

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH · 18 KISLEV 5767 · DEC. 9, 2006 · VOL. 14 NO. 8

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### PROTECTING AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

*"I have sojourned with Lavan." (32:5)*

One of the reasons I like swimming is that waterproof cellphones have not yet been invented. (Please, do not show this article to Nokia, Motorola, et al!)

A few months ago I noticed one of my swimming buddies carefully placing a towel at the end of the pool, right by the edge of the water. He did a few laps, and then coasted to a halt in front of his poolside towel. He carefully dried his hands and then he flipped the towel open to reveal — a cell phone.

Is it my imagination or has solitude become an endangered species?

Life can be divided into two distinct phases: Input and output.

In one's childhood, our brains are largely set to "record"; and we record by imitation. A child learns to speak by imitating his mother. A child starts to learn by imitating his teacher.

Part of raising a child is to encourage positive role modeling and minimize contact with negative stereotypes.

In this week's Torah portion, Yaakov sends a message to Esav that he "sojourned with Lavan." The numerical equivalent of *garti*, "sojourned," is 613. Yaakov was hinting to his brother Esav that Lavan's negative influence had not rubbed off on him; that he still kept the 613 *mitzvot*.

A similar example: Yaakov prays to G-d (28:21) to return him in peace to his father's house without Lavan's negative influence. Even though he was already 75 years old, Yaakov

was still concerned that the natural instinct to imitate would lead him astray.

This also explains the Torah's praise of Rivka; despite being surrounded from the time she was born by evil people, she was able to sense that they were unsuitable role models and did not learn from them. Only an inherent holiness could have protected her.

The second phase starts when a child reaches maturity, or should reach maturity...

At this point, imitation should give way to our motivation. It's not enough for us to do things because "that's the way we always did it at home." Lessons learned through imitation must be re-learned and made our own. If not, we will never grow to be truly independent thinkers and doers; not only that, but our own ability to be role models for our own children and students will be severely limited.

At a certain point, we have to pick up the ball and run with it by ourselves.

The only way we do this is by giving ourselves time; time to introspect, to examine our lives, our wants, our goals. A quarter of an hour a week may be sufficient, but it has to be quality time. If one's spouse or child comes and asks for advice, we would make sure to close the door, take the phone off the hook, and give them our undivided attention. Should we not give ourselves the same attention?

In a world where the deep-sea cell phone is just around the corner, it takes a little effort to create the silence of solitude that is the key to maturity.

• Based on Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

© 2006 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Eisav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Eisav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Eisav. That night Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Eisav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason why it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Eisav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Eisav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Canaanite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his fami-

ly intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Canaanite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement. However, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *brit mila*. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Eisav's descendants.

## ISRAEL Forever

### CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR TO JEWS?

In the recent UN vote on an investigation committee to study "Israeli aggression" the nations of Europe demonstrated that their historic anti-Semitism has now become focused on the Jewish State.

One of the favorite tactics of European anti-Semites has always been to outlaw the slaughtering of animals according to the halachic method of *shechita* on the grounds that it represents cruelty to animals.

The Torah attitude towards animals is diametrically opposed to this characterization of kashrut-observing Jews as being inhumane. In this week's Torah portion we will read that the Patriarch Yaakov, on his way back to Eretz Yisrael after his encounter with the father of anti-Semitism, his brother Esav, arrived at a place called

Succot. The place was thus called because Yaakov built succot shelters there for his cattle.

Why did the Torah record something that on the surface seems so trivial?

The Ohr Hachayim commentary suggests that this was the first time in history that anyone showed such consideration to animals, that he bothered to build shelters for them. Laws and stories abound in Talmudic literature that properly reflect the true Jewish consideration of all forms of life.

Just as Jewry has survived all of the anti-Semitic attempts to demonize and destroy it, so too will Israel, with G-d's help, survive the efforts of its enemies to do it harm.

## 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 KIBBUTZ – THREE SPRINGS

In the Beit Shean Valley there is a kibbutz called Ein Hanatziv, which has three springs in it.

