

OHR NET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

JOURNEY

“These are the journeys of the Children of Yisrael” (33:1)

Can you remember what you did on a certain Tuesday, five years ago? How about a particular day last year? How about last month?

When our lives follow a routine it becomes very difficult to separate one day from the next. The past seems to spread back behind us like an almost endless gray carpet. Here and there, however, landmarks protrude above the humdrum scenery. A marriage, a birth, a death, a golden wedding. The same is true when we travel. We remember clearly the five minutes we spent at Niagara Falls as though it was yesterday even though it happened ten years ago. We still smell the rain of a tropical rainstorm on Fiji, the fumes of a childhood traffic-jam on the way to Bognor Regis. Travel makes time significant and memorable.

We talk of life being a journey. The essence of life is to journey, to move, to develop. When G-d appeared to Avraham Avinu and told him that he would be the progenitor of a holy nation, it was with the command “Go to yourself.” The essential journey is to the self. To develop the internal landscape of the soul. In order for

Avraham to fulfill his potential and be the Father of the Jewish People he had to go, to journey. Maybe it was for this reason that G-d didn’t tell him his destination. For the destination was not the essence of the journey, rather the journey itself, the process.

In this week’s portion, the Torah lists the 42 encampments of the Jewish People on their journey from Egypt to the Land of Israel. Every time they move camp the Torah repeats the phrase “They journeyed from...” Why was it necessary to repeat this phrase with every encampment? Obviously, if they camped in a different place they must have journeyed to it from the place they left.

The journey of the Jewish people through the desert was a spiritual rite of passage between the fleshpots of Egypt and the Land that flowed with the milk and honey of holiness. It’s easier to take the Jew out of Egypt than Egypt out of the Jew. It took many separate spiritual journeys to impact on the collective spiritual psyche of the Jewish People and ready them to enter the Promised Land.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah names all 42 encampments of *Bnei Yisrael* on their 40-year journey from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan River into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d commands *Bnei Yisrael* to drive out the Canaanites from *Eretz Yisrael* and to demolish every vestige of their idolatry. *Bnei Yisrael* are warned that if they fail to rid the Land completely of the Canaanites, those who remain will be “pins in their eyes and thorns in their sides.” The boundaries of the

Land of Israel are defined, and the tribes are commanded to set aside 48 cities for the *levi'im*, who do not receive a regular portion in the division of the Land. Cities of refuge are to be established: Someone who murders unintentionally may flee there. The daughters of Tzelofchad marry members of their tribe so that their inheritance will stay in their own tribe. Thus ends the Book of *Bamidbar/Numbers*, the fourth of the Books of the Torah.

THE WANDERING JEW

The characterization of the Jewish nation as a flock of wanderers perhaps has its roots in this week's Torah portion, which lists no less than 42 stops made by our ancestors on their forty-year journey from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael.

While this wandering was a prelude to inheriting the Land promised to the Patriarchs, the wandering of the last couple of millennia has been the result of exile from that Land.

Our Sages explain the purpose of wandering as not only an atonement for the sins committed while in the Holy Land but also for the impact that a Jewish presence

had on the lands in which they wandered. Whether this expressed itself in the converts to Judaism, the kabbalistic concept of liberating sparks of holiness trapped in foreign cultures or the many other benefits that came to all lands which hosted them, it is clear that the entire world gained much from the wandering Jew.

The return in our generation of many Jews to their own Land has unfortunately not yet brought an end to the saga of the wandering Jew. We pray three times a day for the Divinely orchestrated ingathering of all the wandering Jews into Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

THE CHURVA – AN ARCH FOR REMEMBERING

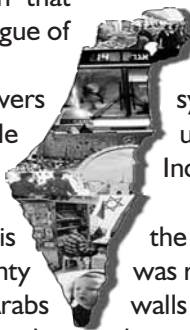
Visitors to the Old City of Jerusalem are always struck by the sight of a magnificent arch that marks the site upon which stood the synagogue of Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid.

This Polish-born kabbalist led a group of followers on aliya to Eretz Yisrael some 300 years ago. He bought a courtyard next to the Ramban Synagogue and initiated construction of his own synagogue. His sudden death slowed down this enterprise but work went on. However twenty years after its completion it was destroyed by Arabs and the site stood desolate for many years – hence the

name *Churva*, which means “ruin”.

