

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE LIVING SHEPHERD

*“But as I live – and the glory of G-d shall fill the whole world...” (14-21)*

Several years ago in London, there was a poetry recital competition. The final poem to be recited was Psalm 23. A young fellow took center-stage and began, *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... He restores my soul... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* His performance was outstanding and was greeted with thunderous applause. Neither the audience nor the judges had any doubt who was the winner, and the young fellow was called to the stage and received his prize.

After the applause and the cheers had died down, there was an elderly, Eastern European Jew standing in front of the stage and looking up through the footlights. He said, *“Would the judges mind if I also said ‘The Lord is my Shepherd?’”*

Amused, the judges invited him up to the stage.

Slowly he made his way to the microphone in a spotlight in the middle of the stage. He cleared his throat and with a thick Yiddish accent began to speak.

After a few words, a reverent hush fell over the audience; soon people started to cry.

The old man finished the Psalm. There was complete silence in the auditorium.

After a few moments, the old man turned to the judges, thanked them and the audience for their indulgence and made his way out into the street.

Clutching his prize, the winner followed the old man out into the street.

“Rabbi, I want you to take the prize; you’re the one who deserves it, not me.”

“Not at all,” replied the elderly Jew. “I wasn’t competing.

You did a fine job and the prize is rightfully yours.”

The young man continued, “But rabbi, can you explain to me why it was that when I ended the Psalm the audience cheered, but when you finished they cried?”

The elderly Jew replied, “The difference is that I know the Shepherd.”

We can believe that there is a G-d, we can even know that there is a G-d, but we can still live like atheists.

*“But as I live – and the glory of G-d shall fill the whole world...”*

Belief can remain an abstract philosophical concept; we can even keep all the *mitzvos*, but fail to make G-d “live”.

When we say that G-d is a “living G-d”, we don’t just mean that we believe in His existence, but that He is part of our every waking second; He is our King.

If the Chafetz Chaim walked into the room, everyone would stand in awe of him. The Master of the Universe fills the entire world and certainly the room in which the Chafetz Chaim stood, but the Chafetz Chaim gets a bigger welcome?

Because G-d is *“Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh”*, thrice-removed, His transcendence makes it difficult for us to sense His immanence — that His Glory fills the world.

Our job as Jews is to take the abstract and the transcendent and make G-d into our living Shepherd.

• Sources: based on Rabbi Shimshon Pincus and others

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## NEDARIM 23 - 29

*“One who doesn’t want his vows for the entire year to be binding should stand on Rosh Hashana and say: ‘Any vow that I will make in the future will be null and void.’”*

In this manner our *gemara* explains the *mishna* on *amud aleph*, and this statement is codified in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah 211. This “nullification in advance” of his vows is qualified by certain conditions, which are specified in the *gemara*, and cited as halacha.

The main concern is that when the person makes a vow in the future, he doesn’t do it in a manner that “nullifies” his earlier declaration of future vows being meaningless. For example, if he recalls that he made the earlier statement, and nevertheless makes a new vow, this would be interpreted as “nullifying his nullification” — thereby resulting in a binding vow that he did not want. The Aruch Hashulchan points out that since we have the custom to say a fixed, communal prayer of “Kol Nidrei” on the night of Yom Kippur, we are not actually negating vows — past or future — but offering a prayer that G-d will accept our prayers (Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 619:3). It is interesting to note that although our *gemara* mentions “the night of Rosh Hashana”, our custom is to say “Kol Nidrei” on the night of Yom Kippur.

• *Nedarim 23b*

*“When an oath is imposed on a litigant in court, he is told: ‘Know that we impose this oath not based on how you interpret it, but rather based on how we and G-d interpret it.’”*

This halacha is taught on our *daf* and is cited in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 87:20. The *gemara* illustrates an example of the significance of this warning by relating a story that occurred in the courtroom of Rava.

A man made a claim against a person who had borrowed money from him, and but failed to repay any of the loan according to the claim of the lender. The borrower, however, denied owning the entire amount, saying that he had repaid part of the loan and only owes the rest (Rabbeinu Nissim). The halacha in this case is that the “denier-admitter” must take an oath, while holding a Sefer Torah, to deny that he owes the part that he claims was already paid. At this point, the borrower asked the lender to please hold onto his walking cane so that the borrower could hold the Torah to make the oath. Little did the lender know that the borrower had put the amount of money that the lender claimed inside the cane before giving it to him to hold while making the oath! After making the oath that he had given the money to the lender, the lender became angry and even broke the cane — resulting in the money falling out and the truth being revealed for all to see.

The warning decreed by our Sages is to cancel the validity of an oath made with a trick like this. After being warned that his oath is to be interpreted as the court and G-d say, and not as the oath-maker would like, a person who makes an oath “on his terms” is making a false and invalid oath.

