

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYESHEV · 21 KISLEV 5772 · DEC. 17, 2011 · VOL. 19 NO. 9

PARSHA INSIGHTS

MASTER OF WAR

(Yosef said to the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers) "If only you would think of me... and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building." (40:14)

Something very strange happens on the twenty-fifth of the Hebrew month of Kislev. Two completely different festivals are observed.

One festival celebrates a military triumph by a small group of partisans who manage by their own bravery to overcome vastly superior forces and restore Jewish statehood to the Land of Israel. The other commemorates a supernatural victory against powers of darkness that wished to adulterate the Jewish People and their Holy Torah.

The bizarre thing is that both these festivals have the same name.

They are both called Chanuka.

The secular version of the Chanuka story makes Mattityahu and Yehuda Hamaccabee sound like characters out of a war movie. True, there's a seven-branched candelabra somewhere there at the back of the set, but Chanuka is really a nationalistic *shoot-em-up* where the good guys win and the bad guys lose and, well, G-d got written out of the plot at the first script meeting.

The other version of Chanuka focuses on the supernatural events that surround Chanuka. The miracle of the oil lasting eight days; of a small minority who manage to hold on to their Judaism against the blandishments of materialism and hedonism. True, there's a military victory somewhere in there, but it's a miraculous victory against impossible odds, a victory which is no more than the revelation of G-d's providential Hand.

There's a fine line between faith and folly. There's an equally fine line between thinking that the Jewish People win wars because we have the best tanks and planes and the best training.

In 1967, the Six Day War opened with a blistering attack on the Egyptian airfields by the Israeli air force. The Israeli air force managed to knock out some 90% of the Egyptian planes while they were still on the ground. Now, 90% is an

interesting statistic — because it can't happen. Warplanes bombing a tiny ground target under fire can achieve 40%, maybe 50%. But 90% doesn't happen.

After the Six Day War ended, you couldn't buy a pair of *tefillin* in the whole of Israel. There were appeals in the United States for anyone who had a spare pair to send them to Israel. The Jewish People realized that G-d had given them a miraculous victory against five Arab armies on four fronts, and the upswell in the observance of Judaism was remarkable. Equally remarkable — and predictable — was the short-lived nature of this awakening. Nothing much had changed in three thousand years, and just as the Jewish People were capable of cavorting around a golden calf a few weeks after they had witnessed the splitting of the sea and all the miracles in Egypt, so too the Jewish People very soon forgot Who it was Who fights our wars, and were busy bragging about the invincible Israeli army.

So, as it were, to give us a little reminder of Who's really running things, some four years later, the Arabs attack again. This time they manage to make deep inroads into the heartland of the country. But the Arabs make a fatal mistake. They think that they will attack on Yom Kippur when everyone is fasting and weak.

They forget two things. One strategic and the other supernatural. Strategically, the most difficult thing about starting a war without a large standing army is to mobilize. The major problem is to find everyone. However, on Yom Kippur you can find *everyone* because almost everyone is in *shul*. So all you have to do is to take a truck drive from *shul* to *shul* and call out the names at the back. Also, the roads are empty so you can mobilize your army in about half the time it would normally take. Secondly, the Arabs forget to read their history books. If they'd paid closer attention, they'd have realized that, traditionally, the Jewish People always used to fast before going into battle to purify themselves

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to

Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the *Mashiach*. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In jail, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

ISRAEL Forever

PROUD TO BE A JEW

Yosef, who is at the center of this week's Torah portion, merited to be buried in Eretz Yisrael even though he spent most of his life in Egypt. Our Talmudic Sages attribute this to the fact that he never denied his origins while in a foreign land. The repeated reference of Potiphar's wife to him as "the Hebrew" indicated that he had made no effort to hide his Hebrew identity.

We unfortunately live in an age in which so many of our

people wish to forget they are Jews in order to assimilate into gentile society. This tragedy is compounded when Jews who have the privilege of living in Eretz Yisrael cast aside the traditional values of Torah Judaism under the banner of "democracy" and pursue a post-Zionistic course of seeking to assimilate as a nation into the "family of nations".

Only by Jews proudly declaring and expressing their Jewish identity through Torah can we hope to secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

ERETZ TZVI – THE EXPANDING LAND

The comparison of Eretz Yisrael to the skin of a deer which one Talmudic Sage interpreted as a tribute to the land's ability to produce fruits quickly and plentifully was applied by Rabbi Chanina to the expanding nature of its territory.

