

OHRNET

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EDITOR'S NOTES: This issue of Ohrnet is for a span of six weeks as our "Special Summer Issue". We hope you enjoy all of the features. We also wish our readers a gratifying and fulfilling Summer Break. May we all merit seeing Tisha B'Av become a Yom Tov and the Beit Hamikdash restored speedily in our days. *Amen.*

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Devarim

YOU'RE A STAR!

"The L-rd, your G-d has multiplied you and behold! You are like the stars of the heaven in abundance." (1:4)

When the Jewish People fulfill G-d's will, they are like the stars. There is no competition or envy among the stars. No star was ever heard to complain that the light of another was brighter than his. Similarly a righteous person is happy with the light that G-d has bestowed on him, for he knows it is not his own light anyway.

Sometimes the light of a star is not immediately apparent. A cloud of cosmic gas or some other obstruction may mask that light. So too are there untold numbers of holy people amongst our nation who deliberately hide their light "under a bushel."

And just as the stars will live forever, so is the Jewish People an eternal nation who will radiate the light of G-d forever.

• Source: based on the Sifri

Va'etchanan

NICKEL AND DIME

"For you shall not cross this Jordan" (3:27)

A dark night. A passenger jumps down from a bus. As he jumps, some small change falls from his pocket. Too embarrassed to ask the driver to wait so he can use the headlights of the bus to collect his nickels and dimes from the sidewalk, the passenger quickly reaches into his pocket and places a twenty-dollar bill on the ground in the vicinity of his small change. He shouts to the driver "Hold the bus! There's a twenty dollar bill of mine somewhere down here on the ground!"

In the bright headlamps the passenger sees not only the twenty-dollar bill but the scattered small change as well, and he quickly scoops them both up and is on his way.

G-d was adamant that Moshe should not enter the Land of Israel. One reason was that Moshe should be buried in the desert along with his generation so that his personal merit would ensure that they would arise at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead.

G-d wanted Moshe to be the twenty-dollar bill amongst the small change to make sure that not a nickel would get lost.

• Source: based on Devarim Rabba 2:5

Ekev

THINGS

"Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones" (10:1)

Even though G-d told Moshe to make the second two Tablets like the first ones, there were fundamental differences between the two sets. In the first set, not only did G-d write upon the Tablets, He fashioned the Safire stone himself. Both the medium and the message were G-dly. The second Tablets were hewn by the hand of Man, only the inscription was Divine.

However, there was a deeper difference between the two sets of Tablets.

When we think of the Tablets, we think of words engraved on stone - words like any other words. However, in the case of the first Tablets this was not so. The first Tablets did not contain words; they contained speech. This doesn't mean the Tablets were like some kind of Biblical tape recorder. It means that when you saw the words, you saw in them G-d speaking at Sinai. Usually, when someone speaks, their words are present as long as they are still speaking them. When they stop speaking, the words vanish. The first Tablets perpetuated G-d's giving the Torah at Sinai, His speech at Sinai. That is what the Torah means when it says "all the people saw the voices" (Shmot 20:15).

The word *davar* - "thing" in Hebrew - has the same root as the word for "speech" - *dibbur*. What is the connection

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Devarim

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, “Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told *Bnei Yisrael* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvot*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: From the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe’s guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn’t sinned by sending spies into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results: The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to G-d’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin. He recounts how they wouldn’t listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of *Eretz Yisrael* in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

Va’etchanan

Although 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*. G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d.

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

If *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 G-d who gave them wealth and success. Nor did G-d 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 G-d and Moshe. Moshe details the events after G-d 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 G-d’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

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually-oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from G-d. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. G-d 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 slaughtered anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may be only 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 — G-d 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

Moshe 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 G-d'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. G-d 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 G-d. 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 Teitzei

The 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 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.

PESACHIM 23 - 64

Rabbi Eliezer asked, “The Torah states ‘with all your life’, so why does it also state ‘with all your money’, and since it states ‘with all your money’ why does it state ‘with all your life?’”

This is the beginning of a *beraita* on our *daf* that is based on a verse in the first paragraph of the “Shema Yisrael” prayer. Rabbi Eliezer concludes the *beraita* with the answer to the question that he posed. He teaches that a person must be prepared to give up even what is most important to him to show his love of G-d. If his life is more important than his wealth, he must be prepared to sacrifice his life. And if his wealth is more important than his life, he must be prepared to sacrifice his wealth.

• Pesachim 25a

Rava said, “Who says that your blood is redder than his? Perhaps his blood is redder than yours!”

