

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAERA · 28 TEVET 5766 · JAN. 28, 2006 · VOL. 13 NO. 14

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### BIG AND GREAT

*“This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d had said...” (6:26)*

Imagine you're walking along the street with an attache case containing ten million dollars. Being a charitable soul, you've decided that you want to build a yeshiva, and you're on your way to donate the money. Suddenly a masked man with a stocking over his face jumps up in front of you. He grabs the suitcase from you and shouts at you, “Speak one word of *lashon hara* (malicious gossip) right now or say goodbye to the money!”

So what can you do? The Torah says that you have to give up all your money rather than willingly violate one Torah prohibition. You stand there and watch the masked man douse the suitcase with lighter fuel and toss a match on to it. The whole thing goes up in a short-lived but rather expensive bonfire.

A different scenario. Same attache case, same ten million dollars. However this time no masked bandit appears. You successfully donate the money and in due course there arises a beautiful yeshiva through your efforts.

Imagine walking into the Beit Medrash of that yeshiva late one night! 400 students are learning there.

Imagine how you feel when you go to bed that night!

So let me ask you a question. Why should you feel any less when you go to bed at night having not spoken one word of *lashon hara* that day?

*“This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d had said...”*

Rashi explains that in some places the Torah mentions Moshe before Aharon, and in others, Aharon before Moshe. The reason is to teach us that Moshe and Aharon were considered equal.

How can that be? The Torah itself says that there will never be a prophet of the stature of Moshe. *“Never again has there arisen in Yisrael a prophet like Moshe...” (Devarim 34:10)*

Aharon must not have been on Moshe's level of prophecy but the Torah equates him with Moshe because Aharon utilized every gift that G-d had given him to the maximum. Aharon actualized all his potential, all his unique gifts, and thus he was considered Moshe's equal.

We tend to think that we can only be great by doing big recognizable things. Like building yeshivas or being famous. The truth is that even if G-d never blesses us with the wherewithal to do BIG things, we can all be truly GREAT.

• Heard from Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter, and a story in the name of Rabbi Meyer Zilberberg heard from Rabbi Dovid Kaplan

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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 small-

er scale, again encouraging Pharaoh's being 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*

### HEAVENLY PLAGUES OR NATURAL DISASTERS?

**D**uring the past couple of years the world has been witness to a wide range of natural disasters that have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and have caused damage to countless billions worth of property.

What has mankind learned from all these earthquakes, tidal waves, hurricanes, floods and landslides? By dismissing them as "natural" disasters most of our people have failed to detect the Heavenly message directed at them through these events.

This was the attitude displayed by Pharaoh and his when G-d sent plagues upon the Egyptians to compel

them to free His chosen people from bondage. They initially attempted to dismiss these plagues as the products of black magic which the Egyptian sorcerers were capable of duplicating. But even when successive plagues described in this week's Torah portion were beyond their ability to duplicate, they foolishly believed that they were merely victims of natural disasters until the final plague shook them into an awareness that they were dealing with a Divine force.

The so-called natural disasters of the past years were Heaven-sent messages to our people to wake up to our responsibilities as Jews and thus secure Israel forever.

*In Memory of*  
**LLOYD KUPFERBERG**  
OF CHICAGO  
*Eliezer ben Menachem, of blessed memory*

A Friend and Supporter of Ohr Somayach  
Husband, Father and Grandfather

## 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.

לע"נ

מרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- The need for a new *chametz* search when rodent brings some to house
- What to do after the search with *chametz* left for tomorrow's consumption
- Various mysteries as to whether *chametz* is still in the house
- Can one who did not search in time still do so after *chametz* is forbidden to eat?
- The parallel of above to *chadash*, Shabbat, first-born animal and animal care on holiday
- How late on day before Pesach can *chametz* be eaten?
- A disparity in testimony of two witnesses regarding exact hour
- When the day before Pesach is Shabbat
- The importance of remaining above suspicion
- The two loaves on Temple Mount which served as signal when to burn *chametz*
- The contact between different levels of spiritual impurity
- How to deal with *terumah* which is suspect of spiritual contamination
- When bread becomes so inedible that it is no longer susceptible to spiritual contamination as food

## SEARCH AND DESTROY MISSION

Is there a need to prohibit any activity connected with foods that are forbidden to eat? This question arises in regard to a Jew who failed to conduct the required search for *chametz* on the eve of the day before Pesach and did not

get around to doing so until the hour of that day when it is already forbidden to eat *chametz* and the *chametz* already found is to be burned.

