

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY BABY

“...he (Avram) armed his disciples who were born in his house...” (14-14)

However many the grey hairs that appear on the heads of our offspring, or however many the lines that appear on their faces, they will never cease to be our “babies.”

Obviously the relationship of a parent to a child traverses many phases. You can't compare diapering your son to discussing with him a moot point in Jewish law, but there is always an unchanging fixed point in that relationship.

And maybe that fact should teach something: Bringing up children doesn't end at their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. It doesn't end when they get engaged or married. It's a lifetime duty to be there for them. And as they grow and mature, so do their needs become more sophisticated.

“...he (Avram) armed his disciples who were born in his house...”

Rashi comments that “his disciples” refers to Eliezer, whom Avraham *initiated* into the performance of *mitzvot*. The concept of *chinuch* (often translated as “education”) implies the initiation of a person or, for that matter, a tool or implement, into the service that it will eventually continue to fulfill as – says Rashi - “in the case of the *chinuch* of children.”

If a father teaches his son Torah in his younger years, but doesn't give sufficient care to his son's continuing development as a Torah Jew, that cannot really be called *chinuch*.

It's clear from Rashi that we can only say that we have truly ‘educated’ our children if they continue to fulfill the instruction they received in their early years.

• Source: based on Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin in *Mayana Shel Torah*

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

BAVA METZIA 44 - 50

“He (G-d) Who punished the Generation of the Flood, the Generation of the Tower of Babel Dispersion, the people of S’dom and Amorah and the Egyptians in the Sea — He will also in the future punish a person who does not keep his word.”

This teaching in the *mishna* on our *daf* is discussed in greater detail in the *gemara* that follows (47b), regarding whether according to Torah law a buyer acquires the item when he gives money for it, or if the buyer must take physical possession of the item (“*meshicha*”) of the item.

If a transaction was agreed upon verbally, and money changed hands for the purchase, but no act of the buyer taking physical possession occurred, the sale is not concluded according to halacha, and either party may back out of the transaction. However, there are consequences and repercussions for the one who backs out and does not keep his word, as taught by the strong curse in the *mishna*.

Why is the person who fails to keep his word punished by G-d in this manner, with a curse that mentions these specific historical Heavenly punishments? The Maharsha explains that “faithlessness” was the common denominator of all the wicked people mentioned in the *mishna*, whereas “faithfulness” is considered an inherent, basic Jewish trait.

I once heard from a great rabbi in Jerusalem that punishments mentioned in the *mishna* are not only of an epic nature, but also miraculous in nature. Likewise, a person who does not keep his word is guilty of failing to recognize the extraordinary power of human speech that G-d breathed into Mankind, a power that can even bring miraculous and supernatural positive results when used in the correct manner.

• Bava Metzia 44a

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Ten generations have passed since Noach. Man has descended spiritually. In the year 1948 from Creation, Avram is born. By observing the world, Avram comes to the inescapable Truth of G-d’s existence, and thus merits that G-d appear to him. At the beginning of this week’s *Parsha*, G-d tells Avram to leave his land, his relatives and his father’s house and travel to an unknown land where G-d will make him into a great nation. Avram leaves, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, their servants and those whom they converted to faith in G-d. When they reach the land of Canaan, G-d appears to Avram and tells him that this is the land that He will give to his descendants. A famine ensues and Avram is forced to relocate to Egypt to find food. Realizing that his wife’s beauty could cause his death at the hand of the Egyptians, Avram asks her to say that she is his sister. Sarai is taken to Pharaoh, but G-d afflicts Pharaoh and his court with severe plagues, and she is released unmolested. Avram returns to *Eretz Yisrael* (Canaan) with much wealth given to him by the Egyptians. During a quarrel over grazing rights between their shepherds, Avram decides to part ways with his nephew Lot. Lot chooses to live in the rich but corrupt city of Sodom in the