The name of the kibbutz and those of the springs can be traced to the renowned head of



the Volozhin Yeshiva in prewar Lithuania, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin. His initials (NaTzYV) form the main part of the kibbutz's name while the Ein preceding it alludes to the springs in it, which have been named Naftali, Tzvi and Yehuda.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Eisav?
2. Why was Yaakov both “afraid” and “distressed?”
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Eisav?
4. Where did Dina hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?
6. What was the angel forced to do before Yaakov agreed to release him?
7. What was it that healed Yaakov’s leg?
8. Why did Eisav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Eisav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word *nisa* in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Eisav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the daughter of Leah and not as the daughter of Yaakov?
13. Whom should Shimon and Levi have consulted concerning their plan to kill the people of Shechem?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. What does the name Binyamin mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
16. The Torah states, “The sons of Yaakov were twelve.” Why?
17. How old was Yaakov when Yosef was sold?
18. Eisav changed his wife’s name to Yehudit. Why?
19. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
20. What is the connection between the Egyptian oppression of the Jewish people and Eisav’s decision to leave the land of Canaan?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so that Eisav wouldn’t see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.
6. 32:27 - Admit that the blessings given by Yitzchak rightfully belong to Yaakov.
7. 32:32 - The shining of the sun.
8. 33:4 - His pity was aroused when he saw Yaakov bowing to him so many times.
9. 33:7 - To stop Eisav from gazing at her.
10. 33:12 - It means “travel”. It does not mean “we will travel.” This is because the letter *nun* is part of the word and does not mean “we” as it sometimes does.
11. 33:16 - They slipped away one by one.
12. 34:1 - Because she was outgoing like her mother, Leah.
13. 34:25 - Their father, Yaakov.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 35:18 - *Ben-Yemin* means “Son of the South.” He was the only son born in the Land of Israel, which is south of Aram Naharaim.
16. 35:22 - To stress that all of them, including Reuven, were righteous.
17. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
18. 36:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
19. 36:3 - One who converts to Judaism, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
20. 36:6 - Eisav knew that the privilege of living in the Land of Israel was accompanied by the prophecy that the Jews would be “foreigners in a land not their own.” Therefore Eisav said, “I’m leaving — I don’t want the Land if it means I have to ‘pay the bill’ of subjugation in Egypt.”

לע"נ

מרת חיה שרה בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- More than one Rosh Hashana
- When the year of the Jewish king begins
- Counting the years from the Exodus
- Nechemia and the Persian king
- Where the Persian king went wrong
- *Bal-te'acheir* - the prohibition against procrastination
- What each of the three Festivals teaches about the others
- The lost Korban Pesach's deadline for offering
- Why two passages (*Devarim* 23:22 and 24) are needed for *bal-te'acheir*
- Status of the animal which wasn't sacrificed in time
- *Bal-te'acheir* rule of the animal replacing a flawed sacrifice
- Difference between a *neder* and a *nedava*
- When a vow of charity to the poor must be fulfilled
- A year without three Festivals and vice versa
- Women in regard to *bal-te'acheir* and mitzvah of simcha
- When the year starts and ends regarding rental of homes
- From when and till when can there be discussion re a leap year
- The order of the months
- The Rosh Hashanas omitted in the *mishna* and why
- Rosh Hashana for tithing of animals
- When the year of the non-Jewish king begins
- When the world was created and how solar cycle is calculated
- Rosh Hashana as day of judgment
- *Shemita* (seventh year) and Yovel (fiftieth year)

## PAYING A PLEDGE ON TIME

In the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* if one was obligated to bring an animal as a sacrifice either as a sin offering or as a fulfillment of a vow, he had to do so before three Festivals passed in order to avoid transgressing the command of *bal-te'acheir* (don't delay).

The Torah passages (*Devarim* 23:22 and 24) that contain this rule include the need to avoid delay in fulfilling a vow made to give charity to the poor. It would seem from this that the deadline of "Three Festivals" applies to charity as well. The Sage Rava, however, declares that one is obligated to immediately fulfill his vow to charity since there are poor people immediately available as recipients. Three different resolutions of this problem are put forth by our early commentaries:

*Tosefot* differentiates between a situation in which there are poor people who are available recipients and one in

which there is no such opportunity. In the first case one must immediately disburse the charity while in the second case he is only obligated to search for recipients after three Festivals have passed.

RaShbA (Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet) contends that there is no difference between the two cases, but rather between the *nature* of the transgression. Even when poor recipients are available the one who fails to immediately fulfill his vow has failed to fulfill the positive command to do so but he is not guilty of transgressing the prohibition of *bal-te'acheir* until three Festivals have passed.

RaN (Rabbeinu Nissini) rejects both of the above positions. If there are poor recipients available and one fails to fulfill his vow, he has indeed transgressed the prohibition of *bal-te'acheir* but he has no obligation to search for them even after three Festivals have passed.

This last opinion is the one cited in *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah* 257:3.

• *Rosh Hashana* 6b

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Israel is judged on Rosh Hashana before all other nations because it is only fitting that when a king and his people are to be judged the king be given precedence."

