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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS

“...it was on that very day that all the legions of G-d left the land of Egypt.” (12:4)

Society has no truer mirror than its advertising. What motivates people to put their hands in their pockets and pull out their hard-earned cash must appeal to their innermost desires. And what someone wants, what he truly desires — is who he is.

Think, for a moment, of all those car ads filmed in the desert. There’s no one for fifty miles in any direction. Climb behind the wheel and you can go wherever you want, whenever you want. You can be whatever you want. Think of all those ads for away-from-it-all vacations (whatever the dreaded “it” might be). They all express the same ideal:

The commitment to being uncommitted.

The freedom to do what I want when I want, and to change what I want from one moment to the next.

Society pays lip service to the ideals of commitment, stability, and fidelity. Advertising, however, gives the lie to that sanctimony and reveals that society’s real aspiration is to be free to “go with the flow.”

Unfortunately, modern secular man finds his flow severely restricted. At every turn, he is encumbered by commitments: a home, a spouse, children, a mortgage, a second mortgage, a second wife. What he would really like to do is to take off and travel the world with a credit card and unlimited credit — to follow any, or all, of a myriad of possibilities. The fact that he tolerates responsibility doesn’t mean that he has accepted a specific form and purpose to his life. He’d really like to be somewhere else, anywhere else, *everywhere* else.

From where does this ideology of irresponsibility come?

Is this desire for constant change a new phenomenon, or does it have its roots in something much more ancient?

Ancient Egypt was an entire society dedicated to the pursuit of infinite variety.

The Egyptians worshipped the Nile, because, quite literally, water is the ultimate symbol of going with the flow, of infinite diversity. For this reason the word for water in Hebrew — *mayim* — is a plural noun, because water has no inherent shape. It always takes on the shape of the vessel it fills.

A society that lauds incessant variety, by definition, rejects and scorns marital fidelity.

No slave ever escaped from Egypt because, for a slave, it was simply the greatest place in the world. There was no pleasure, however exotic or bizarre, that was unavailable to the Egyptians, and those pleasures that the natural world could not afford were conjured by the black arts.

Almost the entire book of *Mishle* (Proverbs) by King Solomon is a denigration of the ‘*isha zara*’ — the unfaithful wife, the antithesis of the ‘*aishet chayil*’, the Jewish woman of valor, whose praise closes the book. Egypt was this faithless spouse who seeks a new partner constantly, a new form. Inconstant as water, she wants to go with the flow.

In diametrical opposition to this culture stands the Jewish home. The spiritual Jewish Masters refer to a wife as the “home.” The Jewish home represents the ultimate triumph of the *aishet chayil*, the woman of valor, who rejects the culture of ‘new’ and remains unchangingly faithful to her spouse.

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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 first-born, 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 first-born 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*.

ISRAEL Forever

WHEN THE SON IS NOT TOLD

The recent disclosure of the findings of an international survey of the educational abilities of pupils in 64 countries caused ruffles in the education circles in Israel. The relatively poor showing of Israeli youngsters raised doubts about the effectiveness of government schools. It also caused many people to wonder why the Education Ministry is making such a major effort to force religious schools to introduce secular subjects into their curriculum rather than solve the problems of student violence and poor academic achievement in government

schools.

"And you shall tell your son on that day" is what we read in this week's Torah portion as the command to relate to our offspring the tale of the Exodus. For education to be successful it has to be built on tradition. When Jewish history begins only with the establishment of the State, it is inevitable that the lack of respect for what went before leads to failure in developing educational skills and absorbing the values of respecting teachers and parents.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

THE TENTH MAN – A MYSTERIOUS GUEST

There were very few Jews in Hebron several centuries ago, and the only way they were able to have a minyan for Shabbat and Holiday services was through the arrival of some Jews from the surrounding villages. One year those Jews decided to go to Jerusalem for Yom Kippur, and the Hebron community was left with only nine men, with no tenth man in sight to complete the minyan for services.