• *Nedarim 25a*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**A**t the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with G-d’s permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to reconnoiter Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea’s name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people’s spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe’s fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts’ false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an

invasion of the Land based on G-d’s original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challa*, a gift for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and he is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is the portion about the Spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the Spies "Are there trees in the Land"?
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the *meraglim* bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?
6. Why did G-d shorten the *meraglim's* journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the Land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Calev quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim's* report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the Land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Calev and Yehoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" G-d is referring to the 10 *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challah* different from other *mitzvot* associated with Eretz Yisrael?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challah* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the *meraglim* (Spies), that they saw Miriam punished for *lashon hara* (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the Land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - G-d knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the Spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed. Therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jewish People were afraid of Amalek because Amalek had once attacked them.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Calev wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - G-d caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av (Tisha B'av). This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Iyov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael* began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challah* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments - i.e. idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

# Abarbanel

## ON THE PARSHA

### Shlach

After the narrative of the spies and the subsequent outcry of the people in reaction to their negative report, G-d threatens to exterminate the nation. Moshe pleads with G-d to forgive them and invokes a curious argument. Moshe claims that the Egyptians will hear about this drastic action and they will say that the Canaanites will also hear about it, and rather than seeing this as a manifestation of G-d's judgment they will attribute it to G-d's inability to bring the people into the Land that He had sworn to give them.

Abarbanel finds numerous difficulties with this argument. First of all, why should G-d refrain from carrying out justice because of what the Egyptians would say? Secondly, having experienced G-d's enormous power already, it is unlikely that they would attribute the punishment to G-d's inability to bring them into the Land. Clearly, a military conquest of the Land would require less miraculous intervention than what the Egyptians had already experienced.

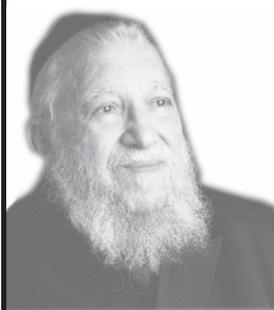
Abarbanel explains that even though the Egyptians experienced the enormity of G-d's power in Egypt, they would say that it was limited to Egypt only, and could not manifest itself in Canaan. Since G-d did not have the ability to bring them into the Land, He had to find a pretext to eliminate them in the wilderness. Exterminating them would not be

seen as a sign of Divine justice; rather it would be interpreted as a sign of Divine weakness. No earthly king would ever exterminate his entire people in the name of justice. This explains why Moshe emphasizes that the Egyptians will report to the Canaanites, to inform them that even though the entire region had heard of what happened to the Egyptians, G-d's power was limited to them only.

Moshe was not advising G-d to overlook completely the transgression of the people. Rather, the punishment should be carried out in such a way that the Egyptians would not attribute it to any limitation of G-d's abilities. G-d did not answer Moshe that the Egyptians would not see this as a sign of G-d's weakness, but rather as an example of Divine punishment, because, having experienced first-hand G-d's great love of the Jewish People, they could not imagine that the Israelites could ever transgress so egregiously that He would wipe them out in a moment. How could that happen to a nation for whom He had performed such miracles? The only explanation that would make sense to the Egyptians would be to think that there must be a limitation to G-d's power.

Moshe's plea to G-d, then, was to prevent this desecration of His Holy Name. Having heard what had happened during the Exodus from Egypt, the entire region was trembling before what they had seen as G-d's limitless power. Moshe's plea was an attempt to preserve this belief.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*  
on the  
Torah Portion of the Week

## SECOND DATE

**From: Marcella**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I am involved in shidduch dating. I met a guy who seemed like he would be compatible, but after the first date I wasn't so excited. I guess he's more or less what I'm looking for, but the feeling I was hoping for isn't there. The person who set us up is urging me to meet him again, but I don't see what advantage there is to a second date. Maybe she's just interested in making the shidduch. What is your opinion?*

Dear Marcella,

You really need to seek guidance from a person you rely on and who knows you well and with whom you can discuss all aspects of the shidduch personally and in detail. But I'll try to address your question in a general way which I hope will be beneficial to you and others in your situation.

Once you have responsibly and thoroughly researched a prospective candidate to the point that you are willing to meet him, which is an indication that you consider him to be basically compatible with all the various things you're looking for, as long as there are no great let-downs, you shouldn't expect to feel "love at first sight" from the first date.

I'm not denying that many people do feel a certain "click" at some point in the process, but most don't feel it immediately on the first date.

That's why, as long as there's nothing repulsive, just a lack of emotional excitement, it's advisable to try another meeting.