fertile plain of the Jordan. A war breaks out between the kings of the region, and Sodom is defeated. Lot is taken captive. Together with a handful of his converts, Avram rescues Lot, miraculously overpowering vastly superior forces, but Avram demurs from accepting any of the spoils of the battle. In a prophetic covenant, G-d reveals to Avram that his offspring will be exiled to a strange land where they will be oppressed for 400 years, after which they will emerge with great wealth and return to *Eretz Yisrael*, their irrevocable inheritance. Sarai is barren and gives Hagar, her Egyptian hand-maiden, to Avram in the hope that she will provide them with a child. Hagar becomes arrogant when she discovers that she is pregnant. Sarai deals harshly with her and Hagar flees. On the instruction of an angel, Hagar returns to Avram and gives birth to Yishmael. The *Parsha* concludes with G-d commanding Avram to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a covenant between G-d and His seed. G-d changes Avram’s name to Avraham, and Sarai’s name to Sarah. G-d promises Avraham a son, Yitzchak, despite Avraham’s being ninety-nine years old and Sarah ninety. On that day, Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael and all his household.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What benefits did G-d promise Avraham if he would leave his home?
2. "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." What does this mean?
3. Who were the souls that Avraham and Sarah "made"?
4. What were the Canaanites doing in the Land of Canaan when Avraham arrived?
5. Why did Avraham build an altar at Ai?
6. What two results did Avraham hope to achieve by saying that Sarah was his sister?
7. Why did Avraham's shepherds rebuke Lot's shepherds?
8. Who was Amrafel and why was he called that?
9. Verse 14:7 states that the four kings "smote all the country of the Amalekites". How is this possible, since Amalek had not yet been born?
10. Why did the "palit" tell Avraham of Lot's capture?
11. Who accompanied Avraham in battle against the four kings?
12. Why couldn't Avraham chase the four kings past Dan?
13. Why did Avraham give "ma'aser" specifically to Malki-Tzedek?
14. Why didn't Avraham accept any money from Sodom's king?
15. When did the decree of 400 years of exile begin?
16. What did G-d indicate with His promise that Avraham would "come to his ancestors in peace"?
17. How did G-d fulfill His promise that Avraham would be buried in "a good old age"?
18. Why did the Jewish People need to wait until the fourth generation until they returned to Eretz Canaan?
19. Who was Hagar's father?
20. Why did Avraham fall on his face when G-d appeared to him?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 12:1 - He would become a great nation, his excellence would become known to the world, and he would be blessed with wealth.
2. 12:3 - A person will say to his child, "You should be like Avraham."
3. 12:5 - People they converted to the worship of G-d.
4. 12:6 - They were in the process of conquering the land from the descendants of Shem.
5. 12:8 - He foresaw the Jewish People's defeat there in the days of Yehoshua due to Achan's sin. He built an altar to pray for them.
6. 12:13 - That the Egyptians would not kill him, and would give him presents.
7. 13:7 - Lot's shepherds grazed their flocks in privately owned fields.
8. 14:1 - Amrafel was Nimrod. He said (*amar*) to Avraham to fall (*fel*) into the fiery furnace.
9. 14:7 - The Torah uses the name that the place would bear in the future.
10. 14:13 - He wanted Avraham to die trying to save Lot so that he himself could marry Sarah.
11. 14:14 - His servant, Eliezer.
12. 14:14 - He saw prophetically that his descendants would make a golden calf there, and as a result his strength failed.
13. 14:20 - Because Malki-Tzedek was a *kohen*.
14. 14:23 - G-d had promised Avraham wealth, and Avraham didn't want Sodom's king to say, "I made Avraham wealthy."
15. 15:13 - With the birth of Yitzchak.
16. 15:15 - That his father, Terach, would repent and become righteous.
17. 15:15 - Avraham lived to see his son Yishmael repent and become righteous, and he died before his grandson Esav became wicked.
18. 15:16 - They needed to wait until the Amorites had sinned sufficiently to deserve expulsion.
19. 16:1 - Pharaoh.
20. 17:3 - Because he was as yet uncircumcised.

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Lech Lecha

Abarbanel offers three reasons why Avram had to leave Haran. First of all, the region was full of heretics who did not recognize G-d's existence. Secondly, these idolaters — who were his friends, neighbors and relatives — were opposed to his “proselytizing”. They saw what had happened to him in Ur Kasdim, where he was miraculously saved from a fiery furnace, and forbade him from continuing his teaching. Thirdly, Avram was reluctant to correct the behavior of his father and brother who were manufacturers of idols. G-d does not tell him explicitly where to go, in order to prevent his family from following him.

Realizing that such a drastic move would be difficult for Avram, G-d assures him that he will make him “a great nation”, meaning that he will have offspring who will be dearer to him than his father and brother, upon whom he had always relied. Secondly, to replace the friends and associates who had helped him to prosper, G-d assures him that “I will bless you and make your name great.” G-d is the ultimate source of all prosperity. G-d also assures him that “I will bless *those* who bless you, and *he* who curses you I will

curse”. “Those who bless you” is in the plural, indicating that they will be far more numerous than those who curse. Finally, not only will Avram benefit from the new Land, but those who accept his teachings will benefit as well — “and all the families of the Land will be blessed through you.”

