

OHRNET

SPECIAL SUMMER ISSUE · PARSHIOT DEVARIM-VA'ETCHANAN-EKEV-RE'EH-SHOFTIM · 5772/2012 · VOL. 19 NO. 45

EDITOR'S NOTES: This issue of Ohrnet is for a span of five weeks as our "Special Summer Issue". We hope you enjoy all of the features. We also wish our readers a gratifying and fulfilling "Summer Break", a topic we address in the "Ask!" column in this issue of Ohrnet. Also, the exciting Siyum HaShas will take place during this summer period with the completion of this 12th cycle of learning of the entire Talmud. We are pleased to present a new feature in Ohrnet titled "Talmud Tips". These "Tips" are based on the teachings we discover as we begin the 13th Daf Yomi study cycle. May we all merit seeing Tisha B'Av become a Yom Tov and the Beit Hamikdash restored speedily in our days. *Amen.*

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Devarim

A BRIDGE TO OBLIVION

"These are the words..." (1:1)

There once was a man who wanted to become an atheist but he gave it up because there were no holidays. Being an atheist is a full-time job. It requires far more faith than believing in God. And yet atheism is probably more widespread in our era than at any other time in history. Why?

The Talmud (Maccot 24a) says that as a result of the Jewish People's standing at Sinai they received 613 *mitzvot*. When King David saw that there had been a spiritual decline since Sinai, he advised that people should concentrate on eleven specific virtues: to walk in G-d's ways wholeheartedly; to act justly; to speak the truth in one's heart; not to speak *lashon hara* (slander);, not to do evil to one's fellow man; to be lowly in one's own eyes; to honor those who fear G-d; to take an oath to dominate one's evil inclination and to keep that oath; not to take interest; and not to take a bribe.

As time passed, so did the decline. The prophet Micha streamlined the focus from eleven principles down to three areas: to judge truthfully, to do acts of kindness, and to perform the *mitzvot* without ostentation.

Seeing yet a further decline, the prophet Yirmiyahu encouraged the people to focus on just two aspects: to do justice and to give charity.

Finally, the prophet Chavakuk distilled the focus for his generation into one principle: *emunah* – "belief" – "A righteous person will live by his faith." (2:4)

So you might say to me "Okay, Rabbi. I have faith. So now I can drive to the football game on Saturday afternoon – right?" Or "I have faith! I believe! By the way, do you think you could pick me up a Big Mac on the way home?" Doesn't

"just having faith" sound dangerously similar to certain well-known Brand X imitations of Judaism?

The section of the Talmud that we quoted above is not a licence to abridge the Torah into oblivion. It is like a drowning man grasping an overhanging branch in order to be able to climb onto the tree.

King David, Micha, Yirmiyahu and Chavakuk were all trying to connect the Jewish People to our Source by focusing on the *mitzvot* that were the key to that age, the branch of survival for that particular generation. In previous generations the attacks on Judaism took the form of forced conversion or crusade, or inquisition. The existence of G-d was never in doubt. Ours is an age of atheism. Nowadays the battlefield is *emunah*. The battlefield is belief.

It says in Parshat Vayelech, "I will surely have hidden My Face" (31:18). In the Hebrew language, the emphatic "to surely do" something is expressed by the repetition of the verb. In other words, the literal translation of the phrase "I will surely have hidden My Face" is "Hide - I will have hidden My Face." The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this 'hiding'.

There are two kinds of concealment. A concealment where you know that someone is there but you just can't see him, and a concealment where you don't even know if he's there at all. In other words, the very fact of their hiddenness is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding. Where the very hiding is hidden. G-d has told us that as history draws to a close in the days of darkness that precede Mashiach, He will surely hide His Face

"The righteous person will survive by his faith."

It was such a world as ours that the prophet Chavakuk was addressing. We live in a world where even G-d's hiddenness is hidden. Our only hope is to reach out and grasp the branch called *emunah*.

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Devarim

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, “Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told *Bnei Yisrael* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvot*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: From the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe’s guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn’t sinned by sending spies into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results: The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to G-d’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin. He recounts how they wouldn’t listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of *Eretz Yisrael* in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

Va’etchanan

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvot*. G-d refuses. Moshe reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impress-

es on *Bnei Yisrael* that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that G-d spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins *Bnei Yisrael* to “pass over” the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in *Eretz Yisrael* they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to G-d.

