



LOUGHTON SHUL
MORE THAN A SHUL

INSPIRE

VAESCHANAN - NACHAMU 11 AV - 1 AUGUST

EVERY EFFORT COUNTS

In this week's Torah portion, Moses reviewed the episode of the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai and repeated the Ten Commandments before the entire nation. In recalling the events of Mt. Sinai, Moses drew attention to G-d's seemingly unusual instruction that the people should return to their tents as a means of ensuring their continuing loyalty to His commandments. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgensztern (1757-1859, known as the Kotzker Rebbe, Poland) asks why it was necessary for Moses to include this as part of his review of the overall experience of receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Furthermore, what connection is there between G-d's concern that the Jewish people "fear and observe" all the commandments and returning to their tents? Indeed, the commandments inspire great admiration for the Jewish people in the eyes of the nations (Devarim 4:6). Surely they are not to be kept hidden in their tents! Rabbi Morgensztern answers that G-d is stressing the importance of how the Jewish people should conduct themselves in their homes. When the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai, it was ablaze with fire, and the heart of the entire nation was directed toward one goal. Now, G-d was instructing Moses to tell the nation that they must bring their burning enthusiasm with them back to their tents, to their homes. Only then would this experience find lasting permanence. In a similar vein, a Mishnah in Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot 1:4) states that one's home should be a meeting place for sages; the very next Mishnah (Pirkei Avot 1:5) states that one's "house should be open wide," and the poor should be treated as "members of your household." On the surface, these two teachings seem to contradict each other. On the one hand, having a home that is a meeting place of sages means maintaining a level of decorum and dignity which would be appropriate for such leaders. On the other hand, treating the poor as members of our household might give an entirely different flavor to the home, with down-and-out people coming and going at all hours. A deeper look, however, shows that there really is no contradiction. When a home truly embraces Jewish values with vigor and enthusiasm, then all who enter, from the wisest of sages to the simplest of people, will be comfortable there. The following story illustrates this point: Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Herman (1880 – 1967) was a pioneering figure in the observant Jewish world in New York in the early part of the 20th century. He encouraged many young people to embrace their Jewish heritage at a time when millions of Jews were abandoning the "ways of the old country." He and his wife insisted that their home be open to all. The greatest Rabbis and the poorest of immigrants were all welcome at – and indeed sought out – his table. After many years of Shabbat and Holiday meals and guests, however, this table definitely showed the effects of all the wear and tear. One day, a relative offered to give them a dining room set to replace the old one at no cost. Rabbi Herman refused. This table has seen the greatest scholars of our generation, he explained. To outward appearances, the table was old and scratched. However, to Rabbi Herman and his family, the table was a treasured vessel used for holy purposes. Another time, while Rabbi Herman's daughter was playing outside, an expensive, chauffeur-driven car drove up to their apartment. An elegant woman appeared from the car and asked to be taken to the Herman residence. The guest was a wealthy Jewish woman from the West Side of Manhattan. She was known for her contributions to Jewish causes, and she had heard about the many guests that the Herman's invited into their home. In a humble voice, this woman asked Mrs. Herman if she could help in the preparations for Shabbat. "How do you want to help me?" Mrs. Herman asked. "Well," she answered, "I could even wash your floors." A woman from the upper classes of New York society had traveled to the Herman home and asked to wash the floors – all to have a small portion in their tremendous generosity of spirit. (From All for the Boss by Ruchoma Shain) As we move past Tisha B'Av and toward the High Holidays, the time is ripe to focus on ways to build love and harmony with our fellow Jews. Rather than extravagant displays of "righteousness," it is the enthusiasm we have for our heritage that helps us create a home of wisdom, values and openness to share our blessings with others. Indeed, it is the warmth and sincerity found in a Jewish home that has the deepest effect on the people around us and that creates a place where the blazing fires of Sinai find expression in our lives.

The Biblical Environmentalist

Lush green grass, tall trees and fresh streams framed our journey through G-d's perfect nature. Sunlight filtered through the overhanging brush, creating patterns on a pine-needle carpet that was rich with activity and teeming with life. Nature's beauty, unbridled and uncapped, radiated in pristine glory. Untouched by human hand and filled to overflow with insects, birds and wildlife, it was simply a paradise on earth. The animals knew it and we knew it too. We were frolicking in G-d's own playground. If only all of the world could be so preserved. If only our planet could become one large conservation. Alas, that cannot be. For humanity to survive we must disturb nature's delicate little petals. We cannot build homes without felling trees. We cannot farm land without turning over soil. We cannot eat without disturbing animal and vegetation.

The Contemporary Question

How much should be disturbed and how much should be preserved?

