

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAERA · 25 TEVET 5771 · JAN. 1, 2011 · VOL. 18 NO. 14

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY?

*“Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land...’ (8:12)*

Two men walking toward each other in the street. As they draw alongside, a smile spreads across the face of one of them. Excitedly, he says to the other: “Izzy, Izzy, it’s me. Moishe. Don’t you recognize me?”

Izzy furrows his brow, trying to bring to the surface of his consciousness some deep forgotten memory. “...Moishe? ...Moishe?”

Unfazed, the other continues, “You remember me, Izzy! It’s Moishe. Once I loaned you \$25,000 interest free for 10 years.”

“Yeah...” replies Izzy.

“But Moishe, what have you done for me lately?”

Unlike the other plagues, G-d commanded only Aaron to initiate the plague of lice by hitting the earth — Moshe was not commanded.

Why?

When Moshe killed an Egyptian who was beating a Jew, Moshe hid the body of the Egyptian in the earth. Thus, he had a debt of gratitude to the earth and could not strike it.

However, that killing became known and Pharaoh tried to kill Moshe, forcing him to flee the country.

So what really was Moshe’s debt to the earth? He had to flee for his life anyway. The earth hadn’t really done anything for him in the end.

Gratitude is not quantified by results. When someone does something for us, even if it turns out to be unsuccessful or unnecessary, we owe him as much

gratitude as if he had just loaned us \$25,000 interest-free for 10 years.

**Gratitude is not quantified by results.**

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**G**-d tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. G-d commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. G-d punishes the Egyptians and sends plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller

scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only G-d could be performing these miracles. Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

## ISRAEL Forever

### A RAY OF HOPE

**T**he problems of Jews caused by the concern of the international community for relations with the Moslems seem to have no borders. Far away from the Middle East such concern allegedly posed a threat to the ability of Jews in New Zealand to slaughter poultry in accordance with halacha.

Thanks to a major campaign by local and international Jewry the ban on kosher poultry slaughter imposed last May by the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture was recently lifted. The "New Zealand Herald", however, raised the

allegation that the motivation for the ban was the concern that allowing Jews to perform *shechita* while prohibiting the preparation of meat according to Islamic dietary laws might hurt the country's commercial and diplomatic ties with the Moslem world.

When we read in this week's Torah portion of G-d's promise to free our ancestors from Egyptian bondage, we gain the confidence that despite all our problems with our enemies and their collaborators, we can look forward to a secure 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

### SULTAN SALIM – UNCOVERING THE WESTERN WALL

**A** fascinating story is told of how the Kotel (Western Wall) was rescued from obscurity almost five centuries ago. Soon after the Turkish Sultan Salim had conquered Yerushalayim he looked out from the window of his residence near the area where the Beit Hamikdash once stood and observed a woman dumping garbage. She explained that this was the custom of the Christian community ever since the Romans destroyed the



Holy Temple of the Jews but were unable to destroy the West Wall of the Temple Mount. By dumping garbage at this site for centuries they hoped to eliminate any memory of the sacred wall.

The Sultan dumped a fortune of coins on the rubbish pile and invited all the residents of the city to dig for them. For thirty days the money-hungry people dug for these coins until the Wall was revealed.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
6. Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel"?
7. After which plague did G-d begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart"?
8. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
9. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
10. How long did the plague of blood last?
11. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
12. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation"?
13. What are "chamarim"?
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
16. What were the Egyptians likely to do if they saw the Jews slaughtering lambs?
17. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
18. The *dever* killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:9 - Although G-d swore to give them the land, they never actually had control over it.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
6. 6:25 - Yitro fattened (*pitem*) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (*pitpet*) at his evil inclination.
7. 7:3 - After the sixth plague — *shechin*.
8. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
9. a.. 7:17 - Because the Nile was an Egyptian god.  
b. 8:17 - Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and G-d did the same.
10. 7:25 - Seven days.
11. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
12. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
13. 8:10 - Piles.
14. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
15. 8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
16. 8:22 - Stone the Jews.
17. 8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
18. 9:10 - In the plague of *dever* only the cattle *in the fields* died. The plague of *shechin* affected the surviving cattle.
19. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

