



PARSHA INSIGHTS

Va'etchanan

DRAWING BY NUMBERS

“Hear O Israel...” (6:4)

The first verse of the “Shema” is like “Drawing by Numbers”. At one time, we must have all followed the numbers on a seemingly inscrutable page of dots, and watched as a perfect picture slowly emerged.

There are really three elements to drawing by numbers: The numbers themselves, the connection of the numbers one-by-one by lines, and the final emergence of the picture from the lines.

In the first verse of the Shema there are three Names:

“Hashem” – the Tetragrammaton – the ineffable four-letter Name of G-d.

“Elokeinu” — literally, “Our G-d.”

And then the Name “Hashem” again. However, this second mention of the Name is different to the first, as it is connected to the last word of the verse, “Echad” — One.

The Arizal explains that the three Names represent *chochma*, *bina*, and *da'at* — three distinct concepts that are variously translated into English by the catch-all (and not very illuminating) word: “Wisdom.”

Ethereal and Kabbalistic as *chochma*, *bina*, and *da'at* normally sound, they all originate in a verse in Proverbs: “Hashem, with *chochma* founded the Earth, established the Heavens with *tevuna* (synonymous with *bina*); with His *da'at* the deep was made permanent.” (Proverbs 3:19-20)

Let us explain.

*Chochma* is like the numbers in “Drawing by Numbers”. *Chochma* is the understanding of what exists. Two plus two is four. That’s called *chochma*. To understand that a chair is for sitting and a pen is for writing is *chochma* — knowledge of what is. These concepts are not extrapolations or implications. They are the knowledge of the way existence is and no more. *Chochma* is like single points on a page.

*Bina* moves beyond the literal to the implied, to the

inferred. *Bina* takes *chochma* and comes to conclusions that move beyond the evidence at hand. *Bina* is the lines that emerge from those points, the development and the extrapolation.

And *da'at* is what is called *Ruach Hakodesh* – literally the “Holy Spirit.” (Rashi, Shemot 31:3).

A person can have knowledge; he can extrapolate that knowledge beyond its literal implications, but he can still be unconnected to what he knows from what he has inferred.

*Da'at* is connecting ourselves to the fruits of our knowledge, so that it becomes part of us.

That’s when the picture emerges.

Now we can understand the three Names of the Shema:

The first “Hashem” means that we know that Hashem created existence. That’s *chochma* — wisdom.

“Elokeinu” means that we know that Hashem didn’t just create existence but that He also supervises everything in existence, and especially the Jewish People. He is involved with the implications of His original creation. That’s *bina*.

The declaration that “Hashem Echad” at the end of the verse means we have the *da'at* to connect everything in existence back to Hashem, be that the miracle of how a seed produces fruit, the wonder of the human eye, or the fathomless depths of the Talmud.

*Da'at* is seeing the complete whole, understanding the wholeness of the Creation.

That’s when the lines of our “Drawing by Numbers” become a complete picture.

That’s “Hashem Echad”.

• Source: based on Rabbi Shimshon Pincus

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**Va'etchanan**

**A**lthough Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvot*. 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 Ten Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

**Ekev**

**I**f *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those “minor” *mitzvot* that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations on 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 Ten 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 curses that result from non-observance.

**Re'eh**

**M**oshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually-oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from 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 eaten only in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added to 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**

**M**oshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near 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

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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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. Enemies 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.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### MOUNT OF OLIVES — TOMB OF THE PROPHET ZECHARYAH

At the bottom of the Jewish cemetery in the Kidron Valley on the slopes of Har Hazeitim, the Mount of Olives, is the tomb of the last of the prophets.

Zechariah lived during the return to Eretz Yisrael from Babylonian exile and was a member of the august "*Anshei Knesset Hagedolah*" (Members of the



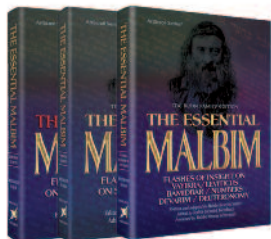
Great Assembly) who played such a major role in rabbinical legislation and leadership.

