

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

You Philistine You



RABBI
MOSHE TZVI
CRYSTAL

Philistine. A word that can be used both as a noun or an adjective. It is defined by the Oxford dictionary as "a person who is hostile or indifferent to culture and the arts, or who has no understanding of them." Its synonyms are words such as savage, boor, ignoramus, and anti-intellectual. The origin of this derogatory moniker is the Philistine nation that lived in the land of Israel and was a thorn in the side of the Jewish people for generations. As they were always described as the enemy, this eventually led to their name referring to an uncouth people. Of late there has been much archeological study done in the Ashkelon area, where scientists are finding increasing evidence that the Philistine nation was not boorish for their times at all and therefore suggest that the Philistine nation's bad rap was another case in which the victor writes the history books.

I would humbly like to suggest that those who have and continue to interpret the bible to mean that the Philistine's were

"uncultured" were and are missing the proverbial boat.

In the Torah portion of *Acharei Mos*, after the Torah delineates all the forbidden relationships, the Torah tells us, "Do not defile yourselves in all these ways for in all these ways have the nations who I will send out before you defiled themselves... For all these abominations are done by those who are in the land before you and they have defiled the land." The "bad rap" the Torah gives the Canaanites and other nations, including the Philistines, that lived in the land of Israel before the Jewish people is based purely on the moral standards of these nations. All these nations may have had beautiful architecture, sophisticated societies, international trade, accomplished artists, and clothing styles that were of the highest couture of the age. All of this does not have any significance in the Torah's eyes if the moral fabric of that society is degenerate.

It actually goes deeper than that as well. Ramban explains that the Torah's warning not to copy the ways of the nations that live in the future land of Israel or else suffer being expelled from the land is not just a punishment. It is a physical property of the land of Israel. The land of Israel is the piece of land on this Earth that is, so to speak, G-d's very own. In the realms of heavenly direction of this Earth, other lands have less direct intervention by G-d Himself. Not so the land of Israel. The physical land itself is therefore more sensitive to moral purity or impurity. A morally debased society in the land of Israel is worse, therefore, than anywhere else. Acting in such a way in G-d's special land is especially abominable.

This is why the Philistines get a biblical bad rap, not because they could not appreciate fine arts. Maybe we should tell Oxford.

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Q) We have all seen and attended *brissim* that take place on Shabbos despite being an act which would normally be forbidden on Shabbos because of either *chabura* (making a wound), *gozez* (shearing), *kotzer* (harvesting), or *maka b'patish* (putting the final touch on an item or person). What is the source for this and are there any exceptions?

A) The Gemara derives from the opening words on *Parshas Tazria*, "uvayom hashmini iimol b'sar orlaso" [on the eighth day he (the newborn) should be circumcised] that the *Bris Milah* should take place on the eighth day even if it falls out on Shabbos. However, there are certain conditions that need to be met.

1) The child needs to be born from a Jewish mother. If there is any question regarding the Jewishness of the baby, the *bris* cannot be performed on Shabbos.

2) The *bris* is *b'zmano* (in its time). For example, it has not been delayed due to the health of the baby or any other reason and the baby was definitely born the preceding Shabbos and not during *Bein Hashmoshos* (twilight period), which is questionable.

3) The baby was born naturally and not via caesarean section. Since the Torah juxtaposes this idea of performing the *bris* on Shabbos with the *halacha* of *tumas leida* (impurity of birth), the Talmud learns out that the two are dependent on each other. A mother becomes ritually impure at birth only upon a "conventional" birth.

4) There is a lot of discussion amongst

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on Fire

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

the contemporaries whether a child that was conceived in an unnatural way, e.g. IVF, can be circumcised on Shabbos or whether it gets pushed off until Sunday (Minchas Shlomo 3:98:4).

