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THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

CASTLES BUILT ON SAND

“The Egyptians started to make the Israelites do labor intended to break their bodies” (1:13)

Henry Ford, the famous American industrialist, was once sitting on the verandah of his mansion by the sea. He saw a fisherman on the beach, lying in the sun, without a care in the world. Next to the fisherman was a bucket in which a few fish were swimming lazily to and fro.

Ford called to the fisherman, who roused himself from his reverie and ambled over to the mansion.

“What are you doing there?” asked Ford.

“Relaxing” replied the fisherman.

“You know” said Ford “If you worked a little harder, you’d catch more fish.”

“And then what?” said the fisherman.

“And then maybe you’d have enough money to buy a boat.”

“Uh-huh... And then what?” said the fisherman.

“Well, if you had a boat, you’d be able to catch a lot more fish, and if you worked hard, maybe you’d be able to buy a second boat.”

“And then what?”

“Well, with two boats you could catch a lot of fish, and with any luck you might be able to make enough to buy a whole fleet of boats.”

“And then what?”

“Well — with a whole fleet of boats working for you, you could just take it easy and lie on the beach all day.”

“But I’m already doing that!”

People don’t work just to make money. A person needs to have a sense of purpose, of pride in his achievements.

The Torah describes the labor that

the Jews did in Egypt as *Avodas Parech* — Work which breaks a person. ‘Busy-work.’

Nothing diminishes a person so much as seeing his efforts as being futile, as totally without purpose. Thus, Pharaoh instructed that the Jews build *Arei Miskenos* — literally ‘pitiful cities.’ These cities were built on sand, and no sooner would they be completed, then they would topple and fall. Then they would have to start to build all over again, only to see the entire process repeated again and again.

“The greater the sense of purpose in one’s work, the greater is the effort that a person is prepared to invest to achieve it.”

There once was a prisoner in a Soviet labor camp who was confined to his cell for ten years. Every day was spent turning a large handle that protruded from his cell wall. He was told that the handle turned a flour mill next door to his cell.

At the end of ten years, when he was finally released from his cell, he saw that on the other side of the wall there was absolutely nothing.

This realization was more crushing than all his long years of imprisonment.

The greater the sense of purpose in one’s work, the greater is the effort that a person is prepared to invest to achieve it.

A Jew works for an eternal life in *Olam Haba* — the World to Come.

“Six days shall you labor (*ta’avod*) and do all your work (*melacha*), and the seventh day will be a Sabbath to Your

Lord.” What transforms a person’s menial labor (*avoda*) into purposeful creative activity (*melacha*) is Shabbos — the ‘taste’ of *Olam Haba* in this world.

• Adapted from *Outlooks and Insights* —
Rabbi Zev Leff

BELIEVING YOUR OWN PRESS RELEASE

“And Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers...” (2:11)

There once was a Hollywood cowboy who had come from a very ‘uncowboyish’ background: He was an assistant in a men’s clothing store in the mid-West.

To beef up his image a bit, the studio publicity machine had concocted a new identity for him. They did a quick face-lift on his life story, which now depicted him being discovered in a Wells Fargo telegraph office in a small cowboy town in Arizona.

It happened one day that, at the peak of his fame, the Hollywood cowboy came to that small town. As befitting his fame, he was given a ticker-tape parade down Main (or was it Mane?) Street.

As he was riding on the back of his open limousine, his car passed the Wells Fargo office. He leaned across to his press agent — the very same press agent who had re-written his past — and said to him without batting an eyelid:

“You see that Wells Fargo station? That’s where I was discovered...”

One of the dangers of fame is that you can start to believe your own press releases.

