



SPECIAL SUMMER ISSUE · PARSHIOT VA'ETCHANAN-EKEV-RE'EH-SHOFTIM-KI TEITZEI · 5766/2006 · VOL. 13 NO. 47

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### Va'etchanan

## WHEN I PAINT My MASTERPIECE

*"I am Hashem, your G-d..." (5:6)*

A man rushes into The Louvre in Paris and shouts out, "Where is it? Where is it?" "Where's what?" asks the attendant. "Where's the Mona Lisa? Quickly, I'm double-parked!"

By the 1780's, Reform Judaism in Hungary had grown extremely powerful and widespread. The Jewish community was a state-recognized legal entity, and the majority became the official representatives of the Jews. Thus the government had designated Reform as the official representative of Hungarian Jewry. The Orthodox community could not tolerate Reform control over such crucial matters as divorce and marriage. Therefore, Rabbi Menachem Katz was sent to request independent Orthodox recognition from Emperor Franz Josef.

Katz's brilliant mind and dynamic personality made a deep impression on the Emperor, and amongst other favors Franz Yosef treated him to a private guided tour of the Imperial Art Collection. The gallery contained many priceless masterpieces, and after they had finished the tour, Franz Yosef turned to Katz and said, "What do you think? Magnificent eh? "Your majesty will forgive me," said Katz, "but there is a painter in our little town, who, to my eye, paints just as well." "You think so?" replied the Emperor, "Let's see what his paintings look like in a couple of hundred years." "Your majesty, I can not help but wonder what reform Judaism will look like in a couple of hundred years."

Looking at how far non-halachic Judaism has diverged from the original Masterpiece, one cannot fail to be amazed by Rabbi Menachem Katz's prescience.

Professor Steven Katz noted that Reform is the first heterodox Jewish movement not only to reject the Oral Torah but the Written Torah as well.

Shortly before his death, Jacob Petuchowski, longtime professor of theology at Hebrew Union College, wrote: "Because American Reform Judaism no longer finds it neces-

sary to justify itself before God and Jewish religious tradition, its abject submissions to any and all modern fads are boringly predictable."

Sounds like a gallery review of the latest grunge/attitude art-fad.

In fact, the Ten Statements which are the centerpiece of this week's Parsha would be better called by reform, "The Ten Suggestions – but please – feel free to sketch your own!"

After two hundred years, Reform Judaism looks far from the masterpiece it was painted to be.

- Sources: Based on a story heard from Y. E. and Jewish Media Resources

### Eikev

## BEING THERE NOW

*"Beware for yourselves, lest your heart be seduced and you turn astray and serve gods of others and prostrate yourself to them." (11:16)*

In our day and age, idol worship seems rather quaint. The overwhelming desire to bow down to a large dolly severely taxes our imagination; yet King Menashe told Rav Ashi in a dream, that had Rav Ashi lived in his days he would have hiked up his cloak and scuttled off to find an idol to bow down to, so powerful was the attraction of idol worship.

It's hard for us to conceive of the attraction of idolatry because in the time of the Second Holy Temple, the Sages nullified the desire for it, but think of our own era's obsession with pursuit of physical pleasure, and you'll get an idea of what the drive to worship idols must have been like: Imagine giant car ads featuring some idol draped around the hottest set of wheels, or the TV awash with ads featuring large stone statues beguiling us to use a certain brand of toothpaste!

In a more subtle way, however, idol worship has far from vanished from our world.

The essence of idolatry is the belief that I can buy the future; that the sun, the rains and the other forces of nature can be bought off with a quick sacrifice or two. In other words, "We have the technology." With one small step for a man, we can control the world, the stars and beyond. The

*continued on page fifteen*

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Va'etchanan

**A**lthough Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvot*. Hashem refuses. Moshe reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on *Bnei Yisrael* that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins *Bnei Yisrael* to “pass over” the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in *Eretz Yisrael* they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to Hashem.

Moshe designates three “refuge cities” to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

## Ekev

**I**f *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those “minor” *mitzvot* that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer *Eretz Canaan* little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in *Eretz Yisrael* is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael*’s righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites; for the road from Sinai had

been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe. Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the 10 Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon’s passing is recorded as is the elevation of the *levi'im* to Hashem’s ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping *mitzvot* and the curse that results from non-observance.