How then does Avram know where to go? Abarbanel offers five reasons:

Avram knew that Canaan had been the ultimate destination of the family when they had left Ur Kasdim.

Avram knew that the very air of Canaan imparted wisdom.

Avram knew that Canaan was in the portion bequeathed to Shem, the most righteous of Noach's sons and that part of it was ruled by Malchizedik, a man committed to monotheism.

Avram knew that Canaan was under G-d's direct Divine Providence.

Given that there was a tradition that Adam was buried there, it makes sense that Avram would be drawn to that area.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE ORIGINAL ALIYA

Although historians refer to the arrival of Jews in Eretz Israel a century ago as the “First Aliya”, the truly original *aliya* took place almost four millennia ago. This was when the Patriarch Avraham was commanded by G-d: “Go out from your country, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the Land that I will show you.” (Gen. 12:1)

As we hear these words read in the synagogue this



Shabbat we should take note of the fact that Avraham was not told where this “Promised Land” was, and yet he headed in the direction of the Land of Canaan which was to eventually become Eretz Israel.

In his commentary on the Torah, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) suggests that Avraham instinctively knew that the Land of Canaan was the G-dly place which would be given to him for his spiritual perfection.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

MIRIAM IN EGYPT

From: Maria

*Dear Rabbi,
Thank you for answering my question about who Miriam was and the meaning of her name. I found your answer to be fascinating, and if you don't mind I'd like to know more. Could you please tell me about her life and her role in the Torah?*

Dear Maria,

In a previous article called "Miriam's Name" we saw that Miriam was the eldest sibling of Aaron and Moses, and that she too was a prophet. The early events of her life revolve around these points. But since her story is so fascinating, I'll have to focus on the early period of her life in this installment, while concluding with the events of her later life in the Wilderness in the next installment.

The Torah relates (Ex. 1:15-17), "Now the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah. And he said, 'When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see on the birth stool, if it is a son you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live'. The midwives, however, feared G-d; so they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they enabled the boys to live."

The Talmudic Sages taught (Sotah 11a) that these midwives, Shifra and Puah, were actually Yocheved and her daughter Miriam, respectively. Miriam was only five years old at the time, but she accompanied her mother to help deliver and save the Hebrew infants (Ex. Rabbah 1:13). Thus the Sages note that her zealous character was apparent at a very early age. It was in this merit that G-d "made houses for them" (Ex. 1:21), establishing the Priestly dynasty from Yocheved, and the Davidic dynasty from Miriam (Ex. Rabbah 1:17).

The Midrash (Ex. Rabbah 1:13) explains that the Torah refers to Miriam in her role as midwife by the name "Puah" based on the meaning of various permutations of that word: She made bubbles (*nofa'at*) with wine with her mouth to amuse the infant, she revived (*mefiah*) the infant and she lifted (*hofiah*) Israel's hope up to G-d. In alternate explanations based on "lifted" (*hofiah*), she was called Puah because she raised her face in rebellion against Pharaoh's decree, and even raised objection to her father's well-intentioned, but mistaken, separation of Jewish marriages (see more below). As discussed in "Miriam's Name", these two latter explanations are related to the inference of "rebellion" (*meri*) in the name Miriam. The Talmud (Sotah 11a) adds two more reasons why she was called Puah, based on the word "*poah*" meaning "to speak", because she would coo the infant with comforting sounds (Rashi), and because she prophesied that her mother would give birth to the savior of Israel.

After describing Pharaoh's decree and the midwives' refusal to obey it, the Torah relates (Ex. 2:1), "A man of the house of

Levi went and married a daughter of Levi." The Sages (Sotah 12a; Ex. Rabbah 1:13) taught that this refers to Amram re-marrying Yocheved, and that the otherwise superfluous word "went" refers to the fact that in doing so, Amram went according to the advice of his daughter Miriam. The details of the story are as follows.

Because of the decree to throw all male children into the Nile, Amram, who was the leader of the generation, decided it was futile to have more children, and so he divorced his wife; with the other men following his example. Miriam criticized her father, saying, "Your decree is harsher than Pharaoh's: His is only against boys, yours is also against girls; his is only in this world, yours applies also to the next; his might not be executed, yours offers no chance". Amram accepted her rebuke and remarried his wife; the other men following suit. When Amram remarried Yocheved he seated her on a bridal throne, while Miriam and Aaron danced before her as the ministering angels portended the birth of Moses by singing, "The mother of children shall rejoice" (Ps. 113:9).

