

OHR NET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THIS IS THE PEOPLE OF G-D

"How can I carry alone...? (1:12)

Sometimes I sit down to write things that I know that people will enjoy: a heart-warming tale, a wry 'take' on our brief walk in this world. And sometimes I sit down to write something that I know people will find hard to take but nevertheless needs to be said. This is one of the latter.

Thursday, this week, is the blackest day of the Jewish calendar – the Ninth of Av. The Ninth of Av has been a day of tragedy for the Jewish People since the Exodus from Egypt. In more recent times, as we mentioned last week, it was in the early hours of July 23rd 1942 – Tisha B'Av – that the first train transport of 'deportees' left Malkinia in Poland. The train was made up of sixty closed cars, crowded with people – Jews from the Warsaw ghetto. The car doors were locked from the outside and the air apertures were barred with barbed wire. That was the day the killings started at Treblinka.

In Auschwitz, there was of all things, a small chapel. The chapel had a priest whose job it was to attend to needs of the camp staff. Day after day, he watched as train after train after train disgorged its human cargo. Day after day after day, his eyes lifted to the smoke wafting from the ovens, all that was left of a million lives, a million mummy's and daddy's goodnight kisses, a million broken birthday toys, a million pairs of bewildered frightened eyes staring lifeless into eternity.

Day after day after day.

One day the priest walked into his chapel and went up to the cross. He picked up the cross and slowly, with his bare hands, tore it piece by piece into splinters. He smashed the cross until nothing remained of it, saying over and over again, "This is the people of G-d! This is the people of G-d!"

The priest realized that he was witnessing something that defied belief, something that went far beyond the bounds of natural hatred and cruelty. He was witnessing something that could only be called supernatural.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai lived at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. There was unimaginable hunger in the Land of Israel. One day he came upon a young

girl picking out undigested barley from amongst the dung of an animal owned by a certain nation – the only food she could find. This girl was the daughter of Nakdimon ben Gurion, one of the richest men in the world. Rabbi Yochanan started to cry, "How happy are you, Yisrael! When you do the will of G-d, no nation nor tongue can rule over you, and when you forsake G-d's will, you are delivered into the hands of the lowliest nation – and not even into their hands, but into the hands of their animals."

Why the Jewish People should be happy that no nation rules over them is self-evident, but why they should be happy sifting dung to survive demands explanation.

The *Rashba* tells us that there are two kinds of miracles, a miracle for the good and a miracle for the bad. A miracle isn't just where someone is saved at the eleventh hour. It isn't just someone throwing away his calipers after a lifetime of being a cripple. A miracle is clear evidence of G-d overriding the natural order, of His direct intervention in nature. That intervention can be for the good – or for the bad.

When natural disaster strikes, when there is an earthquake or a flood, or a building collapses without reason, it means that G-d is punishing us without revealing Himself. He has used the natural world as His agents. In other words, He doesn't want a direct involvement with us and has distanced Himself from us. However, when something happens that is so clearly un-natural – even though the punishment is terrible – nevertheless we recognize that our punishment is coming directly from our Father in Heaven. We have not been abandoned to the hands of an agent.

When the daughter of the most affluent is reduced to foraging in excrement, when the world's most civilized nation suddenly turns into a wild monster without any rational reason, we have clear evidence of the supernatural at work.

This is the source of our strength and our survival – this is the greatest reason to be happy. Even in the darkest times, when we see miracles, even when they are miracles for the bad, we know that G-d has not deserted us. We know that

"This is the people of G-d."

Sources: *Eicha Rabba 1; Talmud -Ketubot 64b; based on Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshitz and Rabbi Elya Lopian in Lev Eliahu*

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, "Repetition of the Torah" (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told *Bnei Yisrael* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvot*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: From the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe's guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua's leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn't sinned by sending spies into *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem would have

given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results: The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem's decree was to want to "go up and fight" to redress the sin; he recounts how they wouldn't listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of *Eretz Yisrael* in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

ISRAEL Forever

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

When was the last time you heard the head of a nation lecturing its citizens in regard to their behavior?

