

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

Author's note: I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is praying for my sister Jill Sinclair. Chaya Esther bas Rochma has been in a coma since a tragic accident eighteen months ago. Please continue to pray for my sister and in the merit of all our tefilot, may G-d return Chaya Esther bas Rochma to full health and to our family very soon!

A LEGEND IN MY OWN LUNCHTIME

"...I shall strike your entire boundary with frogs..." (7:27)

Nursing his Lancaster down below the anti-aircraft fire, Johnny heard the wireless suddenly crackle into life, "Johnny! Johnny! What in the deuce are you doing in there? Get out now! There's more flack over those dams than cucumber sandwiches at a Buck House tea party!"

Johnny hit the *talk* button on his joystick, "What and miss all the fun? Sorry *squaddy*, this is one party you can't keep me from gate-crashing!"

With a wry smile playing across his face, Johnny flicked off the wireless and concentrated on the huge black form of the dam looming up in front of the cockpit. "Steady, steady, steaddddd... and... Bombs away!" Tenderly, Johnny squeezed the bomb release button, and immediately pulled the Lancaster into a steep climb over the right-hand ack-ack tower. As he passed over the tower, a few hundred rounds of flack tore into the soft metal underbelly of the Lancaster; the plane exploded immediately.

"...I shall strike your entire boundary with frogs..." (7:27)

The Midrash tells us that some of those frogs volun-

teered to throw themselves into the hottest ovens to fulfill G-d's miracle that every part of the land of Egypt should swarm with frogs. They perished to sanctify the Name of G-d.

...the grand gesture of self-sacrifice is much easier than resisting even a small desire."

In a striking parallel of animal obedience to the Divine Word, when the Jews left Egypt, the Torah tells us, "But against all the Children of Yisrael, no dog shall whet its tongue, neither against man nor beast" (11:7). As reward for this forbearance, to this very day, we throw non-kosher meat to the dogs.

Nowhere, however, does the Torah tell us that the frogs received a reward. Why doesn't the Torah specify the reward that the frogs received for their self-sacrifice?

The answer is that the grand gesture of self-sacrifice is much easier than resisting even a small desire.

In other words, it's easier to be a frog and go out in a blaze of glory than to be a dog and keep your mouth shut.

• Sources: Heard from Rabbi Yona Rom in the name of Rabbi Dovid of Tolna

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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 to be 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

THE FIFTH CUP

The drinking of four cups of wine at the Pesach Seder has its roots in the four promises of freedom given by G-d to Moshe. But if we pay close attention to the Torah portion which will be read this Shabbat in synagogues throughout the world we will take note that there is a fifth promise as well. "And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov."

The first four promises of liberation from Egyptian bondage and that of "I will take you to Me for a people" through giving them the Torah were completely fulfilled

for the generation of our ancestors to whom these promises were given. But the fifth one was not – an entire generation died on the way to their promised land because of their sins!

The answer to this puzzle is that the first four promises were given unconditionally in contrast to the fifth one which was preceded by the condition "You shall know that I am the L-rd your G-d", a condition they failed to fulfill by accepting the slander of the spies about the land.

Knowing G-d was and remains our guarantee of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

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

WHERE THOSE STONES CAME FROM

If you have gazed with wonder at those massive stones that form the Western Wall and wondered where they came from, you are not alone in your curiosity.

For years archeologists have assumed that the giant limestones used by King Herod for the reconstruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash and the



Western Wall came from a quarry located in the Old City of Jerusalem. It is now believed that they came from an ancient quarry four kilometers northwest of the Old City, in the city's Ramat Shlomo neighborhood. It was discovered during a "salvage excavation" conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority in conjunction with municipal plans to build an elementary school in the area.

ברוכים הבאים
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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' יצחק אייזיק ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- The double meaning of an oath to eat
- Difference between vows and oaths in regard to *mitzvot*
- The double vow and double oath
- The vow with two possible meanings
- The halacha of doubtful status in a number of areas
- Difference between Yehuda and Galil regarding *cherem*
- When a vower claims he meant something other than the simple meaning of his words
- Cautions regarding vows, the company of ignorant people and contact with women
- The importance of bashfulness
- Counsel re marital relations
- Four categories of vows which do not take effect
- Looking for an opening to achieve nullification of a vow

SEARCH FOR AN OPENING

Considerable imagination was employed by our Talmudic Sages in finding a *petach* — an opening — for nullifying a vow. Such nullification was possible only if the one making the vow expressed regret for doing so since he was not aware of how it would eventually adversely affect him. It was therefore up to the rabbi to come up with a suggestion of some harm that was not anticipated by the vow-maker.

One example from our *gemara* concerned the woman who made a vow forbidding her daughter to have any benefit from her. When she came before Rabbi Yochanan to have her vow nullified he asked her:

“Had you known that your neighbors would be saying

that your daughter must have done something drastically wrong to deserve such treatment, would you have made such a vow?”

When she declared that she certainly would not have run that risk and regretted making her vow, Rabbi Yochanan ruled that the vow was nullified.

In the Jerusalem Talmud case cited by Rabbeinu Nissim (RaN), it was Rabbi Muna who sought nullification of a vow. Rabbi Simai asked him whether he would have made the vow had he been aware that people would shun him because of his tendency to make vows. When he admitted that he had not taken that into consideration this constituted an opening for regret and qualified for nullification.

• *Nedarim 21b*

What the SAGES Say

“Bashfulness leads to fear of sin and it is a good sign for a person that he has this characteristic.”