Moshe designates three “refuge cities” to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

Ekev

If *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those “minor” *mitzvot* that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer *Eretz Canaan* little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in *Eretz Yisrael* is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was G-d who gave them wealth and success. Nor did G-d drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael*’s righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites; for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against G-d and Moshe. Moshe details the events after G-d spoke the 10 Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his

bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon’s passing is recorded as is the elevation of the *levi’im* to G-d’s ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping *mitzvot* and the curse that results from non-observance.

Re’eh

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually-oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from G-d. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. G-d will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be slaughtered anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — G-d will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl

- The bleeding after consummation of marriage
- The Sage Shmuel's praise of the Sage Rav
- Purifying contaminated wine or olive oil machinery
- Woman who always sees blood after marital relations
- How strict Jewish women are in regard to *nidah*
- The problem of a barrier between the body of the woman and the water of the mikvah
- Preparing for immersion in mikvah
- *Zav* or *Zavah* who were negligent in checking themselves during all of their clean days
- The twelve questions asked of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya by the Jews of Alexandria
- How does one become wise or wealthy
- Who deserves to be called a "citizen of the World to Come"

GET SMART

“What should a man do to become wise in Torah?” asked the Jews of Alexandria of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya.

“Let him spend much time studying and little time in business,” was the Sage’s reply.

“But many have done so,” they persisted, “and have not

succeeded.”

“Then let him pray to the One to Whom wisdom belongs.”

Why, asks the Talmud, did he first mention the need for much study if, in the end, everything depends on prayer?

Rabbi Yehoshua taught the people of Alexandria that success in acquiring wisdom can only be achieved through a combination of study and prayer, and that one without the other is insufficient.

Maharsha points out that the wisdom referred to here is not the knowledge of Torah but the intelligence of the one studying Torah. The intelligence level of a person, say our Sages (*Nidah* 16b), is predetermined. At the moment of conception an angel brings the seminal drop before G-d and asks whether a wise man or a fool will be formed from it. Is man forever limited to this degree of predestined intelligence, asked the Alexandrians, or is he capable of breaking the barriers of this Heavenly decree?

Rabbi Yehoshua’s response was that man can break the intelligence barrier by a combination of hard work and the Heavenly help gained through prayer and merit of Torah study. One without the other will leave him with the level of intelligence decreed at conception. Together, however, they can make him a more intelligent person.

• *Nidah* 70b

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“One who wishes to become wise in Torah should spend much time studying, little time in business and pray to the One to Whom wisdom belongs.”

• *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya - Nidah* 70b

PARSHA OVERVIEW

at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

Shoftim

Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near G-d's altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have pos-

sessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *sifrei Torah*, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty. Neither the *kohanim* nor the *levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel, rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. G-d promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary

markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in G-d. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

Advice for life from the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

Berachot 2-8

“TEACH YOUR TONGUE TO SAY ‘I DON’T KNOW’ LEST YOU BE EXPOSED AS A LIAR.”

The source for this advice is the manner in which Moshe warned Pharaoh that the plague of the Egyptian firstborn would take place at midnight. He used the term “around midnight” although he knew that G-d would perform this miracle exactly at midnight. The reason for his caution was a fear that Pharaoh’s astrologers would be mistaken in their calculations of midnight and claim that Moshe was a liar.

• *Berachot 4a*

Berachot 9-15

“EVEN IF A SHARP SWORD IS PLACED UPON A MAN’S NECK HE SHOULD NOT DESPAIR FROM PRAYING TO G-D.”

Thus advised Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar based on a passage in the Book of “Iyov (13:15). “Even if He is about to slay me I shall pray to Him.” This same idea was expressed by the mortally ill King Chizkiyahu when he was informed by the prophet Yishayahu that there was a Heavenly decree he was to die because he had never fulfilled the mitzvah of marrying and having children.

The king’s response was that he had a tradition from his ancestor King David that even if a sharp sword was placed on one’s neck he should not despair from prayer.

He then prayed intensely and miraculously recovered.

• *Berachot 10a*

Berachot 16-22

If in the midst of praying the *tefillah* of *shmoneh esrei* you suddenly remember that you have already said this prayer earlier in the day, you must stop, even if it is in the middle of a paragraph. There is a situation, however, in which you must complete the paragraph. If you are saying the *shmoneh esrei* in one of the *tefillot* of Shabbat and mistakenly begin saying instead the weekday prayer, you must complete the paragraph before returning to the Shabbat text.

