

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### I'M BEING WATCHED!

*"And G-d said to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh...'" (10:1)*

**H**ave you ever had the feeling that you are being watched? Have you ever felt that your every move is being scrutinized? I'm not just asking those of you who have the misfortune to live in a police state. (Mind you, if you live in a police state, I doubt that the authorities are sufficiently magnanimous to allow you access to e-mail.) No. I'm addressing this to all of us whose most intimate contact with Big Brother was in a novel by George Orwell.

Have you ever felt that you are being watched? Do you feel that, as you are reading these words, that, right now, you are being investigated?

If the answer to these questions is no, then you're in trouble.

Before you write to the editor of this august publication and suggest that he send this present writer on an extended South Sea cruise (chance would be a fine thing!), or call for those nice smiling men in their white coats, let me explain what I mean.

The phrase "the fear of Heaven" to our Anglo-Saxon ears sounds extremely archaic. It sounds like something out of the mouth of a TV gospel preacher, standing on a street corner,

ranting his heart out to indifferent passersby. We may be frightened by many things: that the dollar may go up; that the dollar may go down; that thieves may break into our homes; that we may contract some terrible malady; we may even be frightened that the supermarket will have sold out of our favorite dog food, but "the fear of Heaven" is something very far from our hearts.

But, quite simply, the fear of Heaven means the feeling that you are being watched.

Try this experiment. Think for one moment that G-d is watching you. That's right. Right now. G-d is watching your every move. In great detail. Think that G-d is right here, right now. Now, with that in mind, change the way you're sitting or standing. Just a little.

What you just did was to show the fear of Heaven.

*"And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh...'"*

Notice that the Torah doesn't say "Go to Pharaoh," rather "Come to Pharaoh." Why?

There's no such thing as "going" from G-d. G-d fills the world. There is nowhere where He is not. No place can exist if He is not there. You can't "go" from G-d. Therefore the expression "Come to Pharaoh" is more apt because it also means, "Come – and I will go with you."

• Source: based on the Kotzker Rebbe

## 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 firstborn, 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 firstborn 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*.

## INVITING A PLAGUE

In response to the demand repeatedly made both by Israel and the USA for the Palestinian Authority to forcefully dismantle the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Arafat puppets serving as prime ministers have declared that they will not initiate a civil war with their Arab brothers.

The need for such a civil war to eliminate the danger which Arab terrorism poses not only to Israel but to the Palestinians themselves has a historical source in the Torah portion we will be reading this Shabbat. The ten plagues inflicted by Heaven on the Egyptians to coerce them into freeing their Hebrew slaves were climaxed by the plague which claimed the lives of all the Egyptian firstborn. When King David (*Tehillim 135:10*) calls upon us to give thanks to G-d "Who smote Egypt with their firstborn" the simple meaning is this tenth plague itself. The Midrash, however, interprets it as a reference to what preceded the plague.

When the firstborn learned that Moshe had warned Pharaoh that further procrastination in obeying the divine command "to let My people go" would result in the death of all of them, they demanded of their leaders that they free the Hebrews. When their demand was rejected a bloody civil war ensued with "Egyptians being smitten by their firstborn".

That abortive revolt failed to save the lives of the firstborn who all perished on the eve of our liberation. It should serve, however, as a lesson to the Palestinians that unless they are courageous enough to fight against their own people such as the Hamas and Jihad terrorists they are inviting a plague upon themselves.

Only a genuine initiative on the part of the Palestinian leadership will bring prosperity to their people and will solve the problem of security for Israel forever.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THANK YOU, CABBIE!

The cab stopped for a moment next to a Jerusalem bus stop on a very busy thoroughfare. The driver called to a gentleman who was waiting for a bus.

Cab drivers rarely pause for even a moment, especially when there are impatient drivers behind them, unless they see someone flagging them down for a ride. The fellow waiting for the bus had no intention of spending money on a cab so his first reaction was to ignore the call as the desperate solicitation of a customer on a slow day for cab drivers. When the cabbie called again he suddenly realized that he

was being informed that his wallet had fallen on the ground when he had reached into his pocket to take out his monthly bus pass.