This is the response that Rava gave to a person who came to him with a serious dilemma. The person was given the choice to kill another person or else he would be killed. Rava told him it is forbidden to save one’s life by taking another’s, based on the above logic.

• Pesachim 25b

Rabbi Idi bar Avin said, “Fruit juice does not cause chametz.”

Fruit juice includes liquids other than water (such as oil or honey) and is the reason why flour combined with any liquid other than water does not qualify as *chametz*. Only water is chemically capable of creating the leavening action which creates *chametz* according to halacha.

• Pesachim 36a-b

The Sage Shmuel taught, “Why is matza called ‘lechem oni’ (Devarim 16:3)? Because many things are proclaimed over it (*oni* means to say or proclaim).”

Rashi explains that we say the complete *hallel* and the *haggada* at the Seder with the matza.

• Pesachim 36a

Rabbi Oshia said, “It is a mitzvah with *chazeret*.”

Although the *mishna* lists a number of bitter herbs that are acceptable for the mitzvah of eating *maror* at the Pesach Seder, Rabbi Oshia teaches that the best choice is *chazeret* - Romaine lettuce.

• Pesachim 39a

Rava taught, “What is ‘*chazeret*’ – ‘*chasa*’, and why use *chasa*? Because G-d had mercy (*chas*) on us and took us out of slavery in Egypt.”

• Pesachim 39a

Our Rabbi taught, “A man should sell everything he owns in order to marry the daughter of a Torah scholar.”

• Pesachim 49b

Rabbi Acha bar Chanina taught, “This world is different from the World-to-Come. In this world one makes a blessing on good news — Blessed is the One Who is good and does good to others — while on sad news he says ‘Blessed is the true Judge’. In the World-to-Come there will be only one blessing — the one for good tidings — for there will be no sad news.”

This is how the Sage explains the verse, “And G-d shall be King of the entire universe, and on that day G-d shall be One and His Name shall be One (Zecharia 14:9)”. This verse requires the above explanation of Rabbi Acha bar Chanina since it is a tenet of our faith that G-d is already One today.

PESACHIM 23 - 64

Rabbi Yochanan taught, “One who provides merchandise to Torah scholars will merit a place in the Heavenly Yeshiva, as it is written (Kohelet 7:12) ‘For in the shadow of wisdom is the shadow of money.’”

Our *gemara* cites this teaching to show that “Todos the Roman” was a great man. Rabbi Yossi bar Avin stated that Todos provided merchandise to Torah scholars and this was evidence of his greatness in accordance with Rabbi Yochanan’s explanation of the verse above. Rashi explains that he provided them with the wares for doing business and earning a livelihood. Rashi also explains the verse as teaching that the special place of Torah scholars with their wisdom in the Heavenly Yeshiva – “the shadow of wisdom” – will allow entrance to those who helped support the scholars financially – “the shadow of money.”

• Pesachim 53b

“*Baruch shem kevod malchuto l’olam va’ed.*” (Blessed is the Name of the glory of His kingdom forever.)
What is the origin of our saying these words after saying the first verse of the Shema prayer?

Our *daf* explains that the origin of our saying this “addition” to the Shema is based on a dialogue between Yaakov and his sons. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish explains as follows:

When Yaakov called his sons to his deathbed to reveal to them what would be in the end of days, he was surprised that the Divine Presence departed from him and rendered him unable to do so. He was concerned that this occurred because perhaps one of his children was blemished in his beliefs that were taught by Yaakov to his children (such as was the case with Avraham and Yitzchak). They all reassured him, however, “Hear, our father Yisrael (Yaakov) ...” - their loyalty to the One true G-d was equal to their father’s loyalty. Yaakov responded with relief and praise of G-d by saying, “*Baruch shem kevod malchuto l’olam va’ed*” – a practice that we continue today.

• Pesachim 56a

The mishna teaches that the korban Pesach was ritually slaughtered in the Beit Hamikdash on the afternoon prior to Pesach, and needed to take place in three separate shifts. The gates of the Beit Hamikdash closed once the courtyard filled with people, and the sacrificial process began. Who closed these gates?

Abaye says that no human effort was made to close the gates. Rather, people were permitted to enter through them until they miraculously closed by themselves. Rava, however, disagrees and states that such a policy could have led to all the people entering at once, which would not result in the division into three shifts as the Torah prescribed. His view is that when the *kohanim* evaluated that there would not be enough people to form a second and a third shift, they took the initiative of closing the gates on the earlier shifts.

