

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

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“And Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers.” (2:11)

There once was a Hollywood cowboy who had come from a very ‘un-cowboyish’ background. He was an assistant in a men’s clothing store in the mid-West.

To beef up his image a bit, the studio publicity machine had concocted a new identity for him. They did a quick face-lift on his life story, which now depicted him being discovered in a Wells Fargo telegraph office in a small cowboy town in Arizona.

It happened one day that, at the peak of his fame, the Hollywood cowboy came to that small town. As befitting his fame, he was given a ticker-tape parade down Main Street.

As he was riding on the back of his open limousine, his car passed the Wells Fargo office. He leaned across to his press agent — the very same press agent who had rewritten his past — and said to him without batting an eyelid.

“You see that Wells Fargo station. That’s where I was

discovered.”

One of the dangers of fame is that you can start to believe your own press releases.

One of the dangers of fame is that you can start to believe your own press releases.

The Midrash tells us that when Moshe ‘grew’, he grew *‘not like the way of the world’*. The way of the world is that when a person grows and becomes celebrated and famous, he forgets — or makes himself forget — his roots, his background and his family. He seems to have a kind of insidious amnesia when it comes to their problems and difficulties.

Moshe grew up in the palace of Pharaoh with an Egyptian gold spoon in his mouth. Nevertheless, he grew up *‘not like way of the world’* — he never forgot the plight of his people. Moshe *‘went out to his brothers’*. He went out to discover their problems and the ways he could rescue them from oppression.

• Source:

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shmot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt.

Sinai) Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

ISRAEL Forever

TOO MANY CHILDREN?

“Too many children are being born to the religious in Israel and this is what is causing our economic problems.”

This is what one of the speakers at a recent convention in Israel declared with a straight face. To observant Jews who see bringing children into the world not only as the fulfillment of a Divine command but as the best thing for the future of Israel as a Jewish state, this outrageous remark sounded like an echo of Pharaoh. In this week's Torah portion we read of the Egyptian ruler's warning to his people about the danger they faced “lest they (the Jews) increase.”

What a switch in the attitude of secular Israelis towards birth increase! In the early years of the state the government awarded prizes to women bearing many children because there was a desperate need for bolstering the Jewish population. The same need still exists in light of the demographic danger posed by the Arab birth rate.

One can only conclude that the above-mentioned speaker had a problem only with the fact that the religious population was growing. He should recall, however, that the Heavenly response to Pharaoh's “lest they increase” was “they shall indeed increase.”

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

RABBI AMI AND RABBI ASI – NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE WEATHER

When it became too hot in the place where two great Talmudic Sages, Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, were engaged in Torah study, they moved to a shadier spot. When the winter cold became too intense where they were studying they moved to a warmer spot. They went to this trouble, explains Rashi (*Mesechta Ketubot 112b*), in order to avoid complaining about the weather in *Eretz Yisrael*.



It must be assumed that these two Sages could have continued their studies where they were despite the heat or cold. Making the move to a more comfortable place probably entailed a loss of precious time which could have been dedicated to intense Torah study. They nevertheless were prepared to make this sacrifice to avoid the temptation of complaining about the weather of the land they loved.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt"?
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro's daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d's promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
14. "And G-d was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16,18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

- The extent of *pigul* manifestation
- How sacrifices of non-Jews in the Beit Hamikdash differs from those of Jews
- Six thoughts attending sacrifice and why they do not apply
- Where and how are details of certain sacrifices performed
- Receiving the blood of slaughtered sacrifice in a vessel or hand
- The source for slaughtering in northern part of Sanctuary
- The comparison between the *olah* and *chattat* sacrifices
- Why service in the north is not required for certain sacrifices
- The methodology of using the 13 rules of Torah interpretation

HOW IMPORTANT IS RELEVANCE?

“Why do you offer us a halachic ruling on a matter which will only be relevant when Mashiach arrives?”

This was the challenge made to the Sage Rabba bar Avuha when he quoted the Sage Rav as declaring the halacha in regard to sacrifices which would only be relevant in the time of the Beit Hamikdash.

The response to this challenge by the Sage Abaye was that although none of the material studied regarding

sacrifices is relevant today, we nevertheless study this material in order to be rewarded for the study of it as part of Torah.

This brought about a clarification of the challenge. Of course subjects mentioned in the Torah must be studied even if they will not be relevant until Mashiach comes and the Beit Hamikdash will be rebuilt. The objection was only to using the term “*halacha*” — which applies only to matters which are relevant and regarding which we must be aware of our responsibility.

(The same dialogue is also found in *Mesechta Sanhedrin* 51b.)

• *Zevachim* 45a

What the SAGES Say

“Study the Torah, even the laws which are not relevant today, and you will be rewarded.”

• *The Sage Abaye - Zevachim* 45a

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SHOULD I BE HAPPY?

From: Name Withheld

Dear Rabbi,

Hi. I take antidepressants, and it has helped me a lot. The only problem is that, truthfully, I do not feel the same connection to G-d now as I did when I was depressed. Sometimes I used to pray with tears. I guess you could say that medication has made it harder for me to feel spiritual.

So this may be a silly question, but should I keep taking the medication even though it makes it harder for me to feel as spiritual as I felt before?

