

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY

“Go for yourself from you land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” (12:1)

“**A**ll work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” runs the well-known phrase. Alfred Hitchcock, the celebrated movie director and renowned workaholic, once rephrased it “All work and no play - makes Jack.”

A few weeks ago, Rabbi Binyamin Zeilberger, *zatzal*, took his leave of this world. Rabbi Zeilberger was a remarkable person. During the Second World War, he made a miraculous escape from Lithuania to Japan with the Mir Yeshiva. After the war, he settled in the United States. He was an exceptional *matmid*, someone whose application to Torah knew no bounds. During the summer vacation, Reb Binyamin could sometimes be found sitting by the bay at the end of Bay Parkway in Brooklyn. One time a colleague passed by. Rabbi Zeilberger was leaning back, his hands cupped behind his head, his legs stretched out and his gemara on a *shtender* in front of him. Seeing his relaxed pose, the colleague remarked, “Reb Binyamin, this is the way you learn?”

“No,” he replied, “This is the way I relax.”

It may sound on the surface that there is little to chose between “All work and no play makes Jack” and “This is the way I relax.” However there is a large and

fundamental difference.

G-d told Avraham *Avinu* to forsake everything he knew — his land, his relatives, and his father’s house. G-d asked him to give up everything in order that he could become the prototype and progenitor of a nation who would change the world — the Jewish People. To fulfill this monumental task, G-d gave the descendents of Avraham a vastly powerful tool to complete their task: the Torah. However this tool, to be effective, needs constant practice. Like any top-notch professional, the tools of the trade cannot be left idle, even for one day. As Jan Paderewski, the famous pianist, once remarked, “If I don’t practice for one day, I know it. If I don’t practice for two days, the critics know it. If I don’t practice for three days, the audience knows it.” If the Jewish People as a whole don’t practice the Torah even for one second, not only do we know it, but also so does the whole world. The vital life-giving influx of spirituality from the supernal realm is halted and the world’s continuing existence hangs in jeopardy. The Torah and its *mitzvot* are not just the lifeblood of the Jewish People. They are the lifeblood of existence. We are not in this world to “make Jack.” Jack’s job is to ‘make the world’, and even though we may need to go and sit by the ocean and lean back a little, we can never afford to chill too much because, in the process, the world may freeze over.

*Sources: Nefesh HaChaim
and story heard from Rabbi Yosef Shapiro*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Ten generations have passed since Noach. Man has descended spiritually. In the year 1948 from Creation, Avram is born. By observing the world, Avram comes to the inescapable Truth of G-d's existence, and thus merits that G-d appear to him. At the beginning of this week's *Parsha*, G-d tells Avram to leave his land, his relatives and his father's house and travel to an unknown land where G-d will make him into a great nation. Avram leaves, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, their servants and those whom they converted to faith in G-d. When they reach the land of Canaan, G-d appears to Avram and tells him that this is the land that He will give to his descendants. A famine ensues and Avram is forced to relocate to Egypt to find food. Realizing that his wife's beauty would cause his death at the hand of the Egyptians, Avram asks her to say that she is his sister. Sarai is taken to Pharaoh, but G-d afflicts Pharaoh and his court with severe plagues, and she is released unmolested. Avram returns to *Eretz Yisrael* (Canaan) with much wealth given to him by the Egyptians. During a quarrel over grazing rights between their shepherds, Avram decides to part ways with his nephew Lot. Lot chooses to live in the rich but corrupt city of Sodom in the fertile plain

of the Jordan. A war breaks out between the kings of the region, and Sodom is defeated. Lot is taken captive. Together with a handful of his converts, Avram rescues Lot, miraculously overpowering vastly superior forces, but Avram demurs from accepting any of the spoils of the battle. In a prophetic covenant, G-d reveals to Avram that his offspring will be exiled to a strange land where they will be oppressed for 400 years, after which they will emerge with great wealth and return to *Eretz Yisrael*, their irrevocable inheritance. Sarai is barren and gives Hagar, her Egyptian hand-maiden, to Avram in the hope that she will provide them with a child. Hagar becomes arrogant when she discovers that she is pregnant. Sarai deals harshly with her and Hagar flees. On the instruction of an angel Hagar returns to Avram and gives birth to Yishmael. The Parsha concludes with G-d commanding Avram to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a covenant between G-d and his seed. G-d changes Avram's name to Avraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. G-d promises Avraham a son, Yitzchak, despite Avraham's being ninety-nine years old and Sarah ninety. On that day, Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael and all his household.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE MITZVOT

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

MA'ASER SHEINI

Torah Source

"You shall tithe all the yield of your field... and eat it before the L-rd, your G-d, in the place He has chosen..." (*Devarim* 14:22-23)

Fulfillment

In the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the seven-year cycle, after one has set apart *ma'aser rishon* for the Levite, there is an obligation to set apart ten percent of the remainder and bring it to Yerushalayim and consume it there. If bringing it to Yerushalayim proves to be too difficult, one can redeem the produce and bring the money there and spend it solely on food and drink.

