

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### DATE WITH DESTINY

**“Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house.” (12:1)**

Wheeling his lone Lancaster above the target at eighteen hundred feet, Freddy leveled off and tried to bomb the target one more time. Suddenly the cockpit radio spluttered into life:

“Freddy! — What are you playing at?! Get out of there now! There’s more flak around those dams than guests at a Buck House tea party!”

“Sorry, skipper. I’m going in one more time — even if it means that you’ll have to pick up my medal for me...”

Hashem tested Avraham Avinu ten times. The first of these tests was to leave his land, his birthplace and his father’s house.

However, the ‘extra words’ here — “for yourself” — indicate that Hashem told Avraham that this journey was for his own benefit.

If Avraham Avinu knew that leaving his roots was for his own benefit, how could this be a test?

The answer is that sometimes it is easier for us to serve G-d when we think we are being self-sacrificing, than when we know there’s something in it for ourselves.

It appeals to our innate sense of self-dramatization to see ourselves as martyrs to the cause. Many are the epics that play in the cinemas of our minds in which we have the title role of the selfless hero, taking arms against a sea of troubles, and all without benefit or profit to ourselves.

The test that Hashem gave Avraham was that he would have to work without the romanticism of self-sacrifice **and still do Hashem’s will** with the same enthusiasm as some dashing hero flying his plane to a date with destiny.

• Based on Rabbi Yechezkel Weinfeld, as heard from Rabbi Daniel Travis

### COUNTING STARS I

**“And He took him outside, and said, ‘Gaze, now, toward the Heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to count them!’ And He said to him, ‘So will be your offspring!’” (15:5)**

The Jewish People are like the stars. Even though there are a myriad stars, Hashem calls every one of them by name.

Even though there are a myriad of Jewish souls, every one has its own name — its own purpose and uniquely

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**“The purpose of every soul is unique and irreplaceable, as is the purpose of every star.”**

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appointed task.

The purpose of every soul is unique and irreplaceable, as is the purpose of every star.

When we look at the myriad of stars in the sky, they sometimes seem to meld into an amorphous mass, merely a wash of light against the vast blackness of space. Each of them, however, is a separate world of light.

Such is the soul, shining its own unique radiance to illuminate its own unique corner of the galaxy of the spirit.

• Based on the Ksav Sofer, as heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner

### COUNTING STARS II

Avraham Avinu’s unique quality was that he obeyed Hashem even in contradiction to human logic.

When Hashem took Avraham outside and told him to count the stars, that’s exactly what Avraham started to do! “One, two, three...” Hashem said to him “Can you count them?” Is it possible for a man to count the stars? Thus will be your seed: They will do the will of their Father in heaven even when the task seems hopeless.

That quality of unbending, unquestioning loyalty is what Avraham Avinu bequeathed to the Jewish People in his spiritual genes.

• Rabbi Meir Shapiro

### THE LETTER OF THE LAW

**“If so much as a thread or a shoe-strap; or if I shall take from anything of yours! ... Far from me! Only what the young men have eaten...” (14:23,24)**

For his part in defeating the four kings, the king of Sodom offered Avraham a share of the victors’ spoils, as was his right. But Avraham would take nothing, for he wanted to show his devotion to Hashem, declining personal gain so that the king of Sodom could not claim that he made Avraham rich.

However, Avraham applied this stringency to himself alone. When it came to his followers, he permitted them to take everything that was lawful.

This teaches us a powerful lesson. Never to be ‘frum’ (pious) on someone else’s spiritual expense account! If, after careful consideration, we want to take upon ourselves stringencies, that’s up to us. But from others, we should never demand, or even expect, more than the letter of the law.

• The Chafetz Chaim

## RIBON KOL HAOLAMIM

"For I have lit by candles and arranged by bed... in honor of Shabbos."

In the Torah passage about Jews observing the Shabbos and establishing the Shabbos "ledorosam" (Shmos 31:16) the literal meaning of the word is "for their generations." A careful look at the word in the Torah indicates that it is spelled in such a manner that it could be read as "ledirosam" which means "to their homes."