All who visit his tomb pray for the fulfillment of his prophetic vision of "Elderly men and women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem... and the streets of the city will be filled with little boys and girls playing." (*Zechariah* 8:4-5)

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## NEDARIM 72 - 91 / NAZIR 2 - 8

*“But he (the husband) didn’t hear the vow!”*

The *gemara* asks this question regarding a scenario where the husband appointed a guardian agent to annul his wife’s vows. However, this question seems difficult to understand, since the agent did in fact hear the vow, and there is an accepted rule that “the agent of a person is like the person”, and the agent’s hearing should suffice. One approach to understand the question is that it is not logical that the agent should have the ability to do something that that husband who appointed him cannot do. If this were true, the agent would be “greater” than the one who appointed him and not merely “like” that person. (Harav Rav Yossi in Tosefot as cited by Rabbeinu Nissim)

• *Nedarim 72b*

*Rav Dimi the brother of Rav Safra taught, “Whoever makes a neder (vow) is called a ‘sinner’ even if he fulfills the vow.”*

This teaching is derived in our *gemara* by Rav Zvid from a verse that states, “and when you refrain from vowing, you will not have a sin” (Dev. 23:22), implying that if a person makes a vow he has a sin by virtue of making the vow. (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah 203:1)

• *Nedarim 77b*

*“Take care to learn Torah only together with other people in a group.”*

This is an important message that the Sages of Bavel sent to the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael at that time. By learning Torah with the others, the members of the group help “sharpen” each other in understanding the Torah. This applies to both the students and the Rabbi who teaches them. (Rashi & Rabbeinu Nissim)

• *Nedarim 81a*

*“Pay special heed to the children of the poor because Torah will come forth from them.”*

This was another important message sent to the Sages of Bavel to Eretz Yisrael, and is supported by a verse in the Torah (Bamidbar 24:7), as is explained in the *gemara*.

Is there a logical basis to explain why poverty should be an indication of great potential for success in Torah study? Yes. One reason is that the students will not be preoccupied with wealth or lofty, pressing careers, and therefore they will not be distracted from dedicating their time and thoughts to Torah study. Another reason is that poverty is humbling, and humility is essential for being successful in learning Torah. (Rabbeinu Nissim)

• *Nedarim 81a*

*“Toch kdei dibbur k’dibbur dami” — literally, “within the time of speech is like speech.”*

This intriguing sounding statement means that a person can retract or correct what he said if he does so within a very short time after saying it. This statement is made by Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi in a *beraita* on our *daf*, and our *sugya* teaches that it is the halacha, with four exceptions.

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## NEDARIM 72 - 91 / NAZIR 2 - 8

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The exceptions are one who curses G-d, one who worships idols by speech, one who marries a woman and one who divorces a woman. These four cases cannot be “undone” by immediate change of mind. A reason offered to explain these exceptions is that these four cases are more serious matters than all others, and therefore a person would not do them unless he made a final and irreversible decision to do them, one that cannot be changed. (Rabbeinu Nissim)

• Nedarim 87a

*Rav Hamnuna said, “A woman who says that her husband had divorced her is believed since we can clearly assume that the woman would not brazenly lie to her husband’s face.”*

This assumption is made despite the fact that one might contest that the woman might be interested in another man and may therefore be lying brazenly to her husband. Rabbeinu Nissim states that the halacha is in accordance with Rav Hamnuna and that she receives her *ketuva* payment as well.

• Nedarim 91a

We learn in a *beraita*: The verse “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him” in Shmot 15:2 teaches that “I will beautify myself before Him in mitzvah fulfillment”. For example, “I will make a beautiful *succah*, a beautiful *lulav*, a beautiful *tzitzit* and a beautiful Sefer Torah.” (See Shulchan Aruch Chaim 656:1 for the practical, financial implications in beautiful mitzvah fulfillment, often referred to as “*hidur mitzah*” — “beautifying a mitzvah”.)

• Nazir 2b

*Mishna: “A term of being a nazir that is unspecified in length is set as being 30 days.”*

Why is it this specific time span? Rav Matna on our *daf* cites a verse that states, “*kodesh yihiyeh*” — “he will be holy”, and the numerical value of “*yihiyeh*” (“will be”) is 30. The Sage Bar Pada cites a different basis, the number of times the word “*nazir*” appears in the Torah. However, we have a rule that measurements are part of the Oral Law that G-d told directly to Moshe, and therefore these sources are not “real sources”, but rather serve as hints in the Torah to this measure of time. (Rambam in his commentary on the Mishna)

• Nazir 5a

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Ekev

## FIRE

***The carved images of their gods you shall burn in the fire for it is an abomination of the L-rd, your G-d. (7:25)***

Our Sages teach us that extreme anger is like worshipping idols. What is the connection? Imagine you're a courtier in the palace of the king. While walking past you, one of the other courtiers treads on your toe, and rather than apologize he turns around and pokes his tongue out at you.

