

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHIOT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH-HAAZINU · TISHREI 5776 - SEP. 2015 · VOL. 22 NO. 50

# *Twelve Months Later...*

BY RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER

It seems that we have come full circle yet again and we are now facing Rosh Hashana and another new year. If you are like me, that last sentence may have been read with a little twinge, even though we all know perfectly well that the year only has twelve months in it. And it is not as if we don't know that eleven and a half of those months have passed already. So why the panicked reaction?

For many of us the answer is as simple as it is depressing. You see, the whole Rosh Hashana period is not just a time for "new year resolutions". It is really a time for stock-taking, for looking back and trying to gauge what it is that we have achieved over the current year, and only then to try and work out what can be done to make the new year even more successful. Better and greater than the year that has just slipped by us into the past.

The problem is that we all know this, and yet for many of us, somehow or other we have lost sight of what we wanted

to achieve over the year and the wonderful resolutions that we accepted upon ourselves this time last year. I am always reminded of a quaint story that is told about one of the adherents of one of the greatest Chassidic Rabbis from pre-Holocaust Poland, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, known as the "Imrei Emet".

Once, one of his Chassidim was going on business to Paris, and, to the surprise of the Chassid the Imrei Emet asked him to bring him back a very good quality cigar. Despite his astonishment at the request (the Imrei Emet was renowned for his being detached from the physical pleasures of the world), the Chassid agreed immediately and was filled with joy at the idea of being able to bring his revered Rebbe something that he needed.

Not only was the Chassid enormously successful in his business endeavors but, never having been to Paris before, he was amazed at all that he saw. In fact, he was so amazed

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JOEL C. BRESLAUER OBM

יהודה בן שמואל הכהן ז"ל

*Devoted Father, Husband and Scholar*

*A strong advocate for Kiruv and Tikun HaOlam.*

OHRNET BEREISHET-NOACH can be found on page 22

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### NITZAVIM

**O**n the last day of his life, Moshe gathers all the people, young and old, lowly and exalted, men and women, in a final initiation. The covenant includes not only those who are present, but even those generations yet unborn. Moshe admonishes the people again to be extremely vigilant against idol worship because, in spite of having witnessed the abominations of Egypt, there will always be the temptation to experiment with foreign philosophies as a pretext for immorality. Moshe describes the desolation of the Land of Israel which will result from failure to heed G-d's *mitzvot*. Descendants of that generation and foreigners alike will remark on the singular desolation of the Land and its apparent inability to be sown or to produce crops. The conclusion will be apparent to all — the Jewish People have forsaken the One who protects them in favor of powerless idols. Moshe promises, however, that the people will eventually repent after both the blessings and the curses have been fulfilled. However assimilated they will have become among the nations, eventually G-d will bring them back to *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe tells the people to remember that fulfilling the Torah is not an impossibility; rather it's within the grasp of every Jew. The *parsha* dramatically concludes with Moshe comparing the Jewish People's choice to follow the Torah to a choice between life and death. Moshe exhorts the people to choose life.

### VAYELECH

**O**n the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent bidding farewell to his people, encouraging them to “keep the faith.” Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, G-d is with them. He summons Yehoshua, and, in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as leader of the Jewish People. Thus, he strengthens Yehoshua's status. Moshe teaches the *mitzvah of hakhel*: Every seven years on the first of the intermediate days of Succot, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather at the Temple to hear the king read from the Book of Devarim. The sections read deal with faithfulness to G-d, the covenant and reward and punishment. G-d tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the *Mishkan*, where G-d will teach Yehoshua. G-d tells

Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods. G-d will then completely “hide His face”, so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, hunted by all. G-d instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song — *Ha'azinu* — which will serve as “witness” against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to *Bnei Yisrael*. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah and instructs the *levi'im* to place it to the side of the Holy Ark, so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll different from the original, for there will always be a reference copy.

### HA'AZINU

**A**lmost all of *Ha'azinu* is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the Heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that G-d “pulls the strings” of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. G-d's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance and for defeating their enemies. But this physical bounty leads the people to become over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods and indulge in all kinds of depravity. G-d will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, G-d will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental — that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between G-d and His people, and eventually, in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. G-d will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His own enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. G-d then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

*DIKSON*

The Ohr Somayach Family wishes  
RABBI & MRS. REUVEN LAUFFER & FAMILY  
a mazel tov on the bar mitzvah of their son Avraham Yitzchak.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Nitzavim

1. Why did Moshe gather the Jewish People together on the day of his death?
2. Who are the wood-cutters and water-drawers mentioned in verse 29:10?
3. How do two parties “pass” into a covenant?
4. What is the connection between the verse “*Atem nitzavim*” and the curses in the previous parsha?
5. Why can't G-d disassociate himself from the Jewish People?
6. How many curses were listed in *Parshat Ki Tavo*?
7. Which two leaders followed Moshe's example and assembled the people at the end of their rule?
8. With whom did Moshe make the covenant and oath?
9. Why did the Jewish People see only idols of wood and stone in Egypt?
10. What is meant by the punishment of “adding drunkenness to thirst (29:18)”?

### Vayelech

1. How old was Moshe when he died?
2. Why was Moshe unable “to go out and come in” (31:2)?
3. What happened to Moshe's Torah knowledge on the day of his death?
4. How did Moshe foresee the relationship between Yehoshua and the Elders?
5. What did G-d tell Yehoshua concerning his relationship with the Elders?
6. How often does the *hakhel* (assembly of the Jewish People) take place?
7. Why does the Torah call the year of the *hakhel* the “*shemita* year”?
8. What sections of the Torah does the king read at the *hakhel*?
9. In what physical location does the king read at the *hakhel*?
10. Why were the men commanded to come to the gathering?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

### Nitzavim

1. 29:9 - To initiate them into the covenant with G-d.
2. 29:10 - Canaanites who came to join the Jewish People.
3. 29:11 - The two parties place objects in two parallel lines and pass between them.
4. 29:12 - The Jewish People asked, “Who can survive such curses?” Moshe comforted them, saying, “You've done a lot to anger G-d, and yet — ‘*Atem nitzavim*’ — G-d didn't destroy you ...you're still standing before Him.”
5. 29:12 - Because He told them He wouldn't and because He swore to the *Avot* (Patriarchs) that the Jewish People would always remain His nation.
6. 29:12 - Ninety-eight.
7. 29:12 - Yehoshua and Shmuel.
8. 29:14 - With the people standing before him and all future generations.
9. 29:16 - Because these were exposed openly. The idols of gold and silver, however, were locked away by their owners for fear of theft.
10. 29:18 - Even unintentional sins will be considered by

G-d as if they were committed intentionally.

“Drunkenness” refers to sins committed unintentionally. “Thirst” refers to sins committed intentionally.

### Vayelech

1. 31:2 - Exactly 120.
2. 31:2 - G-d did not let him because the power of leadership was being transferred to Yehoshua.
3. 31:2 - The well-springs of knowledge were closed up for him.
4. 31:7 - He foresaw that they would work in partnership.
5. 31:7 - That he alone would be the leader — for there can only be one leader in each generation.
6. 31:10 - Once every seven years, in the first year of the new *shemita* period.
7. 31:10 - Because the laws of *shemita* still applied to the harvest.
8. 31:11 - From Devarim: 1:1-6:9; 11:13-21; and 14:22-28:69.
9. 31:11 - On a wooden platform erected in the *azara*.
10. 31:12 - In order to learn.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Ha'azinu

1. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses?
2. How is the Torah like rain?
3. How is G-d "faithful without injustice"?
4. Why is G-d called "tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did G-d bring upon the world?
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did G-d separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"?
9. How is G-d's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, G-d says, "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
11. How does the idea of "chillul G-d" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When G-d overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When G-d punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will G-d's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People?
16. On what day was *Ha'azinu* taught to the Jewish People?
17. Verse 32:44 calls Yehoshua "Hoshea." Why?
18. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
19. Why did G-d tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon?
20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Ha'azinu's Questions!

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

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Eliyahu "My Father." (*Melachim II 2:12*)
7. 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avot*.
9. 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings".
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. G-d would not let His name be desecrated like this.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to G-d.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys G-d's commands, all the more so should we.

## Nitzavim

## LITTLE DAVID

“You are all standing today...” (29:9)

Who would have thought that anti-Semitism would make such a virulent comeback? As a schoolboy in 1967 I remember reading the Sunday Times reporting the Six Day War. You would have thought that the English army had just won the war. Plucky little David against the Arab Goliath.

And now, little David has been recast as the “blood-thirsty Goliath” devouring the “hapless waifs” of Gaza.

“And it was evening, and it was morning...” (Bereishet 1:5) The Torah teaches us that the natural world starts in darkness and then comes the light.

“You are all standing today...”

The existence of the Jewish People in this world is like the natural cycle of nature. Just as night precedes day, so is the story of the Jewish People. It is a story that begins with persecution, hardship and exile — and ends with redemption and light.

As our Sages teach us, “The beginning of the righteous is hardship, and their end, tranquility.”

As the old year and its curses comes to an end, may G-d bless us that the new year and its blessings will bring a world that will finally recognize that the G-d of Israel is the supreme King of Kings and that His sovereignty is upon all things!

• Sources: based on No’am Megadim in Mayana Shel Torah

## Vayelech

## PROSE AND POETRY

“And Moshe wrote this poem...” (31:22)

Prose and poetry are worlds apart.

Prose is more or less like someone speaking from a page.

No one speaks like a poem.

Prose is speech committed to writing.