The Midrash tells us that when Moshe ‘grew’ he grew ‘not like the way of the world.’ The way of the world is that when a person grows and becomes celebrated and famous, he forgets (or

PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the era of the Avos and the Book of *Bereishis* (Genesis) come to an end. The Book of *Shmos* (Exodus) now chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews in Egypt, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate continues to increase, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all baby boys. *Yocheved* gives birth to *Moshe* and places him in a basket in the Nile before anyone can kill him. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts the baby even though she realizes he is probably a Hebrew. *Miriam*, Moshe's older sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe. She arranges for his mother *Yocheved* to be his nursemaid and help raise him. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, and Moshe kills the Egyptian. When Moshe realizes his life is in danger, he flees to Midian where he rescues *Tzipporah*, whose father *Yisro*

approves their subsequent marriage. On *Chorev*, (Mt. Sinai) Moshe witnesses the "burning bush" where Hashem commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, which Hashem has promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People in Egypt will doubt him being Hashem's agent, and so Hashem helps Moshe perform three miraculous transformations to validate him in the eyes of the people: Changing his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker Hashem tells him that his brother *Aaron* will be his spokesman. Aaron greets Moshe on his return to Egypt, and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before, but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but Hashem assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Hebrews leave.

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General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**
Editorial & Web Advisor: **Rabbi Reuven Lauffer**
Associate Editor: **Rabbi Mordechai Becher**
Web Production: **Lev Seltzer - Michael Treblow**

Contributing Editors:
Weekly Daf, Sing My Soul:
Rav Mendel Weinbach
Ask the Rabbi:
Rabbi Moshe Lazerus,
Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz
Insights, Overview, Haftarah:
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
Parsha Q&A
Rabbi Reuven Subar

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SING MY SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

YOM ZEH MECHUBAD

"THIS IS THE MOST HONORED OF DAYS..."

"Six days you shall do your work, and the seventh day shall be for your G-d"

This stanza, based on the words of the Fourth Commandment, suggest a fascinating perspective of Shabbos as an active experience rather than a passive avoidance of activity.

In his commentary on the Torah, Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, author of the

"Ohr Hachayim", explains that the use of the connecting "and" in regard to the seventh day communicates the idea that a Jew works seven days a week — six days in his own activities and on the seventh day in activities of G-dliness. We pray and study Torah in a manner not available during the other days of the week. Even our eating, drinking and sleeping have a special dimension of holiness.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why did the Egyptians specifically chose water as the means of killing the Jewish children? Give two reasons.
2. "And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why was Yocheved called 'Shifrah?' Why was Miriam called 'Puah'?
4. How did Hashem reward the midwives?
5. Who was Yocheved's father?
6. "She saw that he was good." What was 'good' about Moshe that distinguished him from other babies?
7. Moshe killed an Egyptian who was striking a Jew. Who was the Jewish man's wife?
8. Who were the two Hebrew men who were fighting with each other?
9. Why did the Midianites drive Yisro's daughters away from the well?
10. How did Yisro know that Moshe was a descendant of Yaakov?
11. Why did Moshe go far away to pasture Yisro's sheep?
12. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
13. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted Hashem's promise to take them out of Egypt?
14. What was symbolized by the staff turning into a snake?
15. How long did Hashem try to persuade Moshe to go to redeem the Jewish People?
16. Why was Moshe reluctant to assume the role of leader of the Jewish people?
17. "And Hashem was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
18. Concerning which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim*; b) *shotrim*?
20. Why were the *shotrim* beaten?

BONUS QUESTION?

Why did Moshe risk the spiritual and physical dangers involved in bringing his wife and children to Egypt?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

When Yisro learned that Moshe had killed an Egyptian, Yisro threw him into a pit. For ten years Tzipora sustained Moshe by bringing him food, until such time as Yisro realized Moshe's righteousness.

• *Targum Yonasan*

HAFTORAH: YISHAYAHU 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23

Yaakov Avinu had two names: 'Yaakov' and 'Yisrael'. The Jewish People are called by both of these names.

The name 'Yaakov' depicts the experience of the Jewish People in times of degradation and hardship. 'Yisrael' connotes the Jewish People realizing its potential.

The prophet Yishayahu lived in a time of spiritual decay. He begins the *Haftorah* with the prophecy that the 'root' of Yaakov, like all roots, though unseen and trampled on by all, will once again bring forth its luxuriant produce.

