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CELEBRATING OUR 25<sup>th</sup> YEAR!

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SPECIAL  
CHAGIM  
ISSUE

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SHABBAT PARSHIOT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH-HA'AZINU • TISHREI 5779 - SEPT. 2018 • VOL. 25 NO. 52

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## Renewing and Improving Our Ways

### *A Message for Rosh Hashana*

Remember the story of the textile manufacturer who scrounged together his savings over some years to afford his first winter vacation in Miami? Immediately after checking in he rushed to the pool to discover a big sign: “No swimming allowed!” Being the cut-rate hotel that it was, the part-time lifeguard had not yet appeared. Nothing could deter him from actualizing his dream of swimming in January in a Miami pool and so he plunged in. Very quickly a guard appeared and screamed, pointing to the sign, “Didn’t you read what it says: No swimming allowed?”

“Yes, but that’s not how I read it.” “How did you read it?” “No! Swimming allowed.”

Punctuation, diction, nomenclature, each makes a world of difference. Sloppy terminology is both a cause and a result of uncritical thinking and expression. That allows for calling terrorists “Freedom Fighters” and murderers “Resistance Groups”.

While Rosh Hashana is a day of judgment, the prophet indicates there will be an *ultimate* Day of Judgment. The Vilna Gaon explains that only then, at the Messianic climax of history, will all the extensions and ramifications of our earlier actions through the centuries become evident. A similar idea was expressed in a secular manner some 40 years ago when the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, was asked what lasting impact the French Revolution (1789) had had upon the world. His response was, “It’s still too early to tell”.

The Midrash teaches, “Renew your ways, improve your ways.” A second position: “Improve your ways, renew your ways.” Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk (“The Ohr Somayach”) explains: To “renew” is to produce a new generation to carry on the mitzvahs and the tradition. Oft times an older generation beleaguered by culture gap takes to imitating the leniencies of the younger assimilating generation. It never works. “Renew the generation? Improve your ways”. Your consistency and dedication will inspire. Other times it starts the other way. Parents themselves relax in the seemingly less weighty mitzvahs. Invariably, then, the children will relax in the weighty mitzvahs. “Improve your ways – Renew your ways.”

“How?” asks the Midrash. “With the Shofar”. (A play on the root form *Shaper* — to improve — *Shofar*.)

No person prizes words, diction and syntax more than the Torah Jew. So much of Talmudic analysis is linguistically scrutinized. Yet the mitzvah of Shofar means owning up to the transcendent moment that is beyond words.

A tiny bit of breath injected at the narrow end of the Shofar comes out the wide end and echoes for generations.

*Ketiva v’chatima tova* – May we all be written and sealed in the Book of Life and have a good and sweet year!

*Rav Nota Schiller*  
Rosh HaYeshiva

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# ROSH HASHANA

## Feature

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BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

### The Conception of the World

Rosh Hashana is perhaps the most enigmatic of all of the Holidays in the Torah. The other Holidays are a celebration of some event: Pesach the departure from Egypt; Shavuot the culmination of the period between departing Egypt and receiving the Torah; Succot the commemoration of the Clouds of Glory with which G-d provided us protection in the desert, and Yom Kippur the forgiveness of our sins, principally the sin of the Golden Calf. Rosh Hashana, however, doesn't commemorate an event in the history of the Jewish People. In fact, it doesn't commemorate any historical event at all.

Tractate Rosh Hashana (10b) records a dispute between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer regarding when the world was created. Rabbi Eliezer is of the opinion that the world was created in Tishrei (more exactly, it began on the 25th of Elul and culminated with Adam's creation, seven days later, on the first of Tishrei). Rabbi Yehoshua, however, holds that the world was created in Nissan. This debate was not limited to the *Chachamim*. The *Gemara* records that non-Jews also debated this point. They agreed with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer that the world was created in Tishrei. The *Gemara* (Rosh Hashana 12a) concludes that we calculate all *tekufot* (seasons) from Nissan, in accordance with the ruling of Rabbi Yehoshua, implying thereby that the world was created in Nissan. An example of this is *Birkat Hachama*, a prayer recited every 28 years in Nissan when the sun is in the same position as it was on the fourth day of Creation.

Accordingly, we might wonder: Why do we celebrate Rosh Hashana in Tishrei, and not in Nissan, like Rabbi Yehoshua's ruling?

This question is highlighted by the *Gemara* in Rosh Hashana 27a: "Rabbi Shmuel bar Yizchak says: According to whom do we pray today (on Rosh Hashana) that 'Today is the beginning of His works, a remembrance of the First Day'? According to whom? Like Rabbi Eliezer, who said that the world was created in Tishrei."

Rabbeinu Tam reconciles the two opinions by stating that they are both correct. He explains that it "occurred" to G-d to create the world in Tishrei, but that He actually did it in Nissan. While Rabbeinu Tam does not explain the Creator's reasoning, *Midrashim* speak about G-d's wanting to create the world in *din* (strict judgment), but saw that the world couldn't exist if held to such a standard. He therefore created the world in the month of Nissan, which is the month of Mercy, and not Judgment, the trait represented by Tishrei.

However, there are difficulties with this approach. How does G-d — the Omniscient Being — think about something and then reject it because it won't work? He

obviously knew everything beforehand. And why do we celebrate the creation of the world on a date on which it was *not* created?

We say in the Rosh Hashana *davening* after the Shofar-blowing: "*Hayom harat olam.*" Many render this line in English as, "Today in the birthday of the world," which would be in accord with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer. However, the correct translation of "*harat*" is "*conception* or *pregnancy*," which is more aligned with the idea expressed by Rabbeinu Tam.

Yet, the question remains: Why celebrate the "conception" in Tishrei and not the "birth" in Nissan? And, furthermore, why should the time from conception to birth be six months?

If *Kain* and *Hevel* were conceived by human beings and were both born on the sixth day of Creation, the same day that their parents were created, why should there be such a time lapse for G-d's creation of the world from conception to reality?

Another question is: Why did G-d use language to create the world? He doesn't need language to create worlds. His thought is quite sufficient.

One might therefore propose that He actually created the world in Tishrei when he "thought" to, and also created the world in Nissan when He spoke the words of Creation. Just as the Light that He created on the first day was stored away for the righteous to enjoy in the World to Come, so too He "stored away" the world he created in Tishrei — the world of Judgment — for the World to Come. This is the world which we pray for on Rosh Hashana. In fact, all of our prayers on Rosh Hashana are centered around the desire to bring the Mashiach, and that all mankind should unite in the recognition of the Kingdom of G-d. These are not prayers for our success in the material world or prayers of thanks for deliverance from Egypt. They are prayers to bring the Ideal World, the world created in Tishrei.

The *Shofar* underscores this idea. It is a wordless prayer produced from the carotene of a dead animal. The horn, even in the lifetime of the ram, has no nerve endings and is thus impervious to pain. It could be viewed as representative of time before Creation, when there was no pain or suffering of a physical life and no language. Our quintessential prayer on Rosh Hashana is deep, pure and wordless, representative of a time before physical Man was created and only our *neshamot* (souls) were populating the perfect world of Judgment that G-d created in Tishrei, and where Rabbi Akiva, all of the other *Tannaim* and all of our great ancestors wished to dwell. That is the world we pray to return to on Rosh Hashana.



BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Nitzavim

## The Dust of Exile

*“You are standing today, all of you...” (13:17)*

Lyndon Johnson once remarked to Golda Meir that she had no idea what it was like to be the President of a hundred-and-eighty million people. To which Mrs. Meir remarked that Johnson had no idea what it was like to be the president of three million presidents.

There are no taxi drivers in Israel, just budding entrepreneurs biding their time. Get into a cab and the cabbie will need to know your net earnings last year and why you invested in what you invested (what, you didn't invest?). Maybe you would like to meet his brother who has a sure-fire start-up in hi-tech?

A cursory look through the *mishna* will show that the Jewish People were primarily a nation of farmers and livestock breeders. True, there were merchants among us — the Tribe of Zevulun's emblem is a ship and their *métier* was international trade — but much of traditional Jewish life was centered on the yearly agricultural cycle. Two thousand years of exile and persecution, the inability to join craft guilds and the like have forced us to become businessmen. Why are Jews so prominent in the diamond trade? Because when there is a murderous crowd about to break down your door, you can pack your entire wealth into a small pouch and make a speedy exit.

