



LOUGHTON SHUL
MORE THAN A SHUL

INSPIRE

MATOS & MASEI CHAZAK 26 TAMMUZ - 18 JULY PRIORITIES AND PRICE TAGS

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

Is it the money or the man, the cash or the kids? Of course, no one would ever admit to putting money ahead of their children; but is it not an all too common phenomenon? Aren't most parents, even good parents, guilty of making that mistake now and then? In this week's Parshah the Jewish

People are preparing for the conquest of Canaan and the allotment of the Promised Land amongst the twelve tribes of Israel, when the tribes of Reuben and Gad make a special request of Moses. They had abundant herds of livestock and the land east of the Jordan River was especially suitable for grazing. They asked Moses if they could receive this land rather than land west of the Jordan. In making this request they expressed themselves thus: "Pens for the flock we shall build here for our livestock, and cities for our small children." Immediately, Moses chastises them and corrects their mistake. "Build for yourselves cities for your small children and pens for your flock." Moses turns around their sequence, putting the children ahead of the

animals. Rashi observes that these tribes were more concerned about their money, i.e. livestock, than they were about their sons and daughters. Moses needed to give them a lesson in values and priorities. Put family first. Possessions come later. The veteran American spiritual leader, Rabbi David Hollander, once told me the story of a fellow who somehow managed to get himself locked in inside a big department store after they closed up for the day. To compound the problem, it was over a holiday weekend. When all his attempts to get out proved futile, he decided to give vent to his frustrations by taking revenge on the store management. He spent the time of his incarceration swapping price tags on the merchandise. The result? A mink coat was now priced at \$29.99, a necktie at \$999.00. Furniture was going for the price of peanuts, the latest hi-fi for a song, and a set of underwear was absolutely unaffordable! Imagine the chaos when the store reopened. The question is, are our own price tags correctly marked? Do we value the things in our own lives correctly? Are our priorities in order? Or do we too put the cattle and the sheep — the car and the office — ahead of our children? How many workaholic husbands have told their wives, "Honey, I'm doing it all for you and the kids." But the businesses we are busy building for them actually take us away from them in the most important and formative years of their lives.

Rightly has it been said, "the best thing you can spend on your kids is not money but time." I've seen many people become "successes" over the years. They achieve professional success, career success, business success, growing their fame and fortunes. Too many in the process have become family failures. At the end of the day, our deepest satisfaction in life comes not from our professional achievements but from our family — the growth, stability and togetherness that we

have nurtured over the years — what our Jewish parents and grandparents simply called nachas. To paraphrase, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak "Jewish wealth is not measured in property portfolios or stocks and bonds; true Jewish wealth is being blessed with children who walk in the ways of G-d." For that, we need to be there for them and with them. A congregant of mine once walked up to me and proclaimed, "Rabbi, I am a millionaire!" I knew the man to be of modest financial means but he immediately explained, "I'm a millionaire in nachas!" Amen. I wish it upon all of us.

Psalms about Future Events

I'm hoping that you can clarify a few terms that are not clear for me. What is the difference between Torah, Talmud, Mishnah, Gemara and Midrash. If the Bible is the written law, then is the Midrash the commentary? I went to Hebrew School and had my Bar Mitzvah, but they never explained any of this to me. I'm drowning in a sea of unfamiliar terminology. Please help!

The Aish Rabbi Replies:

