

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

A YIDDISHE PUNIM

“They will be holy...” (21:6)

The window of the soul is the human face. The Hebrew word “*panim*” — “face” — has the same root as the “*p’nim*” — meaning “inside”.

The human soul is a G-dly fragment from Above.

When you look into someone’s face you are looking at an emanation of G-d. The light of the soul illuminates a person’s face. For some it’s true more than for others, but in every face there is a G-dly light.

It’s good to remember this the next time you get angry with your neighbor and he scowls at you. You may not see it, because the skin and sinews contort to mask the holiness within, but if you look carefully you will see there a G-dly semblance.

In the current Torah portion, the concept of holiness is repeated many times. The Jewish People are reminded that

they are a holy people. The *kohanim* have an even higher level of sanctity to preserve.

But what is holiness?

The Ramban in last week’s Torah portion says that holiness is refraining from what is permitted.

The more we control our appetites and pass up even those things that are permitted, the less physical we become, which allows our spiritual side to dominate. And the more spiritual we are, the closer we are to G-d.

It’s an amazing thing, but refraining from having an unnecessary extravagance — even something small — allows the radiance of G-d to shine more brightly in us.

That’s a pretty good deal.

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Rav Bulman *zt”l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

KETUVOT 93 - 99

Rabbi Yochanan said, “A Rabbi who prevents his Torah student from serving him is as if he withholds *chesed* (lovingkindness) from his student”.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak says, “He (the Rabbi) is also removing from him the fear of Heaven”.

These two statements show the extreme closeness of the bond between Rabbi and student in this world and its ramifications for the next world as well. Both teachings are derived from Sefer Iyov (6:13-14 – Rashi). The halachic authorities rule that these statements pertain to a student and his “special” Rabbi (*Rav muvhak*), from whom he has gained the majority of his Torah wisdom. A student who shows his honor for G-d and His Torah by serving his Rabbi is rewarded with *chesed* from Above and fulfills what Rabbi Elazar bar Shamua taught in Pirkei Avot (4:12) that “your awe of your Rabbi should be like your awe of Heaven”. These teachings are codified in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 242:50.

• Ketuvot 96a

Rabbi Yossi says, “They divide the extra amount.”

Our *gemara* quotes a *beraita* of a case where a person sends a *shaliach* (agent) with a certain amount of money to spend for making a purchase. In the event that the seller gave the agent more than was expected, who gets the “bonus”? Whereas Rabbi Yehuda says that the agent keeps the extra, Rabbi Yossi rules that the buyer and the agent divide the extra amount.

The *gemara* explains that their dispute is in a case where the item purchased has a fixed price. If it was without a fixed price we would assume that the seller sold it for less than was anticipated and entire amount belongs to the buyer. However, in this case where there is a fixed price we assume that the seller gave the extra amount as a gift. Since we have a doubt whether the seller intended the gift for the buyer or for the agent, the extra amount is divided (Rashi).

This ruling, which is taught on our *daf* as being the halacha, is recorded in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 283:6. However, a question is posed on this ruling. There is a well-known teaching that “*hamotzi mechaveiro alav haraiya*” — one who is taking away from a person in possession must bring a proof that it is his in order to take it. Since the extra amount is in the possession of the agent, why does the buyer receive half without proof that the seller intended to give him that amount, or any amount, as a gift? (Mitzpeh Eitan)

An explanation I have heard from a great Rabbi in Jerusalem is that the agent is not completely considered “in possession” of the add-on. If the seller gave it to the agent as a gift for the buyer, the agent is holding it for the buyer and is not considered “possessing” it. He would be a thief to keep it. Since we have a doubt whether it was a gift for the buyer or for the agent, the fair path to take is to award each one half of the extra amount.