Two thousand years of exile has left its dust on us. I was born and brought up in England's “green and pleasant land.” I became accustomed to politeness as a social norm, and, however superficial that might be, it sure makes day-to-day life a lot more pleasant.

My son once spent the best part of a day trying to extricate himself from a telephone company contract. Let's say the name of the company was *Barak*. The company representative tried every inducement to keep him with the company. My son kept pointing out that other companies had offered him much better deals, that were cheaper and less restrictive, and he'd spent hours trying to extract himself from the clutches of this particular company. The lady on the other end of the line kept arguing and arguing. Finally she said, “And *Barak* doesn't need to make a living?” I doubt that a sales representative in England would have used that as a last-ditch pitch.

*“You are standing today, all of you in front of G-d...”*

Soon it will be Rosh Hashana and we will all be standing in front of the Master of the World. Every Jew, every farmer, every soldier, every sailor. Even though

what divides us is nearly as great as what unites us, in front of G-d we are one nation, indivisible, the sum greater than its parts.

**Vayelech**

### Getting to the Upper Third

*“Gather together the nation, the men and the women and the children...in order that they will hear and they should learn...” (31:12)*

Every seven years the king reads the Torah in the presence of the entire nation. This is the mitzvah of *Hakhel*. Even though the young children did not understand what was being read to them, their parents received reward for bringing them.

This reveals to us a major principle in the education of the young. Even though they may make a noise and be distracting to their elders, the experience for them is irreplaceable, for they feel, through osmosis, the importance to the Torah. Even though they cannot understand a word, they have imbibed a vital lesson: The Torah is the life-blood of the Jewish People.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was once visiting a kindergarten of a Torah school. Noticing that all the *mezuzahs* on the doors were placed on the lower third of the doorposts, he remarked, “It's a lovely idea to put the *mezuzah* in a place where the children can easily reach up and touch them, but please put them where they belong, on the upper third of the doorpost, and let them use a stool to reach the *mezuzah*. Otherwise they will grow up thinking that you can put the *mezuzah* anywhere you wish. One does not raise children with untruths.”

This story can serve as a parable for our relationship to the Torah. *We must go up to the Torah, not bring the Torah down to our level.* Wherever the attempt has been made to make Judaism “easier,” the outcome is that people have come to despise it and reject it altogether.

We may be no more than spiritual children, but we will never grow into adults unless we look up to that *mezuzah*. And then, maybe one day we will be able to reach it by ourselves, unaided by a stool. But if we learn that we have to make no effort to raise ourselves up to the Torah, we will make the mistake of thinking that we are already shoulder-high to the Torah, that we need to

*continued on page twenty-one*

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# TALMUD TIPS

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## ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

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BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

### Menachot 16 - 50

#### The Fortunate Ones

Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua taught, “How fortunate are you, Torah scholars, that the words of the Torah are so beloved by you.”

• Menachot 18a

#### A United Nation

We learn in a beraita, “Just as the four species on Succot must all be taken together, so too does the Jewish People find favor only when they are united together.”

• Menachot 27a

#### The Right Guard

Rabbi Chanina taught, “Come and see how the way of G-d is not like the way of humans: The way of a human king is that he sits inside (his palace) and his nation stands outside to guard him. The way of G-d is not like this. The way of G-d is that His people dwell inside and He stands guard for them outside (i.e., the mitzvah of mezuzah), as the verse says: “G-d is your Guard; G-d is your Shadow by your right side.” (Tehillim 121:5)

• Menachot 33b

#### Surrounded by Mitzvahs

The beraita teaches, “Beloved are the Jewish People! G-d has surrounded them with mitzvot: tefillin on their heads and arms, tzitzit on their clothing and a mezuzah on (each of) their doorposts.”

• Menachot 43b

#### Settling the Land of Israel

Our Rabbis taught us in a beraita, “One who rents a house outside of Israel is exempt from the mitzvah of mezuzah for thirty days, whereas one who rents a house in Israel is obligated in the mitzvah of mezuzah immediately due to the importance of settling the Land of Israel.”

• Menachot 44a

שנה טובה

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

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### 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?

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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Nitzavim-Vayelech's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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### 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?

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### 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?

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## 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.

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Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, *zt"l* • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO

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#### NITZAVIM

On 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's 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

On 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

Almost 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.



BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## Speechless Sound

**From: Raizy**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*Our prayers are verbal, linguistic and very expressive. This is especially true for the High Holiday liturgy. Still, the pinnacle and highlight of the Rosh Hashana prayers is the wordless, raw, and simple sound of the Shofar. What is the explanation for this?*

Dear Raizy,

You are right. While the Shofar is the most powerful vehicle for conveying our prayers to G-d, unlike any of the other prayers, it consists only of simple sounds — *tekiah, shevarim, teruah* — without enunciating a single word.

This wordless medium of sound for Israel's prayers is related to the idea that all speech, no matter how sophisticated an expression of one's thoughts, is based on the ability to emit sound. In returning to the source of speech on this day of Rosh Hashana that celebrates the anniversary of Creation, we return to the source of all life and existence, the Divine utterances through which all of Creation came into being. And, as taught by the holy Baal Shem Tov, we thereby resonate with the underlying voice of G-d, which reverberates through Creation until this very day.

The sound of the Shofar is reminiscent of an urgent, inner cry. And crying out to G-d arouses our Heavenly roots. Crying out to G-d through the Shofar also recalls the merit of the Forefathers and reaches up to the most elevated realm of Heaven, to the spiritual roots of every Jew. This cry of speechless sound thus taps into the highest source of merit, and expresses to G-d that no matter how far we have strayed from our Source, our true desire is to regain and retain our Heavenly character. This is the meaning of Isaac's

proclamation, "The voice is the voice of Jacob" — Jacob's descendants have the power to restore the Jewish soul through their wordless sounding of the Shofar.

On Rosh Hashana many of our requests and aspirations for the coming year can be clearly articulated. Others are so deeply and subtly embedded in our psyche that no words can express them. As the Zohar notes (Shemot 20a), certain cries find their voice only in the heart of the Jew. There exists no better way to express these inarticulate, subconscious cries than via the speechless Shofar. This ability of the Shofar to express the inner, unspoken aspirations of the heart is hinted at in Psalms 81, which we read on Rosh Hashana, and which describes our "sounding the Shofar in hiding" (v. 4) as a "private, thunderous reply" (v. 8). Perhaps the angels — who are described in the liturgy as merging with the sounds of the Shofar — convey, voice, and amplify the cry from within our hidden recesses into the speechless sound of the Shofar before G-d.

Finally, the use of a wordless medium to convey our prayers reflects total self-negation before G-d on this day of Divine Judgment. The Shofar's sound expresses the innate emotions embedded deep in every Jewish heart. And its cries, which emanate from the very breath and life-blood of the Jew, soar to the Heavens. If this cry were accompanied by words it would imply that we are somehow able to dictate our return to G-d. But when we resort to the sound of the Shofar, which is really Jewry's collective inner cry, we demonstrate our total and absolute reliance on G-d to bring us back to Him.

• Sources: *Days of Awe, based on the Sefat Emet, adapted by Rabbi Yosef Stern, 125-134*

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# YOM KIPPUR

## Feature

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BY RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER

### Broken-Hearted

One of my childhood memories is hearing grown men crying behind their *Machzorim* on Yom Kippur. I really couldn't understand what could be causing them so much pain that they cried. In my childish mind I attributed it to the fasting — they must be suffering terribly from hunger and that is why they were crying. Of course, as I got older I began to understand a little better, and today, when I look back, I am awed by the depths of emotions that I was hearing behind the *Machzorim*. Grown men were standing in front of the King of kings, pouring out their deepest feelings. They were accepting responsibility for their actions throughout the year and beseeching G-d to accept their repentance.