That is the contemporary debate. Should we rob the environment to feed our appetites? Should we deplete our resources to serve unending and unnecessary needs? Should we uproot forests and supplant deserts to make space for suburban development? The developer says, yes. Growing populations require housing even if it encroaches on the environment. Sprawling population centers require goods and services even if it encroaches on the environment. Despite the cost, humanity's needs must come first. The environmentalist disagrees. "Leave G-d's nature alone," he says. Revel in its pristine glory, enjoy its enchanting beauty and cherish its peaceful serenity. If we don't learn to protect and enjoy our environment today, it won't be here to serve us tomorrow. Whichever way we turn we are forced to choose. For humanity to thrive, the environment must pay a price. For the environment to thrive, humanity must pay a price. In its final form the question is, does man belong to nature or does nature belong to man? The religious answer is, neither. Both belong to G-d.

A Hybrid Opinion

In his Monumental work, Horeb, Samson Raphael Hirsh argued that mankind is summoned by G-d to govern his created earth and to fashion all things in our environment to our own purposes; the earth for habitation, plant and animal for food and clothing. We are permitted to rule over the world for the six weekdays. On the seventh day, however, we are forbidden, at divine behest, to fashion anything into an instrument of human service. In this way we acknowledge that we have no ownership or authority over the world. Nothing may be dealt with as we please, for everything belongs to G-d. Rabbi Hirsch drafts opposing arguments into his hybrid philosophy. The developer claims humanity's dominion over nature and Rabbi Hirsch grants that dominion. The environmentalist argues that we have no right of ownership over nature and Rabbi Hirsch grants that point as well. Within these parameters mankind is entitled to inhabit the planet and to utilize its resources as necessary. However, unnecessary destruction of any kind, even picking a leaf from its branch without reason, is a crime against nature and forbidden by G-d

SHUL TIMES

Shabbat Times

Candle Lighting

8:30pm

Shabbat Ends 9:56pm

Friday, 31 July

7pm with Rabbi Yanky
Kabbalat Shabbat on
zoom

Artscroll

958

1196

Living Torah

884

1224

PARSHA SUMMARY

Moses tells the people of Israel how he implored G-d to allow him to enter the Land of Israel, but G-d refused, instructing him instead to ascend a mountain and see the Promised Land. Continuing his "review of the Torah," Moses describes the Exodus from Egypt and the Giving of the Torah, declaring them unprecedented events in human history. "Has there ever occurred this great thing, or has the likes of it ever been heard? Did ever a people hear the voice of G-d speaking out of the midst of the fire . . . and live? . . . You were shown, to know, that the L-rd is G-d . . . there is none else beside Him." Moses predicts that in future generations the people will turn away from G-d, worship idols, and be exiled from their land and scattered amongst the nations; but from there they will seek G-d, and return to obey His commandments. Our Parshah also includes a repetition of the Ten Commandments, and the verses of the Shema, which declare the fundamentals of the Jewish faith: the unity of G-d ("Hear O Israel: the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one"); the mitzvot to love G-d, to study His Torah, and to bind "these words" as tefillin on our arms and heads, and inscribe them in the mezuzot affixed on the doorposts of our homes.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

Isaiah 40:1–26 This week's haftorah is the first of a series of seven "haftarot of Consolation." These seven haftarot commence on the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah. This section of Isaiah begins with G-d's exhortation to the prophets: "Console, O console My people . . . Announce to Jerusalem that her period of exile has been fulfilled and that her sins have been forgiven." Isaiah's prophecy describes some of the miraculous events that will unfold with the onset of the messianic era, such as the return of the exiles to Jerusalem, the revelation of G-d's glory, and the rewards and retribution that will then be meted out. The prophet then goes on to comfort the people, describing G-d's power and might, and reassuring them of His care for His people.

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK CHAIM ARUCHIM

**Bensusan Blanche Husband Henry ben Reuben 12 Av
Lieberman Heather Mother Bayla bas Dov ber HaCohen 12 Av
Freedman Stephen Father 15 Av
Cohen Richard Father simcha ben moshe hacohen 16 Av
Cramer David Sister Sheina bas Meir 17 Av
Klein Vivien Mother Esther bas Mordechai 17 Av**

JEWISH HUMOUR

What happens when a fly falls into a coffee cup? The Italian - throws the cup and walks away in a fit of rage

The Frenchman - takes out the fly, and drinks the coffee

The Chinese - eats the fly and throws away the coffee

The Israeli - sells the coffee to the Frenchman, the fly to the Chinese, buys himself a new cup of coffee and uses the extra money to invent a Device that prevents flies from falling into coffee. The

Palestinian - blames the Israeli for the fly falling into his coffee, protests the act of aggression to the UN, takes a loan from the European Union for a new cup of coffee, uses the money to purchase explosives and then blows up the coffee house where the Italian, the Frenchman, and the Chinese, are trying to explain to the Israeli why he should give away his cup of coffee to the Palestinian.

RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

I can be crushed to pieces but only if I am given away first, I can be clogged and attacked but that's usually my own doing. No matter how many problems I have, you wouldn't dare let me go. What am I?

**Answer to last week's Riddle.
A GLOVE**

STORYTIME

A young girl approached the rabbi of her village. With tears in her eyes she described her situation to the kindhearted rabbi. She was engaged, but her joy in her upcoming wedding was marred by the fact that she was an impoverished orphan, and her intended was also very poor. There was no money for a wedding gown or even a proper wedding feast. The rabbi turned to her and said, "Don't worry, my child. With G-d's help we'll celebrate a fine wedding." The young girl went home, comforted by the rabbi's optimistic words. No sooner had she left when the rabbi immediately donned his coat and set off to visit some of the wealthier members of the community to attempt to raise money for the wedding. His first stop was at the home of a very wealthy and generous man, and the rabbi felt confident that he would find success there. When he arrived, the wealthy man greeted him warmly. "Peace unto you, Rabbi," he said. "I am greatly honored by your visit. Please allow me to fulfill the mitzva of welcoming guests properly." With that, he offered the rabbi a seat and served him some fruit. The rabbi pointed to the fruit and said, "While I enjoy the fruit that you have so kindly offered me, I want you to enjoy the fruit that I have brought." The man looked puzzled, and the rabbi went on to explain: "As we say in our morning prayers, 'These are the things, the fruits of which a man enjoys in this world and the remainder is held for him in the World to Come: Honoring one's father and mother, giving charity, hospitality, visiting the sick, endowing a bride...'" "You see, my friend, I am collecting money to enable a poor orphaned girl to get married, and I have come to offer you a chance to partake in this great mitzva (commandment) of endowing a bride." His host smiled at him and replied, "If you will stay and enjoy some refreshments, I will take upon myself the full expense of the wedding, and if your time permits, I would like to tell you a story which will explain why I'm so eager to fulfill the mitzva of endowing a bride." The rabbi was indeed curious to know what motivated his host to make such a generous offer, settled himself comfortably and listened intently to the man's story. "This happened soon after my own wedding had taken place. It was my first time heading out to the market to seek my fortune. I had a substantial amount of money in my pocket, and I was eager to get involved in the noise and excitement of trading in the marketplace." As I was about to get started, I noticed a poor woman standing off to the side, crying quietly. I was greatly affected by her obvious distress, and went over to her to uncover the cause of her sorrow. When I inquired as to what was wrong, she informed me that her daughter was to be married shortly, and she had no money to cover the expenses, and both she and her daughter were heartbroken. "At that moment, the bundle of money in my pocket began to feel like a heavy burden. I took it out and handed it to the woman without saying a word, and then I left quickly before the woman could even thank me." I had no choice but to return home, as I had no money to purchase goods in the marketplace. As I made my way home, a stranger stopped me and greeted me warmly, and then he offered me some diamonds for sale. As my father had been a diamond merchant, I was able to examine the stones competently, and I judged them to be beautiful stones offered at a fair price. I told the stranger that I would be happy to purchase them, but I had no money. "The stranger didn't seem surprised by that, and he said, 'I knew your father, and I know you to be an honest man. Take them on credit, and when you resell them you can pay me back. You will be able to find me in the study hall.'" I had no problem selling the stones at a substantial profit. At the end of the day I hurried to the study hall to pay back my debt. I searched the study hall, but the stranger was nowhere to be found. When I arrived home, I calculated my earnings, and they were ten times what I had given that poor woman. I put the money aside, but I have not seen him since. Since then, I have, thank G-d, been very successful, and I have always been aware of the importance of this mitzva. Permit me then, rabbi, to arrange the wedding of the orphaned bride in my home." With that, the wealthy man handed the rabbi an additional sum of money to pay for the wedding gown and to cover additional expenses of setting up a home. The wedding was celebrated amidst great joy and festivity, and the young couple was able to set up a true Jewish home which was the pride of the community.

FOOD 4 THE SOUL

What is G-d's ultimate delight? That a human soul will build portals of light so that the Creator's presence may shine into His creation. That a breath from His essence will pull herself out from the mud and turn to Him in love. That a child of His being, exiled to the shadows of a physical world, will discover that the darkness is nothing more than Father hiding, waiting for His child to discover Him there. But none of these can reach to the essence of all delights, the origin of all things, the hidden pleasure beyond all pleasures: The delight that this breath, this soul, this child did it all on its own.