The *gemara* explains their dispute: Abaye’s opinion is that it was proper to rely on the miracle that the gates would close on their own, while Rava’s view is that they did not rely on such a miracle.

However, there is a general rule that in human affairs we should trust in G-d but should not rely on miracles. Why should Abaye hold that in this case it was proper to rely on a miracle?

One answer proposed by the commentaries is that the Beit Hamikdash was the site of so many ongoing miracles (see *Pirkei Avot 5:10*) that it was reasonable to rely on the miracle of automatically closing gates as well.

• Pesachim 64a-b

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish stated, “Once a mitzvah presents itself to you it must not be bypassed (even for the sake of another mitzvah).”

• Pesachim 64b

Rabbi Paul Laster Age: 71 Jerusalem
University of Virginia – B.A. in English Literature
Brandeis University – M.A. in
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Ohr Somayach Beit Midrash - 1978

One of the founders of Arachim, *rabbi* to hundreds of *talmidim*, and former captain in the IDF Education Corp, Rabbi Laster has been an outreach pioneer sending ripples of inspiration into the Jewish people for over 40 years.

In 1975, the IDF morale was at an all-time low having suffered major casualties and military disgrace in the debacle of the 1973 Yom Kippur war. The IDF Education Corps enlisted Paul Laster, a secular Zionist from Virginia with a background in higher education, to inspire the army's top officers and revitalize the IDF morale.

Laster found that the top officers in the IDF had "a very tenuous Jewish identity" and "couldn't define what they were fighting for." His solution was to instill a strong Jewish identity in the officers, which would in turn inspire their troops.

Under the laws of reserve duty, Laster had the legal right to call in virtually any Israeli scientist, professor, historian or specialist to teach in his motivational program. Israel's intellectual elite were at his fingertips, yet none of them succeeded in inspiring his officers. He decided, as a non-observant Jew, that he needed to find the masters of Jewish identity.

When Laster asked the Roshei Yeshiva of Ohr Somayach if they were willing to host a program about Jewish identity, they responded "That's what we're here for!" Utilizing this opportunity, Laster built a highly experiential and inspiring ideological program, which became a basic intro to Judaism course. For two and a half years the IDF's top officers —

lieutenants, captains, and majors — were run through the program, including a crash course in Oral Torah, a *chavruta* with a text, and a hand-picked exemplary family to connect with each officer.

During those years Laster's program had the highest evaluation rating in the entire IDF Education Corps. Newfound Jewish identity and inspiration were once again flowing through the veins of IDF officers, albeit from an unexpected source. Yet their close encounters with rabbis and *yeshivot* was ruffling too many feathers to continue. The general of the Education Corps terminated Laster's program, saying "I didn't hire you to recruit for Ohr Somayach!"

A few years later Laster's IDF program was developed into an outreach seminar. This project became part of the largest outreach organization in the world, serving over 100,000 participants every year in their various programs on five continents.

For Laster himself, two and a half years of lectures in the IDF made an impact. In 1978 he moved from the Education Corps to the *Beit Midrash* study program of Ohr Somayach. Eventually the Roshei Yeshiva enlisted Laster's educational talents and social connections to create the yeshiva's first outreach program for Israelis, especially soldiers.

Since 2007, Rabbi Laster has combined his outreach experiences and his 20 years of kollel in Yeshivat Chofetz Chaim to do one-on-one outreach in Ohr Somayach. One might call it "outreach through *gemara*." No guest speakers, no special fieldtrips, not even standard discussions of *hashkafa* — through straight *gemara* alone (plus tremendous care), Rabbi Laster opens the hearts and minds of his students, transforming them into successful *b'nei Torah*.

Rabbi Laster and his wife have been hosting Shabbat guests — religious and secular — for many years. They live in Jerusalem and have five children.



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PARSHA Q&A ?

Devarim

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did G-d instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refa'im?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Devarim's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 – Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 – So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 – They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Va'etchanan

1. "And I prayed to G-d at that time." Why "at that time"?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by G-d's "strong hand"?
3. What is ha'levanon?
4. What did G-d 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 G-d previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
13. What is meant by "G-d, our G-d, G-d is One"?
14. What are two meanings of loving G-d "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 G-d's name?
18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
19. When someone serves G-d 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 G-d 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 - G-d, 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 G-d 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 G-d and reveres His name.
18. 7:7 - B'nei Yisrael are the humblest nation.
19. 7:9 - 2,000.
20. 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Ekev

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that G-d 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 G-d?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in G-d'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 G-d 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 G-d"?