• Ketuvot 98b

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The *kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The *kohen gadol* (High Priest) may not attend the funeral of even his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *kohanim*. The physical irregularities that invalidate a *kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *kohanim*, may be eaten only by *kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple

after it is eight days old and is free from any physical defects. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of G-d by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the *omer* of barley is offered in the Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the menorah and baking the *lechem hapanim* in the Temple. A man blasphemes G-d and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *kohen gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. If the daughter of a *kohen* marries a “zar” she may no longer eat *terumah*. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a *nedavah*?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of G-d?
12. Apart from Shabbat, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *etrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its mother on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of Nissan.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be complete, because according to the Torah a day starts at nightfall.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidat* (binding of) Yitzchak.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemot* 2:12).
20. 24:21 - Death.

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Abarbanel

ON THE PARSHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In this Parsha the Torah instructs us to “afflict” ourselves on Yom Kippur, the tenth day of the month of Tishri. The word that is used for the self is “*nefesh*”, a reference to the soul or essence of the individual. What exactly is meant by affliction? Ibn Ezra, in Parshat Acharai Mot explains that affliction refers exclusively to refraining from eating and drinking. However, Abarbanel says that even though we can say that all fasting is affliction, it is not correct to say that affliction is defined only by fasting. Psalm 102:24 says clearly, “He has afflicted my strength through the wandering of exile.” This is clearly a reference to another kind of affliction. Similarly, the Torah states regarding a wife’s personal vows, “Any vow and any oath-prohibition to cause personal affliction, her husband may let it stand and her husband may revoke it.” (Bamidbar 30:14) It is clear that this is a reference to many examples of personal affliction besides fasting.

Abarbanel offers an expanded definition of this affliction of ourselves, an affliction of our very being. We are commanded to afflict ourselves by eliminating our desire for food, drink, intimate relations and other pleasures. This also includes regret for having previously overindulged, worrying about how this has negatively affected us and chastising ourselves for inappropriate misuse of these desires. This is the essence of the prophet Isaiah’s reproof of the people of his generation when they complained to G-d, “Why did we fast

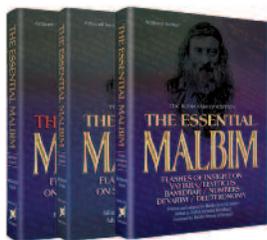
and You did not see? Why did we afflict our souls and You did not know?” (Isaiah 58:3) The people complimented themselves for refraining not only from food and drink, but also from inappropriate physical actions and thoughts as well. The prophet answers them that their sense of affliction is actually worthless, as he tells them in the same verse, “...on your fast day you seek out personal gain and you extort all your debts.” He is telling the people that they are actually *fulfilling* their desires; they are distancing themselves from the things that bring sadness and pain to the soul. As a result the prophet tells them in the next verse, “You fast for grievance and strife...”

Thus, affliction must be understood as everything that causes pain to the soul, the essence of the individual. This is why the Torah states in this Torah portion, “Afflict your souls and bring a fire-offering to G-d.” (Vayikra 23:27) Afflict your souls with repentance, with regret; divest yourselves of inappropriate behavior and thoughts. This is the real essence of affliction. The fats and the blood of the sacrificial offering are to be considered as your own. Knowing that the sacrifice of an animal is meant to teach us that we must give ourselves over completely to G-d, knowing that we have allowed our desires to control us, and reproving ourselves with regretting and repenting brings about the pain and sadness of true affliction.

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BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

REST IN PEACE

From: Manny

*Dear Rabbi,
My parents passed away several years ago. For some reason, I can't get myself to part from their house and belongings. My wife says I've made a museum of them and that it isn't right — but she can't articulate why. Can you help me understand what's going on here and what should be done? By the way, I never sat shiva or said kaddish or observed any mourning rituals for them.*

Dear Manny,

Your parents must have been very special people, and your relationship with them, I'm certain, was very loving and close — and that's why you're having such difficulty in parting with them. This feeling is very natural, and your inclination to preserve their memory in this fashion is understandable.

