

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT PINCHAS • 21 TAMMUZ 5767 • JUL 7, 2007 • VOL. 14 NO. 37

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE LAST LAUGH

“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month shall be a pesach-offering to G-d.” (28:16)

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch was arrested once for organizing a Torah education network in Russia. A KGB officer put a gun to his head and demanded that he name his collaborators.

The Rabbi laughed.

Laughter would not seem the most appropriate response to one's imminent departure from this world.

Why did he laugh?

The twenty-one summer days between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av are the saddest days of the year.

During these three weeks, we remember the destruction of our land, of our people and our Holy Temple, our pipeline to spirituality.

We are still living in that world of destruction. Little that we see gives us hope, surrounded as we are from without and within by forces that try unceasingly to uproot and destroy us.

That's the gloomy picture that we face on a daily basis.

It's all too easy to become despondent and fall into depression.

Then comes along our parsha, Parshat Pinchas (which usually falls within the three weeks) with its message of hope amongst the ruins.

That hope is expressed by the Festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Succot, which are all mentioned in the parsha.

All the festivals share a common element – *simcha*. “And you will have *simcha* on your holidays.”

Happiness has many expressions, and in Hebrew there is a word for each. *Simcha* is the happiness that expresses itself in laughter.

Laughter is a funny thing.

What causes this distinctive physical response that can vary anywhere from a subtle widening of the mouth to fully-fledged convulsions?

When we suddenly see through layers of falsehood to self-evident truth, that flash of revelation generates the physical reaction we call laughter.

In the Book of Psalms, King David says, “Light is sown for the righteous, and for the straight of heart, *simcha*...”

Simcha, laughter, is the product of straightness of heart, of the heart's connection to true reality.

“G-d's commandments are ‘straight,’ they bring *simcha* to the heart...”

G-d's commandments bring *simcha* because they are ‘straight’;

they are reality itself.

Why did Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch laugh?

Every believing Jew lives in this world — but not for this world; we live for the World to Come.

However, like most spiritual realities, this awareness floats around the back of our consciousness without taking up too much airtime.

Until something like a loaded gun brings the World-to-Come into crystal clarity.

Then this world and its illusions are instantly reduced to absurdity.

Once, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Akiva were approaching the Temple Mount. They saw a fox coming out of the place where the Holy of Holies had once stood and they began to cry — except for Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Akiva laughed.

They asked him how he could laugh and he asked how they could cry. They replied that the Torah says that, “Any unauthorized person entering the Holy of Holies shall die.” And now foxes stroll there. Should we not cry?”

He replied, “It is (also) written, ‘Zion will be plowed over as a field.’”

Since the prophecy of the utter destruction of Jerusalem had been fulfilled, Rabbi Akiva had no doubt that prophecy of its ultimate rebuilding would also come true.

And so Rabbi Akiva laughed.

He laughed because his supreme straightness of heart allowed him to penetrate beneath the surface to an intense perception of truth.

“Akiva, you have comforted us,” they said.

And so it is with our holy festivals.

The festivals are also called *moadim* — which means an appointed time of meeting. At the *moadim*, we ‘meet’ G-d; and even though that *simcha* may last for but a few days a year it reminds us that the darker our dark world becomes, so much brighter will be the blinding flash of revelation at our ultimate meeting when the redemption finally arrives.

May it come speedily in our days!

• Sources: Based on Rabbi Saadia Gaon, *Bnei Yissaschar* in *Iturei Torah*, Rabbi Reuven Subar

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

© 2007 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

G-d tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive G-d's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action - executing Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. G-d commands Moshe to maintain a state of enmity with the Midianites who lured the Jewish People into sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. G-d instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to *Bnei Yisrael*. The number of the Levites' families is recorded. Tzlofchad's daughters file a claim with

Moshe: In the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks G-d for the ruling, and G-d tells Moshe that their claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance. G-d tells Moshe that he will ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter. Moshe asks G-d to designate the subsequent leader, and G-d selects Yehoshua bin Nun. Moshe ordains Yehoshua as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

ISRAEL Forever

WHO IS A TRUE LEADER?

The crisis which exists today in Israel in regard to who is suited for leadership calls to mind the formula for true leadership spelled out in this week's Torah portion.

In his appeal to G-d to appoint a man who will succeed him as the leader of the Jewish nation, Moshe thus introduces his delineation of the qualifications of such a leader:

"May the G-d, the G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man to lead the community." (Bamidbar 27:16)

In his commentary, Rashi points out that the title for the Divine used by Moshe in his appeal was actually a description

of the type of leadership needed.

"Sovereign of the Universe," he said, "it is clearly known to you the mindset of each and every person and that they differ from one another. Please appoint a leader who can tolerate everyone according to his own understanding."

