

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### WAITING TILL IT'S TOO LATE

“So Yosef went up to bury his father...”  
(50:7)

Scene One: A diner in New York City. Abe and Sol, two senior citizens, are seated in a booth. Abe puts down his cup and looks up into the distance. When he speaks, it is as though 2,000 years of history are passing in front of his eyes.

Abe: “Y’know Sol... I always wanted to go to Israel.”

Sol: (somewhat cynically) “Yeah? So why don’t you go?”

Abe: I’m waiting.

Sol: Yeah? So what are you waiting for?

Abe: (dreamily) I’m waiting... till it’s too late.

Yaakov Avinu had a tough time getting buried in the Cave of Machpela. He had four formidable opponents to his plans to be buried there: Yosef his son; Pharaoh; the Kings of Canaan; and his brother Eisav.

Yosef was unwilling to let his father be buried in the Cave of Machpela, because it was the burial place of Leah. Rachel, Yosef’s mother, wasn’t buried there, but on the Bethlehem road. So Yosef had no great desire to see his father buried with someone who wasn’t his mother. This was the reason that Yaakov Avinu made Yosef swear that he would bury him in Machpela.

Pharaoh didn’t want Yaakov’s body to be removed from Egypt for he was concerned that there would be another famine.

The Kings of Canaan were reluctant to let Yaakov Avinu be buried in Machpela which was part of their kingdom because they feared a royal cortege by a foreign power on their ‘turf’. They saw it as a challenge to their authority.

And Eisav didn’t want Yaakov to be buried in the Cave of Machpela because he felt that he was the rightful heir to his father Yitzchak, and it was for him alone to be buried there.

Four who stood against Yaakov Avinu. Four formidable adversaries. So why did Yaakov go to such lengths to make sure he was buried in the Land of Israel and not in Egypt?

Yaakov was sending a message to all generations: “I may have lived in exile, but **I wasn’t buried in exile.**”

Yaakov was saying to all his descendants

“...Yaakov is the last, he epitomizes the ultimate purpose of the forefathers. For that which comes last always reveals the ultimate purpose.”

in all lands and at all times: “You may be very comfortable in your exile — whether that exile is in Egypt, or Rome, or Spain or America. You may have lived in exile, **but this is not where you belong.** Your place is in the Land of Israel.

Don’t wait till it’s too late...

• Based on the Meshech Chochma as heard from Rabbi Moshe Carlebach

### AFTER THE NIGHT

“And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years...” (47:28)

History repeats itself. Things that were, will be again. The smallest action of the avos (forefathers) reverberates down the corridors of all time.

Hashem revealed to Avraham that his descendants would be exiled in Egypt. Hashem also told Avraham the

precise length of that exile. History repeats itself — Hashem revealed to Yaakov the Diaspora of the Jewish People and the inevitable end of this exile.

Just as Avraham was the first, Yaakov is the last. Because Yaakov is the last, he epitomizes the ultimate purpose of the forefathers. For that which comes last always reveals the ultimate purpose.

That’s why the Jewish People are called ‘Israel’ — Yaakov’s other name. Israel is the ultimate expression of Yaakov. From him, we inherited our purpose and our destiny.

Yaakov’s seventeen years in Egypt were the essence of his whole life. During those years Yaakov lived without anguish, free from the yetzer hara (negative drive) and was living as though he was in the World to Come.

Those years that Yaakov spent in Egypt are like a matrix, a precursor of the final days of world history.

Yaakov spent most of his days in pain and anguish. So too, the history of the Jewish People has been a seemingly endless catalogue of oppression and tyranny.

But Yaakov lived out his last years in tranquility. And similarly, the Jewish People, after the long, long night of exile, will find peace and tranquility in the final redemption.

• Based on the Zohar and the Maharal

### THE ASSAULT COURSE

“Yissachar is a strong-boned donkey... He saw tranquillity that it was good... yet he bent his shoulder to bear...”  
(49:14)

Take a look at a soldiers’ barracks. Do you find it equipped with luxury orthopedic beds? Is the cuisine five star? Are there waiters dressed in tuxedos standing poised to fulfill every whim and fancy?

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**A**fter living 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close, and summons Yosef. He makes Yosef swear to bury him in the cave of Machpela, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov becomes ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion which removes the status of the first-born from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael, and

the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving Hashem. Yaakov passes from this world at the age of 147. A tremendous funeral procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Ephraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that Hashem will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishis, the first of the five Books of the Torah.

