

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

I'M BEING WATCHED!

"And G-d said to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh...' " (10:1)

Have you ever had the feeling that you are being watched? Have you ever felt that your every move is being scrutinized?

I'm not just asking those of you who have the misfortune to live in a police state. (Mind you, if you live in a police state, I doubt that the authorities are sufficiently magnanimous to allow you online access.) No. I'm addressing this to all of us whose most intimate contact with Big Brother was in a novel by George Orwell.

Have you ever felt that you are being watched? Do you feel that, as you are reading these words, right now, you are being investigated?

If the answer to these questions is no, then you're in trouble.

Before you write to the editor of this august publication and suggest that he send the present writer on an extended South Sea cruise (chance would be a fine thing!), or call for those nice smiling men in their white coats — let me explain what I mean.

The phrase "the fear of Heaven" to our Anglo-Saxon ears sounds extremely archaic. It sounds like something out of the mouth of a street-corner gospel preacher, ranting his heart out to indifferent passers-by. We may be frightened by many things: that the dollar may go up; that the dollar may

go down; that thieves may break into our homes; that we may contract some terrible malady. We may even be frightened that the supermarket will have sold out of our favorite dog food, but 'the fear of Heaven' is something very far from our hearts.

But, quite simply, the fear of Heaven means the feeling that you are being watched.

Try this experiment. Think for one moment that G-d is watching you. That's right. Right now. G-d is watching your every move. In great detail. Think that G-d is right here, right now. Now, with that in mind, change the way you're sitting or standing. Just a little.

What you just did was to show the fear of Heaven.

"And G-d said to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh...' "

Notice that the Torah doesn't say, "Go to Pharaoh". Rather, it says, "Come to Pharaoh." Why?

There's no such thing as "going" from G-d. G-d fills the world. There is nowhere where He is not. No place can exist if He is not there. You can't "go" from G-d. Therefore the expression "Come to Pharaoh" is more apt because it also means, "Come – and I will go with you."

• Source: The Kotzker Rebbe

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned. G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too. Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the first-born, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d

again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month. The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the first-born of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating *chametz* on Pesach. Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first-born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the first-born son) and *tefillin*.

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EXODUS FROM IGNORANCE

“With our youngsters and with our elders shall we go, with our sons and with our daughters.” (*Shemot* 10:9) This was the defiant response of Moshe to Pharaoh's attempt to restrict the participation of youth in the service of G-d.

As we hear this proud declaration read in the weekly Torah portion this Shabbat, we cannot help but see it as a prophetic preview of the commitment of Jews throughout history to the religious education of its youth.

It is indeed a source of pride that after such a devastating

experience as the destruction of Torah centers in Europe, the Jewish People have succeeded in Israel and throughout the world in reviving Torah education on every level. But it is a source of pain to see so many youngsters who are not being given an opportunity to connect with the tradition of the elders who maintained their faith despite everything.

It is our hope that all of our people will heed the call of Moshe and join in providing an exodus from ignorance for our sons and daughters which will secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

ERETZ AVOTEINU - THE LAND OF OUR FATHERS

In the original version of the national anthem of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel there appeared a phrase about “Hatikvah”, the hope of Jews to “return to the land of our fathers”.

The origin of this phrase is in the Torah and it twice appears in connection with the Patriarch Yaakov. The



first is when he receives a Divine command “to return to the land of your fathers” (*Bereishet* 31:3), and the second is when Yaakov blessed his grandchildren and informed their father Yosef of the gift his tribe would receive when G-d would “return you to the land of your fathers” (*ibid.* 48:21).

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makat bechorot* took place at *exactly* midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at *approximately* midnight?
6. Why did the first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
8. G-d told Moshe, "...so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
9. Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what two *mitzvot* involving blood did G-d give to the Jewish People?
12. Rashi gives two explanations of the word "*Pasachti*." What are they?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makat bechorot*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makat bechorot*?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael*?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose first-born is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
6. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
7. 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
8. 11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
9. 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
10. 12:5 - One year.
11. 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
12. 12:13 - "I had mercy" and "I skipped."
13. 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of his home.
14. 12:31 - "Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?"
15. 12:32 - So he wouldn't die, for he himself was a first-born.
16. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matzah was dear to them.
17. 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between the parts" was decreed.
19. 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
20. 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.

