

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

DAS KAPITAL

“For I have hardened his heart...” (10:1)

Zurich. The Barnsdorfer Hotel. 2 AM Earlier that day world-famous Jewish philanthropist Gavriel Manreich had signed a deal, months in the making, that would net his property development company a cool 100 million dollars.

After a deal like that, with good reason you can feel you had a good day.

He wasn't really asleep, but at 2 o'clock in the morning he was sure that he heard a gentle knocking on the door; just loud enough for someone still awake to hear.

Pulling on his dressing gown, Gavriel made his way to the door, and when he opened it he was somewhat surprised to see the holy face of the Nizhovner Rebbe smiling at him.

“Gavriel, I wanted to wish you Mazal Tov. I just heard you pulled off an amazing deal. May it be with much *hatzlacha* and *bracha!*”

Ever the gentleman, Gavriel invited the Rebbe into his suite.

“Would his Holiness join me for a *l'chaim?*” he inquired.

“Just a large one!” replied the Rebbe.

Gavriel ushered the Rebbe into a large plush armchair. Patiently, he listened to a sad tale as the Rebbe told of the finances of Nizhovner's Torah learning institutions; how many families had plummeted below the poverty line and were spiraling into un-payable and ever-increasing debt.

Gavriel heard the Rebbe out, gave him an extraordinarily generous donation even by Manreich *tzedaka* giving standards.

As he handed the check to the Rebbe he said, “I'm happy to help the Rebbe at any time, but could I ask the Rebbe a question? Couldn't this have waited till the morning?”

The Rebbe replied, “Right now Gavriel you see this money as profit; tomorrow it will already have become capital. People don't like eating into capital — even for *tzedaka.*”

Pharaoh suffered from terminal gratitude amnesia. By enslaving the Jewish People he conveniently forgot that it was Yosef the Jew who saved Egypt and made it the most powerful empire that the world had ever seen. By his own evil stubbornness he ignored the lessons of seven mind and body shaking plagues, with the result that G-d hardened his heart and took away the gift of freedom of choice.

None of us are immune from gratitude amnesia. The human mind is a wonderfully flexible organ. It's all too easy to think that what we own is our own capital. It's not. Every penny we have is no more than a windfall from the One “Who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall”.

• Sources: Based on a story heard from Rabbi Nota Schiller

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned. G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too. Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the first-born, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d

again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month. The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the first-born of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating *chametz* on Pesach. Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first-born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the first-born son) and *tefillin*.

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MERIT AND INHERIT

“When G-d will bring you into the land of the Canaanites as He swore to you and your forefathers, and He will have given to you.”
(*Shmot* 13:11)

In his commentary on this passage from this week's Torah portion, Rashi cites the following explanation of the *Midrash* for the stress on “He will have given to you”.

It shall be in your eyes as if you received the land the day you enter it, is the Divine message, and not merely an inheritance from your forefathers.

There is a special feeling when receiving a precious gift

one has earned rather than automatically inherited. The mitzvah which follows the above-mentioned introduction – the sanctification of the first-born – served as a merit for the Jewish nation to acquire their land. It was therefore communicated to them that they should view their entry into the land as a gift they acquired with this and other *mitzvot* rather than just an inheritance.

This relationship between merit and inherit continues throughout history. Only by increasing our merits by fulfilling our spiritual potential can we hope to inherit 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

SHEFARAM – THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE

The unique building in a residential neighborhood of Shefaram bears the Aramaic title “the ancient synagogue of Shefaram”.

Tradition has it that this synagogue, built on the ruins of ancient structures, marks the site where the



Sanhedrin met in one of its ten exiles. Another tradition claims that the Jewish community in Shefaram was in continuous existence since the time of the Second Beit Hamikdash until its inhabitants abandoned it in 1920.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makat bechorot* took place at *exactly* midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at *approximately* midnight?
6. Why did the first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
8. G-d told Moshe, "...so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
9. Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what two *mitzvot* involving blood did G-d give to the Jewish People?
12. Rashi gives two explanations of the word "*Pasachti*." What are they?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makat bechorot*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makat bechorot*?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael*?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose first-born is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
6. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
7. 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
8. 11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
9. 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
10. 12:5 - One year.
11. 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
12. 12:13 - "I had mercy" and "I skipped."
13. 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of his home.
14. 12:31 - "Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?"
15. 12:32 - So he wouldn't die, for he himself was a first-born.
16. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matzah was dear to them.
17. 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between the parts" was decreed.
19. 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
20. 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.

- The pattern of goring to establish an ox as a habitual gorer
- When the ox involved in the goring or its victim is the property of the Sanctuary or of a non-Jew
- The penalty for non-Jews who ignored Noachide Laws
- The Roman delegation that studied Torah
- The Sage Ulla's perspective of comforting a mourner
- Insights on the nations of Moab and Ammon
- The status of the *Kutim* (Samaritans)
- Responsibility for the goring ox belonging to incompetents
- The degree of guarding demanded of owner of ox
- The atonement money paid by owner of a murderous ox
- The status of the *shor itstadian*
- Use of the flesh or skin of an executed murderous ox
- Responsibility for death caused to someone who was not the intended victim
- Who receives the atonement money for death of a woman
- The connection between death sentence for a murderous ox and its owner's responsibility to pay atonement money

THE FIGHTING BULL

“If an ox shall gore a man or woman causing death, the ox shall surely be stoned.” (*Shmot* 21:28) This is the death sentence pronounced by the Torah for any murderous animal. There is, however, one exception to this rule – the “*shor itstadian*”. The reason given is that the Torah passed this judgment only on an ox acting on its own initiative and not one who is incited by others against its will.