Poetry is a written concentration of words divulged by speech.

Moshe transmitted the Torah to the Jewish People first by speech – as a prose experience. It was then committed to writing. This was akin to a lecture – the Oral Torah – that was then written down as the notes of that lecture. That is a comparison to the written Torah.

This is the part of the Torah that we might call prose.

However, there is another part to the Torah: its poetry.

“And Moshe wrote this poem...”

This poem, this *shira*, that visualizes G-d, was given first as a written quintessence and only then came the Oral tradition to correctly explain it.

A poem comes from beyond the literal, beyond the tangible. It uses words to escape language.

The words of the poem soar above language, and the Oral commentary is the ladder given to ascend to its lofty sentiments.

• Source: based on Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

## Ha'azinu

## NOTHING LIKE THE TORAH

“And Yeshurun became fat and kicked” (32:15)

Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) was one of the greatest and best-loved statesmen and communal leaders in the history of the Jewish People.

He was born in Leghorn, Italy and grew up in London. In 1827 he made his first visit to Eretz Yisrael. His stay in the Land had a profound effect on him; he became religiously observant, and from then until the end of his life he was scrupulous in all areas of mitzvah observance.

It happened that one Shabbat, the great sage known as the “Chatam Sofer” stayed with Sir Moses. Sir Moses was overjoyed to have the honor of hosting such a great Torah scholar, and he did not stint to honor his guest in every way. And not just physically. As was his way, Sir Moses was just as concerned with the spirituality of Shabbat, if not more so, than its physical side.

Sir Moses was a humble man. He did not want to pass up the opportunity of correcting even the smallest infraction of halacha, and so, after Shabbat Sir Moses took the Chatam Sofer

aside and said to him, “May I please ask your honor if there was anything you saw about our Shabbat that was not in accordance with that which is written in the Torah?”

The Chatam Sofer replied immediately, “I saw nothing here this Shabbat that was in accordance with what is written in the Torah!”

Sir Moses’ jaw dropped. Could he really believe his ears?

Continued the Chatam Sofer, “It says in the Torah, *And Yeshurun became fat and kicked*. Rashi explains that this means the Jewish People became rich and prospered because of G-d’s kindness, but neglected the service of their Creator.

“I have spent a Shabbat with someone whom the Creator has blessed with great wealth, and yet everything is done in the service of the Most High. So you see, nothing I have seen here this Shabbat is accordance with what is written in the Torah!” They then shared a smile of Torah happiness.

• Source: heard from Rabbi Yehuda Samet

## NAZIR 23 - 66

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav, “One should always be involved in learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvot even if not for the purest reasons, because this will lead to learning and fulfilling for pure reasons.”

An important caveat: This encouragement applies to motives of personal gain; but one who learns Torah as a means to gain knowledge to try to refute or degrade it is “better off unborn”. (Tosefot)

• Nazir 23b

“In the reward of the forty-two sacrifices that the wicked Balak offered, he merited that Ruth would be descended from him.”

This is an example of the ruling of Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav that it is a positive measure to fulfill a mitzvah even if it is only for personal motive. The *gemara* explains Ruth’s lineage from the king of Moav as follows: Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina said, “Ruth was the daughter of the son of Eglon, the king of Moav”.

• Nazir 23b

“Beit Shammai says, ‘Hekdesh made in error is indeed hekdesh’; and Beit Hillel says ‘It is not hekdesh’.”

This *mackloket* is taught in our *mishna* and Tosefot explains why it is taught in this *masechet* about Nazir and not about hekdesh. One reason offered is that a later *mishna* teaches about “nezirut made in error”.

One example of “hekdesh made in error” in the *mishna* is if a person vows that the black ox that goes out from his house in the morning first will be hekdesh — and a white ox goes out first. The white ox is hekdesh according to Beit Shammai but not according to Beit Hillel. A different way to explain their dispute is that Beit Shammai holds that the first black ox that goes out *after* the white one is hekdesh, but not the white one that actually went out first.

• Nazir 30b, 31a

“Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Rabbi Tarfon, “Neither of them is a nazir, since to become a nazir requires a vow of clarity.”

This is taught in a *beraita* on our *daf* and refers to the various cases in the *mishna* we learned above on *daf lamed beit*, *amud beit*. For example, if two people are walking together and each one expresses the words of a vow when they see a “stranger” approach them: One of them says he vows to be a nazir if the stranger is named “Ploni”, whereas his partner says that he will be a nazir if the person is *not* called Ploni. Whereas according to Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel at least one of the two people becomes a nazir, according to Rabbi Tarfon neither of them becomes a nazir because of the lack of clarity (“*hafla’ah*”) that existed at the time each person made a vow to be a nazir. According to Rabbi Tarfon if a person makes a vow to become a nazir with a condition or stipulation, he becomes a nazir only if it is *clear* at the time of his vow that his words are fulfilled and correct.

• Nazir 34a

Reish Lakish (Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish) said, “Any time you find a conflict between a ‘positive commandment’ and a ‘negative commandment’, if you are able to fulfill both of them — good! But if you cannot fulfill them both, then the ‘positive commandment’ comes and pushes aside the ‘negative commandment’.”

According to this, the only time a positive command “overrides” a prohibition is if the command cannot be fulfilled in a manner that does not violate the prohibition. An example discussed in our *sugya* is the mitzvah to shave the entire head of a *metzora*. Since it can be done with tweezers and without a razor, the mitzvah does not grant permission to use a razor, which would violate the prohibition against shaving, since the mitzvah can be done without a prohibited razor. A modern-day example would seem to be to not allow linen *tzizit* on a wool garment, since wool could be used without pushing aside the prohibition against wearing *shatnez*.

• Nazir 41a

*“A nazir may wash his hair with shampoo or untangle his hair with his fingers, but may not comb his hair.”*

One of the prohibitions for a *nazir* is not to cut his hair. The *gemara* on our *daf* explains that when he shampoos or separates the hair he does not intend to remove hair, but when he uses a comb he intends to remove (cut) loose hairs (Rashi). A question raised by commentaries is why the reason for not using a comb is not given as “*psik reisha*” — certain to happen — and some hair will come out even if he does *not intend* to remove any hair (Rosh, Rashi on Shabbat 50b).

• Nazir 42a

*“For these ritual impurities a nazir must cut his hair... and for a half of a lug of blood.”*

This halacha that a *nazir* who is under a roof with a half of a lug of blood must shave and reset his count of *nezirut* is taught in our *mishna*. However, a *mishna* in Masechet Ohelot teaches that it takes only half this amount, a *revi'it* (quarter) of a lug to render a person under the same roof ritually impure. This additional measure of requiring a half of a lug for a *nazir* to shave is a special measure that is known as a “*halacha l’Moshe m’Sinai*.” (Tosefot)

• Nazir 49b

*Rabbi Yossi said in amazement, “People will say that Meir is dead, Yehuda is angry and Yossi is silent. What will happen to the study of Torah?”*

A *beraita* that begins on the previous *daf* gives the background story for this statement. When Rabbi Meir passed away, Rabbi Yehuda was worried that Rabbi Meir’s students might be too “feisty” since they followed Rabbi Meir’s rulings which often conflicted with those of Rabbi Yehuda. Rabbi Yehuda requested that his students not allow entrance to Rabbi Meir’s students who might pull out “all stops” in order to vindicate their Rabbi and prove Rabbi Yehuda wrong.

Sumchus was a student of Rabbi Meir who managed to enter Rabbi Yehuda’s lecture. He proceeded to challenge Rabbi Yehuda, and Rabbi Yehuda displayed anger at his students for allowing Sumchus entrance. He also refuted every challenge.

When Rabbi Yossi, a student of Rabbi Yehuda saw his teacher’s anger, he made the above pronouncement: “People will say that Meir is dead, Yehuda is angry and Yossi is silent. What will happen to the study of Torah?” Rabbi Yossi did not stop there but went on to side with the challenges posed by Sumchus and explained why they were legitimate.

• Nazir 50a

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# Abarbanel

## ON THE PARSHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

### Nitzavim

This section of the Torah begins with the renewal of the covenant between G-d and the Jewish People which first took place at Mount Sinai 40 years earlier. Here Moshe emphasizes that the entire nation is gathered together for that renewal: “The heads of your tribes, your elders and your officers...all the men of Israel, your small children, your women and your proselytes...from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water.” By contrast, in the description of the first covenant, the Torah states that “the people” accepted the covenant, but individual groups are not specified.

The difference can be explained as follows: In “Nitzavim” Moshe is reminding them that they have seen a wide variety of idolatries in Egypt, Midian, Moav and the kingdoms of Sichon and Og. They have encountered individuals of great wisdom and understanding. As a result he cautions them, “There may be among you individuals who, deep inside, have been influenced by these experiences, contacts and ideas, and may have doubts about your commitment to the Torah.” Moshe did not want these issues to fester in private. Rather, he wanted them to be aired in public so that he could remove these doubts from their minds.

The first words of this Torah portion are, “You are standing today, all of you, before G-d.” The Hebrew for standing — *nitzavim* — connotes a gathering for debate, discussion and argument. The same word is used several other times in the Torah with the same connotation. Moshe’s intent was clear. Everyone, regardless of age, status or level of learning, was encouraged to voice his or her opinions and doubts publicly, before G-d and Moshe. Moshe was eager to listen, respond, and convince them of the truth. Moshe knew that there were doubts and issues. He did not want the people to feel that they were coerced into accepting the covenant. He wanted them to choose it freely after having had their doubts addressed properly.