For the fortunate retriever of his wallet this was a lesson in judging others favorably. For all of us it should be a reminder that cab drivers are not necessarily fare-hungry extensions of a steering wheel but are thinking, feeling creations of G-d and deserve a nice "thank you" at the end of the ride and not only when they help you retrieve a lost wallet.

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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 firstborn of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the firstborn?
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 firstborn 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 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 firstborn, 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 PROBABILITY PRINCIPLE

“You shall take these two goats.” (*Vayikra 16:7*) This passage introduces the two goats which played a central role in the Beit Hamikdash service on Yom Kippur. One of them served as a sin offering and the other as a scapegoat which would symbolically carry the sins of the nation out into the wilderness where it would be pushed off a cliff to its death.

An interesting problem is raised by Rabbi Acha bar Yaakov in regard to this scapegoat. The Torah instructed the *Kohen Gadol* to determine which of these two identical goats will be sacrificed in the Beit Hamikdash and which will serve as scapegoat by drawing lots (*ibid. 16:8*). Since either one of them could end up serving as the sacrifice both of them must be without a physical blemish in order to qualify. A blemish consisting of serious damage to an internal organ which renders the animal a *treifa* can only be discovered after the animal is slaughtered. This examination was indeed possible in regard to the animal sacrificed in the Beit Hamikdash. In regard to the scapegoat, however, a postmortem examination was impossible because that animal broke into pieces before reaching half the slope upon which it was pushed.

Since the drawing of the lots which determines which one will be the scapegoat is valid only if that animal was equally capable of serving as an unblemished sacrifice we are faced with a problem: How do we know that this goat which ended up as a scapegoat did not have an internal blemish?

The answer given by Rabbi Acha is that the Torah here taught us that we follow the rule of probability in matters of halacha. Since most animals do not have internal defects we can assume that the scapegoat had none and have no need to be concerned that it was an exception to the general rule. This principle of probability is widely applied in the Talmud and many other sources for it are suggested in our *gemara*.

• *Chullin 11a*

## SACRIFICE TO THE DEAD

When King David recounted the sin of Jews worshipping the idol *Ba'al Peor* during their sojourn in the wilderness on the way to Eretz Yisrael, he went beyond the description of the Torah that “they attached themselves to *Ba'al Peor*” (*Bamidbar 25:3*). He added that not only did they attach themselves with idolatrous worship at the incitement of the promiscuous daughters of Moav but also “ate from the sacrifices offered to the dead”. (*Tehillim 106:28*)

The term “dead” refers, of course, to the idols which have no life or power outside of the misguided minds of their worshippers. But the comparison of sacrifices to idols to the dead has halachic implications as well.

Rabbi Yehuda ben Beseira saw in this comparison a source for ruling that something sacrificed to an idol contaminates a Jew with its spiritual impurity even if there is no physical contact. Just as one contracts spiritual impurity by being under one roof with a corpse so too does he acquire this status if he is under the same roof with something sacrificed to an idol.

Tosefot points out that even the Sages who disagree with this position nevertheless apply this comparison as a source for the ruling that it is forbidden to have any benefit from a sacrifice to an idol just as it is forbidden to derive any benefit from a corpse. They limit this comparison, however, to benefit, since the passage mentions only eating from these idolatrous sacrifices, which is a form of benefit, but makes no mention of spiritual contamination.

The usage of this term “sacrifice offered to the dead” is probably familiar to Jews who study *Pirkei Avot* on summer Shabbat afternoons. It is there, in *Perek 3, Mishna 4*, that Rabbi Shimon teaches us that if three Jews dine together at one table and fail to say any words of Torah they are considered as having eaten from “sacrifices offered to the dead”, while if they do say words of Torah they are considered as having dined at the table of G-d.

• *Chullin 13b*

# The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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## AGE OF THE TORAH

From: Michael F.

