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PARSHA INSIGHTS

GO BACK TO PALESTINE!

“And there I will provide for you...” (48:11)

My mother grew up in the East End of London. She remembers to this day the sight of Sir Oswald Mosley surrounded by his “Black Shirts” standing on the back of a lorry in the middle of Mansford Street, Bethnel Green E2, with searchlights playing on his face, screaming “Jews! Go back to Palestine!”

It’s ironic that the anti-Semitic flavor-of-the-month would like us to go anywhere *but* Palestine. Our “cousins”, the children of Ismael (Yishmael), suggest repeatedly the Mediterranean Sea as our final destination. And those self-same European Jew-haters whose forbears wanted us to “go back to Palestine” are heartily in favor of that suggestion.

A cursory glance at European history shows that the Jews were far from the first migratory nation to settle there. In fact, a remarkable stream of complex migration peopled almost the whole of Europe with strangers long before the tribes of Jacob began their great Diaspora. So, in truth, the Jews could reply to the cry for a *Judenrein* Europe, “Did the cradle of your

ancestors stand here?”

The concept that the Book of Bereshet is a matrix for the entire story of the Jewish People is fundamental to an understanding both of the Torah and history.

“The actions of the fathers are ‘sign’ to the children.” The roots of all that later happens to the tribes of Yisrael is planted in the first of the Books of the Torah.

Thus, millennia before the Jews arrived in Europe, Yosef had already implemented a vast redistribution of the Egyptian people, so that no Egyptian could accuse the Jews, “You have no business to be here, you were not born in these parts.”

No Egyptian or European after him could rightfully claim, “Go back to Palestine!” — for they were no less sojourners than were we.

And when we return, it is not as exiles, and not to Palestine – but to the Land of Israel, our rightful heritage, and as free men and women.

• Source: Based on Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going

down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

ISRAEL *Forever*

THE PROMISE OF RETURN

As anxious as he was to see his son Yosef after 22 years of separation, the Patriarch Yaakov was disturbed by the need to leave Eretz Yisrael for Egypt where his son promised to sustain him and his family. In a night vision G-d assured him that he need not fear going away because he would eventually return.

Although our Sages interpret this as a promise that Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Yisrael, there may be another dimension to this Divine assurance. Everything that

happened to the Patriarchs is a symbol of what will transpire with their descendants. If Yaakov was promised that his exit from Eretz Yisrael was only a temporary one, it also hinted that his descendants would eventually leave Egypt as well and come to Eretz Yisrael. Taking this a step further we can suggest that it was a promise that the descendants of Yaakov, dispersed throughout the Diaspora, would eventually return to their Homeland and thrive in 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

YAD VASHEM – A MEMORY AND A WARNING

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem is visited regularly not only by Israelis and Jewish tourists but also by non-Jewish heads of state and other distinguished guests from all over the world.

In a recent media interview the newly-appointed chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, chief rabbi of Tel Aviv and former chief rabbi



of Israel, stressed the role which this institution has, not only as a memory of the past but also as a warning for the future. Referring to the recent increase in anti-Semitic incidents in Europe, he called upon foreign governments to learn the lesson of the Holocaust and take tougher measures to punish those guilty of attacking Jews and desecrating Jewish cemeteries.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said "Don't dispute on the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt"?
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *lashon hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave Eretz Canaan.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Canaan.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - Dina *bat* Yaakov.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

- Till when can a purchaser of a field back out when he sees ownership contested
- Roles of cash and property in paying for damages or in dividing inheritance
- How much to spend on beautifying a mitzvah
- Responsibility for damage caused by fire put in care of an incompetent
- Comparison of responsibility for various damages
- Damage caused by more than one person
- Calculation of payment for death caused to animal
- Series of laws on many subjects stated by the Sage Ulla in name of Rabbi Elazar
- Whether a non-Jewish slave is considered real estate or chattel
- Responsibility for damage done to Sanctuary property
- Damage done to animal in an area jointly owned by owner of the damager and owner of victim
- Rules of responsibility and court confiscation
- Nature of the half payment of damage caused by ox which is not yet an inveterate goring ox

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

When brothers who get together to divide what they have inherited from their father, every item in the inheritance must be calculated. This includes even the clothes they are wearing that are part of the estate.

The exceptions to this rule are the clothes that the sons and daughters of the heirs are wearing. This is because the evaluation must be made by the court and this would be most embarrassing for them, a consideration which moves each of the heirs to waive his claim to their clothes.

This exception, states the Jerusalem Talmud, has an exception as well. It applies only to the weekday clothes in which they would have had to appear before the court. The special clothes that they wear on Shabbat are brought to the court for evaluation.

Another exception is in regard to the nice clothes worn by the oldest of the inheriting brothers. Since he requires such clothes to successfully manage the business affairs of the estate before its division, it is assumed that the other heirs acquiesced to his clothing himself at their expense.

