

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

DYNASTY

"Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom..." (36:31)

Why do Jews believe that there is a G-d? The famous English physicist Sir Isaac Newton had a colleague who was a staunch atheist. Newton would frequently cross swords with his colleague on this subject.

One day when the atheist came to visit Newton in his library his eyes fell upon a most beautiful sight. Sitting on Newton's desk, basking in the rays of the afternoon sun, was an exquisite *astrolabe* - a brass machine that depicted the solar system in three dimensions.

"How beautiful!" remarked the atheist. "You haven't seen anything yet!" said Newton. "Do you see the small lever on the base? Move it towards you."

As the atheist moved the lever, the entire engine slowly came to life. At its center the orb of the sun started to revolve. Further out, turning on brass cogs, the earth and the planets began their revolutions around the sun; each planet accompanied by its own moons, all moving in wonderful precision.

"This is amazing!" remarked the atheist, "Who made it?" "No one" replied Newton, deadpan. "What do you mean 'no one'?" "No one. It just sort of fell together, you know..."

"No I don't know! I insist you tell me who the maker of this priceless object is. I refuse to believe that this object merely 'fell together'."

"This..." said Newton, pointing to the astrolabe, "this you insist has to have a maker. But THIS..." Newton spread his arms wide, indicating the Creation, "how infinitely more beautiful and complex, THIS you insist has no Maker?"

You don't have to be able to invent the First Law of Motion to read the world like a book.

Just as the book testifies to the existence of its writer, so too the world testifies to the existence of The Divine Author.

Yet however compelling is the evidence of design in the Creation, this is not the reason that Jewish People believe in G-d.

We believe in G-d because the entire Jewish People had a

firsthand experience of the Divine during the Exodus from Egypt, at Sinai and the forty years of daily miracles that followed. Ah, you will say, that was *them*. What about *me*? What connects my belief in G-d to the experience of people I never met a couple of thousand years ago?

The answer is that parents don't lie to their children about things that are important for the children to know. If indeed G-d did speak to the Jewish People at Sinai, and miraculously guided us through the desert; if He indeed gave us a Torah which tells us how to live our lives, then this certainly qualifies as information that our forbears would deem essential to pass on to us.

"Tradition" is infinitely more than the rhapsody of a Russian-Jewish milkman named Tevye.

"Tradition", the passing over from father to son of that encounter at Sinai, is the lifeblood of Judaism.

One of the ways we express that link is by referring to ourselves as the son/daughter of so-and-so. For example, my name is Yaakov Asher ben Dovid. Yaakov Asher, the son of David. My father's name was Dovid ben Shmuel, and his father's name was Shmuel ben Tanchum Yitzchak.

My name - who I am - is inextricably linked with from where I come. I am a link in a chain that spans the millennia. My very name says that.

At the end of this week's Torah portion, there is a list of the kings of Edom. If you look at this list you'll notice that not one of these kings was hereditary. Not one. Every one of them founded and finished his own dynasty.

Edom is descended from Esav. Esav despised the birthright and sold it to Yaakov. Esav viewed heredity as disposable, insignificant. He was prepared to sell it for a bowl of lentils. Esav's worldview is that of unmitigated meritocracy. Nothing else counts. This is his view even to this day.

Meritocracy has much to recommend it. However, when you are building a belief system which will rely on a chain that spans the millennia, to despise dynasty is to disqualify yourself from the job at hand — the eternal witnessing of G-d's interaction and interest in mankind.

• Thanks to Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Esav. That night Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Esav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason why it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Esav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Esav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family inter-

marry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement. However, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *brit mila*. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Esav's descendants.

ISRAEL Forever

THREE-“D” SURVIVAL

“Three-D” is a term associated in the minds of most people with the wonders of three dimensional imagery. But there is another meaning for “Three-D” in the past and future of the Jewish People.

In the Torah portion which will be read in synagogues this Shabbat, our Patriarch Yaakov prepares himself for a fateful encounter with his hate-filled brother Esav and his band of terrorists with the three “D”s — Diplomacy, Defense and *Davening*. Diplomacy took the form of appeasement through a substantial gift. Defense consisted of strategically splitting his camp into two fronts and concealing weapons behind his household's clothes. *Davening*

was praying to G-d for Divine salvation.

Israel is doing a heroic job of struggling for the survival of its citizens through the diplomatic efforts made by its government and the defense provided by its security forces. But the “D” which won the day for Yaakov and his family was the *Davening* — the prayers that earned a Heavenly-engineered change of heart in his implacable enemy. This should serve as a reminder to Yaakov's descendants that their diplomacy and defense will only prove successful if the *davening* of Jews earns from Heaven the change of heart in our enemies towards peace with Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

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

THE STONE THAT RETURNED

Desecration of Jewish graves on the Mount of Olives during the Jordanian occupation of East Jerusalem is not something of the past century alone. Back in the early 1800s a gang of Greek Orthodox Christians decided to go in the way of their Moslem neighbors and steal headstones from Jewish graves to use for their homes and places of worship.