The verse in Psalms, 51:19 reads: “A broken and crushed heart O G-d, You will not despise.” The renowned Rebbi of Kotzk famously commented on the verse that nothing is dearer to G-d than a broken heart, that nothing is as *whole* in the Eyes of G-d as a broken heart. It's a beautiful saying but it requires clarification: Why is broken-heartedness considered to be a positive trait? Rabbi Yisrael Salanter points out that broken-heartedness leads to depression and sin, so why are we extolling it? More than that, he asks: Why, at this time of year, do we refer to our broken hearts as “*Lev Nishbar*” and not use the more usual phrase of “*Lev Shavur*”? Rabbi Salanter explains that, in general, the phrase “*Lev Shavur*” is not a positive thing because it refers to a heart that was broken *externally*; it was broken by the actions of someone else. A “*Lev Nishbar*,” on the other hand, is a heart that was broken by the person himself. If I break my own heart in order to rebuild it so that it is stronger and healthier than it was — that is something truly great!

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik related that an eminent psychiatrist once told him that if it were in his power he would abolish the passage that begins with the words “*v'tein pachdecha*” — give us fear — from the prayers of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. He stated, “Fear is the main cause of all mental illness. A person who wants to guard his mental health should seek to free himself of fear, and he certainly shouldn't pray for it.”

With his trademark modesty, Rabbi Soloveitchik

replied that he was certainly not a psychiatrist, but that he met with countless people daily, and many of them were consumed with fears. Fear of losing their money. Fear of losing their status in society. Fear of illness. Very often, if a person is in pain, he is afraid to go to a doctor for fear that he will be diagnosed with some awful disease. Explained Rabbi Soloveitchik, “Man is full of small fears, but I know there is one big fear that chases away all other fears. What is this fear that a person can accept on himself in order to remove all of the other fears? To remove the fear of failure, of poverty, of not being popular, of illness — and more? This special “curing fear” is the *fear of G-d*. And this is why we pray: *Uv'chein tein pachdecha*.”

Jewish Law dictates that when one approaches the holy Western Wall, and hasn't been there within the last thirty days, he should tear a piece of clothing just as a mourner does. It is a sign of our grieving over the fact that the Holy Temple has not yet been rebuilt. It can truly be a poignant act, but it is not enough just to stop at a piece of clothing. For many years there was a sign on the wall of one of the alleyways that opened into the Western Wall Plaza with a quote from the Book of Joel, 2:13: “Tear [open] your hearts and not your clothing.” If we stop at our clothing and it does not penetrate any deeper than that, then we have missed the point. G-d wants our hearts — broken and fragmented — because we are then offering G-d our very selves. It is as if each and every one of us is coming in front of G-d and saying, “Take my heart and make it whole.” And G-d answers, “My beloved child, in My Eyes your broken heart is whole.”

A few years ago I heard the most beautiful idea from Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis. She said that the secular world thinks that the goal in life is to be happy. We Jews believe that the goal in life is to be good. It is only through goodness that happiness can be achieved. That is why at this time of the year we wish each other a *Shana Tova* — a *good* year — rather than a *happy* year.

May we all be blessed with a *good* year. A year of purity. A year of connection to G-d. A year where our hearts truly belong to our Father in Heaven.

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# SUCCOT Feature

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BY RABBI SHLOMO WIENER

## The Succot Season

In reference to the holiday of Succot, the *Tur* asks a very pertinent question in *Orach Chaim* 625. He asks: Shouldn't Succot really be celebrated in the month of Nissan, and not in the month of Tishrei? Since Succot commemorates the Clouds of Glory that accompanied our ancestors when they left Egypt, it should be celebrated in Nissan, the month when we left Egypt. In other words, why are we celebrating Succot six months after its proper time?

The *Tur* answers by saying that if we celebrated Succot in Nissan, it would not be recognizable that we are sitting in the Succah for the sake of doing a mitzvah. Since the weather is warm in Nissan, people often sit outside to cool off, and, therefore, leaving one's home at that time might not be understood as happening for the sake of fulfilling the mitzvah of dwelling in a Succah. However, when we sit in a Succah in Tishrei, since Tishrei is a cold and rainy time of year, it is obvious that we are sitting there to perform a mitzvah. Therefore, the Torah "moved" Succot from its natural date in Nissan, and changed it to a new date in Tishrei.

This answer of the *Tur* may be technically correct, but perhaps we may offer a deeper explanation to answer his question. In Judaism we know that there are two aspects of our belief. First there is "*emunah*," which is Belief in G-d, and, secondly, there is "*bitachon*," which is Trust in G-d. *Emunah* is more the theoretical aspect of our belief, namely that intellectually and emotionally we know that there is a G-d. There are many levels of *emunah*, but all of these levels represent an intellectual and emotional awareness that G-d created and supervises the universe. *Bitachon* is a second stage that we can achieve after we have clarified our *emunah*. *Bitachon* is putting our *emunah* into practice, or, in other words, living with G-d. A person who has *bitachon* integrates G-d into all aspects of his life. He relies upon G-d for his livelihood, good

health, and every other major challenge that he faces. Instead of merely *speaking* about G-d, a person with *bitachon* *lives* with G-d in every aspect of his life.

Based upon this idea, we can suggest an answer to the *Tur*'s question. By Succot's falling in the month of Tishrei, it chronologically follows the holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are times when a Jew perfects his *emunah* and connection to G-d. On Rosh Hashana we proclaim that G-d is the King of the universe, and that we are His loyal servants. On Yom Kippur we confess our transgressions and promise to improve our behavior in the upcoming year. Through these two holidays we raise our *emunah* to a very exalted level. Once we have perfected our *emunah* to the highest degree on the High Holidays, we move on to stage two, namely *bitachon*. During Succot we leave the comfort of our homes and we live in a Succah, a temporary dwelling. In a Succah we are completely exposed to the natural elements, showing that we are completely dependent upon G-d. It shows our complete trust in G-d, and that we are living with G-d. After the theoretical declarations that we make on the High Holidays, we have to do a practical act to physically express our *emunah*. That practical act is the mitzvah of dwelling in the Succah. And that is a reason why we should celebrate Succot in the month of Tishrei — so that it can follow Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Based upon this explanation we can understand why in many holy books Succot is referred to as the conclusion and the summation of the High Holidays. Succot allows us to concretize and solidify our *emunah*, and to translate our belief into a practical act of *bitachon*. Succot is the fitting conclusion to the entire High Holiday season.

BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

## Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

The commentaries address the question of why the Rabbis chose to conclude a cycle of reading the Torah and celebrate Simchat Torah on Shemini Atzeret and not on Shavuot, the day when we received the Torah. They explain that when the Jewish People accepted the Torah without first going through it, they were unable to truly appreciate the depth of this gift when they received it on Shavuot. Only once they finished learning the Torah did they really come to the realization of the special present they received on Shavuot. Therefore, the Rabbis chose to finish the Torah on a different day than Shavuot to mirror the experiences that the Jewish People had when they received the Torah (See the Ben Ish Chai's *Yedei Chaim*, *siman* 669).

This idea, though, only addresses why Simchat Torah is not celebrated on Shavuot, but it fails to answer why the Rabbis specifically chose to complete the Torah and celebrate the *siyum* on Shemini Atzeret. An additional question we are faced with is: In light of the halacha that one shouldn't mix two different celebrations together, why did the Rabbis choose to make Simchat Torah exactly on the same day as Shemini Atzeret?

### One More Day...

Commenting on the verse that refers to Shemini Atzeret as "*Atzeret*," literally translated as "stopping", Rashi explains:

*Like a king who invited his sons to a meal. When it came time for them to go, the king said, "My sons! I beg of you, stay with me one more day; it is hard to depart from you!"* (Rashi on Vayikra 23:36; see also Rashi on Bamidbar 29:35)

The commentaries ask a basic question on this: How would staying another day ease parting from one another? Wouldn't it just simply delay the hardship of having to part? Or, in fact, wouldn't it even make it harder, following another day of close bonding?

The commentaries explain that through Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Succot, we come closer and closer to G-d until reaching a climax of intense closeness on Shemini Atzeret. In fact, the commentaries tell us that because of this closeness, Shemini Atzeret is the most auspicious time of the year for one's prayers to be accepted (see Ben Yehoyada on Moed Katan 9a). This is why, unlike the holidays that precede it, Shemini Atzeret has no

specific mitzvah that is associated with it. The spiritual energy of this day is so transcendent that it cannot be condensed to a physical mitzvah (Sefat Emet, Succot 5637).