Reason

Sefer Hachinuch offers the same reason for this mitzvah, the one requiring a Jew to bring the fourth-year fruit to Yerushalayim for consumption and the one dealing with the tithe of cattle and flocks which had to be brought to Yerushalayim as sacrifices whose flesh would be consumed there by its owner.

The common denominator is that it was hardly possible for a Jew to consume such a massive amount of food during the three times a year he made a pilgrimage to Yerushalayim. It was therefore practical from an economic perspective for the owner or one of his sons to spend a substantial amount of time studying Torah in the city where the Sanhedrin was located. He could thus develop into a Torah scholar who would return home as an "in-house rabbi" who would be more effective in guiding and influencing his family than any community rabbi with whom there was only marginal contact.



PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What benefits did Hashem promise Avraham if he would leave his home?
2. "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." What does this mean?
3. Who were the souls that Avraham and Sarah "made?"
4. What were the Canaanites doing in the Land of Canaan when Avraham arrived?
5. Why did Avraham build an altar at Ai?
6. What two results did Avraham hope to achieve by saying that Sarah was his sister?
7. Why did Avraham's shepherds rebuke Lot's shepherds?
8. Who was Amrafel and why was he called that?
9. Verse 14:7 states that the four kings "smote all the country of the Amalekites." How is this possible, since Amalek had not yet been born?
10. Why did the "palit" tell Avraham of Lot's capture?
11. Who accompanied Avraham in battle against the four kings?
12. Why couldn't Avraham chase the four kings past Dan?
13. Why did Avraham give "ma'aser" specifically to Malki-Tzedek?
14. Why didn't Avraham accept any money from Sodom's king?
15. When did the decree of 400 years of exile begin?
16. What did Hashem indicate with His promise that Avraham would "come to his ancestors in peace?"
17. How did Hashem fulfill His promise that Avraham would be buried in "a good old age?"
18. Why did the Jewish People need to wait until the fourth generation until they returned to *Eretz Canaan*?
19. Who was Hagar's father?
20. Why did Avraham fall on his face when Hashem appeared to him?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 12:1 - He would become a great nation, his excellence would become known to the world, and he would be blessed with wealth.
2. 12:3 - A person will say to his child, "You should be like Avraham."
3. 12:5 - People they converted to the worship of G-d.
4. 12:6 - They were in the process of conquering the land from the descendants of Shem.
5. 12:8 - He foresaw the Jewish People's defeat there in the days of Yehoshua due to Achan's sin. He built an altar to pray for them.
6. 12:13 - That the Egyptians would not kill him, and would give him presents.
7. 13:7 - Lot's shepherds grazed their flocks in privately owned fields.
8. 14:1 - Amrafel was Nimrod. He said (*amar*) to Avraham to fall (*fel*) into the fiery furnace.
9. 14:7 - The Torah uses the name that the place would bear in the future.
10. 14:13 - He wanted Avraham to die trying to save Lot so that he himself could marry Sarah.
11. 14:14 - His servant, Eliezer.
12. 14:14 - He saw prophetically that his descendants would make a golden calf there, and as a result his strength failed.
13. 14:20 - Because Malki-Tzedek was a *kohen*.
14. 14:23 - Hashem had promised Avraham wealth, and Avraham didn't want Sodom's king to say, "I made Avraham wealthy."
15. 15:13 - With the birth of Yitzchak.
16. 15:15 - That his father, Terach, would repent and become righteous.
17. 15:15 - Avraham lived to see his son Yishmael repent and become righteous, and he died before his grandson Esav became wicked.
18. 15:16 - They needed to wait until the Amorites had sinned sufficiently to deserve expulsion.
19. 16:1 - Pharaoh.
20. 17:3 - Because he was as yet uncircumcised.