In the middle of the 19th century the synagogue was rebuilt with the help of the Rothschild family and served as an Ashkenazi synagogue and as home of the Eitz Chaim Yeshiva until its destruction by Arabs in the War of Independence.

After Israel regained control of the site in 1967 the famous arch which distinguished the building was restored and stood in stark contrast to the ruined walls that remained from the building. Renovation of these ruins are in the final stages of completion.



לע"נ

ר' דוד בן ר' אהרון ז"ל
 מרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the Torah list the places where the Jewish People camped?
2. Why did the King of Arad feel at liberty to attack the Jewish People?
3. What length was the camp in the *midbar*?
4. Why does the Torah need to specify the boundaries that are to be inherited by the Jewish People?
5. What was the *nesi'im*'s role in dividing the Land?
6. When did the three cities east of the Jordan begin to function as refuge cities?
7. There were six refuge cities, three on each side of the Jordan. Yet, on the east side of the Jordan there were only two and a half tribes. Why did they need three cities?
8. To be judged as an intentional murderer, what type of weapon must the murderer use?
9. Why is the *kohen gadol* blamed for accidental deaths?
10. When an ancestral field moves by inheritance from one tribe to another, what happens to it in *yovel*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 33:1 - To show G-d's love of the Jewish People. Although it was decreed that they wander in the desert, they did not travel continuously. During 38 years, they moved only 20 times.
2. 33:40 - When Aharon died, the clouds of glory protecting the Jewish People departed.
3. 33:49 - Twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2,000 *amot*).
4. 34:2 - Because certain *mitzvot* apply only in the Land.
5. 34:17 - Each *nasi* represented his tribe. He also allocated the inheritance to each family in his tribe.
6. 35:13 - After Yehoshua separated three cities west of the Jordan.
7. 35:14 - Because murders were more common there.
8. 35:16 - One capable of inflicting lethal injury.
9. 35:25 - He should have prayed that such things not occur.
10. 36:4 - It remains with the new tribe.

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- When the material upon which the *get* is written belongs to the woman
- Transfer of the *get* through his slave or property given to her
- *Get* written on horn of animal or hand of slave
- *Get* written on something connected to the ground
- When owner of plant and owner of its container want to sell to each other
- Status of tree partially in Eretz Yisrael and partially outside
- When it suffices to have witnesses only on delivery of *get*
- Who is qualified to write a *get* and to deliver one
- Which women are qualified to deliver a *get* or to testify that a husband died
- When the woman is an agent to deliver a *get* to herself
- The requirement for a *get* to be written specifically for the woman being divorced
- The problem of two people with the same name
- The concept of *bererah* and its application here
- What must be left blank in preparing a standard form for a *get* or a document for loan or sale
- Why the *get* must have a date written in it
- A *get* lost and found by the agent delivering it
- The source for returning a found item to its claimant based on his identifying information
- Assuming that an old or sick husband is still alive when agent delivers the *get*
- Which circumstances cause us to assume that someone is no longer alive

ANOTHER LOOK AT LIFE EXPECTANCY

If an elderly man sends a *get* to his wife in another country the agent may deliver the *get* on the assumption that he is still alive. (The ramifications of her being considered a divorcee or a widow is her ability to marry a *kohen*.)

The Sage Rava qualifies this ruling of the *mishnah* by stating that once the sender has reached the age of eighty we can no longer make an assumption that he is still alive when the *get* is delivered. His qualification is challenged by the Sage Abaye who cites a source that

states that even if the divorcer is a hundred years old we can assume he is still alive. The response to this challenge is that once a person has passed the age of most people his life expectancy is not subject to the norm.

Although it would seem from this dialogue that only when one reaches the age of one hundred is he considered capable of living longer than the norm. Rashi, however, saw a need to bridge the initial statement of Rava with his subsequent rebuttal of Abaye's challenge. He therefore explains that while a person is in his eighties it cannot be assumed by his agent that he is still alive when the *get* is delivered. But once he reaches ninety we can assume that he is still alive because he has already proven to be an exception to the norm of longevity.

• *Gittin 28a*

What the SAGES Say

“Brothers who divide an inheritance of fields are considered as having purchased from one another and are obligated to return to each other the field they acquired in the division (due to Yovel).”

