stone of the Holy of Holies.

Nevertheless, based on ancient texts, archeological finds and scientific studies, some rabbis of the last hundred years have suggested that the Temple was actually located on the vacant part of the Temple Mount opposite the Western Wall.

First, the Zohar suggests, as understood by one of its classic commentators, that the foundations of the Temple remain hidden and that no building will be built there until the restoration of the Third Temple. Also, a disciple of the Arizal states that the writings of his master refer to this idea, explaining the matter in great mystical depth. But there are sources other than the esoteric.

The Talmudic sages record that the huge, open courtyard of the Temple was washed by opening an aperture to let water from an aqueduct run into the courtyard and out the other side. This aqueduct originated in Solomon's pools in Bethlehem, made its way to the present day Jewish quarter, and on to the Temple Mount via Wilson's bridge. [In recent times, the Turks used this aqueduct, and much of it remains

intact today.] The problem is that this water source entered the Mount many meters below its current level. This suggests that the original level of the mount was much lower, and the rock under the dome was not in the Temple, but part of a rocky high place outside of it. What was this rocky high place?

Our Sages describe that there was a high point on the north of the Mount upon which was built a fortress to protect the Temple from invasion. This fortress, originally built by the Hasmoneans and later enlarged by King Herod, was called Antonia's fortress. It has been suggested that the rock under the dome is the top of the high place that was originally exposed, upon which the fortress was built. It overlooked the Temple to the south, which would place the Temple's location opposite the Western Wall. Josephus refers to this fortress and says it was built on a rocky hill that was steep on all sides. He also describes secret, underground passages to the north and south of the Antonia. Interestingly, early archeological research revealed long and narrow passageways north and south of the Dome of the Rock. But these are only a few of the underground caverns discovered below the Mount.

About a hundred years ago, archeologists found about thirty such spaces. Oddly, all of the caverns in the area of the Dome of the Rock are relatively small and symmetrical, whereas those to the south of the dome are very large, deep and asymmetrical. Some of these chambers were reported by the archeologists as having decorated ceilings, ruling out the possibility of their being cisterns. This suggests that the ruins of the Temple and its underground chambers are not in the area of the dome but rather opposite the Wall. Recent electromagnetic and infrared tests have revealed other, previously unknown, spaces under the Mount, which may also have resulted from the same phenomenon. Somewhere in those deep, hidden recesses may be the holy objects hidden and lost so long ago.

On the verse, "you shall *inquire* after His dwelling and come there" (Deut. 12:5), our Sages instructed: Inquire and find. This teaches that G-d will not reveal the secret of the Temple's location through a prophet until the Jewish people make an effort to inquire and search for it. Only then will He send a prophetic spirit from above to reveal it. In the merit of our inquiry, may we deserve to see the building of the Temple speedily in our day.

Sources:

- Yoma 54b
- Rambam, *Beit HaBechira* 4:1
- *Beit HaMikdash HaShelishi*, Shalom Dov Steinberg, pp 159-183
- *Shut HaRadbaz*, 4:648,691
- Bartanura, *Darkei Tzion*
- *Nitzutzei HaZohar on Zohar* p. 480
- *Emek HaMelech* (intro ch. 9) in the name of R. Moshe Vital from the *Arizal*
- *Tosephta*, *Pesachim* 4:10
- *Yoma* 2a
- *Josephus*, *War of the Jews* 5.5.8, *Antiquities* 15.7
- *Sifri* 8

“WE CAN'T AFFORD IT”

Question: Some of my son's friends at school are already talking about the summer camps they will be attending. Our family cannot afford to send our son to camp and we will have to make alternative plans for his vacation. What is the right thing to do in order to relieve my son's sense of being deprived?

Answer: The best thing you can do for your child's development, a wise observer of human nature once pointed out, is to respond to his exorbitant requests with the words “We can't afford it”.

Envy of others is a tragic element of human society. “Keeping up with the Joneses” and looking with greedy eyes at “the grass which seems greener on the other side of the fence” are the sources of so much unhappiness and

discord. It is therefore important that at an early age youngsters are taught to be content with what they have and not be envious of what luxuries their friends can afford.

Parents who easily give in to the pleas of their children for toys, games, clothes and vacations that their friends from more prosperous families are enjoying are spoiling them in more ways than one. Not only are they signaling to their child that they can get whatever they wish if they complain enough but they are also training them for living their future lives in an irresponsible way of spending more than they can afford.

If you wish to really soften the blow for your “deprived” child, use your imagination to make his vacation period a more meaningful one than a few weeks in a summer camp.

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