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## SING My SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

### SHALOM ALEICHEM "WELCOME..."

#### "Come in Peace... ...Depart in Peace"

**H**ow do we welcome the heavenly angels and then so quickly speak of their departure? When Yaakov Avinu was on his way out of Eretz Yisrael the Torah tells us that he had a prophetic dream in which he saw angels going

up a ladder and angels coming down. Rashi explains that the angels who accompanied Yaakov in Eretz Yisrael returned to Heaven, while the angels assigned to accompany him outside of the Holy Land came down to meet him. To the angels who will accompany us on the holy day of Shabbos we say "Come in peace," and to our weekday angels we say "Depart in peace."

IN MEMORY OF

MRS. JENNY RICE, OBM

ה.ב.צ.נ.ת

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What is a 'parsha stumah'?
2. Give three reasons why Yaakov didn't want to be buried in Egypt.
3. "When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Ephrat...." Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
4. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Ephraim and Menashe?
5. Name one great descendant of: a) Ephraim; b) Menashe.
6. According to the Parsha, how will the Jewish People bless their sons?
7. What burial ground did Yaakov give to Yosef?
8. How did the neighboring Canaanites react when Shimon and Levi killed the people of Shechem, and how did Yaakov react to their reaction?
9. What privileges did Reuven forfeit as a result of his rash actions?
10. Who is "Shilo?"
11. How did the tribe of Zevulun use the profits of its commerce?
12. Why is Yissachar compared to a 'strong-boned donkey'?
13. What is a 'shefifon'?
14. Which tribe had numerous olive trees in its territory?
15. Which tribe is compared to a wolf?
16. Which descendants of Binyamin "will divide the spoils in the evening (49:27)"?
17. Why did the Egyptians mourn the death of Yaakov?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which dignitaries paid respect during Yaakov's burial procession?
21. Which of Yaakov's grandsons carried his coffin?

## BONUS QUESTION?

**"The scepter will not be removed from Yehuda"** (49:10). For most of our history we have been without a king. And during the second Temple period the Hasmonean kings were from the tribe of Levi and not Yehuda. How can Yaakov's statement be explained?

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

**"Joseph's brothers saw that their father had died and they said, 'Perhaps Yosef will hate us and repay us for all the evil we did to him.'" (50:15)** When the brothers went to Canaan to bury Yaakov, and they passed the pit into which they had thrown Yosef, Yosef stopped and stared into it. The brothers thought he was awakening hidden hatred against them. In reality, Yosef was reciting a blessing, "Blessed is He who performed a miracle for me in this place."

• *Da'as Zekenim MiBaalei Hatsofos*

## HAFTORAH: KINGS I 2:1-12

### THE HEAD THAT WEARS THE CROWN

**A**s in the Parsha where we read the final will and testament of Yaakov Avinu, so too the Haftorah deals with the final words of King David.

David commands his 12 year-old son, Shlomo, to act as a man of wisdom and piety, despite his tender years, and to guard and uphold the Torah.

David promises Shlomo that if he will serve

Hashem in truth, with all his heart and soul, he will merit that all the kings of Yisrael will descend from him.

In the same way that Yaakov Avinu illuminated the path that transformed his children into a people, David Hamelech illuminates the path that will make Shlomo the father of Kings.

However, there is a striking difference between the death-bed scene of Yaakov Avinu and that of King David. When Yaakov took leave of this world, he summoned all 12 of his sons, whereas David calls for only Shlomo, for he alone was a comfort to him and was worthy to inherit the Davidic line.

• *Adapted from Rabbi Mendel Hirsch*

## WEEKLY DAF

### CHULLIN 124 - 130

#### THE PARADOXICAL CONNECTION

When is something considered connected and detached at the same time?

Food is considered impure if it comes into contact with a contaminating agent such as the carcass of an animal which died not through *shechita*. But in order to be susceptible to such contamination, this food has to no longer be a part of its living source. As long as an animal is alive its meat cannot contract impurity, and as long as fruits and vegetables are still growing they are immune to contamination.

What happens, however, if figs dried up, except for their stems, while still connected to their tree? Do we consider them to be still a part of the tree or not? This has two different ramifications. Are the figs considered as detached and therefore susceptible to contamination? Is one who picks them off the tree on Shabbos guilty of violating the Torah command not to pick fruit on Shabbos?

Rabbi Chiya bar Ashi cites an interesting ruling by the Sage Shmuel.

So long as the stems of the figs have not dried up along with the fruit we consider the figs to still be growing on the tree. Therefore, if someone should forget that it is Shabbos, and pick such figs from the tree, he will be required to bring a sin offering to atone for his unintentional violation of Shabbos. But with regard to these very figs coming into contact with a contaminating agent, they are considered as being detached and susceptible to contamination.

The same paradoxical situation exists in regard to the limb of an animal which has become almost completely detached, but remains connected by a hairline of flesh. As far as the rule of a detached limb's impurity, it is still considered a part of the living animal and therefore pure in regard to the impurity inherent in a detached limb. But as regards contracting impurity as food which comes into contact with a contaminating agent, it is considered as detached, and susceptible to contamination.