Dear Rabbi,

I believe that the "Five Books of Moses" comprise the Torah. How and when do we believe we received the Torah? Was it given to us directly from G-d? Was it dictated to Moses or someone else? Was it passed on orally for years and then committed to writing at a later time? Since the Torah covers such a large time period, wouldn't it have to "come" to us no earlier than the end of the time period the Torah covers? Finally, do we believe any other of our sacred texts come directly from God?

Dear Michael,

G-d gave the Torah to Moses and the Jewish people at Mount Sinai 3,316 years ago. This was seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt, on the 6th day of the month Sivan, in the year 2448 of the Jewish calendar. On that day, G-d revealed Himself to the entire Jewish people (which included some 600,000 adult men, in addition to women, children and the aged) and declared to them the Ten Commandments. Afterwards, Moses ascended Mount Sinai where, for forty days, G-d taught him the entire Written and Oral Torah. Later, on Yom Kippur, Moses descended with the second tablets of the Ten Commandments and began to teach the people what he heard from G-d on Mount Sinai.

This was the only event in history where G-d revealed Himself to an entire people, who simultaneously witnessed and experienced His will. "And G-d said to Moses, I come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you" (Ex. 19:9). "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet G-d, and they stood at the bottom of the mount" (19:17). "And G-d spoke all these words saying, I am the Lord your G-d" (20:1). "And all the people perceived the thundering, and the lightning, and the voice of the horn, and the mountain smoking" (20:15). Moses himself emphasized to the people the uniqueness of this event: "Did ever a people hear the voice of G-d speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard? To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord is G-d" (Deut.

4:32-35).

Rabbi Joseph Albo (Spain, c. 1400) comments on the significance of the way in which G-d gave the Torah: "That which is perceived by the greatest number of people is most widely believed; therefore the Holy One wanted the Torah to be bestowed through Moses with the greatest possible publicity and before a multitude of more than six hundred thousand...comprised of intelligent and astute men of diverse characters and attitudes so as to leave not the slightest shadow of a doubt in the minds of its recipients or in the minds of subsequent generations. Thus its reception would be both as correct and as fully credited as possible".

The Written Torah is the word of G-d that He dictated to Moses word for word, and which Moses wrote in the first Torah scroll. It incorporates all the commandments, including the Ten Commandments. It is called the Written Torah because it was to be passed throughout the generations in written form, each Torah a copy of a previous one such that all Torah scrolls are identical to that written by Moses. The Oral Torah, which was also given to Moses at Sinai, is the explanation of the commandments of the Written Torah, and was to be passed down through the generations in an unbroken oral transmission. Eventually the Oral Torah was compiled in written form in the Mishna and Talmud.

Regarding your question about the chronology in which the Torah was actually written, there are two opinions in the Talmud. According to one opinion, Moses wrote the first Torah part by part over the forty years the Jews wandered in the desert, completing it shortly before the Jews entered Israel. Another opinion maintains that Moses wrote the first Torah all at once, at the end of his life. Our other sacred texts, like the Prophets or Writings, were written either through Divine revelation or Divine inspiration. Together with the word "Torah", the Hebrew words for Prophets (*Nevi'im*) and Writings (*Ketuvim*) form an acrostic, TaNaCh, by which the Scriptures are generally referred.

Sources:

- *Sefer Halkarim, Rabbi Joseph Albo, I:19,20*
- *Return to the Source, Feldheim*
- *The Foundation of Judaism, Akiva Aaronson*
- *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gittin 60a*

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

## MOLEDET – THE HOMELAND

The term "homeland" is certainly not a title exclusive to Eretz Yisrael. Every nation expresses its patriotism by referring to its land as its "moledet".

We do find, however, a Torah source for its



application to the Jewish homeland. When the Patriarch Yaakov, in the home of his uncle Lavan in Padan Aram, was told by G-d to leave, the instructions were "to return to... your homeland and I shall be with you." (*Bereishet 31:3*)

## HUNTER AND HUNTED

**Question:** Some friends have invited me to join them on a safari to Africa which will include hunting wild animals. Is hunting proper for a nice Jewish boy?