Leading a people with such diverse outlooks has always been a challenge. In the badly fragmented society of the modern Jewish state it is perhaps even a greater challenge. But only such leadership, free from personal interest and totally dedicated to the needs of every single member of the community, can guarantee Israel forever.

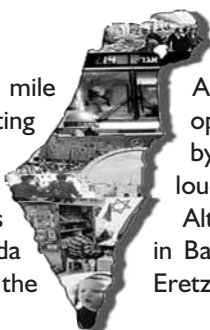
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

AVNIT – TOMB OF RAV CHISDA

An unmarked grave in Avnit, less than a mile from Zefat, is assumed to be the resting place of the great Talmudic Sage Rav Chisda.

A disciple of Rav Huna and his successor as the head of the great yeshiva of Sura, Rav Chisda was so constantly immersed in Torah study that the



Angel of Death was unable to overcome him. His opportunity finally came when he distracted Rav Chisda by causing a tree near his place of study to crash with a loud noise.

Although he spent a lifetime learning and teaching Torah in Babylon, he, like his master Rav Huna, was buried in Eretz Yisrael.

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.TARGUM.COM

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY PRESENTS

LOVE OF THE LAND

VOLUME ONE - THE GLADSTONE EDITION

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why was Pinchas not originally a *kohen*?
2. Why was Moav spared the fate of Midian?
3. What does the *yud* and *heh* added to the family names testify?
4. Korach and his congregation became a “sign.” What do they signify?
5. Why did Korach’s children survive?
6. Name six families in this Parsha whose names are changed.
7. Who was Yaakov’s only living granddaughter at the time of the census?
8. How many years did it take to conquer the Land? How long to divide the Land?
9. Two brothers leave Egypt and die in the *midbar*. One brother has three sons. The other brother has only one son. When these four cousins enter the Land, how many portions will the one son get?
10. What do Yocheved, Ard and Na’aman all have in common?
11. Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
12. What trait did Tzlofchad’s daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
13. Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad’s daughters’ names?
14. Tzlofchad died for what transgression?
15. Why did Moshe use the phrase “G-d of the spirits of all flesh”?
16. Moshe “put some of his glory” upon Yehoshua. What does this mean?
17. Where were the daily offerings slaughtered?
18. Goats are brought as *musaf* sin-offerings. For what sin do they atone?
19. Why is Shavuot called *Yom Habikkurim*?
20. What do the 70 bulls offered on Succot symbolize?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 25:13 - *Kehuna* (priesthood) was given to Aharon and his sons (not grandsons), and to any of their descendants born *after* they were anointed. Pinchas, Aharon’s grandson, was born *prior* to the anointing.
2. 25:18 - For the sake of Ruth, a future descendant of Moav.
3. 26:5 - That the families were truly children of their tribe.
4. 26:10 - That *kehuna* was given forever to Aharon and his sons, and that no one should ever dispute this.
5. 26:11 - Because they repented.
6. 26:13,16,24,38,39,42 - Zerach, Ozni, Yashuv, Achiram, Shfufam, Shucham.
7. 26:46 - Serach bat Asher
8. 26:53 - Seven years. Seven years.
9. 26:55 - Two portions. That is, the four cousins merit four portions among them. These four portions are then split among them as if their fathers were inheriting them; *i.e.*, two portions to one father and two portions to the other father.
10. 26:24,56 - They came down to Mitzrayim in their mothers’ wombs.
11. 26:64 - In the incident of the *meraglim*, only the men wished to return to Egypt. The women wanted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.
12. 27:1 - Love for *Eretz Yisrael*.
13. 27:1 - To teach that they were equal in greatness.
14. 27:3 - Rabbi Akiva says that Tzlofchad gathered sticks on Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon says that Tzlofchad was one who tried to enter *Eretz Yisrael* after the sin of the *meraglim*.
15. 27:16 - He was asking G-d, who knows the multitude of dispositions among the Jewish People, to appoint a leader who can deal with each person on that person’s level.
16. 27:20 - That Yehoshua’s face beamed like the moon.
17. 28:3 - At a spot opposite the sun. The morning offering was slaughtered on the west side of the slaughtering area and the afternoon offering on the east side.
18. 28:15 - For unnoticed ritual impurity of the Sanctuary or its vessels.
19. 28:26 - The Shavuot double-bread offering was the first wheat-offering made from the new crop.
20. 29:18 - The seventy nations.