If Moshe was concerned about the doubts of a nation that had just experienced forty years of direct Providential guidance, and he encouraged debate and discussion, how much more relevant is his insight in today’s world where the truth and relevance of the Torah is under unremitting assault.

### Vayelech

G-d informs Moshe of the consequences that the Jewish nation will suffer if they forsake the Torah and stray after foreign gods: “My anger will flare against it on that day and I will forsake them; and I will conceal My face from them and they will become prey, and many evils and distresses will encounter it.” (Devarim 31:17) Instead of delineating specific

punishments, which He does often throughout the Torah, G-d designates in this verse the worst consequence of all — withdrawing His Divine Providence from the nation.

By turning to other gods the nation will hope to share in the material success of their followers, but in reality the opposite will occur. As the prophet Jeremiah said, “Ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heavens, and pouring out libations, we have lacked everything...” (Jeremiah 44:18) Rather than enjoying material success, their possessions will serve as prey for others. In regard to relations with their enemies, Moshe is telling them that they shouldn’t think that they will be merely subjected to natural, military and geopolitical forces like everyone else, where there is sometimes success and sometimes failure. Rather, they will encounter only “evils and distresses”.

There are two reasons why the removal of Divine Providence is even worse than abandoning the nation to natural forces. First of all, having become used to relying on G-d’s Divine Providence, the nation never learned or practiced the myriad of military, economic and political skills required to navigate a sea of conflicts and natural challenges. This was especially true in terms of military matters, where G-d’s direct intervention, rather than superior numbers, weapons or tactics, insured their success. This is not the case regarding the other nations of the world. Lacking G-d’s unique protection, they are forced to rely on their own intelligence to survive. They have had experience overcoming calamity using the tools of the natural world, human intelligence and experience. This is a dimension totally lacking in the history of the Jewish nation.

Secondly, on the more metaphysical level, the nations of the world are under the influence of the constellations and have “advocates” (*sarim*) in the spiritual realm. Israel, on the other hand, has no advocate other than the Omnipotent G-d. As a result, when G-d withdraws His unique Divine Providence, only evil, distress and suffering remain, as the advocates of the other nations have unfettered sway over the fortunes of Israel.

There is another way to understand the concept of G-d’s “concealing His face”. Withdrawing His protection and subjecting the Jewish nation to suffering at the hands of the nations of the world can actually be seen as a “negative” application of Divine Providence. Divine Providence is always operating with the Jewish nation. What G-d is saying here is that the Divine Providence which results in protection from our enemies and material success will be concealed and replaced with the Divine Providence which gives our enemies a “free hand”. Just as Divine Providence can rescue us from seemingly unavoidable tragedy, such as facing the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, that same Divine Providence can bring about tragedy and suffering even when we feel that we are successful and naturally well-protected.



### Ha'azinu

Abarbanel relates that this Parsha consists of 6 separate sections:

- General introduction
- The benefits that G-d has granted to the Jewish People
- The transgressions of the Jewish People
- The punishments that will follow these transgressions
- G-d's initial intention to annihilate the Jewish People
- Consolation, and G-d's revenge against the enemies of the Jewish People

In reference to G-d's benefits, verse 6 in chapter 32 alludes to four specific types of kindness: "Is He not your *Father*, your *Master*? Has he not *created* you and set you up as a firm *foundation*?" The verses that follow proceed to explain this verse:

"*Your Father*" is a reference to the fact that G-d is the ultimate father. Just as He created the universe, He also created mankind. This is what is meant in verse 7, "Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation." G-d tells us to trace back through human history, all the way to its very beginning, and to recognize Him as mankind's ultimate Creator.

"*Your Master*" is a reference to the Exodus from Egypt, when G-d "acquired" us as His people. Even though succeeding generations did not experience the Exodus, verse 7 continues, "Ask your father and he will relate it to you, and your elders, and they will tell you."

"*Has he not created you*" is a reference to the Torah as a possession of the Jewish People. Verse 8 relates that G-d granted each of the nations of the world its particular portion. But the Jewish People received "G-d's portion". This refers to the giving of the Torah at Sinai, as it says in verse 10, "He discovered him in a desert land... He granted him discernment." By giving us the Torah, G-d "created" the Jewish people — a new creation that is unique and distinct from the other nations.

The final kindness is giving the Land of Israel to the Jewish People. This is the meaning of verse 13, "He will make him ride on the heights of the Land." This refers to the conquest and settlement of the Land of Israel.

### V'zot Haberacha

Here, at the conclusion of the Torah, Moshe gives a blessing to each of the tribes. However, a blessing to the tribe of Shimon is conspicuously absent. Abarbanel says that the blessing for Shimon is actually contained within the blessing to Yehuda: "And

this to Yehuda, and he said: *Shema* (listen), O G-d, to Yehuda's voice, and return him to his people; may his hands fight his grievances, and may You be a helper against his enemies." (Devarim 33:7) The word "*Shema*" has the same root as the name "Shimon".

Furthermore, this is what the Torah says in regard to Shimon's birth: "And she (Leah) conceived again and bore a son and declared, 'Because G-d has *heard* that I am unloved He has given me this one also.' And she called his name Shimon." (Bereishet 29:33)

The Hebrew word for *listen* and *heard* is the same.

When Moshe asks G-d to listen to the voice of Yehuda he is asking Him to listen to Yehuda when he calls on G-d in times of war. When he goes out against his enemies, G-d should protect him and return him to his people. This blessing is also directed to Shimon as well, since the verse states "*and he said*", as if it were a totally new blessing. Moshe is emphasizing that the tribe of Shimon would be joined with the tribe of Yehuda in the inheritance of the Land. This is to the advantage of Yehuda, as G-d will listen to the voice of Shimon just as He listened to the voice of his mother Leah.

Abarbanel then explains that the last part of the verse also indicates that Yehuda and Shimon will be connected. "*His hands*" is a reference to Yehuda, who, although capable of fighting the battles alone, will be joined by Shimon who will be a "*helper against his enemies*" and will inherit the Land with him.

Abarbanel also addresses the question of why Yaakov's blessings to his sons generally widely differ from Moshe's blessings to the tribes, which carry the names of those same sons. Yaakov's blessings to his sons were based on their specific character traits and their responsibilities as role models — the Patriarchs of the nation that would emerge. The Midrash (Bereishet Rabbah 100:12) in reference to the verse "And this is what their father spoke to them" (49:28) states that Yaakov is saying that in the future someone like me (Moshe) will bless you; he will begin from the point where I conclude. Yaakov stopped with the description of the nature of his sons. Moshe continues not with their individual characteristics, but rather with what follows from those characteristics as they pertain to the contribution of each tribe to the establishment of a nation.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## TSEFAT — TOMB OF THE "WHITE TZADDIK"

**J**ews in Tzefat were faced with a dilemma one year as Yom Kippur approached. The Turkish sultan had prohibited the purchase of white chickens for use as *kaparot* and they were forced to buy black ones. Just before Yom Kippur they came to the tomb of



Rabbi Yosef Bena'ah, pouring out their hearts and asking forgiveness before using the black chickens for their ritual. Upon their return home they discovered that those chickens had miraculously turned white. From then on this Sage became known as the "White Tzaddik".

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## TACTICAL TESHUVA

### Rosh Hashana

#### From: Marcia

*Dear Rabbi,  
I'm sure you're familiar with the following phenomenon: Every year at Rosh Hashana time I make grandiose plans to improve myself but after all is said and done I accomplish very little change. Could you help me with this?*

Dear Marcia,

Sure I'm familiar with this, from personal experience, as most people are.

The problem is, out of great enthusiasm to improve, we sometimes set unrealistically great goals for ourselves, overlooking the value of making the smaller improvements that are within our reach, and which would eventually lead to the otherwise out-of-reach goals we fail to attain.

Rabbi Chaim of Tszanz expressed this with a wonderful analogy:

There was once a poor widow whose children were constantly begging her for food. One day she found an egg and brought it home, to the delight of the children.

But the woman insisted, "I'm a far-thinking person. We'll not eat the egg but rather ask the neighbors to have their hen sit on it till it hatches and we'll have a chick." The children

were delighted.

But she said, "I'm far-thinking. We'll not eat the chick but rather wait till it grows to be a hen". The children were delighted.

But she said, "I'm far-thinking. We'll not eat the hen but rather let it lay plenty of eggs". The children were delighted.

But she said, "I'm far-thinking. We'll not eat the eggs but rather let them hatch and have plenty of chickens". The children were delighted.

But she said, "I'm far-thinking. We'll not eat the chickens but rather sell them and buy a cow". The children were delighted.

But she said, "I'm far-thinking. We'll not eat the cow but rather sell its milk and buy another". The children were delighted.

In the meantime, her grandiose plans distracted her from the egg in her hand such that she dropped the egg and all her aspirations were dashed to the ground in an instant...

When aiming for long-term, significant growth, we need to recognize the value of, and be satisfied with, relatively small and incremental improvement toward that goal. But in our passion to improve, we may belittle these steps and delude ourselves into imagining we can, from the outset, suddenly attain an ideal which, in actuality, is very far from where we currently are. It's no wonder that when the bubble bursts we're not much further than where we started!

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## KIPPUR BOW

### Yom Kippur

#### From: Allen

*Dear Rabbi,  
Why do we bow down on the floor during the Yom Kippur prayers - I think we do it several times - which is something we never do during the rest of the year? Is there nothing idolatrous about this?*

Dear Allen,

You are referring to a specific part of the *chazan's* repetition of the *musaf* prayer which recounts the order of the ser-

vice that the High Priest performed in the Holy Temple throughout the entire day of Yom Kippur. It is therefore called the *seder avoda* of the Kohen Gadol.