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 - a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the first-born.
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, 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.

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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 G-d?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that G-d 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 G-d and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “To Him (G-d) 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 G-d’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 G-d'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 G-d'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.

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 G-d 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?

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 prophecies 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 Teitzei

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 G-d 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 G-d 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 Teitzei'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 G-d's image, and because the Jewish People are G-d'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 - G-d 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 G-d."

DETECTIVE STORY

Question: A theft took place in the class that I teach, and I suspect that some of my pupils are aware of the identity of the thief. I am tempted to demand of those who have this information to share it with me but I am afraid that this may encourage them to become malicious talebearers. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Your concern about developing the wrong traits in your pupils is shared by one of the great halachic authorities of the previous generation. Since you wish to protect the other pupils from becoming victims of theft and to also help rehabilitate the young thief, you must resort to other methods to uncover this thief.

Various suggestions have been made, ranging from controversial entrapment to the imaginative insisting on each

pupil's declaring before the *Aron Hakodesh* that he was not guilty of the theft. Perhaps we can learn a lesson in detective work from what the Talmud (*Bava Metzia* 24a) tells us of the Sage Mar Zutra Chasida.

A silver goblet was stolen from the home of this Sage's host and the suspicion was that the thief was one of the young men studying in the yeshiva. One day this Sage noticed a student drying his freshly washed hands on the coat of another student. He immediately suspected that a person with such disregard for someone else's property was probably the thief. Subsequent interrogation of the suspect vindicated his suspicion.

A teacher who keeps a sharp eye open on the casual behavior of his pupils will usually discover which of them has the tendency to steal from his classmates.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE PRICE OF PEACE

Closing in a porch with metal bars is a common practice in Israel in buildings with many apartments. Such a fence keeps little children in and cats out.

When a family on the ground floor in the Torah-observant town of Modi'in Ilit decided to close off its porch, it ran into opposition from the neighbor on the second floor. He expressed fear that the fence would enable a thief to climb up to his porch and break into his home.

This standoff led to a breakdown in the otherwise friendly neighborly relations. To the rescue came the neighbor on the third floor who offered to share with his protesting neighbor the cost of closing in his own porch to protect his

home against burglars. Thus came to a happy end the battle of the porches.

But this is not the end!

A short while after the porches on the first and second floors were completed, a fire broke out on the third floor in the apartment of the fellow who brought peace to his building. The firemen who arrived on the scene were unsuccessful in breaking down the security door to the apartment but found an alternate route by climbing up the bars surrounding the porches of the two apartments below. The peace initiative of the resident of that third floor apartment thus saved his home from destruction.

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TORAH VACATION

From: Aleksey

Dear Rabbi,
Now that the summer break is approaching, would you please share with me the Torah's teachings on vacationing, and is there even such a thing as taking a vacation from Torah?

Dear Aleksey,

Thanks for this very timely and important question.

The answer is yes, we take time off from Torah – providing that such time off is for the Torah.

I'll explain.

When a person eats, or sleeps or works, for example, he is usually not involved directly in learning. If a person does this solely to eat, sleep or work, these acts are merely physical and he therefore lives a very mundane life. However, if a person engages in these needs with the intention of being able to better serve G-d, learn Torah and do His will, these otherwise physical acts are elevated to *mitzvot* and thereby constitute part of a spiritual life.

Therefore, taking time off from learning, when needed to rejuvenate one's strength, and with the intention of directing that rejuvenation back into learning, is not only permitted, but the actual "time off" is considered a *mitzvah*.

But this idea can actually be taken a step further. Since a person can't live without sleep, for example, and he can't learn without life, sleeping in the right measure and with the right intention is actually tantamount to learning. This idea was stated by the Sages in the following teaching: "One who refrains from Torah maintains Torah". Here, the Sages intended to encourage one to take time off from Torah when needed, and that such "off time" is, for all intents and purposes, considered "on time".

Another way in which vacation time can be used for G-d is revealed by Rambam who writes (*Hilchot De'ot* 4:1,2,14): "It is a way of serving G-d to have a healthy body, since it is most difficult to develop spiritually when one is sick. Therefore, one must refrain from activities and foods which harm the body, and perform activities that strengthen the body. Exercise and a proper diet help preserve the body, while idleness and an unhealthy diet harm it." In this way, utilizing the extra time on vacation for healthy eating and activities, in order to get back into shape and restore one's strength and vigor, would not only be permitted, but also a *mitzvah*.