The reason for this is that you are obligated to pray on Shabbat and have only been exempted from the comparatively long weekday text out to deference to the honor of the holy day. The paragraph you complete is therefore appropriate. In the first case, however, there is no point in completing the paragraph since you have already said it on an earlier occasion.

• *Berachot 21a*

Berachot 23-29

**“A MAN SHOULD ENJOY THE USE OF A PRECIOUS CRYSTAL GOBLET
EVEN IF IT WILL BREAK AFTER A DAY’S USE.”**

This folk saying about the benefit of even short-lived experiences was quoted by Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah to his wife during their discussion on whether he should accept an offer to become the head of the Sanhedrin. When she warned him of the danger that he might quickly be deposed, as was his predecessor, he responded that the exalted experience of even a day was worthwhile.

• *Berachot 28a*

HOLDING ONTO THE DAF

A story was told by Rabban Gamliel (*Yevamot* 121a) about the miraculous rescue from drowning of Rabbi Akiva. Surprised to see this Sage learning Torah after the ship he had traveled on had sunk, this head of the Sanhedrin asked him how he had survived.

“A *daf* (a plank) from a ship came my way, I held onto it and bowed my head before every dangerous wave that threatened to drown me.”

When Rabbi Meir Shapiro, the rav of Lublin and founder of the great Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin, introduced the idea

of the Daf Yomi almost a century ago, he referred to Rabbi Akiva’s story, pointing out that in the turbulent sea of exile the Jewish People had survived because they held onto the *daf*, the sacred and beloved page of Talmud.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews throughout the world will these days be publicly celebrating the *Siyum Hashas* completion of the twelfth cycle of Daf Yomi. Not every one of them managed to complete the entire Talmud, but all of them will be expressing their conviction that “holding onto the *Daf*” is what unites and secures Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING

“How should we pray for Heavenly help in solving this problem?” The problem at hand was understanding some extremely difficult point made by one of the classic commentaries in the Talmud.

The one faced by this challenge was Rabbi Meir Simcha Hakohen, the rav of the Latvian community of Dvinsk and author of the Ohr Somayach commentary on the *Mishneh Torah* of Rambam, for whom Yeshivat Ohr Somayach is named. He and a study partner had decided to pray for Divine assistance in solving their problem and he now asked his *chavruta* how he intended to pray.

“I will ask G-d to open my eyes to the wisdom of Torah,” came the reply.

“And I,” countered Rabbi Meir Simcha, “will pray for a

greater love of Torah!”

To his *chavruta*’s query as to how greater love of Torah would help solve their problem, Rabbi Meir offered this explanation:

“It is a common occurrence for a baby to cry for no obvious reason, and all attempts to stop the crying prove unsuccessful. Neither pacifiers nor sweets nor cuddling calm the child. Then the mother walks into the room, takes the baby in her arms and silence prevails. What is the secret? The mother, who has the greatest love for the baby, also has the greatest capacity for understanding his needs. The same applies to us. The more we love the Torah the better we shall be able to understand it.”

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE LAND WORTH RUSHING FOR

As he was about to realize his lifelong dream of making *aliya* from Babylon to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Sage Rabbi Zeira did not wait for the ferry to take him across the river that separated him from the land of his dreams. Instead he made his perilous way across a primitive bridge consisting of a log and an overhead rope.



When he was chided by a heathen onlooker for demonstrating the same sort of impatience that his ancestors showed by accepting the Torah sight unseen, Rabbi Zeira thus explained his haste:

“A place which Moshe and Aaron did not merit to enter, who knows whether I will have the merit to do so if I wait any longer!”

THE PERIMETERS OF PRIVACY

Question: I am well aware that everyone is entitled to his privacy and that it is therefore improper to look into another's private quarters. But does this respect for privacy also extend to other areas that I am not aware of?

Answer: In his very popular book *Tuvcha Yabiyu* (Volume Two) Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, the rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak, suggests a number of areas in which one should be careful to avoid invading another's privacy:

Looking at someone's Identity Card (or passport) to discover his age.

Looking at his Sick Fund Booklet (or other health document) to discover the illnesses he suffers from.

Removing from the Western Wall a prayer note one has

placed in it.

