

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### SOUL FOOD

*“Every son that will be born – into the River shall you throw him!...” (1:22)*

**E**Diets.com, Fat Loss ‘4’ idiots, The South Beach Diet, The Scarsdale Diet, The Atkins Diet, The Mediterranean Diet, The Blood Type Diet, The Negative Calorie Diet, Weight Watchers, Macrobiotic, Vegans, Vegetarians, Fruitetarians, Breathetarians...

Never before in history have there been so many opinions as to what we should and should not eat.

Apart from their physical benefits, many of today’s diets also focus on the purported spiritual benefits of eating and refraining from certain kinds of foods and food mixtures.

The Jewish People, however, have had their own spiritual diet for well over three thousand years. The Torah describes which foods bring us to a clearer contact with G-d and which foods distance us. It also describes foods that are not

in themselves deleterious to our spirituality but are damaging when combined, like milk and meat.

In this week’s Torah portion, the Egyptians mercilessly cast Jewish babies into the river. The Midrash describes that the river brought all of those little

Jewish children to desert lands and ejected them on the shore. There the Divine Presence nurtured them. G-d commanded the rock on one side of these babies to produce honey, and He commanded the rock on the other side to give forth oil and nurse the infants.

Later at the parting of the sea at Yam Suf it was these same children who recognized G-d and cried out “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him!”

When we take care of what goes into our children’s mouths by giving them the benefit of kosher food we are helping them to ingest a spirituality that will one day surface in their coming to recognize G-d in a world where His

existence is doubly concealed.

“This is my G-d and I will glorify Him.”

Source:

*Shmot Rabba 1:29*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shmot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt.

Sinai) Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

## ISRAEL Forever

### A LOOK AT THE BOOK

This Shabbat we begin reading in our synagogues the second of the Five Books of the Torah – *Sefer Shmot*. This Book is subtitled the “Book of Exile and Redemption”. Its eleven *parshiot* trace the history of our people from their exile in Egypt to their redemption, their receiving of the Torah and their construction of the *Mishkan* sanctuary.

In his commentary on Chumash, Ramban calls attention to the fact that freedom from Egyptian bondage is already recorded in the third *parsha* of the Book and yet the process of redemption is not considered complete until our ancestors received the Torah and built a sanctuary in which the Divine Presence could dwell.

There are Jews in the Jewish State of Israel who confuse statehood with redemption from exile. They would do well to take a good look at the Book of *Shmot* and the lesson it conveys about exile and redemption. Just as it was necessary for the Jews who were taken out of Egypt to have Egyptian culture taken out of them through Torah and Sanctuary, so too must we see leaving the lands of our current exile for our Homeland as an incomplete end to that exile. Our exile will not end until we abandon the secular ideas we imported from this exile and achieve true redemption by returning to Torah and being worthy of a rebuilt sanctuary which will make Israel holy and secure forever.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### POSTSCRIPT ON NOBEL NOBILITY

In our *Parshat Miketz* “Human Side” article titled “A Noble Nobel Laureate”, we wrote about the heroic efforts of Nobel Laureate Robert Aumann to strictly adhere to his Jewish faith while receiving the coveted prize.

Although close to 200 Jews have won the Nobel Prize, Aumann is only the second Orthodox Jew to do so. The first was S.Y. Agnon, who received the prize for literature back in 1966.

Agnon told the king of Sweden that he could not attend the awards ceremony until Shabbat ended. He received a room on the lowest floor of the hotel reserved for guests so that he would not have to use an elevator. When the

awards ceremony began he was still in his room waiting for Shabbat to end while a fancy limousine waited outside. Only after he had prayed Maariv, made *havdalah* and lit Chanukah lights did he don his formal attire and enter the car sent for him. Inside, he plugged an electric shaver into the cigarette lighter to rid himself of his Shabbat beard.

Upon finally being called to receive his prize, Agnon made the blessings ordained by our Sages for one who sees a king and wise men of other faiths. He then offered thanks to G-d Who “put it into the hearts of the sages of the illustrious Academy to bestow that great and esteemed prize upon an author who writes in the sacred Hebrew tongue.”