Dear Name Withheld,

Your question is both silly and serious. Silly, because you know the answer: Keep taking the medication as directed by a competent health care professional.

But serious, because you've touched on a basic Jewish concept: "Man was born to struggle" (Job 5:7). All of life's situations are in fact challenges and struggles to be overcome for self-growth.

Depression has been a painful challenge for you, but you've used it as an opportunity to feel close to G-d. That's a great accomplishment. So why not stop taking the medicine and go back to the challenge?

Because you've overcome the hurdle and G-d has decided that you're ready for a new challenge: Finding spiritual inspiration in a normal, healthy state.

You know, after my son was in first grade for a few weeks he asked if he could go back to kindergarten. Kindergarten is fun and affords wonderful growth, but I said no. There's no going back to kindergarten.

For you, depression was a course called "Spirituality 101 - Finding G-d during Dark Days." But you graduated. Now you're in a class called "Spirituality 102 - Finding G-d in Normal Life."

This may be harder. The Sages taught that wealth makes it harder to be spiritual, and the same is true when we're well-off in other areas as well, such as health. The challenge is, can you seek and find inspiration when things are OK? The answer is yes, because G-d only sends challenges that we are capable of overcoming.

May G-d bless you with success and happiness and continue to give you strength and courage to take responsibility for your emotional health and spiritual growth.

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THE TORAH WORK ETHIC

Question: I am fortunate in holding down a good job even in these difficult times. My work ethic is, in my opinion, a decent one since I put in an honest day's work and don't waste the time for which I am being paid. Some of my co-workers make fun of how hard I work at my job, arguing that the wages we are being paid don't justify such an effort. Are they right?

Answer: How wrong they are can best be appreciated by quoting the words of Rambam at the conclusion of the laws regarding the rights of employees:

"Just as the employer is commanded not to deprive the employee of his wages or withhold them, so too is the employee commanded not to steal from his employer by

slacking off a bit here and a bit there and thus dishonestly spending his workday. It is incumbent on him to carefully utilize all of his time, and he is obligated to work with all of his might, as the righteous Patriarch Yaakov declared to his wives: With all my might I worked for your father."

From the words of Rambam we learn that a Torah-true work ethic includes quality of labor as well as quantity. The closing words of Rambam that Yaakov was rewarded by Heaven for his work ethic even in this world by becoming a very prosperous man should be an inspiration for people who indeed give their all for their employers. Inevitably those individuals will be rewarded not only in the World to Come but in this world as well with raises and promotions.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE PIGGIES THAT WIGGLED AWAY

Jews understandably have an aversion to pigs. But what happens when Israel's biggest importer of quality wooden toys discovers that the Country Life toy farms he has imported from Toys R Us includes three little wooden piggies?

The importer, in this case, was an Orthodox Jew who believed that these pieces offended Jewish sensitivities and therefore replaced them with three lime-green geese. His ingenious solution might never have been noticed except

that one customer complained that the geese did not match the picture of the pigs on the box he purchased and that the pig sty which remained inside hardly seemed to be the proper home for the geese.

Subsequent pressure from secular purchasers forced the importer to replace the pigs. But at least some Jewish children were spared the negative impact of three little piggies went to market.

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"Who in fire"

Reflections on the Great Fire in the North of Israel

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

“On Rosh Hashana it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed... who will live and who will die... who in fire and who in water...”

When we uttered these words some three months ago we could hardly imagine the tragedy which struck Israel the past week as over 40 people lost their lives in the massive conflagration on Mount Carmel in the north of the country.

The damage to the environment was extensive and it will take years to replenish the destroyed forests, but this pales beside the loss of lives which cannot be recovered.

Let us reflect on what our reaction must be to this tragedy.

The reflex reaction of the public was “Who is responsible?”

Responsibility, as expressed in the media, was limited to who was guilty of starting the fire and who was lax in preparing the nation for such a challenge.

But is this the way Jews who pray on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur should react?

Of course there is a need to learn from the shocking lack of preparedness of the government how to better organize the firefighting capacity of the nation. We would be sadly remiss, however, if we failed to point an accusing finger at ourselves. Just as virtually an entire nation saw the long period without rain as a heavenly reminder that humans are not in control of their fate, so too have the flames on the Carmel called to our

attention how vulnerable we are despite all of our technology.

Little will be gained by appointing a national commission to investigate the matter. Nothing will be gained by exploiting the tragedy to vilify a political enemy who did his best to prepare the nation but was blocked by a parsimonious treasury. What can and must be done is some serious soul-searching which begins with an honest admission of our dependence on Heaven whether it is in regard to rain, fire or enemy threats.

One consoling thought about the recent tragedy is the concern shown by the public for the victims of the fire. People evacuated from their homes because of the fire found a warm welcome in safer places. The international effort of sending planes and people to help put out the fire helped restore our faith in the basic decency of mankind.

But why must we wait for tragedy to unify us?

Discord between people has been compared to fire because of its consuming power. Perhaps this tragic fire is a signal from Heaven that we must work harder on eliminating strife between individuals and between our communities and create a sense of unity that will spill over into an end of strife between nations.

Once we have internalized that we can only try to solve such human problems and are totally dependent on G-d to spare us from the vicissitudes of nature, we will be on the road to prayer and self-improvement which will bring an end to our suffering.