## Re'eh

**M**oshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be shechted anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year. The Parsha ends with a

description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

## Shoftim

**M**oshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem’s altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *sifrei Torah*, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn’t become haughty. Neither the *kohanim* nor the *levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel, rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased’s family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A kohen is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

## Ki Tetzai

**T**he Torah describes the only permissible way a woman captured in battle may be married. If a man marries two wives, and the less-favored wife bears

- Barrier between *kohen* and the sacrificial blood
- Application of blood to the golden altar
- Turning to the right
- Where remnants of the blood were poured
- Status of something after its mitzvah has been done with it
- The strictness of performing everything in the Yom Kippur service in exact order
- Spilled blood on Yom Kippur and spilled oil of the *metzora*
- The twin goats of Yom Kippur
- Penalty for slaughtering them outside the *Beit Hamikdash*
- When one of them dies

## TAKING HOLD

**W**hat constitutes proper contact between the person performing a mitzvah and the object he is handling?

This was the question raised by the Sage Rami bar Chama in our *gemara*. The *kohen* is required to receive the blood of a slaughtered sacrifice in a sacred receptacle in preparation for applying it to the altar. What if there is a receptacle within the receptacle held by the *kohen*? Does the fact that they are both of the same nature allow us to view this as direct contact between the *kohen* and the ves-

sel containing the blood, or does the inside receptacle act as a barrier?

*Tosefot* points out that if there was some other object inside the receptacle that is not of the same nature it would certainly be considered a barrier between the blood and the *kohen* holding the receptacle. Why, asks *Tosefot*, is this different from the *gemara* (*Succah* 37a) concerning the taking of the four species on *Succot*, which permits taking the *lulav* through some other object like a cloth?

The distinction made is that in the case of the *lulav* the cloth wrapped around the *lulav* is extended beyond the bottom of the *lulav* to form a handle through which the *lulav* is held. This is considered a normal and dignified taking of the *lulav*. The parallel to the case of the foreign object inside the blood receptacle – a cloth wrapped around the hand of the taker – would be considered an improper taking of the *lulav* since the cloth acts as a barrier rather than a handle.

(For more details about the right and wrong ways to perform the mitzvah of *lulav* without directly touching it, see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 551:7)

• *Yoma* 58a

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“Every turn you make in performing the service in the *Beit Hamikdash* should be to the right.”

• *The Sage Rami bar Yechezkel*  
*Yoma* 58b

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

a firstborn son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is stoning. A body must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had housed a holy soul. Lost property must be returned. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs. A fence must be built around the roof of a house. It is forbidden to plant a mixture of seeds, to plow with an ox and a donkey together, or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted

threads — *tzitzit* — on its corners. Laws regarding illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. An escaped slave must not be returned to his master.

Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden. *Bnei Yisrael* are not to make vows. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting. Divorce and marriage are legislated. For the first year of marriage, a husband is exempt from the army and stays home to rejoice with his wife. Tools of labor may not be impounded, as this prevents the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease *tzara'at*

is forbidden. Even for an overdue loan, the creditor must return the collateral daily if the debtor needs it. Workers' pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, converts and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court may impose lashes. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing. It is a mitzvah for a man to marry his brother's widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate and used honestly. The *parsha* concludes with the mitzvah to erase the name of Amalek, for, in spite of knowing about the Exodus, they ambushed the Jewish People.

- The scapegoat that died too soon
- Problem of consecrating an animal or anything else today
- The *kohen gadol's* confession of the nation's sins
- The scapegoat and the "minuteman" taking him
- Rabbi Eliezer's mysterious evasion of answering questions
- The bridge for the scapegoat and the impatient "Babylonians"
- The red ribbon turning white
- Where the scapegoat died and what was the status of its remains
- When the garments of the burners became ritually impure
- How they knew when the scapegoat reached the wilderness
- The *kohen gadol's* reading of the Torah
- Personal use of the priestly garments
- Encounter of Shimon Hatzaddik and Alexander of Macedon
- The battle against the evil inclination towards idolatry and immorality
- Why they were called "Members of the Great Assembly"
- The remaining Yom Kippur service of the *kohen gadol*
- How the *kohen gadol* and Torah Sages were greeted
- The garments of the *kohen gadol* and ordinary *kohanim*

## HOW A TURNAROUND IS ACHIEVED

Is it possible for a person whose early years were plagued with poverty to be blessed with prosperity in his later years?

Rabbi Elazar saw the answer to this question in a passage from *Mishlei* (3:2). After counseling the reader to not neglect Torah and *mitzvot*, King Shlomo declares that these are the merits that will entitle him to "a length of days and years of life and peace".

"Are there, then, a man's years which are not years of life" asks Rabbi Elazar?

His explanation is that this is a reference to those years when a person's life turns around from bad to good. The example cited by Rashi in his commentary is that of someone poor in his youth becoming prosperous in his later years, a turnaround which gives him the feeling of suddenly coming alive.

This is why we offer the traditional blessing of "long life and long days". The first half refers to the quantity of life and the second half to its quality.

• *Yoma 71a*

## WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"If not for the awesomeness of G-d how could this one nation of Israel have survived among the seventy nations who tried to destroy it!"

