

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

“And they arose from Egypt and they came to the Land of Canaan to Yaakov their father.” (45:25)

In the 1960s a new form of advertising was discovered and made illegal almost immediately. Madison Avenue realized that flashing one single frame of an advertisement into a movie playing at 24 frames per second left a subliminal message imprinted in the mind of the viewer — a message of which he was totally unaware. Because of its extreme subtlety, the message managed to sneak under the defenses of the consumer and plant itself into his subconscious. Without knowing it, the next time he was shopping, he had this overpowering attraction to buy FidoFeed over his usual brand of dog food.

In fact, Madison Avenue had invented nothing new, for they were merely applying a principle that was over three thousand years old.

In this week’s Torah portion, Yosef’s brothers returned to their father Yaakov and have to tell him that Yosef is still alive. Naturally, they are concerned how to break the news. They feared that the shock of hearing that not only was Yosef alive but that he was now the ruler of Egypt might be too much for Yaakov. As they approached Yaakov’s tent, they saw Serach, the daughter of Asher,

coming out of the house to greet them. Serach was an extraordinary person, on a higher spiritual level than her contemporaries. She also played the harp beautifully.

They decided that the best way to break the news to Yaakov was for Serach to compose and play a beautiful song whose lyrics would say that Yosef was alive and well and living in Egypt. Then, with her harp, she would slip into her grandfather’s tent and begin to play and sing.

Yaakov had never recovered from the imagined loss of Yosef, and was still in mourning till that moment when Serach began to sing. Softly she began, “My uncle Yosef is still alive; he is the ruler over Egypt...” Serach’s soothing music cocooned those highly-charged words. Yaakov imbibed the words, and the message, and blessed Serach, “Serach! You have revived my soul. May you live forever!” And, measure for measure, Serach’s reward was that she lived until the reign of King David (another master of the harp) and was one of the few people to be taken to Gan Eden alive.

“Music has the power to work on our emotions, to sneak below the level of the intellect and lodge its message in our subconscious.”

Music has charms to soothe a savage beast. It has the power to work on our emotions, to sneak below the level of the intellect and lodge its message in our subconscious. Before Yaakov could be shocked by the news that Yosef was alive, the message had already entered his consciousness subliminally, through the sound of music.

• Source: *Sefer Hayashar*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spir-

itual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

ISRAEL Forever

THE CRY OF THE POOR

“One out of every five Israelis is poor!” This statistic of poverty in Israel sent shock waves throughout the nation.

According to a report released a couple of weeks ago by the National Insurance Institute there are 1.4 million Israelis living below the poverty level, 650,000 of them children. The poverty level is a monthly income of up to 1,740 *shekalim* (\$400). This increase of 80,000 in 2003 over the previous year was caused by the reduction in government allowances for children.

In this week's Torah chapter we read about the outcry of the impoverished Egyptian population to Yosef to supply them with grain from the government warehouses which they cannot afford to buy. The Torah goes into great detail in describing

the response of this Jewish ruler to the plight of his subjects.

Should this not serve as a lesson for the Jewish rulers of the State of Israel in how to respond to the outcry of their Jewish subjects?

Israel once prided itself on its social welfare policy. In its attempt to imitate western capitalism the present government has turned a deaf ear to the outcry of so many of the people it is supposed to serve. One minister in this government was even brazen enough to publicly declare a couple of months ago that there are no starving people in this country.

There is poverty in Israel both in the economy of a fifth of its people but also in the vision of a government which fails to understand that it has a responsibility to relieve the poverty of its people in order to preserve Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

TRANSPLANT NUMBER 100

When Israel's renowned Beilinson Hospital performed its one hundredth kidney transplant last month, the occasion called for a special ceremony. The dedicated staff had the honor of the participation of Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, the former Chief Rabbi of Israel and one of the country's most sought after speakers. The patient that was the beneficiary of this hundredth transplant was Rabbi Lau's niece, who had suffered for many years from renal fibrosis.

The Beilinson staff is quite accustomed to celebrity

patients. A couple of years ago they planted into the body of United Torah Jewry Knesset Member Rabbi Avraham Ravitz a kidney taken from his oldest son. That transplant received a great deal of publicity not only because of Rabbi Ravitz's fame as a spokesman of Orthodox Jewry in Israel but also because of the drama surrounding the kidney donor. A major dispute among Rabbi Ravitz's many sons as to who would have the privilege of donating his kidney had to be settled by the decision of a leading halachic authority.

PARSHA Q&A?