Do you curse and shout at him? I doubt it. Not, that is, unless you are unconcerned about your head staying in nodding contact with the rest of your body. Your awe of the king, not to mention the fear of his punishment, makes it easy for you to swallow your pride and smile a wan and insincere smile at your fellow courtier.

When a person becomes angry it's as though he's saying that he's not in the courtroom of the king. Or worse, there is no courtroom, no king.

Everything in this physical world has a spiritual cause.

Anger is always compared to fire. Anger consumes like a fire the person who feels the anger. Anger turns the face flamed-red. Anger burns you up.

Sometimes, we may even get a glimpse of the connection of the spiritual to the physical:

The Hayman fire, the largest fire in the history of Colorado consumed tens of thousands of beautiful forest-land. The fire was caused by a 38-year old Forest Service technician who took a letter from her estranged husband and burned it in anger. Apparently, she thought she had extinguished the fire and left, only to find later it was spreading out of control.

When we ignite the flames of wrath, it's very difficult to put them out. If one act of anger can burn half of a state, one shudders to think what happens in the spiritual forest-lands Above when a person's anger flames.

Re'eh

## LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL...

***"The blessing that you listen to the commandments  
And the curse that you do not listen and turn aside from the way" (11:27-8)***

I remember being the grateful father of a newborn son. There are very few occasions that compare with the joy of a *brit mila*, the spiritual rite of passage when a Jewish boy is brought into the covenant of Avraham on the eighth day of his life. A feeling of expectancy filled the house. Relatives came from thousands of miles away. The sage and the saintly were duly informed of the time and the place.

Everything was set.

However, as happens quite often, the baby decided to develop non-threatening infant jaundice. It cleared up within a couple of weeks and, with great joy, I brought our young son into the Covenant of Avraham. By that time, however, the eighth day had already come and gone.

In a certain sense, however, I really had brought my son into the *brit* on that eighth day.

At the beginning of this week's Torah reading, when describing the blessings that come from following the Torah

path of spirituality, it says *that you will listen*. However, when speaking about the devastation caused by *not* listening to the Torah, it adds the phrase *and you will turn aside from the way*.

Why the additional phrase?

Sometimes we want to do a mitzvah, like bringing our son into the covenant on the eighth day as the Torah mandates, but circumstances beyond our control prevent us. However, G-d, in His infinite kindness, fuses our desire to do with the doing, and considers the mitzvah as though it was actually done it.

The mere thought of doing a mitzvah *that you will listen* is itself a mitzvah. However, when a person thinks about doing a sin, until he actualizes his thought, until he *turns aside from the way* it doesn't get marked down on his scorecard against him.

• Sources: *Be'er Mayim Chaim; Malbim; Mayana shel Torah*

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

## “GEMACH” – ACTS OF KINDNESS

**From: Karen**

Dear Rabbi,

I recently visited my daughter who lives in an Orthodox community where I encountered for the first time a most heart-warming and lovely phenomenon whereby people loan out free of charge items which are needed by members of the community. Could you please elaborate on this and whether it's particular to the observant community, because I've never seen it elsewhere. Thanks in advance.

Dear Karen,

I am happy that you had such a favorable experience during your visit to an Orthodox community. The truth is that there are many uniquely beautiful aspects to Orthodoxy and Orthodox communal life which people are not aware of until they see it from the inside. This network of communal sharing, referred to as a “gemach”, is just one example.

“Gemach” is actually an acronym for the Hebrew term *gemilut chasadim* which refers to the act of “bestowing kindnesses”. *Gemilut chasadim* is central in Jewish thought and practice, listed together with Torah study and prayer as one of the three pillars upon whose merit the world is sustained (Avot 1:2).