As they wept over the likelihood of Yom Kippur without a minyan, an aged stranger appeared. He refused their offer



of a pre-fast meal saying that he had already eaten one during his travel. After a very special day of prayer, one of the community leaders invited the mysterious stranger to his home to break the fast. When they reached the house, however, the guest suddenly disappeared. After a futile search the disappointed host had a somewhat restless sleep during which the stranger appeared to him in a dream. He identified himself as the Patriarch Avraham, who saw how pained they were and joined them for one day as the tenth man in the city where he lived and was buried.

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 first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
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 first-born 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 for 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 first-born, 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 location of the altar in the Beit Hamikdash
- The different degrees of holiness in the Courtyard
- Sacrifices offered while altar was incomplete
- The sizes of the altars of Moshe and of Shlomo
- Whether the first sanctification of the Beit Hamikdash was to last for all time
- The expansion of the altar in the Second Beit Hamikdash
- How those who returned from Babylonian exile knew where the walls and altar place should be
- The parts and dimensions of the altar
- The reprimand of "sons of Keturah"
- Which service was performed at the southwest corner of the altar
- The sin sacrifice of fowl

SEARCH FOR THE ALTAR SITE

When the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah* set about constructing the second Beit Hamikdash, they were able to determine the exact location of the walls separating the different areas of the first Beit Hamikdash because their foundations were visible. But they had a problem in regard to the altar, which lacked such a visible foundation, so that its exact location remained a mystery.

A number of solutions to this mystery are suggested by various Sages.

Rabbi Elazar states that they were shown an altar in heaven upon which the Malach Gavriel was offering sacrifices, and they understood that the altar they were to build must correspond to the location of that one above.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeni's approach is that the fragrance of incense offered throughout the duration of the

first Beit Hamikdash permeated the entire area except for one spot where it was dominated by the odor of burned flesh, which indicated that this was where the altar stood.

Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha says that G-d showed them the ashes of Yitzchak as an indication for where the altar must be built. Maharsha explains that this is in line with the Midrash that Rashi quotes in his commentary on the passage in *Bereishet* 22:14, which states that Avraham prophesied that G-d will each year see the mound of ashes of Yitzchak and will forgive his descendants.

Although Yitzchak was never actually burned on the altar that his father had prepared, his willingness to serve as a sacrifice was treated by G-d as an actuality and it was these ashes that showed where the altar was in the time of Avraham and where it should be in the Beit Hamikdash.

• *Zevachim* 62a

What the SAGES Say

"The fire which came from Heaven in the days of Moshe did not depart from the Sanctuary altar until the days of Shlomo, and the fire which descended in the days of Shlomo did not depart until Menashe removed it."

• *Beraita - Zevachim* 61b

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GREATLY HUMBLE

From: Anonymous

Dear Rabbi,

I will be honest. I have a problem with arrogance. What I mean is that I know I am conceited and I feel bad about it. I see it affects my relationships (or lack thereof) but I find it hard to change because I have gotten used to acting in a certain way and I almost feel like others expect me to act that way as well. I feel locked into a bad cycle that isn't good for me but I can't find a way out. Can you give me some advice?

Dear Anonymous,

Interestingly enough, it's quite "natural" for us to feel arrogant. This basically originates from the fact that we were created in the image of G-d and are therefore "destined" for greatness. The problem is that instead of directing this potential to becoming G-d-like, we direct it "to becoming G-d". What this means is that we take the credit for our G-d-given talents, deflecting recognition and praise from G-d to ourselves.

Now there is nothing wrong with knowing one's strengths and talents. This is not, from a Jewish perspective, considered arrogant or conceited. On the contrary, how can a person fulfill his G-d-given purpose in life without being aware of the tools G-d gave him to accomplish his mission? Rather, arrogance is attributing greatness to oneself, while humility is attributing that greatness to G-d. So there's no contradiction between knowing how "great" one is and being humble; conversely, knowing how great you are is not necessarily being conceited.

The question is where does one take it from there? How does this affect the way one acts? And this is the

deciding factor regarding our relationship not only with other people, but also with the entire world around us.