In an age when prime ministers are under suspicion of questionable financial dealings and presidents are accused of lying to the public it is difficult to imagine such politicians getting up the nerve to tell ordinary citizens how to behave.

This is what is so remarkable about the Torah chapter we read this week in our synagogues as the beginning of the fifth and final *chumash* of the Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu, who has led his people for forty years and will be taking leave of them in another month, delivers a long lecture to them in which he reproves them for all the mistakes they made.

Moshe was able to do so for two reasons which do not apply to today's leaders. His personal conduct was beyond reproof and no one could say to him what the Talmud says is the usual response of one who is being called to account: "Before you tell me to remove the sliver between my eyes, first remove the log between your own." Secondly, Moshe was a divinely appointed leader who did not have to be concerned about popularity and politics. His integrity, however, gained for him that affection of the people expressed in an entire nation mourning his death for thirty days.

There are many aspects of social life in Israel which need correcting and we look forward to leadership which will seek not only security and economic prosperity but can guide the moral behavior of Israel forever.

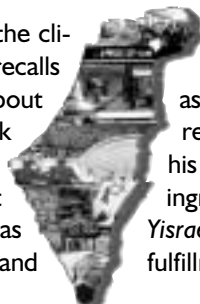
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

REMEMBERING JERUSALEM IN SORROW AND JOY

When a Jew is about to break a glass at the climax of his wedding ceremony he recalls what King David said in his *Tehillim* about bringing up the memory of Jerusalem at the peak of his joy.

This Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, Shabbat Chazon, introduces the saddest part of the year as we recall the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* and



our long exile from our land. Breaking the glass expresses our sense of the incompleteness of any joy as long as our Sanctuary is in ruins. But it is also a reminder that even if a Jew thinks he has achieved all of his heart's desires he is still lacking the most important ingredient for his total success as long as he is not in *Eretz Yisrael* with a *Beit Hamikdash* to enable him to achieve total fulfillment.

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WEEKLY DAFootnotes

ZEVACHIM 56 - 61

WAS THE ALTAR BIG ENOUGH?

When King Shlomo inaugurated the *Beis Hamikdash* which he had built we are told that “On that day the king consecrated the middle of the courtyard that was before the house of Hashem” (*Melachim I* 8:64).

Exactly what he did is a matter of dispute. Rabbi Yehuda's position is that he extended altar status to the floor of the courtyard. This view is based on a literal reading of the concluding words of that passage which report that “the altar of brass that was before Hashem was too small to receive the burnt offerings and meal offerings and the fat of the peace offerings.”

The peace offerings, the preceding passage reports, totaled 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. The brass altar from the days of Moshe could not accommodate such a large number of sacrifices and it was necessary to hallow the floor of the courtyard to qualify it for the burning of the fats.

Rabbi Yossi, however, makes the calculation that the increased size of the constructed altar built to replace the brass one was capable of accommodating even this number of sacrifices. What Shlomo did then was to replace the brass altar of Moshe with the one he constructed. His explanation of the term “was too small” is that it was a euphemism for discarding the old altar in favor of the new one.

The Sage's calculation that the altar of Shlomo was capable of accommodating the large number of sacrifices is based on the passage which reports that Shlomo offered a thousand burnt offerings on the altar of Moshe in Givon (*Melachim I* 3:4). If that comparatively tiny altar, with a top surface of only one *amah* square could accommodate a thousand then surely the new altar with a top of 400 square *amot* could accommodate all the sacrifices offered at the inauguration.

It should be noted that Rashi in our *gemara* writes that the top of the altar was 20 x 20 while Rashi in his commentary on *Melachim* writes that it was 24 x 24. His commentary here is based on the opinion of Rabbi Yossi, quoted later (on 61b) that the altar of Shlomo was only 20 x 20 and was expanded to 24 x 24 in the second *Beis Hamikdash* while Rashi in *Melachim* goes with the position of the other Sages that it was always 24 x 24.