YEVAMOT 65 - 71

- The limits of polygamy
- Who is charged with the mitzvah of procreation
- Which slaves of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*
- The husband's rights to his wife's property
- The limit on the Israelite wife of a *kohen* eating *terumah*
- The role of an unborn child in determining *terumah* rights
- The *yibum* of a nine-year old *yavam*
- Which relationships disqualify the daughter of a *kohen* from eating *terumah*
- The invalid marriages of a minor or mentally deficient
- Doubtful status of the child born to an *arusah*
- The child of a *kohen* who enables his Israelite mother to eat *terumah*
- *Kohanim* and their slaves who are not eligible for eating *terumah*
- The uncircumcised child's effect on his father's ability to offer a Pesach sacrifice
- How the command of circumcision to Avraham differed from that given to Yehoshua

OBLIGATION OR OPPORTUNITY

“You are not obligated by the Torah in the mitzvah of having children,” Rabbi Nachman told the woman who sought to end her marriage because of her husband's impotence, “and if you nevertheless insist on doing so you will forfeit the *ketubah* payment due you.”

Rabbi Nachman's warning was based on the ruling in the *mishna* that only men are obligated in the mitzvah of bringing children into the world. The reason given by Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon is that when Adam was commanded to have children he was told that the purpose of procreation was “to fill the earth and conquer it” (Bereishet 1:28). Since it is only the nature of man to militantly conquer, it was he who was charged with this responsibility rather than the woman.

The woman in our story did not relent. “Don't I need someone to support me in my old age and to care for my burial when I die?” she asked. Rabbi Nachman consented to her argument and ruled that she was entitled to a divorce and *ketubah* payment.

Although it appears from the *gemara* that a woman has no obligation of procreation, a conflicting indication arises from another *gemara* (Kiddushin 41a) where mention is made of the mitzvah for a woman to marry. The commentaries there raise the question as to why she has a mitzvah to marry if she has no obligation for procreation. One of them, Rabbeinu Nissim, suggests that although she is not obligated, her participation is considered a mitzvah because of her essential role.

The solution is challenged by another commentary from our *gemara* which indicates that if not for the woman's claim for the opportunity of children supporting her in her old age, her auxiliary role in procreation would not have sufficed to win her case.

An alternative solution to the above-mentioned conflict is that although there is no obligation for a woman to bring children into the world, only a great merit, there is an obligation for her to get married if she wishes male companionship. This is why the *gemara* in *Kiddushin* refers to her getting married as a mitzvah.

• Yevamot 65b

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“It is permissible to tell a lie for the sake of maintaining peace.”

“It is even a mitzvah to do so.”

• Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon

• Rabbi Natan - Yevamot 65b

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE CONSIDERATE LISTENER

During the time that Rav Eliezer Shach lived in Jerusalem there was an elderly Jew who had arrived from the Soviet Union who made a point of approaching this great sage every Shabbat Eve between Kabbalat Shabbat and Ma'ariv services. He would relate to him all the local and foreign news of the week.

This totally surprised the other worshippers who were familiar with the tremendous dedication to Torah study that

eventually developed Rav Shach into the Torah leader of his generation. When they finally got up the courage to ask him why he did not simply tell this fellow to leave him alone, this was his reply:

“This lonely Jew looks forward an entire week to do what he thinks is a great service to me by sharing all the news he has read. Should I disappoint him by telling him that I am not interested?”

GLOBAL WARMING

From: Olga in Odessa

Dear Rabbi,

Global warming seems to be a hot issue on the international scene. What does Judaism say about the human role in the problem, and our responsibility for preventing/correcting it?

Dear Olga,

Allow me to clear the air for our readers regarding what global warming is and its causes before I address your question.

One of the functions of the atmosphere is to simultaneously enable sunlight to reach the Earth to energize life while keeping some of the heat from escaping back into space. In this way, the atmosphere serves as a giant “greenhouse” which keeps the Earth’s climate viable; without which, the Earth’s surface would be 60 degrees Fahrenheit cooler.

The emission of certain gases from Earth and their presence in the atmosphere, insofar as they trap more heat from escaping, compounds the natural greenhouse effect of the atmosphere, resulting in what is commonly referred to as global warming. Since this warming affects winds and ocean currents that move heat around the globe in ways that can cool some areas, warm others, and change the amount of rain and snow falling, it is claimed by some to be more accurately referred to as “climate change”.

Two of the major gases (referred to as greenhouse gases, GHGs) compounding the greenhouse effect are methane and carbon dioxide. The major source of the first is emitted from the digestive system of grazing animals. The major source for the second is combustion of fossil fuels in cars, factories and electricity production.

While humans are obviously responsible for historically unprecedented CO₂ pollution, we are also indirectly responsible for the former. Unprecedented meat consumption results in greatly increased grazing which means much more methane. The problem is in turn exacerbated since more grazing requires more grazing land, resulting in the deforestation of millions of trees that would otherwise absorb and convert our CO₂ waste into oxygen instead of it being emitted into the atmosphere.

According to the scientific community, global warming is not only a hot topic, but an issue of top priority which can adversely affect weather conditions, resulting in severe floods in some areas and severe droughts in others, harm or wipe out animal and plant species, raise sea levels displacing coastal inhabitants world wide, reduce world wide water supplies coming from snowmelt, and make the world a much hotter place to live in.

