

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYESHEV / CHANUKA • 22 KISLEV 5779 - NOVEMBER 30, 2018 • VOL. 26 NO. 9

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

All Singing!!! All Dancing!!!

“... and the birds were eating them from the basket above my head.” (13:17)

Baruch Hashem, I have had the privilege to be a Gemara Rebbe in Ohr Somayach for more than twenty years.

And as every Gemara Rebbe knows, the times they are a’ changing.

There, I just used one of the most successful techniques I know for fighting weapons of mass distraction: *Verbal Ritalin*®.

I didn’t say “times are changing”. I deliberately made an oblique reference to a song that has entered the public consciousness. I used “verbal Ritalin”.

I don’t think that many kids with attention deficiencies are slow. Just the opposite! They’re too fast for the teacher. Arguably, the modern media have produced a generation whose pick-up rate is much faster than it was. True, it may be more superficial, but the media trains kids to latch on very quickly.

So what happens is that the student has understood the teacher, and then he is not fed new information immediately, and the teacher is now saying the same thing in a different way, and so his mind wanders. But if we can control to where the mind is wandering, we can bring our student back in a flash.

Yes, to be a teacher today requires us to be an all-singing all-dancing one-person entertainment channel.

“Two people holding a *tallit*”. A Breslover *chassid* holding one end of a *tallit* and a *litvishe bachur* holding the other. What color is the *tzizit*?

What’s the difference between being responsible for theft and negligence? Negligence is when you drive your friend’s Bentley Continental down to the Damascus Gate and get out leaving the key in the ignition and the engine running...

I try as much as I can to slip into my explanation of the Gemara references from popular songs or sayings that the *talmidim* will recognize and subconsciously say, “Where does that come from?” I’ll even sing a line in *falsetto*. I have a pretty good gravelly super-bass American announcer voice, “Coming to a city near you!”

This is what I call verbal Ritalin – reinforcing the *talmid’s* tendency to go off-topic, to where I want it to go so I can keep his attention.

“...and the birds were eating them from the basket above my head.”

How did Yosef know that the baker was a walking dead man? In normal circumstances birds are frightened of man. If a bird will come and peck at a basket on top of a man’s head, it’s a sure sign that the man is not even a scarecrow. The birds eating from a basket on a man’s head gives the game away. It’s a small subconscious alarm bell planted in the narrative that tells all. It’s *verbal Ritalin*.

In a world where our students are dreaming, we have to be the early bird that catches their dreams.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Menachot: 93-99

Where Did His Torah Go?

Rav Yosef taught, “From here we learn that a Torah scholar who forgot his learning due to no fault of his own should not be disrespected.”

From where does he learn this important teaching? G-d told Moshe regarding the Second Tablets, “And I shall inscribe on the Tablets the words that were on the First Tablets, which you shattered, and you shall place them into the Ark.” (*Devarim* 10:2). We learn from here, says Rav Yosef, that the Second Tablets, which were not broken, were placed together in the Ark with the broken First Tablets. The lesson from this act, he explains, is that “a Torah scholar who forgot his learning due to no fault of his own should not be disrespected.”

At first glance, it is not clear how we see from this verse that both the Second Tablets and the First, broken Tablets, were placed together in the Ark. The straightforward meaning is that Moshe was commanded to place the Second Tablets – which were received on Yom Kippur, and on which was written the same Torah as the First Tablets which Moshe had rightfully broken when he found the people with the Golden Calf on the 17th of Tammuz – inside the Ark. But where is it mentioned in this verse that the broken First Tablets were placed in that Ark as well?

The Maharsha resolves this mystery. He writes that although the verse is certainly speaking about the Second Tablets, the “close positioning” of the words “*asher shibarta*, which you broke” – which refer to the First Tablets that were broken – to the words “*v’samtam b’aron*, and you will place them in the Ark,” hints that the broken First Tablets had already been placed in the Ark, and now the Second, whole Tablets were to be placed with them there as well. Together. The “unbroken” together with the “broken”.

A Torah scholar, who has internalized his Torah study and practice, and has made himself into a “walking Torah scroll” is deserving of the honor due to the Torah. This is true even if he has now “forgotten” his Torah studies through no fault of his own, such as when he has become unwell, or is under *extreme* pressure to earn a livelihood (Rashi). We should continue to clearly see him as one who

still carries the Torah within him, as part of his very being, and he should therefore not be treated with even an iota of disrespect, G-d forbid. (A great rabbi in Jerusalem once told me that this phrase “*l’onso*” – through no fault of his own – would not apply to a Torah scholar who forgot his Torah studies due a negligent lack of review of his Torah studies.)

The *Mishna* at the end of *Masechta Sotah* states that when Rebbi passed from this world, the trait of humility ceased to exist. The very same Rav Yosef who teaches on our *daf* not to disrespect a Torah scholar who forgot his learning due to circumstances beyond his control comments on that *mishna*, saying: “Don’t teach that humility has ended, because I am here!” Obviously, this seemingly incongruous statement begs for an explanation.