The Talmud (Succah 49b) considers *gemilut chasadim* to be even greater than charity since charity generally takes the limited form of giving money to the poor who are living while *gemilut chasadim* is performed not only with money but also with objects or bodily acts; not only for the poor but even for those who are wealthy; and not only for the living but even by caring for the needs of the deceased.

This is the general spirit and idea behind the network of *gemachim* which is uniquely Jewish and seemingly particular to Orthodox communal life, as I have not seen it to the same extent or on the same scale anywhere else. The details, however, of the *gemach* system are amazingly extensive.

Generally, individuals or families will start and manage on a volunteer basis (usually in the memory and merit of some departed loved one) a *gemach* which fulfills any particular need or service that a person may encounter from birth to death, throughout the yearly cycle, whether for religious or mundane purposes.

So there are *gemachim* which loan out free of charge anything needed in connection with birth such as baby supplies, carriages, baby pens, car seats, etc. Others provide anything that might be needed in the house of mourning such as special chairs, candles, Torah scrolls, extra prayer books, etc. The same applies for needs, objects or foods related to Shabbat and holidays; joyous occasions such as a *brit*, bar mitzvah,

engagement or wedding; and loaning out religious objects such as tefillin, *mezuzot*, Torah books and more.

But there are many *gemachim* which cater to mundane needs and services as well. Some examples are providing medical supplies like medicines, humidifiers, canes, casts, wheelchairs, and a long list of other items; or services such as first aid, bandaging, bone-setting, blood tests, and transportation for health care and more. Others provide any imaginable need related to postal, banking, courier, cooking, housecleaning and babysitting services (to mention just a few).

In short, the list of *gemachim* is so long that the community directory which lists all of them is rather like a phone book of its own.

Of course, one of the major benefits of the *gemach* is, as you note, that it provides these objects or services basically free of charge (some ask for a minimal fee to cover costs), saving people money which certainly helps them provide for the other needs of their families. But there are other advantages to the *gemach* as well.

For one, since everyone is sharing the same objects at an on-need basis, it regulates a standard for the community and limits the tendency of people to want to “keep up with the Joneses”. It is also very helpful in eliminating the need for storage of objects used only on specific occasions – for example, the crib is not stored from child to child but rather transferred from family to family as needed. The same applies for expensive or bulky work tools or equipment.

It also saves time since, rather than having to make a special trip to buy or do something, the *gemach* is nearby and set up to easily provide the object or service needed. Similarly, oftentimes what's needed is either not available, or needed at a time when stores or services aren't accessible. This is particularly true for last minute Shabbat supplies or for middle-of-the-night medical needs.

Other advantages include the social benefit of bringing people in contact with each other in a way which is mutually beneficial for all. This creates a sense of closeness and concern between neighbors and an awareness of communal needs and responsibilities. Children who see all of this mutual-giving going on, while also being beneficiaries of it themselves, learn to be givers while also learning to feel and show gratitude to others.

One last observation, which is yet another advantage to the *gemach* system, is that it is not limited to the immediate community but generally made available to anyone. This creates a positive venue through which people otherwise outside of the Orthodox community can nevertheless get a glimpse of its inner beauty; and sharing these acts of kindness with people of other communities fosters harmony within society at large.

## PRAYING IN ANY LANGUAGE

One may ask: If G-d had intended to give Adam a mate, why did G-d first create Adam alone? Adam, the first man, was created with the full awareness of G-d's existence and providence over the world. Adam was originally alone. Therefore, his first and only relationship was with his Maker. He used the abilities bestowed upon him to communicate solely with G-d. And so, with the realization that all things depended on Divine assistance, Adam's very first act was to pray.

Although today the world is abundantly populated, with worldwide communication at its highest point, there are moments, such as during prayer, when a person must see himself as if he is alone in the world just as Adam was. It is thus taught in connection to the verse, "Avraham was one," that he saw himself as if he were alone with G-d. Through this mode of worship, Avraham was able to build an eternal connection with his Creator. He rose early each morning, with the rising sun, to pray to G-d. In Avraham's merit the Jewish People have a share in this wondrous connection, praying *Shachrit*, the Morning Prayer, each day.

