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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

"...G-d did not lead them by the way of the land of the Pelishtim, because it was near..." (13:17)

Oy vey!, chutzpa, kosher, maven, schlep, bubkes, shmooze. Many are the Yiddish words that have made their way into common English usage over the years

The word "Diaspora" came into the English language solely to describe the unique exile of the Jewish People. A possible origin of the word is the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew word "za'a'va" in Devarim 28:25, "...you will be a Diaspora (Greek for dispersion) in all kingdoms of the earth."

As a nation, there is scarcely a place on the planet that has not seen a Jew. Our exiles have been so broad, so long. So many of our prayers express the longing for the final redemption. And down through the millennia, there have been more than a few that have either given up hope or forgotten that we are still in exile.

And yet, the Jewish People are still what we have always been. The Romans who once filled the world

with sound and fury now sip espresso on the Via Veneto. The glory that was Greece has been reduced to a bottle of Ouzo and a bowl of calamari, but the Jewish People go on and on. From where did we get our staying power?

"...G-d did not lead them by the way of the land of the Pelishtim, because it was near..."

When G-d took us out of Egypt, He could have brought us directly through Gaza and up into Eretz Yisrael. The Torah tells us that G-d was concerned that the Jewish People when confronted by war might reconsider and return to Egypt. Thus He brought us through the desert, removing the opportunity of an easy return.

If Egypt was the matrix of all the future exiles of the Jewish People, so the Exodus from Egypt was the template for the ultimate redemption.

G-d led us a long tortuous path to the Land of Israel so that this experience would give us the spiritual stamina to be able to survive the long and winding road through history that would lead to our ultimate redemption.

• *Based on the Sfat Emet*

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Pharaoh finally sends *B'nei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the Pelishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days' travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe

miraculously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

ISRAEL Forever

A SONG OF HOPE

The "Song of the Sea" which our ancestors sang when they crossed the Yam Suf and saw their Egyptian pursuers drowning is a song of hope for all generations of Jews.

Not only is this song, which is recorded in this week's Torah portion, a reminder that G-d saved our ancestors from their enemies but serves as a reminder of how He consistently rescues us individually and nationally from situations similar to a sea which must be crossed.

Our Talmudic Sages have compared the challenge of

both earning a livelihood and finding a mate to the crossing of the sea. Does anyone feel the obligation to sing praises to G-d when he is blessed with a livelihood or a marriage partner?

Life is full of challenges and should be filled with song. Living in Israel today is one prolonged challenge and we should be singing every day.

Such songs of praise to G-d, Who enables us to cross all of our seas of challenge, is what will preserve Israel forever.

לע"נ

הרב חיים משה ז"ל בן ר' דוד עמנואל נ"ו

נלב"ע ג' שבט תשס"ו

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

In Memory of

RABBI MOSHE DOMBEY ז"ל

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling?"
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

- Things forbidden to eat but benefit can be derived from them
- Two approaches to the exception made by Torah for the *cheilev* fats of an animal that died not through halachic slaughtering
- In search of a source for the ban on deriving benefit from chametz
- Which forbidden things must be burned and where
- Forbidden matters eaten or benefited from in an abnormal way
- Healing with forbidden matters and the requirements of martyrdom
- When enjoyment of a forbidden matter comes against one's will
- Benefiting from sound, sight or smell of Sanctuary property
- What was done with the Kohen Gadol's Yom Kippur garments
- Heating an oven by burning chametz or other forbidden matter
- How chametz can be destroyed
- Status after Pesach of chametz in possession of a Jew during Pesach
- When the ban on chametz begins today and how long it lasted the first Pesach
- Chametz of a non-Jew or property of Sanctuary
- The rule of *bitul* – a forbidden fragment changing its status when it is indiscernible in a mixture with permitted matter

WHY WE EAT MATZAH TODAY

Every student of Torah knows that there is a mitzvah to eat matzah on the first night of Pesach, while during the rest of the holiday we are only enjoined from eat-

ing chametz. But there is some mystery as to what the source is for this mitzvah in our day. After all, the original command (Shmot 12:8) to eat matzah on that night was to do so together with the *korban pesach* – the flesh of the sacrifice offered in the Beit Hamikdash on the afternoon preceding the holiday. How do we know that the mitzvah remains in force even when there is no Beit Hamikdash and no *korban*?

Two different sources are presented in our gemara. Rabbi Yehuda cites the passage (Devarim 16:3), which mentions the ban on eating chametz and the command to eat matzah. The message communicated by mentioning them together is that so long as there is a ban on eating chametz – a prohibition not tied to the *korban pesach* – there is a mitzvah to eat matzah.

Rabbi Shimon finds the source for eating matzah today in the very same Torah chapter where the command to eat matzah with the *korban* is mentioned. Ten passages after this command the Torah repeats “In the evening you will eat matzah” (Shmot 12:18). This seemingly superfluous repetition is seen as a command to eat matzah on the night of Pesach even when there is no *korban* to accompany it.

Although there are other passages in the Torah (Shmot 12:15 and 12:18) that mention the idea of eating matzah for seven days, Rashi explains this as not a mitzvah to eat matzah but rather to avoid eating chametz the entire Pesach. A Jew can fulfill this command by eating everything but chametz. The positive mitzvah of eating matzah is only the first night.

