

OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYETZE · 7 KISLEV 5765 · NOV. 20, 2004 · VOL. 12 NO. 7

PARSHA INSIGHTS

HEAVEN'S GATE

"This is none other than the abode of G-d, and this is the gate of the Heavens" (28:17)

As far as architecture is concerned, the Western Wall cannot compete with the Taj Mahal, or the Sistine Chapel, or any number of Far Eastern places of worship.

Yet that row of enigmatic stone blocks and — what is beyond them — has an unparalleled draw on the hearts and minds of man.

The Muslims may look to Mecca and Medina, but they would like nothing better than to bury their leaders on that hill. The Catholic Church may have its seat of power in the Vatican, but their eye is constantly on Jerusalem. Why?

On that small hill called Har HaMoriah, the central events of world history have been played out: On that hill lies the stone that was the first physical existence that G-d created. It is called the "foundation stone." From that stone, G-d extruded the entire creation. That stone is the bridge between this reality and the reality beyond.

On that same hill, Avraham brought up Yitzchak as an offering in the ultimate test of his faithfulness to G-d.

And, in this week's Torah portion, Yaakov saw a vision of the ladder with its feet planted on the ground and its head reaching to the heavens. That place has always been, and is to this

day, the gate of Heaven.

On that hill stood the two Holy Temples and very soon the third one will stand there again. Subconsciously, the world understands this, but it cannot verbalize that knowledge. That intuitive feeling manifests itself as a stream of resolutions in the United Nations about the necessity to preserve the international nature of the city of Jerusalem.

In this week's Torah portion Yaakov prayed at Har HaMoriah. After completing his prayer Yaakov suddenly heard the voices of angels saying "Yaakov has arrived, the great Yaakov who casts light on the world like the sun!" Yaakov understood that he was overhearing a conversation in Heaven. From Yaakov's words, "*the Shechina (Divine Presence) rests in this place,*" we learn that the Shechina rests on Har Hamoria forever. Not only did It rest there when the two Holy Temples were standing, but It is there to this day.

When you stand at that Wall, you are standing at the gateway of Heaven. If Yaakov could hear what they were saying, in Heaven, surely in Heaven they can hear what we are saying in this world. When you pray at the Wall, it is as if you are praying in front of the Kisei HaKavod, "the Heavenly Throne." This is Heaven's gate - the gate that is open to all prayers.

No wonder, then, that the eyes of the world are constantly on the Wall.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah

bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by Hashem not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

RETURN TO THE STONES

“The more things change,” goes the old French saying, “the more they remain the same.” Two years ago this column featured an article on the collapse of National Unity Government then in power based on the lesson of the stones in this week’s Torah portion. Now that another coalition government seems on the verge of collapse, we suggest to return to this lesson of unity provided by the stones and the Patriarch Yaakov.

When the Patriarch Yaakov lay down to sleep at the site where the Holy Temple would someday stand, the Torah relates that he formed a protective fence and pillow from “stones” he gathered from the area. After he awoke from his prophetic dream of angels and a ladder reaching to Heaven, those same “stones” are referred to as a single “stone” which he erected as a pillar upon which he poured a libation of oil in service to G-d Who assured him in that dream that the earth he slept on would belong to his descendants forever.

How “stones” become one “stone” is explained by the Talmudic Sages in the following manner: The stones which Yaakov gathered began to quarrel amongst themselves, with

each vying for the privilege of having the righteous Patriarch rest his head upon it. G-d thereupon combined all of the stones into one large stone so that all of them would be privileged and pleased.

Let us put aside all of the cynical observations of political analysts who accuse one or the other of the protagonists in this drama. Let us be generous enough to attribute to each of these politicians a genuine concern for the nation as their motive. But are they not like those stones vying for the privilege of rescuing Israel from its security and economic woes? If G-d imposed on the Jewish State problems of such magnitude that they compelled such competing “stones” to form into one entity, could we not expect that all parties would be pleased to have the privilege of serving the people who elected them as leaders?