When the Temple stood, the eyes of all Israel were raised towards the Kohen Gadol's order of service, which began before the break of dawn on Yom Kippur and lasted till the end of the day. The atonement for all of Israel depended on this *avoda*, which, when performed properly, was manifest for all eyes to see.

During this service the Kohen Gadol pronounced the ineffable Name of G-d ten times: three times during each of his confessions on behalf of 1. himself and his household, 2. his fellow *kohanim*, and 3. for the people — comprising nine

*continued on page eleven*

continued from page ten

times; and the tenth time as he cast lots on the goats.

When the *kohanim* and the people heard the glorious and awesome Divine Name pronounced by the Kohen Gadol in holiness and purity, they kneeled, bowed down, and fell on their faces saying, "Blessed be the Name of His glorious majesty unto eternity!"

It is during this part of the recounting of the service of the Kohen Gadol that we bow down, as was done in days of old during Yom Kippur in the Temple. However, nowadays, the actual Name is not pronounced, and we bow only three times — once for each of the three recounted confessions.

Even the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur is incapable of bringing forth the ineffable Divine Name from his mouth; even angels cannot pronounce it. No tongue contains a word for it, because it is concealed, ethereal, and awesome beyond all else.

This is the meaning of the verse, "In every place where I will cause My Name to be pronounced, I will come to you and bless you." (Ex. 20:24) The verse seemingly should have read, wherever "you will pronounce My Name..." We learn from this that flesh and blood is incapable of pronouncing the ineffable Name, and that it was actually G-d who was pronouncing it from the mouth of the Kohen Gadol.

In synagogues whose floors are of stone, it is customary to place something like a towel upon which to bow, because of the prohibition of bowing down upon a smooth stone, which is associated with idolatry (Lev. 26:1). Other types of surfaces are generally not considered to be problematic. Also, generally, it is considered enough to interpose between the floor and one's face, so even a paper towel or napkin would serve as a separation.

## SHADE OF FAITH

### Succot

#### From: Gary

*Dear Rabbi,  
Why is the holiday of Succot and the succa associated with happiness? Personally I view being exposed to the elements or other dangers to be unsettling, at the least.*

Dear Gary,

The way of the nations is not the way of Israel. It is the way of most people to feel secure and unafraid when under the shelter of their own roofs. On emerging from their homes their sense of security is diminished and they begin to feel fear.

Israel, however, is different. While in their own homes the whole year they are concerned lest they become haughty and forget G-d. When Succot comes, and they leave their homes to enter the shade of the succa, their hearts are filled with faith, trust and joy, since now they are shielded not by their roofs but by the shadow of their faith and trust in G-d.

This may be compared to a person who locks himself up at home for fear of robbers. Regardless of the strength of his locks, he remains afraid lest the robbers find a way in. Once he hears the proclamation of the king and his retinue announcing for all to emerge from their homes to join the king, he is no longer afraid. He opens his doors and joyously emerges to behold the king. He knows that wherever the king is found, robbers are not. Thus, he is filled with tranquility and joy.

So too Israel. When they are in their homes throughout the year, surrounded by material comfort, they are afraid lest indulgence sneak in and rob them of their connection with G-d. But during Succot, when G-d calls the Jews forth to celebrate the bounty given them by G-d, to be together with their Divine King and with the righteous Patriarchs who are present in the succa, they are serenely confident that their closeness with G-d will not be diminished. On the contrary, it grows day by day through the seven days of Succot and crescendos on Simchat Torah!

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## GRAND SIYUMIM AT OHR SOMAYACH

The week before Tisha B'Av is a period of deep *aveilut* (mourning). Beginning with Rosh Chodesh Av we reduce our simcha by refraining from haircuts, listening to music, drinking wine and eating meat. But at Ohr Somayach this year the wine was flowing with musical accompaniment while celebrating the simcha of Torah. The Beit Midrash and the Center Programs made “*gala siyumim*”. Many students completed the study of various tractates of the Talmud. The combined number of *misaymim* was more than 25. The Center Program had completed Berachot while the Beit Midrash students completed Kiddushin. In addition, more than 20 of the *talmidim* who made a *siyum* on one of these *mesechtot* also completed Masechet Maccot.

The Rabbis of each program were in attendance, along with the Rosh HaYeshiva, Rav Nota Schiller, *shlita*, and the Rav of Kehillas Ohr Somayach, Rav Yitzchak Breitowitz, *shlita*.

Among the Beit Midrash *misiyamim* was **Pinchos Horowitz**, 24, from Windsor, Ontario. Pinchos comes from a traditional home, observing *kashrut* and having traditional Friday night meals. He attended public school and went to a traditional, but non-Orthodox, Sunday school. By the time he finished high school his growing interest in Judaism had motivated him to learn all he could online. However, that was not sufficient for Pinchos. His desire to grow closer to G-d through Torah study led him to apply to the Derech Program at Ohr Somayach. He entered Derech in Elul of 2012 and made rapid progress. Today he is in Rabbi Connack's *shiur*, one of the highest *shiurim* in the Beit Midrash. He's the oldest of four siblings, and his transformation has led his younger siblings to become mitzvah-observant. They are now attending Jewish schools in Detroit, which borders Windsor, Canada. His *siyumim* on Kiddushin

and Makot are his first *siyumim* in Gemara. “It's an amazing feeling, the culmination of a whole year's effort, and realizing how much I've accomplished in a relatively short time.”

**David Rubinstein**, 24, from Memphis, Tennessee, is in Rabbi Yitchak Dallah's *shiur* after starting out in our Derech Program after high school. He made a *siyum* on both Kiddushin and Maccot. When asked how he felt about his achievement he said, “I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing and I'm maximizing my potential.”

**Dovid Alman**, 22, originally from Santiago, Chile, and recently from London, England, is also in Rabbi Dallah's *shiur* and made a *siyum* on Maccot. He said, “I have a feeling of accomplishment and I feel inspired to keep learning.”

**Aaron Jacobs**, 20, from Sydney, Australia is part of “Pisga”, a group of young men from South Africa and Australia, in the Center Program. He is from a religious family and went to a Jewish school through high school. Aside from learning full-time in the Yeshiva he is also studying for a degree in Criminology from the Open University of Australia. His secular studies are done during *bein hasedarim* (between 1:30 pm and 3:30 pm each day) and during *bein hazmanim* (between terms). He began in the Center Program in January 2014, and by December of 2014 had made a *siyum* on the Gemara Succah. The week before Tisha B'Av he made a *siyum* on Berachot. He is now in Rabbi Yaffe's *shiur*, the highest *iyun* (in-depth) *shiur* in the Center Program. Commenting on his recent *siyum*, Aaron says, “It's always good to have a goal to work toward. One can then look back and say: I've accomplished something.” Unwilling to rest on his laurels, he has started the Gemara Succah a second time and hopes to make another *siyum* by next Pesach.



# Judgment of Rosh Hashana

BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

**T**he Siftei Chaim points out a few fundamental questions surrounding the holiday of Rosh Hashana that can help enrich our understanding of the judgment that takes place on this day. There is a well-known principle in Jewish thought that says names always express essence. By studying the depth behind names a person can get an understanding of the spiritual nature of the person, object, etc. bearing that name. Similarly, the names of the holidays reflect their core. According to this, since the primary notion of Rosh Hashana is judgment, then why isn't "Yom HaDin" ("Day of Judgment") the primary name of the holiday? After all, the name "Rosh Hashana," "Head of the Year," seems to hint at nothing more than the mere date of the day. Furthermore, since Rosh Hashana is the Day of Judgment, wouldn't it be more fitting to celebrate it at the end of the previous year, the year from which our actions are being judged, rather than the beginning of the upcoming year? Finally why is a new judgment necessary every year?

The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 10b) tells us that the first day of Tishrei marks the creation of man, which in turn marks the completion of the creation process. It was on this day that man was given his first commandment to refrain from eating from the Tree of Knowledge, and the job of working and guarding the land. It was also on this day that Adam was given the tools he needed to accomplish this goal. He was placed in the ideal environment for growth (Garden of Eden), given the ideal spouse as a helpmate, and the fruits of all the trees — except for the Tree of Knowledge — as food. Ultimately, he wasn't missing anything he needed to accomplish his assigned role. However, Adam was unable to succeed, and sinned on the very day he was given the commandment. He was judged on this day, and given a second chance, but under different conditions. His ultimate job in the world had changed, and therefore the tools he was given also changed. His environment was no longer the same since he was expelled from Eden; he then had to work for his food, Chava then had to endure childbirth pains, etc.

What can we learn about Rosh Hashana from this? The Maharal explains that the Hebrew word for "year," "*shana*," has the same root as the Hebrew word for "change," "*shinui*." The meaning behind this is that with every New Year there are changes in both the details of the goals that need to be met, and purposes that need to be brought to

fruition in the world. Just like every generation faces new trials to overcome and jobs to accomplish, so too every year the details of what is expected of you change. In this sense every year is like a new creation unto itself and mirrors the original creation process.

