

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT BESHALLACH · 11 SHVAT 5775 - JAN. 31, 2015 · VOL. 22 NO. 16

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### TURNING SATURDAY INTO SHABBAT

*“And it was on the seventh day...” (16:27)*

The English word for Shabbat is Saturday — so named because the planet whose astrological influence is felt most strongly on that day is Saturn.

But Saturn is really the opposite of Shabbat. Saturn is traditionally a bitter planet full of negativity. A secular astrologer might tell you that the reason Jews don't do any creative labor on Shabbat is because it's not worth it. Anyway it's all going to end up in the trash, undermined by the “malignant eye” of Saturn.

But really the opposite is true. Our joy in keeping Shabbat demonstrates that we reject the power and

influence of sad and bitter Saturn, and we place our trust in G-d alone.

That's the meaning of the saying, “The Jews have no Mazal (Zodiac sign).” (Shabbat 156a)

When we place our faith and trust in G-d, we rise above the vagaries of the stars.

We turn Saturday into Shabbat.

• Source: Based on Rabbi Yaakov Orenstein, author of *Yeshuot Yaakov*, as seen in *K'motzei Shallal Rav*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days' travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable

water. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

KETUVOT 2 - 8

*The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael taught: “Why is the main part of the ear hard, while its lobe is soft? In case a person hears speech that is improper, he can bend the lobe into his ear.”*

Mankind was created with built-in “noise-cancelling headphones” in order to avoid hearing inappropriate speech!

The main part of the ear serves a natural purpose as a “funnel” to collect sounds and also as a “cover” to protect against entry of foreign objects. The lobe, however, seems to serve no natural purpose. Not so, it is taught here. The earlobe serves as a “plug” that is ready for folding into the ear to avoid hearing improper speech. (Maharsha)

• Ketuvot 5b

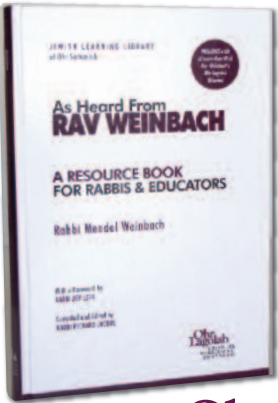
*“A person should not allow himself to hear idle speech, since the ears are the first limbs to be burned.”*

This is a *beraita* on our *daf*, and Rashi explains that the burning refers to the earlobes which are soft and thin and are therefore more sensitive to be burned by heat than other body limbs.

The Maharsha connects this teaching about idle speech to the above teaching about improper and forbidden speech. A person should not think it sufficient to avoid hearing inappropriate and forbidden speech, as taught before. Rather, even idle and useless speech is a hazard that one should take measures to avoid hearing. Why? With all the speech that a person hears in everyday life, if a person is not careful to avoid idle talk he will almost certainly hear forbidden speech as well. One should therefore take steps (and fold earlobes) to hear only speech that is necessary, and listen to talk that is a mitzvah.

Being “the first limb to be burned” illustrates the extreme sensitivity of the ear. It was created as a soft and thin limb, exposed to the dangers of the elements that can easily burn and injure it. This sensitive design also reflects the extreme care needed to protect and guard our ears to hear only “good speech”.

• Ketuvot 5b




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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as He provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

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# Abarbanel

## ON PARSHAT BESHALLACH

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

**A**fter having left Egypt, the nation camps in Refidim. Having no water to drink, the people complain to Moshe and G-d gives Moshe the following instructions: “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and in your hand take your staff with which you struck the river, and go. Behold! I shall stand before you by the rock in Horeb; you shall strike the rock and water will come forth from it and the people will drink.” The Torah continues: “Moshe did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.” (Shmot 17:5-6)

Forty years later, the people are faced with a similar lack of water. However, G-d’s instructions to Moshe are markedly different: “G-d spoke to Moshe saying, ‘Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aharon your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes that it shall give its waters. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock and give drink to the assembly and to their animals.’” (Bamidbar 20:7-8)

Abarbanel is puzzled by the numerous differences between the two situations. In the first case, the miracle is to be performed only in front of the elders; in the second case, in front of the entire assembly. In the first case, Moshe acts alone; in the second case he is joined by Aharon. Here he is told to strike the rock, while over there he is merely to speak to the rock. Here he is told that the water will come out and the people will drink, without mentioning Moshe or the animals, while over there the rock gives its water and then Moshe gives it to the assembly and their animals. Finally, in our case the rock is referred to in Hebrew as “*tsur*” while in the second case it is called “*selah*”.