This paradox, arising from the Oral Law's interpretation of the passages in the Written Law pertaining to impurity, can best be understood if we view the definition of foods susceptibility to contamination not in terms of actual detachment from its source, but rather in terms of the high probability that it will soon become food.

• Chullin 127b

#### PAUPER FOR A DAY

All of us are familiar with the fantasy of "king for a day" in which the pauper momentarily indulges in the luxuries of the rich man.

But there is another side to this coin which has been more common in human experience, that of the rich man who is a "pauper for a day."

A man of substantial means is traveling and finds himself in a situation without funds or any handy means of support. He can get by only by accepting those gifts from agricultural produce which the Torah awards to the indigent. Does his general financial situation as a man of means disqualify him from being eligible for

these gifts or does his current status as a "pauper for a day" qualify him to share these gifts with genuine paupers?

There is a consensus of the Sages that he is entitled to these gifts for the poor. The only point of contention is in regard to his obligation to repay the sum he took as charity when he returns home. Rabbi Eliezer rules that he must reimburse the poor for what he enjoyed during his temporary poverty. The majority view, however, is that since he was genuinely poor at that moment, his right to the gifts was absolute and he has no obligation to repay.

Both views agree, it seems, that one who took such gifts without being entitled to them has an obligation to make reimbursement. This seems to present a conflict with the ruling of Rabbi Chisda that one who destroys or eats the gifts which the Torah awarded to the *kohanim* or to the poor cannot be prosecuted for payment because there is no specific claimant, and the offender can deflect the claim of any individual by contending that he wants to give his gift to another *kohen* or pauper. The conflict is resolved by Rabbi Chisda who explains that the issue discussed by Rabbi Eliezer and his colleagues is not one of a legal claim which the court will prosecute, for there is no specific claimant who can demand such action. There is, however, a moral obligation — "a righteous course" — which Rabbi Eliezer rules is incumbent upon this temporary pauper, an obligation which his colleagues hold is not applicable at all in this case.

• Chullin 130b

continued from page one

Soldiers are trained for battle. In order to perform their task, they must be able to function effectively under the most stressful of circumstances.

For this reason, soldiers are deprived of every home comfort; they are trained day and night to be able to cope where normal people would crack. All of this is to prepare them to fulfill their appointed task of defending

their country and the lives of its citizens.

Even with the lack of the most basic comforts they have the peace of mind to be able to be effective.

The same is true in studying Torah. If you train yourself to the correct level, you will be able to learn with serenity, whatever is happening on the battlefield of life.

Yissachar is the tribe devoted to Torah study. "He saw tranquillity that it

was good." Yissachar saw that in order to learn Torah, his mind needed to be at rest despite whatever battles were raging. Thus "He bent his shoulder to bear" — i.e., he put himself through the necessary spiritual 'assault course' so that whatever difficulties he encountered he would emerge from the melee with the necessary peace of mind to immerse himself in the study of Torah.

• Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, *zatzal*

#### PARSHA INSIGHTS



# ASK the RABBI

## ORTHODOX EQUINOX PARADOX

Lauren Schiff <Laurenrs@aol.com>  
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
My Artsroll siddur says to add the words 'tal u'matar' [prayer for rain] starting the evening of December 4th. Later I saw in the Book of our Heritage that it says December 5th. Which date is correct?

Dear Lauren Schiff,

The Book of our Heritage is correct.

In Talmudic times, the rainy season in Babylon started 60 days after the autumn 'tekufa' — i.e., the halachic equinox. That's the time of year when the Jews in Babylon started to pray for rain. The Sages fixed this date for all Diaspora Jews.

Whereas all Jewish holidays are based on the moon and don't correlate to the civil calendar, the 'tekufa' is based on the sun. That's why it's the only yearly Jewish occurrence associated with the civil calendar.

The Talmudic sage Shmuel approximated the year to be 365 and 1/4 days long. The 'tekufa' is based on this figure. The Roman calendar established by Emperor Julius Caesar is based on the exact same figure — 365 1/4 days. For a thousand years, everything was rosy.

But in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII changed the calendar to what is now known as the Gregorian calendar, which is the one currently in use. According to this calendar every fourth year is a leap year **except** those **century years** which cannot be divided by 400. For example, the year 1600 was a leap year, but the years 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not. The year 2000 is a leap year.

So the year 1900, which was a leap year according to the Julian calendar, was not a leap year according to the

Gregorian. Therefore, the calculations made in the 1800s are no longer valid.