Just as our normal routines generally limit our chances for exercise and other healthy outlets, so too do they limit us within a certain sphere and context of activity. Vacation time affords the possibility of changing scenery, getting out to nature, learning new things about G-d's world and the like. This opportunity to experience, contemplate and appreciate anew the wondrous Creation offers a spiritual breath of fresh air that rejuvenates our connection and commitment to G-d, which we can then re-infuse back into our normal routines.

A final point to consider regarding the value of a vacation from the Torah perspective is that it offers an opportunity to put into practice and actuate the teachings of the Torah in ways, places and among people that we don't normally encounter. This deepens one's own observance, demonstrates the practical aspects of the Torah for one's family, and can serve as a *kiddush Hashem* or sanctification of G-d's name to those unfamiliar with Judaism.

So there are many ways in which a person can take a vacation not from, but *for*, Torah. Whether one is resting to rejuvenate, refraining in order to maintain, increasing activity to gain strength, making excursions to enhance appreciation, or creating new contexts for observance, if it's for G-d – it's a Torah vacation.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

RABBEINU YONA

Make someone your Rabbi and acquire a friend — ***Yehoshua ben Perachia (Avot 1:1)***

A person needs a good friend for three purposes:

1) To learn Torah. As one Sage said: "I have learned much from my teachers, but even more from my friends."

2) To be more careful in observing the *mitzvot*. Even if one of them will be tempted to transgress he will not allow the other to fall as well. This offers hope for both of them to improve.



3) To enjoy his counsel and have someone in whom he can confide.

The term "acquire" employed here is to indicate that if he can find no other route he should be prepared to pay anything to gain a good friend. It also suggests that one should be prepared to "buy" a good friend with soft-spoken patience and to show him tolerance, even when he says something offensive. Otherwise the differences in human personalities will create situations that will lead to strains that can endanger the friendship.

between a thing and speech?

Nothing in this physical world can have an existence without it having a spiritual underpinning. What sustains every object in this physical world is G-d speaking through that object. That object is no more than G-d speaking; it is a *dvar*, an expression of something God wishes to reveal in His world. In the future, we will clearly see the intention behind every thing in Creation, the *dibbur* behind every *davar*. This is what the prophet Yishayahu means when he writes, “*The Glory of G-d will be revealed and all flesh together will see that the Mouth of G-d has spoken*” (40:5) Just as at Sinai G-d’s speech assumed a concrete form, so too at that time in the future every concrete form will reveal its purpose, its *dibbur*.

Only the first Tablets contained the level of revelation where it was possible to see the *dibbur* as though it were an object. Usually a physical object does not reveal the intent of its maker. The first Tablets, however, revealed G-d’s intent; they were a *davar* that revealed *dibbur*. However, after the sin of the golden calf the world was a different place. It could no longer contain the level of revelation epitomized by the first set of Tablets. That is why the Tablets grew suddenly heavy in Moshe’s hands and they fell to the ground. From that time until *Mashiach*, things will not reveal their true identity as being no more than the Word of G-d.

Re’eh

HYPERKOSHER

“*You shall not eat any carcass*” (14:21)

I can remember a slightly more innocent world where the actors and actresses in Hollywood were referred to as “stars.” Of course to call a human being a star is in itself a tremendous piece of fantasy and exaggeration.

However, hyperbole, as everyone knows, is subject to the law of diminishing returns. If everyone is somebody and nobody is nobody, then to get noticed being a “star” isn’t good enough, and in the 70s a new epithet emerged the “superstar.” Of course, these mere mortals were as tarnished and faded as their predecessors, the “stars,” but the march of exaggeration and the debasement of language is not to be halted by squeamish concerns of accuracy or truth.

The “superstars” short reign came to an end with the advent of the “megastar.”

Where to from here?

A kosher *shechita* (ritual slaughtering for kosher food) involves the fulfilling on numerous halachic requirements. The *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) must be a G-d fearing per-

son. He must be allowed to work without the pressure of fulfilling a quota. He must be allotted sufficient time to check the smoothness of his knife and the health of the animal. He must be calm enough to be able to apply the correct amount of pressure to the blade during the *shechita* itself.

The *shochet* must check carefully the animal’s lungs. An adhesion on the lung is something not easily detected and often a decision must be made about this that will affect whether the animal is kosher or not.

If the lungs are completely free of adhesions, the animal is “*glatt kosher*.”

On the average, between two and four percent of all cows that are *shechted* are “*glatt kosher*.”