• Zevachim 59a

THE PASSIVE FIRE

When Jews returned to *Yerushalayim* from Babylonian exile and rebuilt the *Beis Hamikdash* they made the altar surface considerably larger than the one which

existed in the first *Beis Hamikdash*. The reason for this enlargement, explains Rabbi Yossef, was that there was not enough space on the size of the first altar to accommodate all the sacrifices they wished to offer.

A challenge to this approach was offered by his disciple, the Sage Abaye, from a comparison of two passages describing the size of the Jewish population in *Eretz Yisrael* during the two Temple periods.

“Yehuda and Yisrael were as numerous as the sand by the sea” (*Melachim I* 4:20) is how Jewry is described in the first *Beis Hamikdash* era.

“The entire congregation was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty” (*Ezra* 2:64) is the census figure on the number of returnees building the second *Beis Hamikdash*.

If the altar of the first could accommodate a number as immeasurable as sand could it not certainly accommodate the much smaller number of returnees?

The solution to this mystery is found in another *gemara* (*Mesechta Yoma* 21b) which lists fire from Heaven upon the altar as one of the five things which the first *Beis Hamikdash* had and the second lacked. This is then qualified by pointing out that even though fire did descend from Heaven in the second *Beis Hamikdash* as well, it did not assist the man-made fire in consuming what was placed upon the altar. Lacking this input from the heavenly fire it was imperative to build a larger altar surface for burning the sacrifices offered in the second *Beis Hamikdash* even by a smaller populace.

• Zevachim 61b

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did Hashem instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refa'im?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 – Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 – 40 days.
3. 1:3 – From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 – So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 – They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 – Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 – They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 – They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 – Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 – When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 – Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 – Levi.
13. 1:36 – Hebron.
14. 2:5 – Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 – This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 – Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 – During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 – Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 – Amrafel.
20. 3:18 – They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

UNCOVERING THE ISSUE

From: Mrs. H.

Dear Rabbi,

I have been at my current job since November and it requires me to work with the public all day. Until recently, I always wore hats to work and was not even aware whether or not my co-workers and patrons knew I was wearing them for religious reasons. Now that summer is here I started getting questions like "why are you wearing a hat indoors", and figured it wasn't worth it to be annoyed all the time trying to think of an answer that wouldn't turn into a whole long discussion. So I decided to make the switch to wearing a wig to work and figured people would just think I got my hair done. Imagine my surprise when I found out that all my (non-Jewish and non-religious) co-workers and patrons keep asking the other religious person at my office why I stopped covering my hair! To me and probably every other religious person who I see during the day, it is obvious that I am wearing a wig. But how do I respond to the people who apparently have admired me all along for my religious beliefs and think I have stopped being religious?

Thanks for your help.

Dear Mrs. H.,

What a problem, I truly empathize with you! I think that the simplest way to deal with the situation is to turn it into a humorous anecdote. The workplace is a pretty small world and if you tell the story to a couple of your colleagues and have a little laugh with them about the way that the whole thing did not work out the way that you imagined, I'm sure everyone will find out pretty quickly.

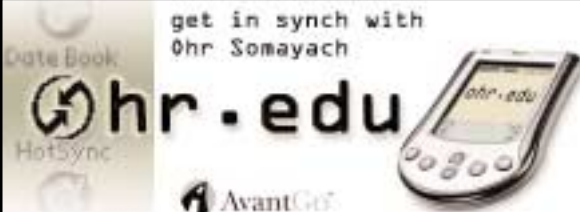
That way you'll be able to let everyone know that you haven't compromised your religious beliefs without making some kind of public announcement that might backfire and make you look ridiculous. May G-d give you the insight to say the right words at the right time!