(The author of this column and others in Ohrnet often rely on Rabbi Zilberstein's rulings and stories contained in his *Tuvcha Yabiyu* and *Aleinu Shebayach* volumes. I recently spoke at a public forum in Jerusalem immediately after Rabbi Zilberstein and planned to use in my talk a wonderful story I had read in one of his books. I suspected, however, that he might have used it himself, so I carefully introduced the story as something I had read in the previous speaker's book. The whispers that followed my opening words of the story confirmed my apprehension. Although I lost an opportunity to use a story that I have shared with many audiences, I was pleased to see that my choice of stories coincided with that of this great man.)

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Devarim

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "Apikorsim" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did G-d instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refa'im?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Devarim's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 – Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 – So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 – They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

PARSHA Q&A?

Va'etchanan

1. "And I prayed to G-d at that time." Why "at that time"?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by G-d's "strong hand"?
3. What is ha'levanon?
4. What did G-d tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the mitzvot properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word v'noshantem?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
9. "You'll serve man-made gods." Is this literal?
10. Why is east called mizrach?
11. "Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you." When had G-d previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
13. What is meant by "G-d, our G-d, G-d is One"?
14. What are two meanings of loving G-d "with all your might"?
15. How well-versed must one be in Torah?
16. Where does the word totafot come from?
17. Who is fit to swear in G-d's name?
18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
19. When someone serves G-d with love, how many generations receive reward?
20. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Va'etchanan's Questions!

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

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of Eretz Canaan, Moshe thought perhaps G-d had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - Ha'levanon means the Beit Hamikdash, which makes "white" (lavan), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The gematria of v'noshantem, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines (mizrach means shining).
11. 5:13 - Before Matan Torah, at Marah. (Shmot 15:25)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (Shmot 15:25).
13. 6:4 - G-d, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether G-d treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - Tot means two in Caspi. Fot means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves G-d and reveres His name.
18. 7:7 - B'nei Yisrael are the humblest nation.
19. 7:9 - 2,000.
20. 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

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Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

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PARSHA Q&A?

Ekev

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that G-d will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a. wonders b. strong hand c. outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by G-d?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving G-d with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to G-d"?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ekev's Questions!

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

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 - The: a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 - Since they served in the Temple, they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Re'eh

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from G-d?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that G-d commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of G-d and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “to Him (G-d) you shall cleave.” How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the “source” of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under G-d’s “special protection”?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Re'eh's Questions!

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

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to G-d's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it; his descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate G-d's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

Shoftim

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
 2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
 3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
 4. What is the source for the concept “seek out a good *beit din*”?
 5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
 6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
 7. What does G-d promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry many wives?
 8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
 9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
 10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of “*chazeh, shok and keiva*.” Which ones?
11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
 12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
 13. What does it mean to “prepare the way” to the cities of refuge?
 14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
 15. “Through the mouth of two witnesses....” What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
 16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
 17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
 18. The Jewish army is warned of four “scare-tactics” the enemy might employ. What are they?
 19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
 20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

Answers to Shoftim’s Questions!

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

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
 2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
 3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
 4. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof...*”
 5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
 6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
 7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
 8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
 9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
 10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
 12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
 13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
 14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
 15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don’t understand.
 16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
 17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
 18. 20:3 - a. Clanging their shields b. Making their horses stomp and whinny c. Shouting d. Blowing horns.
 19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
 20. 21:9 - He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

SUMMER BREAK

From: Jacob

Dear Rabbi,

Summer vacation is here. In our family, the girls have been on break from school for a while. The boys will be going on break soon. Everyone's on break but my wife and I - and we feel we're about to break. We certainly love our kids, and always (theoretically) look forward to the summer vacation in order to be able to spend more time with them. But when the time comes, we don't really know what to do to keep them busy. Do you have any advice on how to get more out of the "vacation"?

Dear Jacob,

Don't sweat over it too much. All parents are challenged with "entertaining" their kids over summer break. Here are a few tips:

All people, including kids, need structure. A common mistake parents make is to think that since the kids have such a rigid schedule throughout the year, the vacation is a time to give them a break. While this is true to a limited extent, kids still absolutely need a basic framework of commitments and obligations. Otherwise, they get pampered, spoiled and agitated.

For this reason, while they might go to sleep later than usual, and get up later, you must impose a bed-time and wake-time which will enable them to maintain some semblance of a normal day. They also must say their normal daily prayers as when in school, clean up their rooms, help with household chores, and have normal meals at normal hours. Too often parents let their kids sleep-in in order to get a few more hours of quiet, but this starts a cycle of laziness and inactivity that ultimately leads to a lack of fulfillment and anxiety.