The particular stone the Greeks set their sights on was the massive headstone of the grave of Kalba Savua, the saintly father-in-law of Rabbi Akiva. It was no easy matter removing such a large stone from the gigantic cave in which the tomb was located. They were so exhausted by



the time they got the stone to the entrance of the cave that they decided to leave it there for the night and return in the morning after getting some rest.

When they returned, the stone had disappeared. Assuming that it must have fallen from the spot where they had left it, they began an anxious search, only to discover that the stone was resting on the grave of the *tzaddik* where they had first found it. Undaunted by this strange event they tried two more times, only to be foiled by the stone's miraculous return to its rightful place. They finally gave up and conceded that Heaven frowned upon their effort to desecrate such a sacred grave.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Esav?
2. Why was Yaakov both “afraid” and “distressed?”
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Esav?
4. Where did Dina hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?
6. What was the angel forced to do before Yaakov agreed to release him?
7. What was it that healed Yaakov’s leg?
8. Why did Esav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Esav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word *nisa* in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Esav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the daughter of Leah and not as the daughter of Yaakov?
13. Whom should Shimon and Levi have consulted concerning their plan to kill the people of Shechem?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. What does the name Binyamin mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
16. The Torah states, “The sons of Yaakov were twelve.” Why?
17. How old was Yaakov when Yosef was sold?
18. Esav changed his wife’s name to Yehudit. Why?
19. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
20. What is the connection between the Egyptian oppression of the Jewish people and Esav’s decision to leave the land of Canaan?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so that Esav wouldn’t see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.
6. 32:27 - Admit that the blessings given by Yitzchak rightfully belong to Yaakov.
7. 32:32 - The shining of the sun.
8. 33:4 - His pity was aroused when he saw Yaakov bowing to him so many times.
9. 33:7 - To stop Esav from gazing at her.
10. 33:12 - It means “travel”. It does not mean “we will travel.” This is because the letter *nun* is part of the word and does not mean “we” as it sometimes does.
11. 33:16 - They slipped away one by one.
12. 34:1 - Because she was outgoing like her mother, Leah.
13. 34:25 - Their father, Yaakov.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 35:18 - *Ben-Yemin* means “Son of the South.” He was the only son born in the Land of Israel, which is south of Aram Naharaim.
16. 35:22 - To stress that all of them, including Reuven, were righteous.
17. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
18. 36:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
19. 36:3 - One who converts to Judaism, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
20. 36:6 - Esav knew that the privilege of living in the Land of Israel was accompanied by the prophecy that the Jews would be “foreigners in a land not their own.” Therefore Esav said, “I’m leaving — I don’t want the Land if it means I have to ‘pay the bill’ of subjugation in Egypt.”

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE SHIUR THAT SAVED

The recent suicide bombing in the Carmel Market in Tel Aviv which claimed the lives of three Israelis and wounded dozens more took place right next to the “Cheese Market” of Moshe Shammai. The shop was badly damaged but its owner was not inside. He had just left to attend the daily *shiur* (class) in *Daf Hayomi* in the Great Synagogue on Allenby Street.

Moshe makes a point of arriving early for the *shiur* given by Rabbi Lipa Pelman even though it means leaving his busy shop at a prime hour. The shock of the explosion and the blood stains on his clothes from administering first aid to some of the victims did not stop him from rushing off to the *shiur*. When it was over he emotionally related to the other participants how the *shiur* had saved his life.

WEEKLY DAFootnotes

ME'ILAH 9 - 15

A CHANGE OF CLOTHES

In addition to the ritual of lifting some ashes from the altar each morning, it was also the duty of the *kohanim* to remove the ashes piled into the center of the altar when that pile became large enough to interfere with functioning on the altar. The question of whether these ashes retained any sanctity, which would cause anyone taking them for personal use to be guilty of *me'ilah*, is a matter of dispute. Rabbi Yochanan contends that they do retain their sanctity, and supports his position by quoting the passage which states that the *kohen* must wear his priestly garments while performing the ashes removal.

In *Mesechta Yoma* (23b) Rabbi Yochanan explains that passage which states "He will take off his priestly garments and put on other garments to remove the ashes" (*Vayikra* 6:14) as meaning that those "other garments" are also priestly ones, only of inferior quality, because they are likely to become dirty in the process of removing the ashes. This is in opposition to the opinion that there is no need for priestly garments at all.

The reason given for the need to change from the sacred priestly garments when removing the ashes is that "the clothes one wears when cooking for his master are not the ones he wears when pouring a cup for him."

