

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAERA · 26 TEVET 5772 · JAN. 21, 2012 · VOL. 19 NO. 14

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE REAL THING

"...and Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs." (7:12)

**Y**ou can't fake the Real Thing. When Aaron's staff swallowed the staffs of the Egyptian sorcerers in front of the king it became clear who was authentic and who was not.

Jewish history has been plagued by other movements purporting to be the Real Judaism.

The most successful of these is undoubtedly Christianity, but there have been many others who have tried to authenticate themselves as the 'real' Judaism. Some break away from normative Judaism and change their name, and some try to usurp the authority of the Torah Sages and call their beliefs 'Judaism'.

During the Ottoman Empire, the Karaites attempted to gain recognition for themselves as the 'authentic Jews'.

They approached the Sultan, wanting to be recognized as the legitimate 'People of Israel', and that the Jewish People should be disenfranchised as being fakes.

The Sultan summoned a representative of both the Karaites and a Rabbi to appear in front of him at the royal palace. After hearing both their cases, he would decide who was the authentic "People of the Book".

Of course, as was the custom of the east, both the Karaite and the Rabbi were required to remove their shoes before appearing in front of the Sultan. The Karaite removed his

shoes and left them by the entrance to the throne room. The rabbi also removed his shoes, but then he picked them up and carried them with him into the audience with the Sultan.

When the Sultan looked down from his throne he was struck by the somewhat strange sight of the Rabbi holding a pair of shoes, and he demanded an explanation.

"Your Majesty," began the Rabbi "As you know, when the Holy One, may His Name be blessed, appeared to our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, at the site of the burning bush, G-d told Moses, "Take off your shoes from on your feet!"

"We have a tradition," said the Rabbi, "that while Moses was speaking to the Holy One, a Karaite came and stole his shoes! So, now, whenever we are in the company of Karaites we make sure to hold onto our shoes!"

The Karaite turned to the Rabbi and blustered, "That's nonsense! Everyone knows that at the time of Moses, there were no Karaites!"

The Rabbi allowed time for what the Karaite had said to sink in, and then quietly added, "Your Majesty, I don't believe there is a need for more to be said."

You can't fake the Real Thing.

• Source: Heard from Rabbi Zev Leff

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**G**-d tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. G-d commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. G-d punishes the Egyptians and sends plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a small-

er scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only G-d could be performing these miracles. Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

## ISRAEL Forever

### THE FOURTH CUP

**O**n Pesach eve at our Seder we drink four cups of wine. Our Sages point out that they correspond to the four expressions of redemption from Egyptian bondage which G-d spoke to Moshe as recorded in this week's Torah portion.

The first three – “I shall take you out from the burdens of Egypt”, “I shall rescue you from their service” and “I shall redeem you” – all refer to the actual liberation from Egypt and the destruction of their pursuing slave-masters. The fourth expression – “I shall take you to Me for a people” – refers to the purpose of the Exodus, the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

Once we became G-d's chosen people – “So you shall know that I am your G-d” –we were deserving of the ensuing promise of “I shall bring you to the land which was promised to the Patriarchs.”

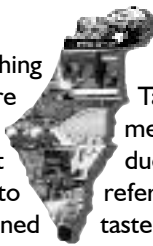
This connection between loyalty to Torah and receiving Eretz Yisrael as a heritage has been tragically forgotten by some Jews who see Israel as nothing more than just another country imitating the nations of the world. It is to be hoped that they will learn to appreciate the security which is provided by the religious community's dedication to Torah which makes us worthy of enjoying Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### THE LAND THAT HAS EVERYTHING

**E**retz Yisrael is described as a land “in which nothing is missing” (*Devarim 8:9*). This outstanding feature of Eretz Yisrael is hinted at again when the Torah prohibits the eating of the fruit of a tree in the first three years of its life. This rule, we are told, applies to “every food-producing tree whose fruit must be shunned as *orlah*” (*Vayirka 19:23*).



There seems to be a redundancy here, notes the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Meir (*Mesechta Brachot 36b*), since mentioning fruit once obviously identifies it as a food-producing tree. His conclusion is that “food-producing” is a reference to the kind of tree whose wood has the same taste as its fruit and is intended to teach us that even such a rare tree is to be found in the land that has everything.

לע"נ  
מרת פייגה בת ר' דוד ע"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA Q&A?

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
6. Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel"?
7. After which plague did G-d begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart"?
8. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
9. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
10. How long did the plague of blood last?
11. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
12. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation"?
13. What are "chamarim"?
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
16. What were the Egyptians likely to do if they saw the Jews slaughtering lambs?
17. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
18. The *dever* killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:9 - Although G-d swore to give them the land, they never actually had control over it.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
6. 6:25 - Yitro fattened (*pitem*) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (*pitpet*) at his evil inclination.
7. 7:3 - After the sixth plague — *shechin*.
8. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
9. a. 7:17 - Because the Nile was an Egyptian god.  
b. 8:17 - Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and G-d did the same.
10. 7:25 - Seven days.
11. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
12. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
13. 8:10 - Piles.
14. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
15. 8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
16. 8:22 - Stone the Jews.
17. 8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
18. 9:10 - In the plague of *dever* only the cattle *in the fields* died. The plague of *shechin* affected the surviving cattle.
19. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

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*Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story* written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

*Parsha Insights* written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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- Fixing the length of months in the lunar year
- The varying length of the lunar year
- The instruments used for music in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- The days of the year in which full Hallel is said
- Why no Hallel is said on Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Purim
- The failure of improvements in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Who played the instruments for the song which accompanied the sacrifices
- Simcha and gladheartedness
- When Levites switch roles in their service
- The timing of the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*
- How many *Yovel* (fiftieth year celebrations) were there between entry into Eretz Yisrael and exile
- The number of musical instruments and Levites playing them
- The dangers of *lashon hara* (gossip and slander)

## NOT SO SMART

Are improvements always successful? The *gemara* records improvements made in the *Beit Hamikdash* which proved to be counterproductive. These included musical instruments used by the Levites for providing the musical accompaniment to sacrifices, a tool used for preparing the spice sacrifice and the flow of water from the Shiloah Pool.

