

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### The Eyes Have It

*“If your brother is not near you and you do not know him, then gather it (the lost object) into your house, and it shall remain with you until your brother inquires after it, and you shall return it to him.” (22:2)*

In the early 19th century in Lithuania, Reb Chaim Mi Verlogen once raised a large sum of money to rescue a Jew who was being held to ransom in a neighboring city. The only way to get to this town was through a forest notorious for its bandits.

They had barely entered the forest when the bandits surrounded Reb Chaim and his talmidim. There was no escape. Reb Chaim handed all the money to the bandit chief. “You will now be put to death,” said the chief. Reb Chaim said, “Before you kill us, I ask for a final request.” “What do you want?” asked the bandit chief. “I ask for a few minutes for contemplation.” Reb Chaim sat on the ground, seemingly lost in prayer.

Finally, Reb Chaim said, “I am ready.” The bandit chief raised his axe to kill Reb Chaim. Then he looked down into Reb Chaim’s eyes, threw down the axe and the money and shouted, “Let’s get out of here.” The other bandits fled. The talmidim cried out. “A miracle!” Reb Chaim said, “That was no miracle. When I knew that I was going to die, I thought to myself, the greatest *deveikut*, the greatest closeness that a person can have with his soul in this world is in the moments just before the soul departs the body. I didn’t want my final moments in this world to be filled with *hakpada*, with resentment.

And so, I asked for time to try to judge the bandit favorably. Much as I tried, resentment overcame me, time and time again, until I thought to myself, this bandit was once an innocent young boy. He was probably poor and hungry. Probably, one day he stole an apple or a cake and someone caught him, and he got locked up with a bunch of criminals, and when he got out, he turned to a life of crime and one day he killed someone. A young, innocent boy eventually became a killer.

Then I felt I could leave the world without resentment. When he looked into my eyes, he saw that I understood him. That was probably the first time anyone looked at him like that since he was a boy. When we judge people favorably, we can actually change who they are.

*“If your brother is not near you and you do not know him, then gather it into your house, and it shall remain with you until your brother inquires after it, and you shall return it to him.”*

This verse can be understood homiletically as follows: “*If your brother is not near you*” – if he has turned his back on his faith and the faith of our forefathers to the extent that ‘*you do not know him*’ – do not reject him, but rather ‘*then gather him into your house.*’ Be close to him. ‘*And he shall remain with you*’ until he finds his true self, and by doing this, ‘*you shall return it to him*’ – you will have given him the way of return, the way of teshuva.

If we can change the way we look at other people, we can indeed change who they are. If we have children who are struggling in a system that can be very judgmental, if we can look at them and see how good they are, how special they are, who they are and who they could be, we can change the way they look at themselves.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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When the Jewish People dwell in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the *kohen*. This is done in a ceremony that expresses recognition that it is G-d who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all ages. This passage forms one of the central parts of the Pesach Haggadah that we read at the Seder.

On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year *shemitta* cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that Hashem has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in Hashem’s ways because they are set aside as a treasured people to Him.

When the Jewish People cross the Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes are to stand on Mount Gerizim, and half on Mount Eval, and the *levi'im* will stand in a valley between the two mountains. The *levi'im* will recite twelve commandments, and all the people will answer "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon the Jewish People, blessings that are both physical and spiritual. However, if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Kiddushin 9-15

### Experts Only!

*Rav Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel, "Anyone who is not an expert in the laws of divorce and marriage should not be involved in them."*

Doesn't marriage need to precede divorce chronologically? Why does this teaching mention divorce *prior* to mentioning marriage?

The laws of effecting a marriage are quite well-known compared to the great complexity of the laws of writing and giving a get for a divorce. In addition, in the event of error the potential consequences regarding the marriage of an unmarried woman are far less serious than those that could occur as a result of wrongly permitting a married woman to remarry. Therefore, although it is correct to only authorize rabbis who are familiar with the laws of *kiddushin* to perform marriage ceremonies, it is even more important to ensure that only the greatest halachic experts in the laws of *gittin* are allowed to deal with divorce matters.

In order to stress the greater caution required regarding divorce, the statement in our *gemara* mentions the laws of *gittin* before the laws of *kiddushin*. (Maharsha)

▪ *Kiddushin 13a*

### Wedding for a Widow

*"Death (of her husband) is 'equated' with divorce; just as divorce permits her to remarry, likewise the death of her husband permits her to remarry."*

Rav Ashi offers this as a definitive proof for the halacha in the first *Mishna* of the Tractate, which teaches that a woman is permitted to marry another man if she is divorced or if her husband dies. The *gemara* on our *daf* asks for the source in the Torah from which we learn that a widow is permitted to remarry. The *sugya* offers numerous possible sources, but raises challenges to each attempted proof. This 'equation' between divorce and being widowed is unchallenged as a clear proof.