The message communicated by this spelling is that if a Jew lights Shabbos candles, sets his table and arranges his furniture in a manner which transforms his weekday house into a "Shabbosdig" home then the Divine Presence declares that it wishes to enter such a home. But if the spirit of Shabbos is not reflected in the house the Divine Presence avoids a home which lacks a Jewish flavor.

Dedicated by  
HERSCHEL & RACHEL AINSPAN  
White Plains, NY  
in honor of the birth of their b'chor  
SHMUEL YERUCHOM

## OHRNET

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## ASK the RABBI

### BRITTLE FASHION

Jack <c2mxjaco@fre.fsu.umd.edu>  
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Shalom: I had a quick question for "Ask the Rabbi": I recently bought a new hair brush. After purchasing it in a hurry, I noticed that the package boasts the fact that it's bristles are made of 100% BOAR HAIR!! So, my question is, is there something inherently "unkosher" about brushing my hair with such a brush?? Is there a restriction about possessing non-edible pig products? Thanks!!

Dear Jack,

About oinkers, The Torah says "You shall not eat of their flesh." The Sages explain that the Torah prohibits eating the flesh only. But the hoofs, hair and bones (excluding the marrow), you are allowed to eat.

Certainly, then, your 100% Boar's-hair brush is 100% kosher!

Sources:

- *Leviticus 11:8*
- *Torat Kohanim 4:8*

### VOWEL-UP FOLLOW-UP

In 'Ask the Rabbi' for *Parshat Bereishit*, Vol. 4 No. 121, Case E. Krell asked why there are no vowels written in the Torah. We offered a few answers, including

the idea that the Torah's words can be understood in many different ways. Writing the vowels would limit the different ways the Torah can be read. (Please refer to that issue for more details.)

Since then, Rabbi Zev Rosen directed me to a very interesting source describing the 13 Torah scrolls that Moses wrote. At the end of his life, Moses wrote 13 Torah scrolls. He gave one scroll to each of the twelve tribes, and the thirteenth was placed in the Holy Ark. According to some, this thirteenth scroll was indeed written with vowels and accent marks.

Sources:

- *Handbook of Jewish Thought*, by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Ch. 7 footnote 136, citing *Tzafanat Pa'aneach, Deut. 31:9*. He adds, "This may be supported by *Bahir 115*, which speaks about the "vowels in the Torah of Moses."

### YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

On Tisha B'Av morning, everyone sits on the floor as a sign of mourning. However, one person in every synagogue publicly sits down on a chair. Who is this person?

Answer:

The person honored with 'hagbah' — lifting the Torah after it is read. This person lifts the Torah from the 'bima' and sits in a chair. Then the Torah is bound and covered, and he remains sitting until the Torah is returned to the Holy Ark.

### I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The letter yud taken away from Sarai's name has a numerical value of ten. It was divided into the two letters hey each of which has a numerical value of five. One was added to Sarah's name, the other to Avraham's. This teaches that an ideal marriage is based on sharing.

- Based on *Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 2:6*

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# PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What are three things diminished by travel?
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 Sara 'made'?
4. Which one of Noach's three sons received the Land of Canaan as part of his inheritance?
5. What two results did Avraham hope to achieve by saying that Sara was his sister?
6. Why did Avraham's shepherds rebuke Lot's shepherds?
7. Who was Amrafel and why was he called that?
8. What does 'hera' mean (verse 14:10).
9. Why did the 'palit' tell Avraham that Lot had been captured?
10. Who accompanied Avraham into battle against the four kings?
11. Why did Avraham give 'maaser' to Malki-Tzedek?
12. Why didn't Avraham accept any money from the king of S'dom?
13. Why was Avraham anxious after he defeated the four kings?
14. When did the decree of four hundred years of exile begin?
15. What did Hashem indicate with his promise to Avraham that he would "come to his ancestors in peace?"
16. How did Hashem fulfill his promise to Avraham that he would be buried in "a good old age?"
17. Why did Avraham die five years before his allotted time?
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. How old was Avraham when Yishmael was born?

