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SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYETZE · 11 KISLEV 5767 · DEC. 2, 2006 · VOL. 14 NO. 7

PARSHA INSIGHTS

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

“And he named him Yissaschar...” (30:18)

When you close your eyes and think of Chanuka, what comes to mind? The lights of the menorah; the dreidel spinning; the aroma of latkes and doughnuts.

And of course, the sound of “*Maoz Tzur*”.

In that beautiful stirring Chanuka song, we sing of the *B’nei Vina*, the “*Children of Understanding*”. Who were those children, and what was it that they understood?

Another question. On the festival of Lag B’Omer, there is a widespread custom to shoot arrows from a bow and arrow. The symbol of the month of Kislev, in which we are now, is the bow (*Sagittarius - The Archer*). What is the connection between the bow of Lag B’Omer and the bow of Kislev?

Lag B’Omer commemorates the passing of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. On that day, before he left this world, Rabbi Shimon revealed much of the Torah’s hidden light. The “bow and arrow” symbolizes this revelation. How? White light seems indivisible, inscrutable. No detail can be discerned in its pure whiteness. The bow of the rainbow, however,

reveals the secret anatomy of white light. It shows us how white light is really composed of all the colors.

Just as the rainbow reveals the hidden colors within the white light, so Rabbi Shimon revealed the hidden light within the Torah.

The most conspicuous event in the month of the bow, the month of Kislev, is Chanuka. Chanuka is the festival that celebrates the hidden light of the Torah. Yissaschar, the son of Yaakov most closely associated with Torah learning, was conceived on Chanuka and born on Shavuot. Birth is the ultimate revelation of the hidden. Just as the conception of life is something that only makes itself manifest after the fact, so Yissaschar’s entrance into this world connects the hidden and the revealed — the hidden light of Chanuka with its revelation on Sinai at Shavuot.

Those “*children of understanding*” of whom we sing on Chanuka are Yissaschar’s children who understood and inherited this connection of Chanuka to Shavuot. This is why the Book of Chronicles calls them “*men with understanding of the times*,” for they understood how the connection of those two times — Chanuka and Shavuot — are the link between the hidden and the revealed Torah.

• Source: *B’nei Yissaschar*

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven,

Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and, in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

ISRAEL Forever

A LADDER REMINDER FOR LATTER DAYS

There are times when there seems to be no solution in sight for the problems facing the Jewish People in Israel. The terrorist rockets and the Iranian nuclear threat cast dark shadows on the security of the Jewish State.

At such times it is important for us to reflect on the prophetic dream of the Patriarch Yaakov described in the Torah portion which will be read this Shabbat. Yaakov saw a ladder with angels walking up its rungs and then coming down. The Midrash teaches that these were the patron angels of the nations which would subjugate the descendants of Yaakov in the "four exiles" of history.

The angel of Babylon ascended 70 rungs, representing the 70 years of Babylonian exile. He was followed by the angel of Persia who mounted 52, and the angel of Greece who climbed 180, representing the years of those two exiles. Then appeared the angel of Edom (Rome) whom Yaakov saw climbing higher and higher without coming down. Yaakov's fear that this indicated no end to the final exile was allayed by the Divine guarantee that He has already warned the forces involved in that last phase of exile that "even if you soar aloft like the eagle and set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down" (Ovadiah 1:4).

What better guarantee of Israel forever!

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

ONE MOUNTAIN, FOUR NAMES

"The Zidonim call Mount Hermon 'Siryon' and the Emori call it 'Senir'." (*Devarim* 3:9)

"To Mount Sion which is Hermon." (*ibid.* 4:48)

Hermon, Siryon, Senir and Sion.
Four names for one mountain!



"To teach you the praise of Eretz Yisrael that four different nations took pride in having some connection with it, each of them demanding that the mountain should bear the name which it gave to it."

• *Sifri* quoted by *Rashi*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "G-d remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

לע"נ

מרת לאה בן ר' יצחק אייזיק ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- When crops cannot be consumed in any manner before tithing
- Moving crops on Yom Tov to save them from rain
- Moving crops on Shabbat to make room for Torah study
- Covering crops and wine to protect them
- Covering bricks, stones and a beehive
- Catching the drip and what happened to Abaye's mill
- Removing disgusting matter
- Climbing a tree, riding an animal, swimming and dancing on Yom Tov
- Other things forbidden on Yom Tov even when a mitzvah is involved
- A comparison between Shabbat and Yom Tov bans
- The limits of how far animals and vessels can be transported on Yom Tov
- The concept of *bereira* in regard to a number of issues
- The status of a borrowed vessel and borrowed ingredients
- The coal and the flame
- The private and public wells and cisterns
- The status of crops entrusted to another for safe-keeping
- Which animals are considered as being available for slaughtering on Yom Tov

NEVER ON YOM TOV

A wedding can never take place on Yom Tov, not even on the intermediate days of Chol Hamoed. But what about making *kiddushin* – the formal gaining of a marriage partner, which in Talmudic times was done separately from the actual wedding? Can this be done on Yom Tov itself?

The answer is that it depends on an understanding of a question asked in our *gemara*:

“Is this not a mitzvah?”

This was the challenge posed regarding the *mishna* that lists *kiddushin* as one of the non-mitzvah activities prohibited on Yom Tov.

Two radically different understandings of this question are put forth by two leading commentators. Rashi explains that the question is why *kiddushin* is not included

in the *mishna*'s list of *mitzvah* matters prohibited on Yom Tov. Rabbeinu Tam, however, is quoted by Tosefot as defining this as a challenge to why Sages prohibited *kiddushin*, since it is a mitzvah to marry and have children.