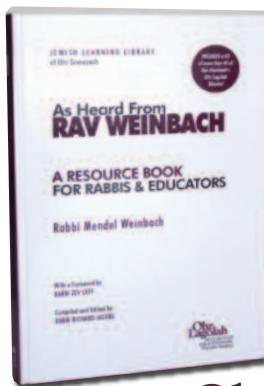
The Shelah Hakadosh explains that although the Men of the Great Assembly composed fixed prayers that are the same for all to say, each person should pray to G-d sponta-

neously for his needs. For every endeavor one should therefore pray to G-d, expressing himself in any way he can. After praying, one can engage in his endeavors, trusting that G-d will help him.

In Chassidic writings it is taught that one should make sure to pray to G-d in his own language. This is how prayer began. The main form of prayer was an expression of the heart before God in a person's own words.

The Rambam speaks of this in the beginning of his "Laws of Prayer". He explains that people originally prayed in their own words, each according to their ability. This continued until around the beginning of the Common Era, which is when the formal order of prayer, which is still used today, was introduced by the Men of the Great Assembly.

But even according to the law, the original form of prayer is still of the utmost importance. Even though we follow the order of worship ordained, personal prayer as it originally existed is still extremely beneficial. All are thus encouraged to make a habit of praying to G-d from the depths of the heart, using one's own words, in whatever language is best known by the individual. Ask G-d to make you truly worthy of serving Him. This is the essence of prayer.



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## OUR THREE YOUNG TURKS

**Erol Azuz 20 - Marmara University, Istanbul, Junior Year, Industrial Engineering**  
**Niso Zakuto 22 - University in Istanbul, BA in Information Technology**  
**Eliezer Bahar 22 - Tel Aviv University, Junior Year, Social Media Major**  
**STUDENTS IN OHR SOMAYACH'S "JINTERNSHIPS" PROGRAM**

Ohr Somayach is host to three young Turks this summer: Erol, Niso and Eliezer. Friends for years, these three young men have decided to come together to the source of their tradition — Jerusalem — to delve into the wisdom of the Torah.

Jewish settlement in Turkey is dated to the First Temple period. Jews have lived there continuously for thousands of years. Historically spread out over many cities and regions of Turkey, today most of the Jewish community is centered in Istanbul, a city split into European and Asian sides by the Bosphorus Strait.

The Turkish Jewish community today is almost exclusively composed of those whose ancestors emigrated from Spain in 1492. The Ottoman Empire was one of the few governments that welcomed them after the Expulsion. Ladino had been universally spoken by the community until 50 years ago. Now its use is limited to the generation of our students' grandparents.

Until relatively recently, when the government turned anti-Semitic, Jews had been treated fairly for hundreds of years and not restricted in commerce, the professions and government service. The community flourished. At the beginning of the 20th century there were over 200,000 Jews living in the Ottoman Empire. With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, it dissolved into many independent states. Modern Turkey was formed in the aftermath of the World War and after a civil war led by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) in 1922. The modern state of Turkey is a secular state, which is quite unusual for a Moslem majority country, and allows, at least in theory, equal rights for all its citizens, including the Jews. With the establishment of the State of Israel there was a large *aliyah* from Turkey, and now, with raging anti-Semitism and periodic murderous attacks on Jews and our places of worship, the population stands at around 11,000 to 12,000 in Istanbul and 1,000 in Izmir.

According to our students, every Turkish Jew is planning to leave, most to Israel and the rest to other countries.

While the community is fairly traditional, there is an inter-marriage rate of over 50%. There are very few religious families.

Although there is a government-supported Jewish school in Istanbul, none of our students attended it. It is Jewish in name only. Students are forbidden to wear *kippot* and *tzitzit*, and with only two hours of religious classes a week, there is virtually no Jewish instruction. In fact, with the exception of the classes in religion, none of the teachers are Jewish. Even the principal is a Moslem. Interestingly enough, the reason isn't religious discrimination. On the contrary, it's

because the educational system is secular. Even Moslem girls are also not allowed to cover their heads until they reach university.

Our students all come from very traditional homes, homes with Kiddush on Friday night, shul attendance on Shabbat and *kashrut* at home. All three were involved in a *kiruv* (outreach) program in their local shuls where they had regular classes in *gemara* and halacha given by their local rabbis, while going to high school and university. They were encouraged to come to Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem this summer by those rabbis.

