

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TEITZEI · 21 AV 5770 · AUG. 21, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 46

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE UNCHAINED TONGUE

"Remember what the L-rd, your G-d, did to Miriam on the way, when you were leaving Egypt" (24:9)

When Miriam criticized her brother Moshe unfairly, G-d punished her with *tzara'at*, a serious leprous-like skin affliction that covered her body.

The Torah, for some reason, connects Miriam's punishment with leaving Egypt. What does one thing have to do with the other?

The captivity of the Jewish People in Egypt was more than physical bondage. On a deeper level Egypt represented the enslavement of the power of speech. Egypt not only enslaved the bodies of the Jewish People, but it put in chains the major weapon of the Jewish People – speech. Thus, the Torah writes that the Jewish People “cried out” to G-d. It never writes that they “prayed.” For in Egypt, speech itself was bound.

The Exodus from Egypt was the beginning of the rebuilding of the power of speech.

Man's pre-eminence derives from his power of speech. He has the ability to direct himself according to his will. When the Jewish People left Egypt, they went straight into the desert. In Hebrew, the word desert is *midbar* which is from the root “*mi dibur*” – “from speech” – because the desert is the place that is separated and removed from speech. Since the desert

is the maximum place of non-speech, of non-direction, it is the ideal place to rebuild the power of speech from the ground up.

When the Jewish People left Egypt they were like a newborn baby. When a child begins to speak, his father is obligated to start to teach him Torah. In this formative stage, then, it was essential that the Jewish People should guard their mouths and their tongues with great care. Something is most vulnerable during its construction. To protect the reconstruction of speech, they were given Torah, and to protect their mouths, they were given the manna.

The gravity of Miriam's error was not just what she did, but *when* she did it. To use the power of speech incorrectly at the time of its reconstruction required a serious punishment. Thus, the Torah connects her mistake with the leaving of Egypt.

It is Miriam's eternal privilege though that every generation has a positive commandment to remember what G-d did to her, to teach us that death and life are in the power of the tongue.

• Sources: *Sfat Emet*, *Ramban*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah describes the only permissible way a woman captured in battle may be married. If a man marries two wives, and the less-favored wife bears a firstborn son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is stoning. A body must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had housed a holy soul. Lost property must be returned. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs. A fence must be built around the roof of a house. It is forbidden to plant a mixture of seeds, to plow with an ox and a donkey together, or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads — *tzitzit* — on its corners. Laws regarding illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. An escaped slave must not be returned to his master.

Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden. *Bnei*

Yisrael are not to make vows. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting. Divorce and marriage are legislated. For the first year of marriage, a husband is exempt from the army and stays home to rejoice with his wife. Tools of labor may not be impounded, as this prevents the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease *tzara'at* is forbidden. Even for an overdue loan, the creditor must return the collateral daily if the debtor needs it. Workers' pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, converts and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court may impose lashes. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing. It is a mitzvah for a man to marry his brother's widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate and used honestly. The *parsha* concludes with the mitzvah to erase the name of Amalek, for, in spite of knowing about the Exodus, they ambushed the Jewish People.

ISRAEL Forever

PROBLEMS WITH A JEWISH PRIME MINISTER

“The decision by the New Zealand government, one which has a Jewish prime minister, is outrageous.”

This is what Rabbi Moshe Gutnick, acting president of the Organization of Rabbis of Australia, reportedly commented regarding the ban on *shechita* which is the result of New Zealand's new animal welfare code requiring stunning of the animal before slaughter.

Prime Minister John Key, reports the JTA, is the son of

a Jewish mother but he frequently attends church.

Critics of the Israeli government's attitude towards some religious issues have cynically suggested that the observant community in Israel has problems with its own Jewish prime minister. It must be stated in his defense that at least he does not attend church and has no intention of banning *shechita*. Perhaps such merits will help secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

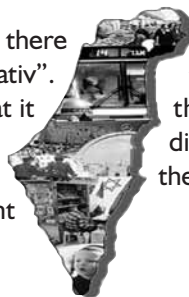
Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

THE TRANSPLANTED SYNAGOGUE

In the ancient Babylonian city of Nehardeah there was a famous synagogue called the “Shaf Veyativ”.

Those Aramaic words referred to the fact that it was built from material brought to Babylon by the lovers of Eretz Yisrael.