Based on the above, the commentaries suggest that everything that happened at the original creation of the world takes place every year on Rosh Hashana. Just like on Rosh Hashana G-d created and judged Adam, and determined the ultimate job that would be given to him, so too, on this day G-d judges us to see what, if any, job we will be allotted in the undertaking for the New Year. Furthermore, just as Adam was given everything he needed to carry out the job he was expected to accomplish (both before and after his sin), so too, every year on this day, riches, health, marriages, births, deaths, etc. are decided, based on the personal job given to every individual. A person may be given wealth to accomplish his goal to use it for good causes, while a person may live in poverty to test his level of trust in G-d. Every person's tools are decided based on his personal tests and goals for the upcoming year. There is, however, one major difference between the original day of creation and what takes place every year on Rosh Hashana. G-d's original decision to create Adam was not dependent on Adam's actions, simply because Adam was yet to be created. Conversely, the judgment of Rosh Hashana is based solely on one's individual merits.

Based on the above, we can answer the questions we started with. Since every year brings with it changes in the goals that need to be met, a judgment is needed once a year to determine the role of each individual with its changes. Also since the purpose of the judgment of Rosh Hashana is not to hand out punishments for the past, but rather it is a judgment for the upcoming year, the judgment is on the first day of the *new year* rather than on the last day of the previous year. Finally, the name "Rosh Hashana," "head of the year," is more essential than the name "Yom Hadin," "Day of Judgment," since this energy of *newness*, which demands new obligations and roles, prompts the judgment of Rosh Hashana. Therefore the name "Rosh Hashana," like all other holidays, elegantly encapsulates the essence of the day.

# Two Days and Two Judgments

by Rabbi Guy Matalon

**T**he Mishna (Rosh Hashana 16a) teaches that there are four times during the year when different aspects of the natural world are judged. For example, on Pesach, harvests are judged; on Atzeret (Shavuot), fruits are judged; and lastly, on Succot, water is judged. Humanity is judged on Rosh Hashana. The Mishna says, "...all who are on the earth pass before Him, one by one, like 'bnei maron'." The term *bnei maron* is understood by the *gemara* in Tractate Rosh Hashana (18a) in three ways: Firstly, like young sheep; secondly, like the stairs in the house of Maron, i.e., a narrow staircase that allows only one person at a time to climb; thirdly, like the soldiers of King David who were counted one by one before going into battle. Then the *gemara* adds, "Rabba bar bar Chana said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, 'They are all surveyed with one survey'."

The *gemara* seems to teach us two contrary teachings: We are each judged individually, and, according to Rabbi Yochanan, we are judged all together. How are we to understand this?

Rabbi Dessler, in *Michtav M'Eliyahu* (Vol. 2 Rosh Hashana) suggests that we have two types of judgments, and we find hints of them in Jewish sources. For example, the Zohar in Parshat Pinchas (231a) writes that Rosh Hashana is always two days, where the first day is called "*din kashya*" (strong judgment) and the second day is called "*din rafya*" (weak judgment). The Ramak, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (1522-1570), in his commentary on the Zohar, *Ohr Yakar*, explains that the first judgment is individual, whereas the second judgment is general.

On the first day we are judged according to our own merits and transgressions, and they are weighed using a qualitative scale known only to G-d, as the Rambam explains in *Laws of Teshuva* (3.4). On the second day we are evaluated according to our effect and influence on the Jewish People. That is, to what extent does the Jewish nation need us? It is theoretically possible that a person may be judged as an evil person (G-d forbid) on the first day, and yet his sentence would be overturned because of his role for the Jewish People.

As the old adage states, "If the king needs the services of the condemned man, he is brought back from the gallows." If the Jewish nation needs a particular person because of what he does for the Jewish People, then even if he has more sins than *mitzvot* he is left to continue his important service to the greater society.

We cannot be sure how we would fare before G-d on the first day of Rosh Hashana, but we can do *teshuva* (repent), increase our connection to Torah and strengthen our acts of kindness for others. Consider also taking a greater role for Jewish People. Make yourself indispensable to your family, to your community, to your people — and thereby may you merit to be judged favorably on the second day of Rosh Hashana.

Rabbi David of Lalov used to say, "May we have a good year with big '*Kiddush Levana*' letters!" A year where everyone can easily see the goodness and blessings of the year, just as the letters of the *Kiddush Levana* prayer can be seen clearly even from far away.

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## A PLACE IN TIME

*“You have chosen us from all the nations; You loved us and have found favor in us; You exalted us above all the tongues, and You sanctified us with Your commandments. You drew us close, our King, to Your service, and proclaim Your great and Holy Name upon us.”*

These words are part of the special prayers that we say on the three *Regalim* (the special festivals when the entire Jewish People would travel to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem).

What is the value of a moment? It would seem that the answer would depend on how much was accomplished. In some situations a person is given five dollars for an hour of his time, while others make five hundred. Yet, there are times when a person, utilizing all of his resources, can make thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars in that same hour. The same can be said for real estate. A square foot is always the same measurement, but its value is always changing.

Of all the nations of the world, G-d chose the nation of Israel, instilling within us an aspect of holiness which stems from His own holiness. This is mentioned in the verse, “The soul is a part of the Divine above.” And so it is also written, “For G-d’s portion is His people, Yaakov is the measure of His inheritance.”

The Vilna Gaon explains that “His people” is a reference to the Jewish nation, while the term “His inheritance” is a reference to the Land of Israel, as G-d also instilled it with

holiness. When G-d apportioned the lands to the nations, He gave each of them a ministering angel to overlook them, while keeping both the Jewish People and the Land of Israel for Himself.

Of all the places within Israel, G-d chose the Beit Hamikdash for His Divine presence to rest. Thus, in the days when the Temple stood, all ascended to the holy city of Jerusalem during the festivals to celebrate “*lifnei Hashem*”, “before G-d”. Likewise, of all the different times, the *Mo’adim*, the Festivals, were infused with a special holiness, making them the most precious moments we have in life. As their name “*Mo’ed*” (which is the same name given to the “Tent of Meeting”) suggests, they are a special “place in time” to be with G-d.

In conclusion, within the Jewish holidays lies the potential for a threefold union, where man brings together time and space as he unites with G-d. A lesson we can all take from this is one of responsibility. We have been chosen from among all the peoples and given a unique mission. Each holiday serves as a source of unlimited power from which we draw the strength to maximize our time and resources in this world to become a “holy nation, in front of G-d.”

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

# Mysterious Omens & OUR FOREFATHERS

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

If you were to ask the random man on the street what pictorial image he visualizes to symbolize the holiday of Rosh Hashana, chances are he would reply “an apple dipped in honey”, or perhaps a ram’s (or fish’s) head, or a pomegranate. It is pretty widespread knowledge that these are traditional foods that contain important symbolisms on this High Holy Day. In fact, they date back almost two millennia!

The *Gemara* (Horiyot 12a and Kritut 6a) recounts that the Sage Abaye exhorted us to eat certain specific foods on Rosh Hashana as symbolic omens (“*simanim*”) for the upcoming year. This practice is even codified as halacha in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 583:1). These foods include gourd, fenugreek, beets, leek, and dates. Based on his precedent, later authorities added the famous apple dipped in honey for a “sweet New Year”, a lamb’s head so that we “be as a head and not a tail”, pomegranate “to increase our merits like a pomegranate’s seeds”, as well as fish, which serves several symbolisms: to “be fruitful and multiply like fish”, “to increase our merits” like fish, and to arouse G-d’s ever-present Divine supervision.

But, the question begs to be asked: doesn’t Judaism frown upon, at best, the idea of superstitions, talismans, and omens? How can this be not only allowed, but actually encouraged as a part of the traditional ritual on none other than the High Holy Days?

Several authorities, including the famed Maharal M’Prague (Chiddushei Aggadot, Horiyot 12a and Be’er HaGolah, Be’er HaSheini s.v. *b’perek gimmel*) clue us in. The Ramban (Parshat

Lech Lecha Ch.12:6; and in his introduction to Sefer Shemot), based on the Midrash Tanchuma (Parshat Lech Lecha 9), expresses great interest in every detail related by the Torah, and introduces us to the fundamental concept of “*Ma’aseh Avot Siman LaBanim*”. This refers to the idea that the actions of our forefathers created a spiritual reality which was symbolic for their descendents. In other words, the challenges met by our great patriarchs transmitted to their children a unique form of “spiritual DNA”, whereby the potential was created for their descendants to emulate their deeds. This is why, he explains, the Torah records the stories of our forefathers in great detail. Showcasing their actions demonstrates that they serve as a conduit to actualize Divine decrees, in this case creating and enabling abilities in future generations.

So too, explains the Maharal, this is the intention of these seemingly mysterious omens on Rosh Hashana night. Perish the thought that they are meant to be lucky charms; far from it. The purpose of these *simanim* is to perform a physical action, small as it may be, to function as a means to channel a Heavenly decree. Therefore, we are utilizing these “omens”, with their specific characteristics, as a unique but positive way to channel Divine blessing for the New Year.

May we all merit channeling the blessing to be inscribed in the Book of Life for a sweet New Year!

• *Author’s note: Much of the above is based on Rabbi Eliezer Brodt’s article in Kovetz Datz”ah (vol. 100, pp. 4 -5).*

The Ohr Somayach Family wishes you and yours and all of Israel a year filled with happiness, health and peace.



## ROSH HASHANA Q&A ?

1. Why do we blow the shofar during the month of Elul?
2. Where in the written Torah text does it tell us explicitly that the first day of Tisrei is Rosh Hashana?
3. We eat apples dipped in honey to symbolize a sweet year. Why do we choose apples above other sweet fruits?
4. What two blessings do we say before sounding the shofar?
5. Which Book of *Tanach* does the beginning of the *Tashlich* prayer come from?
6. What three barren women were 'remembered' by G-d on Rosh Hashana?
7. A person's yearly allowance is fixed on Rosh Hashana, except for three types of expenses. What are they?
8. We refer to the binding of Isaac in our prayers when we say: "Answer us as You answered Abraham our father on Mount Moriah..." What was Abraham's prayer on Mount Moriah?
9. Why, even in Israel, are there two days of Rosh Hashana, whereas other festivals in Israel are celebrated for only one day?
10. What halacha applies to the *shehechyanu* blessing on the second night of Rosh Hashana which does not apply on the second night of any other holiday?