Erol Azuz is 20. He's a Junior at Marmara University in Istanbul majoring in Industrial Engineering. Niso Zakuto is 22 and has recently graduated from a University in Istanbul with a Bachelor's degree in IT. Eliezer Bahar is 22 and is a Junior at Tel Aviv University, majoring in Social Media. He has been resident in Ohr Somayach for the last three and a half years, where he learns half a day in the Mechina Program.

All three are also enrolled in the Ohr Somayach jInternships program, and are working in the high tech industry in Israel this summer.



# Abarbanel ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

## Va'etchanan

In the beginning of the Parsha we are faced immediately with a perplexing situation. Moshe has already been told explicitly that he would not be allowed to enter the Land of Israel. Moshe, however, beseeches G-d to allow him to enter the Land, saying, "My L-rd, You have *begun* to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; let me now cross and see the good Land that is on the other side of the Jordan, this good mountain and the Lebanon." This is a reference to the conquest of the mighty rulers Sichon and Og, which Moshe interprets as the beginning of G-d's demonstration of His might which would eventually result in the conquest of the Land of Israel as well.

Moshe had referred to this idea previously in Parshat Devarim when G-d told him, "This day I shall *begin* to place dread and fear of you on the peoples under the entire Heavens." Moshe understands this to mean that his involvement in the final conquest of the Land is not finished with the conquest of Sichon and Og. Yet, since he has already appointed Yehoshua to be the leader in his place when they cross the Jordan, he beseeches G-d only to allow him to "cross and see the good Land that is on the other side of the Jordan." Moshe's only request is to be allowed to enter the Land as simply one of the people, not as their leader. G-d rejects his plea, however, and tells him, "This is enough for you; don't speak to Me further about this matter." Since Moshe's punishment to not be allowed to enter the Land is the result of his culpability for the nation's rebellion at the incident of the spies, G-d has allowed him to conquer Sichon and Og, and will give him the opportunity to miraculously see the Land as if he were actually there, but no more.

Moshe had four specific reasons to enter the Land: First of all, he wanted to enjoy the merit of keeping those numerous *mitzvot* which could only be observed in Israel. Secondly, he wanted to see his efforts of the last forty years come to fruition. His entire purpose has been to bring about the fulfillment of the promise that G-d had made to the forefathers to give their descendants the Land of Israel as an inheritance. By entering the Land with them, he would complete his mission. Thirdly, he wanted to prove to the people that the Land was good, as he says in his request, "Let me now cross and see the good Land. In so doing, he could personally refute the spies' slander. Finally, Moshe wanted to reveal to

the people the exact location of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. Again, this is hinted at in his request, where he asks to see, "this good mountain and the Lebanon." The mountain is a reference to the Temple Mount, and the Lebanon is a reference to the Temple itself, since the word '*levanon*' in Hebrew refers to 'whiteness' and the purpose of the Temple is to 'whiten' (cleanse us) from sin.

What remains to be understood is why G-d doesn't respond favorably to Moshe's request. There is a basic principle that G-d can forgive transgressions that are between Man and G-d, but transgressions between Man and Man are not forgiven by the same way by G-d, not even on Yom Kippur. It is up to the individuals who were wronged to grant forgiveness. Since it was Moshe who initiated the mission of the spies, and since he was ultimately responsible for leading the nation astray, G-d would not grant his request.

## Ekev

In Devarim 10:12 Moshe says to the people, "Now, O Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-rd, your G-d, to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and all your soul, to observe the commandments of the L-rd and His decrees which I command you today for your benefit." By using the word "only", it appears that G-d is not asking much of the Jewish People. But the implication of the rest of the verse is that the people have an enormous and difficult task to fulfill. From various other Biblical and Talmudic sources this difficulty is apparent. We are reminded that man's nature is evil from his youth and that his inclination to stray from the Divinely-ordained path is renewed and strengthened on a daily basis. Perhaps for Moshe this responsibility was but a small thing. But the same cannot be said for the rest of the nation.

Abarbanel answers that the word "only", which implies an easy-to-fulfill requirement, refers to the first part of the verse. The verse should read as follows: "What does the L-rd your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-rd your G-d." G-d is referring to the lowest level of 'fear', which is the simple fear of physical harm, a type of fear that is universally experienced by man and animals alike. Standing in reverential awe before G-d's miraculous omnipotence is a higher level of 'fear' which goes far beyond simple fear of physical punish-

*continued on page fifteen*

ment.