• *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi - Yoma 69b*

"At first they tied a red ribbon at the inside of the entrance to the *ulam* of the *Beit Hamikdash* and when it turned white they knew that the scapegoat had reached the wilderness, and that its mission had been accomplished in accordance with what is written (*Yeshayahu* 1:18): 'Though your sins be like red they will be as white as snow.' "

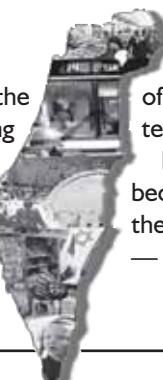
• *Rabbi Elazar Hakapar - Yoma 67a*

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

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

"WHOEVER LEARNS TORAH FOR THE PURE SAKE OF TORAH STUDY MERITS MANY THINGS. NOT ONLY THIS, BUT HE IS CONSIDERED AS IF ALL OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE WAS WORTH CREATING AND SUSTAINING FOR HIM ALONE." — RABBI MEIR (AVOT 6:1)

The "many things" mentioned here are not the spiritual rewards that are detailed in the long list presented by Rabbi Meir in the continuation of his statement. The reference here is to all of the material blessings such as children, health and economic security. Since these blessings are merely instruments for achieving the goal



of spiritual perfection Rabbi Meir refers to them in general terms and is specific only about the goal.

Not only is the entire world he lives in worthwhile because of the existence of this Torah scholar but also "all of the entire world" — the universe from the beginning of time — was created and sustained only for his sake.

• *Midrash Shmuel*

- Threads, poles, boards and crowns of the *Mishkan* Sanctuary
- The Torah scholar's need for fear of Heaven
- The *kohen* anointed for war role
- How the *urim ve'tumim* conveyed the Divine response
- The five forms of affliction required on Yom Kippur
- The ban on eating less than the amount punished by extirpation
- The sources for fasting as the definition of affliction
- The manna which sustained the Jews for 40 years
- How we know that drinking is included in ban on eating
- Sources for the ban on washing, anointing, wearing shoes and marital relations
- The banishment and return of the Angel Gavriel
- When contact with water is permitted
- The unnavigable waters of the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Passing through river waters on Shabbat or Yom Kippur
- Cooling off on Yom Kippur and other fast days
- What is expected of the child on Yom Kippur
- A dispensation for the king and the newlywed wife

## THE MISSING LETTERS

When a king or the Sanhedrin wished to have Divine guidance in deciding on an important matter, such as the advisability of taking military action, they consulted the *urim ve'tumim*. Beneath the precious stones on the *choshen* breastplate of the *kohen gadol* was the sacred

name of G-d, which enabled the letters inscribed on those stone to communicate the Divine response to the question presented.

Since the twelve stones contained the names of the twelve tribes, the response came by the letters forming the response either coming together or lighting up. The only problem was that there were four letters of the Hebrew alphabet that are not to be found in all the names of the tribes. Two of them are mentioned in our *gemara* — the letters *tet* and *tzadi*. This was solved by adding the names of the Patriarchs — Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov — and the words *shivtei yeshurun* (the tribes of G-d), which contain these missing letters. The Jerusalem Talmud notes that if not for these additions to the names of the tribes, there would be missing also the letters *chet* and *kuf*.

These four letters missing from the names of the twelve sons of Yaakov form the basis for the dialogue that the *Ba'al Haturim* (*Bereishet* 49:1) suggests took place between the Patriarch and his children as he lay on his deathbed. When he wished to reveal to them the *ketz* — end of days — he felt the Divine Presence depart and was unable to do so. Turning to his sons he asked if they were guilty of any sin that should have denied them this treasured knowledge. “Look at our names,” they countered, “and you will not find the letters *chet* and *tet* which spell sin.” “True,” replied Yaakov, “but your names also lack the letters *kuf* and *tzadi* which spell the word *ketz* — the end of days — so you are probably not deserving of that knowledge.”

• *Yoma* 73b

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“There were three crowns on vessels of the Sanctuary – on the altar, the ark and the table. The crown of the altar represents service in the Sanctuary that was awarded to Aharon. The crown of the table represents kingship that was awarded to David. The crown of the ark represents Torah which is still available for anyone who wishes to gain it.”

• *Rabbi Yochanan* - *Yoma* 72b

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### IN SEARCH OF KIRYAT SHMONA

While the Hezbollah terrorists kept up their search of Kiryat Shmona in the north of Israel as a target for their murderous missiles, there were people on the other side of the world searching for that city for the opposite purpose.

The Ohrnet office at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem received the following request from the Administrative Assistant of the Town of Hampstead in Quebec, Canada who came across Kiryat Shmona on our website presentation of “Love of the Land”.

“The Town of Hampstead would like to send a letter of support to the Mayor of Kiryat Shmona, Haim Barbevai. Unfortunately we no longer have the coordinates of the City Hall at Kiyrat Shmona. This is why, after looking on the Net for possible coordinates and coming across the article on Kiryat Shmona, I decided to try and see if you would have the information.”