Nevertheless, there comes a point where a person must let go, make peace with death and seek closure. Obsessive mourning is unhealthy and it's also incorrect as it calls into question G-d's just mastery over life and death. In fact, as difficult as death is for the living, ultimately it's the best for the departed. Initially we bereave our loss, but eventually we celebrate their gain.

I think you have reached this point and therefore must let your parents rest in peace and focus on their spiritual well-being while continuing to celebrate your life with your loved ones who are living.

In my opinion, the fact that you are preserving the physi-

cal remnants of your parents indicates that you are lacking in some degree a belief in their afterlife. You need to concentrate more on the fact that your parents were not bodies, but people — souls — in bodies. After the body's demise, the soul lives on. Your parents live on. Not in the physical house in which they lived or the belongings which they used, but in the abode which they prepared for themselves in Heaven.

Therefore, preserving their house and their belongings, in a way, chains them to this world and impedes their spiritual progress. You would do them a much better service and honor by setting them free. And once you connect more to the spiritual aspect of your parents, you'll realize that your love for them, and what you can do for them, far transcends marinating a "museum" in their memory.

The Jewish way is to pray for the souls of the departed, to say kaddish, to learn (or have others learn) on their behalf, or donate money for worthy Jewish causes in their name. I'm sure that if you did more of those things you would also be unchained from your parents' house and its furnishings, with its attendant gloom and paralysis, and rather be propelled toward positive, constructive action.

Accordingly, you really need to sell or rent out the house and dispose of as many unnecessary belongings as possible — preserving only the most valuable and sentimental objects for yourself and posterity. And use substantial amounts of the proceeds from your parents' property to promote their spiritual well-being in the ways I mentioned above. This will allow both you and your parents to truly "rest in peace".

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

RACHEL'S TOMB AND A GREAT BENEFACTOR

Although the Torah relates that the Patriarch Yaakov put up a monument to mark the grave of his beloved wife Rachel, the structure that we see in Beit Lechem when visiting this holy site was built in 1841 by Sir Moses Montefiore.

The British benefactor received a building permit



from the Turkish sultan and paid the fees for maintaining the site. Before his death at the age of 101 he asked that a small imitation of the dome on Rachel's grave be placed on his grave and that dust from Rachel's tomb be placed in his own grave.

SHEMONEH ESREI — TWELFTH BLESSING: PART 3

“May the wicked kingdom be speedily uprooted and smashed and utterly destroyed - and subjugate them speedily in our days.”

The wording of this blessing is quite puzzling. If we’ve already asked to utterly destroy and uproot evil, what then is meant by the latter request to subjugate evil? (Rabbi Yaakov Emden)

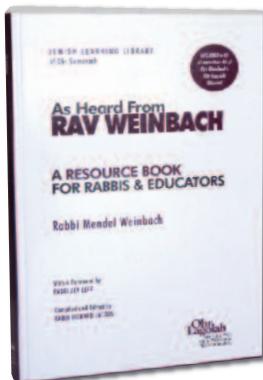
In order to clarify the seeming contradiction in asking to both eradicate and subjugate evil, one must first understand that the evil that exists here below has a spiritual counterpart above. In fact, this aspect of evil above is the root and cause of the existence of evil forces in the world. It is taught in the Zohar that there are, in reality, two levels of evil that exist above. One level is completely evil. This level is the true root and source of all evil. The second level is a mixture of good and evil, as is taught regarding the sin of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. (Zohar)

When the blessing mentions the complete destruction of evil, it is speaking about the first level. However, regarding the second level we do not pray for its complete destruc-

tion, but rather for its subjugation and ultimate inclusion in G-d’s perfect Divine Kingdom, both above and below.

This idea can be understood from an example of human social behavior. It is well known that a person is greatly influenced by his environment. Even someone born with a good nature will find it difficult to develop his good traits if he is raised and educated in a wicked place, where sinful behavior is socially accepted. Instead he will likely accept the false and evil ideologies of his land. If, however, this same person would be in a positive environment, where no evil existed, he would develop to be a fine and descent person. Thus, by totally destroying the root and cause of evil above, the potential good which lies latent in all things will become empowered, subjugating the secondary level of evil within.