The "work" that is demanded from us on Shemini Atzeret is to feel the closeness with G-d that we developed from all those special days prior, and try to extend it to the regular days that follow. That's why this day is called "*Atzeret*" (stopping). On this day, one is meant to stop the influences of the twenty-one prior days from going away, by absorbing the lessons learned and spiritual heights achieved (Shem M'Shmuel, Shemini Atzeret).

How can one do this? The only way for this to happen is through the Torah, because through the Torah, which is above time and above physicality, even without auspicious times such as the holidays and without the means of timely *mitzvot*, such as the Shofar and Succah, one can still connect to G-d in a very intense way. It is therefore only through the Torah that we can transfer over the closeness we feel to G-d on Shemini Atzeret to the mundane days that follow. According to this, it is no surprise that the Zohar, which predated the custom of finishing the Torah on Shemini Atzeret, says to rejoice with the Torah on this day. Even prior to this day being a time when we celebrate the finishing of the Torah, there was an intrinsic connection between this day and the Torah.

This is why the Midrash says that the extra day of Shemini Atzeret actually eases the departure. On this day we prepare and carry with ourselves the influences of the *Yamim Noraim* (High Holidays) and Succot through the Torah, so that even when we leave, so to speak, we are still close to G-d. This is also why the Rabbis chose to institute the finishing of the Torah specifically on Shemini Atzeret. The rejoicing with the Torah, which helps us retain our intense closeness with G-d even after the *Yamim Noraim* and Succot, fits the theme of Shemini Atzeret perfectly. It is now also clear why the Rabbis did not worry about the halacha of not mixing two different celebrations by instituting Simchat Torah on Shemini Atzeret. Since the Torah is an intrinsic part of Shemini Atzeret, it is not considered the mixing of two different celebrations but rather one big celebration (See Siftei Chaim, Moadim I, pp. 345-346, and Moadim Uzmanim VI *siman* 79).



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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

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BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

Rosh Hashana

## Straying from the Path

Over the last few weeks we spoke about different words for roads and paths — mostly in a literal sense. Those words, of course, also relate to the means towards reaching ethical destinations and living up to moral expectations. Any straying from what is viewed as the paths towards righteousness can likewise be understood to be deviance from the proper paths. Those children who received a Jewish education, but unfortunately decided to reject the tenets of Judaism, are colloquially known as children who are “off the *derech*”. In this installment we will discuss different Hebrew roots which denote deviating from a given path.

The word *zonah* (colloquially, a prostitute) literally refers to one who has strayed from a certain set of expectations. The Torah forbids a *kohen* from marrying a *zonah* (Lev. 21:7) — who, for the purposes of this prohibition, is any woman who engaged in relations with somebody forbidden to her. Similarly, on his deathbed Moshe warns the Jewish People of the tragedies that will befall them should they stray after foreign gods (Deut. 31:16). In that context, Moshe uses the word *ve'zanu* to express the action of straying. Idolatry and adultery are conceptually similar in that both eschew an expected loyalty (either to one's G-d or to one's spouse). For this reason, the Bible (especially in Hosea and Ezekiel) uses words associated with sexual deviance to describe theistic infidelity.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) offers a fascinating insight into the etymological development of the word *zenut* (promiscuity). He explains that at its core lies the two letter combination ZAYIN-NUN. Those two letters make up the nucleus of the root-words associated with “sustenance.” In the Grace after Meals we describe G-d as He who is graciously *zan* (“sustains”) the entirety of Creation, and the word *mazon* (“food” or “nourishment”) denotes an essential component in sustaining life.

Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim proposes that an over-abundance of *mazon* — a very physical substance — causes a person to be drawn towards

wholly physical endeavors, and this leads to lustful desires. A person's excess physical proclivities generally find outlet in his toiling in strenuous activities (such as work or exercise, or Torah study), but one who does not avail himself of such opportunities enters dangerous territory, as the Talmud (*Ketubot* 59b) warns that inactivity/boredom leads to sexual misconduct. This is the basis for the connection between sexual deviance and sustenance. Once the term *zenut* came to refer to deviance from the sexual norm, it came to mean deviance from any expectation, and could aptly apply to idol worship as well.

Another word which denotes deviating from a given path is *stiyah* (spelled with a SIN in the Bible and with a SAMECH in rabbinic works). A woman suspected of adultery is called a *sotah* because she is suspected of having deviated from the path of fidelity. The *satan* is an adversary who impedes one's ability to continue in a given path. The word *shoteh* refers to a mentally incompetent person, whose erratic behavior is unpredictable and certainly does not follow any specific path. The word *bechor* refers to a “firstborn”, and the term *Bechor Shoteh* or *Bechor Satan* (*Yevamot* 16b) refers to an irregular firstborn (i.e., one who is a firstborn to his mother, but not to his father). Similarly, a *Hadas Shoteh* refers to a myrtle branch which deviates from the norm in that it does not have three leaves growing together (see *Succah* 32b). Finally, the Talmud asserts (*Sotah* 3a) that a person sins only if a *ruach shtut* (“spirit of deviance”) enters him. From all of these sources we see that the root SAMECH/SIN-TET refers to straying from a specific track.

Interestingly, Rabbi Moshe Shapiro (1935-2017) explains that the word *shitah* — which refers to a “systemized and ordered” approach to something (commonly used to refer to an opinion in a Talmudic discussion) — is also related to *stiyah*. In fact, it denotes the thematically diametric opposite of *stiyah* (which refers to one who *deviates* from the systemized path). This is yet another example of a uniquely Hebrew phenomenon, in which words that mean the polar

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reverse from one another are actually related in their roots. Rabbi Shapiro also explains that the place-name *Shittim*, where the Jews strayed after the Moabite women (Num. 25:1), is also related to the word *stiyah*.

We conclude with a wildly innovative idea presented by Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916). He suggests that not only are roots in the Hebrew language made up of letters, but individual letters themselves can sometimes be a root that unites words that use those letters. To this effect he proposes that the very letter *TET* actually denotes “movement to the side” — i.e., straying. He shows this idea through a bevy of words which contain the letter *TET* and imply such movement: *stiyah*, (“deviation”), *natah* (“to incline”), *titah* (“turn aside”), *tata* (“broom”), *tach* (“plastering”), *taah* (“erred”), and more.

Most significantly, Rabbi Marcus argues that the active letter of the word *chet* (“sin”) is the *TET* in the middle. This implies that to “sin” is to “move to the side” — i.e., stray from the proper path. In fact, Rabbi Marcus adds that two other words for “sin” are also related to this idea: the word *avon* is related to the word *ivvut* (“warped”) because a sinner is on a *warped* or contorted path, and the word *pesha* is related to *posea* (“takes a step”) because a sinner has *taken steps* in the wrong direction. (A fuller discussion on the words for “sin” is forthcoming.)

## Yom Kippur

### Degrees of Sin

**T**hroughout the Yom Kippur services we repeatedly confess our sins and beg for forgiveness. In doing so, we mimic the confessionals of the *Kohen Gadol* in the Holy Temple. The Mishnah (*Yoma* 4:2) relates that when the *Kohen Gadol* would confess his sins and the sins of his household, he would specifically admit to three types of sins: *chet*, *avon*, and *pesha*. These three words are not synonymous, but rather refer to different degrees of sin. The Talmud (*Yoma* 36b) explains that *chet* refers to an inadvertent sin (the state of mind known as *shogeg*), *avon* refers to wanton/intentional sins (*meizid*), and *pesha* refers to sins of rebellion. Nevertheless, there are other ways of explaining the differences between these three types of sins.

When King David was nearing the end of his life, his oldest surviving son, Adonijah, began to

proclaim himself as king. Batsheba, the mother of Solomon, came before her husband, King David, and demanded that he fulfill his promise that Solomon would succeed him. She said to him that if Adonijah succeeds in securing the throne, “... then I and my son Solomon will be *chataim*” (I Kings 1:21). What does the word *chataim* mean in this context? Rashi explains that *chet* means “lacking”, and in this case it means that Batsheba and Solomon would be *lacking* the royal titles due to them. Probably based on Rashi’s comment, the Vilna Gaon (in his commentary to Prov. 1:10; 13:6) writes that *chet* means a sin through a lacking. In other words, he writes, a *chet* refers to the failure to perform a *positive commandment*.

Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (1713-1793) also understands that *chet* refers to the lack of fulfilling a *positive commandment*, but synthesizes this with the Talmud’s contention that *chet* refers to an inadvertent sin by explaining that it refers specifically to the failure to fulfill the commandment of repenting after one has committed an inadvertent sin.

Rabbi Moshe Shapiro (1935-2017) defends the classic rabbinic definition of *chet* as an inadvertent sin, but still draws an important lesson from Rashi associating *chet* with a “lack”. He explains that a *chet* is not simply the lack of something, but represents the failure to achieve a goal. A sin is therefore called a *chet* because the sinner deviates from the goal of mankind, and misses his intended objective. His *lack* of achievement in that area is called a *chet*.

Similarly, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) writes that *chet* denotes the sinner’s *lack* of intentions/mindfulness when committing his sin. By contrast, an *avon* denotes the sin of one who “thinks too much”. He wrongly concludes that sinning is the proper way to go, and acts accordingly. A *pesha* refers to the sin of somebody who knows that his forbidden actions are completely wrong and should not be done, but carries them out anyways in order to rebel against G-d.

Malbim takes a slightly different approach. He understands that all three words could refer to an offense committed purposely, but reflect varying motives. A *chet* refers to a sin committed because a person was swayed by his *physical temptations*, and purposely indulged in what he knew to be wrong. An *avon* refers to a sin that a person commits because his *intellect* had been negatively

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## ANATOMY OF A MITZVAH

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

### People of the Book

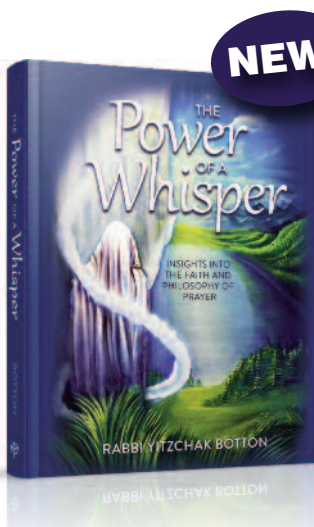
As a yeshiva student, I remember always being amazed at how many books there were in the houses I would visit for Shabbat meals. Though one can often find an assortment of Jewish books around the house, to find a Sefer Torah (Torah scroll) one usually needs to go to a *shul*. Why is that?

The Sefer HaChinuch concludes his monumental work with mitzvah number 613, the mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah. The ideal way for a person to fulfill this command is for him to write one. However, not everyone is capable of doing so. The laws of writing a Sefer Torah are many and intricate, not to mention the actual act of writing, which requires countless hours of training and practice. So, aside from someone who is a scribe, how does one fulfill this mitzvah?

Although there is a dispute as to whether one can fulfill the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah by purchasing one that has already been written, there is agreement that it is sufficient to hire a scribe to write it. One can fulfill the mitzvah even by fixing one or more letters of an existing Sefer Torah that needs correcting, thereby rendering it kosher. As Rav Sheishes said, “One who corrects even one letter (of a Sefer Torah) is considered as if he has written the entire Torah.”

According to some commentaries the purpose of writing a Sefer Torah is for the sake of having it to study. This idea is implied in the verse that commands one to write a Sefer Torah, “Write this song for yourselves and *teach* it to the Children of Israel.” (Devarim 31:19). Based on this reasoning, the Tur writes that the above command to write a Torah scroll applied when the common custom was to write a Torah scroll and learn from it. However, nowadays, the common custom is to use Torah scrolls only for public readings in *shul*, but we study Torah from printed books. It is therefore a positive mitzvah for anyone who is able to, to write (or acquire) a Chumash, Mishnah, Talmud, and rabbinic commentaries, in order to properly learn the *mitzvot* of the Torah and their detailed laws. The Chinuch also writes that the purpose of this mitzvah is in order to facilitate Torah study, and he even encourages purchasing rabbinic commentaries, but he does not seem to include these acts in the fulfillment of the mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah.

A mitzvah as important as this should be pursued with the best of one’s abilities. If possible, fulfilling both of the above opinions — owning a Torah scroll and *sefrei kodesh* - would be ideal.



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# Letter & Spirit

Insights based on the writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch

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BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

## Nitzavim

### Close to the Heart

**M**oshe Rabbeinu's soliloquy nears its end. After exhorting the nation multiple times of the importance of their faithfulness to the Torah, and after setting forth how this commitment is the sole basis of its destiny and survival, Moshe then assures them that fulfillment will always be within reach:

*For this commandment that I command you today is not beyond your understanding, nor is it far away. It is not in Heaven, that you could say: Who shall go up for us to Heaven and bring it to us, and make us understand it so that we may carry it out? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you could say: Who shall go for us to the other side of the sea and bring it to us, and make us understand it so that we may carry it out? For the Word is very near to you, to carry it out with your mouth and with your heart.*

The Torah does not require minds and deeds of a supernatural quality, nor does its fulfillment depend on remote conditions. *It is not in Heaven.* All of the Divine revelations necessary for understanding and fulfilling the law have already been given to us, on earth. It does not require an individual or leader with superhuman spirit to penetrate the secrets of Heaven.

*It is not beyond the sea.* Fulfillment of Torah is not contingent upon circumstances and conditions that exist in some faraway land. It is not bound by climate, social or economic conditions. It does not require someone to cross the sea and study the conditions of the soil of Torah in its original region in order to understand its applicability elsewhere.

It is not that Torah is *not only* found in the Heavens, *but also* on earth. Torah is *not in the Heavens*. Once transmission of Torah was concluded by Moshe, there is nothing more to be divined. Only by scholarship, derived from text and tradition — and not by prophesy or revelation — can the law be understood and applied. Nothing of the Torah was left in the Heavens.

Rather, *it is very near to you*. In fact, it is closer than anything else, because you yourself are its subject, and your life on earth its content. To understand Torah, you need only delve into your own inner self and examine your human relationships. Anything else required for its application, *to carry it out...* has already been given to you...*in your mouth*, by tradition and oral transmission. As long as you engage *your heart*, the study of our tradition will enable you to acquire and fulfill the Torah. On this earth, and on this side of the sea. That heart, if full of such desirable traits as humility, dutifulness, and honesty, will surely be an able receptacle of Torah and guide for its application.

- Sources: Commentary, Devarim 30:11-14

## Vayelech

### Steadfast Song of Torah

**B**efore the final song (*Ha'azinu*) and blessing (*V'zot Habracha*) to the Jewish People, Moshe foretells of the nation's defection from Torah, and its consequences. But even when those many oppressive evils will come upon them, Moshe guarantees that *this song will testify... for it will not be forgotten from the mouth of its children*.

Herein is the secret of the eternity of the Jew. No matter how far the Jewish People may fall, no matter how low it may sink as a result of its sin, one asset will remain with it throughout, and accompany it on the darkest paths of its sufferings: the Torah. This inextinguishable Divine spark will be sufficient to turn Israel's spirit back to the Torah again and again, and to inspire the people with enthusiasm for the teachings and tasks set forth in the Torah. This Divine spark will keep awake the soul, which will not allow this nation to die; which will strengthen it to withstand all oppression from without; and which, in the midst of every misfortune, will enable the people to maintain their serenity, warm heart and open hand.

While the paths history paved for the Jewish nation will appear to all lead to its demise, the

*continued on page twenty*





BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

## Removing Roof for Succot

*Q: We had the privilege of designing our home, and we took advantage of that opportunity to build a removable roof over our dining room. Every year we remove the roof and replace it with schach for an instant Succah.*

*This past year I was putting my roof back after the Chag together with my son who was back home after his first year in yeshiva. He asked me whether we should now take off the mezuzah and replace it with a new beracha.*

*His reasoning was that since the room has been a Succah and was thus exempt during the week of Succot, the mezuzah was “purposeless” during that time. Seemingly, we should now be required to affix the mezuzah again and not to rely on one that was affixed when the doorway was exempt.*

*Do I really need to take down and replace the mezuzahs after I replace the roof?*

**A:** A stand-alone Succah is exempt from mezuzah as it is a temporary dwelling. However, the status of a room that one dwells in year-round and replaces its ceiling on Succot with *schach* is a matter of

controversy. Some authorities write that during Succot, since he is living specifically in that room only because of the mitzvah, it is demoted to the status of a temporary dwelling and is exempt.