The information was duly provided and “Love of the Land” thus succeeded in giving people in Quebec an opportunity to express their love of the Land in this time of trouble.

- Amount of food and drink consumed on Yom Kippur that is punishable by extirpation
- Consumption of food in irregular fashion
- Analysis of Torah's phrasing of command to fast
- Mitzvah of eating on day before Yom Kippur
- Consumption of inedible food
- At what age one begins fasting
- When fasting endangers life

- The rules of martyrdom
- When doctor and patient disagree on need to break fast
- Saving the dangerously ill with forbidden food
- Cure for the bite of a mad dog and other maladies
- Saving someone buried under rubble on Shabbat or Yom Kippur
- The source for violating the Shabbat to save a life
- The range of sins and the atonement for them

## WHEN EATING IS LIKE FASTING

**J**ust as there is a mitzvah to fast on Yom Kippur, there is a mitzvah to eat well on the day before Yom Kippur. This is derived from the passage containing the command "You shall afflict yourselves on the ninth day of the month (Tishrei) at evening." (*Vayikra* 23:32)

Do we then fast on the ninth, asks the Sage Chiya bar Rav of Diftie, when Yom Kippur is actually on the tenth of the month?

His conclusion is that the Torah is hinting that one who eats and drinks on the ninth is considered as if he fasted on

both the ninth and the tenth.

While the obvious reason for eating well on the ninth is to strengthen one for the fast that will achieve atonement for his sins, the question remains as to why this idea is conveyed in the terminology of fasting rather than of eating. The explanation offered by the commentaries is that the credit one receives for performing a mitzvah involving pain far exceeds a painless performance. The Torah therefore expresses this command to eat in terms of fasting to communicate the idea that one who eats on the day before Yom Kippur will be credited as if he was performing this mitzvah with the pain of fasting.

• *Yoma* 81b

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"The sins which one commits in relation to G-d are atoned for by Yom Kippur. But sins committed towards a person are not atoned for by Yom Kippur until he asks that person's forgiveness."

• *Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah - Yoma 85b*

"How fortunate are you, O Israel! Before Whom are you becoming purified and Who is it that purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven... and just as a mikveh purifies the ritually impure, so does the Blessed G-d purify you."

• *Rabbi Akiva - Yoma 85b*

## ISRAEL Forever

## COMFORT FOR MY PEOPLE

**C**omfort follows tragedy. After three weeks in which the *haftarat* read in the synagogue on Shabbat spoke of the tragedies which the prophet warned would befall the people of Israel as a consequence of their sins, we are provided with the consoling Divine words of "Be comforted, my people."

Not just that one *haftara* on Shabbat Nachamu following the fast of Tisha B'Av but seven entire weeks of comforting prophecies.

What a wonderful message for Jews in Israel during the

difficult days of war against vicious terrorists wreaking death and destruction. The sweet words of comfort that the prophet says in the name of G-d communicate the message that the suffering that preceded them was the therapy of a loving father who wishes to direct his children on the path that will lead them to fulfillment of their mission in life.

May we merit to soon hear those words of comfort for our current suffering, and see Israel in peace and security forever.

- Power of Repentance
- Setting an example
- Confession - when and how
- Remedy for pride
- Human relations
- Ritual contamination on Yom Kippur
- Why a succah cannot be too high
- How large the succah must be
- When is house a house
- Reducing height to make the succah kosher
- Virtual succot
- How low can the succah be
- How close to Heaven did Moshe rise
- Thickness of the *kaporet* cover of the Holy Ark
- The position of the *keruvim*

## How HE GOT TO BABYLON

One of the Sages most prominently identified with the Babylonian Talmud is Rav. How he reached Babylon, where he achieved prominence as a disseminator of Torah, is detailed in the final pages of *Mesechta Yoma* that we now conclude.

Rav was once studying a chapter of Tanach in front of Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi in Eretz Yisrael. He was soon joined

by some other Sages, one after the other, who wished to do the same. Time and again he was forced to go back to the beginning in order to accommodate them. When Rabbi Chanina bar Chama came after three such interruptions, Rav lost his patience and expressed irritation.

Upon realizing that he had hurt the feelings of this venerable colleague, Rav went on the day before Yom Kippur to beg his forgiveness. Rabbi Chanina refused to accept his apology even though Rav came to him thirteen years in a row to seek his forgiveness.

This behavior of Rabbi Chanina was challenged by the *gemara* on the basis of the statement of the Sage Rava regarding the importance of forgiving one who has wronged you. Rabbi Chanina's action is explained as the result of a dream he had which indicated that Rav would be the head of a yeshiva. Since it was Rabbi Chanina who succeeded Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi as head, he was afraid that this was a sign that he would die and be succeeded by Rav. He therefore acted towards Rav in an unforgiving manner that would encourage him to leave for Babylon, where he would be the head of a great yeshiva without jeopardizing Rabbi Chanina's longevity.