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt?"
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro's daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d's promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
14. "And G-d was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16,18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

לע"נ

מרת לאה בת יצחק אייזיק ע"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- When the search for *chametz* takes place
- The importance of esthetic speech and concise expression
- The detective work of Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteiro
- Giving yourself away by what you say
- Why the *chametz* search is done at night
- Landlord and tenant in regard to responsibility for *chametz* search
- Torah source for ban on eating *chametz* from midday of the 14th
- The three “firsts” in our people’s history
- The *chametz* of a non-Jew or which is property of the Sanctuary
- How the king’s tax on an animal or grain affects the halachic status
- When one leaves his home or turns it into a warehouse
- Studying the laws of Pesach 30 days before the holiday
- Renouncing ownership of *chametz*
- Mystery of food not recognizable whether matzo or *chametz*
- The blessing made before search for *chametz* and other *mitzvot*
- Why a candle is used for the *chametz* search
- Which places must be searched for *chametz*
- Divine protection for mitzvah performance

## SHEDDING LIGHT ON “LIGHT”

“The light of the 14th (of Nissan) is when the search for *chametz* is conducted.” This is how *Mesechta Pesachim* begins.

It is not clear from the language of the *mishna*, however, whether the term “light” refers to the evening preceding the 14th or the morning of that day. After a rather elaborate discussion of the subject based on the sources in Tanach and Talmud where the term light appears, a conclusion is reached that the meaning of light here is the evening.

But why, asks the *gemara*, does the *mishna* use such an ambiguous term which can easily be mistaken for its more obvious meaning of day?

The answer given is that the *mishna* preferred a *lishna me’alya* – a euphemism – for the less esthetic term “night” which is associated with darkness.

In explaining this point Rabbi Avraham ben David (RAB”D), one of the early commentaries, notes that no matter how important it is to follow the directive of the Sage Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi to always seek to avoid an unesthetic expression, this alone would not have justified referring to the night as light. Since there is still some light lingering when the evening begins, there is a legitimate choice of referring to that time period as either the beginning of the night or simply as light. The need to use esthetic expression then tips the scale in favor of light.

The practical halachic implication of this is that one should begin his search for *chametz* at the very beginning of the evening of the 14th while there is still a lingering light and not to delay since such delay may lead to completely forgetting this obligation.

• *Pesachim* 2-3a

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“Why was Jerusalem not privileged to have hot springs like Tiberias? So that those who made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for each of the Three Festivals would not say it was worth going there just for the hot springs, and thus making their mitzvah wrongly motivated.”

*Rabbi Dostai ben Rabbi - Yannai Pesachim 8b*

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## MOURNING FOR GRANDMA

**From: Anonymous**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*My widowed paternal grandmother just passed away. I have become observant over the past few years, but my father (who is my grandmother's only son) is not particularly religious. I would like to help, and I would like to see that the funeral takes place in the traditional fashion, but I don't want to impose on my father at this very difficult time, particularly given the fact that my grandmother was not observant either, and probably would not want any type of religious funeral or burial. What can/should I do to help without being a burden on my family?*

Dear Anonymous,

First let me extend my heartfelt condolences to you and your family. May the Torah path you've chosen be a source of merit and spiritual elevation for your departed grandmother's soul, and may those her mourn her be comforted together with those who mourn over the destroyed Temple, may we merit to see it rebuilt speedily in our days.

As a son, you certainly have a duty to honor and respect your father, particularly in this difficult time of loss, and you must first and foremost be there to comfort and console him, and and relieve him of as many burdens as possible. Anything you do to help ensure that the funeral and burial is done in as Jewish a way as possible is certainly very important, but you must do it in a way that will not upset your mourning father.

That being said, you should gently and patiently explain the Jewish custom, ritual and law, and offer to help in any way. You should be in contact with a local Orthodox rabbi immediately who can explain to you and your father those things that must be done, and regarding what practices there might be room for leniency if your father is not comfortable with them. In addition, the rabbi should take care of all the arrangements that take place behind the scenes such as the guarding of the body, having someone recite psalms (preferably near the body), purification before burial and arranging a proper casket. Even though your grandmother might not have agreed to these things while living, from her perspective now in the World of Truth, she'll appreciate them.