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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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- *Lashon hara*, its consequences and the atonement for it
- The obligation of giving reproof to a sinner
- The bright side of suffering
- Differences between rich and poor in regard to payment of *arachin* and vows
- The ages of the people about whom *arachin* is made
- The exact definition of month and year regarding *arachin* and other matters
- A vow made to contribute one's weight or arm to the Sanctuary
- When heirs are obligated to honor the pledge made by their deceased father
- The two kinds of vows and the difference between them
- Coercion in regard to certain religious obligations
- How property confiscated by the rabbinical court is utilized for payment of debt

THE BLESSINGS OF SUFFERING

If you stick your hand into your pocket to take out three coins and only two come out, you probably feel a sense of discomfort in the fact that you have to once again put your hand into your pocket. The truth, however, is that you should be very pleased that this happened. The reason is our *gemara's* statement that if forty days pass without some suffering it is not a good sign.

One view is that since it is only natural that a person suffer some inconvenience, the fact that one is spared from even such a minor one should lead to his becoming concerned that this is at the expense of his reward in the here-

after.

The Sages of Eretz Yisrael, however, saw this as a Heavenly reprieve from a more serious suffering. Maharsha explains that since the purpose of any Heaven-inflicted suffering is to arouse a person to repentance, it is an expression of Divine compassion to substitute small doses of suffering every forty days which are easier to bear, and achieve the same purpose.

One interesting footnote is added by the *gemara*. If you intended to take only two coins from your pocket and three came out, this does not qualify as suffering since tossing an extra coin back requires little effort.

• *Arachin 16a*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"One should always refrain from excessively praising another because this invites the listener to counter with criticism."

• *Rabbi Dimi - Arachin 16a*

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SHABBAT GAMES

From: Bradley

May one play a game like Scrabble™, Monopoly™ or Chess on Shabbat?

Dear Bradley,

Before addressing whether these games are in the spirit of the law, I'll first address your question regarding the letter of the law, according to the guidance of Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, *shlita*.

Scrabble™. The issue here is whether forming a word by placing letters next to each other transgresses the prohibition against "writing" on Shabbat. Also, since people keep score when playing Scrabble, would that make it prohibited to play because one might come to write down the score by accident? An edition of Scrabble which had a flat board, without grooves for the tiles, was shown to the Rabbi who was asked if it is permitted to play this game on Shabbat. He acknowledged that some *poskim* forbid it, and others permit it. He ruled that it is permitted, but that great care must be taken to ensure that the players do not forget that it's Shabbat and write down their scores.

Monopoly™. The problem with Monopoly is that it mimics business transactions, which are prohibited on Shabbat. Nevertheless, the Rabbi said that technically it is permitted, but playing a business-oriented game on Shabbat is not con-

ducive to a proper attitude about Shabbat.

Chess. This game is discussed in the Shulchan Aruch. The Rema mentions it as a pastime that is permitted on Shabbat. Some of the *poskim* note, though, that in order to distinguish between Shabbat and a regular weekday, some people had a special Chess set made of silver just for Shabbat play. According to this, a separate Shabbat set might be in order.

When playing these games one must be careful not to transgress the prohibitions of *borer* or *miyun* which involve separating or organizing objects that one doesn't plan to use immediately from a pile of other objects. With games that have many different pieces, this is something that can occur when cleaning up. So don't separate the pieces when putting them away.

Even though according to the letter of the law these games may be permitted, the question is if this is the best way to spend the precious moments of Shabbat. Shabbat is supposed to be a beautiful time to sing *zemirot*, take a walk to appreciate G-d's creation, get closer to family and friends and, yes, even to study Torah. You're the final arbiter. Could you be spending the precious time of Shabbat more wisely?

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 338
- Chayei Adam 38:11
- The Halachos of Muktzah, Chapter 1 note 24
- Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 16:32

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

JOINING IN ON A SIYUM

Question: A friend of mine who is a serious student of Talmud invited me to a *mesiba* (party) that he is making in honor of his having completed an entire *mesechta* (Tractate) of the Babylonian Talmud. Is there any point in my being a part of this siyum given that I did not study and complete that *mesechta*?

Answer: The Talmud (*Mesechta Sabbat* 118b) relates that the Sage Abaye made a *mesiba* for all the students in his yeshiva when even only one of them completed a *mesechta*. This is the source for the halachic ruling that such a *mesibat siyum* is considered a *seudat mitzvah* for all the participants.

Two reasons are given by the commentators for this Sage's policy of celebrating a *siyum*.