When King Yechonyah and his company went



into Babylonian exile they brought along with them stones and earth from Jerusalem with which they constructed this synagogue that had the distinction of hosting the Divine Presence even after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house?
2. What fraction of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother? b) two brothers?
3. What will become of a *ben sorer u'moreh* if his parents don't bring him to court?
4. Why is it a degradation to G-d to hang a criminal's body on the gallows overnight?
5. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
6. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
7. Why does the Torah link the mitzvah of sending away the mother-bird with the mitzvah of making a railing on the roof of your house?
8. What mixture of wool and linen is permitted to be worn?
9. What three things happen to a man who falsely slanders his bride?
10. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
11. Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
12. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
13. What is the groom's special obligation to his bride during their first year together?
14. When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?
15. What type of object may one not take as collateral?
16. "Remember what G-d did to Miriam." To what event does the Torah refer?
17. If a poor person finds money, the one who lost it receives a blessing. From where do we derive this?
18. Who has the primary obligation to perform *yibum*?
19. Which two people in this week's *Parsha* are required to speak in *Lashon Hakodesh*?
20. How does the Torah describe those who cheat in business?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 21:13 - So her captor will find her unattractive.
2. 21:17 - a) 2/3 b) 1/2
3. 21:22 - He will eventually rob and kill to support his physical indulgences.
4. 21:23 - Because humans are made in G-d's image, and because the Jewish People are G-d's children.
5. 22:2 - Sell it and save the money for the owner.
6. 22:5 - It leads to immorality.
7. 22:8 - To teach that one mitzvah leads to another, and to prosperity.
8. 22:12 - Wool *tzitzit* on a linen garment.
9. 22:18 - He receives lashes, pays a fine of 100 silver *selah*, and may never divorce her against her will.
10. 23:8 - Because they hosted Yaakov and his family during the famine.
11. 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come.
12. 23:21 - Three; two negative commandments and a positive commandment.
13. 24:5 - To gladden her.
14. 24:5 - When he remarries his ex-wife.
15. 24:6 - Utensils used to prepare food.
16. 24:9 - G-d punishing Miriam with *tzara'at* for speaking *lashon harah*.
17. 24:19 - From the mitzvah to leave the "forgotten bundle" for the poor.
18. 25:6 - The eldest brother.
19. 25:8 - The *yavam* (brother-in-law) and the *yavamah* (his childless brother's widow).
20. 25:16 - "An abomination (*to'evah*) to G-d."

לע"נ

הרה"ח ר' יצחק אייזיק בן הרה"ח ר' אליעזר דב זצ"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

TALMUDigest

AVODAH ZARAH 9 - 15

- Chronology of the past and the future of the world
- Dating documents according to the reign of kings
- Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi (Rebbie) and Emperor Antoninus
- The heroism of Ketiah bar Shalom and the convert Onkelos
- Burning beds and other forms of mourning for deceased king
- Strange special days of idolaters
- Avoiding any appearance of bowing before idols
- Dangers in drinking water
- The decorated shops of the idolaters
- Doing business with idolaters
- What may not be sold to idolaters
- Restriction on selling land or agricultural machinery in *shmitah* year

MAGIC OF MOTHER'S MILK

One of the most fascinating relationships in Jewish history is the one between Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi (Rebbie), the head of the Sanhedrin and leader of the Jewish People, and Antoninus, the head of the Roman Empire.

What was there that motivated the mighty emperor to humble himself before the spiritual head of a people who suffered persecution during the reigns of his predecessors?

Tosefot cites a midrash which offers a solution to this mystery. When Rebbie was born there was a Roman ban on

circumcision. Upon learning that his parents had defied the ban and had made a *brit mila*, the emperor summoned Rebbie's mother to appear before him with her circumcised son. Somehow she succeeded in switching her baby with the uncircumcised baby Antoninus whom she nursed before coming before the emperor. This succeeded in saving her life and that of her son, and the mother's milk which Antoninus received from such a saintly source had such an impact on him that when he ascended to the throne he maintained a relationship with Rebbie which culminated in his conversion to Judaism.

• *Avodah Zara 10b*

What the SAGES Say

"Some gain their world-to-come in one hour while others do so only in many years."

• *Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi (Rebbie) - Avodah Zarah 10b*

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JOYFUL MOURNING

From: Manya

Dear Rabbi,

The three-week period of mourning for the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash is always so depressing. There are so many don'ts that I personally feel overwhelmed and overly-limited. Is there anything positive that can be done during this period to help us remember the Temple and stir up longing for its rebuilding?

