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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE SEEKER

“And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Take to yourself Yehoshua ben Nun, a man in whom there is spirit...’” (27:18)

What is the essential ingredient of greatness? Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, *atzal*, one of the great Torah scholars of the previous generation was once visiting his uncle, Rabbi Avraham Yafin, *atzal*, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Nevardok Yeshiva. As they entered the *Beit Midrash* (study hall), Rabbi Shmuelevitz asked Rabbi Yafin, “Who is your sharpest student?” Discreetly, Rabbi Yafin pointed out a certain pupil. “And who is the most studious?” Rabbi Yafin showed him another. “And who has the greatest breadth of knowledge?” Rabbi Yafin indicated yet a third. “And who,” said Rabbi Shmuelevitz finally, “is the best student?” Rabbi Shmuelevitz was surprised when Rabbi Yafin indicated none of the previously mentioned students, but another one entirely.

“He is my best bachur (young man),” said Rabbi Yafin.

“But until now you didn’t mention him.” said Rabbi Shmuelevitz, “What makes him the best?”

Rabi Yafin looked at Rabbi Shmuelevitz and said, “This one is a seeker.”

In the ascent to greatness, the most precious quality that a person can have is the desire to seek, to pursue truth with a ceaseless and tireless longing.

“And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Take to yourself Yehoshua ben Nun, a man in whom there is spirit...’”

The Sforno explains the phrase, “a man in whom there is spirit,” to mean “prepared to receive the Light of the Face of the Living G-d.” The Sforno compares Yehoshua to the artisans who crafted the Mishkan and its vessels in the desert. About them G-d said, “And into the heart of all wise of heart, I have placed wisdom.” (*Shmot 31:6*)

The closest those artisans had come to the extremely skilled work needed to construct the Mishkan was shlepping cement to build Egyptian treasure-cities. How were they able, with no previous experience, to fabricate something as beautiful, delicate and spiritually precise as the Mishkan?

To be “wise of heart” means to be prepared to receive “the Light of the Face of the Living G-d;” to be dissatisfied with the knowledge that one has already, and to want more; to want G-d’s radiance to illuminate our minds. Whatever those artisans, those painters, builders and draughtsmen lacked in experience was more than made up for by their overwhelming enthusiasm to build the Mishkan.

When the Torah lists the heads of the Jewish People who were sent to spy out the Land of Israel, it lists them according to their importance. Yehoshua appears fifth in that list. G-d chose him to be the leader of the Jewish People precisely because of the quality that he was a seeker and wanted more.

When Moshe ascended to the supernal realms, Yehoshua waited for him at the foot of Mount Sinai for forty days. Yehoshua took no tea breaks, no days off. Even though he could have rushed out to meet Moshe and resumed his learning as soon as Moshe returned, Yehoshua was not prepared to waste those few precious extra moments between the camp and the foot of the mount.

Such is the nature of a seeker.

Oh, by the way, I almost forgot. That student that Rabbi Avraham Yafin described as his ‘best bachur’ became better known as the Steipler Gaon, one of the greatest halachic arbiters of his generation.

Source: Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz in Sichot Mussar; with thanks to Rabbi Mordechai Perlman and Rabbi Eli Merl and Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive G-d's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action - executing Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. G-d commands Moshe to maintain a state of enmity with the Midianites who lured the Jewish People into sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. G-d instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to *Bnei Yisrael*. The number of the Levites' families is recorded. Tzlofchad's daughters file a claim with

Moshe: In the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks G-d for the ruling, and G-d tells Moshe that their claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance. G-d tells Moshe that he will ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter. Moshe asks G-d to designate the subsequent leader, and G-d selects Yehoshua bin Nun. Moshe ordains Yehoshua as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

ISRAEL Forever

THREE WEEKS TO BECOME STRONG

On Thursday of this week occurs the fast day of the 17th day of Tammuz, the beginning of the three-week mourning period culminating with Tisha B'Av, the fast day of the 9th day of the month of Av.

Our Talmudic Sages tell us that five tragic events in Jewish history took place on this day. The one we relate to the most is the penetration of the walls of Jerusalem almost two millennia ago by the Roman legions who went on to destroy our Beit Hamikdash three weeks later.

