

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### NOWHERE MAN

*“Six cities of refuge that you shall provide for a murderer” (35:6)*

The greatest gift to man is life. There can be no greater present than the very fact of our existence. When G-d created the world, when He created life, He did so in His own image. Just as He lives, so too we partake of that ultimate life, that ultimate existence. Nothing is closer to G-d than life itself, and nothing contradicts His will more certainly than the taking of life, even inadvertently.

G-d is known as HaMakom, literally “The Place.” He is the place of all existence; the place of life itself. With Him is the source of life, and only with Him. Of every agency that He has given over to His emissaries, the key of life stays

immutably with its Source.

Thus, it can be understood that someone who removes life from this world, even inadvertently, has removed himself from existence. He literally has no place; he has expunged himself from reality, from existence.

It is for this reason that the Torah designates special ‘places’ for those who commit manslaughter. Without these special places there would be nowhere for them in the world.

• Source: Based on the Chidushei HaRim in Iturei Torah

### EVERYWHERE MAN

*“Aharon went up to Mount Hor at the word of G-d and died there in the fortieth year ...in the fifth month on the first of the month.” (33:38)*

A man of peace is missed by all. Nothing leaves a mark on the world as much as the departure from it of someone who loves peace.

In the entire Torah the specific date of the departure from this world of a tzaddik is never mentioned — with one exception.

Why does the Torah not specify the date of a righteous person’s parting?

“Your righteousness is like the mountains of G-d,” G-d’s kindness and righteousness are as prominent as the great mountains; “Your judgments are a vast deep.” His judgment, however, is as hidden as the deep.

The destruction of the Holy Temple took place on the Ninth of Av but its date was hidden from the prophet Yechezkel so that he would not publicize the date of the Holy Temple’s destruction.

The day that a tzaddik dies is as ‘difficult’ for G-d as the day the Temple was destroyed. Just as G-d concealed the date of the destruction of the Temple, so too He did not

broadcast the date of the death of a tzaddik.

With one exception.

“And the entire congregation saw that Aharon had passed away...” (Bamidbar 20:29)

Aharon pursued peace between husband and wife, between one person and another. This made an indelible impression on the Jewish People. The entire Jewish People felt the loss of Aharon.

Similarly it says, “And the Canaanite heard... and they waged war on Yisrael.” (Bamidbar 21:1)

The Canaanites also heard about the death of Aharon; also from the day of Aharon’s passing, the Clouds of Glory departed (Ta’anit 9)

Thus both friend and foe, those who dwell beneath and those above, knew immediately that Aharon had passed to the next world.

And that fact was as blatant as a billboard.

• Source: Divrei Shaul in Iturei Torah

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Matot

Moshe teaches the rules and restrictions governing oaths and vows — especially the role of a husband or father in either upholding or annulling a vow. *Bnei Yisrael* wage war against Midian. They kill the five Midianite kings, all the males and Bilaam. Moshe is upset that women were taken captive. They were catalysts for the immoral behavior of the Jewish People. He rebukes the officers. The spoils of war are counted and apportioned. The commanding officers report to Moshe that there was not one casualty among *Bnei Yisrael*. They bring an offering that is taken by Moshe and Elazar and placed in the *Ohel Mo'ed* (Tent of Meeting). The Tribes of Gad and Reuven, who own large quantities of livestock, petition Moshe to allow them to remain east of the Jordan and not enter the Land of Israel. They explain that the land east of the Jordan is quite suitable grazing land for their livestock. Moshe's initial response is that this request will discourage the rest of *Bnei Yisrael*, and that it is akin to the sin of the spies. They assure Moshe that they will first help conquer Israel, and only then will they go back

to their homes on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe grants their request on condition that they uphold their part of the deal.

### Masei

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 Tzelafchad 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.

## ISRAEL Forever

### A TIME FOR TEARS — AND HOPE

As Jews throughout the world prepare for the Nine Days of Mourning preceding the Tisha B'Av fast for the destruction of both the First and Second *Beit Hamikdash* holy Temples, there is a strange feeling of a blending of tears and hope.

Tears for the absence of a holy place where man could unite with his Creator in the most powerful way.

Tears for the two millennia of exile which followed the

tragic destruction and the loss of our homeland.

Hope for the survival of the Jewish People despite destruction and exile — a hope reinforced by the exciting recovery of world Jewry after the Holocaust.

Hope for the inevitable triumph of our people over all their enemies and the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Hope for Israel forever.

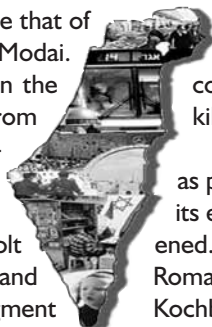
## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

### NABURIA — TOMB OF RABBI ELEAZAR HA-MODAI

Not far from Tsefat is a tomb reputed to be that of the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Eleazar Ha-Modai. Aside from his Aggadic interpretations in the Babylonian Talmud which gained great respect from his colleagues, this Sage was the center of a dramatic historic incident recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud.