Challenged by a heathen skeptic how it was possible, as the Sages claimed, that millions of Jews



once lived in a part of Eretz Yisrael called Har Hamelech, he referred him to the Prophet Yirmiyahu's description of the country as "the land of the deer". Just as when the skin of a deer is removed from its carcass it is impossible to once again have it envelop the animal's flesh because of its contraction, so too when Jews live in Eretz Yisrael the land expands to absorb them after contracting when they are not there.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef..." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn't G-d reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar's father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word "hand" mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar "see" that G-d was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream?
19. What prompted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
6. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
7. 37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and G-d, so to speak, abided by their ban.
8. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
9. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
10. 38:24 - Shem.
11. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
12. 38:30 - To allude to his descendent, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
13. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
14. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned G-d's name frequently in his speech.
15. 39:11 - Potiphar's wife.
16. 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread.
17. 40:4 - Twelve months.
18. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
19. 40:6 - Yosef asked them why they looked troubled.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

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- Which physical flaws make it possible to slaughter a *bechor* for non-sacrificial purposes
- The flaws relating to the eyes
- Other flaws in the structure of the face
- Flaws in the tail, genitals and legs
- When lips or cheeks are not symmetrical
- Particular flaws in particular animals
- Other categories of disqualification
- The status of *androgonus* and *tumtum*
- The flaws that disqualify *kohanim*

FLAWLESS COMPARISONS

A *moom* – a physical flaw – disqualifies an animal from serving as a sacrifice and a *kohen* from performing the sacrificial service.

In three different places the Torah spells out the need for flawlessness.

The disqualification of a *bechor* (firstborn male animal) for sacrificial purposes is mentioned in *Devarim* 15:21. For other sacrifices the source is *Vayikra* 22:21-24 and for *kohanim* it is *Vayikra* 21:16-24.

Why was it necessary for the Torah to spell out the concept of disqualification in regard to all three rather than just mention it by one and learn the others from it?

The answer given by the *gemara* is that each of the three categories has a unique feature which would not be comparable to others.

If only the disqualification of *kohanim* was mentioned, we might have assumed that this is because they are obligated in *mitzvot* and must therefore be flawless in order to perform service.

From the disqualification of animals for sacrifice it would have been impossible to extend the concept to *kohanim* because the animal itself serves as the sacrifice.

And finally we could not learn about the disqualification of *kohanim* or even regular sacrifices from the need for flawlessness in the *bechor* because the firstborn is considered sacred upon birth and fit for sacrifice.

• *Bechorot* 43a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“Any chapter in the Torah which is repeated was repeated in order to introduce something new.”

• *The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael - Bechorot* 43a

NEW
FEATURE!

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students

Daniel Keebler

Seattle, Washington

Thomas Edison State College

Currently a student in the Intermediate Beit Midrash

Take one part Buddah, one part Conservadish, a touch of Rabbi Akiva Tatz, a splash of Zionism, and stir it all up with an *Eishet Chayil*, and you start to get a taste of Daniel Keebler. Still, this former Nachal Charedi soldier is far beyond generalization.

He has always found the “*Yad Hashem*” in life, from his



smallest acupuncture needles to his new baby boy’s biggest uh-ohs. When he and his wife first noticed Divine Providence taking them to Eretz Israel, his prayers along with her planning planted the seed of what would soon be a budding Torah scholar. Daniel left behind his quick “podcast Torah” for Ohr Somayach’s make-it-last Torah. He feels that moving to Israel and learning at Ohr—with his wife’s complete encouragement—synced-up his physical and spiritual life. Ohr Somayach has turned him into a “*ruchnius* factory,” and his praise and thanks for the tools that the Yeshiva has given him would make even a Buddah blush.

HEALTHY OUTLOOK

From: Barry

Dear Rabbi,

I have a friend who insists that G-d is the only source of healing. Medicine and doctors have no real role, according to him, in maintaining or restoring health. In fact, he says, rabbis and blessings are more beneficial. Can this possibly be the Jewish position? Clearly only natural causes and cures have to do with health. Who is right?

Dear Barry,

You're both right.

Torah sources are so abundant with the idea that G-d is the source of health and healing, that it hardly needs to be elaborated. One source in the Torah itself is, "If you hearken to the voice of the Lord, your G-d, and you do what is proper in His eyes, and you listen closely to His commandments and observe all His statutes, all the sicknesses that I have visited upon Egypt I will not visit upon you, for I, the Lord, heal you" (Ex. 15:26).

