

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYECHI · 11 TEVET 5771 · DEC. 18, 2010 · VOL. 18 NO. 12

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

*"...and heal with love and truth with me, please do not bury me in Egypt" (47:31).*

A couple of thousand years ago a famous Jew said that the outpouring of his kindness by dying for the sins of his followers would grant them eternal and unqualified atonement.

Possibly this is the source of a literary and cultural tradition that glorifies unstinting giving.

Our culture's cult of romantic (and ultimately decadent) self-abandonment on the altar of giving makes it difficult to relate to the Torah's insistence on limits.

The well-worn canard that the Judaic "letter of the law" extinguishes its delicate and self-sacrificing spirit is another symptom of this bias.

However, without truth, kindness descends into depravity.

The Hebrew word for kindness, *chesed*, is connected to the word meaning 'to pour oneself out' (*ashad*). For example, when the Torah prohibits a certain kind of incestuous relationship, it describes the relationship as *chesed*. (*Vayikra 20:17*)

True kindness is always controlled and appropriate. Thus, the ways of G-d are always described as *chesed v'emet* "kindness and truth." No Being can be kinder than G-d, and His Kindness is tempered by Truth.

Where would the newspapers be were it not for the foibles of the young and the restless? Our society adulates romantic abandon, head-over-heels love, and extravagant emotional indulgence.

Unbridled kindness is not what G-d wants from us. He wants kindness with our heads screwed on.

Yaakov knew that Yosef would inter him with all possible pomp and ceremony, but despite the true *chesed* of burying the dead, Yaakov preferred not to be buried at all than his bones should take up rest in the soil of Egypt.

The question remains, however, why was Yaakov so concerned that he not be buried in Egypt?

After seventeen years of living in Egypt, Yaakov had seen the effects of living next to the fleshpots. The Jewish People were already starting to mistake the Nile for the Jordan River. The Exile was so comfortable that it seemed that Egypt was not an exile at all.

Egypt is the matrix of all exiles, and we, the children of Israel, of Yaakov, find ourselves in the last of all those exiles.

Yaakov was sending a posthumous message not just to his children in Egypt, but also to his most distant descendents across the millennia, saying, "Your hope is to live in a land in which I refuse to even be buried."

The more comfortable are our lives, the more difficult it is to feel the reality of the exile in which we languish, and the more important is Yaakov's message in a bottle.

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov

summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Efraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

## ISRAEL Forever

### WHOSE WALL IS IT?

In Psalm 83 of Tehillim, which is recited in many synagogues throughout Israel and the world for the sake of security in the Holy Land, there is a dramatic description of a conspiracy of nations against the Jewish inhabitants of the Land.

Philistines and Ishmaelites join Assyrians and other classical enemies of Jewry in a declaration that "they will inherit the dwelling place of G-d" (83:13). The commentaries explain that this is a reference to the *Beit Hamikdash*, which is the Divine residence.

We are reminded of this threat by the recent publication of an official paper by the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Information that claims that the Kotel was never a part of the

Temple Mount and really belongs to the Muslims. It was Muslim tolerance, says the paper's Palestinian author, which allowed Jews to stand in front of the Wall and weep over its destruction.

In this week's Torah portion the Patriarch Yaakov, in his blessing to his son Yehuda, prophesies that Jews will be connected to Yerushalayim and will build the *Beit Hamikdash*. (See *Targum Onkeles* on *Bereishet* 49:11).

It is the age-old connection of the Jewish People with Yerushalayim and the Kotel which conclusively refute the preposterous Arab claim and strengthens our resolve to maintain this city as the undivided capital of Israel forever.

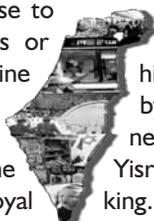
## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

### OMRI – THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

A secular perspective of history explains every rise to leadership in terms of military power, politics or popularity. This narrow view ignores the Divine power behind the throne Who ultimately determines who will sit upon it and for what reason.

A case in point is that of Omri, who ruled the Kingdom of Israel for seven years. Omri was not of royal