The Sages disagree with the position of Rabbi Yehuda that no search be made then for fear that in the process of searching one might forget that the time has already arrived when *chametz* is forbidden and will involuntarily eat what he finds. Their own position here that no such safeguard is necessary seems to contradict their position in regard to *chadash*.

The Torah prohibited eating grain before the *omer* of barley is offered on the altar of the *Beit Hamikdash* on the second day of Pesach (16th of Nissan). Once the *omer* was offered on that day, one would find the marketplaces in Yerushalayim well stocked with flour and other grain products. This meant that the grain had been processed at a time when it was not yet permitted to be eaten. This, says Rabbi Meir, was done without the approval of the Sages who hold that it is improper to be active with food which is not permitted to be eaten for fear that one will inadvertently eat from it.

Why a safeguard is required in regard to processing *chadash* and not in regard to searching for *chametz* is thus explained by the Sage Rava. When someone is processing grain and preparing it for consumption there is a real danger that he may forget himself and consume it at its premature stage. But when one is searching for *chametz* in order to destroy it as required by the Torah, there is hardly a likelihood that he will then eat what he finds.

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Jews have already been promised that the Prophet Eliyahu will not arrive (to announce the arrival of Mashiach the following day) on the day preceding Shabbat or a holiday because of the preoccupation of the people (to prepare the Shabbat and holiday meals which will be interrupted by their rushing to greet him)."

- *The Sages in response to Rabbi Elazar ben Yehuda - Pesachim 13a*

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## THE COURTSHIP COURT

From: R. in San Diego, CA

Dear Rabbi,

*I have become religious over the past year and a half or so, and feel that I am getting ready to start dating for marriage. The problem is that there are certain things that I did before becoming religious and in college that I am embarrassed about, and I'm also concerned that a prospective religious man would not want to continue a relationship with me if he knew about them. Since I don't do those things any more, and since I don't live that type of lifestyle anymore, nor do I have that type of friends anymore, do I have to talk about these things to religious men I hope to meet? Ultimately, what difference does it make, since I left all that behind and plan on starting my married life as a totally different person? Thanks for your guidance.*

Dear R.,

Let me commend you on the significant changes you've made. May you continue to grow day by day, and may G-d send you your proper soul mate at the proper time.

Dating for marriage is an extremely important part of a person's life. It is a very personal process as well, which has so many individual details that vary from person to person. For that reason, you absolutely must find a rabbi, rebbetzin or other stable person experienced in these matters who knows you well and who you can be in close personal contact with during the entire dating process, and ideally, beyond. Without knowing you and all the details, I can only give you general guidelines that I hope will be appropriate for you.

Generally speaking, honesty is the best policy. Any relationship can thrive only on honesty and mutual trust. A relationship that is built on cosmetics and cover-ups does not have a sound foundation. And given all the challenges that life normally offers a couple, this is not a safe way to ensure a resilient, enduring marriage. On the other hand, a couple that has endured the challenge of an honest dating period before marrying most certainly will have found a firm basis upon which to build their marriage, including a much richer mutual understanding of each other's background and its effect on each partner's personality, outlook and motivations.

True, this can be embarrassing, and also painful. But remember that just as you have difficult parts in your past, most people have one thing or another that they're not particularly proud of. However, while these things may not be praiseworthy, what you learned from them and the way you ultimately dealt with them is extremely praiseworthy. Most truly good people would and should admire your fortitude and commitment.

