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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The Wandering Jew

“Now, when Pharaoh let the people go, Hashem did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines.” (13:17)

The exile of Egypt was the matrix for all the other exiles that the Jewish People would endure, and therefore the manner of their exodus from that exile laid down a matrix, a pattern for all the other exiles that the Jewish People would suffer.

“Hashem did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines.”

Rather, Hashem took them the long way, the way of the wilderness, to instill in the Jewish People’s genes the ability to serve Hashem even at a great distance both physically and spiritually.

When the ‘going got tough’ during our many persecutions and long exile ‘way off the beaten track,’ the experience of traversing the wilderness of the desert prepared the unborn souls of the Jewish People for the long and difficult unpaved road of exile.

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Q & A

Questions

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead, and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

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

Answers

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo ...*" ~ "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiety.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river...."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Armed and Ready

When the Pharaoh finally let the Jews leave Egypt, the Bible reports that the Jews were *chamushim* (Ex. 13:18). Most of my readers are likely familiar with the exegetical interpretations of this word cited by *Mechilta* and Rashi, which interpret the word *chamushim* as a cognate of the Hebrew word *chamesh* (“five”) in explaining that only one-fifth, one-fiftieth, or one-five-hundredth of the Jews enslaved in Egypt actually left in the exodus. However, the more literal understanding of the word *chamushim* means that the Jews exiting Egypt were “armed.” As Nachmanides explains, the Jews entering the wilderness were “packing heat,” because they were scared that the Philistines or other nations might attack them on their way to the Holy Land. In fact, one Midrash states (*Bamidbar Rabbah* §13:20) that *chamushim* means the same thing as *chalutzim*, while other Midrashim state that it means *mezuyanim*. All three of these words – *chamush*, *chalutz* and *mezuyan* – are adjectives that refer to those who are “armed” and ready to do battle. In this essay we explore these three synonyms by analyzing their respective etymologies and tracing them to their core meanings.

Although the term *chamush* only appears once in the Pentateuch (in Ex. 13:18, as mentioned above), it appears another three times in rest of the Bible: The first is when Joshua reminds the Tribes of Gad and Reuben that they undertook to militarily help the rest of the Jews conquer the Holy Land proper as a condition for them receiving their land in the trans-Jordan region. In that context, Joshua says that “armed” (*chamush*) soldiers from Gad and Reuben were expected to lead the Jews’ war effort (Joshua 1:14). Similarly, when relating that soldiers from Gad and Reuben did precisely that, the word *chamush* appears again (Joshua 4:12). Finally, the word *chamush* also appears in the sense of “armed men” in the context of Gideon’s war with the Midianites (Judges 7:11). (In Modern Hebrew, the association with armaments continued to be developed, such that the word *tachmoshet* refers to “ammunition/ammo.”)

The Talmud offers an exegetical approach that connects *chamush* to *chamesh*: The Mishna (*Shabbat* 6:4) discusses what sorts of paraphernalia a man might be allowed to equip himself with when going out into a public domain on Shabbat. In that context, the Mishnah mentions five different weapons with which a man might arm himself: a sword, a bow, a shield, a club, and a spear. On this Mishna, the Jerusalem Talmud (*Shabbat* 6:4) comments that when the Torah states that the Jews exiting Egypt were *chamushim*, the word *chamushim* is a cognate of the word *chamesh* (“five”) and alludes to the fact that the Jews were armed with “five” types of weapons – the very same five listed in the Mishna.

In this way, we have another of way of seeing how *chamush* relates back to other meanings of the root CHET-MEM-SHIN. Although the standard editions of the Jerusalem Talmud read “fifteen” instead of “five,” the version I cited is the one preferred by Rabbi David Frankel (1704-1762) in *Korban HaEidah*, Rabbi Baruch Epstein (1860-1941) in *Torah Temimah* (to Ex. 13:18) and by Rav Chaim Kanievsky. *Mechilta D’Rashbi* and the Yemenite Midrash *HaBeiur* (to Ex. 13:18) also seem to have had the “five” version. See also *Baal HaTurim* (to Ex. 13:18).

Like the word *chamush*, the word *chalutz* also means “armed.” In fact, when Moses originally stipulated with the Tribes of Gad and Reuben that they send soldiers to lead the rest of the Jews in conquering the Holy Land proper, those armed men were called *chalutzim* (Num. 32:30, 32:32, Deut. 3:18). The term *chalutz* in this military sense appears seventeen times in the Bible, mostly in the Books of Numbers.

*For more about the words *chamush*, *chalutz* and *mezuyan*, please consult with the full version of this article available at: https://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Bava Kama 86-92

A Mitzvah in Sight

Rabbi Yehuda said, “A blind person is exempt from paying for embarrassing another person,” and likewise Rabbi Yehuda exempted a blind person from all mitzvahs that are stated in the Torah.