- Concept of *bereira* – determining the halachic status of something in the present on the basis of what will develop in the future
- Applying this concept to *eiruv*, tithing and redemption of Second Tithe crops
- Making an *eiruv* when Shabbat and Holiday are back to back or for two days of Rosh Hashana
- Why Rabbi Sheishet refused to eat the deer meat
- Is there a mention of Rosh Chodesh in the Rosh Hashana prayers?
- The blessing of *shehechyanu* on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur
- The clash between ending a fast and starting the Shabbat
- Leaving the *techum* – the limit to which one may walk beyond his city on Shabbat – and returning there
- Those who are victims of circumstances which cause them to lose control of their actions
- Beginning the Shabbat in an open valley which becomes fenced in that day
- The Sages on the ship on Shabbat
- Is flying by Eliyahu limited by the *techum* of Shabbat and why won't he arrive on Friday
- Rabbi Gamliel's telescope

One of the early commentators, Rabbi David Avudraham, is quoted by Rabbi Yosef Karo in his commentary on *Tur Orach Chaim* (550), as stating that the Fast of the Tenth of Tevet is an exception to rule. This fast day, which recalls the beginning of the Babylonian army's siege of Jerusalem which culminated in the destruction of the first *Beit Hamikdash*, can never fall on Shabbat according to our perpetual calendar. But if it could, as was possible in earlier times when the calendar was determined by the sighting of the new moon, we would be obligated to fast even though it was Shabbat. His logic is that in the prophecy of Yechezkel regarding the beginning of the siege, the term "on this very day" used to describe it is the same as that used in the Torah to describe Yom Kippur, and that just as we fast on Yom Kippur when it falls on Shabbat the same applies to the Tenth of Tevet.

Although no Talmudic source is mentioned for this unconventional position, it is suggested by the author of "Ohr Somayach" on the *Mishneh Torah* of Rambam that the source may be found in our *gemara*. The Sage Rabbah asked Rabbi Huna whether an individual yeshiva student who committed himself to fasting on Friday must complete his fast even though he enters Shabbat in a suffering state. Why, asked the "Ohr Somayach", didn't he pose the same question in regard to the four mandatory communal fasts? The answer is that in his time the perpetual calendar was already in effect and the only one of the fast days which could fall on Friday is the Tenth of Tevet. There could be no question regarding extending that fast day into Shabbat because that particular fast day would be observed on Shabbat itself if the two collided. Based on this analysis, he concludes, Rabbi David Avudraham arrived at his position.

FASTING ON SHABBAT?

The general rule is that if any of the days in which Jews are obligated to fast in mourning for the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* falls on Shabbat, the fast is postponed to the following day so as not to interfere with the celebration of Shabbat.

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"If one failed to include the blessing of *shehechyanu* in the *kiddush* for a holiday, he must make it whenever he remembers, even if he is out on the street."

• Rabbi Nachman - *Eiruv* 40b



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A SMASH OF A SMASH

From: Susan in London

Dear Rabbi,

I was at a religious wedding where I noticed the groom break a glass with his foot, then everyone said "mazel tov!" I asked someone what's the meaning behind breaking the glass. She said it's in commemoration of the Holy Temple that was destroyed. It seems strange to me that an act symbolizing destruction should be followed by such an enthusiastic cheer of "mazel tov!" Would you please explain?

Dear Susan,

The custom of breaking a glass at the chupah is based on an event mentioned in the Talmud (Berachot 30b) where Mar, the son of Ravina, was making a wedding for his son. When he saw that the guests were becoming overly joyful, he took an expensive glass and broke it in front of them, thereby tempering their joy.

The question is, what's wrong with being happy at a wedding? Furthermore, the Talmud describes the guests as being rabbis. Presumably they were not acting in a way that would generally be inappropriate. Why did Mar, the son of Ravina break the glass?

There are two basic reasons given for his desire to damper their joy. One is based on the verse "rejoice in trembling" which reveals that a Jew, even at a time of joy, should not be carried away to the extreme, which might cause him to "forget himself" and come to sin (Ran, Berachot). Another reason is, as you were informed, to recall the destruction of the Temple. This is based on the verse, "I shall elevate Jerusalem above my greatest of joys" (Kol Bo, Rema Ev. HaEz. 65).

Your question applies to both of these reasons. If the breaking of the glass is intended to temper the joy and recall the destruction, why is it followed by such an outbreak of joy? Very great rabbis have also asked this question, and have concluded that people have become confused, thinking that the breaking of the glass is itself

a joyous custom (Chupat Chatanim 6:3). Some have even written that the custom of saying mazel tov at the breaking is a mistake in the first place (Siddur Beit Oved). One great rabbi harshly criticized the custom and wrote that he would nullify it if he could (S'dei Chemed "zayn", 12).

