

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

KNOWING WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

"The daughters of Tzelafchad..." (27:1)

I once asked my Rabbi an important and difficult personal question. When I finished the question, he looked at me with a puzzled look and said "What makes you think that I could answer such a question? You must go to Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and ask him. This is a question that I am not qualified to answer."

A similar occurrence took place when someone I know took their son to a leading Israeli cardiologist with a rare heart complaint. He took one look at the child and told them that the problem was out of his league and they would have to take the child to The Boston Children's Hospital.

Nothing inspires confidence more than someone saying they don't know. Because if they know what they don't know, then what they know — they know.

In this week's Torah portion, Tzelafchad passes away and leaves five daughters. They are all righteous, intelligent and learned. So much so that at the age of forty, none of them can find a spouse that is her intellectual equal.

When they hear Moshe say that Eretz Yisrael is to be divided according to the number of male children in the family, they realize that, under this ruling, their father's name will be forgotten. They decide that they themselves will claim their father's inheritance so that his name will be perpetuated.

Moshe had instituted a system whereby there were judges appointed over ten people, judges over fifty, judges over a hundred, and judges over a thousand people.

The daughters approach the judges over ten people with their claim. The judges realize that this is an unprecedented case and immediately refer the daughters to the judges appointed over fifty. They too refer the case to those above them, and they in turn to the judges over a thousand people. These judges tell the daughters that only Moshe is qualified to address their claim.

Although reluctant to appear in public, they overcome their natural modesty and when Moshe starts to explain the laws of *Yibum* (Levirate Marriage), they enter the court and seek to present their claim.

They present their case in a clear and forceful fashion; however Moshe replies that according to Torah Law only the males can inherit. The daughters reply using the exact same law of *Yibum* that Moshe himself was in the middle of explicating, that if, as women, they are not considered to be their father's heirs, then their mother should marry one of the late father's brothers as mandated by the law of *Yibum*. For *Yibum* requires that when a man dies without issue, one of his brothers should marry his widow.

Moshe replies, "Once there are daughters, *Yibum* does not apply, and she is forbidden to marry one of her late husband's brothers."

"Moshe, our teacher," reply the daughters, "How can that be logical? If we are considered our father's progeny as far as the law of *Yibum* is concerned, why may we not be considered his heirs in regard to inheriting his portion in the Land?"

Seeing that their logic is impeccable, Moshe then turns to the Almighty and asks Him to confirm the claim of the daughters of Tzelafchad.

Why did Moshe, rather than acknowledge the truth of their argument, defer his judgment to that of G-d? G-d taught Moshe all of the Torah; surely Moshe knew that their claim was a just one?

In truth, Moshe knew the correct ruling, but when he heard that every court from the judges of ten upward had deferred their judgment in favor of a higher authority, he too wanted to defer his judgment to the Ultimate Higher Authority.

Moshe wanted to teach every judge throughout the generations that, when necessary, one should never hesitate to consult a higher authority.

• Source: *The Midrash*

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THE ENEMY WITHIN

The occasional problems Israel's security forces encounter with Israeli Arabs serve as a frightening reminder of the enemies within our borders who share the dream of the Palestinian Arabs of destroying the Jewish State.

There is, however, another enemy within that may be even a greater threat to our security.

In the Mussaf (additional) Service we recite on Rosh Chodesh we speak of the sacrifices offered in the *Beit Hamikdash* on this day, recalling that they served as a "saving of souls from the enemy". Who is this enemy that our sacrifices in the past, and our prayers which serve as "virtual sacrifices" today, protect us against?

A most insightful answer to this question is provided by

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, author of the major Torah philosophical work "Hakuzari" and many poetic masterpieces that have been incorporated into special services. The enemy, he writes, is the *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination that tempts us to follow our passions rather than the commands of G-d. This is a dangerous enemy who leads us to self-destruction. The sacrifices offered on Rosh Chodesh and our prayers today supply the spiritual energy needed to overcome this enemy.

As we read this Shabbat in our weekly Torah portion about these Rosh Chodesh sacrifices, we will hopefully reflect on the message they communicate about the real enemy within us whom we must subdue in order to protect Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

LIFESAVING STUBBORNNESS

"Shalom", said the excited voice on the telephone to the author of the Hebrew book "*Tuvcha Yabiyu*", "I'm the fellow you wrote a story about in your book".