Dear Manya,

The laws of the three weeks are intentionally patterned after the laws of mourning in order to instill within us the utter sense of loss that we should feel in not having the Holy Temple. And in truth, a mourner doesn't need to be told to feel sorrow over the loss of a loved one – it comes completely naturally as a result of the mourner's sense of void and bewilderment as to how it is possible to continue living without the departed. So if we find mourning over the Temple arduous, it's because we really don't appreciate what we've lost.

And if the mourning practices are limiting, this should also remind us just how limited we really are, both physically and spiritually, without the Temple.

That being said, we are not required to be sad.

The Sages taught that when the month of Adar (Purim) arrives we are to increase joy; when the month of Av (Tisha b'Av) arrives we are to reduce joy. They didn't say that we are to be sad, but rather to reduce joy. This means that we must always be in a state of joy, but during this time that joy is to be tempered by the realization of how much more we'll rejoice after the Redemption – as in the verse, "Then our mouths will be full with laughter and our tongues with joyous song" (Ps. 126).

The Talmud (Maccot 24b) relates a story where Rabbi Akiva and the Rabbis, overlooking the Temple in its destruction, noticed a fox darting out of the place of the Holy of Holies. The Rabbis cried over this desecration but Rabbi Akiva laughed. "Why are you laughing?" they asked. Rabbi Akiva replied, "Now that I see the fulfillment of the prophecy comparing the Temple Mount to a desolate forest (Micha 3:12), I am assured that in the future will be fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 8:

"I will return to Zion, and I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth, ...Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem...And the city shall be filled with boys and girls

playing in its streets...Behold I will deliver My people from the east and from the west...And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I shall be their G-d, in truth and in righteousness."

So you see, there's an element of hidden joy within our sources' discussion of the Destruction. In fact, we're told by verses and by the Sages that after the final redemption, the fast days recalling the destruction of the Temple will be transformed into holidays of feasting and rejoicing. This is odd. It is understandable that once the Temple is rebuilt, those fasts will be nullified, but that those days should themselves become holidays doesn't seem to make sense. Rather we see here as well the idea that there is an inherent aspect of joy latent in these days, which will fully blossom after Redemption.

What can we do to tap into this positive dimension of mourning?

For one, we can learn about the Beit Hamikdash – it's beauty, grandeur, structure and function and its elevating affect on both Jews in the Land of Israel and on all nations worldwide. Knowing as much as possible about the centrality of the Temple to spirituality and prophecy, its being the focal point of all humanity, greatly enhances our sense of loss in its absence and inspires corresponding joyous longing for its rebuilding.

A second proactive, positive thing we can do to express our longing for its rebuilding is to increase brotherly love among our People. The Temple was destroyed because of unjustified hatred between Jews. It will be rebuilt through unconditional love for one another. We must make every effort to reach out to each other with sincere care and respect, as brothers and sisters, the children of G-d. When our Father sees how we receive and treat each other, He'll be moved to receive us in kind.

A last sphere of positivity in mourning is strengthening our Torah learning and observance of *mitzvot*. Each step of progress we make in the name of coming closer to G-d, hastens G-d's return to us. So much so that our learning and good deeds become spiritual stones placed in the Temple being built on high. When that spiritual Beit Hamikdash will be completed, it will descend into this world as a soul into a body, and this Resurrected Beit Hamikdash will glow with the glory of G-d, kindling renewed fervor and inspiration among Jews and all nations to serve G-d as one.

PRAYING FOR FAILURE

Question: A colleague of mine and I are both being considered for promotion to a single opening in our office. Is it proper for me to pray that he doesn't do well in his interview so that I will get the promotion? What is the right thing to do?

Answer: A Jew must always live with the perspective provided by our Talmudic Sages that "No one is capable

of infringing to any degree on what Heaven has designated for another."

Such a perspective renders prayer for your colleague's failure an exercise in futility. Your prayer must be focused on your finding favor in the eyes of your employers and your thoughts must be that whatever happens is ultimately for the best of all.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE FORGOTTEN LETTER

Rabbi Michael Unger, a veteran resident of the community established by Ohr Somayach in Zichron Yaakov, was learning in the yeshiva's branch when he came across a classical work of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (RaMo) written 500 years ago, which he felt desperately needed to be reprinted. He put in a major effort to correct and retype the *Toras Chatoss* and sent a letter to a publisher offering him the finished manuscript.

No response came because the letter was misplaced

and ended up among some important documents. Exactly 14 years to the day that the letter was sent, it was found and a call immediately came from the interested publisher. Nine months of intensive work followed and this past Chanukah saw the publication of *Toras Chatoss* and *Toras Ha'ashom* (along with the *Minchas Yaakov* written some 300 years ago) now available in Hebrew book stores.

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