Most current English prayer books today are based on reprinting prayer books from the 1800s; hence, the mistake. Therefore, the words 'V'tein tal u'matar L'vracha' — 'Give dew and rain for blessing' — should have been added this year on the fifth of December, and not on the fourth.

Which reminds me of a story of a very punctual Jew. On December 5th he calls his wife and tells her, "I'll be 3 seconds late for dinner tonight, dear, we are starting "Tal U'matar."

### Sources:

- Tractate Ta'anit 10a
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 117:1
- Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 4:17 that the 'tekufa' is according to Shmuel
- Rabbi Yedidya Menat, author of Luach Kir

## WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THE WORLD TO COME?

Alice Schubach

<aa909@cleveland.freenet.edu>

wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have a coworker who used to ask me many questions about Judaism. One morning when he came to work he told me his children asked him why they have to go to church. He didn't know what to tell them. He said an honest answer would have been, "Go to church, so you won't go to Hell." But he didn't know if he should be so blunt with his young children.

Then, he suddenly looked at me and asked, "Alice, what would you tell your children? Don't Jews believe in Hell?" I said that I had never been taught the concept in my religious education and had never heard it discussed in synagogue. I was taught that Judaism emphasizes this world. So, does Judaism believe in Hell?

Dear Alice Schubach,

In fact, Judaism does believe in "life after death". We do not call it "heaven and hell"; but we refer to "the world to come" — *olam haba* and *gehinom* — "hell." *Gehinom* — a purification process — is part of the world to come.

When a person dies, his soul gets a chance to 'think objectively' about his lifetime spent on earth. Depending on how the person spent his lifetime, this can be a painful process in which the soul mourns its bad deeds, lost opportunities and wasted potential or it can be a process of joy in which the soul delights in its closeness to G-d.

Ultimately, the *gehinom* process is temporary, and eventually enables the person to enjoy the benefits of all the good things he did during his lifetime.

Although, there is a Jewish concept of 'heaven' and 'hell,' we nevertheless emphasize this world. Here's a parable to explain:

A wealthy man goes on a cruise ship. The ship sinks, and he finds himself afloat in a tiny rubber raft. This raft is his only hope of arriving safely to his family, his mansion and all his wealth.

Judaism looks at this world as a raft. By following the survival manual — the Torah — this little raft can bring us safely to the World to Come.

Therefore, Judaism emphasizes this world. Only through good deeds in this world does a person earn reward in the next.

We educate our children about the World to Come, including the idea that no bad action goes without redress. But the emphasis is positive and the aim is to help everyone maximize potential and live the best life possible.

### Sources:

- Mishna Eduyot 2:10
- The Aryeh Kaplan Reader p. 179 citing Sefer Haikkarim 4:33

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

When is a non-kohen called first to the Torah in the presence of Kohanim?

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# PARSHA Q&A!

## Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

- 47:28 - A 'parsha stumah' is a parsha written in the Torah Scroll which is not preceded by a blank space. 'Vayechi' is the only 'parsha stuma' in the Torah. All other weekly portions are preceded by a blank space or they begin on a new line.
- 47:29 - a) Egypt's ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside of Israel will suffer; c) so the Egyptians wouldn't make him into an idol.
- 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef's mother, Rachel, in the *Ma'aras HaMachpela*.
- 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
- 48:19 - a) Yehoshua; b) Gideon.
- "Yesimcha Elokim k'Ephraim v'ch'Menashe" May Hashem help you to be like Ephraim and like Menashe.
- 48:22 - Shechem.
- 48:22 - They gathered against Yaakov to attack him. Yaakov defended himself with sword and bow.
- 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
- 49:10 - Mashiach.
- 49:13 - They provided for the needs of the tribe of Yissachar so that Yissachar could learn Torah.
- 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
- 49:17 - A type of snake.
- 49:20 - Asher.
- 49:27 - Binyamin.
- 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
- 50:3 - Because he had brought blessing to Egypt and the famine ended.
- 50:5 - From Eisav.
- 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh's ignorance of the Hebrew language.
- 50:13 - Menashe and Ephraim.

## BONUS ANSWER!

Yaakov did not promise that Yehuda would reign continuously, or that no other tribe would produce leaders; rather he promised that kingship would eventually return to Yehuda.

• Gur Aryeh

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

- 47:28 Egypt and Rome  
47:31 Necessity for the Oath  
48:1 The Division of Eretz Yisrael  
48:7 Rachel's Tomb  
48:15 (first part) Yosef's other children

- 49:10 (first part) Kings of Israel  
49:17 Shimshon  
49:31 Burial in the *Ma'aras HaMachpela*  
49:33 The Death of Yaakov

### SFORNO

- 47:31 Yosef's Oath  
48:18 The Laying of Hands  
49:7 The Humility of Dispersion  
49:11 Signs of *Mashiach*