This introduction triggered memories of a touching story about a yeshiva student scheduled for radiation treatment in an Israeli hospital. He was informed that he could only receive such treatment wearing sterilized hospital clothes. The hospital could not provide him with a sterilized four-cornered garment and *tzitzit*, so he had one of his own properly washed and sterilized in order to avoid being without this mitzvah while undergoing such serious treatment.

To his dismay the nurse in charge of the treatment refused to administer it unless he removed the *tzitzit* garment.

He stubbornly refused to comply and sat for hours outside the radiation department hoping for some miracle. The miracle did come but not in the way he expected. One of the senior doctors of that department noticed him and asked what he was waiting for. Upon hearing his problem he entered the department office to speak to the nurse. When he returned to our hero, he was in shock.

"I took a look at the records of your case", he said, "and the treatment you were to receive. The nurse had accidentally mixed things up and the treatment she would have given you could have proved fatal!"

The boy whose life had been saved by his stubbornness for the mitzvah of *tzitzit* went on to tell the author that he had enjoyed a complete recovery a couple of years later and was now happily married.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive G-d's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action - executing Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. G-d commands Moshe to maintain a state of enmity with the Midianites who lured the Jewish People into sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. G-d instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to *Bnei Yisrael*. The number of the Levites' families is recorded. Tzlofchad's daughters file a claim with Moshe: In the

absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks G-d for the ruling, and G-d tells Moshe that their claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance. G-d tells Moshe that he will ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter. Moshe asks G-d to designate the subsequent leader, and G-d selects Yehoshua bin Nun. Moshe ordains Yehoshua as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why was Pinchas not originally a *kohen*?
2. Why was Moav spared the fate of Midian?
3. What does the *yud* and *heh* added to the family names testify?
4. Korach and his congregation became a "sign." What do they signify?
5. Why did Korach's children survive?
6. Name six families in this Parsha whose names are changed.
7. Who was Yaakov's only living granddaughter at the time of the census?
8. How many years did it take to conquer the Land? How long to divide the Land?
9. Two brothers leave Egypt and die in the *midbar*. One brother has three sons. The other brother has only one son. When these four cousins enter the Land, how many portions will the one son get?
10. What do Yocheved, Ard and Na'aman all have in common?
11. Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
12. What trait did Tzlofchad's daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
13. Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad's daughters' names?
14. Tzlofchad died for what transgression?
15. Why did Moshe use the phrase "G-d of the spirits of all flesh"?
16. Moshe "put some of his glory" upon Yehoshua. What does this mean?
17. Where were the daily offerings slaughtered?
18. Goats are brought as *musaf* sin-offerings. For what sin do they atone?
19. Why is Shavuot called *Yom Habikkurim*?
20. What do the 70 bulls offered on Succot symbolize?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

1. 25:13 - *Kehuna* (priesthood) was given to Aharon and his sons (not grandsons), and to any of their descendants born *after* they were anointed. Pinchas, Aharon's grandson, was born *prior* to the anointing.
2. 25:18 - For the sake of Ruth, a future descendant of Moav.
3. 26:5 - That the families were truly children of their tribe.
4. 26:10 - That *kehuna* was given forever to Aharon and his sons, and that no one should ever dispute this.
5. 26:11 - Because they repented.
6. 26:13,16,24,38,39,42 - Zerach, Ozni, Yashuv, Achiram, Shfufam, Shucham.
7. 26:46 - Serach bat Asher
8. 26:53 - Seven years. Seven years.
9. 26:55 - Two portions. That is, the four cousins merit four portions among them. These four portions are then split among them as if their fathers were inheriting them; i.e., two portions to one father and two portions to the other father.
10. 26:24,56 - They came down to Mitzrayim in their mothers' wombs.
11. 26:64 - In the incident of the *meraglim*, only the men wished to return to Egypt. The women wanted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.
12. 27:1 - Love for *Eretz Yisrael*.
13. 27:1 - To teach that they were equal in greatness.
14. 27:3 - Rabbi Akiva says that Tzlofchad gathered sticks on Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon says that Tzlofchad was one who tried to enter *Eretz Yisrael* after the sin of the *meraglim*.
15. 27:16 - He was asking G-d, who knows the multitude of dispositions among the Jewish People, to appoint a leader who can deal with each person on that person's level.
16. 27:20 - That Yehoshua's face beamed like the moon.
17. 28:3 - At a spot opposite the sun. The morning offering was slaughtered on the west side of the slaughtering area and the afternoon offering on the east side.
18. 28:15 - For unnoticed ritual impurity of the Sanctuary or its vessels.
19. 28:26 - The Shavuot double-bread offering was the first wheat-offering made from the new crop.
20. 29:18 - The seventy nations.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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 which 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!"