## BONUS QUESTION?

Avraham didn't accept any money from The King of S'dom, not wanting the king of S'dom to say "I made Avraham rich." Why then was he willing to take presents from Pharaoh, King of Mitzrayim?

## BONUS ANSWER!

If Avraham had refused the gifts offered for Sarah, he may have aroused Pharaoh's suspicion that he was indeed her husband, and spoiled the charade.

• Abarbanel

# Weekly Daf

Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

## • CHULLIN 61 - 67 THE CHICKEN BEFORE THE EGG

How do we know that it is permissible to eat eggs?

But why should there be any problem with eggs laid by a kosher chicken?

The Talmud (*Bechoros* 5b) states a rule that forbids anything that comes forth from an animal which is forbidden. This ban includes the milk and other secretions of forbidden animal life (with the exception of honey from a bee) and raises a problem concerning the milk of a cow. Before the cow is slaughtered it is forbidden to cut off any part of its flesh and eat it. So, why may we drink the milk which flows from such forbidden flesh?

The resolution of this problem is that in a number of places in Scripture there is reference to milk being consumed. One of these is the Torah's description of Eretz Yisrael as a "land flowing with milk and honey," leading to the conclusion that unless milk was permissible to drink it would not be utilized as a praise for the holy land.

The same problem which is raised regarding milk applies to eggs as well. If we cannot eat from the flesh of the chicken while it is alive how can we eat the eggs which

come from it? The revelations which are found in the various passages about the legitimacy of milk are not there in regard to eggs.

An interesting source is proposed by the *Ba'al Hilchos Gedolos*. Our Gemara states that the eggs of a non-kosher bird are forbidden because one of the birds listed by the Torah as forbidden is "the daughter of the *ya'annah*," which is interpreted as meaning the eggs of that or any other forbidden bird. There is really no need for a source to prohibit eggs of forbidden birds since they are covered by the aforementioned general ban on anything coming from a forbidden species. The purpose of mentioning a ban on *ya'annah* eggs, therefore, is to communicate that only the eggs of a forbidden bird are forbidden but not the eggs of a kosher fowl. Tosefos finds this interpretation of the Gemara a bit difficult to reconcile with the text. He suggests an alternative source. In regard to the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird before taking the eggs found along the road there is an exception made if the eggs are those of a forbidden species even if the bird sitting on them is kosher. This distinction communicates the message that if the eggs have been laid by a kosher bird they may be eaten.

## GREAT FISH FOR DINNER

The Leviathan is a kosher fish.

Tradition has it that this creature, referred to as the great sea-giants created on the fifth day of creation, was removed from circulation but will be restored in the end of days to serve as a main course in the feast for the righteous. It is described in the Book of Iyov (41:6,22) as having the fins and scales which identify a kosher fish.

An interesting problem is raised by the commentaries in regard to the Talmud's need to prove the kosher status of the Leviathan. How could we possibly assume that the fish to be served at the feast reserved as a great reward of the righteous could be non-kosher?

*Maharsha* suggests that there was never a doubt as to whether the flesh of the Leviathan is kosher since it is to star in the menu of that great feast of the future. The question, rather, is whether it is to be classified as a **fish**, or whether it is a **fowl** which lives in the water, like some gigantic duck. The proof cited from the Book of Iyov establishes that it is indeed a fish, on the basis of its having the fins and scales that other kosher fish have, and thus assures us that the righteous will enjoy great fish for their great dinner.