• *Anonymous Beraita - Nedarim 20a*

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ANIMAL SUFFERING

From: A. C. in Mexico

Dear Rabbi,

I am studying Torah in Mexico City. I saw an animal program, where lions or wolves attack an animal for food. I saw that animals before they die, they suffer so much that it makes me wonder, why? In our eyes, this is so unfair for someone who does not have free-will, did animals make sins so they are punished in this way? Can you please answer me this question?

Dear A. C.,

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, in his book called "The Kuzari", discusses the harshness of life in the animal kingdom in the context of describing the wonder of its design:

"See how wonderfully conceived is the nature of the creatures, how many marvelous gifts they possess which show forth the intention of an all-wise Creator, and the will of an omniscient all-powerful Being. He has endowed the small and the great with all necessary internal and external senses and limbs. He gave them organs corresponding to their instincts. He gave the hare and the stag the means of flight required by their timid nature; endowed the lion with ferocity and with the instruments for robbing and tearing. He who considers the formation, use, and relation of the limbs to the animal instinct, sees wisdom in them and so perfect an arrangement that no doubt or uncertainty can remain in his soul concerning the justice of the Creator. When an evil thought suggests that there is injustice in the circumstance that the hare falls prey to the lion or the wolf, and the fly to the spider, reason warns him as follows: How can I charge the All-Wise with injustice when I am convinced of His justice, and that injustice is quite out of the question? If the lion's pursuit of the hare and the spider of the fly were mere accidents, I should have to assert the necessity of accident. I see, however, that the wise and just Manager of the world equipped the lion with the means for hunting, with ferocity, strength, teeth and claws; that He furnished the spider with cunning and taught it to weave a net which it constructs without having learned to do so; how He equipped it with the instruments required and appointed the fly as its food, just as many fish serve other fish for food. Can I say anything but that this is the fruit of a wisdom which I am unable to grasp, and that I must submit to Him Who is called 'The Rock Whose doing is perfect' (Deuteronomy 32:4)?" (The Kuzari, part III)

Rather than give an explanation, he states that since there is an a priori awareness that G-d created the universe and is just, and that animals are clearly designed to eat one another, then predation must therefore be planned, and it must be the product of a justice that is beyond our comprehension. Like the mystery of human suffering, the suffering of the animal kingdom is one of the ultimate, unknowable mysteries of creation.

Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz, the "Chazon Ish" (1878-1953), gives more of an explanation, although one that is nevertheless still somewhat cryptic:

"Animals are similar to man in the structure of the body, with its aspects and capabilities; the material of their bodies is flesh and blood, sinews, bones and skin, and they possess a life-force. They possess senses like man, they sustain themselves like man, they are of two genders, male and female, and the difference of man from animals is in intelligence and language. Animals are of utility to man, such as an ox for a yoke and a donkey for a burden, and they prepare food for man, milk and eggs, and from some of them we obtain wool to wear, and some of them are themselves food for people. They were created as different kinds and as many species, and the food of each is different. People do not benefit from some of them, such as predatory animals, and snakes, and vermin, and insects; however they possess sublime necessity and benefit. Sometimes man is punished by way of them, and sometimes man learns wisdom and ethics from them. We are already used to their existence, and we feel that without them the world would be lacking, and the world is not beautiful and perfect except when there are predatory animals in it. The abundance of habit numbs the sense of wonder of the soul which befits every living creature by virtue of its being alive. As opposed to this, the soul does feel wonder from special species which are not so frequently found..." (Emunah Ubitachon 1:7)

Rabbi Karelitz seems to be saying that the harshness of nature, demonstrated by predatory animals, is part and parcel of the overall grand tapestry of creation. "We feel that without them the world would be lacking, and the world is not beautiful and perfect except when there are predatory animals in it." Mankind somehow intuitively understands that it is part of a greater good.

In summary, then, the essential answer is that such things are part of the larger picture, part of the greater good, part of G-d's ultimate and unknowable plan:

"For My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor are your ways as My ways, says G-d." (Isaiah 55:8)

WHEN TO VISIT THE SICK

Question: I am aware that it is a mitzvah to visit the sick. My experience has shown, however, that there may be times when such a visit is not only unwelcome but also even counterproductive because of the patient's condition. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: There definitely are things to be taken into consideration when visiting the sick. Although our halachic sources state that there is no limit to the visits one should make to the ill, this is true only if the visitor does not become a burden on the patient.

This consideration applies not only to the number of visits but to the length of the visit and its timing. You should be

sensitive to subtle signals from the patient that you have overstayed your visit. But even before scheduling your visit it pays to contact either the patient or someone close to him to inquire when it is best to visit.

Another dimension in timing is presented by the Talmudic Sages based on the role which prayer plays in achieving recovery. One should not visit in the early hours of the day when the patient's condition appears better than it really is because he will mistakenly feel that there is no need to pray for him. A visit during the last hours is also discouraged because the poor appearance of the patient may mistakenly create the impression that he is beyond help and prayer is futile.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

NEVER TOO LATE

When he reached the age of 100 Boris Apimov decided it was time to learn something about his Jewish heritage, knowledge that had been denied him as a result of growing up under a Communist regime.

Although he had achieved fame as a Russian caricaturist

and had received a 1967 award as the "Folk Artist of the Soviet Union", he did not explore Judaism until he was a centenarian.

Last month the man considered to be the oldest living Jew celebrated his 107th birthday in a Moscow synagogue.

Another proof that it is never too late to return to G-d!

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