Rashi, in his commentary on *Chumash*, writes that this change from dignified priestly garments to inferior ones is not obligatory but rather a matter of good manners, as illustrated by the parable of the servant and master. Ramban disagrees, insisting that it is an obligation for the *kohen* to maintain the cleanliness of the garments he wears for his regular duties.

In his footnotes Rabbi Akiva Eiger calls attention to the problem of the *gemara* citing the passage (*Vayikra* 6:5) which speaks about the *kohen* putting on his regular priestly garments to perform the "lifting of the ashes" when it really should have quoted the next one, which we mentioned above, that speaks of the change to inferior garments.

• *Me'ilah* 9a

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS?

When the *Kohen Gadol* completed that part of the Yom Kippur services which he performed while wearing the special linen garments reserved for the service in the "holy place", the Torah commands that "he shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he

went into the holy place and shall leave them there." (*Vayikra* 16:23)

There are two different interpretations as to what is meant by the instruction to "leave them there". The view of Rabbi Dosa is that once these garments have fulfilled their role there is no problem of *me'ilah* in using them for something else, and they can therefore be utilized by ordinary *kohanim* throughout the year. The other Sages, however, rule that these garments must be permanently put away because using them for any other purpose constitutes *me'ilah*.

These two positions are based on interpreting the term "he shall leave them there". Rabbi Dosa sees it as a restriction on those garments being used again on another Yom Kippur, as if the Torah is telling us that once the *kohen gadol* has removed the garments this Yom Kippur they must remain removed from the use of any *kohen gadol* on another Yom Kippur. This does not, however, exclude their use for any ordinary *kohen* for the regular service.

The other Sages interpret the command to "leave them there" as a prohibition on their use for any purpose and an order to permanently put them away.

This debate as to the fate of these garments which have already fulfilled their mitzvah role has ramifications for another subject in our *gemara*. The position of Rabbi Dosa places these garments in the general category of sacred items to which *me'ilah* no longer applies after they have been used for the mitzvah for which they were intended. According to the other Sages, however, it is an exception to that rule.

• *Me'ilah* 11b

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DYBUK PART 2

From: Helene in Louisville, KY

Dear Rabbi,

I read your article on reincarnation and I found it so interesting that I re-read it several times. However, an idea keeps returning to my mind. If a soul can come back many times in different bodies, can it come back into someone else's body who is already living? I don't mean to be redundant, but I guess I'm asking if a soul can return to possess another person.

Dear Helene,

Last week we explored the phenomenon of *dybuk* in depth. We concluded with the question of whether *dybuk* exists today. Rabbi Chaim of Velozhin purportedly said that before the coming of the messiah, spirituality will be so hidden that even *dybuk* will be uncommon. Nevertheless, a famous *dybuk* involving the Chafetz Chaim was reported by an eyewitness, the great Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, to his son Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Leib:

On the way from Isisock to Vilna there is a town called Stretzi where there lived a Jew named Nachum. Once this man came to Radin with his 14-year-old daughter who was ill. The father said that she was possessed by a *dybuk*, and told my father what happened:

After Chanukah a horse fell dead in the barn. Everyone went outside to see what happened, including his daughter. The daughter, very excited and sweaty, went into the house and drank cold water from an open vessel. From then on she became progressively ill. At first, she started convulsing and would fall lifeless like a stone but afterwards she wouldn't know what happened. After this happened several times, a voice started speaking out of her.

The voice said that it was the soul of a daughter of elderly parents who, when 12 years old, converted to Christianity. She later moved to another town, and the Jewish children would run after her, jeering her. In her anger, she joined several non-Jews and strangled two Jewish children. Five years later, when she was seventeen, she died and was judged in the Heavenly court to be reincarnated for 15 years.

At first the soul entered into the cross over her grave. When the cross was crushed, she went into a tree. The tree was cut and she went into a stone that was in the stall where the horse was. When the horse stepped on the stone it fell and died. From the horse the soul went into the vessel of water from which the daughter drank.

At that time, 5 years had passed and she still had another 10 years. The father asked the soul why it possessed his daughter. She answered in a sad voice, 'Nachum, she is a sinner. She drinks without making a blessing. If she had blessed, I could not have entered her'. All this, the man told my father, Rabbi Elchonon.

On Friday morning, my father, Rabbi Naftali, and Rabbi Koller were in the attic where they learned *Kodshim*, and the Chafetz Chaim came up and asked them to go see the girl. Rabbi Eliyahu Dushnitzer asked her who rules over her, and she said demons. He asked, 'What is their name?' She answered, 'Why do you need to know?' And then she explained that when she enters some object she is protected from the demons that wait for her, and when they find her they torment her. When the voice spoke, the onlookers saw that the girl's tongue didn't move normally, but rather by some other force.