Abarbanel explains that just as the manna miraculously “followed” the people throughout their forty years in the

desert, so too did the water, which was necessary for their survival. The giving of the manna, the giving of the water and the giving of the Torah were three aspects of a single miracle — the demonstration of G-d’s glory. In our case — the first example of water being brought forth miraculously — the water is compared to the Torah that we received from the “*Tsur*” (another name for G-d), whose ways are pure” (Devarim 32:4). Because in this case the water is compared to the Torah and its source is G-d, Moshe is instructed to perform the miracle only in front of the elders. This is similar to what happens later when Moshe is instructed to approach Mt. Sinai prior to receiving the Torah: “Go up to G-d, you... and seventy of the elders of Israel” (Shmot 24:1). In the second case, however, the comparison to the receiving of the Torah is absent and the miracle can be performed in front of everyone. The comparison to Torah is also indicated by the fact that our verse makes reference to Horeb, another name for Sinai, where the Torah would be given. In our *parsha* Moshe acts alone, but in the second case Aharon’s assistance was required to organize such a large group. In our case Moshe is instructed to strike the rock in order to dramatically demonstrate the nature of the miracle which was taking place for the first time — the actual physical nature of solid rock, which represents solid ground, was being transformed into liquid water. Forty years later, however, the people were used to the miraculous appearance of water and no dramatic action was required. To further dramatize this new miracle in our *parsha*, the entire emphasis is on the fact that the rock itself gives forth its water, something new and unheard of previously. Finally, in our *parsha*, since the water is being compared to the Torah, there is no need to mention the animals, as they are not the ones to receive the Torah.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*  
on the  
Torah Portion of the Week

## CONVERSION QUERY

**From: Brandon**

*Dear Rabbi,  
In Judaism, are converts accepted as full-fledged Jews  
or do they have a status in any way different than Jews  
by birth?*

Dear Brandon,

Sincere converts who convert to Judaism according to Jewish Law are full-fledged Jews.

It is nevertheless worth mentioning that Judaism does not require a person to be Jewish in order to gain closeness to G-d in this world or the next. Torah teachings define beliefs and practices for non-Jews who would thereby be referred to as Righteous Gentiles. This is a major reason why Judaism doesn't proselytize – a person need not be Jewish to attain righteousness and life in the World-to-Come.

What's more, since Judaism is such a demanding way of life, and Jews are often subject to hardship and anti-Semitism, gentiles who are interested in converting are actually discouraged from Judaism, but rather encouraged to live by the Torah's Noahide Laws for gentiles. This might be a reason why some people think converts are not fully accepted by Judaism. But this is only before conversion; after prop-

er conversion as above, the convert is a full member of the Jewish People.

That being said, even within Jews by birth there are certain distinctions. For example, there are Kohanim (specifically, descendants of Aaron), Levites (general descendants of the Tribe of Levi), and Israel (descendants of the rest of the Tribes). A convert could not have the status of Kohen or Levi with their specific privileges and responsibilities, but neither could any other Jew become a Kohen or Levi. Rather the convert would have the status of Israel.

The Torah is very emphatic about honoring, sympathizing with, and being sensitive to the convert. G-d commands many times in the Torah that Jews must love the convert, because the Jewish People knows what it's like to be a newcomer among a different people. If individual Jews do not accept or show proper empathy for the convert, that's not coming from Judaism, but rather from their own personal shortcomings.

One possibly sensitive area regarding the position of converts in Judaism is regarding marriage. Even though converts have full Jewish status and are permitted to marry freely with born-Jews, often they marry each other. While in some cases the reason for this might be unfounded prejudice, more often the reasons are social. In this way it may be compared to the many reasons why first-generation immigrants often marry people of a similar background. But as with new immigrants, over time converts and their children become fully integrated within the Jewish People at large.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## RACHEL'S TOMB AND A GREAT BENEFACTOR

**A**lthough the Torah relates that the Patriarch Yaakov put up a monument to mark the grave of his beloved wife Rachel, the structure that we see in Beit Lechem when visiting this holy site was built in 1841 by Sir Moses Montefiore.



The British benefactor received a building permit from the Turkish sultan and paid the fees for maintaining the site. Before his death at the age of 101 he asked that a small imitation of the dome on Rachel's grave be placed on his grave and that dust from Rachel's tomb be placed in his own grave.