Perhaps the difference between stones and politicians is that stones have no agenda other than providing support for the righteous. Let the politicians take a cue from the stones and increase their support for the righteous Torah institutions which are the best guarantee for the security and economy of Israel – forever!

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

WINE AND BLOOD

“Rush to the synagogue where blood-red flames are burning in the Holy Ark. Hurry before the fire spreads to the rest of the city!”

This was what the *shamash* of the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Old Jerusalem heard in the middle of the night from a mysterious stranger standing next to his bed.

When he reached the synagogue and opened the Ark he saw no flames, only the Torah scrolls and a bottle of wine he had placed there for *kiddush* on Shabbat eve. But the bottle was not in the spot where he had placed it. His suspicion was aroused and he examined the contents of the bottle. He discovered that it was filled with blood! He quickly poured out the blood and refilled the bottle with wine.

The next morning the Moslem ruler of Jerusalem, accompanied by the Greek Patriarch and a Greek citizen, burst into the synagogue announcing that the priests had

charged that Jews had murdered a Christian child in order to use his blood for sacramental purposes. An order was given to open the Holy Ark and the Greek shouted that it contained the blood of the child. But when the Patriarch opened the bottle and poured some of its contents into a glass, it became clear that the guilty party was the Greek who had falsely accused the Jews.

The Moslem pasha leading the investigation was so angry with the Greek that he drew his sword to kill him. But the Patriarch held him back, declaring that it was wrong to shed blood in a holy place. Outside the synagogue the Greek confessed to the murder before being put to death.

The *shamash* and all the Jews of the city then understood the meaning of the mysterious warning about flames in the Holy Ark.



OHRNET magazine is published by Ohr Somayach Tanenbaum College

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "Hashem remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's Parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A TIP FROM HEAVEN

After sharing a personal story of Divine Providence with a cab driver in Jerusalem, I had the opportunity of hearing an even better one from him.

He started off one day in a very bad mood. There was a debt of one hundred dollars due for payment that evening and he had no idea of how he was going to get that kind of money. Driving through the city streets in a depressed state, he picked up a tourist couple, obviously non-Jewish, who asked him to take them to a particular hotel.

After dropping them off he picked up a religious Jewish passenger who informed him that there was a pouch on the

back seat. The cabbie asked for it to be put on the seat next to him and soon heard a cell phone inside the pouch ringing. He answered the call and a worried voice on the other end of the line asked him to immediately bring the pouch to the hotel, assuring him that it would be worth his while.

Our hero drove to the hotel and returned the pouch to its relieved owner who anxiously began examining its contents. Satisfied that nothing of these valuable contents had been touched, he presented the cabbie with a tip of one hundred dollars. This simple G-d-fearing cab driver clearly saw that this was a tip from Heaven.

ANOTHER SORT OF ME'ILAH

The *mesechta* we now begin deals with laws of *me'ilah*, a term describing the sin of taking for private purposes an animal, funds or any other property which has been consecrated for the use of the *Beit Hamidkash*.

As long as an animal consecrated for sacrificial purpose is alive the ban on deriving any personal benefit from it obviously applies, as does the atonement required for such a sin. But what happens if such a sacrificial animal dies? Does the Torah's rule about the one "who is guilty of *me'ilah* by unintentionally sinning in regard to what is sanctified to G-d" (*Vayikra 5:15*) still apply when that animal is no longer capable of being offered as a sacrifice?

The answer given by the Sage Ulla in the name of Rabbi Yochanan is that there is no longer any *me'ilah* in such a case as far as Torah law is concerned. The Sages, however, were afraid that deriving personal benefit from a sacrificial animal which perished might lead people to take the same liberty in regard to those which had been duly slaughtered as sacrifices. They, therefore, instituted a rabbinical ban on doing so.

If there is a concept of *me'ilah* of rabbinical as well as Torah law, asks the *gemara*, what difference is there in the manner of atonement? The answer given is that when one is guilty of *me'ilah* by Torah law he must compensate the Sanctuary not only for what he benefited from but must also add a *chomesh* (literally translated as a fifth but actually a 25 percent penalty, which is a fifth of the principle sum plus the penalty). When the *me'ilah* is only of rabbinical nature this penalty is not required.