It is clear from here that there are spiritual forces underlying health and healing, and that harmonizing one's life with G-d's Will is a path in well-being. Since this is so, those who devote their lives to doing His will are also positioned to heal, and one of the ways this works is through blessings or prayers on behalf of those who need healing.

However, over-emphasizing either G-d's or the righteous' role in healing is possibly irresponsible in the case of the former, or possibly sacrilegious in the case of the latter. One who neglects his health in the name of relying on G-d is being irresponsible, while relying on rabbis' blessings rather

than recognizing G-d as the Healer is also a mistake.

A certain couple was not able to have children. They went to a great rabbi for a blessing. When the rabbi realized they relied on him more than on G-d, he feigned requiring a great amount of money for his blessing. Dejected, the couple decided they didn't need the rabbi's blessing after all, and that they would cry out to G-d instead. After they gained proper focus, the rabbi then bestowed his blessing gratis. Their prayer and his blessing were answered.

However, just as over-emphasis on spiritual emissaries of health is possibly heretical, certainly over-emphasis on medicine and doctors can also be heretical. The Talmud (Berachot 10b) relates that King Solomon had a special book of remedies that could be used to cure all sickness. When people abused this to rely only on the cures, forgetting G-d's healing power behind them, Hezekiah hid the book, an act that was approved by the Sages. Similarly, the Talmud (Bava Kama 85a) posits that G-d permits the doctor to heal. What this means is that G-d is the source of health and healing, and although he enables humans to act as His agents, we must not substitute them for G-d.

Therefore, the true Jewish position is in the middle of the two extremes you express. One must pray to, and rely on, G-d for good health, while making responsible effort to maintain it. And if one is ill, one must seek medical treatment, while praying that G-d send good agents whom He'll enable to heal. In fact, it's customary before engaging in any form of healing, even when only taking medicine (and all the more so before going to the doctor or undergoing any procedure) that one request of G-d, "May it be Your Will, O L-rd my G-d, and the G-d of my fathers, that this procedure be for me a cure".

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VIRTUAL EVIDENCE

Question: As the manager of an inner-city supermarket I am faced with the usual problem of shoplifting. When we catch someone and call the police to arrest him, the law enforcement officers insist that we give them the stolen item to be used as evidence in court. The probability of ever getting this item back is very low. Must I comply with their request even at the cost of losing the item?

Answer: In Torah law a thief can be convicted on the basis of the incriminating testimony of witnesses without the need for such "evidence". But if you want police cooperation in your community you have no choice but to go along with their requests and it is probably worth sacrificing the item in

order to eliminate the danger of a shoplifter you may not catch another time.

But there may be a solution to your problem. A Brooklyn supermarket owner recently told me a story about a fellow who stood at the checkout counter with blood running down his forehead. An emergency call was made for paramedic help but it was soon discovered that this fellow was hiding a frozen steak he had pilfered and concealed under his hat. When the police came and took away the thief and the steak, the owner decided on a new strategy. He installed a Polaroid camera at the counter to photograph the stolen item and he now offers the picture taken to the police as "virtual evidence" while retaining the real thing.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

NOT JUST ANOTHER KITCHEN

Everyone always knew that Rabbi Nosson Tzvi was special. After all, there aren't many people who could take a yeshiva and build it up to a network of thousands of people who learn Torah. Not to mention the Rosh Yeshiva's severe case of Parkinson's which would have incapacitated anyone lesser than he. Nor does it take an ordinary man to proclaim, truthfully, that although he didn't manage to know every person who learnt in his yeshiva, he "loved every single one".

One man my husband stood next to at the *levaya*, proudly told my husband that he works in the kitchen in the Mir. "The kitchen in the Mir is like an extension of the Beit Midrash," he said, and elaborated with a story.

One Chanuka, a lady in the kitchen of the Mir was inspired to make latkes for the yeshiva. For hours she slaved over the potatoes and the hot oil, and she made a total of three thousand (!) latkes. She excitedly sent it up to the

yeshiva dining room and then left for a break. Rabbi Nosson Tzvi saw the platters of latkes, and also saw that no one was eating them. Apparently, all those three thousand latkes were no good. Something had gone wrong in the recipe. Realizing how painful this would be to the cook, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi quickly called a caterer and ordered three thousand latkes. He paid for them. He discreetly had the bad latkes taken away and replaced with the new ones. It wasn't long before the three thousand were reduced to zero as word got out that they were really good. The fine young men, who were unaware of the drama behind the latkes, went to compliment the lady on the delicious Chanuka treat.

