

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHEMOT · 19 TEVET 5772 · JAN. 14, 2012 · VOL. 19 NO. 13

PARSHA INSIGHTS

KVELLING

“And these are the names of the children of Yisrael.” (1:1)

Imagine a grandmother sitting with a stack of photos of her grandchildren. She takes out the pictures after breakfast and leafs through them, reciting the names of each of her beloved treasures, one by one.

After lunch she has a nap, and then, well, she takes out her photos again and recites their names again.

And last thing at night, out come the pictures for a last time, kissing them and calling each of them by name.

The name of the book of Exodus in Hebrew is “Shemot”, *The Book of Names*.

It starts with a list of the names of the children of Yaakov.

Even though the Torah had already detailed the names of Yaakov’s children in their lifetimes, the Torah lists their names again here after their passing from the world, to show how dear they are to G-d.

Because something that is dear and highly-prized is repeated and re-examined many times.

Like the photos of a doting granny.

The children of Yisrael are likened to the stars. Just as G-d counts the stars and calls them by name when they come out, and again when they pass from the world and are gathered in, similarly he counts the children of Israel both when they enter this world and when they are gathered in.

We should remember that since we are compared to the stars we must emulate the stars. Just as the purpose of the stars is to radiate light to the darkest and most distant corner of the universe, so too it is the job of the Jewish People to radiate spiritual light to the most benighted corners of the world.

SOUL FOOD

“Every son that will be born – into the river shall you throw him!” (1:22)

E-Diets.com, Fat Loss ‘4’ Idiots, The South Beach diet, The Scarsdale Diet, The Atkins Diet, The Mediterranean diet, The Blood Type Diet, The Negative calorie diet, Weight Watchers, Macrobiotic, Vegans, Vegetarians, Fruitetarians, Breathetarians...

Never before in history have there been so many opinions as to what we should and should not eat.

Apart from their physical benefits, many of today’s diets also focus on the purported spiritual benefits of eating and refraining from certain kinds of foods and food mixtures.

The Jewish People, however, have had their own spiritual diet for well over three thousand years. The Torah describes which foods bring us to a clearer contact with G-d and which foods distance us. It also describes foods that are not in themselves deleterious to our spirituality but are damaging when combined, like milk and meat.

In this week’s Torah portion, the Egyptians mercilessly cast Jewish babies into the river. The Midrash describes that the river brought all of those little Jewish children to desert lands and ejected them on the shore. There the Divine Presence nurtured them. G-d commanded the rock on one side of these babies to produce honey, and He commanded the rock on the other side to give forth oil and nurse the infants.

Later, at the parting of the sea at Yam Suf, it was these same children who recognized G-d and cried out, “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him!”

When we take care to feed our children only kosher food we help them to ingest a spirituality that will one day enable them to recognize G-d in a world where He is almost invisible.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shemot (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

EXILE AND REDEMPTION

“The Book of Exile and Redemption” is the name given to Chumash Shemot which we will begin reading this Shabbat.

The exile to which this title refers is the descent of the Patriarch Yaakov and his family from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt. This was, in a sense, a preview of the four exiles which Jews would experience throughout history. The spiritual strength which they developed in maintaining a unique identity despite the influence of a corrupt Egyptian culture became the force which enabled future generations to remain faithful to G-d and His Torah despite persecution.

The redemption mentioned in this title came in three stages – freedom from bondage, receiving of the Torah and the building of the Sanctuary – all of which are recorded in Chumash Shemot. In our own day we must remember that the freedom from bondage which we enjoy, both in our own land and in Jewish communities throughout the world, is not yet our longed-for redemption. A widespread commitment to Torah values will hopefully make us worthy of the final stage of redemption – the building of the *Beit Hamikdash* and the fulfillment of the prophecies about the security and prosperity of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

MOLEDET – THE HOMELAND

The term “homeland” is certainly not a title exclusive to Eretz Yisrael. Every nation expresses its patriotism by referring to its land as its “*moledet*”. We do find, however, a Torah source for its applica-



tion to the Jewish homeland. When the Patriarch Yaakov, in the home of his uncle Lavan in Padan Aram, was told by G-d to leave, the instructions were “to return to your homeland and I shall be with you.” (*Bereishet 31:3*)

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.

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

Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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- The difference between *arachin* and *nedarim* and who can do either of them
- Mitzvot which all are obligated in
- The situation of *kohanim* wearing *tefillin* while dressed in their priestly garments
- If *kohanim* are obligated in mitzvah of *machatzit hashekel*
- A vow of *arachin* made in regard to a child less than 30 days old
- The vow of *arachin* made by a non-Jew or by a Jew about a non-Jew
- Accepting a gift to the Sanctuary from a non-Jew
- A vow of *arachin* made by a dying man or about him
- How to deal with a woman condemned to death and the child she is expecting
- When one who made a vow of *arachin* cannot afford to pay

TRAINING A MINOR

Although a minor is exempt from the obligation of fulfilling mitzvot, it is responsibility of his parents to train him in the performance of mitzvot so that he will be aware of what to do once he is a bar mitzvah.

Two examples of this responsibility of *chinuch* are *tzitzit* and *tefillin*.

In regard to *tzitzit* our Sages ruled that a minor who knows how to properly wrap himself in a *tallit* is obligated in the mitzvah of *tzitzit*. If the minor is capable of safeguarding

the sanctity of *tefillin* (by avoiding entering the bathroom while wearing them), his father is obligated to purchase *tefillin* for him.

Why is the obligation to purchase mentioned only in regard to *tefillin* and not in regard to *tzitzit*?