Some also opine that in the short gap between the removal of the ceiling and the placement of the *schach*, the roofless room might be seen to lose its mezuzah requirement altogether and gain a new obligation when the ceiling is replaced. Therefore, some authorities recommend removing the mezuzah after the ceiling has been replaced and reaffixing it without a *beracha*.

Nevertheless, the custom follows those opinions that assert that such a room retains its status as a permanent dwelling, and consequently the mezuzahs do not need to be replaced. They also reason that since the mezuzah was originally placed properly, it maintains its status even when some external factor exempts the room for a time.

• Sources: *Agur B'ohalecha* 16:31:72; *Sha'arei Teshuvah* O.C. 627:7; *Pischei Teshuvah* 286:14; *Chut Shani, Succot* p. 204; *Igros Moshe* O.C. 5:40; *Aruch HaShulchan* 286:27; Cf. *Mishnah Berurah* O.C. 626:21

Got a mezuzah question or story? Email [rabbi@ohrsandton.com](mailto:rabbi@ohrsandton.com) or submit on my website [mymezuzahstory.com](http://mymezuzahstory.com)  
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## LOVE of the LAND

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

### “Avinu Malkeinu” — “I Have No Other Father”

**A**mong the many legends of how Jews braved all odds in order to reach Eretz Yisrael is one with a most important lesson.

Rabbi Yeshaya Bardaky was the son-in-law of Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov, an outstanding disciple of the Gaon of Vilna. He eventually became the leader of the *Parushim* community in Jerusalem, made up of the Gaon's followers.

The ship on which he traveled to the Holy Land from Europe together with his two young children was wrecked by a storm and sank. No lifeboat was available, so he told his children to climb on his back and he would make a desperate swim to safety. After a couple of hours of such strenuous swimming, he felt that he could no longer continue carrying the weight of both children and



asked one of them to let go.

When he tried to explain to this child why she had to let go, they both wept at what this implied.

But, then the little girl cried out “But Abba, I have no other father!” Upon hearing these words Rabbi Yeshaya told her to hold on again and made a superhuman effort to reach shore, where he collapsed in a faint.

Upon waking up he turned to his daughter and asked her to forever remember what she had said to him when she was on the brink of drowning. “Remember that whenever you are in trouble,” he advised her, “just turn to G-d and say to Him what you said to me that you have no other father except for me and you will discover that you *do* have another Father Who can and will come to your rescue.”

BY RABBI ARI WASSERMAN

## Working During Chol Ha'moed

### QUESTION

I have been offered a great job, but now I am informed that the kickoff/initiation call will take place during *Chol HaMoed* (the intervening days between the festival Yom Tov days of Succot and Pesach). Since this conference call will take place not on the holidays themselves but in the week between, am I allowed to take the call?

Two partners of the company are Jewish (though not Torah observant), and I do not know what to do. I am worried that I might rub my new bosses the wrong way, and I will lose the job if I postpone the call.

Under the circumstances, considering that I need this job to support my family, can I go forward with the call?

### HALACHIC BACKGROUND

Just as Torah-defined creative work (*melacha*) is prohibited on Shabbat and Yom Tov, so too, it's prohibited on *Chol HaMoed*. (*Shulchan Aruch O.C. 530:1*) Some early halachic authorities (*Rishonim*) are of the view that the prohibition of *melacha* on *Chol Ha'oeid* is ordained by the Torah, while others are of the view that it's ordained by the Talmudic sages.

However, according to both of these views, the Sages were clearly authorized to decide which forms of work are permitted and which are prohibited on *Chol HaMoed* (*Chagiga 18a*), and they have instituted a number of exceptions. Practically, this means that we are permitted to do certain types of work on *Chol HaMoed* that we are not permitted to do on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

One of the five categories of work allowed on *Chol HaMoed* is called *davar ha'veid*, roughly defined as work which we are permitted to do in order to avoid a financial loss. In addition, we are permitted to do this type of work if worry about financial loss will spoil our enjoyment of the holiday. (*Ritva, Moed Katan 13a*)

### RESPONSE

The crucial issue in your case is financial loss and, as you see from the above, the laws concerning working on *Chol HaMoed* make an exception in this regard.

But does your situation fit into the halachic definition of "financial loss"? It seems that your concern is more speculative. You do not know that you will, in fact, suffer a loss. You are merely concerned that you might. But that concern may cause you to worry and not allow you to enjoy the holiday.

Ideally, you should arrange the call before or after Succot. Try to do that and see what your bosses say. If they insist on talking on *Chol HaMoed*, then you can go forward with the call.

### POSTSCRIPT

After receiving the above advice, the questioner responded that he asked his bosses to delay the call until after the holidays, and they acquiesced without any reluctance.

*l'Ilu nishmas*

*Yehudah ben Shmuel HaKohen Breslauer*

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persuaded, causing him to stray. Finally, a *pesha* refers to the iniquities of one who shamelessly sins as a way of rebelling against G-d.

*Peirush HaRokeach* also slightly disagrees with the Talmud's way of differentiating between *chet*, *avon*, and *pesha*. He explains that *chet* refers to an inadvertent sin, *pesha* refers to a willful sin, and *avon* refers specifically to a sin from which one derived physical pleasure or gained some other benefit.

The truth is, it's not so simple. Rabbi Netanel Weil (1687-1769) writes that the differences between the terms *chet* and *avon* are only apparent when those terms are juxtaposed to each other. In such contexts, *chet* means whatever *chet* means, and *avon* means whatever *avon* means. However, when the terms appear on their own, without the other, then each of these terms includes all types of sins, not just the specific type of sin that it otherwise means.

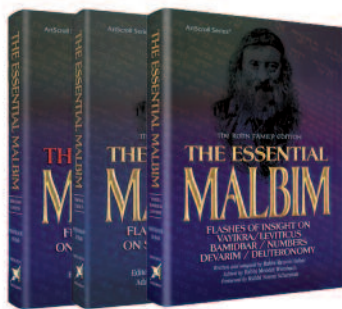
Moreover, classifying sins is not so black-and-white. In his Laws of *Teshuvah* (Repentance), Maimonides codifies the requirement for a penitent to confess his sins by saying, "*Chatati* (I committed a *chet*), *Aviti* (I committed an *avon*), *Pashati* (I committed a *pesha*)" — the same formula that the *Kohen Gadol* said in the Temple.

Rabbi Yosef Babad (1801-1874), in his seminal work *Minchat Chinuch*, writes that one need not necessarily make all three declarations. Rather, one should confess whatever sins are relevant in each situation. However, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Mann Shach (1899-2001) disagrees with this position, and maintains that Maimonides' wording implies that in all situations a person should always recite all three declarations. He argues

that not only is this because the formula instituted for the confessional includes all three types of sins, but also for another reason: Even though these three words represent three different degrees of sin, Rabbi Shach argues that no sin is so clear-cut that it fully fits into one of these three categories. Rather, every sin has different elements of *chet*, *avon*, and *pesha*. For example, someone may have sinned inadvertently, but that sin also contains elements of wantonness and rebelliousness. Or, conversely, somebody may have sinned rebelliously, but his sin may also have some traces of inadvertency and/or pure wantonness.

A fourth term for a "sin" appears in rabbinic sources, but not in the Bible: *aveira*. *Aveira* literally means "transgression" or "violation", and although it once specifically referred to crimes of indecency, it now colloquially serves as a general term for all types of wrongdoings. Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that *aveira* comes from the root *AYIN-BET-REISH*, which means "passes" in a physical sense. He explains that the concept of an *aveira* is that somebody morally "passes over" his thoughts in order to not focus on the nefariousness of his deeds. We might also suggest that he who commits an *aveira* has crossed a rabbinic red line, and, indeed, the Talmud (*Shabbat* 40a) maintains that even a person who violates a rabbinic prohibition can be called an *avaryan*.