The verse where this equation, called a *hekeshe*, is found is: "If the latter husband hates her and writes her a bill of *divorce*, and places it into her hand and sends her away from his house, or if the latter husband who took her as a wife *dies*, her first husband, who had sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife..." (Deut. 24:3-4)

Rashi asks why the *gemara* doesn't prove that a widow may remarry from this same verse in a more direct manner. It states that if the second husband dies, her first husband may not remarry her, implying that she is, however, permitted to marry anyone else. Rashi answers that this proof could be rejected. Perhaps returning to her first husband would transgress a negative command, whereas marrying someone else would still violate a positive command. This is the same reasoning that the *gemara* used earlier to reject other suggested proofs to allow a widow to remarry.

*Kiddushin 13b*

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. When did the obligation to bring *bikkurim* begin?
2. *Bikkurim* are from which crops?
3. How does one designate *bikkurim*?
4. Who shakes the basket containing the *bikkurim*?
5. What does "*v'anita v'amarta*" mean?
6. Which Arami "tried to destroy my father?"
7. When during the year may *bikkurim* be brought? Until when are the special verses recited?
8. Someone declaring that he separated *terumah* and *ma'aser* says: "And I didn't forget." What didn't he forget?
9. What were the Jewish People to do with the 12 stones on Mount Eval?
10. Six tribes stood on Mount Eval and six on Mount Gerizim. Who and what were in the middle?
11. Who "causes the blind to go astray"?
12. How does one "strike another secretly"?
13. Eleven curses were spoken on Mount Eval. What is the significance of this number?
14. Why are sheep called "*ashterot*"?
15. How is the manner of expressing the curses in Parshat Bechukotai more severe than in this week's parsha?

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

## Answers

1. 26:1 - After the Land was conquered and divided.
2. 26:2 - The seven species for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised.
3. 26:2 - When he sees the first fruit ripen on a tree, he binds a piece of straw around it to mark it as *bikkurim*.
4. 26:4 - The *kohen* places his hands under the hands of the one bringing it, and they wave the basket together.
5. 26:5 - Speak loudly.
6. 26:5 - Lavan.
7. 26:11 - *Bikkurim* are brought from Shavuot until Chanukah. The verses are recited only until Succot.
8. 26:13 - To bless G-d.
9. 27:2 - Build an altar.
10. 27:12 - *Kohanim*, *levi'im* and the Holy Ark.
11. 27:18 - Any person who intentionally gives bad advice.
12. 27:24 - By slandering him.
13. 27:24 - Each curse corresponds to one of the tribes, except for the tribe of Shimon. Since Moshe didn't intend to bless the tribe of Shimon before his death, he did not want to curse it either.
14. 28:4 - Because they "enrich" (*m'ashirot*) their owners.
15. 28:23 - In Bechukotai the Torah speaks in the plural, whereas in this week's *parsha* the curses are mentioned in the singular.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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By Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Single Guys

The Talmud says that each and every day, Hashem “announces” in the Heavens that He is impressed with three categories of people: poor people who exert themselves to help return lost objects to their rightful owners, rich people who take off tithes even when nobody is looking, and unmarried men who live in the city and do not sin. In that context, the word for “unmarried/single man” that the Talmud uses is *ravak*. Indeed, the temptations of the urban setting are such that it is quite laudable for a single man to live in such a milieu and still remain free from sin. Similarly, the Midrash speaks about the great reward that Hashem grants the *ravak* who lives in a community and contributes to the communal funds for child education – even though he himself does not have any children. The unmarried man’s temptation to avoid contributing to this cause makes sense from his perspective, but when such a person exerts special effort to pay his dues, he is lauded in the Heavens. In this article we discuss three Hebrew terms for “unmarried/single man”: *ravak*, *panui* and *bachur*. In doing so we explore the respective etymologies of these different words and try to zone in on the nuances they express.

The word *ravak* does not appear in the Written Torah, but it does appear thrice in the Mishna. The Mishna cites the opinions of those rabbis who ruled that a *ravak* may not serve as a teacher for young children, a *ravak* may not work as a shepherd, and two *ravakim* may not sleep together under the same blanket. In the context of these restrictions, there is a dispute in the commentaries regarding what exactly the word *ravak* means. Rashi (to *Kiddushin* 82a) explains that *ravak* refers to any male singleton who is unmarried, whether or not he was previously married (and subsequently divorced or widowed). However, *Tosafot* and Maimonides disagree with this assessment, and write that *ravak* refers specifically to a bachelor who was never married.

*Ravak* makes another appearance in some versions of Targum to Psalms 148:12, which translates the Hebrew *bachur* as *ravak* – although, in our versions of the Targum to Psalms, an Aramaic variant of *elem* is used there.

Another term for a single man is *panui* (and *penuiah* for an unmarried woman). This word does not appear anywhere in the Bible, nor in the Mishna; but, it does, however, appear multiple times in the Talmud (for example, *Yevamot* 59b, 61b, 76a, *Sanhedrin* 51a, *Temurah* 29b-30a).