ENLIGHTENMENT NOW AND LATER

An unresolved problem of the Talmudic Sages was always relegated to resolution by the Prophet Eliyahu who will appear sometime in the future. The term “*teiku*”, which appears at the end of a discussion of such a problem, is traditionally understood as being an acronym for the words “Tishbi (what Eliyahu was called based on where he came from) will answer all questions and resolve all problems”.

In our *gemara*, however, we are introduced to another way of communicating the idea of Eliyahu enlightening us. A passage is quoted (*Hoshea 10:12*) in which there appear the words “until he comes and teaches you what is right”. The particular problem dealt with is that of a pig seen nursing from a lamb. If it can be assumed that the lamb would only nurse its own offspring then this pig could be eaten on the basis of an earlier ruling (*Bechorot 5b* - see Weekly DAFootnotes “Strange Creatures”) that an animal with non-kosher features born from a kosher animal may be consumed. There is, however, the possibility that this pig is not the offspring of the lamb that took pity on it and nursed it, and is therefore considered forbidden until Eliyahu arrives to enlighten us as to whether an animal ever nurses an offspring not born from her and not even of the same species.

Although this phrase from the Prophet Hoshea is thus applied to the eventual enlightenment we will receive from Eliyahu, it conveys a different message according to the commentaries who explain it in the context of the entire passage. The words preceding this phrase are “set a time to seek G-d”. One of the explanations offered by Rabbi David Kimchi (*Radak*) runs as follows:

“If you shall seek your G-d to know His Torah and *mitzvot* He shall come and teach you what is right.”

This approach of present Divine help for the serious student of Torah rather than a reference to eventual enlightenment by Eliyahu is based on the Talmudic principle that “one who strives to purify himself is assisted by Heaven”.

• *Bechorot 24a*

CORRUPTING THE COVENANT

“You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Tribe of Levi” (*Malachi 2:8*). This is the accusation that the Prophet Malachi makes in the Name of G-d against the *kohanim* and levites of his day. This covenant, explains *Metsudat David* in his commentary, was

made between G-d and Aaron, the head of the Tribe of Levi, and it called for the members of his tribe to serve G-d and honor him. Instead they are guilty of corrupting this covenant by shaming Him.

In our *gemara* we learn of how far-reaching is the concept of corruption. *Kohanim* and levites who assist the planters in the threshing of their crops should not be given the tithes that the Torah awarded to members of their tribe as compensation for their efforts. If this is done it is considered a corruption of the above-mentioned covenant made with Aaron. Our Sages even regard such an action deserving of death, based on the warning in the passage (*Bamidbar 18:32*) that “the sacred things of the Children of Israel shall not be profaned so that you shall not die”.

Why is compensating a *kohen* or levite with tithes for his help considered such a serious form of corruption?

The Tribe of Levi was set aside by G-d to completely dedicate itself to this service in the Sanctuary. They were therefore not given a portion of Eretz Yisrael to cultivate for their support and were instead made the beneficiaries of all Jews who were commanded to give them a share of their produce. In this manner their support was assured and their benefactors gained the mitzvah of sustaining these servants of G-d. Turning this arrangement into a business of using the tithes as a form of wages for services rendered was therefore a violation of what the covenant was all about.

