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PARSHA INSIGHTS

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

“Because you did not serve the L-rd, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart...” (28:47)

Reading this week’s Torah portion is like watching a film of two cars about to collide in slow-motion. We feel a chilling inexorability when we read the dire warnings of the results of failing to keep the Torah and compare these all too accurate predictions with the grim reality of Jewish history.

One of the strangest predictions that the Torah makes is that the Jewish People will be punished “Because you did not serve the L-rd, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart.” Why doesn’t the Torah talk about idol worship, immorality, baseless hatred? Aren’t those better reasons for exile and tragedy? What’s so wrong about not serving G-d with ‘gladness and goodness of heart’ that it provokes such terrible consequences?

Manner reveals this matter. When you ask someone to help you to do the dishes, you can tell whether he really

wants to help or not. If he says to you, “Is there anything else I can do?” then his help is sincere; but if he says, “Can I go now?” you know that he had one foot out the door the whole time.

Similarly, when the Jewish People fail to serve G-d “amid gladness and goodness of heart”, it is symptomatic that their whole reason for serving G-d is selfish.

People worshipped idols because they wanted to control their deities. They thought they could ‘buy off’ the rain god with a sacrifice or two. Or they could get the sun god to behave by a few quick libations. When the Jewish People serve G-d without gladness and goodness of heart, they are revealing that they relate to G-d in the way of idol worship — trying to ‘buy off’ G-d by merely going through the motions.

HANDS UP!

“And the Kohen shall take the basket from your hands...” (26:4)

Hands are unique. Hands are different from the other limbs of the body. The other limbs of the body are fixed and static, whereas the hands may be lowered lower than the feet or raised higher than the head.

The same is true on an allegorical/ethical level. Man can lower his hands: he can stoop to the lowest of the low. He can commit the greatest sins possible. He can murder. He can steal. Everything can be done with the hands. Idiomatically we talk of ‘blood on his hands’ and ‘dirty hands’.

However, the hands can also be raised up. They can perform the holiest acts. When the *Kohen* blesses the people he

raises his hands. Hands give *tzedaka* (charity). They put on *tefillin*. We extend ‘the hand’ of friendship and assistance.

The handiwork of a person is symbolized by the acquisitions that his hands have brought him. For this reason the first of his fruits must be made holy as “*bikkurim*”.

Since the beginning always influences what follows, every beginning needs to be holy. For when the beginning is holy everything that follows will also be holy.

When the hands are raised above the head, when their direction is Heavenwards, then the head and the body will inevitably follow after them.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

When *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in the Land of Israel, the first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the *kohen* in a ceremony expressing recognition that it is G-d who guides Jewish history throughout all ages. (This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Passover Seder.) On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year *shemita* cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this *mitzvah*, Moshe concludes the commandments that G-d has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in G-d's ways because they are set aside as a treasured people to G-d.

When *Bnei Yisrael* cross the Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, and they are to be covered with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim and half on Mount Eval, and the *levi'im* will stand in a valley between the two mountains. There the *levi'im* will recite 12 commandments and all the people will say "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon *Bnei Yisrael*. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. But if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

RABBI NATAN

“Be a disciple of Aharon – one who loves peace, one who pursues peace, one who loves people and who brings them closer to Torah” —

Hillel (Avot 1:12).

Whenever Aharon met a sinful person as he walked along his way, he would greet him. The next day the same fellow, contemplating a sin, would say to himself: “If I do this, how will I face Aharon? I’d be so ashamed after the greeting he gave me.” In this way a Jew was prevented from sinning.

When two people had a dispute Aharon would approach



each of them separately and say to him: “Look what’s doing with your friend. He’s pounding his chest, tearing his clothes and saying, ‘Woe to me for how can I look at my friend’s face; I am so ashamed because it was I who wronged him.’” Aharon would continue in this way until he had completely removed all hostility from him.

The two unsuspecting quarrelers would subsequently meet in the street, embrace each other, and resume their friendship.

