

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

PARTNERS IN TIME

“...When you come to the Land which I am giving to you, the Land shall observe a Sabbath rest for G-d.” (25:2)

When you look at the letterhead of some law firms you might think you’re reading the New York phone book. It seems like everyone is a junior partner.

In a way, we too want to be junior partners — junior partners with G-d. We think: Okay G-d, you run the world. You’re the Boss. I just want a little junior partnership over here to do what I want to do. I just want a little of my own space.

How can you have your own space when “His Honor fills the world?” How can you have a junior partnership with the One to whom there is no ‘two’?

The religions of the world are based on the premise that you can be a junior partner with G-d. You can turn up once a week for an hour and that’s that. The rest of your time is your own. A Jew is on duty 24/7, from the cradle to the grave. We are the people that G-d has chosen to serve Him.

But doesn’t that sound terribly forbidding? Am I nothing more than a cipher? A mindless automaton filling instructions? Where is my space? Where is my individuality?

In reality, G-d has given us a junior partnership. But it’s not a partnership so we can slink off and play golf in the afternoons. It’s a partnership in the very creation of time itself.

Nothing can exist in this world without a spark of holiness. Even a bathroom has a spark of holiness. The laws of how one conducts oneself there. Nothing can exist without holiness. Holiness is the air that the world breathes. Just like man cannot exist without air, the world cannot exist without holiness.

When G-d created the world He created it with two kinds of holiness, which are expressed in Shabbat on the one hand, and the Festivals on the other.

The holiness of Shabbat is fixed, immutable. Every seven days, we enter a world called Shabbat. It requires no intervention on our part. Shabbat flows down from the upper worlds without our assistance and beyond our control.

The Festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Succot are another

matter. G-d allows man, as *Beit Din*, to establish the day on which the month begins, and thus the exact times of the Festivals: G-d gave to *Beit Din* the power to adjust the day on which the months began, and thus determine on which days the Festivals would fall.

In the mitzvah of *shmitta*, (the Sabbatical year for the Land) it says “...When you come to the Land which I am giving to you, the Land shall observe a Sabbath rest for G-d.” The Land is to observe a Sabbath rest for G-d. Exactly the same expression — for G-d — is used in the account of the Creation of Shabbat — “A Sabbath for G-d.”

Just as there are two types of holiness in the days and the months, Shabbat and of the Festivals, so too there are two types of holiness in the years themselves. The seventh year is a Sabbath of the Land. Its holiness is ‘fixed’ like Shabbat. The holiness of *Yovel* (the Jubilee year) is like the holiness of the Festivals. Its holiness represents a partnership of G-d and Man. “For it is *Yovel*; holy it will be to you.”

If the shofar is not blown at the beginning of the *Yovel* year, the year is not a *Yovel*. If the slaves are not set free, the year is not a *Yovel*. If the fields do not return to their original owners, the year does not have the status of a *Yovel* and it is permitted to reap and sow like an ordinary year.

The year of *shmitta* is different. Even if *Beit Din* fails to sanctify the year as a *shmitta* year, nevertheless it is *shmitta*. Its holiness is fixed. It is independent of man. Even if the years have not been counted and there has been no cessation of sowing and reaping, the fields are considered ownerless and their produce exempt from tithes.

It is for this reason that *shmitta* is called “a Sabbath of rest for G-d”. *shmitta*, like Shabbat, allows for no junior partnerships.

• Sources: *Torat Kohanim, Rosh Hashana 9, Rambam Hilchot Shmitta and Yovel, Ch. 26, Meshech Chochma in Iturei Torah*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah prohibits normal farming of the Land of Israel every seven years. This “Shabbat” for the land is called “*shemita*”. The year 5768 will be a *shemita* year in Israel. After every seventh *shemita*, the fiftieth year, *yovel* (jubilee) is announced with the sound of the shofar on Yom Kippur. This was also a year for the Land to lie fallow. G-d promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the *shemita* and *yovel* years. During *yovel*, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work. A Jewish indentured servant may not be given any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may

not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free. The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption is limited to the first year after the sale. The Levites’ cities belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of one another by lending or borrowing with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment.