lineage, only an army general. Neither was his piety very commendable. But he had one thing going for him. He proved to be a "settler" of the highest order by purchasing a hill in Shomron upon which he built a new city (*Melachim I* 16:24). For adding a city to Eretz Yisrael he was rewarded by Heaven with the position of king.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “*chesed shel emet*” — kindness of truth?
2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn't want to be buried in Egypt.
3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?
4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat...” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?
6. What does *pillalti* mean?
7. What does “*Shechem*” mean as used in this week's parsha? (two answers)
8. Which individual is called “the *Emori*”? Why? Give two reasons.
9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?
10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?
11. What congregation from Yaakov's offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?
12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?
13. What does milk do to teeth?
14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey”?
15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?
16. In Yosef's blessing Yaakov said, “They embittered him...” Who are “they”?
17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.
2. 47:29 - a) Egypt's ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn't make him into an idol.
3. 47:31 - Bow to him.
4. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef's mother, Rachel, in the *Ma'arat HaMachpela*.
5. 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
6. 48:11 - “I thought.”
7. 48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.
8. 48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (*imrei pi*).
9. 49:1 - When *mashiach* will come.
10. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
11. 49:6 - Korach and his congregation.
12. 49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.
13. 49:12 - It makes them white.
14. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
15. 49:20 - Oil-rich land.
16. 49:23 - Yosef's brothers, Potifar and his wife.
17. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
18. 50:5 - From Esav.
19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh's ignorance of Hebrew.
20. 50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the *aron* (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

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- How many applications of blood on the altar are required
- Blessings on eating meat of sacrifices
- Words whose pronunciation differs from the spelling
- Blood application on the two altars
- *Pigul* caused by improper thought while applying blood
- Status of blood remaining after application to altar
- How a missing application affects the service
- The importance of performing details of Yom Kippur service in the order they appear in the Torah
- If *pigul* applies when the improper thought was present in only half of the service
- When *pigul* does not apply at all

## BLESSINGS ON SACRIFICES

Which blessings were made in the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* that cannot be made today? When a Jew ate the meat of a sacrifice he performed a mitzvah and he therefore made a blessing before doing so.

Since the blessing had to specifically refer to the mitzvah at hand, if one ate the meat of the *korban Pesach* he had to mention in his blessing that we were commanded by G-d to eat the *Pesach*, while if he ate the *shlamim* sacrifice he would say that we were commanded to eat the *zevach* (the slaughtered sacrifice).

Although one normally ate the meat of a single sacrifice on Pesach eve, there could arise a situation in which he ate

both the *korban Pesach* and the *shlamim* known as the “14th day *chagigah*” which accompanied the *korban Pesach* if the company was too large for it to provide meat for all its members.

If he made a blessing on either one of these two sacrificial meats, maintains Rabbi Akiva, he must make a different blessing on the other one. Although both are sacrifices they differ in the way their bloods are applied to the altar. While the blood of the *korban Pesach* is ceremonially poured at the base of the altar, the blood of the *shlamim* is sprayed on the altar wall. This difference in the service separates the two sacrifices and necessitates a different blessing for each.

• *Zevachim 37a*

## What the SAGES Say

“The difference between a community sinning and only the *kohen gadol* sinning is compared to the difference between a majority of a human king’s subjects acting against him or only a minority of them.”

• *The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael - Zevachim 41b*

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## LIVING IN ISRAEL

From: T. in Miami, FL

Dear Rabbi,

I have a small dilemma. I am 18 years old. I have a close relative now living in Israel who is very extremist when it comes to living in Israel. He has always disapproved of people living outside Israel for he never really sees them as "worthwhile Jews" or Jews who are so dedicated to their Jewish heritage.

Lately, he has criticized me for living outside of Israel, and claims that there will be a price I will have to pay for doing such a "sin." I know I want to come to Israel once I get an education so I could support myself later on in the future. Neither does he agree that this is the right way to go and he claims that by the time I will get to Israel (when I will be about 20 - 22 years of age), I will be "too old" and therefore it won't have an impact on me.

I have decided to write to you for, as a Rabbi, I would respect your opinion. I don't want to believe that I'll be too old to go to Israel at 22 or that my life outside Israel is a waste of time, yet, by the letters I receive from him, I am beginning to feel guilty.

Do you think I should work now so I could support myself in the future and meanwhile help in the local Jewish community, or should I ignore the Jews outside Israel and go to Israel now, so I won't be "too old" in a couple of years? Thank you.

Dear T.,

As you probably know, the Land of Israel is central to Judaism. It's an intrinsic part of the covenant between G-d and Abraham, and it's where the Patriarchs and Matriarchs lived and are buried. Most events recorded in the Tanach took place in Israel.

Israel is the only land conducive to developing the faculty of prophecy. All the prophets either received prophecies in Israel, or prophecies that related to the Land of Israel. For example, Abraham's only prophecy outside Israel was the command to go there.

Even today, people who live in Israel experience extraordinary Divine assistance in Torah study and spiritual growth. As the Sages said: "There's no Torah like the Torah of the Land of Israel;" – "The air of the Land of Israel imparts wisdom." Despite the security situation, in

many ways one can experience a higher level of tranquility in Israel than can be experienced elsewhere.

Furthermore, most of the commandments only apply when the majority of Jews are in Israel; nowadays, when most Jews live outside Israel, only 270 of the 613 mitzvot can be fulfilled.