It was thus that Babylonian Jewry was enriched by the arrival of Rav in their city.

• *Yoma 87b*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Great is the power of repentance for it brings closer our redemption."

• *Rabbi Yonatan - Yoma 86*

"Committing a sin and then repeating it causes the sinner to assume that he is not sinning after all."

• *Rabbi Huna in the name of the Sage Rav - Yoma 87a*

To our Ohrnet Readers  
A Happy and Safe Summer  
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## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Va'etchanan

1. "And I prayed to Hashem at that time." Why "at that time"?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by Hashem's "strong hand"?
3. What is ha'levanon?
4. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the mitzvot properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word v'noshantem?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
9. "You'll serve man-made gods." Is this literal?
10. Why is east called mizrach?

11. "Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you." When had Hashem previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
13. What is meant by "Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is One"?
14. What are two meanings of loving Hashem "with all your might"?
15. How well-versed must one be in Torah?
16. Where does the word totafot come from?
17. Who is fit to swear in Hashem's name?
18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
19. When someone serves Hashem with love, how many generations receive reward?
20. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Va'etchanan's Questions!

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

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of Eretz Canaan, Moshe thought perhaps Hashem had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - Ha'levanon means the Beit Hamikdash, which makes "white" (lavan), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The gematria of v'noshantem, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines

(mizrach means shining).

11. 5:13 - Before Matan Torah, at Marah. (Shmot 15:25)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (Shmot 15:25).
13. 6:4 - Hashem, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether Hashem treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - Tot means two in Caspi. Fot means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves Hashem and reveres His name.
- 7:7 - B'nei Yisrael are the humblest nation.
- 7:9 - 2,000.
- 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Ekev

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a. wonders b. strong hand c. outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?

9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by Hashem?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving Hashem with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to Hashem"?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Ekev's Questions!

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

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 - The: a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of

- the golden calf.
12. 10:9 — Since they served in the Temple, thus they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Re'eh

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from Hashem?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?

10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of Hashem and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “to Him (Hashem) you shall cleave.” How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the “source” of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under Hashem’s “special protection”?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Re'eh's Questions!

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

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it; his descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar,

- pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate Hashem's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Shoftim

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept “seek out a good *beit din*”?
5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of “*chazeh, shok* and *keiva*.” Which ones?

11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to “prepare the way” to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
15. “Through the mouth of two witnesses....” What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four “scare-tactics” the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Shoftim’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof....*”
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).

11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, something told to another prophet, or prophesies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don’t understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - a. Clanging their shields b. Making their horses stomp and whinny c. Shouting d. Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 21:9 - He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Ki Tetzei

1. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house?
2. What fraction of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother? b) two brothers?
3. What will become of a *ben sorer u'moreh* if his parents don't bring him to court?
4. Why is it a degradation to Hashem to hang a criminal's body on the gallows overnight?
5. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
6. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
7. Why does the Torah link the mitzvah of sending away the mother-bird with the mitzvah of making a railing on the roof of your house?
8. What mixture of wool and linen is permitted to be worn?
9. What three things happen to a man who falsely slanders his bride?
10. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People,

the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?

11. Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
12. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
13. What is the groom's special obligation to his bride during their first year together?
14. When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?
15. What type of object may one not take as collateral?
16. "Remember what Hashem did to Miriam." To what event does the Torah refer?
17. If a poor person finds money, the one who lost it receives a blessing. From where do we derive this?
18. Who has the primary obligation to perform *yibum*?
19. Which two people in this week's Parsha are required to speak in *Lashon Hakodesh*?
20. How does the Torah describe those who cheat in business?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Ki Tetzei's Questions!

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

1. 21:13 - So her captor will find her unattractive.
2. 21:17 - a) 2/3 b) 1/2
3. 21:22 - He will eventually rob and kill to support his physical indulgences.
4. 21:23 - Because humans are made in Hashem's image, and because the Jewish People are Hashem's children.
5. 22:2 - Sell it and save the money for the owner.
6. 22:5 - It leads to immorality.
7. 22:8 - To teach that one mitzvah leads to another, and to prosperity.
8. 22:12 - Wool tzitzit on a linen garment.
9. 22:18 - He receives lashes, pays a fine of 100 silver *selah*, and may never divorce her against her will.
10. 23:8 - Because they hosted Yaakov and his family during the famine.