THE REVOLUTION THAT WENT WRONG

"To whom shall one teach knowledge, who can be made to understand a message? Those weaned from (mother's) milk, removed from the breasts!" (28:10)

Since the time of the Industrial Revolution, we have witnessed an ever-accelerating development of science and technology.

As the Holy *Zohar* predicted, from the year 5600, the gates of wisdom were opened. If the Jewish People had been worthy, this tremendous outpouring of knowledge would have found its proper home in the wisdom of Torah and holiness.

Now, since we were not worthy, this diffusion of high-

er energy has found its way to the realm of superficial wisdom and precipitated the invention of weapons of mass destruction to humanity's profound loss.

From the day that the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, 'prophecy was given to fools and infants.' Meaning, that when Yisrael dwelled in the Holy land, celestial energy, both spiritual and material, descended to its correct landing place.

However, since the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, this spiritual radiance has gone astray — descending on desolate lands and unsuitable people — "fools and infants."

This is what the prophet means when he asks whether "those weaned from (mother's) milk" can be "made to understand a message."

• *Adapted from Ahavas Yonason and Rabbi Bunem M'Pshiche*

WEEKLY DAF

CHULLIN 131 - 137

SKIPPING A MEAL

If one ate *terumah* before it was given to a *kohen*, ruled Rabbi Chisda, he has no obligation to compensate any *kohen*. But if the king confiscated a Jew's field as payment for a debt, that Jew must give the *kohen* the tithe due on the confiscated produce from another of his fields. This is not considered compensation for consumed *terumah*, explains the Talmud, but rather an obligation to give the *kohen* the money which the Jew saved by paying his debt with the *kohen's terumah*. That saved amount is considered as if the *terumah* is still intact and must therefore be awarded to the *kohen*.

Why, ask Tosefos, do we not apply this same logic to the case where one ate the *terumah* due to the *kohen*? He too saved the money he otherwise would have spent on a meal. That saved money should also be considered as *terumah* intact and the *kohen's* property?

Tosefos' resolution of the problem is that when the king confiscates *terumah* for a debt there is a definite saving of money which otherwise would have been collected for the debt. But when a man eats *terumah* there is no definite saving of money, because there is a possibility that he might not have eaten that particular meal so no money was saved.

There is an interesting discussion amongst the commentaries as to

whether this Tosefos can be applied to the halachic question of whether a man who invites one to eat a meal can subsequently charge him for it. One view is that the one who ate the meal can argue that he saved no money by accepting the offer, because he would have gone without the meal. Another view contends that this argument is valid only in the case of *terumah*, because there is no obligation to pay for damaging or benefiting from the gifts due to a *kohen*, and the possibility of shipping a meal eliminates the claim of the *terumah* being intact. In regard to eating a meal, however, you can be charged for the enjoyment you had even if you saved nothing.

• Chullin 131

THE TALL AND THE GREAT

A fascinating glimpse of the greatness of the Talmudic Sages and the pattern of decline from generation to generation is provided by an exchange in our section of the Talmud.

When the Sage Issi bar Hini came to Eretz Yisrael from Babylon he met the foremost sage there, Rabbi Yochanan, who asked him: "Who is the Rosh Yeshiva in Babylon?" The reply he gave was "Abba Aricha."

"Abba Aricha you call him and not Our Master!" Rabbi Yochanan castigated him. "I remember him before he left

Eretz Yisrael for Babylon. I sat 17 rows behind him in the *Beis Midrash* and watched him discuss Torah with Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi, the head of the Sanhedrin). It seemed as if flames were shooting out of their mouths and I was unable to understand a word of what they said — and you simply call him Abba Aricha!"

Abba Aricha was the sage Rav, so called because he was the teacher of his generation. He was also the tallest man of his generation so that 'Aricha' — Aramaic for 'tall' — was added to his given name of Abba. Rabbi Meir, relates the Talmud (*Mesechta Niddah* 24b), was the tallest of his generation, and Rebbie came up to his shoulder. Rebbie was the tallest of his generation, and Rabbi Chiya reached his shoulder. Rabbi Chiya was the tallest of his generation, and Rav reached only his shoulder.