*Eiluy Nishmat* my mother Bracha bat R' Dovid  
and my grandmother Shprintza bat R' Meir



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spark of life within it will be perpetually revived by the Torah. Its heart will always remain wakeful. Even if it crumbles into tiny particles which are scattered to all corners of the earth, even if it is temporarily detached from its high calling, this Book will remain its eternal possession. Its tunes will reawaken its spirit in the various stations of its wanderings (*Your statutes were music to me in my dwelling place*, Tehillim 119:54), and its songs will be softly sung throughout the long nights of its exile (*By night, His song is with me*, Tehillim 42:9). The power of this song will awaken the slumbering spirit of the Jews, so that they embrace the old truth with fresh courage.

But the power of Torah to reawaken is realized when the Torah is a *song*. The only means of keeping the Jew faithful — the promise that the Book will never leave the mouths of Jewish youth — is guaranteed when the Torah is taught as a *Shirah*, a song. It is always essential for the knowledge and understanding of Torah to be promoted, but it must be done in a way that cultivates the *spirit* of the *mitzvot*, and in a way that communicates Israel's unique position and mission.

Because it is the Torah, in its full force and glory, that represents the staying power of the Jewish People. It is never indicated to lower the standards of Torah to the weaknesses of the time. Here, Yehoshua is instructed with the demand to be made of all future leaders of the Jewish People: Do not be deterred by the spirit of the times; never give in to any period of unfaithfulness. Remain calm and steadfast, holding high the standard of Torah so it may remain intact, prepared to capture the hearts of the next generation, for that is the guarantee: *It will never be forgotten from the mouths of our children.*

• Sources: Commentary, Devarim 31:21-22

### Ha'azinu

## On Eagle's Wings

The song of Ha'azinu contains a terse poetic description of Jewish history from the time nations were differentiated at the dawn of civilization through the end of days. The

description of our exodus from Egypt is described as G-d awakening us as an eagle stirs its nest, and then carrying us aloft, on His wings.

The imagery describes not only G-d's special care for his chosen people, but also the leap that was required of us to become that chosen people. The eagle first *stirs his nest*, then *hovers over its young*, and then *spreads out its wings, taking it, carrying it aloft upon its pinions.* (*Devarim 32:11*) The eagle does not take his young in a sleeping or passive state. Rather, he rouses his nest and then spreads his wings *above* his young. They then energetically fly up to alight on the outspread wings. By free, conscious and brave decision, they fly up out of the nest and entrust themselves to him. So too, did G-d awaken us, so that we would, by free, conscious, and brave decision, entrust ourselves to Him.

That young eagle has the courage to leave the security of the warm nest and entrust himself to the father's wing for the flight to the isolating heights. The Jewish People needed the courage of this eagle. Other nations felt secure only if their dwelling place was secure, hewn in the firm stone of human power, ingenuity, and prosperity. That edifice of security all too often became a goddess of security, as man then idolizes power and prosperity. But Israel was called upon to separate itself from that nest in which the other nations take refuge, and to entrust itself to the wings of G-d; the wings that would enable it to soar to the heights of man's moral and spiritual calling.

• Sources: Commentary, Devarim 32:11

### V'zot Haberacha

## Everlasting Inheritance

**T**orah tziva lanu Moshe, morasha kehillat Yaakov. These are the first words that a Jewish child learns from his father. *The Torah that Moshe commanded us — this is the inheritance, O community of Yaakov!* While teaching this sentence to his child, the father takes his first step in passing the Torah on to the next generation. But, in fact, it is not the father who is entrusted with this task. Rather, it is the community.

When Moshe addressed his people for the last

*continued on page twenty-one*



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## Parsha Insights...continued from page four

make no efforts to change and improve ourselves. We will thus both debase the Torah and give ourselves no motivation to grow. We will merely sit back like self-congratulatory pygmies convinced that we are already spiritual giants.

- Sources: based on a story by Rabbi Nisson Wolpin as seen in *Growth through Torah* by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

### Ha'azinu

## Gardening, Jewish Style

*"May my teaching drop like rain,  
may my utterance flow like the dew" (32:1)*

**A** violent storm. Winds howling. The rain lashes the ground. It seems as though the earth is being torn apart by the weather. And yet without this heavy downpour nothing will grow properly. For if only the dew waters the ground, the heat of the sun will

burn and shrivel the seeds.

Only if heavy rains water the ground will the dew do its job of bringing forth the flowering blossoms.

This is the way of Torah. If a person labors in the halacha, filling himself with the methodology and torrent of Talmudic logic, even though it may seem that he is struggling against a deluge, he will eventually bring forth strong and beautiful flowers.

He may feel storm-driven and pounded by the rains. Nevertheless, the fruits of his labors will also include the esoteric parts of Torah, the "dew" of *Aggadita* (homiletic, ethical teachings from our Sages). They will flower in his hands.

However, if he only concerns himself with the "dew" of the Torah, the *Aggadita*, then in the withering "sun"-the bright lights of secular cynicism - his Torah will wither and die, lacking the deep rain to nourish its roots.

- Sources: based on the *Netziv* as explained by Rabbi Pinchas Kantrowitz

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## Letter & Spirit...continued from page twenty

time, and he searched for a starting point from which to bless them, he did not refer to the Land — which is usually regarded as the foundation of a nation's prosperity — but rather to the Torah, as the single enduring inheritance of the community. The Torah, the Law, is the one true center around which the nation and leaders were to gather as one united community. Only in Torah does the destiny, character and significance of the people find its source.

And indeed, for thousands of years, our whole nation has lived and breathed only within the framework of this Law. The Law has absorbed all thoughts and emotions and has permeated all words and aspirations. In turn, millions of minds have drawn upon it for their thoughts and feelings, and have based their decisions upon it. There has always been only one national endeavor, one national resource, one national treasure: Torah. And every generation is entrusted with observing its precepts and preserving its spirit, with disseminating its teachings and applying its timeless lessons to the

problems posed by the times.

The wording *kehilat Yaakov* is significant. Yaakov, as opposed to Yisrael, is the name that denotes the Jewish People in a weakened state. Moreover, the word *kehilla* is used, as opposed to the word *kahal* which is used everywhere else in Tanach. *Kehilla* is a dependent form of *kahal* and thus reflects a weaker community. Whether the nation shines forth with spiritual grandeur and triumphant might as *Yisrael*, or whether it is slow and weary, limping as *Yaakov*; whether it is a healthy, politically independent nation (*kahal*) or an insignificant dependent *shtetl*, the destiny and goal of the Jewish People remains the same. Torah is our one inalienable treasure, accessible to humble and great alike. The entire community — whether weak or strong — is appointed as guardians and transmitters of this inheritance.

- Sources: *Devarim* 33:4, *Collected Writings* VI, pp. 36-7, 61-4

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## PARSHA INSIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

### The Other Side of Cable Street

“Bereishet (In the beginning)...” (1:1)

#### Bereishet

I well remember my grandfather describing the Battle of Cable Street. On Sunday 4th October, 1936, the fascist “Black Shirts” of Sir Oswald Mosley proclaimed that they would march through London’s predominantly East End to demonstrate their power. “The Jewish boys,” reminisced by grandfather, took up the slogan, “They shall not pass!” and pass they did not. Trucks were overturned. Roadblocks were set up to prevent the march from taking place. An estimated 20,000 demonstrators turned out, and were met by around 6,000 police (including mounted police), who attempted to clear the road to permit the march of 2,000–3,000 fascists to proceed.

The demonstrators fought back with sticks, rocks, chair legs and other improvised weapons. Rubbish, rotten vegetables and the contents of chamber pots were thrown at the police by women in houses along the street. About 150 demonstrators were arrested. Others escaped with the help of fellow demonstrators. Around 175 people were injured, including police, women and children.

Many of the arrested demonstrators reported harsh treatment at the hands of the police.

“History” rhymes with “irony.” My grandfather would be speechless at recent events in England. His beloved Left, under its thinly veiled anti-Semitic leader, is marching to the same tune as Mosely. And, unlike Mosley, who was always on the lunatic fringe of the Conservatives, Jeremy Corbyn is the leader of the Labour party.