• *Rabbi Yochanan - Gittin 25a*

WHY WINE?

From: Baruch Greenbaum in NY

*Dear Rabbi,
Why does wine have such a significant role in Judaism?*

Dear Baruch,

I'll introduce the answer to your question by way of a joke:

A leader of a house of worship was giving a fiery sermon about the evils of alcohol: "If I had all the beer in the world," he said, "I'd take it and throw it in the river; and if I had all the wine in the world, I'd take it and throw it in the river! And if I had all the whiskey in the world, I'd take it and throw it into the river." He sat down. The choir leader then stood and said with a gluttonous grin, "All please rise for the singing of number 258: 'We Shall Gather at the River.'"

The above story illustrates two approaches to drinking alcohol and wine. The sermonizer believes that wine is intrinsically evil and must be totally avoided, while the glutton implies that hedonistic immersion in wine is not so bad. The Jewish view is far from both of these views. We believe that the enjoyment of wine, like other physical pleasures, can and should be used, but in the service of G-d.

To be sure, many verses warn about the potential harm of indulging in wine. Yet others laud its value. For example, wine is mentioned in Psalm 104 as something that "gladdens the heart of man." Hence it is used to gladden and inspire us at various times: like at a circumcision, wedding and other joyous occasions, and also for kiddush on Shabbat (sanctification of Shabbat), and during Purim

and at the Passover Seder recalling redemption.

In addition to its relevance as a venue to compliment the inherent joy of these occasions, there is a deeper reason for the relevance of wine as well.

Wine symbolizes the coming into fruition and the perfection of the human life cycle. It starts off in an undeveloped state as a conglomerate of disparate parts thus corresponding to the incognizance of infancy. It then becomes grape juice that corresponds to the sweetness, yet immaturity of childhood. Eventually, it undergoes fermentation, a possibly unpleasant but necessary transition to sophistication and maturity. This corresponds to the struggles and challenges of adolescence and young adulthood on all levels: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Only then does it become the refined, elevated and mature product, wine. This corresponds to the serene and sagacious state of adulthood.

This transformative property of wine, then, is another reason it's involved on occasions such as mentioned above. We drink it on occasions that mark distinction (circumcision), growth (marriage), elevation (Shabbat) and enlightenment (Purim, Passover). In fact, this latter, latent quality of wine to engender elevation and enlightenment is covertly alluded to in the Hebrew word for wine – "yayin".

"Yayin" is spelled 'yud', 'yud', 'nun'. Since each Hebrew letter has a numerical equivalent (referred to as 'gematria') such that 'yud' equals 10 and nun equals 50, the value for wine is 70. This is also the value for the Hebrew word for the mystical or esoteric – "sod" ('samech', 'vav', 'dalet'; 60, 6, 4). Through the proper use of wine in the proscribed context, one is able to release great potential for spiritual transformation, elevation and enlightenment.

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THE OTHER PATIENTS

Question: When I visit a relative or friend in the hospital I invariably find him sharing a room with others with whom I am not at all familiar. I often wonder whether the mitzvah of visiting and encouraging the sick extends to these strangers as well. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: While you are not obligated to visit someone you don't know, the situation is different when you are already in their proximity as in the case you describe. Just as someone is not required to attend every funeral, but if he encounters

one he is expected to somewhat escort it to show his respect for the deceased, so too if you are already in the same room with a sick stranger you are expected to make some gesture of *bikur cholim*.

This does not necessitate spending as much time with him as you do with the patient you came to visit. Simply asking how he feels and wishing him a speedy recovery can go a long way to lifting his spirits and thus adding another notch to your fulfillment of the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

TALE OF TWO TOMBS

Before he died at the age of 101 the legendary Jewish philanthropist Sir Moshe Montefiore left instructions to build a small dome on his grave in England as a replica of the dome on Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem and to have dust from her tomb placed inside his burial site.

The reason for this was the special connection that Montefiore had with Rachel's tomb. It was he who

secured a building permit from the Turkish sultan and financed the construction of the building at the site of the tomb.

When Jews regained control of the tomb in 1967 improvements were made to accommodate the large number of visitors to the grave, especially on the memorial day of 11 Cheshvan and special times of the year.

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