This explains why this verse immediately follows Moshe's recounting of the story of the golden calf and the resultant deaths of those who participated. As a first step, the people are asked to do something that is not difficult: to remember the severity of the punishment that resulted from the transgression of the golden calf in order to avoid a similar transgression in the future. The rest of the verse represents the progression that an individual can follow in order to attain the highest level of attachment to G-d.

The next part of the verse refers to "going in all His ways". This is the next step in the progression. It is the individual's responsibility to avoid transgression, to stay on the straight path and not deviate either to the right or to the left. Next is the reference to the love of G-d, which also incorporates the higher level of fear which was mentioned previously. Both of these types of 'fear' together lead to the service of G-d that is expressed through the observance of the commandments.

Finally, the last words of the verse are "for your benefit". G-d is reiterating to the nation that G-d does not 'need' our service for His benefit. The observance of His commandments with the full dedication of our hearts and soul is intended only to enable us to fulfill our potential as human beings whose sole purpose is to attach ourselves as much as possible to the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe.

### **Re'eh**

In this Parsha Moshe warns the people that when they enter the Land of Israel and conquer the various idolatrous nations living there, all of their sacrificial offerings were to take place only in the place designated by G-d. Additionally, they were instructed to avoid adopting any of the idolatrous practices found there, even if they were adapted purely to the service of G-d.

Between this section and the next section which deals with a lengthy discussion of what defines and how to deal with a false prophet from among the Jewish People, a single line is somewhat incongruously inserted: "The entire word that I command you, *that* shall you observe to do; you shall not add to it and you shall not subtract from it." (Devarim 13:1) This indicates that whatever is commanded is sufficient. By adding to the Torah on our own we would essentially be 'weakening' it and subtracting from it. The fact that this line immediately follows the previous paragraph dealing with sacrificial offerings teaches us that the sacrificial aspect of service to G-d can only be done in the specific manner prescribed by the Torah. Besides prohibiting the adaptation of Canaanite idolatrous practices to the Torah's system of sacrificial offerings, we are also prohibited from making use of any venue that was previously used for idolatry, even for practices permitted by the Torah.

However, from this one-line admonition alone one could reason that it would be permitted to add additional commandments and means of serving G-d that have no connection at all to the Canaanite idolatrous practices. To counter this way of thinking, the Torah states clearly in Parshat Ve'etchanan (Devarim 4:2) that regardless of what type of mitzvah or form of service to G-d one might consider instituting, "You shall not add to the word that I command you, not shall you subtract from it, to observe the commandments of the L-rd your G-d, that I command you."

The Rambam (Maimonides) uses the verse in Parshat Re'eh as a proof of the eternal, permanent and irrevocable nature of the Torah's commandments. Sefer Haikkrim (Rabbi Yosef Albo) argues with the Rambam and says that the purpose of the verse in Re'eh is not to offer proof of the eternity of the Torah's commandments, but rather to admonish us not to add to or subtract from the commandments of the Torah by adapting formerly idolatrous Canaanite practices.

Abarbanel, however, agrees with the Rambam. The essential foundation of Jewish faith is that the Torah is eternal. When G-d instructs us to observe and guard all of the commandments that He has given us, it is as if He is saying to us, "The *mitzvot* that I am commanding you are eternal because they are commanded by Me, G-d, and you should keep them forever." As a result we cannot add to them or subtract from them for how could human beings, on their own accord and according to the limitations of their intellect, possibly tamper with something that the eternal G-d has created for an eternal existence?

### **Shoftim**

The Torah describes the preparations necessary when the Jewish People go to war as follows: *When you go out to battle against your enemy and you see horse and chariot — a people more numerous than you — you shall not fear them, for the L-rd your G-d is with you, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt. It shall be then when you draw near to the war, the kohen shall approach and speak to the people.*

*He shall say to them, 'Hear O Israel, you are coming near to the battle against your enemies; let your heart not be faint; do not be afraid, do not panic, and do not be broken before them. For the L-rd, your G-d, is the One Who goes with you, to fight for you with your enemies, to save you.'*

*Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, 'Who is the man who has built a new house and has not inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it. And who is the man who has planted a vineyard and not redeemed it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will redeem it. And who is the man who has betrothed a woman and not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will marry her.'*

*continued on page sixteen*

The officers shall continue speaking to the people and say, 'Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, and let him not melt the heart of his fellows.'