Is there a specific mitzvah to live in Israel? Many authorities say it is a mitzvah to live in Israel, in keeping with the verse, "and you shall possess the land and dwell in it (*Bamidbar 33:53*)." Maimonides, on the other hand, states that "one should always dwell in the Land of Israel," yet he does not list it as one of the 613 commandments. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein explains that according to Maimonides there's no obligation to go to Israel, although it is a good thing to do.

Since living in Israel affects almost the entire range of mitzvah observance, all factors should be considered. Will you be able to find work that provides you with the time and money to fulfill the mitzvot - for example, study Torah, give charity, and provide a Torah education for your children? Halachic authorities throughout the ages have emphasized that a person should come to Israel only if reasonably sure he can support his family and guarantee his children a Torah education. However, one shouldn't seek luxuries - the importance of living in Israel outweighs driving a Ferrari and eating steak every day for breakfast.

Other factors to consider: How will you deal with living far from family? How do you feel about the security situation? How will you adapt to a new culture? What suitable marriage prospects are available? What appropriate Torah study program will you connect with? Will you be able to live in a Torah neighborhood?

G-d forbid anyone should say a life isn't "worthwhile" just because it's lived outside of Israel. A life dedicated to Torah and mitzvot is certainly worthwhile, wherever it is. Sometimes a person's contribution to the Jewish People can be even greater outside of Israel, especially a person involved in Jewish education, outreach or community matters.

Coming to Israel is sort of like getting married: Everyone should do so eventually, but not because a well-meaning relative bullies you into it. And if you do so when you want to, you're more likely to fall in love.

Sources:

- *After the Return*, Rabbi Mordechai Becher & Rabbi Moshe Newman (Feldheim Publishers). Ch. 7

## THE UNWANTED CALLS

**Question:** I have a very busy schedule during the day and look forward to a restful evening at home when I can do some studying of Torah and spend some quality time with my family. But there are always phone calls from business or social contacts which I have no interest in answering. Is it right for me to tell a family member answering the phone to tell the caller that I am not at home?

**Answer:** When the Torah warns us against lying it does not say “Don’t lie!” but rather “Distance yourself from lying”. This phrasing is intended to warn us against prevarication of any sort, regardless of how much you can find justification for it. (The one exception is saying a “white lie” in order to preserve or restore peace between mates and neighbors.)

If it is your child that you instruct to lie about your not being there you have compounded your guilt by setting a bad example which the youngster is likely to emulate in other situations.

What then can you do?

If it is studying Torah that you wish to do it is in any case preferable to do so in a local Beit Midrash where you will not be disturbed by phone calls. When spending time with the

family at home, in order to avoid these “nuisance calls,” either remove the receiver during that special period, or request that whoever answers the phone inform the caller that you are not available at that moment (which is true!) and invite them to call back at an hour which you have previously designated as the time you are prepared to receive calls.

The important thing to remember is what the Sage Rav told his son when he caught him lying to his mother for the noble purpose of assuring that she would prepare the sort of meal for her husband that he desired rather than continue her practice of ignoring his wishes. The son was always the go-between, relaying to his mother his father’s menu wish. When he grew older and realized that his mother was spitefully preparing meals opposite to his father’s instructions he hit on the idea of switching the instructions. When Rav surprisedly came home that day to a meal he really wanted he discovered what his son had contrived. He praised his ingenuity but scolded him for indulging in falsehood, which is so habit-forming that it twists the tongue of its perpetrator and makes it difficult for him to ever adhere to the truth.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

### IN THE NICK OF TIME

**W**hen the Sabbath-observant passengers on El Al’s Flight #02 from New York were informed that they would be arriving in Israel at 3:30 on a Friday afternoon rather than 1:00 as scheduled, they began worrying about where they would spend the Holy Day of Rest. This delay, resulting from inclement weather on the East Coast, meant that they had only one hour and ten minutes until the beginning of the Sabbath.

Their problem was solved thanks to two airline rabbis and scores of generous hosts. Rabbi Yochanan Chayot, El Al’s Director of Religious Passengers Services, and El Al Rabbi Avshalom Katzir set up an emergency service for the 50

passengers who requested it. They were rushed off the plane on a special staircase and hurried through two special border-control lines. In the meantime an appeal was made on a religious radio station for families to host passengers for the Sabbath. Some 80 calls came in response, many more than were needed.

In a matter of minutes those who lived nearby were on their way home while the others enjoyed the hospitality of families in Bnei Brak, Elad, Kfar Chabad and Shoham. Two other passengers who arrived on another flight only 20 minutes before the holy day began spent the Sabbath at the airport, courtesy of El Al.

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