ISRAEL Forever

LAG B’OMER – A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

As Jews throughout Eretz Yisrael celebrate Lag B’omer on the 18th day of the Month of Iyar, there is serious reflection on the cause for this celebration.

One explanation is that it was on this day that the plague that struck the 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Akiva came to an end.

It is interesting to note that the Talmud describes the impact of this plague as “the world was desolate”. Only

when Rabbi Akiva managed to locate and teach five outstanding Sages in the south of Eretz Yisrael was the Torah restored to the Jewish People.

There is an important lesson in this account. Without Torah study the world is desolate. This will hopefully be internalized by the nation and its leaders so that the Torah studied in *yeshivot* will be encouraged and supported in order to secure 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

PEKI’IN – A LEGENDARY CAVE

In the center of the Peki’in village in the north of Israel there is a cave which is purported to be the one in which the Sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Elazar hid for thirteen years. Lag B’omer, which is celebrated this coming week, is the Yahrzeit (anniversary) of Rabbi Shimon’s death.

Condemned to death by the Romans for publicly criticizing their oppressive rule in Eretz Yisrael, this



great Sage, who authored the classical Kaballah work “*Hazohar*”, fled to a cave. The Talmud recounts that he and his son were sustained with the fruits of a carob tree and water from a spring that miraculously appeared out of nowhere.

Next to the cave there is a synagogue which the Israeli government renovated and which serves as a prayer site for visitors to the cave.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the Torah specify that the laws of *shemita* were taught on *Har Sinai*?
2. If one possesses *shemita* food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
3. The Torah commands, “You shall sanctify the fiftieth year.” How is this done?
4. Which two “returns” are announced by the shofar during *yovel*?
5. From where does the *yovel* year get its name?
6. What prohibitions are derived from the verse “*v’lo sonu ish es amiso* — a person shall not afflict his fellow”?
7. What is the punishment for neglecting the laws of *shemita*?
8. If *shemita* is observed properly, how long is the crop of the sixth year guaranteed to last?
9. After selling an ancestral field, when can one redeem it?
10. Under what circumstance may one sell ancestral land?
11. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
12. What does the word “days” mean in this week’s *Parsha*?
13. What is considered a walled city?
14. What is the definition of a “*ger toshav*”?
15. To what is one who leaves *Eretz Yisrael* compared?
16. Why does Rashi mention the plague of the firstborn in this week’s *Parsha*?
17. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Jewish indentured servant.
18. Who supports the family of the Jewish indentured servant during his years of servitude?
19. If a Jew is sold as a servant to a non-Jew, does he go free after six years?
20. Where is it permitted to prostrate oneself on a stone floor?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 25:1 - To teach us that just as *shemita* was taught in detail on *Har Sinai*, so too, all the *mitzvot* were taught in detail on *Har Sinai*.
2. 25:7 - Remove it from his property and declare it ownerless.
3. 25:10 - At the beginning of the year the Beis Din declares, “This year is *kadosh* (sanctified).”
4. 25:10 - The return of the land to its original owner, and the “return” (freedom) of the slave from slavery.
5. 25:10 - From the sounding of the shofar. A ram’s horn is called a *yovel*.
6. 25:17 - One may not intentionally hurt people’s feelings, nor give bad advice while secretly intending to reap benefit.
7. 25:18 - Exile.
8. 25:21,22 - From Nissan of the sixth year until Sukkot of the ninth year.
9. 25:24 - After two years following the sale, until *yovel*. At the beginning of *yovel* it returns to the family automatically.
10. 25:25 - Only if one becomes impoverished.
11. 25:29 - Only within the first year after the sale. Afterwards, even in *yovel*, it does not return.
12. 25:29 - The days of an entire year.
13. 25:29 - A city that has been surrounded by a wall since the time of Yehoshua.
14. 25:35 - A non-Jew who lives in *Eretz Yisrael* and accepts upon himself not to worship idols.
15. 25:38 - To one who worships idols.
16. 25:38 - The prohibition against taking interest is accompanied by the phrase, “I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of Egypt.” Rashi explains that just as G-d discerned in Egypt between those who were firstborn and those who were not, so too will G-d discern and punish those who lend with interest, pretending they are acting on behalf of others.
17. 25:39-43 - a) Do not make him perform humiliating tasks; b) Do not sell him publicly; c) Do not make him perform unnecessary jobs.
18. 25:41 - His master.
19. 25:54 - No. If he is not redeemed with money, he must wait until the *yovel* to go free.
20. 26:1 - In the *Mikdash*.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