- Where remains of sacrificial blood are poured at the altar base
- In regard to which sacrifice is proper disposal of remaining blood indispensable
- Application of blood of sin offering to the altar
- The red band around the altar
- How *olah* sacrifice was offered
- Why the southeast corner of the altar was different from the others
- How the altar was constructed
- How the location of the Beit Hamikdash was determined
- The six *asham* sin offerings
- The *todah* (thanksgiving) and nazirite sacrifices
- The *shlamim* sacrifice procedure and who may consume its flesh
- The time and place for the slaughter of the *shlamim* sacrifice
- The remaining categories of sacrifices

## THE NAME AND THE PLACE

Deciding where the Beit Hamikdash should be built based on hints in the Torah and Prophets was no simple matter. In addition, the deliberations concerning the location took place at a time when one of the deciders was fleeing for his life.

When King Shaul sent agents to capture David, whom he viewed as a threat to his throne and therefore deserved to be killed, they failed to find him, for he had fled to the home of the Prophet Shmuel. While he was there, he and Shmuel studied the sources, which enabled them to determine where G-d wanted the Beit Hamikdash to be built.

Where is it indicated in the account of David's arrival at

Shmuel's home that they dealt with the issue of Beit Hamikdash location?

Maharsha explains that the passage relating to this meeting calls Shmuel's city Nayot (*Shmuel I*, 19:18), although whenever Shmuel's city is mentioned it is always identified as Rama. This was seen by our Sages as an indication that they were actually in Rama but were discussing the Beit Hamikdash, which is the "Naveh" – the Divine dwelling place.

The exact location of where the Beit Hamikdash stood is not known today, which explains why halacha forbids going up on the Temple Mount for fear that a ritually impure (because of contact with the dead) Jew may enter the sacred area forbidden to him.

• Zevachim 54b

## What the SAGES Say

"The Beit Hamikdash is higher than all of Eretz Yisrael, which is higher than all other lands."

The Sage Rava - Zevachim 54b

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## TORAH ON TENSION

**From: Morgan**

Dear Rabbi,

*I get stressed-out over all the things I have to do. It gets so overwhelming that I just get confused and lock-up. I was wondering whether there might be any particular Jewish way of dealing with and managing this type of stress. Thanks for any help and insight you may be able to offer me on this situation.*

Dear Morgan,

Your feelings of stress are absolutely understandable – we live in a very stressful society that places great demands and expectations on people. On the one hand, this breeds achievement; on the other hand, this pressure to produce, if not channeled properly, leads to tension, depression and burn-out.

What's the Torah's wisdom on this?

### 1. Don't take on too much

The Talmud Sages taught: "*Tafasta meruba, lo tafasta*" which literally means, "If you take hold of too much you hold nothing". In our terminology this translates into, "Don't take on too much". You have to be realistic about your abilities and only take on what you can carry out. Don't let others' demands on you (or demands on yourself) cause you to spread yourself so thin that you crack; otherwise you'll be left with nothing.

### 2. Write a list

Furthermore, our sources teach, "*K'neh lecha chaver*" which literally means "acquire for yourself a friend". But the commentaries note that the teaching may also be read to mean, "A quill is for you a friend", referring to the fact that writing things down organizes and clarifies one's thoughts. Whatever you have decided to take upon yourself, write down in a prioritized and organized list. This is extremely helpful since it takes the pressure off having to remember everything you have to do, and enables you to view your otherwise seemingly unbearable burden as separate, manageable tasks. What's more, crossing off entries in the list gives you a sense of accomplishment that encourages you to keep going.

### 3. Share the burden

King Solomon, in his great wisdom, wrote, "*Tov ha'shnayim min ha'echad*" which means, "Two are better

than one". This includes the idea that, whenever possible, delegate responsibilities to others. You don't always have to take everything upon yourself, and you should feel comfortable in sharing joint burdens with others. Often, over-achievers, who are natural leaders, fall prey to the notion that the more they do, the more their leadership will be recognized; but the ability to delegate responsibility and rally others behind a cause exhibits no less leadership.