Rabbi Goldberger, who learned in Radin, told me that he heard Rabbi Eliyahu say, 'Even the wicked in that world rest on Shabbat'. She replied, 'Whoever doesn't rest on Shabbat here, doesn't rest on Shabbat there'. On Shabbat in the afternoon she started talking; my father asked her if she knows the Chafetz Chaim. She answered, 'Yes he is as great as a *Tana*'. 'If he commands you to leave, will you leave?' She said, 'Yes'. My father said, 'The Chafetz Chaim orders you to leave'. 'I'll go'. 'When?' 'Tonight'. 'After you leave, you won't return?' 'If they will say *Kaddish* for me, I won't return, but if not I'll enter her or her sister'. 'Who shall say *Kaddish*?' 'Two rabbis'. My father asked, 'How long should they say *Kaddish*?' 'One week'. She asked, 'from what part of her body should I leave?' He told her, 'From her small finger'.

During *ma'ariv*, people came in saying that the *dybuk* left the girl. When it left, four people were there and they described how the girl started to scream, 'My side hurts', then 'My shoulder hurts', and then 'My arm hurts'. Then her hand swelled and after that her small finger swelled. Then they heard breaking glass from the window as the *dybuk* left. After waiting to see that girl was stable, her father took her home and the Chafetz Chaim ordered that they say *Kaddish* in the *Kollel* and learn *mishnayot*. Rabbi Eliyahu and Rabbi Gershon of Salant said *Kaddish* the whole week, and the *dybuk* never returned.

Sources:

- Rabbi Yoel Schwartz, *Guf v'Neshama*, p. 91
- Rabbi Yehuda Pataya, *Neshamot Mesaprot*, Publisher's introduction
- Rabbi Yisrael Lugasi, *Netzach Yisrael*, p. 222
- Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, *Chayei Olam*, vol. I p. 20

HONOR VS. SHAME

Question: In the school where I teach, a colleague of mine was particularly upset by the misbehavior of one of his pupils and punished him by demoting him to the class of his younger brother. Is this the right thing to do?

Answer: While there is a precedent in the Talmud (*Bava Metzia 85a*) for motivating a recalcitrant student by offering him honor he does not yet deserve, we do not find a precedent for shaming one as a form of discipline. In fact, we find the opposite. The Sage Rav instructed the great teacher Rabbi Shmuel bar Shilas to patiently allow an inattentive pupil to remain in the classroom in the hope that he would eventually be motivated to fully participate (*Bava Batra 21a*).

There is also a serious danger that severe embarrassment of a pupil may result in his rejection of the school and what

it stands for. The eminent Torah giant Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky of Bnei Brak tells the story of a teacher in the Talmud Torah which he attended as a child who seated his pupils in the classroom according to their diligence. When one of the outstanding pupils once began to slack in his studies, he was placed in the back row, an embarrassment which caused him to abandon not only the school but his faith as well.

Public embarrassment has been equated by our Sages with murder, a warning that we should think twice before using such a harsh action as a means of discipline. Just as a teacher must be careful to refrain from striking a pupil who upsets him, he must also resist the temptation to embarrass him. Your colleague should instead try to come up with imaginative ways of using honor as a source of motivation.

PUBLIC DOMAIN _____

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Flash of Inspiration

To the editor of Ohrnet and to the author of Ohr Somayach's "Flash of Inspiration", a brief weekly insight on the Parsha, I send you this week as well as each and every week a hearty "Yashar Koach"! Good Shabbos,

• N. Z.

Re: For Whom the Bell Rings

Regarding the dilemma of whether to continue the telephone conversation when the doorbell rings or to conclude it to go answer the person at the door, I would like to mention that we have a cordless phone at home, which solves this issue.

• Sam

Ohrnet replies:

That's fascinating, Sam! The Chafetz Chaim who explained the deeper significance of new inventions might have said that the reason for G-d's "creating" or allowing the invention of cordless phones is so that we would not upset anyone by either answering the door or not answering the door under such circumstances.

Sam replies:

I wonder what he would have said about cell phones? It is unfortunate how easy it is to forget one's whereabouts and transgress the boundaries of *tzenius* (modesty), etiquette, and common sense when using these enablers of ubiquitous talk.

Rays of Ohr.edu

My name is J. and I am Operations Manager for a new Parsha Shavua sheet in English that is distributed everywhere in Israel. It has a distribution of more than 10,000 weekly copies. We are looking for nice, short and inspiring Divrei Torah, if possible, on a weekly basis. I just came across your site, Ohr.edu, and I like it very much.

Could we have your permission to use your Divrei Torah to publish them in our publication?

Naturally, we would give credit to the author of the article, his sources and the source of the material. Thanking you in advance for your time and patience.

• J.

Ohrnet replies: We give permission as long as you give credit to the author, the institution and our website Ohr.edu