Tosefot offers two answers to this question. One is that the father probably has a *tallit* already so that there is no need to purchase one. A second approach is that only in regard to something as expensive as *tefillin* does the term "purchase" apply and not to something so easy to acquire as a *tallit*.

• *Arachin 2b*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"A government is different than an individual in that it will not withdraw from its intention. As the Sage Shmuel put it, 'If the government intends to uproot a mountain it will carry out its plan'."

• *The Sage Abaye - Arachin 6a*

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WRONGLY RELIGIOUS?

From: Allen

Dear Rabbi,

Is it acceptable that a Jewish man or woman become religiously observant because of their desire to marry someone they know that is already observant? Is there any problem with the possibility that they might not be sincere?

Dear Allen,

Since the person is Jewish, he or she is obligated to be observant in any case. Of course, the more sincere a person's motivations are the better. But even if he or she is only interested or practicing in order to gain or maintain a relationship with one who is already observant, this is tolerable.

This is not so different from the fact that many observant people are committed for any number of reasons, which, in addition to the altruistic ones, might include social acceptance, recognition, honor, livelihood, etc. While these motives are certainly not ideal, realistically they exist, and if in the end of the day they contribute to a person's observance, they have value as such.

In fact, the Sages taught that even if a person realizes his motivations are not ideal, he should not desist from observance. Rather, through lower-level intentions one will eventually grow toward the ideal. In a case you describe where the motive is for another person, the observant person, if interested, should try his or her best to guide the other

toward genuine belief and observance.

This is probably the more problematic issue with the question you raise. Because even if the interested person eventually retracts from observance, G-d will not be "harmed", and the person can always come back to G-d even if it takes an entire lifetime. But if he or she retracts after committing to another person, particularly in marriage, that can have devastating ramifications. So it's really the observant person who has to be most careful.

The famous Rabbi Akiva was initially an illiterate hired hand of a wealthy estate owner whose daughter Rachel saw that Akiva had what it takes to become a great Torah scholar. She proposed to him saying, "If I marry you, will you study Torah?" Apparently, he was not so sure of himself, or sure of the sincerity of his motives, because the Midrash teaches us that Rachel took him on a walk with the intention of inspiring him.

When they arrived at the base of a waterfall, she asked him, "What do you see?" He replied, "Water pouring onto the rocks beneath the fall." "Look closer", said she. "I see the rushing water has bored a hole through the rock." Rachel then said these piercing words: "Take heed. If something as soft as water can bore a hole through something as hard as rock, surely something as strong as Torah can bore a hole through something as soft as your heart of flesh."

Akiva was inspired. They were married. After 24 years of extreme sacrifice and dedication on the parts of both Rachel and Akiva, he became a rabbi to 24,000 students. And it was through Rabbi Akiva that much of the Torah was preserved through the destruction of the Temple to the generations that followed.

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Step-by-step growth has been bringing Meier Sternberg closer to his goals every day. This one-time Building Design major started off separating milk and meat and was soon studying the details of candy gelatin. After his “experiment” with keeping an entire Yom Tov, something sparked. Shortly thereafter, he vowed to never work on



Shabbat again and kashered his kitchen.

When he first came to Ohr Somayach he was overwhelmed by all of Torah he had never seen before, but the Rabbis “can take a man from nowhere and make him a *ben Torah*. No other environment is as conducive to growth as Ohr.” Learning has become a part of his identity: “The thrill of learning can never get old. It’s always new, and there’s always more.” Meier looks up at the edifice of Torah, knowing that the right effort in the right environment makes the impossible possible, thanks to G-d’s help and His team at Ohr Somayach.

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

EASTERN JEWISH TIME

Question: I am in a quandary as to when to arrive at wedding halls since I have learned from experience that there is a vast gap between the time indicated on the invitation and the actual start of the *chupa*. On the one hand I don’t want to miss the ceremony, but, on the other, I have often wasted 1-2 hours that could have been much better spent. What is your advice?

Answer: This problem has arisen so often that some people have wryly suggested that the word *bediyuk* written in Hebrew after the scheduled hour of the *chupa*, which literally means “exactly”, is really an acronym for the Yiddish phrase “*biz die Yidden vellen kumen*” — “till the Jews arrive”.

The trouble is that even after Jews like yourself do arrive

they discover that they came much too early as a result of their failure to understand that the hour written on the invitation was E.J.T. — Eastern Jewish Time, which means that nothing will happen until an hour or more later.

It would be ideal if we could radically change this pattern so that both the wedding party and the guests arrive on time and get the *chupa* going as scheduled. In the meantime, however, it is advisable to inquire of the families involved when they really expect the *chupa* to begin and add to that another quarter to half hour to allow for unexpected delays.

In conclusion, we live in an imperfect world and must learn to tolerate the failure of a *chupa* to take place on schedule when there is really no single factor that can be blamed for the delay.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE SURPRISE OF THE WIG

When the rabbis in Eretz Yisrael issued their ruling that wigs with hair from India were forbidden for use by married women because they were made from material offered as sacrifices for idol worship, the immediate reaction of countless women was to remove their wigs until the source of their hair could be verified and receive rabbinical sanction.

One such woman, a teacher in the fourth grade of a school in the State Religious (*Mamlachti Dati*) stream, appeared before her students one day wearing a snood in place of her customary wig. In response to the curious

inquiries of her pupils she explained that the prohibition had been issued by the rabbis and proceeded to elaborate on the importance of obeying such rabbinical rulings.

Upon hearing this, one pupil suddenly removed the wig she was wearing, exposing the baldness of her head, which had hitherto been unknown to her classmates.

All the praises heaped by the rabbis upon the married women who bravely obeyed their directive pale beside the courage of this youngster to whom we all have to tip our hats.