Abarbanel finds numerous difficulties with this section. Why are these exhortations divided between the *kohen* and the officers? Why does the *kohen* use four different expressions for essentially the same concern: 'faint', 'afraid', 'panic' and 'broken'? Why specifically are these three categories of individuals excused from battle? Almost everyone else was also a homeowner, vineyard owner and married man, often with children as well.

Abarbanel answers that the first speech was given to those who possessed the most solid trust in G-d. They deserved to be addressed by a *kohen* whose words are then transmitted to them by a second *kohen*, who represent the highest spiritual level of the nation. They use the expression 'Hear O Israel' to remind them that they belong to the Holy nation of Israel and that their cause is an eminently just one. The four similar expressions refer to the two extremes of behavior in warfare which can undermine success in battle. On the one hand 'fainthearted' and 'afraid' refer to man's innate squeamishness at the sight of bloodletting, and his innate fear of death in battle. On the other hand, 'panic' and 'broken' refer to the other extreme of unnecessary risk-taking in battle, where men might be provoked into displays of courage and aggressiveness, which could be counterproductive. Such behavior also could be an indication of a lack of trust in G-d and a dependence on pure military might

instead. Even those with the highest level of faith that G-d ultimately will grant them victory must strike a proper balance between normal military tactics and that very trust.

The next group is not on a level to be addressed only by the *kohen*. Instead, the *kohen* delivers the speech, which is then transmitted by the officers. These three types of individuals are not excused because their concern for the possible loss of wives and property is any greater than anyone else's concern. Rather, they are concerned that they will not be able to complete the *mitzvot* that they have initiated. A home is not just a dwelling place; it requires an official sanctification. Likewise, a man cannot benefit from his vineyard until the fourth year when he is able to redeem his crop. Finally, until a man actually marries his betrothed wife he cannot engage in the *mitzvah* of reproduction. Because their concern is for the proper fulfillment of a *mitzvah*, not their own personal loss, they merit the partial participation of the *kohen*.

The final group is comprised of those who are not trying to avoid battle due to their desire to perform a *mitzvah*, like those of the second group. According to Rabbi Akiva in the *gemara* (Sotah 44a), they simply lack a strong faith and trust in G-d to insure their safety. In the same *gemara* Rabbi Yossi Hagalili says that this group is comprised of individuals who are afraid that their past transgressions will strip away any Divine protection. According to either opinion they do not merit the participation of the *kohen* at all. They are dealt with only by the officers.

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

continued from page six

### Shoftim

## DID YOU HEAR THAT?

**When you go out to battle against your enemy and you see horse and chariot. Let not your hearts be faint; do not be afraid, do not panic, and do not be broken before them. For the L-rd, your G-d is the One who goes with you, to fight for you with your enemies, to save you. (20:1-4)**

The Torah gives four warnings here: *Let not your hearts be faint; do not be afraid, do not panic, and do not be broken before them.* Rashi comments that these four warnings correspond to four strategies that the kings of the nations use in battle: *Let not your hearts be faint* — from the sound of the stamping of horses hooves and their neighing. *Do not be afraid* — of the sound of shields being banged together. *Do not panic* — from the sound of horn blasts. And *do not be broken before them* — from the sound of their shouting.

All of these fears are based on sound. The power of sound is that it draws from the world of imagination, intimation. It lacks the immediacy of sight, but therein lies its power.

Sound suggests much more than it says: A creaky door in

a gothic house; the sound of the wind whistling through a cracked window. These are only sounds but they have the power to petrify. Why? Sound is always alliterative. It hints. It suggests. The nature of sound is that the person who hears has to assemble the sound and make it meaningful.

Sight is unambiguous. When the Jewish People were sinning with the golden calf, G-d told Moshe to go down and see what was happening in the camp. Wouldn't Moshe have believed G-d if He had told him what was happening? If you can't believe the Almighty, who can you believe? And yet G-d wanted Moshe to see with his own eyes what was going on. Because you can't compare hearing to seeing. The very ambiguity of sound is what makes it so frightening.

Did you hear that? Or was it just me?