• *Rabbi Chisda - Rosh Hashana* 8b

## IS CLASSICAL MUSIC IN HARMONY WITH JUDAISM?

From: Stephanie in RI

Dear Rabbi,

I enjoy listening to classical music. Particularly if I'm upset, or want to relax, or even if I just want to tune out what's going on around me and concentrate on things I'm doing like reading, studying or whatever. Is this OK? Is there any problem with listening to classical music according to Judaism?

Dear Stephanie,

Music is considered by Judaism to be one of the seven classical, pure wisdoms. Music is therefore viewed as being very uplifting, and conducive to such higher states as Divine inspiration and prophecy. For these reasons, music was an instrumental part of the service in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Of course, as with most things, music can be holy and pure, or it can be an expression of, and can engender, un-holiness and impurity. The music used by the Jewish prophets and mystics to attain inspiration, and the music played by the Levites in the Temple, was based on ancient, Divinely inspired *nigunim* (tunes). As a counter-

point, music has always accompanied the pursuit of idolatrous and immoral states of ecstasy as well. Even today, certain types of music specifically play on such base inclinations.

Most classical music, while not as spiritual as the ancient Jewish melodies, is nevertheless refined and elevating. It is usually pleasant to listen to, and often intends to convey majestic, subliminal impressions and ideas. Accordingly, while it would be generally preferable to listen to refined, uplifting Jewish music, listening to most types of classical music is also okay.

Exceptions would be: liturgical music that conveys religious ideas contrary to Judaism or music with lyrics expressing immoral ideas and feelings. Some people refrain from listening to music composed by notorious anti-Semites as well, even if the music itself is "purely" classical.

Regarding your general use of music for lifting your spirits, relaxation and concentration, if the music is acceptable, that's fine. Thus Maimonides noted that since physical, emotional and mental health is a prerequisite for spiritual growth, if a person is 'singing the blues', "he should attempt to remove the depression by listening to good music, by taking walks in beautiful gardens and by looking at beautiful buildings and art forms" (*Shemone Perakim* ch. 5). Ultimately, though, this should always be with the intention of inspiring one to acquire wisdom and positive attributes, and to come closer to G-d.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### THE WISEST RESPONSE

**Question:** Someone recently said something to me that I found offensive. I was tempted to react with a very strong response but restrained myself. Afterwards I had second thoughts as to whether I should have allowed this insult to pass. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Ideally, the best response is silence. In *Pirkei Avot* (1:17) Rabbi Shimon declares: "All my life I have grown up among Sages and I found nothing better than silence". Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura explains that this means remaining silent in the face of insult.

If one feels, however, that the situation demands a response he must assure that it is proportional to the insult. In the Talmud (*Mesechta Beitza* 20b) a story is told

to illustrate this point.

A halachic debate raged between the academies of Hillel and Shammai as to whether the owner of an animal offered as a *chagigah* sacrifice on Yom Tov was to place his hands on it in the ritual of *semicha*. A member of the Shammai Academy which held that this was forbidden on Yom Tov once saw a member of the Hillel Academy about to do such *semicha* in the *Beit Hamikdash* on Yom Tov. "What is the meaning of this *semicha*?" he challenged him. The response was "What is the meaning of silence?" which was meant to communicate that the challenge was out of order.

The Sage Abaye concluded from this incident that a reaction must be proportionate to the insult.

## NOT ANOTHER 9/11!

It is hardly headline material when a person is released from a hospital. But when Ilana Benhuri came out of the New York hospital where she had spent a month undergoing major surgery and several skin grafts, it was a news item that brought relief to the residents of the Big Apple.

Benhuri, a 50-year old Iranian Jewess, was the victim of a freak accident on October 11th. New York Yankee pitcher Cory Liddle and his flight instructor were in a small plane that crashed into the 30th floor of the Upper East Side building in which she lived. Her housekeeper, Eveline Reategue, rushed into the room where Benhuri was doing some paperwork, and warned her that a plane

was headed their way. As they ran from the four-bedroom apartment the plane smashed through the wall and set off a massive explosion. Although both the pitcher and his instructor were killed, Benhuri and Reategue managed to crawl out from the debris and go down the stairs.

Coming only a month after the fifth anniversary of the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center, this accident shocked New York. This time, however, there were no fatalities (aside from the occupants of the plane). Of the 23 people injured, including 14 firefighters, only Benhuri was hospitalized. Her miraculous recovery brought a happy end to a tragic event.

AT JEWISH BOOKSTORES & WWW.TARGUM.COM

NOW AVAILABLE!

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY

is proud to present its premier edition

LOVE of the LAND

VOLUME ONE

THE GLADSTONE EDITION

*A compendium of selections from Torah and historical sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel.*

A PROJECT OF OHR SOMAYACH - TANENBAUM COLLEGE