The first thing to know is that the Torah consists of two parts: The Written Torah, and the Oral Torah. The Written Torah totals 24 books, including the Five Books of Moses and the prophetic writings – e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Psalms, Proverbs, etc. The Five Books of Moses – comprised of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – was written down by Moses in 1273 BCE, and includes all 613 commandments (mitzvahs). Perhaps part of the reason for your confusion is that the Five Books of Moses has many names. It is referred to as the Bible (meaning "book" in Greek), the Chumash (Hebrew for "fifth"), the Pentateuch (Greek for "five scrolls"), or generically "Torah" – Hebrew for "instructions," because its purpose is to instruct. (Jews consider it insulting to call it the Old Testament, as this implies a New Testament, which Jews reject.) But whatever the name, it refers to the best-selling, longest-running book in the history of mankind. So what is the Oral Torah? Its name derives from the fact that it was not allowed to be formally written down but had to be taught orally. It contains the explanations of the Written Torah. One cannot be understood without the other. In 190 CE, persecution and exile of the Jewish people threatened the proper transmission of the Oral Torah. Therefore, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi compiled written notes on the Oral Torah called the "Mishnah" (Hebrew for "teaching"). Rabbi Yehudah arranged the Mishnah into six sections: Laws of Agriculture, Festivals, Damages, Marriage, Purity, and Offerings. Rabbi Yehudah wrote the Mishnah in code form, so that students would still require the explanation of a rabbi – since this information was meant to remain oral. In 500 CE, the Jewish people again suffered an uprooting of their communities, and two Babylonian rabbis – Rav Ashi and Ravina – compiled a 60-volume record of rabbinic discussions on the Mishnah, called the "Gemara." Together, the Mishnah and Gemara comprise what is commonly called the "Talmud." The Oral Torah also includes the Midrash, an explanation of the Written Torah, comprising both ethical and legal components. Much of this material is also contained in the Talmud. The Oral Torah also includes the works of Kabbalah, a tradition of mystical secrets of the metaphysical universe received by Moses at Mount Sinai. It was first published as "The Zohar" by R' Shimon bar Yochai (170 CE), and elucidated by the Arizal (1572 CE). Torah is not to be regarded, however, as an academic field of study. It is meant to be applied to all aspects of our everyday life – speech, food, prayer, etc. Over the centuries great rabbis have compiled summaries of practical law from the Talmud. Landmark works include: "Mishneh Torah" by Maimonides (12th century Egypt); "Shulchan Aruch" by Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century Israel); "Mishnah Berurah" by the Chafetz Chaim (20th century Poland). I hope this helps solve your confusion. Now only one thing remains – to go out and learn the entire Torah!

SHUL TIMES

Shabbat Times

Candle Lighting

8:50pm

Shabbat Ends 10:16pm

Friday, 17 July

7pm with Rabbi Yanky

Kabbalat Shabbat on

zoom

PARSHA SUMMARY

Moses conveys the laws governing the annulment of vows to the heads of the tribes of Israel. War is waged against Midian for their role in plotting the moral destruction of Israel, and the Torah gives a detailed account of the war spoils and how they were allocated amongst the people, the warriors, the Levites and the high priest. The tribes of Reuben and Gad (later joined by half of the tribe of Manasseh) ask for the lands east of the Jordan as their portion in the Promised Land, these being prime pastureland for their cattle. Moses is initially angered by the request, but subsequently agrees on the condition that they first join, and lead, in Israel's conquest of the lands west of the Jordan. The forty-two journeys and encampments of Israel are listed, from the Exodus to their encampment on the plains of Moab across the river from the land of Canaan. The boundaries of the Promised Land are given, and cities of refuge are designated as havens and places of exile for inadvertent murderers. The daughters of Tzelafchad marry within their own tribe of Manasseh, so that the estate which they inherit from their father should not pass to the province of another tribe.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

This week's haftorah is the second of a series of three "haftarot of affliction." These three haftarot are read during the Three Weeks of mourning for Jerusalem, between the fasts of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av. The prophet Jeremiah transmits G-d's message to the Jewish people, in strong tones chastising all the sectors of the people, including the leadership, for their abandonment of G-d. "What wrong did your forefathers find in Me, that they distanced themselves from Me, and they went after futility and themselves became futile?" He reminds them of the kindness G-d did for them, taking them out of Egypt and leading them through the desert and settling them in the Promised Land, yet they repaid kindness with disloyalty. "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the spring of living waters, [and furthermore, this was in order] to dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that do not hold water." G-d asks them to view the actions of their neighboring nations, the Kittites and Kedarites, "and see whether there was any such thing, whether a nation exchanged a god, although they are not gods. Yet My nation exchanged their glory for what does not avail." Jeremiah then goes on to foretell the suffering the Jewish people will suffer at the hands of their enemies, and also their erstwhile allies: "Your evil will chastise you, and you will be rebuked for your backsliding; and you shall know and see that your forsaking the L-rd your G-d is evil and bitter." The haftorah ends on an encouraging note, assuring the people that if they return to G-d with sincerity, they will be restored to their full glory.