A person who views himself as the source of his strengths and talents will naturally expect to be lauded by others and will simultaneously lord these attributes over others for his own advantage. In contrast, one who views G-d as the source of his assets will direct his praise, and the praise of others, to G-d. And he will simultaneously share these attributes with others for their benefit. Unlike the former who uses his G-d-given talents to exploit others, he exploits his G-d-given strengths to help others.

It should be clear, then, how and why this arrogance you describe affects your relationships with others. But how can you get out of this self-perpetuating cycle of damage?

The answer lies in the very reason why you can't find the way out. Until now you thought that the only way to correct your arrogance is to deny your greatness. But that would be denying the truth since you are truly great (and I think this is the underlying idea behind what you describe as people "expecting" you to act a certain way).

What I suggest, however, is not to deny your strengths to yourself or to others. Let everyone continue knowing just how great you are. But from now on, make the mental switch of expecting and taking no credit at all, while simultaneously subjugating and sharing your talents with others for their benefit. There is nothing more humbling than admitting your complete reliance on G-d and indenturing your G-d-given strengths in the service of others. The greatness of this humility will be recognized by others the more you selflessly serve as a conduit through which G-dliness enters the world.

Just be careful not to get conceited about being so humble...

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THE DEGREE OF DECVING

Question: I have recently entered the job market and have been preparing my curriculum vitae (CV) which all prospective employers demand before even considering an interview. I am confident that I can do a good job in the field for which I trained at school but all the firms demand experience. Is it ethical for me to dress up my CV to give the impression of more experience than I have really had?

Answer: Our Talmudic Sages (*Mesechta Bava Metzia 60a*) rule that it is forbidden for a seller to “dress up” for sale animals, humans or vessels in order to deceive the buyer as to the true condition of the item he is purchasing. Examples are easily provided for how one can paint an old vessel to make it look like new and how an animal or its meat can be given the appearance of better health and size. But how, asks the *gemara*, does one dress up a human for sale?

The answer given to this question sheds light on the question before us. A story is related about an old heathen who dyed his gray hair black and sold himself as a young slave to Rabbi Papa bar Shmuel. When the master once asked his new slave to fetch him some water the outraged fellow rinsed the dye from his head and beard to expose his grayness and

indignantly rejected this offensive order by exclaiming: You see, I am older than your father! Should a Jew wish to sell his slave to another and deceive him in regard to his age in such a fashion he is guilty of transgressing a Torah prohibition — “Let not a man deceive his fellow” (*Vayikra 25:17*).

While selling slaves may not be relevant in modern society, selling ourselves as candidates for jobs is very relevant as indicated by the question before us. Our Sages cite several examples of dressing up which is permissible and offer us a simple rule of thumb. When selling a new vessel there is nothing wrong with enhancing its beauty to increase its value. But when dressing up is done to conceal the used condition of an item being sold as new this constitutes deceit.

Applying this to preparing a CV every effort should be made to accentuate the positive by stressing whatever education or experience you have truly acquired. But don't try to eliminate the negative by lying or even exaggerating the degree of your experience. Aside from the sin involved there is also the practical danger that someday your deceit will be embarrassingly exposed and your dressed up gray hair may be showing.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE SHERIFF KNOWS HIS HEROES

“The heroes of the world are here in Israel.” This is how Sheriff Leroy D. Baca of Los Angeles summed up his feelings after participating in a recent four-day seminar in Israel on “Police and Law Enforcement in the Era of Global Terror”.

Boca, one of 34 chiefs of police and other law enforcement officers from the U.S. and Canada who took part in the seminar hosted by the Israel Police told the press that he could

not imagine any community as strong and as helpful as the one in Israel. “The help received by victims of terror attacks, who have had their bodies torn apart by a terror explosion, is an act of heroism of an unprecedented level,” Boca added.

The police chiefs of Washington D.C., Chicago and Portland, Oregon were in the group along with the police commissioners of Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit and Kansas City, and various FBI representatives.

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