### 4. Take breaks

We find that when Jacob sent animals as a gift to appease Eisav, Jacob instructed his servants, "*revach tasimu bein eder l'eder*" — which means "make space/breaks between the herds". By breaking up the work of sending the herds (which themselves were beasts of burden) rather than sending them all at once, Jacob hinted at the importance of taking breaks between tasks, which was simultaneously intended to enable Eisav to "digest" the massive amount of gifts that were being sent to him. Both ideas are relevant here. Taking breaks enables you to complete your tasks, without being overwhelmed by all that entails.

### 5. Stop thinking/talking and do

Earlier in the Torah narrative, when Jacob arrived at the well where he met Rachel, we find him discussing with the local shepherds how and when the task of removing the huge stone should be performed in order to fulfill the task of watering the herds. When Rachel arrived, the verse states, "*vayigash Yaakov*" – "Jacob approached" to remove the stone. If it were up to the shepherds, they would have kept discussing the task till evening. Jacob, on the other hand, realized that the only way to realize is to do. We often procrastinate, responsibilities accumulate and stress is compounded because we don't know how or when to start. The answer is, "*vayigash*" – stop vacillating and just start!

### 6. Everything is from G-d

Last but not least is the teaching, "*Hakol bidei Shamaim*" which means everything is in the hands of Heaven. You have to do as much as you can within reason to accomplish your goals. But ultimately, the degree of success depends on what result G-d wants. He's the boss. The acceptance of this idea greatly defuses stress because while you certainly have to try your best, ultimately the outcome is not up to you and you (and others) have to accept the result as G-d's Will. This is echoed in the teaching of our spiritual leader and ruler King David, "*hashlech al Hashem yehavcha v'Hu yikallecha*" – "place your burden on G-d and He will support you".

## ADVICE WITHOUT VICE

**Question:** An acquaintance of mine is considering purchasing a certain property and, as he has done on other occasions, consulted me for my opinion on the advisability of the deal. It so happens that I am also interested in the same property and if I encourage him to buy I will lose out. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** The answer to your question can be found in the words of the great ethicist, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, who offers these guidelines in his classic “*Mesillat Yesharim*” (The Path of the Just, Chapter 11).

“This is the responsibility of the honest man. When someone asks his advice, he must tell him to do what he himself would do in a similar situation, without any consideration other than the benefit of the asker. This advice must be offered without the most remote ulterior motive. If it so happens that he anticipates a loss to himself through such advice, he should try, if possible, to reveal this to the

asker. If this is not feasible he should excuse himself from giving any advice. Under no circumstances may he propose anything whose result will not be for the benefit of the asker.”

The author, whose strong stand on this matter is based on the Torah prohibition “And do not place a stumbling block before a blind man” (*Vayikra 19:14*), points out that the Talmudic Sages have applied this rule to areas of life outside of business. If someone asks for information regarding a prospect for marriage, caution must be exercised to avoid misleading him with wrong information because you have an interest in seeing the other party married.

It is because it is tempting to rationalize one’s bad advice by claiming it to be good that it was necessary for the entire Jewish people to hear, upon entering Eretz Yisrael, the Heavenly warning of “Accursed be he who misleads a blind man on his path.” (*Devarim 27:18*)

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

### NOT FROM A SPIELBERG MOVIE

All is darkness. Then the movement begins, a trailing shot down the birth canal of a hallway, toward the mystery. Suddenly light! A bright room filled with elderly men in beards and black hats: sages, perhaps from another world. At the far end of the room, on a raised platform, is a blazing red light.

Is this a scene from a Steven Spielberg movie?

In an overview of the career of this legendary director, Time Magazine described this event as one which influenced Spielberg’s vision. It turned out to be his earliest memory from a day in 1948 when he was taken in a stroller to a Cincinnati synagogue for a service.

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