How is it, then, that nowadays nearly every restaurant/butcher/deli proclaims that they are “*glatt kosher*?” It’s just not possible.

The answer is that the world of *kashrut* is not immune from the dreaded disease that affects so much of modern discourse - hyperbole.

Glatt ain’t what it used to be.

Shoftim

AS LOVELY AS A TREE?

“*You shall not plant for yourselves an idolatrous tree any tree near the Altar of G-d.*” (16:21)

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.*

*A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth’s sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at G-d all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only G-d can make a tree.*

In this week’s Torah portion we learn that it is forbidden to plant trees in the Beit Hamikdash, the Holy Temple. What is the reason for this prohibition? Wouldn’t trees have been a wonderful way to enhance the beauty of the Holy Temple?

At one time, it was the custom of idolaters to plant beautiful trees, called *asheiros*, at the entrance of their temples.

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continued from page Fifteen

These trees would be venerated as holy. In the Book of Shoftim G-d commanded the Judge Gidon to “Destroy the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the asheira next to it.”

The Torah prohibited the planting of any tree in the Beit Hamikdash or its forecourt. The Torah Masters then extended the prohibition to include the entire Temple Mount.

However, apart from the connection to idol worship, there is a more subtle problem here.

When something is very beautiful, it’s always a challenge to place that thing in its correct perspective. Whether it’s a beautiful person or a beautiful view, or a beautiful tree, the nature of beauty is to say, “Look at me! I’m so beautiful” It’s difficult to look beyond the surface of the beauty.

In Hebrew, one of the words for beauty is *shapir*. The name *Shifra* comes from this root, as does the common Jewish surname *Shapiro*. In the Book of Iyov it says, “By His breath the Heavens are spread (*shifra*)” (Iyov 26:13). Iyov describes how G-d’s breath spreads aside the cloud cover to reveal the Heavens beyond. The word to spread aside, to reveal is from that same root, *shifra*. In Jewish thought, something is only beautiful to the extent that it reveals what is beyond, what is inside. The part of the body where the personality of a person, his inside, is revealed is the face. In Hebrew the word for face and inside is the same - *pnim/panim*.

In Jewish thought, a beauty that reveals nothing more than itself cannot be called beautiful. “Art for Art’s sake” has no place in the lexicon of Jewish thought. Jewish beauty is the revelation of the inner.

On Friday night, a Jewish husband sings a song of praise to wife called *Aishet Chayil* - a Woman of Valor. Towards the end of the poem it says, “Charm is false and beauty empty. A woman who fears G-d, she should be praised.” When charm and beauty don’t reveal their source, their *pnim*, then they are false and empty. Charm and beauty by themselves are false and empty, but when they are ennobled and animated by an interior life of holiness and spirituality they radiate the purpose of their gift.

Similarly in the Holy Temple, the beauty of a tree can lead the mind in one of two ways: It can either lead to thoughts of the kindness of the Creator of the tree, how He brought into being such a beautiful thing, or it can stop at the surface: “Wow! That’s beautiful!”

Mother Nature is so beautiful that it’s easy to forget that Mother Nature has a Father.

• Sources: Joyce Kilmer for Mrs. Henry Mills Alden

Ki Teitzei

THE SPICE OF LIFE

“...and he wrote her a bill of divorce” (24:1)

Nothing is sadder than family break-up. Divorce is the scourge of our modern world. In all sectors of the community, divorce is on the rise. In some areas, more people now get divorced than stay married. Pre-nuptial agreements are par for the course. More and more couples enter marriage with fewer and fewer expectations.

The Torah acknowledges that not all marriages will be successful. It gives us the mitzvah of *gerushin*, divorce, in such an unhappy event. The concept of “till death do us part” is not a Jewish idea. However, divorce while being a mitzvah is no source for joy. The Talmud says that when a couple gets divorced, the *mizbe’ach*, the holy altar, weeps.

How are we to understand this idea that the *mizbe’ach* weeps? Nothing in Judaism is merely poetic. Why specifically should the *mizbe’ach* weep? Why not the Tablets of the Covenant? Why not the husband’s *tefillin*? Why not the wife’s Shabbat candelabra?

Probably the greatest source of marital disharmony is misunderstanding the purpose of marriage. The secular paradigm, enshrined in every fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm to the Brothers Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, is that the princess finds the prince of her dreams. She finds total fulfillment in Prince Charming, and he finds everything he wants in her: Beauty, poise, intelligence, money, someone who puts the top on the toothpaste - everything!