• *Avot of Rabbi Natan 12:3*

Remembering Rav Weinbach

LEARN MISHNAYOS IN MEMORY OF
HAGAON HARAV MENDEL WEINBACH זצ"ל

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When historically did the obligation to bring *bikkurim* begin?
2. *Bikkurim* are from which crops?
3. How does one designate *bikkurim*?
4. Who shakes the basket containing the *bikkurim*?
5. What does “*v’anita v’amarta*” mean?
6. Which Arami “tried to destroy my father?”
7. When during the year may *bikkurim* be brought? Until when are the special verses recited?
8. Someone declaring that he separated *terumah* and *ma’aser* says: “And I didn’t forget.” What didn’t he forget?
9. What were the Jewish People to do with the 12 stones on Mt. Eval?
10. Six tribes stood on Mt. Eval and six on Mt. Gerizim. Who and what were in the middle?
11. Who “causes the blind to go astray”?
12. How does one “strike another secretly”?
13. Eleven curses were spoken on Mt. Eval. What is the significance of this number?
14. Why are sheep called “*ashterot*”?
15. How is the manner of expressing the curses in *Parshat Bechukotai* more severe than in this week’s *parsha*?
16. What is meant by “the Jewish People will become a proverb”?
17. Why did all the curses expressed in 48:16-44 befall the Jewish People?
18. “In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were (last) evening’ and in the evening you will say, ‘If only it were (this) morning.’” Why?
19. To which tribe did Moshe give the Torah first?
20. How long does it take to understand the depth of one’s teacher’s wisdom?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week’s Questions!

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

1. 26:1 - After the Land was conquered and divided.
2. 26:2 - The seven species for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, olives, figs, dates, and pomegranates.
3. 26:2 - When he sees the first fruit ripen on a tree, he binds a piece of straw around it to mark it as *bikkurim*.
4. 26:4 - The *kohen* places his hands under the hands of the one bringing it, and they wave the basket together.
5. 26:5 - Speak loudly.
6. 26:5 - Lavan.
7. 26:11 - *Bikkurim* are brought from Shavuot until Chanukah. The verses are recited only until Succot.
8. 26:13 - To bless G-d.
9. 10. 27:2 - Build an altar.
10. 27:12 - *Kohanim*, *levi'im* and the Holy Ark.
11. 27:18 - Any person who intentionally gives bad advice.
12. 27:24 - By slandering him.
13. 27:24 - Each curse corresponds to one of the tribes, except for the tribe of Shimon. Since Moshe didn’t intend to bless the tribe of Shimon before his death, he did not want to curse them either.
14. 28:4 - Because they “enrich” (*m’ashiro*) their owners.
15. 28:23 - In *Bechukotai* the Torah speaks in the plural, whereas in this week’s Parsha the curses are mentioned in the singular.
16. 28:37 - Whenever someone wants to express the idea of extraordinary suffering, they will use the Jewish People as an example.
17. 28:47 - Because they did not serve G-d with gladness when everything was abundant.
18. 28:67 - Because the curse of each hour will be greater than that of the previous hour.
19. 29:3 - To the Tribe of Levi.
20. 29:8 - 40 years.

לעילוי נשמות
מרת אסתר בשה בת ר' משה יחזקאל ע"ה
אשה יראת ה' ובעלת חסד
נלב"ע ד' מנחם אב תשע"ג
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

PESACHIM 65 - 71

“A person who is haughty — if he is wise, his wisdom will depart from him; and if he is a prophet then his power of prophecy will depart from him.”

This statement taught by Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav is brought on our *daf* as an example of what transpired with Hillel when he was appointed leader of the Sanhedrin and spoke with a degree of haughtiness to the previous leaders, the sons of Ben Betera. He was subsequently punished by Heaven by forgetting what he had learned from his teachers Shamaya and Avtalyon regarding transporting the knife for the *Korban Pesach* when the eve of Pesach occurred on Shabbat.

• *Pesachim 66b*

“Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: Any person who becomes angry — if he is wise, his wisdom will depart from him; if he is a prophet then his power of prophecy will depart from him.”

Our *gemara* explains that the Sage learns the first part of his teaching from Moshe Rabbeinu. When the Jewish army came back victorious from their battle with Midian, Moshe expressed anger with them for not precisely carrying out his orders. As a result, he was punished from Above and the laws of “*tevillat keilim*” — ritual immersion of the vessels taken as spoils of the war — were forgotten by him and were taught to the Jewish People by Elazar the Kohen instead of by Moshe.