Understandably, you seem to have wanted to avoid making an issue about your religious observance. However, sometimes avoiding the issue can make it worse while addressing it has certain advantages. Having to explain the Torah's position to others is a great opportunity to clarify the matter for ourselves. People generally ask sincere and probing questions (sometimes forcing us to consult others) whose answers benefit us as well. The dialogue itself, while sometimes heated, in the long run actually deepens and enriches relationships. When all is said and done, most people will respect the Torah view (even if they disagree) and they'll respect you for living up to your values and beliefs – as your colleagues seem to have admired you all along.

Your situation reminds me of a story I read about a religious law student who maintained his beliefs and practices despite the difficulties he encountered in his non-religious environment. He became close to the dean of the school who admired his dedication to his ideals, and who eventually got him an interview with a highly respected law firm. While waiting for the interview, he grappled with the dilemma of whether to wear his yarmulke or not. At the last moment he decided to take it off in order to avoid making an issue of his being a religious Jew. Once in the office, he was shocked to find that the head of the firm, who had thoroughly researched the candidate, respectfully put on a yarmulke for the interview while he had taken his off. Needless to say, his integrity was questioned and he didn't get the job.

Sources:

• *Horizons*, Number 28, "The Lawyer Learns a Lesson" by Roizy Waldman



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MISPLACED GIFT OF GAB

Question: Often on the buses I ride a gabby passenger gets on and, standing beside the driver or sitting behind him, carries on a running conversation with him, an obvious safety hazard. Although I understand this is against company rules, I am aware that lodging a written complaint will get the driver into trouble. And if I make a remark to the offending passenger, I will probably incur his/her ire. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: If you are convinced that the driver is being negligent in regard to his responsibility towards you and your fellow passengers, you definitely have a mandate to take action. The action you take, however, must be within the guidelines set by the Torah for dealing with people who have harmed you or pose a threat.

Since it is doubtful that the situation you describe is one of a clear and present danger warranting strong preemptive action on your part, it is necessary to offer the driver, the real villain in your scenario, some gentle reproof such as an innocent question as to whether the bus company rules permit carrying on conversations while driving. Only if his

response is a rude rejection of your overture should you resort to the threat of reporting his misconduct to his superiors by asking him for his particulars which he is obligated to provide.

Should your hitherto gentle approach meet with continued resistance all that is left to do is to jot down the route number of the bus (and the bus serial number which usually appears somewhere inside), and the day and hour of the incident. All of this information should be included in the complaint that you write to the company in the hope that it will enforce its own rules.

While on the subject of bus drivers, it is a good idea to reward considerate ones by expressing your appreciation of the service he provided you as you are about to leave the bus. A simple "thank you" makes the driver realize you relate to him as a human being and not just an extension of the steering wheel. Relating to a driver in this way will inevitably make him more sensitive to the needs of his passengers and less likely to react in negative fashion when a suggestion is made for him to stop talking and keep his mind on driving.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

BROTHERS IN BLOOD

Students of the Sanz Yeshiva in Netanya were in the midst of their holiday prayers on the morning of Shavuot when a nurse from nearly Lanyado Hospital came rushing in and excitedly called one of them outside. A patient's life was at risk, she explained, and fresh blood was needed immediately. Some 70 of the young men there quickly interrupted their prayers and rushed to the hospital and succeeded in saving a life.

Shulamit Marom had entered the hospital in which her husband, who made aliya from Russian 12 years ago, serves as a gynecologist, to give an expected normal birth to her

fourth child. Something went wrong and a pulmonary embolism brought her heartbeat to a standstill. In 90% of such cases the woman dies and the severe hemorrhaging of Shulamit posed a serious threat to her life. An alarm was sounded for 20 units of fresh O+ blood and staff members with such a blood type quickly responded. But it was not enough and the yeshiva next door was the only answer. Pints were taken from those with O+ blood and Shulamit was saved. A 3.2 kilo healthy baby boy was delivered by caesarian section and all the donors were invited to his Brit Mila.

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