Marriage is not about finding someone to fulfill you. It’s about finding *someone you can fulfill*. Marriage is a machine for giving; that’s all it is. Marriage is about living the principle that you are *not* the center of the world. In the book of *Bereshet* the Torah says, *It is not good for man to live alone*. When you live alone, you only have one person to give to yours truly. The world revolves around you. You are the center of the universe.

The *mizbe’ach* is the place when man gives to G-d. Man gives of his best and offers it to his Creator. The word *korban* (inadequately translated as sacrifice) derives from the root closeness. When you give, you become close. When you take, you distance yourself.

The Torah tells us that no *korban* could be offered without the presence of salt on the *mizbe’ach*. Salt is the archetypal giver. Salt has only one purpose - to give taste to something else. By itself it is nothing. When a person sees himself as salt, when he sees the whole purpose of his existence is to give, he has added the vital ingredient to his marriage.

He has added the spice of life.

The Cost of “Free-Hatred”

BY RABBI YOCHANAN ZWEIG

Kamtzah and Bar Kamtzah

The Talmud relates the following incident: Because of *Kamtzah* and *Bar Kamtzah* Jerusalem was destroyed. A certain person had a friend named *Kamtzah* and an enemy named *Bar Kamtzah*. This person made a party, and told his servant to invite *Kamtzah*. Instead, the servant went ahead and invited the host's enemy, *Bar Kamtzah*. When the host saw *Bar Kamtzah* sitting at his party, he said, “What are you doing here? Get up! Get out!”

“Since I came, let me stay and I'll pay for my meal,” said *Bar Kamtzah*.

“No!” said the host.

“I'll pay for half of the entire affair,” said *Bar Kamtzah*.

“No!”

“I'll pay for the entire affair!”

“No!” said the host. He then grabbed him, stood him up and threw him out.

Bar Kamtzah, enraged that several Sages were present but did not protest, went to Rome and deceived the Caesar into believing that the Jews were plotting rebellion. Convinced, the Caesar came and destroyed Jerusalem.

Now, one might ask, why didn't the host take advantage of *Bar Kamtzah's* offer to pay for the entire meal? What better way to exploit your enemy than to throw a lavish feast and have him foot the bill!

Furthermore, what is meant by the introductory statement: “Because of *Kamtzah* and *Bar Kamtzah* Jerusalem was destroyed”? Why blame **Kamtzah**? *Kamtzah* was supposed to have been invited to the party, but he never got the invitation. His only “sin” was that he just happened to have the same name as the host's enemy. Is this any reason that his name has been associated for nearly two millennia with this cataclysmic tragedy - the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash?

Sinat Chinam

To answer these questions, we need to understand what is meant by the term “*Sinat Chinam*.” Our Sages tell us that it is *Sinat Chinam* that destroyed Jerusalem, and it is *Sinat Chinam* which keeps us mired in exile until this very day. *Sinat Chinam* is sometimes translated as “baseless hatred” - hatred for no reason. When there is love and caring among Jews, G-d acts with us in a way that shows love and care. But when we act with anger and spite, harboring animosity, it's as though we're inviting G-d to do the same.

But let's stop and think: What sane individual hates someone for no reason? A petty reason, an invalid reason, perhaps. Bob steps on Steve's toe, so Steve hates Bob. But hatred with *absolutely* no reason whatsoever? Let us therefore take a different approach to understand the concept of *Sinat Chinam*.

The following parable characterizes *Sinat Chinam*: A king told a person, “Ask for anything you desire and I'll give it to you, and to your enemy I'll give double.” After thinking a while he said, “O, King, poke out one of my eyes.”

Anyone who doubts that such people actually exist should consider the following true account: There were two brothers whose old mother died, leaving a \$100,000 inheritance entirely to the younger brother. The older brother was enraged, certain that in the last year of her life his brother had convinced their mother to cut him out of the will.

“I'm going to contest the will,” he told his rabbi. “I'll see to it that my brother doesn't get a penny!”

“Did you ask lawyers how much it'll cost to contest the will?” asked the Rabbi.

“Of course,” answered the man. “It's going to cost \$200,000, but I don't care. It's worth it for me to lose a fortune as long as my brother gets nothing!”

How is it that a person is willing to spend thousands of dollars in order to gain nothing? Why doesn't he go out and buy presents for his friends and family, or better yet - himself?