• *Pesachim 66b*

OHRNET *Special*

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT KI TAVO

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

Stones of Torah, Glory and Honor

In the Book of Devarim, Chapter 27, Moshe tells the Jewish People to set up large stones immediately after having crossed the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. When other nations, such as the Romans, conquered foreign territory they established physical signs of their presence such as monuments and re-named streets and cities to glorify their power and domination. The Jews, on the other hand, are instructed to erect a monument to the glory and honor of G-d who gave them the Land.

Moshe tells them not to make a simple list of the *mitzvot* on the stones but rather to inscribe a recounting of how G-d took them out of Egypt, sustained them in the wilderness and defeated their enemies in order to bring them into the land of Israel. The people would have natu-

rally erected such a monument; Moshe is simply instructing them to emphasize the true meaning of their conquest.

Moshe then instructs the people to bring the stones to Mt. Ebal. They were to use them to build an altar for sacrificial offerings. The altar was then to be dismantled and given a new inscription. Some commentators say that the entire Torah was to be inscribed, while others say only the Book of Devarim. In any case, by setting up the stones immediately upon crossing the Jordan, using them for an altar, and finally setting them up as a permanent monument, these stones are a physical testimony to the entire purpose of the conquest of the Land of Israel. In his grammatical analysis of these few verses, Abarbanel emphasizes a concept that occurs many times in the Torah's narratives. Moshe took the natural inclinations of the people to commemorate their conquest and steered them into focusing on their relationship with G-d and the importance of the Land of Israel.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

From: Moshe

*Dear Rabbi,
Would you please explain the significance of names in Judaism? Does it matter what name a person was given, or gives to his children?*

Dear Moshe,

Naming is taken very seriously in Judaism. We find that the names of all the important and central figures of the Torah were significant and given for a reason. This is because a name is bound with, and has an effect on, the spiritual character of a person. It is therefore of utmost importance to choose a name which fits this lofty purpose.

According to Jewish sources, despite the fact that prophecy has ceased in general, there are still some residual situations and people in which inklings of prophecy appear. One of them is regarding parents' naming their children. So a Jewish name given at birth is very significant and contains within it a divinely inspired connection to the person's spiritual essence.

In addition, such a name expresses and enhances the unique qualities and powers of the individual, forming a type of aura that accompanies a person through life. It is for these reasons that it is so important to give traditionally acceptable names of righteous and holy people or things.

This is the basis for the common practice to name children after relatives or rabbis and rebbetzins of outstanding spiritual and moral standing. Sefardim often do so for people who are still living; Ashkenazim do so only after the departed. In any case, this is viewed as actually establishing a spiritual connection between the child and the namesake. (According to some opinions, the full name of the namesake should be used and not part of the name, or combined with the name of another person – as naming after different grandparents together.)

Since the name is so intimately entwined with the essence of a person and also has such a significant influence on what happens in a person's life, certain teachings stress the importance of avoiding nicknames, diminutives or parts of names which could change or limit the flow of spiritual influence otherwise derived from a person's full name. So, for example, Ya'akov Yosef should be called just that and not Yankel or Yosi. Some are of the opinion that two names should not be given in the first place, i.e. either Ya'akov or Yosef but not both.

Finally, since names are viewed as being so influential, while they are rarely *changed*, names are often *added* under special circumstances. So someone who is seriously ill might have the name Chaim, life, added to his name. Similarly, a person who is lacking something very important in life such as a spouse, livelihood or tranquility might have a relevant name added whose influence may improve what's lacking in his life. Sometimes names are added to increase compatibility between couples both before and after marriage.

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students

By Shimon O'Heron

**Yehoshua Dov Maline
Yonkers, NY
Derech Program**

One faithful day, bouncing innocently on the trampoline with his friend, Yehoshua was asked, "Why don't you take off your *tzitzit*?" That got the ball rolling, and soon, he himself was off and running. School was too rigid and life was too fast, so at the tender age of 12 years old, Yehoshua had basically finished his formal education and began a personal journey.