This statement, which is taught in a *beraita* on our *daf*, is the ruling of Rabbi Yehuda regarding the lack of obligations of a “*suma*,” a blind person. It is derived from a verse in Devarim 6:1, as explained by Rav Shisha bar Rav Idi in the *gemara*.

But does this mean that a blind person has no mitzvahs at all? Tosefot writes that although Rabbi Yehuda said that a blind person is exempt from “all mitzvahs that are stated in the Torah,” a blind person is nevertheless obligated in mitzvah observance according to Rabbinical law, since otherwise he would be like a non-Jew who is not part of the Torah of the Jewish People. Tosefot points out that the Rabbis did not decree for a woman to Rabbinically observe time-bound positive mitzvahs the Torah exempts them from since they are at least obligated in all negative commandments of the Torah, as well as the positive mitzvahs that are not time-dependent. A blind person, however, would have no mitzvah obligation without Rabbinical intervention, and therefore the Rabbis obligated him in order that he will share in the role of the Jewish People in having a share in mitzvah fulfillment.

Another opinion is found in the writings of Rabbi Akiva Eiger in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah (1:9), regarding the status of a *shechita* (ritual slaughter of animal for food) done by a blind person who is supervised. The Shulchan Aruch rules that the *shechita* should not be done, but if it was (and was properly supervised), it is kosher. Rabbi Akiva Eiger explains that although a blind person is exempt from mitzvahs according to Rabbi Yehuda, this exemption applies *only to positive commands*, but not to negative ones (“*lo ta’aseh*”). Therefore, since a blind person is obligated by the Torah in the command to not eat meat that was not *shechted* correctly, his act of *shechita* is acceptable if supervised.

I once asked a great Rabbi in Jerusalem a question on the opinion of Tosefot: “If a blind person is exempt from all Torah mitzvahs, why is he required to obey the command of the Rabbis who decreed him to be obligated according to their law? Isn’t the reason that a person must obey Rabbinical law derived from the Torah (Devarim 17:11), ‘According to the law they instruct you and according to the judgment they say to you, you shall do; you shall not divert from the word they tell you, either right or left?’ A blind person is not bound by any mitzvah of the Torah, including Devarim 17:11, and is therefore seemingly not bound to the decrees of the Rabbis. So, how would Tosefot answer this?”

The Rabbi answered me that it is “logic.” Every person who is part of the Jewish People, even a blind person who is exempt from mitzvahs, must certainly listen to and obey the teachings of the Rabbis. They are the leaders, the teachers and the authorities in this world who help lead us in the path of Hashem.

▪ Bava Kama 87a

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

BIRKAT HAMAZON (PART 10)

BLUEPRINT OF JEWISH DESTINY

“Anyone who recites Birkat HaMazon is blessed through it.”
(Zohar HaKadosh to Parshat Terumah)

The Third Blessing concludes: “Rebuild Yerushalayim, the Holy City, soon in our days. Blessed are You, Hashem Who rebuilds Yerushalayim in His mercy. Amen.”

Yerushalayim is the holiest and most elevated place in the world. The Midrash teaches us (Ber. Rabbah 59) that Yerushalayim is the source of light in our world – “Yerushalayim Oro Shel Olam.” As the Prophet Yeshayahu says, “From Zion will come forth the Torah, and the Word of Hashem from Yerushalayim.”

Tosafot (*Bava Batra* 21a) asks why it states that the Torah comes forth from Yerushalayim. Tosafot explains that when people would come to Yerushalayim and to the Holy Temple, they would be inspired by seeing the *Kohanim* perform the Temple Services. Experiencing this elevated experience motivated them to become better people. They became more spiritually aware, to the point of being more careful in their mitzvah observance. Rabbi Aharon Kotler, in *Mishnat Rabbi Aharon*, writes that because we have no Temple today, each individual needs to look at themselves as a living Temple. Just as the *Kohanim* inspired others and embodied the essence of the Temple, so too should we inspire others and embody the essence of the Holy Temple.

It is truly a tragedy that we do not have the Temple. Our Sages teach (*Ta’anit* 30b), “Whoever mourns over [the destruction] of Yerushalayim will merit to witness its joy.” Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865-1935), the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine, asks why the Talmud uses the phrase “witness its joy.” If anything, it would seem to be more appropriate to say that they will “merit to see its rebuilding.” How is the concept of joy connected? Rabbi Kook offers a poignant answer. Even after Yerushalayim will be rebuilt, not everyone will merit to “see” the depths of its joy. To see its joy will require a special spiritual insight not possessed by everybody. Our Sages are teaching that only someone who truly mourns the destruction of the Holy Temple and Yerushalayim will merit to see its joy.