One good way of encouraging this type of schedule is to make and hang a large chart with the various objectives and give daily and/or weekly prizes for X number of checks

attained per child. You can even employ healthy competition, or encourage group effort to attain the objectives. And you can also promise a grand-prize for any child who adheres consistently to the schedule by the end of the summer.

The above is regarding providing structure and responsibilities. But you should also provide your children with entertainment and activities. It is definitely worth investing in new games and books that will keep the kids occupied. But rather than stocking up for the whole summer at once, buy a little each week, and bring the kids along for the excursion.

Similarly, encourage them to develop hobbies or interests that they can cultivate and develop over the break. This can include sports, arts and music, or crafts of different sorts. In some cases, specialized summer camps cater to these interests. In fact, sometimes, older children might even be encouraged to make a type of camp for local children, and this not only helps the parents and keeps the kids busy, it gives the older children the opportunity to be independent, responsible and creative and teaches them to work with others. It also enables them to earn some spending money.

A last suggestion is to plan family events and outings over the break. Don't rely on spontaneous decisions that are made hastily and usually result from pressure and tension. Rather plan ahead and make and post an events calendar. This gives the kids something to look forward to, and also gives you certain leverage over bad behavior. Even simple, inexpensive excursions like a BBQ in the park, swimming or an overnight campout can do wonders. Educational trips to museums or other cultural events can also be included.

It's certainly not an easy time, but with forethought you can make the break a very nice time for you, your wife and your children. Think both like a parent and an activities director. Impose structure and demand cooperation, but offer incentives and rewards while showing the kids that there's lots of fun in store for them – if they'll be on board.

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Va'etchanan

FOREVER

"Ascend to the top of the cliff, and raise your eyes westward, northward, and see with your eyes, for you shall not cross this Jordan." (3:27)

Picture the feelings of longing that Moshe must have had as he stood on top of the cliff, gazing out over the land that he had given so much to enter.

There it was stretched out in front of him like a map. The Land of Israel. So close and yet so far. G-d knew how much Moshe wanted to go into *Eretz Yisrael*, so why did He 'tantalize' Moshe by telling him to go up and gaze at this land that he knew he was never going to enter?

Furthermore, our Sages tell us that by prophetic insight G-d showed Moshe every single square inch of *Eretz Yisrael* — which only must have increased his longing!

What was G-d's purpose?

Each of the *Avot*, the Patriarchs, are associated with a specific quality: Avraham with *Chesed*, Kindness; Yitchak with *Gevurah*, Self-control; etc. The quality that is associated with Moshe is *Netzach* - Eternity.

Everything that Moshe did was forever.

If Moshe had gone into the Land of Israel with the Jewish People, then their entry would have been an 'eternal entry'. Everything that Moshe did had the touch of eternity. After such an entry, the Jewish People could never again leave the Land. G-d knew that the Jewish People would *have* to go into exile, for they would not be able to maintain the high spiritual standards that the Land requires. If they could not leave, and they could not stay, they would be caught, as it were, in a spiritual vise and they would be in the very real danger of annihilation.

Thus, Moshe *could* not enter the Land of Israel.

However, G-d made Moshe's non-entry into the Land serve a positive purpose. G-d wanted to sear the memory of the Land of Israel into the collective psyche of the Jewish People. By showing Moshe every blade of grass, by taking him and showing him every corner of the land he was never to enter, G-d planted in Moshe's heart a longing for the Land of Israel *which would be eternal*.

Look at our daily prayers. Look at the blessings after eating a meal. Our petitions to G-d are saturated with the name of the Land which we long to return to as a Holy People.

Throughout the long, long night of exile, the Jewish People have never lost that same longing for *Eretz Yisrael* that Moshe felt when he stood on the top of the cliff and gazed into the Land he would never enter.

Ekev

FIRE

"The carved images of their gods you shall burn in the fire... for it is an abomination of the L-rd, your G-d." (7:25)

Our Sages teach us that extreme anger is like worshipping idols. What is the connection? Imagine you're a courtier in the palace of the king. While walking past you, one of the other courtiers treads on your toe. Rather than apologize, he turns around and sticks his tongue out at you.

Do you curse and shout at him? I doubt it. Not, that is, unless you are unconcerned about your head staying in nodding contact with the rest of your body. Your awe of the king, not to mention the fear of his punishment, make it easy for you to swallow your pride and smile a wan and insincere smile at your fellow courtier.