Tosefot notes that in Mesechta Kiddushin the *gemara* cites yet another source for matzah today. “In all your dwelling places shall you eat matzah” (Shmot 12:20) is interpreted as a signal that the mitzvah of matzah is not limited to any time or place.

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“Let yourself be slain rather than slay someone else. Why do you consider your blood redder than his – perhaps his blood is redder than yours?”

- The Sage Rava's ruling for a Jew who was ordered by the local despot to either kill another or be killed - Pesachim 25b

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GARLIC GEMACH

From: S. in Israel

Dear Rabbi,

First of all, I enjoy your publication very much and would like to see more of Ask the Rabbi and readers' comments.

I volunteer in a used clothing center (gemach) open in the mornings. There is one woman who comes in every week with a very strong smell of garlic. Since we are in a basement and don't have adequate ventilation, it is very disturbing to all present. We sometimes spray aerosol but it is only effective for a short while, and she stays longer. Can we ask her outright to eat her daily garlic for lunch? Will she be insulted? What is the right thing to do?

Dear S.,

I empathize with your problem. Still, even though it might be permitted to say something to the person, I do not think that it would be the correct thing to do.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 11a) relates that once Rebbi was giving a lecture and there was a very strong smell of garlic in the room. He stopped the lecture and asked for whoever had eaten the garlic to leave the room. Rabbi Chiya got up and walked out. When the others saw someone as important as Rabbi Chiya leave, everyone

else left out of deference to him. In the morning, Rebbi's son sought out Rabbi Chiya and asked him how he could have been so inconsiderate as to disturb the class like that by eating garlic. Rabbi Chiya replied that he would never have been guilty of garlic breath in a lecture. Rather, knowing that if he left, everyone would follow, he decided to get up in order to spare the "culprit" embarrassment by enabling him to leave with everyone else.

I know that your scenario is not completely analogous, but I think that the underlying message of the Talmud is as applicable. It is difficult to imagine any way of telling the woman that her odor leaves something to be desired without her being terribly embarrassed. This is not only regarding the time that she is being told, but every time she comes into the *gemach*. And besides, you never know, she may have to ingest garlic to treat some health condition. If so, complaining will just make her feel bad about something she has no control over. Subsequently, in my humble opinion, however hard it is for you and your "co-chesedniks" to put up with the discomfort, the rewards for not saying anything are far greater than the immediate reward of saying something. While saying something now might bring a breath of fresh air into your lives in this world, not saying something will bring you eternal "fresh air" in the World to Come.

- *Many thanks to Rabbi Reuven Lauffer for his insightful contribution in the preparation of this article.*

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE SPEAKER'S DILEMMA

Question: As a public lecturer I am sometimes faced with the dilemma of someone in the audience making a disturbing noise by either whispering to a friend or nervously tapping. I find it difficult to continue my talk in the face of such noise but I want to avoid publicly embarrassing the offender. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: You are right on mark in avoiding publicly embarrassing the offender, especially since there may even be justification for the disturbance or a lack of awareness on his part that you are being disturbed by his innocent act. On the

other hand, it is understandable that you find it difficult to continue speaking in such a situation.

The ideal solution is to stop speaking and simply look in the direction of the disturbing noise. Your pause will almost certainly cause the source of the disturbance to look towards you. As your looks cross he will either realize that he is doing something wrong or will be appraised of it by the people next to him.

It is not your problem alone. People in the audience should be aware of how sensitive a speaker is and make every effort to avoid doing anything that may disturb him.

YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU

In preparation for leaving this world a wealthy Orthodox philanthropist who spent his last years in Jerusalem prepared his last will and testament in two sealed envelopes, which he entrusted to his children. His instructions were to open one of the envelopes immediately after his passing and the other after the shiva-mourning week.

When the first envelope was opened his survivors were astounded to read, among all the other details, a request that he be buried in his stockings. But when they conveyed this request to the local Chevra Kadisha burial society they were firmly told that there was no way that

they could accommodate this wish since it was contrary to custom.

When the shiva was over the second envelope was opened. In it was a letter to the deceased's children that stated that he was well aware that the Chevra Kadisha would not bury him with his stockings on. He had only made the request to dramatically drive home to his children that when a man leaves this world he cannot even take his stockings with him.

What he did take with him was the merit of all the good he had done with his money for Torah study and the needy.

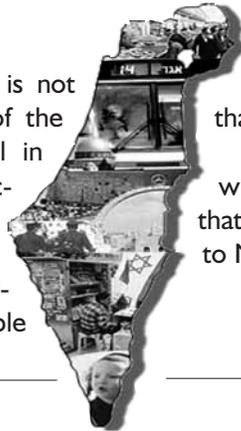
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE SAGES

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

“MOSHE RECEIVED THE TORAH AT SINAI” (AVOT 1:1)

Unlike all the other *masechtot*, Avot is not based on any one of the *mitzvot* of the Torah. It consists only of counsel in regard to self-improvement and good character.

Wise individuals of other nations also compiled ethical works, which they developed with their own intellect, on how people



should relate to one another. One might think that Avot is also a creation of man.

The Sages therefore begin this Tractate of Avot with “Moshe received the Torah at Sinai” to tell us that this *masechta* is not man-made but was relayed to Moshe at Sinai.

• Rav Ovadia of Bartenura

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