The purpose of fasting on this day, explains Rambam, is to call our attention to the mistakes of our ancestors

that brought upon them Heavenly punishment so that we will correct the very same mistakes we are making in our own day.

But even fasting on this day and seriously examining ourselves is not enough. Three weeks of denying ourselves some of the ordinary pleasures are required to really internalize the lesson of history.

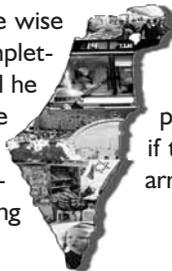
It is our hope that these three weeks will be utilized by every Jew who earnestly mourns the absence of our Beit Hamikdash to do his own soul-searching, and that the collective effort of our people to return to our responsibilities as a Torah nation will secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE SAGES

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

“THE WISE MAN DOES NOT SPEAK BEFORE ONE WHO IS WISER THAN HIM AND DOES NOT BREAK INTO THE WORDS OF ANOTHER” — (AVOT 5:7)

When he debates a point with someone the wise man waits until the other person has completed all that he has to say, and only then will he respond if he has anything with which to challenge the statements. He will never break into the other's words, for this causes him to become confused and prevents him from properly expressing



himself. The wise man, after all, is prepared to concede to the truth no matter whom it comes from.

It is also poor manners to insult a *chavruta* (study partner) or a *talmid* (student) by thus interrupting him, as if to say that there is no value to his words. Nothing but arrogance can explain such behavior.

• *Tiferet Yisrael*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why was Pinchas not originally a *kohen*?
2. Why was Moav spared the fate of Midian?
3. What does the *yud* and *heh* added to the family names testify?
4. Korach and his congregation became a “sign.” What do they signify?
5. Why did Korach’s children survive?
6. Name six families in this Parsha whose names are changed.
7. Who was Yaakov’s only living granddaughter at the time of the census?
8. How many years did it take to conquer the Land? How long to divide the Land?
9. Two brothers leave Egypt and die in the *midbar*. One brother has three sons. The other brother has only one son. When these four cousins enter the Land, how many portions will the one son get?
10. What do Yocheved, Ard and Na’aman all have in common?
11. Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
12. What trait did Tzlofchad’s daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
13. Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad’s daughters’ names?
14. Tzlofchad died for what transgression?
15. Why did Moshe use the phrase “G-d of the spirits of all flesh”?
16. Moshe “put some of his glory” upon Yehoshua. What does this mean?
17. Where were the daily offerings slaughtered?
18. Goats are brought as *musaf* sin-offerings. For what sin do they atone?
19. Why is Shavuot called *Yom Habikkurim*?
20. What do the 70 bulls offered on Succot symbolize?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 25:13 - *Kehuna* (priesthood) was given to Aharon and his sons (not grandsons), and to any of their descendants born *after* they were anointed. Pinchas, Aharon’s grandson, was born *prior* to the anointing.
2. 25:18 - For the sake of Ruth, a future descendant of Moav.
3. 26:5 - That the families were truly children of their tribe.
4. 26:10 - That *kehuna* was given forever to Aharon and his sons, and that no one should ever dispute this.
5. 26:11 - Because they repented.
6. 26:13,16,24,38,39,42 - Zerach, Ozni, Yashuv, Achiram, Shfufam, Shucham.
7. 26:46 - Serach bat Asher
8. 26:53 - Seven years. Seven years.
9. 26:55 - Two portions. That is, the four cousins merit four portions among them. These four portions are then split among them as if their fathers were inheriting them; *i.e.*, two portions to one father and two portions to the other father.
10. 26:24,56 - They came down to Mitzrayim in their mothers’ wombs.
11. 26:64 - In the incident of the *meraglim*, only the men wished to return to Egypt. The women wanted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.
12. 27:1 - Love for *Eretz Yisrael*.
13. 27:1 - To teach that they were equal in greatness.
14. 27:3 - Rabbi Akiva says that Tzlofchad gathered sticks on Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon says that Tzlofchad was one who tried to enter *Eretz Yisrael* after the sin of the *meraglim*.
15. 27:16 - He was asking G-d, who knows the multitude of dispositions among the Jewish People, to appoint a leader who can deal with each person on that person’s level.
16. 27:20 - That Yehoshua’s face beamed like the moon.
17. 28:3 - At a spot opposite the sun. The morning offering was slaughtered on the west side of the slaughtering area and the afternoon offering on the east side.
18. 28:15 - For unnoticed ritual impurity of the Sanctuary or its vessels.
19. 28:26 - The Shavuot double-bread offering was the first wheat-offering made from the new crop.
20. 29:18 - The seventy nations.