## ROSH HASHANA Q&A!

### Answers to Rosh Hashana's Questions!

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

1. After the sin of the golden calf, Moshe went up to Mount Sinai to receive the second set of Tablets on Rosh Chodesh Elul. On that day, the Jewish People sounded the shofar to remind themselves to stray no more after idol worship. Also, the sound of the shofar strikes awe into our hearts and inspires us to return to the ways of Torah.
  - *Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 581*
2. Nowhere. The Torah calls it "a day of shofar blowing." (This is one of many examples showing how our observance depends on the continuous oral tradition dating back to Mount Sinai).
  - *Bamidbar 29:1*
3. Isaac blessed Jacob with the words: "The fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field which G-d has blessed..." (*Bereishis 27:27*). The Talmud identifies this "field" as an apple orchard.
  - *Ta'anis 29b, Biyur Hagra*
4. "Blessed are You... who has commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar," and the *shehechyanu* blessing.
  - *Orach Chaim 581:2*
5. The Book of Micha (7:18-20).
6. Sara, Rachel and Chana. On Rosh Hashana it was decreed that these barren women would bear children.
  - *Tractate Rosh Hashanah 10b*
7. Expenses for Shabbat, Yom Tov, and the cost of one's children's Torah education.
  - *Ba'er Hetaiv Orach Chaim 242:1*
8. He prayed that Mount Moriah should remain a place of prayer for all future generations (*Onkelos 22:14*). Also, he prayed that his sacrifice of the ram should be considered as though he had actually sacrificed Isaac.
  - *Rashi 22:13*
9. Before our current exile, we did not have a fixed calendar as we do today. Rather, the Supreme Torah court in Jerusalem determined our calendar on a month to month basis. They did this on the first day of every month, based on witnesses testifying that they had seen the new moon. Therefore, the people outside Israel had insufficient time to find out the exact date in time for the festivals. The "two-day festival" arose to correct this situation. In Israel, however, the people lived close enough to Jerusalem to find out the exact date of all the festivals except Rosh Hashanah. Since Rosh Hashana occurs on the first day of the month, even those living in Jerusalem sometimes needed to observe it for two days, if the witnesses failed to arrive.
10. On the second night of Rosh Hashana it is customary to wear a new garment or to have a new fruit on the table when saying the *shehechyanu* blessing. Thus, the *shehechyanu* blessing applies not only to the holiday, but to the new garment or new fruit as well. (This is done in order to accommodate the minority of halachic authorities who rule that no *shehechyanu* blessing be said on the second night of Rosh Hashana.)
  - *Taz 600:2*

1. Passover commemorates the going out from Egypt. Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah. What historical event can Yom Kippur be said to commemorate?
2. For what kinds of sins does Yom Kippur not atone?
3. What should someone do if the person he wronged does not forgive him the first time?
4. Why is the vidui confession included during the mincha prayer the afternoon before Yom Kippur?
5. On Yom Kippur we refrain from: Working, eating, drinking, washing, anointing, family relations and wearing leather shoes. Which three of these prohibitions are more severe than the others?
6. In what two ways does the prohibition against eating food on Yom Kippur differ from the prohibition against eating pork the entire year?
7. Who wrote the prayer "Unesaneh Tokef" said during the chazan's repetition of musaf?
8. Why do we read the book of Yona on Yom Kippur?
9. In what two ways does havdalah after Yom Kippur differ from havdalah after Shabbos?
10. Ideally, what mitzvah should one begin immediately after Yom Kippur?

### Answers to Yom Kippur Questions!

1. Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the tenth of Tishrei with the second set of Tablets, signifying forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. Yom Kippur can be said to commemorate this event, the first national day of forgiveness for the Jewish People.
2. Sins committed against other people, including hurting someone's feelings. Yom Kippur does not atone for these sins until the perpetrator gains forgiveness from the victim himself. (Orach Chaim 606:1)
3. He should try at least two more times to gain forgiveness. (Orach Chaim 606:1)
4. Lest one choke while eating the pre-Yom Kippur meal and die without atonement, or lest one become intoxicated and unable to concentrate on the prayers at night. (Mishna Berura 607:1)
5. Eating, drinking, working. (Mishna Krisus 1:1)
6. Although any amount is forbidden, eating on Yom Kippur is not punishable by a Sanhedrin until one has eaten food equal in volume to the size of a date. Eating pork, on the other hand, is punishable for eating even an olive-sized piece, which is smaller than a date. (Mishna Berura 612:1)  
Eating on Yom Kippur incurs the punishment of kares - spiritual excision, whereas eating pork does not.
7. "Unesaneh Tokef" was written by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Germany about 1000 years ago.
8. The repentance of the people of Ninveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree. (Shelah Hakadosh)
9. After Yom Kippur, the blessing over spices is omitted from havdalah. Also, the source of the flame used for havdalah after Yom Kippur must be a fire kindled before Yom Kippur. (Orach Chaim 624:3,4)
10. Building the succa. (Rema, Orach Chaim 624:5)

גמר חתימה טובה

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## *Twelve Months Later...*

*continued from page one*

at the kaleidoscope of sights and sounds that he completely forgot his pledge to the Rebbe. As his train was pulling out of the Gare du Nord he suddenly remembered and his face fell. The person sitting next to him asked what was wrong, and he explained that he was supposed to have bought an expensive cigar for someone very close to him and he had forgotten. His travel-mate told him not to worry. The train was due to stop in Brussels and the cigars in Belgium were even better than the ones in France! The train duly stopped in Brussels and the Chassid ran to the first cigar store that he found and asked for the very best cigar that they had. They brought out an enormous cigar in its own wooden box, which he bought and then raced back to the train feeling very pleased.

On his arrival back in Poland he hurried to his Rebbe's house to tell him about his success and to present him with the cigar. The Rebbe looked from the impressive box to his Chassid and back again, and finally asked him where it came from. The Chassid hummed and hawed and then, rather sheepishly, admitted that it wasn't a French cigar at all, but rather a Belgium one. But he was quick to reassure the Rebbe that he had been guaranteed that the cigar that he had bought was of the finest quality that money can buy. Far better than anything he could have bought in Paris.

The Imrei Emet looked at him long and hard and then said, "Do you really think that I needed a cigar from Paris? What I wanted was for you to remember that you had a Rebbe when you were in Paris — and you forgot!"

I always feel a certain pang of regret for the poor Chassid whenever I think of that story. But the story is really far more than just a story. The message that the Rebbe gave to his hapless disciple is the same message that G-d is giving to us all the time. We wander around this beautiful world that G-d has created for us, and we are supposed to remember constantly that not only did G-d create this world but that He wants us to live in this world in a way that reflects that knowledge. He gives us each year to grow within it and to truly live it! G-d demands from us that we attempt this year to reach beyond where we reached last year. And to grow even more next year than we managed to grow this year. And He gives us Rosh Hashana and the build-up to the New Year to try to remember that fact. That involves far more than just sitting on the side and waiting for the year to get

better. It means being absolutely engaged in making the year better!

Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States, used to say, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn."

We are no different. The more engaged we are, the greater is our own input into the year, the greater are the chances that the New Year will truly be one that we can be proud of. The less we understand that and act upon it, the greater are the chances that the year will fizzle out and we will be left with that sense of impending panic as the year draws to a close.

There is a verse in Deuteronomy (11:12) that reads in Hebrew, "*M'reishit hashana ad achrit shana*" (from the beginning of the year to end of the year). The Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, points out that there is a grammatical inconsistency in the verse. The verse should either read, "*M'reishit HAshana ad achrit HAshana*" or "*M'reishit shana ad achrit shana*", but it should not read as it does. The Satmar Rebbe explains that in Hebrew grammar the use of the letter "*heh*" at the beginning of a word is to denote a definitive article. When the year begins we are convinced that this year is going to be *the* year. It will be the year that I live up to all my resolutions. It will be the year that I remain attached to G-d and aware of G-d throughout the year (not just when I am in trouble and need Him). It will be the year that I am a better, kinder, gentler and more thoughtful person. And yet, when the end of the year rolls around it transpires that the year was just another year like all the other years that came before it. It wasn't *the* year at all. That somewhere along the way I lost sight of my true goals and aspirations.

What could be a blessing that can contain all of our aspirations and goals for the New Year? That G-d should bless each and every one of us with a sweet and happy year. With a year of good health and continued growth and awareness. That we turn the year into something unparalleled. And if we do so, we should merit that this time next year we are able to make a very small but extremely significant change to the way in which that verse is read with respect to how we live our entire year. That we will be able to add a small "*heh*" to the beginning of the word "*Shana*" so that the verse reads – "*M'reishit HAshana ad achrit HAshana*"!