While what you've done might include things that a man who was raised religious might have difficulty accepting, marrying such a person might not be right for you. There are enough differences between people as it is, that you should probably concentrate on men that have become religious later in life, as you did. You'll probably understand each other a lot better and find

more in common. It's also important to remember that, for better or worse, these things are a part of who you are, and hiding them from your spouse (and yourself) would only maintain a wedge between you. Incidentally, I'm not sure you should be taking these things so seriously. I once heard in the name of a very experienced rabbi of women *ba'alot teshuva* that a young woman who was brought up in modern secular society with all that entails, and who by college didn't do certain things, is very likely not normal or is socially unstable.

That being said, there are guidelines for what, when and to what extent you have to talk about your past. While a prospective spouse must be told before marriage about any perpetual, ongoing or recurring situation or condition, things pertaining to the past that have no direct bearing on the future are generally different. First of all, in the course of a dating relationship, you can rely on a person's asking you directly (or finding out in some other way) the things that are important to him to know. If you're not asked, you don't have to volunteer information.

Second, even if you are asked, you always have the right to say that while you've got nothing to hide, you're not comfortable enough to talk about it yet. You also have the right to ask him if this issue is one that makes or breaks the relationship. If it's not, you can say you'd rather talk about it after your relationship grows in marriage. Still, if it's very important to the other person, he has a right to know about it when you feel close enough and confident enough about the prospects of marriage to share it with him. And if it's something that for him the relationship is contingent upon, you must either eventually tell him, or accept his right to break the relationship.

If and when you tell him, you don't have to go into great detail. Most of the things that most people have done are fairly common and the details are not important. Once he knows the general information that is important to him, pressing you for details would be insensitive and unadvisable for your relationship. Nevertheless, if for whatever reason, he feels, or is advised, that he must know details that you don't want to reveal, you'll have to decide if you want to risk breaking the relationship over it. Every situation is different, and each side should have reliable guidance in working through all the details as they arise.

Ultimately, regarding relationships that didn't work, you have the right to decide what things were said in confidence and which therefore may not be revealed to others. Every relationship should be started with a clean slate, based on the guidelines discussed above. This way, at your discretion a person will gradually come to know what is important to him, while giving him the right to discontinue if you choose not to tell him. Obviously, everything I've written applies both ways, and in any given relationship you may find yourself on the other side of the court. Don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to you.

You are about to embark on a wonderful, exciting and challenging journey. Be happy, be confident and be yourself. And most important, remember that G-d is with you: pray to Him, confide in Him, beseech Him, and trust in Him. He doesn't hold what you've done against you; on the contrary, much as a bow must be pulled back to shoot an arrow, your past distance has propelled you that much higher and closer to G-d. May He bless you with success and joy!

### A BLESSING FOR THE DOG

“**R**abbi, my pet dog is very sick and needs your blessing.” This was the heartfelt plea of a secular Jew who had come to the distinguished Torah scholar who had a reputation for invoking Heavenly mercy for sick people through his blessings and prayers.

Rather than rebuke this fellow for making such an outlandish request, the rabbi listened carefully and even

expressed empathy for the dog owner’s agony. He then turned to him and said:

“It is customary that when we pray for someone we mention the name of that person’s mother as well. If you can supply me with the name of your sick dog’s mother we will then consider the question of giving you the blessing you request.”

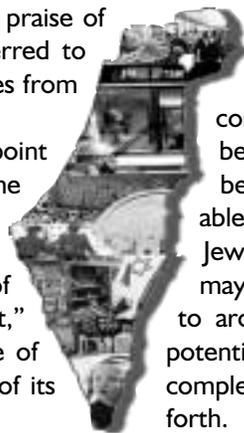
## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE FRUITS

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

### OIL-RICH OLIVE- PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

**O**f all the seven species mentioned in praise of Eretz Yisrael the olive alone is referred to not as a fruit but as the oil that comes from the fruit.

To understand this we must analyze a point made by our Sages (*Menachot* 53b) about the comparison that the Prophet Yirmiyahu made (*Yirmiyahu* 11:16) between the olive and the Jewish People. “Just as the purpose of the olive is the oil which is extracted from it,” says Rabbi Yitzchak, “so too is the purpose of Israel realized only after it reaches the end of its processing.”