- Components of the *Kohen Gadol's* confession and the response of others
- The *kalpie* ballot box, where it stood and what it was made of
- Who accompanied the *Kohen Gadol* and how a Torah scholar is to be accompanied
- The ballots for selection of the sacrificial goats
- The improvements made by Ben Gamla, Ben Katin, King Munvaz and Queen Helenie
- The miracle of Niknor's gates
- The refusal of some experts to teach others, their removal and their return
- Relating to the memory of the righteous and the wicked
- The process of selecting each of the two goats for its respective mission
- The miracles that ceased with the passing of Shimon Hatzaddik
- The long-range impact of the sounds and smells from the Beit Hamikdash
- Which features of the Yom Kippur service are not valid if done out of order
- The drawing of the ballots and placement on the goats
- The determination of which bird for which sacrifice of the woman who gave birth
- The sacrifice of one who involuntarily entered the Sanctuary in a state of ritual impurity and underwent a change in his economic status
- Marking the goats and making a second confession on the *Kohen Gadol's* bullock
- The red woolen tongue and its function on Yom Kippur and in burning the Red Heifer
- If a non-*kohen* may do the slaughtering of the Yom Kippur bullock and of any of the functions in preparing the Red Heifer for its purification mission
- The slaughtering of the bullock and the process for preparing the coals and incense for the special Yom Kippur incense offering

NEVER TOO LATE TO SLIP

Once a man has lived most of his lifetime without sinning, states Rabbi Yochanan, he is unlikely to sin. This statement of Rabbi Yochanan seems to run counter to what the *gemara* says in *Mesechta Berachot* (29a). There the mishna in *Mesechta Avot* (2:5) is quoted as warning "Don't be sure about yourself until the day of your death," and the example provided by the *gemara* is that of Yochanan who served as *kohen gadol* for 80 years and then became a *tzaduki* (a member of the Sadducee sect which denied the validity of the Oral Law).

Rabbi Yochanan himself has provided the resolution in a rule which he put forth (*Mesechta Eiruv* 27a) that we can

never assume that a general statement made in a mishna has no exceptions. If Rabbi Yochanan applied this rule to mishnaic generalities it is reasonable to apply it as well to his sweeping generality regarding sinners.

The commentary *Tiferet Yisrael* on *Mesechta Avot* who suggested this approach writes that Yochanan was 80 years old when he turned sour. This seems to clash with the *gemara* (*Yoma* 9a) that states that he actually served 80 years as *kohen gadol*, which rules out that his deviation came at age 80.

Whatever the case, Yochanan is the classic example of the need for a Jew to be on guard all his life to maintain his spiritual standard.

• *Yoma* 38b

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"When I call out the Name of G-d, said Moshe to the Jewish People, you must give praise to His greatness."

• *The Sage Rebbie* in explaining the source for the response of those who heard the *Kohen Gadol's* confession (*Yoma* 37)

"The entire universe is sustained by the merit of one righteous person, as it is written (*Mishlei* 10:25) 'And the *tzadik* is the foundation of the universe'."

• *Rabbi Yochanan* (*Yoma* 38b)

WHAT IS HOLIER?

From: Alex in Chicago

Dear Rabbi,

I always thought that Jerusalem is the one and only holy city in Judaism. Is it true that other cities in Israel are also holy?

Dear Alex,

The entire Land of Israel is considered holy, and therefore all cities in Israel are considered holy by virtue of their being in the Land of Israel. However, there are four cities that are considered especially holy, of which Jerusalem is at the head. The four cities are Jerusalem, Tzefat, Tiberius, and Chevron. Our sources comment that these four cities correspond to the four basic elements: fire, air, water and earth, which in turn are related to enlightenment, spirituality, Torah and consistency.