In the meantime, you should also recite psalms and learn *mishnayot* on behalf of your grandmother, before and after burial, preferably in the house in which she lived, or at least in your father's house. You can also give charity and light a memorial candle in her honor. If you can encourage your

father to do this as well, all the better. But if he cannot or will not, you must do it for him. It is very important to encourage your father to say Kaddish for his mother. Tell him that Jewish sons have been saying Kaddish for their mothers since time immemorial, and in so doing he is connecting himself to the unbroken chain of the Jewish people who honor their parents through life and death. He may need help reading it – get him a transliteration, or even sit with him in order to help him learn to read it in Hebrew.

Regarding the actual funeral ceremony, the rabbi will take care of it, and will tell you before and during the ceremony everything that needs to be done. Again, consult with him beforehand about what must be done, and what might be suspended if it will cause disharmony among the family at that very sensitive hour. Prepare your father regarding the customary rending of the garment. Having a *minyan* at the funeral so that your father can say the special burial Kaddish is very important. Help him prepare for it, since it is different than the normal Kaddish.

Before the burial, you can also help arrange for the customary meal that takes place after the burial. It should be simple, dignified, kosher (that's where you fit in) and usually includes hard-boiled eggs, which is a food of mourning since it symbolizes the cycle of life. Afterwards, consult the rabbi about the details regarding your father's sitting *shiva*. Hopefully he will be able to say Kaddish regularly. However, since that is usually not the case among the non-observant, you should encourage your father to have someone say Kaddish for the first year, and you should make the arrangement for him (you shouldn't say Kaddish if both of your parents are living). Normally, this can be arranged through a *yeshiva* or *shul*.

Of course, the more you and your father do in honor of your grandmother, the better. You should continue saying psalms and learning *mishnayot* during the year. Try and encourage your father to go to *shul* if possible to *daven* and say Kaddish, and try to foster a relationship between him and the rabbi. He can also donate to charitable Torah causes in her honor. Of course, all this applies to other living relatives, such as your father's sisters, if he has any. Any good deed done by people who are directly related to the deceased is like a living Kaddish which benefits their soul, simultaneously perpetuating their influence in this world and elevating them in the next.

*Note:*

*We have referred this person to appropriate rabbis in his father's area. While we have recommended to him specific books, there are many good books on this topic in Jewish book stores.*

## WHEN TO AVOID DOING A FAVOR

**Question:** Just as I was about to enter the airport for a trans-Atlantic flight I was approached by a stranger who asked me to do him a favor by taking a small package with me which someone would receive from me upon arrival. I had no problem with my luggage being overweight but I turned down the request because I wasn't sure it was the safe thing to do. What is the right thing to do in such a case?

**Answer:** Although the general rule is that one who refuses to do a favor for someone else when there is no loss to him is guilty of having the corrupt, selfish character of the ancient Sodomites, in this case you were very wise to refuse.

First of all there is the security issue. You will recall that

when you pass through security at the airport you are asked whether you received a package from anyone whom you do not know. If you answer truthfully, the package will be taken from you and cause a very unpleasant delay at best, or confiscation at worst.

Secondly, there have been incidents in which a naive favor-doer was stopped by customs inspectors upon his arrival and discovered to be carrying a large amount of drugs or diamonds in the innocent looking package. Such victims have experienced great difficulty in escaping conviction for illegal activity, especially since they were unable or unwilling to identify the scoundrel who gave them the package.

In conclusion, save your favors for safer circumstances and politely turn down the stranger at the airport.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE FRUITS

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

### POMEGRANATE - SYMBOL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Anyone who has ever eaten this exotic fruit is well aware of the extraordinarily large number of seeds it contains. King Shlomo's comparison (*Shir Hashirim* 4:3) of this fruit to the Jewish people leads our Sages to finding merit even in those Jews whose standard of observing the *mitzvot* leaves something to be desired.

In one place (*Berachot* 6a) it is explained that the city of Tiberias is also called Rakat because the word *raik* means empty or unworthy. Just as in the above-mentioned passage we



read the word *rakota'ich* as a hint to "the unworthy ones being as filled with mitzvah credits as a pomegranate is filled with seeds", so too were even the unworthy people of Tiberias filled with *mitzvot*.

In another place (*Berachot* 6a) this appreciation of Jews is extended to the entire nation. Even the unworthy ones, our Sages tell us, are so filled with *mitzvot* like the pomegranate is filled with seeds that these merits will protect them against the fires of retribution in the World to Come.

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