A relative of Bar Kochba (who led a revolt against the Romans), Rabbi Eleazar fasted daily and prayed in Beitar that G-d should not sit in judgment



which might stifle the revolt. Bar Kochba, however, was tricked into believing that Rabbi Eleazar was in collusion with the Romans and, as a result, Bar Kochba killed him.

A Heavenly voice then informed him that as punishment for "breaking the arm of Israel and blinding its eye" his arms would become useless and his eyes darkened. After a three-and-a-half year siege of Beitar the Romans succeeded in penetrating its walls, killing Bar Kochba and crushing the revolt.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Matot

1. Who may annul a vow?
2. When may a father annul his widowed daughter's vows?
3. Why were the Jewish People not commanded to attack Moav, as they were to attack Midian?
4. Those selected to fight Midian went unwillingly. Why?
5. What holy vessels accompanied the Jewish People into battle?
6. Those who killed in the war against Midian were required to remain outside the "machane" (camp). Which machane?
7. Besides removing traces of forbidden food, what else is needed to make metal vessels obtained from a non-Jew fit for a Jewish owner?
8. "We will build sheep-pens here for our livestock and cities for our little ones." What was improper about this statement?
9. During the conquest of the Land, where did Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven position themselves?
10. What promise did Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven make beyond that which Moshe required?

### Masei

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.

### Matot

1. 30:2 - Preferably, an expert in the laws of *nedarim*. Otherwise, three ordinary people.
2. 30:10 - If she is under 12 1/2 years old and widowed before she was fully married.
3. 31:2 - Because Moav only acted out of fear against the Jewish People. Also, Ruth was destined to come from Moav.
4. 31:5 - They knew that Moshe's death would follow.
5. 31:6 - The *aron* and the *tzitz*.
6. 31:19 - The *Machane Shechina*.
7. 31:23 - Immersion in a *mikve*.
8. 32:16 - They showed more regard for their property than for their children.
9. 32:17 - At the head of the troops.
10. 32:24 - Moshe required them to remain west of the Jordan during the conquest of the Land. They promised to remain after the conquest until the Land was divided among the tribes.

### Masei

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.

- Why there was no circumcision in the Wilderness
- Status of an uncircumcised Jew, one whose circumcision becomes covered, and one whose gender is uncertain
- Is there ever a possibility of circumcision at night
- Contrasts between laws of *terumah*, *bikkurim*, and *ma'aser*
- One whose genitals are damaged in regard to eating *terumah* and marriage
- The “marriage” of King Shlomo with an Egyptian princess
- The difference between Ammonite or Moabite converts and those of Egyptian or Edomite descent
- King Saul’s investigation of David’s lineage
- The issue of whether the convert Ruth was permitted in marriage
- The eligibility of a convert’s daughter to marry a *kohen*
- Status of the child whose parents are both limited in their marriage eligibility
- The lasting limitation on the marriage eligibility of the *mamzer*
- King David and the mysterious cause of the famine

## WHEN PATRILINEAL DESCENT WORKS

It is axiomatic that a child born from a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother is not considered a Jew because Jewish law does not recognize patrilineal descent as a qualification of Jewishness. But when it comes to other nations patrilineal descent is the determinant of the child’s status.

Rabbi Yochanan applies this rule to the case of a Canaanite woman who bears a child from relations with a man who is not a member of the seven nations whom Jews were commanded to destroy. That child is not considered a Canaanite like his mother, and may therefore be

purchased as a slave since his status is that of his father.

This ruling is used by our commentaries to explain a passage in the Torah chapter which speaks of a Jewish blasphemer. He is described as the “son of a Jewish woman and an Egyptian man who went among the Children of Israel”. (Vayikra 24:10) Rashi explains this as meaning that he converted to Judaism. *Tosefot* asks why it was necessary for him to convert if his mother was Jewish. His answer is that since the relationship between Egyptian and Jew took place before Jews received the Torah, the rule of patrilineal descent applied to Jews like all nations, and the blasphemer was considered an Egyptian who had to undergo conversion to become a Jew.

• *Yevamot 78b*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The fact that the slaying of the Egyptian first-born took place at midnight indicates that this is a particularly favorable time for Jews.”

• *Beraita in Yevamot 72b*

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## KOSHER GIRAFFE

From: Ben in Baltimore

Dear Rabbi,  
Is giraffe kosher — and if so, why don't we eat it? Does it have anything to do with the long neck?