11. 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come.
12. 23:21 - Three; two negative commandments and a positive commandment.
13. 24:5 - To gladden her.
14. 24:5 - When he remarries his ex-wife.
15. 24:6 - Utensils used to prepare food.
16. 24:9 - Hashem punishing Miriam with *tzara'at* for speaking *lashon harah*.
17. 24:19 - From the mitzvah to leave the "forgotten bundle" for the poor.
18. 25:6 - The eldest brother.
19. 25:8 - The *yavam* (brother-in-law) and the *yavamah* (his childless brother's widow).
20. 25:16 - "An abomination (*to'evah*) to Hashem."

## ONE-UPWOMANSHIP

**From: Susan in CO**

Dear Rabbi,

*Lately it seems that I am being sent "signs" that I should look more into my Jewish roots, but I am reluctant to because of Judaism's repressive attitude toward spirituality for women. I would appreciate any insights you can offer me on this topic. Thanks.*

Dear Susan,

That fact that Judaism advocates different venues for men and women to serve G-d doesn't mean that one is superior to the other; rather they are intended to be complimentary. While great things are said about men and the ways in which they express their spirituality, just as many great things are said about "women's" spirituality. In fact, at the risk of sounding apologetic, women are often viewed as being spiritually higher than men.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh explained the verse, "It is not good that man should be alone" as follows: "This, i.e. the Creation, is not good, man being alone". Accordingly, the completion of good in the Creation was attained only after woman was created. For this reason, only after she was created did G-d say about the Creation, "behold it was very good". In fact, in her ability to impart life, woman most closely resembles G-d.

G-d created the world in a sequence of increasing importance: space, time, energy, inanimate matter, plant-life, fish, birds, animals, man, woman, Shabbat. In the spectrum of Creation, woman was created after/above man and before Shabbat. Therefore, in the hierarchy of spirituality, man is closer to the mundane while woman is closer to sanctity. This is one of the deeper reasons why women are exempt from time-bound commandments. Because of their spiritual elevation and sensitivity they have less need for temporal obligations to come close to G-d.

Our Sages explain that Eve's being taken from the side of Adam refers to the idea that Man was originally created as a unified composite of both male and female aspects. G-d then separated these complimentary facets of Man in order that they should regain this unity and harmony through their own efforts. This is the idea behind the verse, "Because she was taken from man, that is why a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife...." However, this raises a difficulty: If she was taken from him, shouldn't the unity be re-established by her returning to him? Rather, we see from here that he is sec-

ondary to her, and harmony is attained through his elevation to her. Thus our Sages taught, "He who has no wife has no joy, no blessing, no good" (Yevamot 62b).

There are many examples that indicate women's spiritual one-upmanship over men:

In Genesis 18:9 the angels ask Abraham "Where is Sarah your wife?" He answers, "She's in the tent". Rashi explains that this illustrates her modesty. Lest you think this is sexist, illustrating her inferiority, our Sages declare that she was in fact spiritually higher than Abraham. On the verse, "All that Sarah tells you, hearken to her voice" (Gen. 21:12), Rashi comments "this teaches that Sarah was superior to Abraham in prophecy".

Recall Isaac's intention to bless Esau. Rebecca counters Isaac's plan and secures the blessing for Jacob instead. Her spiritual insight and sensitivity ensured that the blessing would pass through Jacob and his twelve sons, eventually engendering the Jewish People.

During the exile in Egypt, Pharaoh decreed that all Jewish male children be thrown in the Nile. Amram separated from his wife Yocheved to avoid bearing children to the decree. His daughter Miriam reprimanded him saying, "Your decree is worse than Pharaoh's. His is only against boys, yours is against boys and girls". As a result, he returned to his wife who later gave birth to Moses, the redeemer of Israel.

In the desert, the women didn't worship or contribute to the golden calf. Rather, the men had to literally pull the jewelry off them. Lest one say, "Perhaps that was because the women didn't want to give up their gold"? That's not the case, since later we find that the women donated generously of their riches to the building of the tabernacle.

Similarly, only the men feared fighting for the Land of Israel while the women encouraged them on. A cynic might claim, "That was easy for the women to say, they weren't doing the fighting." However, consider what would happen to a woman whose husband died – she'd become a widow. And if all the men died, what would have happened to the women taken captive? Nevertheless, despite the possible consequences, and because of their great trust in G-d, the women urged the men to do the Divine bidding.

We see from all these ideas and examples that far from repressing women's spirituality, Judaism recognizes women's spiritual elevation, sensitivity and insight. Of course, this was only an introduction to a very expansive topic — namely the role of woman in Judaism — but I hope this will help you be more open to following the signs leading you toward your Jewish roots.

# WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

## WHO GETS THE SPOT?

**Question:** For a number of years I have given permission to my neighbor to build his succah in my yard. A relative of mine has now moved to across the yard from me and has asked me to allow him to build his succah on that same spot. I would certainly prefer to do that favor for a relative instead of the other neighbor. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Your dilemma is perhaps based on a halachic opinion that one who is accustomed to having a particular *mohel* circumcise his sons should not take another *mohel* in his place, just as one who was accustomed to giving a particular *kohen* his tithes should not switch to another.