If so, why does the custom continue? On a simple level, the preceding objections can be answered with the explanation that once the glass has been broken, the joy has been reduced a bit and the Temple has been recalled, and at that point the "simcha" must go on (after all, people get married, and it is a joyous occasion). The assembled then initiate this joy with the heartfelt blessing of "mazel tov!"

However, there are mystical reasons for the breaking of the glass that are more directly related to the ensuing outbreak of "mazel tov!" When a person becomes spiritually elevated (in this case the *chatan* and *kallah*), a certain negative force of judgment may be aroused against him. This judgment is deflected away from the couple and directed against the breaking glass. Emerging "unscathed" from this spiritually elevating experience, the couple is blessed "mazel tov!" (Shelah in the name of Rekanati). Some relate this to the harmful effect of "the evil eye", which may result from people's jealousy or other negative thoughts or feelings against the *chatan* or *kallah* (Ohr Chama, derush l'Adar).

Another deeper meaning to the custom is recorded in the name of the Rozhiner Rebbe. The Talmud (Sota 17b) states that if a man and woman merit it, the Divine Presence dwells between them. Rashi explains that this is based on the letters 'yod' and 'hey' in the Hebrew words for man and woman. However, these are only two of the four-lettered name. Where are the 'vav' and 'hey'? The canopy under which man and woman are betrothed becoming one is called "chupah", spelled 'chet'-vav'-pey'-heh'. The letters 'chet' and 'pey' spell "pach" which means vessel. When the glass ("pach") is broken, 'chet' and 'pey' are separated, enabling the remaining 'vav' and 'hey' of "chupah" to be united with the 'yod' and 'hey' of the couple, resulting in the unification of G-d's name.

That's something to be jubilant about!

THE CALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF A MEETING

Question: After a long wait for a meeting with a public official I finally got a chance to present my case face to face. No sooner did I begin my well-prepared presentation than his phone rang and he completely turned away from our conversation to speak with the caller. This most disconcerting disturbance repeated itself several times during the course of our meeting. What was the right thing for me to do?

Answer: The official you met with is apparently a very busy man and you must appreciate that other people

aside from yourself are anxious to speak with him during his office hours. If you find that such calls disrupt your meeting with him, you should make a polite request at the outset of your meeting that he instruct the secretary to hold all calls for a short span of time or that he remove his receiver. Such a request will not only eliminate the disruption but will also impress the official with the seriousness of your meeting.

Experience has shown that an official who turns down such a request is not particularly interested in what you have to say, so why waste your time anyway?

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

KINDNESS UNLIMITED

Gemillat Chassadim – acts of kindness to others – is a beautiful trait of the Jewish People everywhere. But it reaches its greatest heights in the Torah communities of Israel.

Open up the Orthodox Telephone Directory of Yerushalayim and you will find no less than 80 pages of different GeMaCh (acronym for *Gemillat Chassadim*) listings.

Six of these pages deal with equipment needed for *brit mila* (circumcision) and *pidyon haben* ceremonies. There are pages for meals for families stuck in a hospital for Shabbat and for housing them. There is even a full page

for used clothing centers.

Consideration for both the physical and spiritual needs of the community finds expression in three pages of *Gemachim* for medical supplies and three pages of *Gemachim* for tefillin and people who will pray in your behalf.

Some of the more unusual *Gemachim* are the ones for pacifiers and baby bottles and for ladies' wigs and *shtraim-lech* for men who left theirs at home.

There is no limit to the imagination displayed by people who want to help others.

ISRAEL Forever _____

THE FIRST OLEH

Why does a Jew make *aliya* (immigrate) to Israel? Much has been spoken and written about the motivations of Jews voluntarily leaving the lands they grew up in in order to settle in Israel. Too many veteran Israelis fail to truly appreciate the difficulties involved in such a move and actually show a disdain for newcomers. ("Israelis love *aliya*," it has been cynically put, "but hate *olim*.")

In this week's Torah portion we are introduced to the first *oleh*, the Patriarch Avraham. When G-d commanded him to travel to "the land which I will show you", He made a point of stressing what Avraham would have to give up – his land, his birthplace and his father's home. In

his commentary, Rashi explains that the focus on what Avraham was sacrificing with his move would make Eretz Israel more beloved to him and would gain for him a greater reward for obeying the Divine command.

"Whatever the Patriarchs experienced," say our Sages, "is a sign for their descendants." *Olim* who come to Israel not as a result of persecution or economic distress are also making the sacrifice of leaving land, birthplace and family in order to achieve what the first *oleh* did – a high level of spirituality. It is the desire to come closer to G-d so dramatically demonstrated by *olim* which will positively influence the secular community in Israel with what is needed to preserve Israel forever.