*Please daven for a refuah shleimah for*

**Chaim Yechiel ben Malka** (Ohr Somayach alumnus Chaim Howard Rothman)

**Chaim Eitan ben Sarah - Yitzchak ben Chaya**

**Shmuel Yerucham ben Baila** (Rebbetzin Heller's son-in-law)

*May we hear Besoros Tovos.*

## SHEMONEH ESREI: NINTH BLESSING - PART 3

**“Bless for us Lord our G-d this year...”**

Of all of the thirteen blessings of requests only this one begins with the word “bless”. The reason is because in this blessing, more than the others, we are asking for physical abundance and prosperity. In fact, the word “bless” in the holy language connotes increase and abundance. For example, we find that when Yitzchak planted a field that yielded a hundred times the usual amount, the verse concludes — as if stating the reason for the unusual occurrence — that G-d blessed the field. Through our prayer to G-d for a prosperous year we hope to be worthy of Divine blessing from Above.

#### Heaven’s Decree

The question is raised: Since one’s financial status for the coming year is decided on Rosh Hashana, why is it necessary to pray for *parnasa* (livelihood) on a daily basis? The answer is that based on a person’s actions the judgment rendered on Rosh Hashana can change for better or for worse. For example, a person may have been motivated to do sincere *teshuvah* during the High Holidays, changing his actions for the better. In return G-d may have given him a favorable judgment. If, however, he

returns to his old ways afterwards, thereby distancing himself from G-d, his verdict can be changed for the worse. We are taught in the Talmud that a person’s negative actions can cause a “good decree of even seventy years” to be reversed and replaced with a bad one. (Rabbi Avraham, son of the Vilna Gaon)

**“... And satisfy us from Your good”**

Is a person ever satisfied with what he has? According to the Talmud the answer is “No”. In fact, it is stated there that a person’s greed can get so out of control that no matter how much wealth he may amass he will always want more. “He who has one hundred will desire two hundred, and he who has two hundred will desire four hundred.”

When, however, one keeps in mind that all the good he has comes from G-d, he will remain humble and content with his lot. In connection to this the Sages teach that a truly “wealthy” man is one who is happy and content with his lot (Avot 4:1). We therefore ask G-d to grant us “satisfaction” in addition to His “good”, since one can experience true good only if he is also satisfied with his portion. This becomes possible when one internalizes the fact that whatever he has is Divinely ordained.

## @ OHR *Profiles of Ohr Somayach Staff, Alumni and Students*

BY MICHAEL GIARDINA

### Yonatan Abbo-Caracas, Venezuela-Center Program The New School, Parsons School of Design BA in Design and Technology, 2013

“It was beautiful, everything was taken care of.” Yonatan describes the landscapes of his childhood, the trees flying past the car window on drives to the beach. “We also used to go to a country club in the mountains, going up into the fog, up into the clouds.” He was born into a traditional home in Caracas, Venezuela, and at age six they moved to Manhattan.

Yonatan is the youngest of three brothers. His older brothers became *ba’alei teshuvah* while he was still in high school. He says nonchalantly, “I always knew it was the *emet* (truth).” He went on various learning trips to Israel. After graduating last August he came to Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem as part of J-Internship and started to make Judaism integral to himself.

As an artist Yonatan does not strain in occupying or in creating new spaces. The artist works refinement into raw materials. Yonatan understands his *avoda* (religious endeavors) in similar terms — the work of infusing spirituality into the physical.

As one who says that “I was always into sci-

ence, always artistic,” he found the perfect fusion in graphic and product design. What he calls “practicality in a beautiful sense.” He designs smartphone applications, with his latest project a fashion app for emerging designers.

Yonatan says that for most secular Jews the darkness of the outside world makes it difficult to connect beyond their own way of thinking. “If they don’t see something real they won’t want to do it, they won’t even give it a chance.” He maintains that one of the most effective tools for beginning to change people on a deep level is Shabbat dinner. He describes it in terms of tangibility, “Like a ball in your hand, the happiness of Jewish life accessible to anyone.”

Yonatan made a *siyum* last month when completing the study of Seder Mo’ed *mishnayot*. Our Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Nota Schiller, *shlita*, was in attendance and spoke on the concepts of recognizing and being appropriate to pulling into new stations of time — new “jurisdictions.” For example, standing at the border of another country, and the importance of knowing its laws, occupying a new space called Shabbat or Yom Tov. Rav Schiller was addressing a practitioner of adaptation and invention, a student with his sights on making himself a self-sustaining Jew in any space.