The lesson to be learned from the failure to these improvements is the fulfillment of the warning of the Prophet Yirmiyahu that “Let the wise man not laud himself with his wisdom” (9:21). Rashi explains that the vessels of the first *Beit Hamikdash* were all created according to Divine instructions so that any attempt to improve upon them was an exercise in futility.

• *Arachin 11a*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“One who speaks *lashon hara* is guilty of sin comparable to the three cardinal sins of idol worship, murder and sexual immorality.”

• *The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael - Arachin 15b*

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## BAD JEW

From: D.

Dear Rabbi,

*Am I a bad Jew if I eat bacon, don't go to temple very often, actually only on the major holidays (I do celebrate Passover, and try to keep it)? Religion just isn't a very big part of my American Jewish life. Let me know, thanks!!*

Dear D.,

I don't know. Here's why:

From a Jewish point of view, teenage years start at 12 for a girl and 13 for a boy; ending at 20 for both. The significance of these ages is that 12/13 is when a girl/boy becomes liable in the Earthly court for transgressing commandments, and 20 is when one becomes liable in the Heavenly court. Why is the Heavenly court more lenient (i.e., judges one at a later age)? Because the Heavenly court judges a person as a whole, and until 20 the person has not yet finished developing his personality. Here on earth, on the other hand, we

can't judge people, we can only judge actions. As a teenager grows we can judge his actions, but not the person.

So, the question of whether you are "good" or "bad" is for G-d to decide. We can only speak about what you do, not who you are.

Rabbi Nachman Bulman, *zatzal*, once related that in Poland in the early 20th century, a few Jewish students were allowed to attend medical school. The only catch was that they had to supply their own Jewish cadavers to study on (after all, it would not befit a Polish cadaver to help a Jewish student). Familiar with the problem in Jewish law of dissecting Jewish bodies, the students approached the foremost Halachic authority of the time, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky. They proposed, that in order to gain entrance to medical school, they be allowed to use the bodies of deceased Jews of ill repute or criminals. The Rabbi, after recovering from the shock of the suggestion, responded, "For me to allow that, I would have to know what G-d thinks about those people. And that I can never know."

From your own description, your actions leave room for improvement, and you're concerned about that. That's a good start. Now I suggest that you take the next step and start to improve.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### WHERE THERE'S A WILL

**Question:** Is there any way, according to Torah law, to determine during my lifetime who should inherit what I leave behind, and is it proper to do so?

**Answer:** Torah law is very specific about the rules of inheritance and the priorities it assigns differ in many ways from that of civil law. The only way one can determine his own priorities according to Torah law is to make a gift during his lifetime of what he wishes to bequeath to a particular recipient. The Talmudic Sages provided a formula for doing so while retaining the use of the bequeathed property. A will is written in which the ownership of the property is transferred to the beneficiary but use of it remains with the benefactor until his death, at which time it also reverts to the beneficiary. One should consult a rabbi or a religious lawyer familiar with halachic preparation of wills if this is what he intends to do.

In regard to the propriety of making any such arrangement, a few considerations must be borne in mind.

Disinheriting a son, even if he fails to live up to the spiritual standard expected of him, is frowned upon by our Sages

because there is always the possibility that the offspring of that wayward son may be righteous Jews who will benefit from the inheritance.

Favoring one son over another in distributing the inheritance carries with it the seed of fraternal discord, as we learn from the hatred Yosef suffered from his brothers because of the favoritism to him shown by their father.

Finally, there is the issue of leaving money to charitable causes. While there is halachic restriction on a Jew giving away so much money that he risks impoverishment, this does not apply to what one gives to charity at the time of his death. There is a difference of opinion amongst the halachic authorities as to whether this means that he can give away everything or whether to leave half or two-thirds to his heirs.

If one is inclined to giving charity in order to gain great merit for the World to Come and wishes to avoid any problems, he should make such contributions during his lifetime, thus not only gaining credit for his afterlife but extending and enriching his life in this world.

**Yechezkel Scheer**

Detroit, Michigan

Attended Ohr Somayach for Elul Zman 5771

After college, this part time Tia Chi instructor was disenchanted by his 13 months in Nepal working for the Peace Corps. This realization triggered a spiritual journey to the *kibbutzim* of Israel. His *modus operandi* was to absorb the culture, so when he was “picked off The Wall” to attend an authentic Shabbat meal, the adventure was a

welcome one.

Mr. Scheer was a changed man. He soon returned to Detroit where he married, started a business, and began learning in the local Kollel. He has been experimenting with full-time learning over the past couple years, planning for his retirement schedule. Rabbi Pindrus’ gemara class was just the challenge Mr. Scheer was looking for. There is no doubt that the world will get a significant boost of *kedusha* when Mr. Scheer and his wife retire and make their favorite vacation spot, Israel, into their permanent home.

## 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.

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