Miriam's wise counsel as a child not only caused all of Israel to remarry and defy the decree by having children. According to our sources (Sotah 12b, 13a; Ex. Rabbah 1:22), even at that young age she was also a prophet. After Miriam convinced Amram to re-marry Yocheved she prophesied, "My mother is destined to give birth to a son who will save Israel". Thus, the Torah states about Yocheved (Ex. 2:2), "The woman conceived and bore a son". When Moshe was born, the house became full of light and Amram kissed Miriam on her forehead and said, "My daughter your prophecy has been fulfilled" (Sotah 13a; Ex. Rabbah 1:22).

Moshe was born prematurely, such that Yocheved was able to hide him from the Egyptians who kept record of when each woman was due in order to seize her child (Ex. Rabbah 1:20). Thus the Torah states, "When she saw that he was well, she hid him for three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took a reed basket...placed the child into it, and put it into the marsh at the Nile's edge" (Ex. 2:2-3). Her parents then exclaimed, "Miriam, what will become of your prophecy!" For this reason the verse states (2:4), "His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him" (Sotah 13a; Ex. Rabbah 1:22). Thus, when she saw the daughter of Pharaoh remove Moses from the water, it was Miriam who saved his life: "His sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call for you a wet-nurse from the Hebrew women so that she will nurse the child for you?' Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Go!' So the girl went and called the child's mother" (2:7-8).

Since Moses was born on the 7th day of the Hebrew month of Adar, this event, which took place three months after his birth, was on the 6th day of Sivan, the date in the future on which G-d would give the Torah to Moses at Sinai. This means that Miriam saved the life of Moses, who was destined to receive the Torah, on the very day that G-d appointed to give it!

LIKE TALKING TO A FRIEND

“For what great nation has God close to it, as the Lord our God whenever we call to Him” (Deut. 4:7)

One of mankind’s oldest mistakes, one that still plagues us even today, is the mistaken belief that G-d is far too exalted to bother with this lowly world. They claim, “True, G-d created us; however, after doing so He left us under the control of stars, planets and constellations.”

This is of course completely wrong. Although G-d appears as if He were far beyond our reach, residing beyond this world and beyond all galaxies, beyond the abode of even the angels, in the highest Heavenly realm lies G-d’s Throne of Glory. How far away G-d seems from us! Yet, in truth, there is none so close to us.

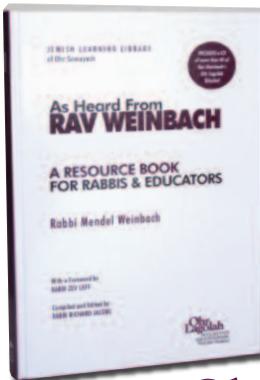
How close? Prayer connects us to G-d. Even when we feel distant, He is there listening. Through prayer we enter into G-d’s private chamber. There we convey — directly to G-d — our thoughts, needs, fears and hopes. Each of us, even young children, when praying the *Shemoneh Esrei* prays in a mere whisper — and G-d listens. Through our daily

prayers we testify that G-d not only exists, but that He also watches, listens, and responds to our spoken word.

So why does G-d bother to listen to our prayers and requests?

Because He genuinely cares for each of us in a perfect way. He wants to be involved in the details of our lives. This is the essence of prayer: to recognize G-d through the faculty of one’s intellect and beseech His goodness. In this way a person not only succeeds in welcoming G-d into his personal life, but also raises his own endeavors aspiring to live a life worthy of G-d’s involvement.

In connection to the above, Ramchal explains that one should strive to see himself as if he were literally standing before G-d, exchanging words with Him as with a friend. When one truly senses that G-d is “right there” with him, listening to the words that emanate from his heart, he makes G-d a real part of his life. When you pray today, don’t forget to add some of your own words from the heart. G-d is waiting to hear what you have to say.



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DON'T BE A BEHEMAH OR A CHAYAH!

Have you ever heard an old Jewish Bubby (Yiddish for “grandmother”) refer to wild kids as *chayot* or *behemot*? Do you know what she’s talking about? Both of those words mean “animal”, but, as we have already discussed many times, in the Hebrew language there are no two words which mean exactly the same. So what then is a *chayah* and what is a *behemah*?

Before moving on to the more technical, taxonomical definitions of *chayah* and *behemah*, we will first take note of several halachic differences between a *chayah* and *behemah*. According to halacha there are certain animal fats which are forbidden from being eaten. However, this prohibition applies only to animals which are considered *behemot*, not to animals which are *chayot*. Conversely, there is a special commandment to cover the blood of ritually-slaughtered animals and birds, but this commandment applies only to animals which are in the category of *chayot*, to the exclusion of *behemot*.