The response given by the *gemara* to this challenge is that the *mishna* refers to a man who already has a wife and children. According to Rashi this is merely an explanation as to the listing but does not mean that if a mitzvah indeed exists for one who has no wife and children he will be permitted to make *kiddushin* on Yom Tov. Rabbeinu Tam's position is that the *gemara*'s answer is that the ban on *kiddushin* on Yom Tov was limited to one who has already fulfilled his mitzvah of “be fruitful and multiply” and does not affect one who still has to do so.

• Beitzah 37a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“I deserve this for ignoring the guidance of my master.”

- The Sage Abaye commenting on the collapse of his mill after failing to heed the advice of his teacher the Sage Rabbah

TRIAL TRIO

From: Ian in Toronto

*Dear Rabbi,
Why does G-d try the righteous? And why did G-d try Abraham with 10 different trials, culminating in the command to sacrifice Isaac?*

Dear Ian,

Our Sages asked, "Why did G-d try Abraham?" They answered with three parables: To what may the matter be compared? To a seller of earthenware vessels who bangs on his jugs; to a grower of flax who beats on his produce; to a mule driver who spurs his animal along the way.

This teaching needs explanation. If all three parables are alike, why did the Sages mention all three? If they are different, what is each intending to teach that the others don't? A closer look at each parable will demonstrate the difference between them, and what each is intended to teach.

Why would a merchant bang on his jugs? To demonstrate in front of passersby their durability. To do so, he beats on the strongest of his jugs to show their ability to withstand even the strongest blow. So too, G-d "banged" on Abraham in order to demonstrate to the world the strength of his belief and loyalty to G-d. In general, the trials of the righteous and the way they overcome them demonstrate to us their greatness. And even more importantly, they show us what a person is capable of such that each of us will be encouraged to withstand our own trials.

Why does a grower beat on his flax? Beating the stalks of flax while they grow in the field causes the flax to grow fuller and more robust, similar to the way pruning encourages growth. So too G-d "beat" on Abraham in order to engender spiritual growth, elevating him level above level in closeness to G-d. In general, the trials of the righteous and the way they overcome them

encourages them to grow, and makes them more sensitive and able to help and guide us to grow through our own trials as well.

Why does a driver spur his animal along the way? To ensure that the animal, lured by various diversions off the road, will remain on the path and ultimately reach the intended destination. So too G-d "spurred" Abraham to ensure that he would continue in His way. This is the meaning of the verse, "For I know Abraham, that he will command his children after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19). The loyalty Abraham maintained to G-d acquired for his progeny, the righteous as well as the simple Jew for all generations, the fortitude necessary to keep the faith despite adversity, and reach the final destination.

Thus our Sages relate the famous story of Hannah and her seven sons: A wicked Roman ruler wanted to break Jewish loyalty to G-d and force them to commit idolatry. He summoned Hannah's oldest son, demanding that he bow to an idol or be killed. One after another, each of Hannah's sons was taken out for execution. In a last ditch effort to save face, the ruler pleaded with the seventh son, yet a child, to make a mere semblance of bowing by picking up a sweet he'd throw in front of the idol. The lad refused. On his way to execution, Hannah whispered in his ear, "Tell Abraham our father, 'You built an altar, Hannah offered seven sacrifices!'"

Hannah's declaration to Abraham is peculiar. Was she boasting that her sacrifice was greater than that of Abraham's? The commentaries explain that she meant to convey the idea mentioned above. Namely, Abraham's building an altar with full intention to sacrifice Isaac instilled within even the most simple Jew for all generations to come a willingness to endure even the most severe trials in order to ensure that the merchandise — our precious Jewish heritage — is ultimately safely delivered to the intended destination — with the Jewish people until the arrival of Mashiach.

Sources:

• Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Dean, Yeshivat Ohr Somayach

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A SEUDAT MITZVAH ANYWAY

Hundreds of guests in a hall in Herzliya anxiously waited for the *brit mila* to begin. Imagine their shock when the *mohel* emerged from his final pre-circumcision examination and announced that the baby was slightly jaundiced and the *brit* had to be postponed because it presented a danger to life.

What would now happen with the hundreds of portions prepared for this *seudat mitzvah*?

To the good fortune of all concerned the rabbi of the

city, Rabbi Yacobowitz, was present. He invited everyone to sit down and partake of the meal that he ruled was a *seudat mitzvah* despite the fact that the *brit mila* did not take place.

His reasoning was that the postponement of the *brit mila* was a demonstration of our commitment to the halachic ruling that consideration of danger to life is placed above performance of this mitzvah. This alone was something to be celebrated with a *seudat mitzvah*.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

WHEN TO DELIVER OLD CLOTHES

Question: I have some old clothes that I would like to contribute to a Gemach in my community which sorts used clothes, and allows needy families an opportunity to purchase usable items at a token price. The collection area happens to be the front yard of my neighbor, and I have the impression that there are times when my deliveries are not welcome. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: It is obvious from your question that your neighbor does not post any sign limiting hours for delivery because your neighbor relies on your sense of when it is inconsiderate to bring your things.

As a general rule, a collection area adjoining a private

home should be out of bounds for deliveries on Friday because the family living in the home uses that day to put things in order in honor of Shabbat. Three weeks before Pesach when people clean their homes and discover so many things they wish to give away is also a time when the family members putting their yard at your disposal are also cleaning their homes and do not welcome the extra burden of old clothes. The same is true of the two weeks before Succot when the yard is being preparing as a Succah area.

In conclusion, do as many considerate people do and call the family to determine if it is the right time for a delivery.

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LOVE of the LAND

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