Which is why, the kitchen staffer told my husband, he loves working in the Mir kitchen. Because everyone that Rabbi Nosson Tzvi knew about was worthy of the same respect, time, compassion, and even money, that he was known to provide to his own students.

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The Mityavnim – Then and Now

How Jews turn against Jews

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

When US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made her statement about certain legislation being considered by Israel's Knesset, there was revulsion and shock in Israel that anyone could portray the only democracy in the Middle East as being on the road to becoming another Iran.

Such a scandalous remark by a senior official of Israel's foremost ally is really an echo of the sort of defamation that our people suffered from in the days of Hellenist exile that we recall on Chanuka. The oppression of our religion by Antiochus was aided by the *Mityavnim* – Jews who abandoned their faith in favor of Greek culture and became collaborators in the effort to “cause Jews to forget the Torah and turn away from *mitzvot*.”

Is it indeed surprising to hear Clinton make a comparison to Iran if the Chief Justice of Israel's High Court can warn that the efforts of the Knesset to limit the exaggerated pow-

ers of the judiciary are degenerating Israel into a situation similar to Nazi Germany?

When modern *Mityavnim* who have replaced Judaism with “democracy” and “the rule of law” are capable of so de-legitimizing their own nation, what can we expect from others?

And if anti-religious elements continuously ridicule Torah observance, is it any wonder that an American stateswoman has the nerve to express asinine opinions about how religious Jews in Israel allegedly discriminate against women?

Mityavnim made trouble for our people in days of old and continue to do so today. Their fate in the past was to disappear from the stage of history, and the same fate awaits those who today follow this self-hating, self-destructive path.

Our consolation is that the Chanuka miracle of the triumph of “the weak against the powerful” will soon be repeated in our own time.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

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before G-d. And even in the secular State of Israel, anyone with the remotest connection to his Judaism is davening his heart out in *shul* and the angels are taking his prayers upstairs to the King of Kings. Not a good day to attack really.

Again the same thing happens. A realization of a miraculous miracle followed by a return to “with my own power and the strength of my own hand” way of thinking.

So next time, G-d, as it were, says, “So you think it's your army that's winning these wars? I'll tell you what. Next time, your army will sit on its benches, and I will send the largest and most powerful navy in the world steaming half way around the world, and your army and your navy and your air force will do absolutely zero.”

And that's exactly what happened in the Gulf War. I remember sitting in a taxi at the time, and this totally secular taxi driver was quoting me a verse. I think it was from the prophet Yishayahu. All about how G-d will tell us to go into a sealed room for a little while until the danger passes. “Who is like your people Israel?! One nation in the land!” Even the taxi drivers quote you the Prophets!

I also remember when the day the Gulf War ended. It “just happened” to be Purim. I went into my own sealed room and I ripped the plastic off the window and threw the window open wide to let in the sweet air of freedom wafting in the holy city of Jerusalem.

If I live to a hundred and twenty I don't think I'll ever have a Purim like that one.

And now, that same holy air is filled with the sounds of *jihad*, and not-so-distant guns, and the shrill threats of another

er Haman, and the promise of weapons that should keep us awake at night.

Isn't the message that G-d is sending us clear enough?

“If only you would think of Me... and mention Me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building.”

In this week's Torah portion Yosef asks the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers twice to intercede on his behalf to Pharaoh. By his lack of trust in G-d, by asking the Chamberlain twice, Yosef languished two further years in jail.

Rabbi Chaim of Brisk once asked Rabbi Shimon Shkop how long Yosef would have been kept in prison if he had asked the Chamberlain only one time to help secure his release.

Rabbi Shimon replied that if Yosef had asked only once, he would have spent only one year in prison.

Rabbi Chaim disagreed. “He wouldn't have had to spend any more time in prison at all. To try to secure his release by asking once is considered to be *hishtadlut* — the human effort that G-d expects of each of us. To ask twice showed a lack of trust in G-d. So it would have been two years or nothing.”

The Jewish People are faced yet again with the threat of war. Again there are those who rise, as they do in every generation, wishing to annihilate us. If we must fight we must fight with everything we have. With our bodies. With our minds. But mostly we must fight that little voice inside us that tells us that we ourselves are doing all this. The greatest fight is the fight to remember that whatever we do, there is only one Master of War.