Yerushalayim is the epicenter of the universe (*Yoma* 54b). Yerushalayim is the place that every Jew turns towards in prayer. Yerushalayim is the heart of the Jewish People.

Rabbi Mordechai Yoffe (1530-1612), the Chief Rabbi of Posen in Poland, was one of the greatest scholars of his generation. He was an expert in all aspects of the Torah and its esoteric dimensions. In his all-encompassing work *Levush Malchut*, he writes that our blessing closes with an appeal for mercy even though it is not directly linked to the theme of Yerushalayim and the Holy Temple. This is because the blessing’s conclusion parallels its beginning, which begins with the words, “Have mercy, Hashem, our G-d.”

Our blessing concludes in what seems to be an unusual manner. As a rule, we do not answer “Amen” to our own blessings. It is actually a mistake to do so. Yet, here we do so. Our Sages explain (*Berachot* 45b) that since this is the final blessing of Birkat HaMazon that is mandated by the Torah, it is correct to have an indication that the blessing which follows is of Rabbinic origin and not from the Torah. Therefore, our Sages instructed us to add the word “Amen” to the end of the third blessing. This makes the differentiation clear. It also

ensures that we won't make the mistake of thinking we must always say "Amen" to our own blessings. Our Sages teach that we should pause before saying the word "Amen" at the end of the third blessing as a reminder that we are saying "Amen" at this point for a specific reason.

To be continued...

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS

Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

"Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance." (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

SHABBOS BOUNDARIES

(Mitzvos #24 in *Sefer HaChinuch*)

"See that Hashem has granted you the Shabbos. Therefore, He is giving you on the sixth day [of the week] bread for two days. Let every man sit where he is; no man shall leave his place on the seventh day." (Shemos 16:29)

THE MITZVAH

When Hashem sustained the Jewish people with manna in the Wilderness, He gave a double portion on Erev Shabbos, and commanded them not to leave their places to gather it on Shabbos. The Sages interpret the words, "No man shall leave his place on the seventh day," as a mitzvah for all generations, that we may not travel outside the city on Shabbos. Since the "place" mentioned in the verse refers to the Jewish encampment, which was twelve *mil* wide (approx. 12 km or 7 miles), the Sages expound that one may travel until this distance outside a city on Shabbos. As a safeguard, the Sages decreed that this distance be limited to one *mil*, which is approximately one kilometer or two-thirds of a mile (*Chinuch*).

REASON ONE: DAY OF REST

We are commanded to commemorate the seventh day as a day of rest so that we remember that the world has a Creator, Who completed His work and rested on this day. Therefore, the Torah forbids the highly strenuous activity of traveling. Until a distance of twelve *mil*, however, a walk may be considered pleasurable and restful (*Chinuch* §24). We may explain similarly that this mitzvah was given in the Wilderness, where the only source of livelihood was the *man*, and the command not to leave the encampment to get the *man* was essentially a command not to engage in business. Even afterward that period of history, traveling would always remain a primary means of doing business. Thus, the Torah limits us to our cities of residence on the day of rest as a measure to prevent us from engaging in labor. "Let every man sit where he is" means that a person should sit at home (*Ibn Ezra*). This indicates a second facet of this mitzvah: other than the prohibition to travel, we are also commanded to be at total rest in our homes on the day of Shabbos.

REASON TWO: DAY OF APPRECIATION

During the week, we are preoccupied with pursuing our needs and wants, and we cannot properly recognize and appreciate that which we already have. This is similar to the way someone who is constantly moving around

cannot focus on anything. On Shabbos, every Jew is commanded, “*Let every man sit where he is,*” so that he can appreciate what he already has and give thanks and praise to the Creator, as it is written, “*Mizmor shir leyom HaShabbos: Tov lehodos laHashem*” – “A psalm of song of the day of Shabbos: It is good to thank Hashem.” (Based on *Ayala Temimah*)

REASON THREE: DAY OF SPIRITUAL PURSUIT

Shabbos is a holy day, on which our conduct must be distinctly holier than that of the week. Accordingly, the Torah states, “*Let every man sit where he is; no man shall leave his place on the seventh day.*” “His place” alludes to Hashem’s place, as it is written, *Blessed is Hashem’s glory from His place.* We dwell with Hashem throughout Shabbos by meditating upon His Torah. In order to enable our minds to better perceive the Torah, our souls expand on Shabbos, and our intellectual capacity increases correspondingly. In light of this, we may understand why the Giving of the Torah occurred specifically on Shabbos (*Rav Menachem HaBavli* §13).

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends the *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves, and chases after the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff, and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks.

After three days' travel, only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain mitzvahs. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. Hashem sends quail for meat and provides manna, miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday, a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations.

When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle, and Moshe prays for their welfare.

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