In regard to why all *brissim* are not pushed off until Sunday in deference to Shabbos, several explanations are given:

- There is a Midrash which cites a parable of two ladies of the royal court standing next to each other. No one knew which was the more prominent of the two. However, when the king told one lady to make way for the other, everyone realized that the one who moved aside was of lower rank. So, too, since Hashem moved Shabbos aside in favor of *milah*, we understood that *milah* is greater than Shabbos. As the Gemara (Nedarim 31a) teaches us, *milah* is so great that it supersedes the important *mitzvah* of Shabbos.
- The Ramban (Sefer Ha'amunah Ve'habitachon) suggests that *milah* overrides Shabbos because *milah* is a permanent and uninterrupted *os* (sign) on a Jew's body, whereas the *mitzvah* of Shabbos is not continuous, as Shabbos comes to an end on *Motzei Shabbos*.
- Tosefta (Shabbos, Perek 16 and brought in Rashi Yoma 85b) quotes Rabbi Eliezer, who gives another reason. A person who has not had a *bris* is punished by *kareis* (the penalty of being cut off). This being so, *milah* will override Shabbos since it saves a person's life. Rabeinu B'chaya adds to this by saying

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Rabbi Fishel Shachter relates that he was once was in a shul and it seemed that there was much excitement surrounding the young man that was doing the Gelila, the honor of covering the Torah scroll following a reading. It is usually something done somewhat by rote, yet here the young man had tears in his eyes and the other men in the shul had begun singing as if to celebrate some great event. His curiosity piqued, after davening Rabbi Shachter went over to the man and asked for his story. "I was in a horrible accident," he said, "and the simple story is that I was terribly injured and am celebrating my recovery. The longer story is that I was basically in a full body cast and there was not much hope for me to regain full use of my limbs. Naturally, I was very down. I was miserable until I remembered

that it is for this reason the Torah itself gives an example of when performing *milah* saved a life, when Tziporah took a stone, circumcised her son and as a result the angel let go of Moshe (Shemos, Perek 4). 🙏

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The Torah in this week's portion relates three different prohibitions in one *passuk*. "You shall not steal, and you shall not falsely deny, and a man shall not lie to another." There is another in the beginning of the next *passuk*, "and you shall not swear falsely in My name." The order and juxtaposition, explains *Ba'al Haturim*, is because one who steals will have to deny that he stole, will lie about what he has done, and will come to swear falsely to cover up his transgression. 🙏

something one of my *rebbeim* told me – the secret to being happy no matter what situation one is in. He said that you have to appreciate and not take for granted the good you have in your life, and you will be happy. I decided in the midst of my difficult situation to find what I had to be thankful for. I found that I could wiggle my left shoulder a little and I was so excited! I kept wiggling it just to enjoy the feeling of being able to move something at all. My recovery took off from there. My upbeat attitude no doubt contributed to my recovery which stymied the doctors as to how well it was going. Today was the crowning glory where I was able to use my limbs which had once sat useless to roll up and cover the Torah scroll!" 🙏

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

CRYPTO-SABBATIANS – NECHEMYAH CHIYUN (PART III)

Nechemyah Chiyun attracted a considerable following in Prague and, to finance the publication of his *Divrei Nechemyah*, he began distributing amulets to his followers in exchange for large sums of money. These amulets, which Chiyun claimed were genuinely written with the combination of letters of G-d's name, would provide healing and salvation for those in need. Chiyun succeeded in this endeavor and soon had enough money to publish his manuscript.

As a side note, years later, Chiyun's amulets led to the horrific death of Rabbi Yosef Oppenheim's young son as Rabbi Yaakov Emden records in his *Toras Ha-kenaos*. Rabbi Yosef Oppenheim was planning a trip to the spa town of Carlsbad (west of Prague near the German border), to recuperate in its thermal springs. Rabbi Yosef wished to take his young son, to whom he was particularly attached, with him on his journey, but the boy's grandfather insisted that his precious grandson remain in Prague where he would be safe from the hazards of travel. Nechemiah Chiyun approached Rabbi Yosef and offered his services – a mystical amulet which would "guarantee" the protection of the young child. Upon hearing that Chiyun had prescribed a special amulet, Rabbi Dovid agreed to allow the young lad to travel. Rabbi Yosef gladly accepted the amulet from his trusted friend and began the journey to Carlsbad. The amulet hung around the neck of Rabbi Yosef's son as their journey began. At some point during the journey the wagon unexpectedly jolted, throwing the young boy out of the wagon. The young child didn't survive the fall and tragically passed away on the roadside. The amulet was eventually opened, revealing the iconic symbol of Sabbatianism, an image of a black raven. 🙏