His mother wanted to send him to Israel, and he was more than happy for the adventure. Meditation and philosophy filled his days on the kibbutz, and when he returned to find his best friends with peyote and *tzitzit*, his Jewish spark ignited and his *tzitzit* too returned – tie-dyed of course.

Another trip out to Israel landed Yehoshua in the Derech Program at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem alongside those very friends from Miami and the signs were just too much. He is now in his second year of study and planning on a third. He says the relationships he has with the rabbis here are the best of his life.

NEW!

THE ESSENCE OF TESHUVA

Rejoicing with Trepidation

It is well known that all the concepts related to the shofar revolve around the idea of *teshuvah* (repentance). In order to gain a better understanding of how these concepts relate to the inner process of *teshuvah*, let's take a closer look at some of the aspects of the shofar.

Consider the shape of a shofar. One end is narrow and the other end is wide.

Regarding the required length of the shofar, *Chazal* teach us that when you hold a shofar in your hand, part of it should stick out either way. Consequently, when you look at both sides of the shofar you see a narrow end and a broad end.

We must also understand the connotations inherent in the sounds of the shofar. What are the concepts behind these ideas?

A person trying to repent must look back, with his mind's eye, to the actions he committed in the past. Also, he must look forward with regards to his future actions. The reason is that full *teshuvah* is comprised of two parts.

1. Regretting the past; i.e., repenting for having violated the King's dictates through his sins.
2. Resolving that from now on, he will do only what is right.

Hence, someone who decides to do *teshuvah* finds himself situated between the past and the future. In so doing, he looks forward and looks back; i.e., to the "narrow" side of his errant past, and to the "broad" horizon of his bright future. (We will explain why the narrow side is connected to the past, whereas the wide side is connected to the future.)

There is special significance to each type of shofar blast. The *tekiya* blast is symbolic of joy and goodness, whereas the *shevarim* and the *teru'a* blasts represent pain and suffering. These are also connected to *teshuvah*. On the one hand the person violated the decrees of the King. Consequently, he must show how very sorry he is, as it is written: "My sin is before me always" (*Tehillim* 51:5). Such a person intends to always keep his past sins in mind, and to reflect on how he pained G-d's holy presence through his misdeeds. At the same time, however, once a person has firmly resolved to

act in accordance with G-d's will, he has reason to be very happy, because his new path in life will draw him closer to G-d, as the Prophet Hoshea says in verse 14:2, "And you shall return until you reach the L-rd your G-d." Moreover, by doing sincere *teshuvah* a person can actually mend whatever spiritual damage he may have caused, thereby saving himself from future punishment. Such a resolution should be the cause for great joy.

Based on this, we can explain the following puzzling verse in *Tehillim*, 2:11: "Serve G-d with fear, and rejoice with trepidation."

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 30b) asks, "What is the intent of this verse in combining those two opposite emotions? Rabbi Ada bar Masna answered in the name of Rav, 'In a situation of joy, there should also be trepidation'." Similarly, in the *Zohar*, Rabbi Elazar says, "In one part of my heart I weep, while in another part I am joyful." The reason for this is that, in order for one's *teshuvah* to be complete, one must involve both aspects of love and fear, which will involve pain as well as joy.

It is important to note that although a *ba'al teshuvah* must combine the two opposite forces of pain and joy in his heart, nevertheless, the main emphasis should always be on the positive side - joy. This is especially true nowadays.

Therefore, we can suggest the following. The narrow end of the shofar represents looking back at one's past and is symbolic of sadness, which a person should try to reduce as much as possible. But when it comes to happiness (which is hinted at in the broad side of the shofar), one should increase his joy as much as possible, for we are taught that one must serve G-d with joy and gladness. Nevertheless, a person shouldn't go overboard. Everything should be done sincerely and in proper measure, exercising good judgment at all times. This state of mind is alluded to in the Hebrew letters of the word *b'simcha* - with joy - which can also be read in Hebrew as [proper] thought (*machashava*). The idea is that, from a Torah perspective, true joy includes a proper frame of mind.

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