• *Bechorot 26b*

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“MESSIANIC JEW”

From: Jason from Tuscon, AZ

Dear Rabbi,

I am recently on my way back to becoming religious, and I have started to wear a kippah at work as a Sergeant in the USAF. The other day, a woman that works there asked me if I was a “messiah Jew or the other kind”. My immediate response was rather negative, since I don’t see the first group she mentioned as Jews at all. What, if anything, should I do to try to clarify the difference to her? Or, should I just rely on my initial response of, “I’m a Jew, ‘messianics’ are not”?

Dear Jason,

First let me salute you on your return to Jewish observance. It is not easy for anyone to make the changes you have made; and it’s often more difficult for one who was brought up religious and then consciously left it, to return. I’m sure it’s difficult to make the changes while in the Air Force as well. May G-d give you strength and fortitude to keep flying high.

One of the most challenging aspects of becoming reli-

gious is dealing with the comments, remarks, opinions and questions of those who notice the changes taking place — whether they be family, friends or co-workers. Their reactions may result from being totally uninformed, positively inquisitive, cynically critical or outright hostile. The Golden Rule in all cases is to be calm, pleasant, courteous and understanding.

After all, remember that it is you who is changing, not them. You’ve thought about it a lot, know why you’re doing it and see where you’re going. Most people have never even thought about the issues you’ve probably been working through on your own for some time now, but are only recently starting to surface. How would you have reacted a year or two ago to something like this? And whatever your reaction would have been, surely a pleasant response would have only increased your appreciation and respect for the newly religious person and his religion.

Therefore, in your specific case you should apologize for being abrupt and explain that you were surprised by the question. Then, without going into too much detail, respectfully explain the difference as you understand it. If the conversation results in disagreement, politely end the discussion. Most importantly, do not fall into the mistake of trying to elevate Judaism by shooting down other people or religions. Rather emphasize the truth and beauty of Judaism and let it fly on its own.

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

BLESSING THE BLESSER

Question: At the recent wedding of my daughter many people kindly wished me “Mazal Tov” and blessed me that I should enjoy much *nachat* happiness from the young couple and all my children. What is the right thing to do in responding to such a blessing and others like it?

Answer: The blessing of any person, say our Talmudic Sages, should never be treated lightly. Since a blessing constitutes a prayer for your well-being it is proper to respond with “Amen” as we do upon hearing any blessing made in our prayers or before fulfilling a mitzvah or partaking of worldly pleasures. Even if the blessing offered appears to be for something only remotely possible, we should have this same reaction which is our way of expressing our faith that G-d

can bring the blessing to fulfillment and of echoing the blesser’s prayer that He do so. Ramban writes that our Matriarch Sarah was rebuked by G-d for laughingly dismissing the blessing she heard about her having a child at the age of 90 from people she thought were simple Arab wayfarers instead of reacting with an affirmation of “may this be the will of G-d”.

Along with the “Amen” should come an expression of gratitude to the blesser. The ideal way of saying thank you is to reciprocate with a blessing that your blesser should be blessed with the same blessing. If you are aware of a special need for your blessers in regard to finding a mate for their own child or any other area of life, this is the time to bless them that G-d should fulfill all their hearts’ desires.

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Re: The Red String Grows Longer

I am the webmaster of the Committee for Rachel's Tomb website and I would like to ask permission to reproduce the article entitled "*The Red String of Protection*" <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1732> that appears on your website Ohr.edu for our website.

I happen to get e-mails asking this very question and your Rabbi Ullman answered this far better than I could ever hope. By the way, a link to Ohr Somayach's site has been on our Links page for a number of years. Thank you!

• Dale B.

To Learn and To Teach

Hi, I hope that Ohr Somayach and Ohr.edu can help me in the following matter. I'm interested in learning (hopefully teaching something in the meantime) one-on-one with women from diverse backgrounds on different sub-

jects. I've been going to SEED (English *kiruv* outreach program) for over four years where I've been learning one-on-one with either newly observant women, or any women who would like to strengthen themselves in Judaism. I would really appreciate it if you could contact me with more details on how I can continue this terrific experience. Thank you,

• T.

Ohrnet responded privately.

Re: Ask! — The Red String of Protection

Besides the reasons and sources you mention perhaps there could also be a connection to the red string that was tied around the foot of Zerah, brother of Peretz? Zerah, the less assertive of the two brothers, came out okay too.

• Sara C.

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