According to the Torah view, to the extent to which we contribute to the problem, we are culpable for it. Similarly,

to the extent that we can prevent/correct the problem, we are responsible to do so. This is evident from the following Torah teachings:

“When the Holy One Blessed Be He created the first man he took him and showed him all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him — ‘see My works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are; and I created all of it for you. Be careful not to spoil or destroy My world because if you spoil it, there will be no one after you to repair it’.” (Kohelet Rabbah 7:13)

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch describes the magnitude of this mandate in no uncertain terms: “‘Do not destroy anything!’ is the first and most general call of G-d, which comes to you... If you regard the creations as objects without rights, not perceiving G-d Who created them... you have no right to the things around you... If you use them unwisely, you commit treachery against My world, you commit murder and robbery against My property... With this call He defends the greatest and the smallest against you and grants the greatest and the smallest a right against your presumptuousness.” (Horeb, London: Soncino Press, 1962, chap. 56, #397)

We find that the Sages prohibited burning wood from olive trees and grape vines on the altar. According to one opinion this was to avoid air pollution, since these woods burn with a great deal of smoke. (Baba Kama 82b)

In Sefer HaChinuch, Rabbi Aaron Halevi of Barcelona writes, “This is the way of pious and elevated people... they will not waste even a mustard seed, and they are distressed at every ruination and spoilage they see, and if they are able to save, they will save anything from destruction with all of their power... Every person is obligated to master his inclinations and conquer his desires [to exploit and consume]”. (Sefer HaChinuch 529)

Judaism’s attitude toward protecting nature is not just for tangible results in the present; the Torah also teaches to plan preservation strategies for the future. The Talmud relates that Choni HaMe’agel was walking on the road. He saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked the man, “How long until this tree will produce fruit?” He answered that it will take seventy years. Choni asked him, “Are you sure that you’ll still be around in seventy years?” The man replied, “Just as my fathers planted for me, so will I plant for my children”. (Ta’anit 23b)

We see from all these sources that we must take responsibility for maintaining and preserving G-d’s Creation not only for the here and now, but also for the benefit of posterity. This is something that must be taken very seriously, and we are required to follow the guidance of the experts in taking practical measures of conservation and preservation to save the world from irresponsible and destructive consumption.

The Wonder of the World

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

07.07.2007. No, this is not a telephone number! This is the date when in Lisbon, Portugal there will take place the “Official Declaration of the New Seven Wonders of the World”.

A Swiss organization came up with an idea several years ago that the time had come to replace the old list of the seven wonders of the ancient world with a new one which would be chosen democratically by the citizens of the world. Towards this end a committee of historians, engineers and experts in various fields selected 21 sites from which voters can choose. The date chosen for the declaration of the results is one that symbolizes the number of the winners.

Some of the leading candidates are the Statue of Liberty in New York, the Great Wall of China, the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the pyramids in Egypt and Mexico. The Twin Towers would probably have been on the list but the al-Qaida terrorists voted against this architectural wonder with their suicide attack.

What about the wonders of the Jewish world?

In the old list of the seven ancient wonders, the Colossus of Rhodes which was only 31 meters high was included, while the Second *Beit Hamikdash*, which rose to

a magnificent height of 50 meters, was left out. But who could really expect inclusion of a Jewish Temple which the nations of the world utterly destroyed!

The same point may be made in regard to the new list of candidates for recognition as a wonder of the world. What other country can claim to have such impressive walls of antiquity as the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem? Again, there is no need to wonder why this wonder was left out since so much of the world refuses to recognize Israel's right to the area these walls enclose.

When all is said and done, however, the People of Israel themselves represent the greatest wonder of all. “There is no greater proof of G-d running His world,” commented a Torah sage, “than the survival of one lamb among seventy wolves.”

The Jewish People need no buildings to express the great wonder of their survival. They do look anxiously forward to the day when all mankind will recognize the Third *Beit Hamikdash* as the greatest wonder of all.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE WINNING SIDE

Question: In my community there is an anti-religious element which is threatening to establish a Jewish school of an entirely secular nature. There is some strong local support for this move and, much as others and I are opposed to this effort to deprive all our children of a truly Jewish education, it seems to be a losing battle. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: When the Chafetz Chaim was asked a similar question he replied with a parable about a city caught in the middle of a revolution with both rebels and loyalists pleading for its people to join their side. A town meeting was held at

which arguments were presented in favor of each side. Finally, one wise fellow presented a solution.

“Since there is no way to avoid joining one of the sides despite the fact that we feel no allegiance to either of them, let us make a study of which side is stronger. If we must fight let us at least be on the winning side.”

“When in doubt,” concluded the Chafetz Chaim, “always choose the winning side. The secularists and their powerful supporters are on one side. On the other side is G-d and His armies. It's up to you to figure out which side is sure of winning and to join it.”