Dear Ben,

The Torah clearly delineates the physical criteria for determining whether an animal is kosher or not. These are that it be a ruminant and have split hooves (Leviticus 11:2-8; Deuteronomy 14:4-8). The giraffe is not only the tallest cud-chewer but also has completely cloven hooves. It therefore fits the Torah criteria for being kosher. In fact, major Torah commentaries such as Rav Sa'adia Gaon, Rabbeinu Yona and Radak identify the *zemer*, listed among the ten types of kosher animals, as the giraffe (Deuteronomy 14:5).

Contrary to popular misconception, the reason we don't eat giraffe despite its being kosher has nothing to do with the neck. This misconception is based on the idea that since the neck of the giraffe is so long, it is not known where on the neck to perform the *shechita* (ritual slaughter). This is incorrect. The Talmud (Chullin 27a, 45a) and halacha (Yoreh Deah 20:1-2) give precise parameters indicating the top and bottom of the neck that define the area within which *shechita* may be performed. Accordingly, the valid region for a pigeon is a few inches long; for a cow, over 12 inches; and for a giraffe, close to six feet!

The halachic basis for not eating giraffe is because, in addition to needing the physical criteria for kosher animals to be met, the Torah may also require a continuous tradition of actually eating the specific animal in question.

Commenting on the verse "These are the creatures that you may eat" (Lev. 11:2), our Sages noted: We learn from this that the Holy One, blessed be He, grabbed hold of each and every variety and showed Moses, saying, 'This

you may eat, and this you may not eat.' (Babylonian Talmud, Chullin 42a). Moses then passed the tradition on to the Israelites by taking hold of each creature, saying to them, "This you may eat, and this you may not eat. The following you shall abominate among the birds [he then showed them]: These you shall abominate, and these you shall not abominate. The following shall make you unclean [not kosher, and he then showed them]: These are unclean, and these are clean" (Sifra, Shemini 2).

According to most halachic authorities, the need for such a tradition is essential only in the case of birds; as Rabbi Isaac said, "Birds are eaten by tradition" (Babylonian Talmud, Chullin 63b). As for beasts and animals, it appears from Maimonides that merely recognizing them as being kosher is enough (Ma'achalot Asurot 1.8). However, some Ashkenazi halachic authorities have ruled that these animals also require a tradition. Therefore, the giraffe, despite its signs of being a kosher animal and its long, *shecht*-able neck, would still not be permitted to eat without an uninterrupted tradition of its being eaten.

That being said, there are also practical concerns that make the consumption of giraffe meat prohibitive: Giraffe is probably a protected species and taking its life would be prohibited by law. There should also be a great concern of its consumption leading to extinction. Also, slaughtering an animal of that size is no easy chore, particularly when you consider that one kick of giraffe can kill a lion. Finally, even if methods of breeding and slaughtering could be found, the price of the meat alone would probably be exorbitant and most prohibitive. There might be some value in searching for a tradition of eating the giraffe and then (legally) slaughtering and consuming one in order to preserve the tradition given by G-d to Moses and the Israelites. Otherwise, it's probably best to keep the noose off the giraffe's neck.

Sources:

- Rabbi Ari Z. Zivotofsky Ph.D., "What's The Truth About...Giraffe Meat!"
- Dr. Zohar Amar, "Tradition, Tradition!"

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### GENTLE REPROOF

**T**he profound wisdom and the love for all of his fellow Jews which characterized Rabbi Meir Simcha Hakohen, rabbi of Dvinsk and the author of the "Ohr Somayach", find expression in this story.

On his way to the synagogue one Shabbat morning he came upon the son of one of the communal leaders smoking a cigarette. The youngster was shocked to be discovered in his Shabbat desecration by the revered rabbi and

failed to even remove the cigarette.

"Good Shabbat," said the sage in a gentle tone. "You probably forgot that today is Shabbat. Yes, Meir, today is Shabbat. Remember the Shabbat to keep it holy!"

The rabbi continued on his way as if nothing had happened but the rebuked youngster never forgot the lesson he learned from this gentle reproof.

## PUSHING THE TRAIN

**Question:** I am aware of the importance of setting some time each day for the study of Torah. The trouble is that I have to spend long hours earning a livelihood and am too exhausted at the end of my workday to do any studying. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** A similar question was once put to the Chafetz Chaim by the owner of a Warsaw hotel where he lodged. In response, the sage told him a parable about a villager traveling to the capital to present a matter to some high officials. Brooding over his fear that the train he was on was moving too slowly, he impatiently jumped up from his seat, rolled up

his sleeves, and began pushing against the front wall of his coach. Asked by his fellow passengers as to why he was so exerting himself, he replied that he was in a hurry to reach his destination, and was pushing to make the train go faster.

As silly as it may seem for an impatient passenger to think that he can make the train go faster by pushing, it is no less absurd for a person to think that his livelihood depends entirely on how much he pushes himself.

Try putting aside some time for Torah study and you will discover that Heaven will provide you and your family with what has been decreed for them on Rosh Hashanah without an extra push from you.

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