So what is a *chayah* and what is a *behemah*? Of the kosher animals, the term *behemah* is limited to three families of animals, which are designated by the Torah as the only types of animals that can be offered as sacrifices in the Holy Temple: the bovine, the ovine, and the caprine families. Those Latin-based designations names refer to the cows/bulls, rams/sheep, and goats, respectively. Only these three types of animals may be offered as animal sacrifices. This makes defining the term *behemah* somewhat easier, but still leaves us in the dark because there are other, non-kosher animals, like pigs, camels, and donkeys, which are seemingly also included in the category of *behemah*. So what defines a *behemah* as opposed to a *chayah*?

Ibn Ezra and Radak explain that *behemot* are domesticated animals, which live among people, and have utilitarian uses for mankind (e.g., their meat is for consumption or they are used for transportation). *Chayot*, on the other hand, are

wild animals, which live in the uninhabited wilderness. Animals which fall into the category of *chayot* include lions and tigers and bears.

Nachmanides suggests a different way of drawing the distinction between *chayot* and *behemot*.

He explains that all *behemot* are herbivores, meaning that they are animals which feed solely on plants and other flora. By contrast, *chayot* are carnivores, that is, meat-eating animals.

Interestingly, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (1816-1893) favors the approach of Ibn Ezra and Radak, and finds reason to doubt Nachmanides’ definitions. The Talmud (Bava Kama 19b) claims that deer do not generally eat meat. According to Nachmanides’ rubric, this would place deer in the category of *behemot*; yet we know that deer are kosher animals and are not one of the three families of kosher *behemot* listed above. Everybody agrees that deer are *chayot*. How then can Nachmanides define *chayot* as carnivorous animals? Because of this question Rabbi Berlin rejects Nachmanides’ approach and adopts the approach of the Ibn Ezra’s and the Radak. Nonetheless, a recently-published letter from Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky (a great and contemporary Jewish scholar in Bnei Brak) offers a fascinating defense of Nachmanides’ position. Rabbi Kanievsky proposes (in a letter addressed to my friend Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Lehrfeld) that even though deer do not eat animal meat, they do eat small insects and other reptiles. Based on this idea, Rabbi Kanievsky explains that eating those creeping creatures is considered carnivorous enough for deer to be labelled as *chayot*, even though they do not eat “animal” meat.

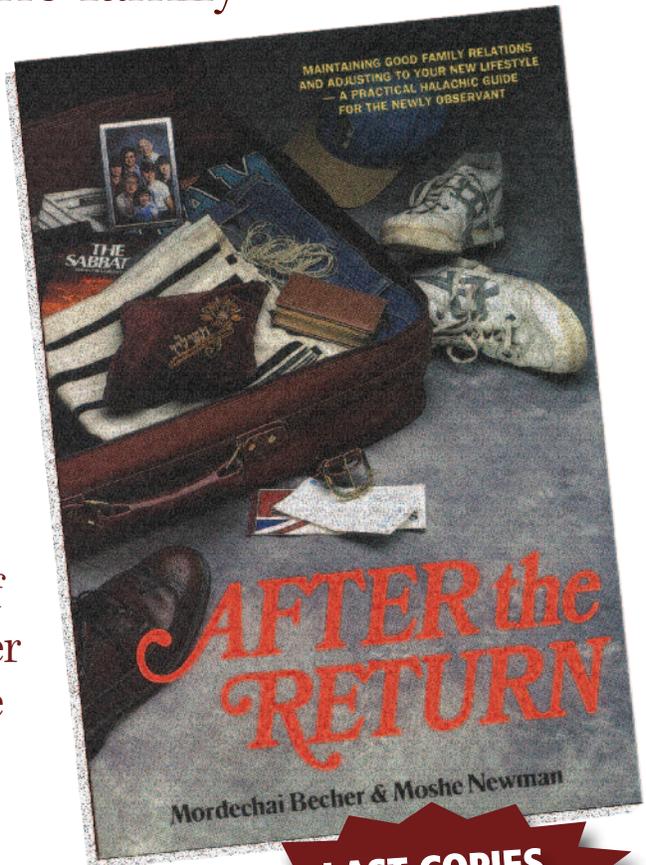
Either way, if your Bubby calls you a *behemah* or a *chayah*, it’s a call to stop acting like an animal — wild or not — and shape up!

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BY RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER AND RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN
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