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said "Don't dispute on the way?"
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt?"
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *Lashon Hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave Eretz Canaan.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Canaan.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - *Dina bat Yaakov*.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

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THE SCHOLARLY PEACEMAKERS

One of the best known Talmudic statements is “Torah scholars increase peace in the world.” It is so familiar not only because, in addition to its appearance in our *gemara* and at the conclusion of *Mesechot Berachot*, *Yevamot*, *Nazir* and *Bechorot*, it is included in our prayer service. (There is a footnote in our *sefarim* which already calls attention to the fact that everywhere else this statement is attributed to Rabbi Elazar in the name of Rabbi Chanina while here it is credited to Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah.)

The source for this statement is the passage (*Yeshayahu* 54:13): “And all your sons shall be students of G-d and there will be abundant peace for your sons.” The last word in this passage - *banayich* - which we read as “your sons” can also be read as *bonaich* which means “your builders,” and teaches us that those who study G-d’s Torah build peace in the world.

There is a reason why this particular statement appears in all of the above-mentioned places, explains Maharsha, and he relates its appearance here to the preceding account of the dialogue between Alexander of Macedonia and the Torah scholars in the south of Eretz Yisrael. When he asked them to define who is considered a wise man, a powerful one and a wealthy one, he was hinting to them to pay tribute to the philosophical wisdom he acquired as a student of Aristotle, to his power as demonstrated in conquering so many lands, and his wealth accumulated from those conquests. These Sages, however, put down this haughty conqueror by defining true wisdom as recognizing the true purpose for which man was created, true power as self-control and true wealth as being content with one’s modest earnings and not accumulating wealth through aggressive military conquest.

The moral lessons thus communicated by Torah scholars to a power-thirsty militarist certainly had an impact on retraining him from unlimited warfare and they thus proved that Torah scholars indeed increase peace in the world. The extension of this is the statement of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah that the very study of Torah also serves, in some mystical way, to increase peace in the world.

• *Tamid* 32b

THE LION ON THE ALTAR

In his prophecy regarding the second Beit Hamikdash, the Prophet Yechezkel thus describes the measurements of the roof of the altar:

“And the *Ariel* shall be twelve cubits long by twelve cubits

wide, square in its four sides.” (43:16)

Why was the roof of the altar upon which were burned the sacrifices called by the name *Ariel*?

In his commentary, *Tiferet Yisrael* offers a very interesting explanation. The *gemara* (*Mesechta Yoma 21b*) relates that the fire which descended from Heaven upon the altar was in the form of a lion. (Rashi there writes that it was a large coal which descended upon the altar in the days of King Solomon in the shape of a crouching lion and remained there until the idol-worshipping King Menashe removed it.) *Ari* means “lion” and *El* means “powerful”, and this fire was indeed like a powerful lion both in its brilliant appearance and in its ability to devour liquids as well as solids.

The only problem with this brilliant explanation is what Rabbi Chanina, the deputy *Kohen Gadol*, says in the above-mentioned *gemara* about seeing this Heaven-sent fire during the Second Beit Hamikdash period in the form of a dog rather than the lion which it simulated in the first one. How then can we fathom Yechezkel’s prophesy about the fire on the altar roof in the Second Beit Hamikdash being a lion - like *Ariel*?

Perhaps the answer lies in what Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura points out concerning Yechezkel’s prophesying about the Third Beit Hamikdash of the future as well as the second one. (In his introduction to this *mesechta*, *Tosefot Yom Tov* elaborates on how the Second Beit Hamikdash had elements of both the first and the third.) It may be assumed that in the Beit Hamikdash which *Mashiach* will build, the glory of a lion-shaped fire on the altar will grace it and the Prophet can already refer to it as *Ariel*.

• *Middot* 35b

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MONTAGE

From: Jack

Dear Rabbi,

Hi. I have a question for the Rabbi. My digital camera has a function that allows me to take 2 photos, and combine them into one. In other words, I can take 2 pictures, one of one person from the neck up, and a second photo of a second person from the neck down, and combine the 2 shots into 1. The resulting combined photo shows person A's head in the place of person B's head. Many people find the combined photos to be funny.

Last week at a family wedding I took many pictures of that sort. Everybody was wearing appropriate-for-wedding-photographs clothing. I checked with everybody at the wedding who I had taken "split" pictures of to see if they were OK with my sharing the combined photographs with other family members as part of an electronic wedding album that I would prepare and email to them. Included in these were my 2 nephews who are in their 20's, and my 16-year-old niece, though she is not identifiable in the photos, since my nephews' heads are in those photos superimposed where her head would otherwise be. All said that it would be fine for me to send their combined photos on to others as part of a wedding album. Some volunteered that they thought that the pictures of them were funny.