But who is this unique animal and who are its inciters?

This is how Rambam in his commentary on the *Mishna* explains it:

“This is an ox trained by people for battle with other oxen trained for the same purpose. A voiced signal from its master incites it to overcome the other ox. This is not in the nature of the animal but rather the result of the interest of

its owner. Many of the worthless people conduct such contests with other animals.”

While Rambam is suggesting that the ox in question is one on which wagers are made, there is a different version offered by Nimukei Yosef who apparently interpreted *itstadian* as the stadium in which bullfights – pitting bulls against each other or against toreadors – were conducted for the pleasure of royalty. Should a bull kill a man in such circumstances it is not liable for a death sentence and is not even disqualified from being offered as a sacrifice on the altar of the *Beit Hamikdash* since its murderous act is not of its own volition.

The difficulty in this latter explanation is how such an animal reserved for the entertainment of heathen royalty came into the possession of Jews who must consider its status.

• *Bava Kama 39a*

What the SAGES Say

“Greater is the one who does *mitzvot* in which he is obligated than one who does them without being obligated.”

• *Rabbi Chanina - Bava Kama 38a*

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FRIEND REQUEST

From: Anonymous in NYC

Dear Rabbi,

I have been friends with a guy since we were kids. We were brought up traditional/modern orthodox. In high school, we were not exactly the best example of Jewish behavior. Now we go to college together and room in the same dorm. I can't say we've gotten any better, but I'm telling him I want to start getting my act together and move back toward observance. He does not want to go there at all, and also says we have to room together next year as well. I might agree if I felt it would have a good influence on him, but I feel the opposite would happen – he would draw me into things that I'm trying to get away from. If I don't room with him, for one thing I don't know how I could tell him since we've been such good friends for so long, and also how could I let him down as a friend. Please give me advice on what you think I should do, because I'm really torn.

Dear Anonymous,

While it's not acceptable to have gone astray, it's understandable. A young person is greatly influenced by what's going on outside himself, particularly when there are so many changes taking place inside him. However, for that reason, it's completely natural and correct that as you're maturing and settling down inside, you intuitively feel a desire to return to the proper path. You clearly can't keep partying forever – that won't get you anywhere – and you're starting to realize that you have to make something of yourself not only as a person but as a Jew.

Your friend may or may not get there. As a friend, you should do what you can to influence him in the right direction. But there's no guarantee that he wants that now, or that it will help. On the other hand, you're at the beginning of a sensitive stage where you could go either way, and might ultimately fall. Since you're at a threshold, you have to make sure you give yourself every chance of making it. Unfortunately, this means distancing yourself from the strong influence of this friend and finding roommates who will maintain an environment conducive to your desire for growth.

I think you have to tell him this straight out. Since you've spoken about it and he's said straight out that he's not interested in changing, you have no choice but to make different living arrangements. You'll tell him that it's not personal, and that you can keep on being friends, but you'll also need his understanding and support to let you grow in the direction you feel you want and need. He'll be let down. He'll be upset. But that's because he needs you to be able to keep enjoying what he's not ready to give up. In a way, he'll want to keep using you.

He may say he'll accommodate you – that you should move slowly, no drastic changes etc. He'll say you can stay roommates and you can still go in the direction you've decided. Even though that might be sincere, he would be fooling himself and you. Don't do that. Rather, offer him the choice of making a change with you by moving together into a better environment. Tell him it's really important to you that the two of you, together, coming from the same strong Jewish background and having been friends for so long, make this change together. If he accepts, fine. If not, you will have demonstrated your friendship and sincere concern for him in the best possible way. If he doesn't take you up on the offer, the decision was his.

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Question: On a recent visit to a hospital I found myself impatiently waiting for an elevator to take me up to the floor where I intended to visit a sick friend. When the elevator finally arrived I saw that it was packed with passengers and I would have to literally squeeze myself into the crowd. What was the right thing to do?

Answer: In office or apartment buildings care must be taken never to overload an elevator beyond its capacity. In regard to a hospital there are other considerations as well in decid-

ing whether to enter the crowded elevator or wait for the next one. Patients in special situations may be using that elevator and adding to the crowding may be a cause of discomfort for them. If you see someone in a wheelchair on that elevator or a patient hooked to a stand with an intravenous connection you should do your utmost not to compromise the space they require.

Another few minutes of waiting is certainly preferable to causing discomfort for one sick person while on the way to visit another.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

A GIANT SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

It was one of those hot, humid summers in Bnei Brak before the days of air conditioning in every home. An effort was made by a Jew close to the rosh hayeshiva of Yeshivat Ponevez, Rav Shach, *zatzal*, to utilize the break in the yeshiva schedule to relocate to Jerusalem where the Rav could enjoy the pleasant climate.

Arrangements had even been made for him to stay in an apartment near a yeshiva so that he would be able to continue his practice of praying with a yeshiva-type minyan.

Despite all the efforts to persuade him, Rav Shach gently turned down the offer.

“People in Bnei Brak are always coming to my home,” he explained, “in the hope of gaining my help. I think they are mistaken in assuming that I can solve their problems but they think so. Should I leave for Jerusalem they will come to my home and find the door locked. How can I leave when so many people need me?”

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