## SUCCOT Q&A ?

1. According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a succah roof?
2. If the succah causes discomfort (e.g., it's too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?
3. What two things are forbidden to do outside of the succah all seven days of the festival?
4. What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the succah during the seven-day holiday?
5. Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word "etrog" mean literally?
6. What is the minimum length of a lulav?
7. What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his etrog in order to obtain an etrog of greater beauty?
8. On the Shabbat that occurs during Succot, we read the Book of Kohelet, in which King Solomon refers to himself as "Kohelet." Why is King Solomon called Kohelet?
9. What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the succah on the eighth day of Succot?
10. We hold a tallit over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

## SUCCOT Q&A!

### Answers to Succot Questions!

1. It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to tumah (ritual defilement).
2. Because the commandment of living in a succah is to dwell in the succah for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year. (*Mishna Berura 640:13*)
3. Eat (an 'established' meal) or sleep. (*Orach Chaim 639:2*)
4. One. Eating a meal in the succah the first night of Succot is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat 'snacks' which are not required to be eaten in a succah. (Outside Israel, one must eat a meal the second night of Succot as well. However, there is no requirement to live outside Israel!)  
(*Orach Chaim 639:3*)
5. Beauty. (*Ramban Vayikra 23:40*)
6. Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic hand-breadths).
7. 33.3% (*Orach Chaim 656:1*)
8. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succot after the Sabbatical year. (*Rashi, Kohelet 1:1*)
9. Bal Tosif - "Do not add to the *mitzvot*." The commandment to live in the succah applies for only seven days. To sit in the succah on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses "bal tosif." (*Orach Chaim 666:1*)
10. It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to G-d.

תג שמח

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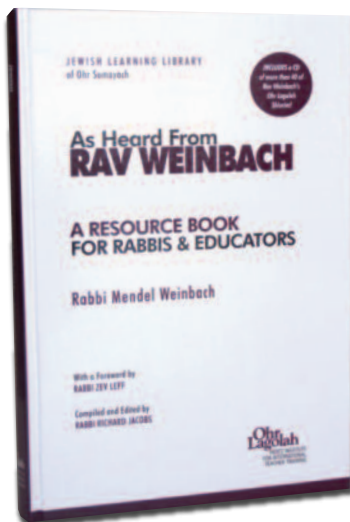
# Abarbanel ON SUCCOT

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

**A**barbanel offers several insights into the holiday of Succot and the succa itself. First of all, the temporary nature of the succa is a reminder of our temporary life on earth. The seven days of the festival correspond to the seven decades of the average lifespan. The number of bulls which were brought as sacrificial offerings decreases with each day of the festival. This is to remind us that each passing decade brings us closer to the inevitable end, and encourages us to make the best use of our time to develop our spiritual potential. The first and last days of the festival represent the first and last decades of life. In the first decade — the years of our youth — we revel in the delights and pleasures of the physical world. This is to remind us that we are not prohibited from enjoying those delights. However, in the last decade we are enjoined to make the physical world secondary to spiritual accomplishments. The eighth day, the separate festival of Shemini Atzeret, reminds us that if we have merited living into an eighth decade we have attained a special level of holiness and spiritual purity.

Abarbanel offers a unique insight into the deeper meaning of the four plant species which we use on Succot. The Torah prescribes that the citron, palm branch, willow and myrtle be held together on the first day of Succot. (According to

Rabbinical law they are held together on the intermediate days of the festival as well.) Each of these species, as they are named and described by the Torah, hints at the sweetness and pleasures of the physical world as previously indicated by the first decade of life. The citron is described as the “fruit of a beautiful tree” — which is pleasing to the eyes of all who gaze upon it. The palm tree is also beautiful and pleasing to the eye. The myrtle is described as the “branches of a braided tree”. The Hebrew word “*avot*” is normally translated as “braided” since on each branch there is a series of three leaves that grow closely together like a braid. Abarbanel, however, states that the word “*avot*” is actually derived from the word “*aveit*” which means fat or corpulent, and is a reference to the beautiful, dense arrangement of the leaves on each branch. Finally, the Hebrew word for the willow, “*arava*” has the same root as the word “*arav*” which can mean pleasant and sweet. After describing the four species the Torah states immediately that “You shall celebrate it as a festival for G-d.” This is a clear indication that the pleasures and delights of the physical world are to be enjoyed only according to the parameters of the Torah in order to serve G-d properly.



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# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHIOT BEREISHET-NOACH · TISHREI-CHESHVAN 5775 - OCT. 2015 · VOL. 23 NO. 2

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

Bereishet

### DRESSED IN WHITE

“...and that every product of the thoughts of his heart was but evil constantly” (6:5)

When I was growing up in London, you could go to one of two shuls. A major difference between them was that, at one, people drove to shul and parked around the block, and at the other, they drove to shul and parked in the forecourt.

At one shul they knew what was right but they just didn't want to do it. At the other, they had changed the definition of “right.”

There are two ways a person can do an *aveira* (transgression). He can do something that he knows is wrong and have sufficient embarrassment about it to try and conceal it, or he can come out of the closet and proclaim that there was no reason to be in the closet in the first place.

One of the major casualties of our generation is embarrassment. Virtually nothing is a cause for embarrassment

anymore because almost everything is okay.

The Talmud (Mo'ed Katan 17b) says that if someone has an overpowering desire to commit an immoral impropriety, he should first go to a place where no one knows him; he should garb himself in ‘plain-clothes’ by wearing black and should wrap his head in black.

Why, if he dresses in black, should he also drape his head in black?

To change your clothing is to prevent a desecration of G-d's name by being easily identified as Jew; to drape your head in black is to remind yourself that what you're about to do is terribly wrong. And if that is not sufficient to deter you, at least you should know that you cannot rewrite the rule book.

What's wrong is wrong – you can't dress it up in white.

Noach

### BEING A “G-D NEIGHBOR”

“And he will dwell in the tents of Shem” (9:27)

Most of us have dreamed, at one time or another, of living a life of rustic isolation; an idyllic existence in a solitary cottage, the birds chirping uninterrupted by the drone of the freeway traffic — or of our neighbors.

This is not, however, a particularly Jewish view of the world. Apart from the halachic needs of a *minyán* with whom to pray, and a *mikveh* to protect pure family life, the Jewish idea of a home is inextricably bound up with neighbors.

The Hebrew root of the word “to dwell” — *lishcon* — is the same as the word for “neighbor” — *shachen*. In other words, the essence of dwelling is to be a neighbor. There is no true dwelling without neighbors.

Rabbi Nossan Tzvi Finkel, *zatza*, once described the defining lesson of the Holocaust thus: In the horror of the camps,

when only one out of every six inmates was given a blanket to ward off the crippling cold, rather than hog that blanket to oneself, he shared it with five other people.

The power of the human spirit is never more manifest than in our thoughts for the well-being of others.

That same Hebrew word, *shachen*, is also the name for the Divine Presence in this world, the *Shechina*. The *Shechina* is man's “neighbor”, as it were. She dwells alongside man. She is a Neighbor because she allows him his own “space”, his ability to exercise that most precious human gift: the freedom of choice.

It is this worldview that has protected the Jewish People from the fanaticism that plagues other religions. Without a concept of a dwelling together with G-d in this world, the religious

*continued on page twenty seven*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### BEREISHET

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing “sin,” Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain bearing and raising children. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock, and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain, until the birth of Noach. After the death of Sheith, Mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out Man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noach, finds favor with G-d.

### NOACH

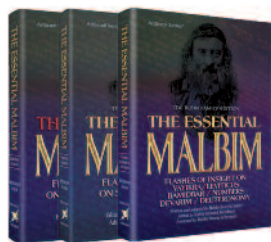
It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam’s descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth’s inhabitants except

for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days Noach sends the dove once more; the dove does not return. G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: the prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world’s climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach’s sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach’s three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Bereishet

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How was the wood of the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. G-d blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so for the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article "the"?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from G-d?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked?"
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Bereishet's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that G-d, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - G-d saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. G-d created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. G-d commanded not to eat from the tree, but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore G-d took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.



## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Noach

1. Parshat Noach begins by describing Noach as “perfectly righteous.” Yet later in the parsha, G-d says to Noach “For I have seen that you are righteous” but not “perfectly” righteous. Why not?
2. What sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
3. Why did G-d tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
4. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
5. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
6. Why did G-d postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
7. The flood began “in the second month.” What is the second month?
8. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
9. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did G-d do to protect him?
10. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
11. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
12. What did the olive branch symbolize?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Noach’s Questions!

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

1. 7:1 - Because one should not tell the entire praise of a person in his presence.
2. 6:13 - Robbery.
3. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, “G-d is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
4. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
5. 7:2 - G-d told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
6. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
7. 7:11 - Rabbi Eliezar says Marcheshvan; Rabbi Yehuda says Iyar.
8. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
9. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” G-d surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
10. 7:22 - The fish.
11. 8:4 - Eleven *amot*.
12. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it’s better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from G-d, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach’s disgrace to Ham. And because Ham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Ham’s fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against G-d.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yiscah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

## IN THE BEGINNING

### Bereishet

#### *In the Image of G-d*

**W**hy G-d created man and what is his purpose are among the most important questions a person must ask himself as he approaches Rosh Hashana.

The Torah tells us that G-d made man in His image. What does this mean? Perhaps one could answer that man's ultimate purpose is to fulfill this statement in the Torah by emulating G-d, his Creator. G-d is the ultimate giver. In fact, the reason He created the world was to give of His goodness to Mankind. Accordingly, in order for man to emulate G-d, he must also be a giver.

Based on the above we can understand the Tur's explanation on the verse, "It is not good for man to be alone." He explains that man cannot be good when he is alone since when he is alone he cannot give to anyone else.