Tosefot explains why the *gemara* did not mention the obvious difference between the two is that the *asham* sacrifice which is required for atonement of this sin applies only when the *me'ilah* is of Torah law. This difference is too obvious because offering an animal as a sacrifice which is not required by the Torah constitutes the forbidden act of bringing non-sacred animals upon the altar of the Sanctuary.

• *Me'ilah 2b*

INDISPENSABLE FOR ATONEMENT

What serves as a sacrifice to achieve atonement for certain sins depends on economic ability. If the sinner cannot afford a sheep or goat for his *chatat*

sacrifice, he can offer instead two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one as an *olah* sacrifice and the other as a *chatat*.

In detailing the manner of sacrificing the fowl used for the *chatat*, the Torah instructs the *kohen* who slaughters it to then "sprinkle of its blood upon the side of the altar and the rest of the blood shall be wrung out at the bottom – it is a *chatat*." (*Vayikra 5:9*)

Although both sprinkling the blood and wringing out the remainder are mentioned in this passage, there is a difference of opinion among the Sages as to whether the latter is absolutely essential for achieving atonement or whether it is merely proper to wring out any blood if there should remain any after the sprinkling, but not that this process is indispensable for achieving atonement.

These two views are based on contrasting interpretations of what the Torah meant to convey with the closing words of the above-mentioned passage: "it is a *chatat*." Rabbi Ada bar Ahava viewed its proximity to the instruction regarding the wringing out of the blood as an indication that the blood which is to be thus removed from the fowl is still considered *chatat*. Failure to execute this process would therefore render the sacrifice service incomplete. Rabbi Huna, on the other hand, sees this closing phrase as a reference only to the processes leading up to this climax – the slaughtering and sprinkling – but not to the wringing out of blood, which is only proper to do but is not indispensable for achieving atonement.

• *Me'ilah 8b*

The Weekly Daf
by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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Published by Targum Press / Distributed by Feldheim



DYBUK PART I

From: Helene in Louisville, KY

Dear Rabbi,

I read your article on reincarnation and I found it so interesting that I re-read it several times. However, an idea keeps returning to my mind. If a soul can come back many times in different bodies, can it come back into someone else's body who is already living? I don't mean to be redundant, but I guess I'm asking if a soul can return to possess another person.

Dear Helene,

In our article on reincarnation (<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1077>) we explained that after a certain number of reincarnations without repair, the soul is not permitted in *gehinom*, nor to be reincarnated any more as a human being (SHG 1:4). Bodiless, the soul is pursued by demons and spirits as it frantically seeks refuge from their torment. Sometimes it finds respite in a sub-human host, such as an animal, plant or inanimate object. This is a form of reincarnation called transmigration where the soul migrates to rest in a different species.

Another possibility is that it finds "room" in another person's body. Usually this happens when the desperate soul finds a spiritual "breach" in a person. This "niche" is often found in one who is steeped in transgression, where the connection between his soul and body is already tenuous. Similarly, intense emotional or mental turmoil can create this "crack" in one's spiritual conscious that can draw fetid souls like flies to a festering wound. Once a soul enters such a "breach", it cleaves tenaciously to its human host who shelters it from its pursuers. This "cleaving", or possession, is called a *dybuk* that usually takes over the person's speech

and behavior.

In addition to punishment, a second reason for *dybuk* is premature death. While an in-depth explanation of "premature death" is beyond our scope here, the idea may be understood from the following saying of our Sages: "Once tragedy is let loose, the Angel of Death doesn't differentiate between innocent or guilty" (Baba Kama 60a). This can result in a prematurely disconnected soul that has not yet lived out its purpose in this world, and, rather than undergo reincarnation, it clings to this world seeking to fulfill its unrealized potential by cleaving to another's body.