My sister's husband has suggested that under Jewish law it is inappropriate for me to email the combined photos of my nephews and niece (his children) to my family members.

He maintains that: "One of the basic values in Judaism is the sacredness of the human body, based on the Genesis I comment that G-d created humans in His image (interpreted as a value statement, not "physically"). To deliberately distort the human body in this manner is a deviation from this Jewish value in my opinion. At the same time, he says that "it was cute for a moment." He is far more learned than I am in Jewish law. But I find his conclusion surprising. (I should note that he does not have a problem with photographs of people in general.) My thought had been that these are my photos, that the people in the photos have all consented to my emailing the photos to the rest of our family, that most are adults, and the 16 year old (an adult, I guess, under Jewish law?) is not even identifiable. Can you tell me your view of this issue under Jewish law?

Dear Jack,

Your very unique and detailed question is itself interesting reading, so I'll limit my response to a brief answer. While there does not seem to be any halachic prohibition with your photo-montage as far as the "letter of the law" is concerned, I think there may be a problem as far as the "spirit of the law" is concerned. Such a montage seems to compromise *tzelem Elokim*, man's being created in the image of G-d. After all, a person might just as well be superimposed over an animal or vice versa. Similarly, merging men and women, as in the photo in question, creates an image which the Torah prohibits in action, namely cross-dressing. If such images are spiritually inappropriate, it would be improper to make and share them with others, even if they agree to it and find them funny. In any case, there is certainly a basis for the father's sensitivity, and in the name of peace and good will, you should respect his request. May your family have only joyous occasions.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

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

PILLAR OF HUMILITY

One of the Jerusalem Torah giants about whom so many legends have been related was Rabbi Shmuel Salant. Not only was he outstanding in his Torah scholarship and communal leadership, but in his humility as well. Although he headed the community in the Holy City for nearly seventy years with firmness that shaped its character, he was extremely modest, refusing to be called the Rabbi of the city.

How humble he was in his relations with others was



expressed in an incident which occurred when his rabbinical court was forced to take action against a local merchant who defied a ruling of the rabbis. After an edict was issued against him, the merchant soon burst into Rabbi Salant's home and threatened to break all his windows if he did not retract the edict.

"What do you think I'll do," responded the Rabbi, "remain silent? I'll send someone to the glazier and order new windows!"

TOTS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

Question: I am anxious to train my young son in attending synagogue and participating in the prayer services. Since he is only a tot, however, he is more interested in running around and making noise to the great annoyance of the other worshippers. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: As praiseworthy as are your intentions for providing *chinuch* training for your child at a very young age, you must bear in mind what is stressed in all halachic works about the negative side of bringing to the synagogue children who disturb the decorum which should prevail in such a holy place.

If you insist on bringing your son to the synagogue then it is your responsibility to keep him at your side throughout the service and to take him home if he gets out of hand. Too many fathers with good intentions see the idea of taking restless little ones to the synagogue as a way of giving their overworked wives a chance to rest. They should be reminded that the synagogue is not a babysitting facility.

A final note on this subject is the observation made by halachic authorities that allowing children to run around in the synagogue is counter-productive to *chinuch* because it trains them in disrespect for the sanctity of the house of prayer.

PUBLIC DOMAIN _____

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Where is Portuguese for Brazil?

Please tell us where the Portuguese pages of Ohrnet from Ohr Somayach are that we remember reading and studying in the past?

• Abraham S.
Londrina - Parana - Brazil

Ohrnet replies: We did in fact produce a weekly publication in Portuguese for Brazilians for a number of years until our resources no longer allowed us to continue. If we should find a sponsor we would be delighted to continue.

Honor Thy Student

You should send this one to all teachers, so that they should be careful not to embarrass a student in front of the others (or at all if possible!).

• Joel S.

The Environment Around the World

Shalom,

Yasher koach on your wonderful response re the environment. I would like permission to include your complete response, with proper credit given, in a Jewish Vegetarians of North America Newsletter.

Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, College of Staten Island

Ohrnet replies: Permission granted.

Thank You For “The Environment”

This is beautiful, I am so happy to have gained this insight! Thank you for your highly informational and educational service, so much of benefit to all types of people — myself as well.

• M., Senior Journalist