- Haircut of the nazir or *kohen* who is a *metzora*
- Removal of a man's body hair
- The various situations facing a nazir who is uncertain if he became ritually impure
- Women, slaves and gentiles in regard to *nezirut*
- The vows of a gentile
- Unclear indications of a desire to be a nazir
- The master's control over his slave's *nezirut*
- Known and unknown source of ritual impurity caused by graves
- The corpse found on the road
- Other cases of uncertain contact with source of ritual impurity
- If finding one corpse raises the possibility that there are other corpses buried nearby
- Halachic doubts arising in the case of a *metzora* or a *zav*
- The nazirite status of the Prophet Shmuel

BORN TO LEADERSHIP

“Torah scholars increase peace in the world.” This statement by Rabbi Elazar in the name of Rabbi Chanina appears at the very end of *Mesechta Nazir*. Although it also appears at the end of *Mesechta Berachot* and *Mesechta Yevamot* it has a special connection here to the subject discussed in the last *mishna*, the *nezirut* of the Prophet Shmuel and the Judge Shimshon.

Both of these *nezirim* were sanctified for the service of Heaven from their very birth. In regard to Shmuel, his moth-

er, Channah, in her prayer for a son, declared: “I will give him to G-d for all the days of his life and no razor shall come upon his head.” (*Shmuel I 1:11*) The angel who appeared to the mother of Shimshon and informed this barren woman that she would bear a son instructed her “no razor shall come upon his head for the child shall be a nazir to G-d.” (*Shoftim 13:5*)

Both of these spiritual giants, points out Maharsha, were great Torah scholars from their youth and blossomed into judges of their people who were capable of establishing peace among them.

• *Nazir 66b*

What the SAGES Say

“Torah scholars increase peace in the world.”

• *Rabbi Elazar in the name of Rabbi Chanina - Nazir 66b*

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WHAT'S A NAME IN?

From: Jason in PA

Dear Rabbi,

Is there some connection between G-d's name and the mitzvot? I ask because I have seen a prayer often said before doing a mitzvah which talks about unifying G-d's name through performing the mitzvah.

Dear Jason,

The prayer you have seen is referring to the idea of "unifying" G-d's name from the higher spiritual worlds to the lower, physical realm of this world. While the idea is quite deep and complicated, the basic idea is that through our performance of mitzvot in this world we draw down positive influence from on high, infusing this world with the Divine Presence. This in turn results in a connection that centers all Creation around G-d, hence a "unification" of His name.

While we cannot explore this concept in too much detail, perhaps the idea can be more easily understood through a few practical, familiar mitzvot as examples: 1. charity; 2. the "hamotzie" blessing said over bread on Shabbat and Festivals; and 3. "zimun" – the blessing after the meal with three or more men when recited over wine.

In these cases, the inner message and intention of the mitzvah is related to the correlation between the four-letter Name of G-d "yud" and "heh" and "vav" and "heh", and the way the fingers, hands and arms correspond to these letters.

Regarding charity, there is an idea that as one shares his G-d-given resources with the needy, G-d actually sends down more blessing to be shared. This mitzvah, then, is associated with drawing down a greater degree of Divine

influence that unifies the upper and lower worlds around G-d. As such, G-d's name is infused within and permeates the mitzvah of charity. The round coin corresponds to the rounded letter yud in the hand of the giver whose five fingers correspond to the letter heh. The one giving the charity then dispenses the charity with an out-stretched arm that take the shape of the letter vav. The interaction between the giver and the recipient, whose receiving hand corresponds to the final heh, then completes the unification of G-d's name in this mitzvah.