**Answer:** This question was put to the rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, over two centuries ago. His answer, as it appears in *Responsa Noda B'Yehuda*, rejects the idea of hunting on cultural, ethical and halachic grounds.

Who are the hunters mentioned in the Torah?, he asks rhetorically. Nimrod and Esav, the two individuals identified as hunters, were also the personification of rebellion against Heaven and cruelty towards man. Hardly models for a nice Jewish boy!

He also calls attention to the Jewish custom of wishing someone who wears a new article of clothing that he live to see it wear out and be replaced by another (“*tibaleh vetitchadesh*”). This blessing is withheld, however, in regard to

items made of leather, such as shoes, because it implies the death of an animal to make such renewal possible. If such compassion for animals is expected of us in the blessing we offer, he concludes, how much more so in regard to refraining from slaying them simply for the sake of pleasure.

After stating these reasons based on *mussar* (ethics) the author issues his ruling that hunting is forbidden because of the risk which it presents to the hunter. (“Just as the hunter is out to kill his prey the animal is out to kill the hunter.”) If someone hunts for his livelihood he is permitted to expose himself to this level of risk just as the Torah permitted one to climb high fruit trees, cross oceans and travel deserts for his livelihood despite the fact that each of these carries with it a degree of risk. But if hunting is done simply as a form of sport one is guilty of exposing himself unnecessarily to such a degree of risk and therefore violates the Torah command to guard against danger to life – a sin which makes his situation even more precarious.

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

### Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

**Re: Seasons of the Moon by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair on Ohr.edu**

I rarely save written material - it tends to accumulate into mammoth piles! - But I have been keeping your monthly Seasons of the Moon articles for several years. They are beautiful, poetic, insightful. Thank you.

• Yaffa Ganz

(Yaffa Ganz is an award winning author of over forty-five titles for young Jewish readers including the two-volume history for teens: “*Sand and Stars - A Jewish Journey Through Time*”. A complete selection of her books can be seen on [www.feldheim.com](http://www.feldheim.com) and [www.artscroll.com](http://www.artscroll.com))

**Re: Prayer – Is Anyone Listening? (Ohrnet Vayechi)**

Dear Rabbi,

I would add the story with the Ponovizher Rov, who, when asked “I pray and G-d doesn’t answer!”, answered “He’s answering: No!”

• Rabbi Avrohom Bleich, *Modi'in Ilit*

What about the fact that sometimes his answer is NO?

Are you a father? How many times did you tell your kids “No” in the past 7 days?

• Zev. S.

Though it may be simplistic, it seems to me that Hashem can also answer a prayer with “No.” Just as it’s appropriate as a parent to say no to a child’s request, why not also with

Hashem? I’m not sure why people expect to get everything they ask Hashem for...

• Ira R.

**Ohrnet wrote:** “That being said, often G-d answers and it is we who don’t hear.”

Hence the expression: “Do what you can; pray for what you can’t.”

Another anecdote: Once riding upon a rural highway I was exceeding the speed limit in my haste to arrive at my destination. Suddenly I was struck by the sight of flashing lights and my heart pounded heavily as I attempted to curtail my unruly pace. As I rounded the curve I saw that the flashing was coming from a mere highway maintenance vehicle and did not belong to law enforcement. Sighing in relief I told my self that perhaps G-d had spared me a financial burden and was warning me that I should stick to the speed limit from here on in. Then I reflected conversely; perhaps G-d was sending me a sign that I oughtn’t worry myself about apprehension, and that this was in fact the message contained behind the benign flashers. Finally I resolved, that the Omnipotent Almighty and the Creator of all existence, should He like to send me a message, He could do so unambiguously and in plain English so I dare not revel in these petty thoughts.

At that moment I passed a sign written in plain English: “SPEED LIMIT 55 m.p.h.”

Almost every direction we need from G-d is already clearly codified and readily accessible. All we need to do is follow it.

• Melech Y.