This is true, however, only in regard to something that is

obligatory, such as giving a *kohen* the tithe or arranging for a *mohel* to do the *brit* on his son. There is no obligation, however, for someone to give permission to another to build a succah in his yard. This may be compared to one who is accustomed to lending his *tallit* to another. Does it make sense that he will be restrained from lending it to someone else instead?

In conclusion, you can definitely give that spot to your relative but try to pacify your other neighbor so that there will be no hard feelings.

- Based on a ruling by Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein, rav of Ramat Elchanan in Bnei Brak

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

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future is ours! This is the philosophy of the West. Lip service may be paid to the idea of a G-d, but He is lucky if He gets more than a Sunday morning visit. The real worship of the West is technology and its unlimited promise of control.

The Arabs, on the other hand, have a strong, some might say fanatic, belief in a G-d, but are obsessed with immorality. The Talmud tells us, "Ten portions of immorality descended to the world – Arabia took nine of them". Islam must be the only theistic religion whose concept of an afterlife is rampant immorality.

In his interpretation of Nevuchadnezzar's dream, the prophet Daniel envisioned a huge statue. Its head was of gold; its torso and arms were of silver; its stomach and thighs were of copper; its legs of iron; and its feet — one of iron and one of earthenware. (*Daniel 2:31*)

The Arizal says that this statue was an embodiment of the world-historical exiles through which the Jewish People would suffer and endure: The crown of the statue represents Egypt, the root of all exile; the head of gold symbolizes the exile of Babylon; the arms of silver stand for the exile of Persia, and the stomach of copper is Greece. The legs of iron, which correspond to the exile of Rome, divide into feet, one of iron and the other of earthenware: Meaning that in the very last stages of history, in which we now find ourselves, the two dominant powers would be the descendants of the Roman Empire, i.e. the nations of the West, and the Empire of Arabia.

Like two feet, the two last Empires of exile must work in tandem to be effective. A person with only one hand can still use it to good advantage, someone with one foot, however,

is virtually incapacitated. The feet must work together if they are to be of use.

In the third paragraph of the Shema, the Torah warns us, "Do not stray after your hearts and after your eyes," (Bamidbar 15:39). "After your hearts" refers to idol worship; "after your eyes" refers to immorality. Rabbi Mendel Mishkelov said, in the name of his teacher the Vilna Gaon, that idol worship and immorality always go hand in hand — or better — "foot with foot", for, as we mentioned, Rome and its current cultural heirs — the nations of the West — epitomize idol worship, and the empire of Arabia — immorality.

But why should idolatry and immorality be connected, and why do the feet represent them?

The feet want to take us somewhere else; they want to be anywhere but here. They want the future now.

This is the symptom of the age: To be there — while I'm still here.

Hidden beneath an apparent similarity to eating and other physical desires, the deeper attraction of immorality is a distortion of the ultimate pleasure of basking in the radiance of the Divine Presence — a pleasure reserved for the World to Come. It cannot be experienced here and now. If there is a distant glimmer of that radiance in this world, it exists in the Shabbat experience, and Shabbat is the time of family closeness.

When G-d told Avraham to forsake his environment of idol worship, He said, "Go for yourself!" The sentence could equally well be translated "Go to yourself!" The Hebrew word for "Go" is exactly the same as the word for "to yourself." In other words, our journey in this world is to our-

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selves, to connect to our essence, to our soul, which is a part of G-d, not to try to buy the future and have it now.

This is the common denominator of idol worship and immorality — the desire to consume the future now. The feet, the agents of locomotion want to run, to be there now. Their correct task, however, is to lead us to our higher selves, for only that will bring us to perfection at its appropriate time and place.

## Re'eh

### Do You REALLY WANT To Do This?

*"And the curse – if you do not listen and turn aside from the way..." (11:28)*

**O**ne of my favorite messages from my friendly computer is, "Do you really want to do this?" One mouse click away from reformatting my entire hard drive of more than 15 years of hard work: essays, letters, accounts, projects and random musings (they're the hardest work), when that little voice of sanity pops up on my screen and enquires politely, "Do you really want to do this?"

G-d loves His people as no one else.

In this week's portion, describing the path of blessing, the Torah says – *that you hearken to the commandments of G-d.*"(26:27) When warning us about the alternative, the Torah talks of "...the curse — if you do not listen **and turn aside from the way....**" Why, when speaking about the negative consequences of rejecting the Torah, did the Torah add the seemingly extra words "*and turn aside from the way?*"

When we think of doing a mitzvah, of feeding the poor, visiting the sick, putting on *tefillin*, or learning Torah, G-d already considers it virtually a done deal. Even if, for reasons beyond our control, we never manage to perform the mitzvah, it's as though we had already done it.