“In the beginning...” Our Sages understand the word for “In the beginning...” — *Bereishet* — to contain at least several ideas. The word can be understood as a hint to “*bishvil reishit* — “on account of *reishit*”— that the world was created for something called *reishit*. *Reishit* has several connotations. One of them is the Jewish People, who are called *reishit*, as it says in writings of the Prophet Yirmiyahu (2:3), “*reshit tevuato*” — “the first of His produce.”

G-d created everything with its opposite. There is another *reishit*, an “anti-*reishit*” — Amalek, the archenemy of the Jewish People. He is also called *reishit* (Bamidbar 24:) — Amalek is the first of the nations in the queue to try to destroy the Jewish People after we became a nation at Mount Sinai.

Amalek takes many guises, and thus his indictment of the Jewish People is almost infinitely elastic: To the Right, we have been the filthy poor; to the Left, the filthy rich. We are both Capitalist pigs and rootless cosmopolitans or Communists. Virtually the only thing that this anti-Semite can agree on is that the world would be an infinitely better place without the Jew. Much of the world is prepared to take active steps to effect this, and the rest would be quite happy if they succeed.

So let us not be surprised that Jew-hatred has surfaced in the UK from the other side of Cable Street. Jews and Jew-hatred are coded into the matrix of this world from the very first word of the Torah.

*continued on page twenty-seven*



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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### Bereshet

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?

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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Bereshet's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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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.

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### 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?

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## 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 Cham. And because Cham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Cham'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.

### 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. Cham, 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 Bavel, 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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### Noach

## Catch the Wind

*“...and G-d caused a spirit (ruach) to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided” (8:1)*

People often say, “If there is a spirit in Man, why can’t we see it?” In this week’s Torah portion there’s a difference of opinion about how to

translate the word *ruach* in the above verse. Rashi and others translate it as “spirit”, whereas the Ramban translates *ruach* as “wind”.

Just as the wind is invisible, but it blows the leaves through the air and moves them around on the ground, so too the spirit inside us cannot be seen but it motivates every part of our body.

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# Letter & Spirit

Insights based on the writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch

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BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

**Bereishet**

## Forbidden Fruit

**T**he first prohibition given to man has within it all the features of the future Law of Israel, and marks the beginning of man's training for his moral calling. It begins human history and shows all future generations the path in which they are to walk. *From the tree of knowledge of what is good and what is evil you shall not eat.*

This *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* is not so named because it conferred the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Freedom of choice is the hallmark of man, and without the ability to distinguish between good and evil there can be no choice. There would have been no meaning to any prohibition that preceded this basic awareness.

Rather, the tree is named for its initial role in shaping man's knowledge of good and evil. The tree, and the prohibition associated with it, was to teach man what is good or bad for him, and how he *should* distinguish between them. The tree is described as appealing to man's *taste, imagination and contemplative mind*. These all drew man to the tree and tempted him. Yet, G-d forbade man to eat of the fruit of this tree. In other words, partaking of this fruit was defined as being *bad* for man. This tree, then, was to remind man of that teaching on whose observance man's whole eminence depends. A person's senses, imagination and intelligence may tell him that a certain thing is good — but that thing may conflict with his higher calling. This *tree of knowledge of good and evil* teaches us how to determine what is good and evil: namely, that we should not rely on our own senses, imagination, or intelligence, but rather obey the revealed Will of G-d. Only then will we have followed *good*. The form of the prohibition is also significant. As explained above, the prohibition was not a rational one. Indeed, the rational mind resisted it. Moreover, it was a dietary prohibition, transmitted as an oral

tradition. It was communicated directly to Adam, yet Eve and her descendants were commanded to obey it. These characteristics of the law — a dietary prohibition, with no rational purpose, transmitted orally — are precisely those aspects that our sensual nature and mocking neighbors have taken issue with. And they are all contained in this very first prohibition, the one which begins the development of man as a free, choosing being.

The tree is also named for its subsequent role in the final result: Through this tree, knowledge of good and evil will be acted upon and decided; through its fruit, man will choose what is good or bad in his own perception. We all still stand before this tree of knowledge, as did Adam and Chava in their day. Faced with the demands of G-d's moral law — at times incomprehensible to us — we decide whether to obey bodily sensuality, imagination of the sensual mind, and our own limited intellect, or to be mindful of our higher calling and heed the voice of G-d.

• Sources: Commentary, Bereishet 2:9, 16

**Noach**

## Post-Deluvian Education

**T**he flood is over, and Noach, his family and all living creatures emerge from the ark. G-d reflects on the destruction of the land, and promises that never again will He bring such destruction upon the world. *The days of the earth shall be forever, we are told. Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall never cease.* (Ber. 8:22)

According to the plain meaning of the text, this refers to a return to the regular course of the seasons and the daily cycle, which were disrupted during the flood. But the *midrash* states that the seasons of the year mentioned here were instituted only *after* the flood. Further opinions in the *midrash* recite how, before the flood, people would sow fields only once in forty years, how it was always springtime with moderate temperature, and how the earth was not yet split into continents, enabling rapid



transportation from one end of the world to the other.

Our verse speaks of the climactic conditions as we know them after the flood — the nature and position of earth will be such that all times of the day, and all seasons of the years, all gradations of temperature and climate, will always be present simultaneously in the various parts of the earth — summer here, winter there, midnight here, noon there.

According to Rav Hirsch, the post-deluvian arrangement of geographic and climactic phenomena introduced a new method of educating mankind. It is no longer sufficient for man to sow once in forty years. Climate and weather patterns interfere with his efforts, and he is no longer independent as he once was. The changes — continental shifts as well as climactic differences — led to great diversification among people, who came to differ in their virtues, vices and values.

In addition, the lifespan of man was greatly shortened. For example, Noach lived 950 years, Avraham lived 175, Moshe 120 and David calls 70 the average life span. This reduction ensured that even the mightiest of despots cannot wield his power for much longer than fifty years. When men lived for eight centuries, the younger

generation could not express itself. But when the lifespan was shortened, the wicked would die off quickly, leaving room for a pure, innocent, youthful and upright generation to take its place. In this way, the hope for the future can rest in the next generation.

Likewise, the division of earth into continents and countries obstructed the spread of evil. These climactic and geographical changes would dictate profound differences in human experience across the globe. Instead of a single family or community, where corruption at one end would quickly infect the whole, humanity is dispersed so that it may be able to rejuvenate itself: a corrupt branch, after it has passed through all stages of human delusion, will make way for a hardier, more robust one, which will start a new life.

In this light, the mention of the seasonal changes right after the promise to never again destroy the world makes sense. Although man's heart may aspire to evil, the response will no longer be destruction; rather the new seasonal and geographic realities will usher in a new phase in the education of mankind.

- Sources: *Commentary, Bereishet 8:22, The Nineteen Letters, Letter Six*

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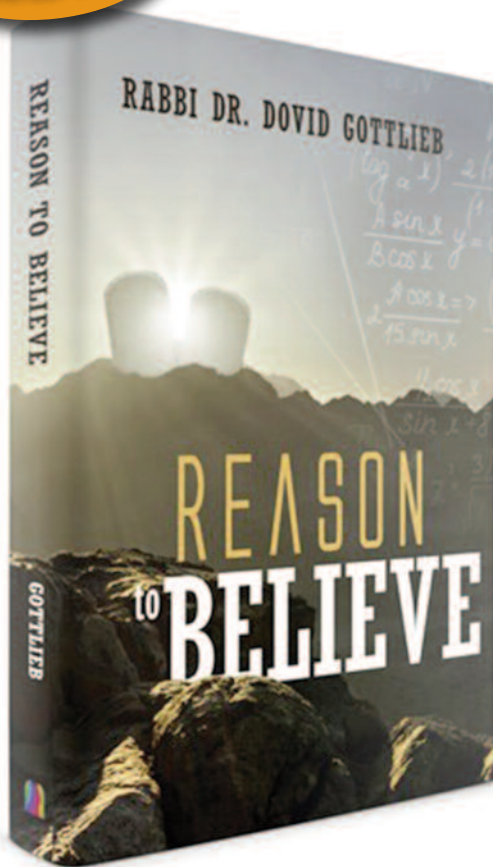
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