When a person becomes angry it's as though he's saying that he's not in the courtroom of the king. Or worse — there is no courtroom, no king.

Everything in this physical world has a spiritual cause. Anger is always compared to fire. Anger 'consumes' like a fire the person who feels the anger. Anger turns the face flame-red. Anger 'burns you up'.

Sometimes, we even may get a glimpse of the connection of the spiritual to the physical.

The Hayman fire, the largest fire in the history of Colorado, consumed tens of thousands of beautiful forest-land. The fire was caused by a 38-year old Forest Service technician who took a letter from her estranged husband and burned it in anger. Apparently, she thought that she had extinguished the fire and left, only to find later that it was spreading out of control.

When we ignite the flames of wrath, it's very difficult to put them out. If one act of anger can burn half a state, one shudders to think what happens in the spiritual forest-lands above when a Jew's anger flames.

Re'eh

GURU SHMURU

"For there will arise in your midst a prophet..." (13:2)

In this week's *parsha* there is an uncanny warning about a situation that we ourselves are witnessing today. We live in an era where many Jews are a prey to the missionaries of other religions.

The Torah warns us about three ways that a person can

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be enticed away from Judaism:

He can be blinded by the charisma of a star, a celebrity, or a 'guru' who seems far-sighted. Through sheer force of personality, such a person can lure Jews away from Judaism. The Torah warns us about this form of enticement when it says, "Do not listen to the words of that prophet" (13:4).

Sometimes a sibling can turn a person away from Judaism: "Judaism has nothing to offer. Look, I'm your brother. Listen to me. Why don't you come for a weekend retreat with the 'Master'. I promise you it will be okay. Who needs telephones anyway?" Against this form of attack the Torah tells us "If your brother, ...or your son or your daughter or (your) wife ...or your friend who is like your own soul should entice you secretly saying 'Let us go and worship the gods of others ...from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth' ...do not accede to him and to not listen to him..." (13:7).

The third attack is the onslaught of peer pressure - not wanting to be out of step in the march of the masses. Fashions in ideas are as transitory as fashions in clothes. The dedicated follower of fashion is a prey to every new 'ism' that comes along. He's at the mercy of the mob mentality. Corresponding to this form of brainwashing the Torah says, "Lawless men have emerged from your midst, and they have caused the dwellers of their city to go astray, saying 'Let us go and worship the gods of others..' " 13:15).

Shoftim

NO STONE UNTURNED

"Do not erect for yourself an altar of only one stone."

'Organized religion' is one of those phrases which is guaranteed to bring distaste to the Western liberal sensitivity.

Being part of a group smacks of regimentation. We who were educated in the 'liberal enlightened' tradition were taught to cherish the moment alone with one's Creator, in a

field, on top of a hill, under the stars. And, to be sure, the individual communicating with his Creator not only finds a place in Judaism but is Judaism's bequest to the world.

But there is another side to Divine worship. One that is much maligned and misunderstood: that of the *klal* (the entire group) and its Maker.

There are two kinds of altars. An altar made from a single block of stone and an altar made from many stones. There are two kinds of Divine service. That of the individual and that of the *klal*. The single block represents the service of the individual; that of many stones represents the service of the complete group.

In this week's portion of the week we learn that the Torah forbids an altar consisting of only one stone. (Even though in the times of the Avot the Fathers of the Jewish People) the single stone altar was beloved, subsequently however, it became the preferred method of idolatry and thus was no longer fitting for the service of G-d.

The prophet Eliyahu erected an altar of twelve stones. Twelve is the number of the Tribes of Israel. The Altar of twelve stones symbolizes the unity of the Jewish People in the service of G-d; the *klal* becoming like one person. The stones are separate but they join together and become the instrument through which Man can serve his Creator. The individual's desire attains its appropriate expression when channeled through this mystical 'one person' who is the Jewish People.

Thus it was that the Forefathers were able to build altars of only one stone. For they were the entire Jewish People in embryo. But once the Jewish People are 'born' at Sinai, the service of the individual finds its proper fulfillment in making up the 'one person' who is Israel.

The spiritual light that we receive in this world is radiated as a totality to all parts of Creation. There is no place which is devoid of His radiance. Thus, when we approach our Creator, it must be as a totality, joined like the stones of the altar. For with even one stone missing, there is no altar.

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