As with you, people often wonder what a second date will do that the first didn't. They think if they didn't feel it at the first meeting, the potential must not be there. This is a mistake for several reasons.

First of all, we all have changing moods which vary with what we've done that day, or what happened to us. This can definitely affect the dynamic on either side of a first meeting. Similarly, the place, time of day and even the weather has an effect on people's

moods and therefore also affects the interaction. When things are generally compatible but that feeling doesn't come, it's worth meeting again under different circumstances in order to give it another chance.

However, more importantly, a major difference between the first date and the second is that while during the first date neither side really knows whether the other is actually interested in what he or she has found, a second date makes the very strong statement that each is actually interested in the other.

This means that while on the first date many people will naturally feel unnatural and guarded and therefore not give a complete impression of themselves and their feelings, by the second date, after being deemed desirable by the other, most people will be much more at ease and confident and their hearts will therefore be much more open to each other.

Accordingly, there are many reasons why Mr. and Mrs. Right might not recognize each other on the first date, but will on the second.

I once worked with a young man on *shidduchim* who, after a particular first date, had doubts if he wanted to continue. I asked him to first enumerate the points of compatibility and then to tell me his points of doubt. The first list included many wonderful strengths, while the latter boiled down to her being only attractive but not beautiful and having a slight chip in her tooth. I asked him whether he considered himself to be especially handsome. He admitted he was no movie star. I then reminded him that his very own tooth was also chipped, which he had forgotten!

In short, after I impressed upon him that even on the points in which he thought they were incompatible they were in fact compatible, he agreed to a second date. After the date, he came back with the beaming reply, "She's the one". Of course all the wonderful things that he originally saw remained, but when I asked how he felt about her appearance and chip, he said that she was actually quite attractive, and regarding the chip — as with his, so with hers — he didn't even notice it!

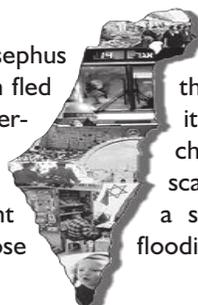
## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## THE SEWERS OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM

In his book called "The Jewish War", historian Josephus Flavius writes that numerous people in Jerusalem fled from the invading Roman legions into the subterranean drainage channel that served the city.

A archaeological excavation has uncovered this channel in the City of David. Its walls reach a height of three meters in some places, an indication that those



who fled to this sewer were able to actually live there until they could escape from the city through its southern end. What particularly impressed the channel's discoverers was the planning on a grand scale, which the city's rulers did in order to develop a system that drained the rainfall and prevented flooding.

## SHEMONEH ESREI: THE FOURTEENTH BLESSING - PART I

***“And to Jerusalem, Your city,  
may You return with mercy.”***

**A**n explanation seems needed in order to understand the precise meaning of the above phrase, “May You return with mercy,” for how can G-d’s return to Jerusalem, which will mark our long awaited redemption, be defined as anything other than an act of Divine mercy?

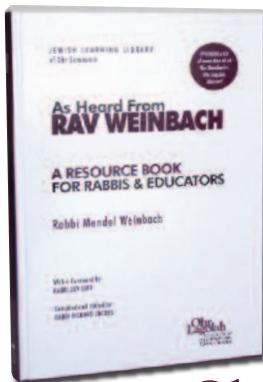
Although the Jewish People have been faced with bitter hardship and tragedy over the years, its end will be of great joy and triumph. Thus, the Torah as well as Rabbinic literature is replete with G-d’s promise that He will return us to the holy Land of Israel to live in peace and tranquillity. How exactly this will occur, however, is not entirely clear. It is for this reason that the nature of the events at “the end of days” is one of the most mysterious and intriguing questions discussed today.

Many explain, based on the words of the Prophets, that before our “happy ending” will arrive there will be a great war with much bloodshed, devastating the world together with the Jewish People of that time. Others say that the wars talked about in the Torah will not necessarily take place in a physical sense; rather they can be fought and won on a spir-

itual plane. The Jewish nation as a whole, through good deeds, can defeat the source of evil ‘above’, and thereby conquer its physical counterpart ‘below’.

One may ask: If the first opinion quoted above is based on Divine prophesy, how can anyone argue against it? One may further ask: If one can, in fact, argue against those prophecies, then can one also argue against other prophecies that state that there will in fact be a final redemption? The answers are clear. There is a well-known principle that ‘negative’ predictions by a prophet may or may not come true, while any ‘good’ prediction must certainly come true, or else the prophet is false.