According to the above we can understand what will take place in the future era of redemption, when the world will attain its destined state of perfection. Then, the entire world, including the most wildest of animals, will live in peace and tranquility. May we see the fulfillment of G-d’s promise, as those days He will be King across the land and He and His name will be One.



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THE LIGHT OF LAG B'OMER

During Sefirat Ha'omer we observe some laws of mourning because it was at this time that 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died. On Lag B'Omer, however, not only does the mourning period come to a halt, but there is even an idea to increase in happiness. The commentaries investigate the rationale for the extra happiness that we are meant to experience on Lag B'Omer. Some suggest that it is based on the tradition that on Lag B'Omer Rabbi Akiva's students stopped dying. However, this is hard to understand, since the reason why they stopped dying was because they had *all* already died! Others suggest that the source of the happiness is the fact that this day marks the *yahrzeit* (day of death) of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. However this is also not an obvious reason to celebrate. There were many righteous people who died throughout the ages and never do we make a celebration on their *yahrzeit*. In fact there is a custom to go to the other extreme and fast on the *yahrzeit* of a righteous person, as many do on Moshe Rabbeinu's *yahrzeit*. What then is the reason for the increase in happiness on Lag B'Omer?

To understand the reason why we stop the mourning process on Lag B'Omer we first need to investigate the reason behind mourning during the Omer period. After all, throughout history there were many tragedies that befell the Jewish People in which large populations died in a short period of time and yet the Rabbis did not designate a mourning period to commemorate those disasters. Furthermore the Ramban tells us that the period between Pesach and Shavuot is similar to Chol Hamo'ed, making it an even more inopportune time for mourning. Therefore we must ask ourselves: What was unique about the death of Rabbi Akiva's students to necessitate such an extensive mourning period at such an inopportune time?

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 86a) says that Rabbi Akiva was the source of the entire Oral Torah. Each one of the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva was in turn meant to be a link in the chain for transmission of a unique portion of the Oral Torah that Rabbi Akiva taught. The death of the students of Rabbi Akiva was therefore not only the death of individuals but also a direct threat to the transmission of Torah. With the loss of each student another layer of Torah was forgotten. This is the reason why we specifically mourn the death of Rabbi Akiva's students over other tragedies.

With this we can begin to understand why it was fitting to institute customs of mourning at a time that is compared to Chol Hamo'ed. The days of Sefirat Ha'Omer are meant to be a time to prepare ourselves to receive the Torah on Shavuot. However, the death of the students of Rabbi Akiva during this time and the loss of Torah that accompanied it made this period bittersweet. The Torah that we prepare ourselves to receive on Shavuot is no longer on the level of the Torah that we could have had if Rabbi Akiva's students would have been able to

transmit their Torah. This is why the days of the Omer are the most fitting time to mourn the loss of Torah that came through the deaths of Rabbi Akiva's students.

On Lag B'Omer, however, things took a different turn. Basing himself on the Gemara (Yevamot 62b) the Arizal explains that on the 33rd day of the Omer Rabbi Akiva found five new students who became the new transmitters of his Torah. Based on this we can understand one aspect of the happiness on Lag B'Omer. During the Omer we observe customs of mourning because of the intense loss of Torah that Klal Yisrael experienced, but on Lag B'Omer, we celebrate because the loss of Torah ceased, and the dissemination of Torah continued through the ordination and survival of Rabbi Akiva's new students.

Let's now address the opinion that says Lag B'Omer marks the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. The Mishna in Sotah (Sotah 49b) says that the death of Rabbi Akiva marked the end of "*kavod haTorah*" (honor of the Torah). Rashi explains that this is because Rabbi Akiva was able to expound on even the crowns on the tops of the letters of the Sefer Torah. The Maharal explains that the crowns on top of the letters represent the secrets of the Torah that are too lofty to be put into words. Rabbi Akiva had the unique ability to bring out these secrets through expounding on every drop of ink that is on the parchment of a Torah scroll. There is no greater honor to the Torah than showing how there is not even a drop of ink without depth and meaning.