One is the Midrash relating to the feast that King Solomon made for all his servants when he was granted the wish for superior wisdom that he made in a prophetic dream. This, notes the Midrash, is the source for making a celebration upon

completing the Torah. Just as the increase of wisdom of one man was a cause for celebration for his entire entourage, so too is the increase of Torah knowledge a reason to celebrate. This is why we celebrate on Simchat Torah upon completion of an entire year's public reading of the Torah. This, too, is the reason for celebrating a *siyum* on even one *mesechta*.

A second reason is based on one of the Talmudic explanations of why the fifteenth day of the Month of Av is considered a special day in our calendar. This was the day when the *kohanim* climaxed their work of preparing wood for use on the altar in the Beit Hamikdash, a climax that they celebrated with a feast. The great joy with which they performed this mitzvah throughout the year reached its peak with this climax and demanded expression. The joy with which one studies the Talmud, page-by-page, reaches its peak with the completion and a *mesibat siyum* is in order.

As far as you are concerned, aren't you happy to participate in the other *simchot* of your friend?

Rabbi Zalman Corlin

"The Skypler" New York

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His future was foretold in a Bar Mitzva *bracha*. Rabbi Corlin's uncle was the Torah Reader in Portland, Maine. At the time of Zalman's Bar Mitzvah his uncle gave him a special *sefer* for Torah readers. On the inside cover he inscribed a *bracha*, quite remarkable in light of future developments in Zalman's life.

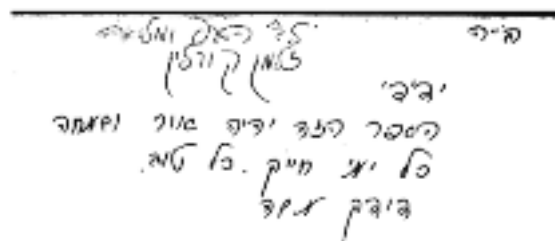
At age nineteen, during a Pesach trip to Tsefat while on a Wesleyan University program in Jerusalem (1978), Zalman bumped into his cousin, Rabbi Yaakov Lubow, a Kollel student. With Rabbi Lubow's encouragement, Zalman visited Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem after graduation in 1980. Moved by several world-class rabbis, including Rabbi Nachman Bulman *zatzal*, Rabbi Uziel Milevsky *zatzal* and Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb, Zalman left for a top New York yeshiva where he learned for nearly eight years. Married in 1984, Rabbi Corlin joined the Kollel Gur Aryeh until 1989.

Hired by Ohr Somayach International in the fall of 1989, he established an evening Beit Midrash in Brooklyn to cater to students returning from Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem. By 2010 the concept of an alumni Beit Midrash had blossomed into real-time audio-video classes (using Skype) spanning much of Torah. Among his students: a soon-to-become Cardoza law student teaching English in a small rural village, 12 hours by bus north of Bangkok, Thailand; a student of veterinary medicine in New Zealand; and an engineering student in Vancouver, British

Columbia on the Pacific west coast of Canada. Most of Rabbi Corlin's students are located in major collegiate hubs in the US & Canada. He had become - his closest colleagues quip - the "Skypler Rebbe".

Which brings us back to the Bar Mitzva *bracha* inscribed in the *sefer* young Zalman received from his uncle.

G-d had a plan for Zalman's life, and inspired his uncle, Reb Moshe the Torah Reader, to put that plan into words, long before all the pieces began to fall into place. In his short, ten word *bracha* (see photograph) you can hear an unmistakable whisper of *ruach hakodesh*:



[Translation: My dear one, this *sefer* should be a source of *ohr v'simcha* all the days of your life, (signed) your Uncle Moshe]

The words "*ohr*" and "*simcha*" which appear in this *bracha* provide a breathtaking preview of the rabbi's life journey. His uncle's Bar Mitzvah *bracha* that this *sefer* (Torah) should become the source and resource from which he would derive and impart "*orah v'simcha*" - light and delight - (represented by Ohr Somayach) all the days of his life, was destined to play out to the letter!

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

BREAD OR STOCKINGS?

One of the great *chassidic* leaders of the past generation was Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam, the Klausenberger Rebbe.

Scores of legends have been related and written about this extraordinary sage, especially about his experiences in a concentration camp and the encouragement he provided for his fellow sufferers during the war and after their liberation. Assuming the role of surrogate father to surviving orphans,

he consented to offer each of them, boys and girls, the parental blessing customarily given before Yom Kippur.

After blessing one such girl he gently urged her to wear stockings for the sake of feminine modesty. When she asked in return whether her severely limited funds should be used for buying bread or stockings, this warmhearted Torah giant quickly removed his own stockings and gave them to her.