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK CHAIM ARUCHIM

Rosen Sylvia Mother Leah bas Yitzchak 28 Tammuz
Morris Lindsey Mother Malka bas Shlomo 29 Tammuz
Sugarman Marlene Father Yacov Ben Nochem Ha'Levy 29 Tammuz
Green Shirley Brother David ben Yona 2 Av
Teller Chaim Father Zvi ben Chaim 2 Av
Cramer David Mother Sarah bas David 3 Av

JEWISH HUMOR

The Edelstein family from New York was getting a guided tour through one of the ancient crusader forces in the land of Israel. "This place," their tour guide told them, "is almost one thousand years old. Not a stone in it has been touched, nothing altered, nothing replaced in all those years." "Wow," said Zadie Edelstein, "they must have the same landlord I do."

RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

What has six faces, but does not wear makeup, has twenty-one eyes, but cannot see? What is it?

Answer to last week's Riddle.
fire

STORYTIME

Many years ago, in the time when the Holy Temple stood, there lived in Jerusalem two storekeepers named Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok and Abba Shaul ben Botnit. The two men were neighbors and friends and had known each other most of their lives. But in addition to being friends, they shared a wonderful and rare character trait - absolute and strict honesty. It is related in the Talmud that as a favour to their fellow Jews, these two men would prepare stores of wine and oil before every holiday so that the people of Jerusalem would have what they needed to celebrate the holidays properly. Tens of thousands of Jews would stream into Jerusalem for the holidays and would be welcomed into homes throughout the city. With so many guests, it was no wonder that their gracious hosts would sometimes run out of oil or wine during a festival. Whenever that happened, they could go to Rabbi Elazar or Abba Shaul and take what they needed. Of course, no money would pass hands on a festival, but there would be no lack of those two necessities to prepare for the festive meals. Even during the intermediate days of the pilgrimage festivals of Sukkot and Passover, the two generous merchants would prepare in advance and make their goods available to those in need so that they could spend their time studying Torah. Not only did they practice these deeds of great kindness, but even on regular workdays they were outstanding in their adherence to the mitzva of honesty. When they would finish pouring the contents of one of their containers into a customer's container, they would sit their container on top of that of the customer and allow the dregs of the jug to drip into the customer's receptacle. Only then were they sure that they had given the customer everything that was due him. Despite their stringency, the two rabbis feared that a bit of oil and wine would still cling to the edges of the jugs. So what did they do? Each man had a special container into which he would pour the last tiny drops. Over many years, they accumulated three hundred barrels of oil and three hundred barrels of wine. One day, they decided to bring all of these barrels to the Holy Temple. After all, they did not consider it their property, yet they could not give it to the customers either. They decided to consecrate it to the Holy Temple. When the porters arrived, they were met by the treasurers of the Temple. "What have you brought?" they asked. "We have brought three hundred barrels of wine and three hundred barrels of oil for use in the Holy Temple. It has taken us many years to accumulate it, allowing it to drip from the sides of our jugs. We did not want to benefit from anything which does not belong to us, and we couldn't give it to our customers." "It was certainly not necessary to collect those small leftovers," remarked the treasurers. "Your customers understand that tiny drops adhere to the sides of your jugs, and they expect there to be some waste." "Nevertheless," the men continued, "We don't want anything that is not rightfully ours." "Since you wish to keep such a high standard, we will accept your offering. The oil and wine will be used for the good of the community. We will sell them and from the profits we will dig wells for the pilgrims to have water on the festivals. The residents of the city will also be able to use them. So you see, even your own customers will benefit from your offering, and your own minds can be at ease." The two merchants left the precincts of the Holy Temple with hearts full of joy, knowing that they never departed from their customs of strict honesty and kindness

FOOD 4 THE SOUL

The fundamental principle of a free society, the basis to the absolute rejection of totalitarianism and fascism for which we fought a world war, is this: The individual is sacred. Nothing, not the good of the state, not even the lives of the majority, can override the sanctity of the individual. What is it that renders an individual sacred? The breath of G-d within him. That which we call the divine image.