In either case, the *dybuk* can be removed by exorcism, which is a spiritual repair whereby a tainted soul publicly confesses the sins of its previous life, or a prematurely departed soul is promised fulfillment; each case is accompanied by the spiritual influences of a Kabbalistic ceremony (SHG 1:13). Since, according to mystical sources, every soul has some "ethereal mass" (called *tzelem* or *guf dak*) the departing *dybuk* is observed as small mobile bump as it exits from the body. A window in the room is usually left open for the *dybuk* to leave, and after the exorcism the person usually returns to normal.

There is another type of *dybuk* that is dormant or passive, which is referred to as *ibur* since it unobtrusively "impregnates" the host who is unaware of its presence (SHG 1:2). The *ibur* may be cooperative where the *dybuk* of a righteous soul benefits the host, helping the person to achieve perfection, or where the host benefits the *dybuk* through his good deeds. In such a case, the *dybuk* stays as long as there is benefit, but departs upon sin. However, an *ibur* may also be damaging, as when a wicked soul compounds the wicked activities of the host (SHG 1:22).

Does the phenomenon of *dybuk* exist today? We'll see next week!

Sources:

- Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*

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THE UNINVITED GUEST

Question: I received an invitation to the wedding of a good friend and naively assumed that I was also being invited to the meal following the *chupa*. Upon arrival at the wedding hall I discovered that there was no place card for me and learned from another guest that only those whose invitations included response cards were invited to the meal. I had made a great effort to come to this wedding and I was anxious to fulfill the mitzvah of bringing simcha to the *chatan* and *kallah* when they made their appearance during the meal. But I also did not wish to be an unwanted guest. What was the right thing to do?

Answer: Your first reaction in such a situation should be to

give the wedding host the benefit of the doubt by assuming that some oversight was responsible for your invitation from such a good friend failing to include a response card. If it was indeed an oversight your host is probably wondering why such a good friend failed to respond.

The only way out of such a “Catch-22” dilemma is to approach the host with a hearty “Mazal Tov” and an apology for not being able to remain for the meal because of conflicting obligations. If the reaction is a plea for you to stay, then you can consider taking the place of someone who did not show up. The absence of such a plea should be seen as a sign that there was no oversight, and you must content yourself with the fact that you brought simcha to the *chatan* and *kallah* simply by attending their *chupa*.

PUBLIC DOMAIN _____

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Kiddush Hashem

I enjoyed your recent e-column very much regarding Kiddush Hashem. I speak Spanish. I lived in a part of New Mexico where there were a number of Crypto Jews. The term *marrano* means pig, and is interchangeable with *puerco* and *cerdo*. It was an offensive epithet originally applied to Jews who converted to the church, but is commonly used in Spanish when discussing swine. While the word is popularly known and understood in English, its insulting connotation is not. *Anusim*, or the forced ones, I find preferable.

Aside from that, I have found your articles nothing but informative.

• Steven G.

For Whom the Bell Rings

Regarding your article on the dilemma of choosing whether to answer the door or ignore it when speaking with someone on the phone you gave two reasons for asking the person on the phone to hold for a moment and answer the person at the door.

There is an important third reason. The person on the telephone is probably sitting down in comfort while the bell-ringer is possibly standing outside in cold or heat.

• Jack B.

One Ohrnet To Go, Please

I am interested in receiving your weekly Ohrnet magazine by e-mail and wanted to know how to go about registering. Is there a fee? The weekly Torah essays are very enlightening and the additional articles are a tremendous *chizuk* — spiritual strengthening. A true “zikui ha’rabim, providing merit to the public”. Keep up the good work. Please let me know at my e-mail address. Thanking you in advance. Tizku l’mitzvot – may you merit fulfilling many more mitzvot.

• C. P.

Ohrnet replies: Thank you for your warm words of appreciation. They certainly encourage us in our efforts. Ohrnet magazine and all Ohr Somayach online publications are offered as free subscriptions, but donations are more than welcome to enable this free dissemination of Torah teachings worldwide.

Ohrnet Clarifies

In the Chayei Sara issue of Ohrnet, it was stated in that the Samaritans were declared idol worshipers and although they had originally converted they were to be excluded from the Jewish People. The era given for this exclusion was during the Second Temple when in fact it was after the time of the Second Temple.