On the other hand, the thought of doing an *aveira* (spiritual transgression), by itself does not render us liable until it becomes concrete action.

How thankful we should be to G-d that He gives us the chance to say to ourselves, "Do you really want to do this?"!

• Sources: *Be'er Mayim Chaim; Malbim*

## Shoftim

### THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES

*"And it (the Torah) shall be with him (the king), and he shall read from it all the days of his life..." (17:19)*

**A** recent newspaper article described how a man, who had been in a coma for some 20 years, awoke one day and started speaking normally. Apparently, he had been able to hear and understand everything that had been taking place around him. To the eyes of the world, and principally his doctors, he was as though dead to the world. So much so, that several times they stood at the foot of his bed

discussing the possibility of turning off his life-support machines.

Can you imagine what it must be like to lie in a bed and hear such a conversation? Can you imagine what it must have felt like to want to scream, "I'm alive! I'm alive! Don't turn me off!" and yet not a sound emerges from your throat, nothing moves, not a finger, not a muscle?

*"And it (the Torah) shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life..."*

The Torah is a feminine noun. Thus, in the first part of this sentence, the phrase, "it shall be with him", referring to the Torah, is feminine. However, the "it" at the end of the sentence is masculine. What is the Torah hinting to us through this anomaly?

The *luchot*, the two tablets of stone on which G-d inscribed the Torah, were square in shape. If you go into almost any synagogue in the world, however, you will notice that the typical representation of the *luchot* suspended above the Holy Ark has rounded tops. From where does this shape derive?

The classic diagrammatic depiction of the human heart is an inverted triangle with two rounded tops. When G-d gave the Jewish People the Torah on Mount Sinai, It was not given just as the World's Instruction Book; its words were to be engraved indelibly on the hearts of the Jewish People forever.

The Torah's place of residence in this world is the Jewish heart.

*"And it (the Torah) shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life..."*

You can read the second half of this sentence like this: "...and he shall read in him(self) all the days of his life."

The Torah is the voice of life inside every Jew.

Many are the challenges that face us in the world today; many are the lures – success, money, marrying whom we want; doing what we want when we want. It's all too easy to just turn off our Jewish life-support systems and join the rest of the crowd.

However, there will always be a little voice inside us shouting inside us "I'm alive! I'm alive! Don't turn me off!"

• Source: Thanks to Rabbi Aryeh Burnham

## Ki Tetze

### FROM THE HEART

*"He doesn't listen to our voices..." (21:20)*

I recently had the privilege of attending a lecture by one of the great Torah leaders of our generation. In anticipation, I wondered what he would say, what heights of spirituality would he convey, what lofty ideas and profound insights? When he rose to address us, he spoke in the simplest words one could imagine. There was absolutely nothing he said that

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

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I had not heard, in one way or another, from many, many other speakers. What made his address so powerful, however, was not what he said, but who he was.

Apparently, the Chafetz Chaim was far from being a brilliant demagogue. He would stand at the *bima* and begin his address quietly: "Shiru lo! Zamru lo! Sing to Him! Chant to Him!" Everyone would be transfixed by his simple recitation of this one line of a Psalm. The impact of his words came not from his intellectual brilliance nor his oratorical skills, it came from the fact that when he said, "Sing to Him!" it was clear to everyone that the Chafetz Chaim was referring to a Reality whose existence was more self-evident than his own.

Another story tells of a young man who had started to break Shabbat and was brought to the home of the sage. The Chafetz Chaim took one of this young man's hands gently between his own. Then he began to cry and whispered, "Shabbas... Shabbas..." The young man fled the room in tears. For the rest of his life he kept Shabbat faithfully. Many years later he described how the Chafetz Chaim's tears burned the skin on his hand until he could bear no more.

To the best of my knowledge the Chafetz Chaim's tears contained no sulfuric acid nor were his tears boiled in a kettle hidden up his sleeve.

"He doesn't listen to our voices..."

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin 71*) derives from this verse that the Torah exonerates a rebellious son who has even one deaf parent. The law of the wayward son simply does not apply to this boy.

Ostensibly, this is difficult to understand: The Torah says that the son "doesn't listen to **our** voices." If anyone was deaf, it sounds like the son – not the parents.

A person cannot influence others unless he himself is a paradigm of those virtues that he seeks to instill. He cannot rebuke, censure, or inspire, unless he himself is the very picture of the person he is exhorting his listeners to be.

If one of the parents of the wayward son was "deaf" — if he, or she, did not hearken to that same level of ethical behavior that was being demanded of the son — the son could not be blamed for his delinquent behavior, since only words that come from the heart penetrate the heart.

It's not what you say — it's who you are.

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