HaBachur reveals the etymology of the word *panui* by tracing it to the Mishnaic Hebrew verb *panah*. That elastic term variously refers to “removing/clearing,” “cleaning,” “emptying,” “opening up,” “making available,” “bring free/at leisure.” For example, the Mishna (*Avot* 2:4) states: “Do not say ‘when I will be available (*k’she’efneh*), I will study,’ for maybe you will never become available (*lo tipaneh*).” In the same way, an unmarried man is called *panui* because he is “available” and “open” to forging a matrimonial bond to the lucky woman (and an unmarried woman is likewise called a *penuiah* for a similar reason). In Modern Hebrew, *pinui* refers to “cleaning up,” but also to “eviction,” “evacuation,” and other ways of “making room” for something else.

For more about these different words, including a discussion of the word *bachur*, see the full version of this essay online at: <http://ohr.edu/this-week/whats-in-a-word/>

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## Havdalah Introduction (part 5) Farewell, My Beloved

“Hashem, my G-d, will illuminate my darkness”  
(King David, Tehillim 18:29)

Havdalah continues with the blessing over the cup of wine: “Blessed are you, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.”

In an earlier essay titled “Kiddush – Part 3” [https://ohr.edu/this\\_week/counting\\_our\\_blessings/11232](https://ohr.edu/this_week/counting_our_blessings/11232) we have already explored the blessing over the wine. Here we will focus on a beautiful custom that most people have when making Havdalah. When the wine is poured into the cup, there is a tradition to pour in so much wine that it spills over the top and collects in a small puddle underneath the cup.

What is the origin of this custom? In Tehillim 23:5, King David describes his cup as “*kosi revayah* – my cup is overflowing.” The commentaries explain that Hashem’s blessings are immeasurable, and His goodness overflows on to all those who deserve it. The “cup” is the vessel that holds Hashem’s blessings and symbolizes our lives. When we live as Hashem wants, we become the recipients of His bounty. So much so that His goodness pours over us and His blessings continue to pour out from our own immediate lives into the lives of all those nearest to us as well.

Rabbi Yitzchak Ber Weiss (*Siach Yitzchak*), points out that the gematria (numerical value) of the word for cup in Hebrew is 86, which is exactly the same gematria as the Name of Hashem denoting strict justice – Elo-him. Rabbi Weiss explains that a cup holds a clearly defined amount of liquid. In the same way, Hashem’s attribute of justice is also meticulously precise. Where there is pure justice, there is no place for mercy. There is no room for anything other than the inflexible and uncompromising truth. When, however, Hashem’s mercy overcomes His attribute of justice, the blessings begin to flow, gaining strength until they pour forth an abundance of goodness.

As we enter the new week, we fill our cup to overflowing. We watch the wine run over the edge of our “*Kos Shel Bracha* – our cup of blessing.” And we know that all of the blessings that we received over Shabbat will accompany us throughout the coming week as well.

The cup spilling over with wine teaches us that there is always room for more when it comes to spiritual matters. We experience an immeasurably gratifying feeling when we successfully continue to move beyond our spiritual limitations. My Rebbe once taught that our Sages refer to a heaping measure of spices, as used in the Temple, as *sochet* (see, for example, Tractate Kritut 6b). The word *sochet* is rooted in the Hebrew word for laughter, *sechok*. My Rebbe explained that when we overcome our own limitations and successfully demolish the “walls” that restrict our ability to connect to Hashem, we become the recipients of an overflowing measure of blessing. It is the source of tremendous joy, and a reason to be filled with laughter. This is what our Sages refer to as “*middah sochet*, a laughing measure.” When we go beyond our physical limitations, we are just like the spoon overflowing with spices.

Therefore, as we face the new week, we are invigorated and excited. We watch as our cup of wine runs over and pours the extraordinary blessings of Shabbat into our week, enhancing and enriching our relationship with Hashem at all times.

*To be continued...*

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# PEREK SHIRA

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

## THE SONG OF THE ANT

The Ant says:

“Go to the ant, lazy one, watch its ways and become wise.” (Mishlei 6:6)

The ant is the epitome of industriousness. The wisest of men, King Shlomo, directed the lazy to go learn from the ant. Throughout the summer, it carries food many times its size in order to store it for the winter. Although it is a minute insect that requires as little as a wheat kernel and a half to live out its short lifespan, it hordes masses of grain with seeming foresight that perhaps it will live much longer. The ants' methods of building their intricate colonies, tracking food, navigating their way back home, reproducing and expanding, attacking and defending, could put to shame the greatest of human armies.

Ants function with discipline, and they not steal from each other, even though no supervisors stand over them. The Sages teach that if the Torah had not been given, we would have learned from ants to abstain from theft. Its provision for its own sustenance precludes the necessity to steal. The ant thus sings of the virtues by which the Creator's perfectly-designed world thrives.

Productive usage of the human body and the mind is part of our natural function. Conversely, lazy unproductivity fosters unhealthy, negative emotions, and leans a person to dishonest gain. The more a person labors, the more he will become inspired to achieve yet more, and he will be both physically and emotionally satiated. Ants succeed in their relatively insignificant lives through their healthy work ethics. We, whose lives are truly significant, and who need to amass enough Torah and mitzvahs to last eternally, would be wise to learn from the song of the ant.

\*Sources: *Tanchuma; Rashi; Eruvin 100b*

In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

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