Maharsha explains this comparison in the following way:

The olive itself has no great value as a fruit and consuming olives too frequently, say our Sages, can be harmful to the memory. Only after the olive has been squeezed and crushed to extract its very valuable oil is this fruit’s potential finally realized. The Jewish People have a great spiritual potential but it may take the crushing experience of suffering in exile to arouse them to repent their sins and realize that potential. In the days of Mashiach this process will be completed and the “oil” of the Jewish “olive” will come forth.

## WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### THE CROWDED MAILBOX

**Question:** I keep getting all sorts of “junk mail” in my mailbox from those who are advertising their services or products and from committees appealing for charity funds. What is the right thing to feel toward this unsolicited mail?

**Answer:** As regards the commercial advertising you should adopt a positive view. You may be surprised to find, with one quick glance, a service or product you have been looking for. Even if you fail to discover anything worthwhile, you should take comfort in the fact that this unso-

licited literature comes in place of a door-to-door salesman who is much harder to get rid of.

Reacting to appeals for charity funds is a different story. Don’t be too quick to throw away that brochure from a yeshiva or that impassioned form letter about a campaign to help a widow and orphans. This may be your opportunity to give charity for a very worthy cause. And even if your charity budget is already overtaxed, at least read the appeal and heave a sigh of empathy. Who knows what impact in Heaven there will be from a Jew who would have liked to help but couldn’t?

# HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS Find a Home

## PART TWO

### The 25 Million Dollar Sacrifice

*(In a recent issue of Ohmet we told the story of sacred books that survived the Holocaust although their owners did not. Some of those volumes reached the library of Ohr Somayach and a search was initiated to find relatives of their owners. There is another story circulating today about other survivors who reached Israel, one in his lifetime and the other after his death. This almost unbelievable story was recently told to an audience by the highly respected rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak, Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, whose halachic rulings have often been quoted in our "What is the Right Thing to Do?" column. It reached a much broader audience when David Damen wrote it up in the Vayeshev issue of Mishpacha Magazine. We here present it in condensed form for the benefit of our subscribers and surfers, using fictitious names to protect privacy.)*

#### Scene 1

**Auschwitz.** David and his son Chaim are separated from each other by the Nazi guards. Upon being liberated David makes a futile search for his son and assumes he was killed.

#### Scene 2

**South America.** Broken by his Holocaust experience, David wanders in search of a new life. He ends up in a South American country where no one will recognize him as a Jew and marries a non-Jewish woman who bears him a son. Approaching his last days on earth and troubled by the thought that he did not adequately search for Chaim, David informs his non-Jewish son Alberto that he may have a Jewish half-brother alive somewhere in the world. He begs him to conduct an intensive search for him and to split evenly with him the fifty million dollars he is scheduled to inherit.

#### Scene 3

**Tel Aviv.** Chaim, who made it to Israel and raised a

Torah-observant family there, receives a phone call from a man in South America who identifies himself as his half-brother. Alberto recounts the search he made for him on several continents and urges him to come visit their father before he dies. Chaim catches the first plane headed in that direction, racing against time to see the father he long thought was dead.

#### Scene 4

**South American Airport.** Alberto informs Chaim upon his arrival that David died a few hours earlier. On their way to town they discuss funeral arrangement and Chaim is shocked to hear that Alberto has planned for a Christian ceremony followed by cremation. How ironic, he reflects, that a Jew who escaped cremation in Auschwitz should meet that fate here. His protestations fall on deaf ears so he tries to win his case for bringing the body of his father to Israel through legal means. But he suffers a second setback when the local judge rules that the cremation must take place and the ashes divided between the two sons. As a last desperate move Chaim offers Alberto his 25 million dollar share of the inheritance if he will let him bring his father's body to Israel.

#### Scene 5

**A Cemetery in Central Israel.** A few months ago Chaim's family stands before the open grave into which their father and grandfather has been interred. Chaim reflects upon all the events that have led up to this day, from Auschwitz to South America to Israel. And the mourners cannot help wondering who of these two Holocaust survivors had the greater merit: The father who escaped cremation and was buried in the Holy Land? Or the son who sacrificed a fortune and spent over fifty thousand dollars of his own on legal and transportation fees to see that the father who had abandoned living as a Jew should at least be buried as a Jew?