The description of the exchange between Rebbie and Rav as shooting flames, explains Maharsha, is based on the Biblical comparison of Torah to fire, and refers to the nature of Torah to generate a fire within those who study it. Other commentaries expand on this comparison. One of them (*Eitz Yosef* in the *Ein Yaakov*) draws attention to the nature of a coal whose fire is dormant within until someone stirs it to life and releases brilliant flames of many colors. So it is with Torah. The brilliance of its illumination is locked within until one comes along to release the multicolored flames of knowledge.

• Chullin 137

continued from page one

PARSHA INSIGHTS

makes himself forget) his roots, his background and his brothers. He seems to have a kind of amnesia when it comes to their problems and difficulties.

Moshe grew up in the palace of Pharaoh with an Egyptian gold spoon in his mouth; nevertheless, he grew up 'not like way of the world,' he never forgot the plight of his people. Moshe 'went out to his brothers.' He went out to discover their problems and the ways he could rescue them from oppression.

• Based on *Yalkut HaDrush in Iturei Torah*

THE NAME OF FREEDOM

"And these are the names of the Children of Israel..." (1:1)

This is the opening line of the book of *Shmos* (Exodus).

As it is the first line, it must be hinting something fundamental about the book of *Shmos* itself. For that which comes first always contains the seeds of all that follows. The book of *Shmos* describes the exile of the Jewish People in Egypt and their miraculous redemption.

Hashem never brings a malady upon His people until the cure is already in place. Even before the doom of slavery falls on the Jewish People, the light of redemption

is already glowing, hidden away, waiting for its time.

We can see this hinted at in the name of the tribes of Israel who went into the slavery of Egypt. **For every name hints to the inevitable redemption.**

The name Reuven comes from the root 'to see.' As Hashem said "I have indeed **seen** the affliction of My people" (3:7). Shimon's name comes from 'to hear' — "And G-d **heard** their moaning..." (2:24)

With the exile comes the redemption. Similarly, we find that *Tisha B'Av* — the day most connected to exile — is the day on which the *Mashiach* is born. And the *Mashiach* will bring with him the ultimate liberation.

• Based on the *Kotzker Rebbe*

GETTING PERSONAL

Carol Brown
<Paul_Brown@nynet.nybe.north-york.on.ca> wrote:

Dear Rabbi

I was told that a person isn't supposed to ask Hashem for personal requests on Shabbat. Is the reason so that we won't have sad thoughts on Shabbat? How far does this rule extend? For example, I have a particular prayer for an errant child which I say every other day. Is it really not appropriate to say it on Shabbat?

<Saydee613@aol.com> wrote:

When a woman lights Shabbat candles, she davens over them, beseeching Hashem. Isn't this in contradiction of not asking Hashem for things on Shabbat?

Dear Carol Brown and Saydee613,

On Shabbat, it's inappropriate to pray for personal needs. Focusing on what you lack is apt to cause worry and distress, contrary to the spirited, festive atmosphere which should reign on Shabbat.

I discussed this issue with Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*. He explained that that this prohibition is limited to physical needs. Praying for spiritual needs, however, is permitted. Praying for an errant child is considered a spiritual need.

Sources:

- Tractate Shabbat 12a.
- Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, senior member of the Jerusalem Beit Din Tzedek (Badatz), and author of many important halachic works.

LETTERS TO HEAVEN

Neil Parks <nparks@torah.org> from Beachwood, Ohio wrote:

I've noticed the Hebrew letters "Bet Samech Daled" on the top of many web pages. What does it stand for? (I presume they're not trying to tell you what brand of Unix it's running on.)