• *Bava Kama 11b*

What the SAGES Say

“A beam of wood which sells for one zuz in the city sells for a zuz while it is still in the field (despite the fact that it has to be transported – Rashi).”

• *A folk saying quoted by the Sage Rava - Bava Kama 11a*

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MONEY TALKS

From: Manny in Austin, TX

Dear Rabbi,

With all the discussion on the causes of the current financial crisis I can't help but wonder if there aren't additional reasons going on behind the scenes. Can you offer any insight into this aspect of the crisis?

Dear Manny,

Contrary to popular belief, I am not a prophet. Nor do I wish to be apocalyptic. However, insofar as Judaism posits that G-d runs the world, and that things that happen are often directly related to what people do, there might be a connection between our attitude toward money and wealth and what's happened with the world economy.

Of course, there are real, tangible reasons and explanations for what's happened. And as you say, that's what everyone is talking about. Also, in considering the possible spiritual reasons behind the scenes, the key is to view them as what you correctly label "additional" reasons (although they might still be primary). This means one should not be divorced from the reality of the situation, nor should one lose touch with the human element, and should have empathy for those who have lost.

That being said, the Torah position on money is that wealth is a gift from G-d independent of one's effort or economic acumen. One person may be very original, astute and hard working and never amass much wealth, whereas another might not have much of these talents yet be very successful. Regardless, a person must view his financial success (or lack thereof) as coming from G-d. The corollary of this is that the wealth which one has must be used according to the will of the One who bestowed it. For this reason people are

expected to be charitable, provide for the needy and in some cases give up to 20 percent of their net income to charity.

In our modern, materially oriented world, global obsession with wealth and financial success may have blinded mankind to the purpose of wealth, namely to be cognizant of G-d, express our gratitude to Him and to generously share wealth with the less fortunate. Not to proclaim, "By my strength and through the power of my own hands have I acquired all this", but rather "To G-d is the glory, the grandeur, the success, and the splendor". We must view the act of giving as a privilege, an honor and even as a gift itself – "the gift of giving".

It is my (perhaps naïve) opinion that the early founders of America had all this in mind with the decision to inscribe "In G-d We Trust" on the money of the United States. The point is clear: Despite America's wealth of natural resources and the resourcefulness of the early American spirit, it was stated unabashedly with the intention to inculcate to all – it is to G-d whom we pray and in G-d whom we place our trust for financial success. (Ironically, among the multitude of ways that Israel mimics America, this is not one of them.)

Unfortunately, over time, in the United States and internationally, we have lost sight of this humble yet very powerful creed which has greatly been replaced with egotistical consumption, vice and greed. Perhaps the root of the crisis, then, is G-d's repudiation of our trust in money rather than in Him. Perhaps in replacing the motto "In G-d We Trust" with "For Money We Lust", by indulging in unnecessary luxuries while others lack the bare necessities, we have forfeited His blessing such that the money upon which we lean has started to crumble. Maybe we need to feel more acutely the precariousness of the needy, to give more to others and to put our mouths where our money is by sincerely proclaiming: In G-d We Trust!

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Question: As I am walking I sometimes see a very young child preparing to cross a fairly busy street, not a crosswalk. I am aware of the danger but am reluctant to interfere in something that is not my business. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: In its campaign for pedestrian safety the authorities in Israel have come up with this slogan that is posted near schools:

“In the School of Life a child under the age of nine does not cross alone.”

This warning is intended even for the child who wishes to

cross at a crosswalk because he cannot be trusted to do so without harm. In the case you mention the danger is multiplied, for even adults should avoid jaywalking.

It is definitely “your business” to intervene, just as it would be in any situation where you can possibly save a life. You should approach that youngster and tell him that his parents would be very upset if he were to carry out his reckless plan. Then take him by the hand, lead him to the nearest crosswalk, and safely escort him across the street.

Not only will you prevent any possible tragedy but also you will be giving a child a valuable education for life in the school of life.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

When the observant mother living in a very secular neighborhood in Ramat Gan approached the municipality with a request to register her child in an Orthodox nursery she was told that there was not enough of a demand in her neighborhood to justify opening such a nursery. Only if 20 parents registered for such a nursery, she was told, would the city agree to open one.

The next day this woman took her little boy to the local playground frequented by her non-observant neighbors. One of these neighbors watched with amazement as he instructed her little son to make a blessing before eating the

candy she offered him. So impressed was she by the self-discipline of the child that she approached his mother and asked her to explain how she succeeded in training her son in this manner.

Another day, another incident. A second neighbor approached our heroine for an explanation of the *tzitzit* that her son was wearing and was intrigued by the explanation she received. The excitement generated among the mothers by these two incidents led to twenty-two of them registering their children in an Orthodox nursery, even more than the required number.

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