The answer is: *Sinat Chinam*. Of course he'd be better off spending the money on himself. But he cannot. Why? *Sinat Chinam*: “Free Hatred.” Though the hatred may have some basis, it is “free” in the sense that it *yields nothing*. It is free of logic, free of profit. On the contrary, he will poke out his own eye or spend a fortune - even destroy himself - to satisfy his hatred. Ultimately, *Sinat Chinam* is self-hatred.

“Kamtzan” means “miser”

“A certain person had a friend named *Kamtzah*” - In Hebrew, the word “*Kamtzan*” means “miser,” someone so out of touch, so self-hating, that he cannot spend money even for himself. “The host had a *friend*” - someone with whom he identified - named “Miser.” The Talmud is hinting here that the host *himself* is a *Kamtzan*. What greater gain than to throw a party and have someone else foot the bill? But the host was focused *not* on his own gain, but rather, on his enemy's - and ultimately his own - destruction.

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Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT DEVARIM

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

Two of the main difficulties encountered in Parshat Devarim are the changes that Moshe makes in his recounting of the incident of the spies that had occurred 40 years previously as reported in Parshat Shelach, and his attributing his inability to enter the Land of Israel to his behavior in the spies incident rather than his error of hitting the rock to get water rather than speaking to it, which was clearly the reason given in Parshat Chukat previously.

In his recounting of the incident of the spies, Moshe makes three specific changes: 1. In Parshat Shelach it is clearly stated that G-d instructed Moshe to send spies into the Land of Israel, while here Moshe states that the people came to him requesting the mission. 2. In Parshat Shelach Moshe gave the spies numerous instructions about the nature of the land, its produce and its inhabitants. Here he only asks them to find the best way to enter the land. 3. In Parshat Shelach the spies return with a comprehensive report starting with the positive and ending up with the negative assessment that they would not be able to conquer the land. Here, however, Moshe only mentions that they said, "Good is the land that the L-rd our G-d gives us", which is hardly a negative report!

Moshe made these drastic changes in order to avoid the possibility of a repeat of what had happened 40 years before. If he would mention that G-d and Moshe were the original impetus for the mission of the spies, which ended in disaster,

then the people would blame Moshe and G-d for the incident and would therefore lose faith in their ability to conquer the Land. He also ignores specific details about the land and the spies' doubts and concerns so as not to plant negative ideas in the peoples' minds. Instead, he pins the blame squarely on the people of that generation, not this new generation poised to enter the land. This re-telling of the story is an example of what our Sages teach us in the Talmud (*Bava Metzia 87*) that it is permitted to change the facts in the interest of peace.

In regard to Moshe's punishment of not being permitted to enter the Land of Israel, it is clear that this punishment is the result of Moshe's miscalculations with the spies. The additional instructions that he gave them backfired and gave them more ammunition for a negative report. However, since Moshe's transgression was unintentional, unlike the brazenly false report of the spies, G-d did not want Moshe's punishment to be mentioned in the same context as the spies'. Additionally, G-d wanted to protect Moshe's honor and status by not mentioning his punishment in the context of the serious transgression of the spies and the people. In essence He put the decree 'on hold' until the incident of the water from the rock, through which the decree was sealed. This is the reason that the incident of the rock is not mentioned in Parshat Devarim at all. That incident alone would never have resulted in such a drastic punishment. The real reason for the decree was Moshe's role in the incident of the spies.

The Cost of "Free Hatred" *continued from page seventeen*

"Bar Kamtzah" means

"outside the realm of miserliness"

The guest at the party, *Bar Kamtzah*, on the other hand, loved himself. Look how much money he was willing to spend to spare himself the embarrassment of unceremonious eviction! His very name - *Bar Kamtzah* - hints at this: "*Bar*" means "*outside*." "*Kamtzah*," as mentioned before, refers to self destructive miserliness. Hence, "*Bar Kamtzah*" refers to someone who is "*outside the realm of miserliness*." From the story's tragic end, however, we see what an infectious disease is *Sinat Chinam*. After being the target of the host's vicious *Sinat Chinam*, even *Bar Kamtzah* - the symbol of love and gener-

osity - succumbs. His hatred fomented into a storm, until in a fit of malice he slanders the entire Jewish nation in the ears of the Roman Emperor, bringing destruction upon his family, his homeland, and ultimately - himself.

May we merit the swift fulfillment of the prophetic promise that the days of mourning for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash will become days of joyful celebration. As the verse states "So said G-d, 'The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month will become days of rejoicing, happiness and festivals for the House of Judah - therefore, love Truth and Peace.'" (*Zechariah 8:19*)