Of Rabbi Akiva's five new students, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was the one who specifically received this deeper part of the Torah from Rabbi Akiva. The commentaries point out that on Lag B'Omer, the day when Rabbi Shimon left this world, he revealed some of these deeper teachings to his students. In fact a major portion of the Zohar that we have today is based on the teachings that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai revealed on Lag B'Omer. The B'nei Yissaschar explains that this is one reason behind the custom to light bonfires on Lag B'Omer. The bonfires symbolize the light of the Torah that Rashbi revealed on this day. Now we can understand why, as opposed to the *yahrzeit* of other *tzadikim*, we celebrate the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. It is because it was on this day that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai lit up the world with his revelation of the secrets of the Torah.

To conclude, according to both opinions above, the happiness of the day of Lag B'Omer stems from the continuation and revelation of Torah that took place on this day. Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen explains that every year on Lag B'Omer the same revelation of Torah repeats itself and we are given the opportunity to understand the depth and beauty of the Torah on another level. May we all merit taking full advantage of this special day.

RABBI YITZCHAK GREENBLATT

**Age: 34 - Capetown, South Africa; Bournemouth, England
Cambridge University, PhD in Hebrew and Aramaic Studies
Director of the Fusion Program at Ohr Somayach**

The Duke of Wellington is reputed to have said: “The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton.” Eton, the most elite so-called “public school” (private actually) in England, was originally founded as a preparatory school for Cambridge University. And if the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, it is the playing fields of Cambridge that continued the development of the schoolboy who became the Empire builder.

In like manner, Rabbi Yitzchak Greenblatt, who won honors both in the classrooms and the playing fields of Clifton College and Cambridge University, is now winning the hearts and minds of his students at Ohr Somayach.

Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, he moved with his family to Bournemouth, a seaside community in the South of England, when he was 13 years old at a time of great political upheaval in South Africa. His father found work there as a business consultant.

Yitzchak was sent to Clifton College, an English public school in Bristol. At the time it had a Jewish house with daily davening and kosher food. Coming from a very traditional home where there was some Shabbat observance and *kashrut* and daily davening, it was a good fit.

Because he was South African, and South Africa had one of the best rugby teams in the world, he was invited to play the game on its playing fields. In fact, Yitzchak had never played rugby in South Africa, but he took up the game and mastered it. He was named to the England Under-16 team

and Under-18 teams and played internationally. He continued in university and played for Cambridge.

While at Cambridge and studying linguistics, he started learning with an outreach rabbi on campus and was smitten with the intricacies of Talmud and its language – Aramaic. While doing his PhD he made numerous trips to Israel for research and stayed at Ohr Somayach, where he became increasingly involved in Torah learning. During this time he developed a very close relationship to the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Nota Schiller, *shlita*, who convinced him that he had to spend more time in yeshiva and commit himself fully to mitzvah observance. With Rabbi Schiller’s encouragement, Yitzchak completed his PhD and returned to Ohr Somayach where he learned full-time for three years in both Rabbi Connack’s shiur and Rabbi Reisman’s Kollel. He also completed Ohr LaGolah and received *semicha* (rabbinical ordination). In addition to being the Director of the Fusion program, he attends Rabbi Breitowitz’s Gemara *shiur* in the morning. His academic career is continuing as a researcher at Tel Aviv University where he is working on a comprehensive Aramaic dictionary with another professor. In 2009 he married an American from Monsey, who grew up in Har Nof, Jerusalem. They have two children, Lily and Yehuda Leib.

Asked about his goals in life, Rabbi Greenblatt says, “I was lucky enough that at key moments in my life I met people who were able to engage me, answer my questions and project an authentic image of the beauty of a Torah life. I want to try to be one of those people for others.”



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