According to this we can explain the source of the above argument. Since everything depends on us, if the Jewish People repent, turning to G-d loyally and accepting His decrees wholeheartedly, then G-d will act towards them with mercy and accept them with open arms. All of the negative decrees will be cancelled, and replaced with revealed kindness and mercy. Not only will our end be blissful, but the road that leads us there will be the same as well. We therefore beseech G-d to return to Jerusalem, not as was prophesied, but instead, through mercy.



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## GOODBYE, COLUMBUS — SHALOM, ISRAEL

**Moshe Eisenstein - Columbus, Ohio – Kiryat Sefer, Israel  
Ohio State University, Bachelor of Education**

**A**t the age of 25, Joel (who now goes as Moshe) had been passionate about many causes. Whether as a human rights activist, a recreational unit leader, or an athlete who excelled at basketball, he put his heart and soul into everything that he did — everything, that is, except for his religion.

“Growing up as a ‘traditional’ Jew in Columbus, Ohio, I never showed much interest in Judaism. I spent my time playing sports and participating in minority rights demonstrations.”

Seeing Moshe today, it is hard to believe that he had no idea what it meant to even observe the most basic commandments. “I didn’t even know that Shabbat had any rules, nor did I care.”

Today, Moshe lives in an Orthodox community with his wife Sarah and their five children. Moshe spends his days engrossed in intensive Talmudic study, while at nights he draws from his past experiences to educate and guide estranged Jews.

“I never would have imagined in my wildest dreams that one day I’d be religious.”

Now he is as passionate about his religion as any cause he has ever taken up. As Shimon, his long time study partner, tells us, “I’ve never seen Moshe come to *kollel* looking lethargic. He always looks excited and enthusiastic to start studying. Everything he does, whether study, prayer, or mitzvah performance, is with a burning passion.”

Moshe was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1967. His father’s family had fled Poland to Siberia at the start of World War Two to escape the Nazi invasion. Moshe’s family observed a few Jewish traditions, but didn’t really know what it meant to be an observant Jew. “My religious upbringing consisted of little more than going to the synagogue Friday nights, my father reciting Kiddush, and observing some level of *kashrut* in the house.”

*What was your attitude towards religion?*

“It didn’t interest me. As a kid, I had attended afternoon Hebrew School, but I was just a troublemaker. Even at an older age, my Rosh Hashanas were spent in the Social Hall of the Synagogue rather than in the Sanctuary.”

*When did that change?*

“While working as an elementary school teacher I was very embarrassed about being Jewish. With Rosh Hashana approaching, I shamefully asked the principal if I could take off one day for the upcoming holiday. Surprisingly, her response was, ‘I know it’s a two-day holiday. Why don’t you take both days off?’. A non-Jew telling me I should be more Jewish really struck something in me.”

*Was Rosh Hashana that year different than previous years?*

“Definitely. For the first time, I got a hold of a book that explains the essence of the day. After reading it two or three times I felt a much deeper connection to the day.”

*What was the turning point in your life?*

Having been an active member in a human rights group, I majored in multicultural education at Ohio State University. After graduation I took a job as an elementary school teacher in a low-scale area. There, not only did I teach my students, but I also became very involved in their personal lives. I tried to help them as much as I could. My main purpose was not so much to educate them about the subject matter, as it was to educate them about life. Although this was very fulfilling, after several years I felt as if I hadn’t really found myself. I requested a leave of absence for a year in order to do some introspection. “

*So you immediately enrolled in a yeshiva?*

“No. That never even crossed my mind. I was debating whether to go to Vegas or join a secular kibbutz in Israel.”

*Then what happened?*

“While I was trying to figure out my next step, I needed a source of income. I found a job working for a company in the closeout industry. My boss, who had recently become observant, would bring various Orthodox Rabbis to give classes to the employees. After some time had elapsed, I sought the advice of one of the Rabbis about where I might be able to find myself.”

*He sent you to yeshiva?*

“No. He saw I wasn’t open to the idea. Instead, he sent me to a program in which half of the day is spent studying Torah and the other half is spent volunteering.”

*There did you find yourself?*

“Not quite. After six months of this program I had become thirstier for Judaism. Then, when I took up my friend’s invitation to spend a Shabbat at the home of his Orthodox brother, I had no idea what a profound impact that one experience would have on my life. My friend’s brother urged me to immediately leave the program where I was and enroll at Yeshivat Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem.

*You listened to him?*

“Yes. He was very convincing.”

*What happened at Ohr Somayach?*

“I found myself.”

*What was the process?*

“First I was extremely impressed by the great insight the Rabbis had into life’s issues. Then I started to really get into Talmudic study. During the three years I spent at Ohr Somayach before getting married, I gradually underwent a complete transformation until I became fully integrated into a religious lifestyle.”

When I asked Moshe about what motivates him, he humbly shrugged his shoulders and said, “I’m just trying to make up for lost time.”