• Chullin 67b

• Chullin 64b

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

Ten generations have passed since the time of Noah. Man has descended to lower spiritual depths. In the year 1948 after the Creation, Avram is born. Through observing the world, Avram comes to the inescapable Truth of Hashem's existence, and thus merits that Hashem reveals Himself to him. At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Hashem tells Avram to leave his land, his relatives and his father's house and travel to an unknown land where Hashem will make him into a great nation. Avram leaves, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, their servants, and those who he converted to faith in Hashem. When they reach the land of Canaan, Hashem 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 tells her to say that she is his sister. Sarai is taken to the Pharaoh, but Hashem afflicts the 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. After a quarrel over grazing rights breaks out 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 demurs from accepting any of the spoils of the battle. In a prophetic covenant, Hashem 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 Hashem commanding Avram to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a covenant between Hashem and his seed. Hashem changes Avram's name to Avraham, and Sarai's name to Sara. Hashem promises Avraham a son, Yitzhak, despite Avraham being ninety-nine years old and Sara ninety. On that day, Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael and all his household.

## HAFTORAH: ISAIAH 40:27-41:16

Avraham *Avinu* is known as *Ha-Ivri* — the Hebrew, which means 'the one who crossed over.' He crossed over from being an idol worshipper to serving the living G-d.

Even if the rest of the world is on the other side, the Hebrew — the one who crosses over — stands up and says "Stop worshipping your idols of stone, of money, of worldly power, and acknowledge that Hashem is G-d alone."

The task of the Jewish People has always been to deliver this message to the world. The prophet Isaiah encourages Israel to persevere both in the face of their own failures and exile, and despite the resistance and apathy of the nations. Hashem has promised them that ultimately they will prevail, for though the Jewish People may seem worm-like in their insignificance and powerlessness, they will vanquish those who now seem invincible.

### DUST AND JEWELS

**"...as much dust as Avraham used, turned into swords..." (41:2).**

Nachum *Ish Gamzu* was a man whose very name expressed his essence — whatever happened to him he would always say — "This is also for the good!" He never doubted that what Hashem does is always for the best.

Nachum was chosen to travel to the Emperor and present him with a box filled with precious stones as tribute from the Jewish People. On the way, and unknown to Nachum, the jewels were switched with worthless dust. With great ceremony the 'jewels' were presented to the Emperor and slowly the box

was opened in front of him...

The Emperor's rage knew no bounds at this unbelievable insult from the Jews. Suddenly, the prophet Eliyahu appeared in the guise of one of the Emperor's ministers and said: "Your Imperial Majesty, this must be the special dust that the Jews' forefather Avraham used to defeat the four kings as it says '...as much dust as Avraham used, turned into swords...' Let us, at least, try the dust and see if it works for us as well."

The Emperor agreed and Hashem caused a miracle — the dust indeed proved to be lethal against the Emperor's enemies. We must remember that even in the darkest moments of exile, when all our jewels look like dust, Hashem will bring the prophet Eliyahu to announce the dawn of redemption.

• Based on the Midrash

## Parsha Q&A

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

- 12:2 - Offspring, wealth and fame.
- 12:3 - A person will say to his son, "You should be like Avraham."
- 12:5 - People they converted to the worship of Hashem.
- 12:6 - Shem.
- 12:13 - That the Egyptians would let him live and give him presents.
- 13:7 - Lot's shepherds grazed their flocks in privately owned fields.
- 14:1 - *Amrafel* was Nimrod. He said (*Amar*) to Avraham to fall (*fel*) into the fiery furnace.
- 14:10 - To a mountain.
- 14:13 - He hoped Avraham would die trying to save Lot, so that he might be able to marry Sara.
- 14:14 - His servant, Eliezer.
- 14:20 - Because Malki-Tzedek was a kohen.
- 14:23 - Hashem had promised Avraham wealth, and Avraham didn't want the King of S'dom to be the one to take credit for it.
- 15:1 - He was afraid that his victory was Hashem's reward for all his good deeds.
- 15:13 - With the birth of Yitzchak.
- 15:15 - That his father, Terach, repented and became righteous.
- 15:15 - Avraham lived to see his son, Yishmael, repent and become righteous, and he died before his grandson, Esau, became wicked.
- 15:15 - So as not to see Esau begin his pursuit of evil.
- 15:16 - They needed to wait until the Amorites had sinned sufficiently to deserve expulsion.
- 16:1 - Pharaoh.
- 16:16 - Eighty-six.