Not everyone is in a position to help his fellow person. For example, if someone is not a doctor he cannot help a sick person get well. Likewise, someone who is not wealthy cannot help save a person from bankruptcy. Not everyone is even qualified to give advice. So what can we do to help our fellow in his time of need? We can pray. The hand of G-d is

all able, and there is therefore never a situation that is beyond hope. When we are moved to pray for others out of a genuine concern for their well-being, we give of ourselves — and in doing so we emulate G-d in a way.

#### *Prayer - an Act of Kindness*

According to the above we can appreciate why Rabbi Aharon Kotler describes prayer as an act of kindness, an act of *chesed*. When we pray we do not think only of our own benefit, but also for the benefit of our fellow people as well. In fact, all of our requests in the Shemoneh Esrei prayer are stated in the plural form, thereby including in our own request all who are in need.

This idea always puzzled me. Who are we "fooling" with this selfless request? Aren't we really asking for ourselves? We can explain that we are not fooling anyone, and certainly not G-d. The truth is that G-d knows that we are really asking for ourselves. But He wants to teach us how to be less selfish. What better time is there to change our nature and to emulate G-d than a time that we are standing together with Him? Through prayer we are given Divine assistance in becoming "true givers" — like G-d. Therefore, the reason the prayers are all in the plural is to instill within us, over time, a genuine concern for others.

# Abarbanel

## ON THE PARSHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

### Bereishet

#### *Cain and Abel*

**T**he narrative of Cain and Abel (Kayin and Hevel) presents numerous difficulties. Why did they choose their respective professions? Why was only Hevel's sacrifice accepted? Why does G-d challenge Kayin's justifiable anger? Why does Kayin murder his brother, and why does he lament his punishment of being forced to wander? He should have been executed for murder!

Kayin, the farmer, saw that the ground was the source of all life. His name, which means "acquisition", indicates that he was rooted in materialism. Hevel, as a shepherd, pursued the less material objectives of leadership, honor and power, as the shepherd is the leader of his flocks. The word "*hevel*", which

connotes the ethereal, is an indication of his lack of concern for materialism. Kayin, the firstborn, chose farming, since plant life precedes animal life, just as acquisitions precede honor. Hevel, on the other hand, viewed shepherding as a higher and more honorable profession, as evidenced later by the Patriarchs.

Each brought a sacrifice in order to substantiate his claim to superiority, not in order to give thanks to G-d. Kayin felt that farming was most important since it was the foundation of man's physical existence, providing food, clothing and shelter. He felt that shepherding was without substance and required little effort. Hevel, however, felt that it was much more honorable to deal with animals, whereas Kayin was dealing with the ground which had been cursed to produce thorns and this-

## Abarbanel ON THE PARSHA

bles. He brought his offering from the choicest of his flocks to show the absence of this curse.

G-d's acceptance of Hevel's offering was an indication that his life was on a higher plane. His pursuit of honor actually brought him to a level which shielded him from other negative characteristics. He was in control of his occupation while Kayin was enslaved to the ground and its material products. There is no honor in material possessions, and when one is not concerned with his own honor he is more likely to lapse into dishonesty and theft. Kayin was constantly involved with the demands of working the ground, while Hevel was free from the hazards of materialism and able to concentrate on higher contemplations.

Kayin was upset as he saw himself subservient and inferior to his younger brother. But G-d tells him that the actual problem is his failure to fulfill his own potential. G-d tells him that he does not have to be a slave to the material world, but that he can rise above it and conquer it. G-d also tells him that Hevel was not a paragon of perfection; he had a desire for power and fame. Kayin was afraid that Hevel, having chosen a life of control over others, would also exercise that control over Kayin and his descendants, even to the point of usurping his land. He felt that he had no choice but to kill Hevel to prevent this from happening. Kayin would then be left alone to do G-d's work.

In terms of Kayin's complaint that his punishment was more than he could bear, Abarbanel relates that he actually means just the opposite. He is actually referring to the fact that his transgression was so heinous that G-d cannot bear to forgive him, even though G-d's power to forgive can overcome even the most grievous transgressions. Furthermore, when Kayin complained that someone was likely to kill him during his wanderings from place to place, he was actually expressing his desire to be killed because of the severity of his act of premeditated murder.

### Noach

#### The Great Flood

At the end of Parshat Bereishet the Torah states, "And G-d saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth... I will blot out man, whom I created, from the face of the ground." (Ber. 6:5-7) G-d is stating clearly that man's evil nature is the cause of the destructive flood. However, in Parshat Noach, at the conclusion of the flood,

G-d says, "I will not continue to curse again the ground because of man, since the nature of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I continue to smite every living being." (Ber. 8:21) Here G-d is saying that man's evil nature is the reason for not bringing another flood.

Abarbanel explains that man's being "evil from his youth" is not a reason to be forgiven for transgressions. Rather, the punishments will take place over the course of a lifetime, beginning in his youth and extending into his old age, instead of being one cataclysmic event. Additionally, the verse concludes "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter... shall not cease." This indicates that future punishments will occur in the context of earth's natural cycles of drought, famine, and extremes of heat and cold.

Prior to the flood, the earth's rich physical environment led to gross materialism. Just as the first stage of an individual's life is characterized by spiritual emptiness, so too the first stage in the development of mankind was characterized by spiritual emptiness, materialism and sensuality. The phrase "man's heart is evil from his youth" is a reference to this first stage. The flood obliterated this first stage and led to an attachment to spiritual pursuits, obviating the need for another flood.

The rainbow is then presented as the sign of the covenant that G-d will not bring another flood. Abarbanel points out a difficulty in understanding this narrative. First of all, a rainbow is a natural phenomenon which must have existed prior to the flood. If G-d is promising a new relationship with mankind, the sign should be something new as well. He answers that after the flood there was a change in the physical nature of the clouds themselves. During the flood they were so dense that no sunlight could penetrate to produce a rainbow. From this point onward they would no longer be so dense as to envelop the entire atmosphere in cloud. This would allow for the refraction of light necessary to produce the rainbow. This new atmospheric reality hints to the new status of mankind. There will no longer be one unified, immoral society. Some societies will sink into immorality, others will not. Just as rain will now fall in some areas and not in others, so too some regions will suffer due to the behavior of their inhabitants and others will not.

The rainbow is a reminder to mankind that G-d has modified nature and diluted the density of the atmosphere, precluding the possibility of another catastrophic deluge.

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### Parsha Insights *continued from page twenty three*

seeker can easily fall into a gushing absorption in the Divine so totally that he loses his sense of self, The result will be that his will and G-d's Will become one and the same, meaning what I want is what G-d wants. If I kill you, it is because G-d wants you dead. A person can become so entranced in his own vision of "the truth", that he believes that everything he does is, by definition, G-d's Will.

The Hebrew name for the nation that surrounds our small

but Holy Land is Yishmael, which means "G-d will hear." Whatever I say, G-d will hear. This is the essence of fatalism and fanaticism. G-d agrees, de facto, with whatever I do.

The Jewish people are called Yisrael, which means "G-d is Straight." Whatever He does is Straight and I have the choice to align myself with that Reality.

That's what it means to be a good neighbor.

**Bereishet** continued from page seven

*It was taught in a beraita, “His teeth became black as a result of his fasts”.*

The context of this statement is that Rabbi Shimon spoke about his Torah teacher — Rabbi Akiva — in a manner that was lacking appropriate *derech erez* and respect. “Did he (Rabbi Akiva) change his mind after he died?” asked Rabbi Shimon rhetorically. As a result, Rabbi Shimon fasted for many days, which had a negative physical impact on him, but was part of his atonement process. (Rashi, Tosefot)

• **Nazir 52b**

*“When a Torah teaching is being taught in a long chain of tradition, only two names must be mentioned: the name of the first Sage who said it, and latest Sage it was heard from.”*

The *gemara* on our *daf* shows that this is evident from the *sugya*, and also brings a proof from a *mishna* in Tractate Pe’ah (2:6) which omits the Sages Yehoshua ben Nun and Kalev ben Yefuneh in listing the chain of transmission of the teaching. Although more than the names of the first and final Sages are mentioned, the commentaries explain that this is permitted despite not actually being required.

**Nazir 56b**

**Noach**

*Rav said to his son Chiya, “Take the cup and go make a beracha” (“Take the ‘cup of blessing’ and lead the blessing of zimun after the meal over the cup.” — Rashi)*

The *gemara* explains that Rav holds that saying the blessing is more important than answering “amen” after the blessing. However, the *gemara* points out, whether saying the blessing is greater or whether answering amen after the blessing is greater is a point of disagreement between the Tana’im. The *gemara* concludes that the reward for both saying the blessing and answering amen is the same, but the one who says the blessing is granted his Heavenly reward more quickly.

Why does this *masechta* that focuses on the topic of “*nazir*” conclude with the topic of “blessing”? The effect of a blessing is similar to the effect of being a *nazir*. One who says a blessing opens an outpouring of Divine blessing to the world. Likewise, a *nazir* who dedicates himself to spiritual matters opens an outpouring of Divine blessing to the world. (Maharsha)

• **Nazir 66 a-b**

*Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina, “Torah scholars increase peace in the world.”*

This teaching is based on a verse in the prophecy of Yeshayahu (64:13), and it concludes our *masechta*. The Maharsha explains that this statement in the *gemara* is related to the final *mishna* in *Masechet Nazir*. The *mishna* discusses Shimshon and Shmuel who were both *nezirim* from the time of birth. Both of these great spiritual leaders continued growing in greatness throughout their lives and brought peace by judging righteously and providing protection from enemies. (Maharsha)

• **Nazir 66b**



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