Tzefat is the city high in the mountains of Galilee. One of the meanings of its name is related to its fabulous viewpoint above the entire region. The air of Tzefat is known for its light, elevating quality. The city of Tzefat has always been associated with spirituality in general, and mysticism in particular. Just as air cannot be perceived directly by the senses, but only indirectly by scents (smell) or colors (sight) it may carry, or by its movement across our skin (touch), or through other objects (hearing), so too mysticism is that realm of spirituality that is not readily and immediately accessible, but rather hidden behind the veil of the apparent.

Tiberius is located at the banks of the fresh-water Sea of Galilee, called the Kineret in Hebrew because of its harp-like shape. Because of the abundance of fresh, sweet water, the entire area is one of the most fertile in Israel. The Talmud considers the fruit of that region to be the

most sweet and lush of all fruits. The Torah is compared to life-giving water through which everything is created and sustained. Its pleasant ways are likened to lovely music and delicious fruits. Interestingly, a collection of some of the greatest Talmudic scholars gathered in Tiberius to compile what came to be known as the Jerusalem Talmud.

Chevron corresponds to earth. Abraham's sojourn there was on account of acquiring a tract of land for the purpose of burying Sarah. In fact, all of the famous four couples are buried there because of the underground cave in which Adam was interred. When Adam (so named because of the earthy origin of his body) returned to the ground upon death, it was to the earth of Chevron that he returned. It was in Chevron that King David originally got his kingship off the ground, and it is Chevron, the burial place of the Forefathers, which is the grounds for the Jewish claim to the Land of Israel. The pact made between them and G-d regarding their offspring, the Jewish People, is consistent and perpetual.

Many are surprised that Jerusalem corresponds not to air and spirituality but rather to fire. Isn't Jerusalem the spiritual center of the world? The answer is yes, but it's more than that. The spirituality of Jerusalem is based on the enlightenment and illumination of the Torah: "From Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of G-d from Jerusalem". Any visitor to Jerusalem is aware of the special light emanating from its stones. This is a reflection of the special spiritual light that radiates from, and permeates, the city. In days of old, the sacrifices were burned on the fire of the altar in the Temple, the lights of the holy Menorah shined forth and the sanctity of new moons was promulgated by bonfires originating from Jerusalem, the seat of the Sanhedrin. Regarding Jerusalem our Sages remarked, "With fire You consumed her and with fire You will rebuild her, as it is said, 'I will be for her a wall of fire around, and I will be glorious in her midst' (Zech. 2:9)" (from the Tisha b'Av liturgy).

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

LITTLE LEAGUE, BIG PLAYERS

When officials of Rockland County in New York State decided to allocate the use of county sports fields to baseball teams in the Orthodox "Little League" as part of services due to local residents, they included professional umpires in the package. One of these umpires, who also officiates at games of non-Jewish Little League teams, was recently reported as commenting on the difference between the two leagues.

At those other games, he said, there are frequent violent clashes, not only between the players of the opposing teams but even between the fathers who are spectators. What a pleasure, he concluded, it is to umpire a game in which the players are so well behaved!

It may also be assumed that there is no trouble between the fathers who are probably using their free time to study Torah rather than watch their children play.

CAUTIOUS CABBIE

Question: I sometimes take a cab to an important appointment that I am in a hurry to reach. The impression I get from some cabbies is that they are overly cautious when it comes to crossing an intersection when a traffic light is about to change from green. As I nervously look at my watch and see the precious seconds passing as we wait for the light to change to green (and at the meter registering a higher fare!), I cannot help thinking that I would have made that light. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: While we can empathize with your frustration in the situation you describe, we must point out why you have no justified cause for being upset with your cautious

cabbie.

Crossing an intersection when the light is about to change is a risky business. If you are wrong in your estimation you face not only the danger of being fined for passing a red light, but also the peril of being involved in an accident with a pedestrian or another car. Although you feel confident of avoiding both of these dangers when you are driving, it is unfair to expect your cabbie to take the same risk. It should also be remembered that, unlike you, the cabbie drives for a living and cannot afford to take chances.

So just sit back and relax and be happy that you will reach your destination safe and sound.

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