Many have the custom for "hamotzie" of Shabbat and holidays to take hold of the two loaves with the ten fingers while both hands are extended. Since this double portion of bread is symbolic of the way in which Shabbat and the Festivals are the interface between the spiritual and physical, a conduit through which the source of blessing and bounty flow into the weekdays, it is not surprising to find G-d's name infused within this mitzvah as well. The ten fingers are the yud, both five-fingered hands are the two hehs that correspond to the upper and lower worlds, and the outstretched arms connecting the loaves are the vav that bridges the two. Interestingly, "vav" in Hebrew actually means a hook or connector, and this is apparent in the case of charity as well where the out-stretched arm connects two people, thereby unifying G-d's name.

Finally, the zimun upon blessing after a meal also exhibits this phenomenon. Here, the greatness of G-d's bounty is proclaimed and publicized, a recognition which brings in its wake more bounty and blessing. As in the prior examples, here, one person lifts the cup of wine with his ten fingers, which are the yud. He places it in the hand of the one who will lead the blessing, which is the heh. After the blessing, he shares the cup with others with an out-stretched arm, the vav. The recipient of the cup then completes the unity of G-d's name by taking it in his hand, the final heh.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Who Makes the Bed?

In reference to the article "Who Makes the Bed?" in the Pekudei issue of Ohrnet which mentioned the Chafetz Chayim's insistence on making the bed for his guest, we received the following question from Dr. Michael Weinberg of Cincinnati:

"What about 'stripping' beds after you have been a guest at someone's home? Is it the host's job or the guest's to remove the linen from the beds? My wife and I have discussed this a few times!"

OHRNET replies:

The answer to your question may be found in the words of the Sage Abaye (*Mesechta Megilla 26a*) that it is good manners for a guest to leave his host something of token value such as a clay vessel that he used during his stay or the skin of an animal that he had slaughtered. While this advice may serve as a hint to even leave behind a token gift, it certainly implies the need to at least strip the bed at the end of the stay.

THE GEMACH SOLUTION

Question: I have a large collection of clothes and toys that are no longer of any use to me and are taking up valuable space in our home. It seems a shame to just throw them away. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Your reluctance to discard things that may be of use to others is shared by so many thoughtful people. Thanks to the initiative of some inspired volunteers there is a solution to your problem and theirs.

In many communities in Israel and the world there are *Gemachim* (used clothes centers) that accept the items you mentioned and channel them to economically underprivileged families. The work is done by volunteers, and the cus-

tomers are charged a token sum so that they can maintain their dignity while saving the small fortune they would have had to spend on new items.

Israel, in particular, has a large number of such *Gemachim* that receive shipments from volunteers in North America and England.

Make some inquiries in your own area as to where you can drop off your unwanted items. But keep in mind that you must show consideration for the volunteers as well. This means that you don't ask them to pick up your things and that you don't drop them off at times like before Shabbat and Holidays when it is inconvenient for the receivers.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

RETRIEVED FROM THE SEA

The matter that came before the *Beit Din* (Rabbinical Court) was truly an unusual one. The claimant was Rabbi Safrin, the Admor of Komarna, and the defendant was a young survivor of the Holocaust. The issue was who had the right to a Sefer Torah that belonged to the Komarna Chassidim in pre-war Europe.

The defendant, who was the current possessor of the Sefer Torah, described to the judges how he had saved this sacred scroll by wrapping it around his body and thus concealing it from the enemy as he dashed from place to place.

The court ruled in his favor on the basis of the Talmudic ruling that something retrieved from the sea belongs to the finder because its owner has certainly despaired of ever regaining possession.

The claimant accepted the decision but was so interested in bringing the Sefer Torah back to its ancestral home that he paid the defendant a handsome sum of money to relinquish ownership. Thus was the Sefer Torah once again "retrieved from the sea".

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