Dear Neil,

The letters stand for **B'Siyata D'Shmaya**. It's Aramaic, and it means "with the help of Heaven." By the way, a number of years ago I asked the Steipler Rav (Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky, *zatzal*) which is better to write at the top of a note or letter: 'Bet Samech Daled' or 'Bet Heh' (Baruch Hashem)? He answered that "Many people use the Aramaic expression instead of the Hebrew because it avoids writing one of the letters of Hashem's holy name (Heh) on something which might be thrown out."

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein states that writing 'Daled' — although a reference to Heaven — is not a letter of Hashem's name, unlike the letter 'Heh.'

Source:

- Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah 2:138

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

When is a non-kohen called first to the Torah in the presence of kohanim?

Answer:

When he is the only non-kohen present.

Ordinarily, the first person called to the Torah is a 'kohen' — a descendant of Aharon. After the kohen, a 'levi' is called. The third person honored to go up to read the Torah is a 'yisrael' — someone who is neither a kohen nor a levi.

But if everyone in the synagogue is a kohen, with the exception of one non-kohen, the non-kohen is called first.

Since the Torah's "paths are pleasantness, and all its ways are peace," it's fitting to have a systematic way to decide who will be honored first. This will preempt any ill-will or argument which might otherwise arise. (*Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 135:12*)

Speaking of arguing in synagogue: A young scholar from New York was invited to become Rabbi in a small old community in Chicago. On his very first Shabbat, a hot debate erupted as to whether one should or should not stand during the reading of the Ten Commandments.

Next day, the rabbi visited 98 year-old Mr. Katz in the nursing home. "Mr. Katz, I'm asking you as the oldest member of the community," said the rabbi, "what is our synagogue's custom during the reading of the Ten Commandments?"

"Why do you ask?" asked Mr. Katz.

"Yesterday we read the Ten Commandments. Some people stood, some people sat. The ones standing started screaming at the ones sitting, telling them to stand up. The ones sitting started screaming at the ones standing, telling them to sit down..."

"That," said the old man "is our custom."

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:10 & 22 - Since Hashem promised Noah never to flood the entire world, the Egyptians chose water, hoping to thereby escape Divine retribution. Also, Pharaoh's astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:15 - *Shifrah* means she beautified the newborn. *Puah* means she would coo at the newborn.
4. 1:21 - Their descendants were *Kohanim*, *Levi'im* and royalty.
5. 2:1 - Levi.
6. 2:2 - When he was born the house was filled with light.
7. 2:11 - Shelomis bas Divri.
8. 2:13 - Dasan and Aviram.
9. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed upon Yisro for abandoning idol worship.
10. 2:20 - Because the water of the well rose up to Moshe.
11. 3:1 - So that the sheep wouldn't graze in privately owned fields.
12. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by Hashem if he did as Hashem requested.
13. 3:12 - The merit that they were destined to receive the Torah.
14. 4:3 - Moshe spoke ill of the Jewish people by saying that they would not listen to him, just as original snake sinned through speech.
15. 4:10 - Seven days.
16. 4:10 - He did not want to take a position that would be superior to that of his elder brother, Aaron.
17. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *Kohen*. This privilege was transferred to Aharon.
18. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
19. 5:6 - a) the Egyptian taskmasters; b) the Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They refused to pressure the Jewish People to work harder.

BONUS ANSWER!

Moshe wanted to give hope and encouragement to the Jewish People. By bringing his wife and children, he showed them his confidence that Hashem was going to redeem the Jewish People very soon.

• Meshech Chochma

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN	3:18 The Code Word for Redemption	2:11,13,17 Reactions to Injustice
1:10 Politics of Genocide	4:10 Moshe's Speech Impediment	KLI YAKAR
2:2 Certainty of Moshe's Rescue	4:13 Moshe's Humility	2:2 Light and Three Months
3:5 The Burning Bush	4:19 Moshe's Family as Proof	2:7 Prophecy of Miriam
3:8 Qualities of Eretz Yisrael	SFORNO	2:13 Striking Words
3:12 Moshe's Concerns	2:10 Moshe's Name	

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PEOPLE
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