It is important to note that Rav Yosef was a great Sage whose teachings are recorded in a great number of places in the Talmud. Yet, despite his great scholarship achieved through learning and teaching Torah, and despite the lofty Torah knowledge he had attained, we are taught that Rav Yosef became blind, and as a result of his illness he forgot his Torah learning.

In this light, we can understand Rav Yosef’s point. He was *not* saying, “I am humble, and therefore the trait of humility has not ceased from existence, since humble people still exist in the world.” Rather, he was saying: “Do not say that there cannot be humble people around anymore. Please look at me. As long as I am around, people can look at me and see what can happen to a person. Let them see that a person can be a Torah scholar, learn a vast amount of Torah, teach countless students – and yet forget it all, if it be the will of God. One who truly “gets” this point will become humble, or, at least, will likely become humble. The key to humility is realizing that everything we have is a gift, and it can all be lost at any given moment.

- *Menachot 99a*

PARSHA Q & A

1. "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef..." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn't G-d reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar's father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word "hand " mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar "see" that G-d was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream?
19. What prompted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

Answers

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

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
6. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
7. 37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and G-d, so to speak, abided by their ban.
8. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
9. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
10. 38:24 - Shem.
11. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
12. 38:30 - To allude to his descendent, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
13. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
14. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned G-d's name frequently in his speech.
15. 39:11 - Potiphar's wife.
16. 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread.
17. 40:4 - Twelve months.
18. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
19. 40:6 - Yosef asked them why they looked troubled.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

Maccabees in Modi'in

Although there is no firm evidence that the heroes of the Chanuka miracle Jews are now celebrating are buried in Modi'in, the site east of Lod and Ben Shemen near the relatively new city of Modi'in is visited by many Jews who consider it to be the resting place of the Maccabees.

Eshtori ha-Parchi identified Tzova, west of Jerusalem, as the Maccabean Modi'in, while other travelers named different sites. During the last century researchers have leaned towards the above-mentioned site near the Arab village of Mideah where visitors go to identify with the Chanuka heroes.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt,

Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the *parsha's* sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the Mashiach. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His exceptional beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In prison, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, ז"ל • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO / DANIEL FREEDMAN

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ASK!

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by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman

Chanuka for Women

From: Jill in Toronto

Dear Rabbi,

What is the special connection of women to Chanuka? In particular, why do women customarily rest or refrain from work while the candles are burning even though this candle lighting, as opposed to for Shabbat, is done by the men?

Dear Jill,

Take 1: The reason women rest while the candles are burning is because after “slaving” in the kitchen all day to make *latkes* and doughnuts, they deserve a break. Just kidding (about the reason, that is; not about deserving a break).

Take 2: The reason is that as opposed to Shabbat where the women work in preparation and light the candles, while the men do virtually nothing to help, on Chanuka the men work to light and the women get a chance to relax. Just kidding (about the reason, that is; not about men not helping enough for Shabbat).

Take 3: In all seriousness, the real reason is:

The very name of Chanuka implies resting, relaxing or refraining from difficult or mundane tasks. How so? Chanuka can be read as two phrases: ‘*chanu*’ and ‘*kah*’. ‘*Chanu*’ means “they rested” and ‘*kah*’ is comprised of the letters ‘*kaf*’ (20) and ‘*hey*’ (5) which together have the numerical value of 25. This alludes to the fact that the Jews were relieved of their oppression on the 25th day of the month of Kislev, which is Chanuka.

Although all Jews experienced respite from

Hellenistic repression, women in particular experienced a great relief, and also figured prominently in the redemption of Chanuka itself.

But in what way did women particularly suffer and in what manner did they participate in the miracle?

Despite the Greeks’ stated purpose of battling the spirituality of Judaism in the name of “enlightened” Hellenism, one decree in particular was physical: Every Jewish girl who was to be married was to be brought first to the Greek ruler. This very ugly and degrading decree prevented many righteous women from becoming wives, or compromised others before they did.

In this context, the redemption came about through the heroism of a woman. Yehudit, daughter of Yochanan the High Priest and sister of Judah the Maccabee, was especially beautiful, and the tyrant ruler desired her. Pretending to acquiesce, she came to him and first fed him cheese dishes, which made him thirsty (here is the source for eating dairy foods on Chanuka). She then brought him wine to quench his thirst. When he became drunk and fell asleep, she beheaded him and displayed the prize above the city walls. When the enemy soldiers saw that their head had been removed, they fled and the Jews were saved.

It is for this two-fold reason (the nullification of the decree against the Jewish women and a woman’s role in its nullification) that women in particular simultaneously rest and reflect on the relief and redemption that the Chanuka lights reflect. And, by the way, it is similarly for this reason that not only men but also women have a mitzvah to light the Chanuka *menorah*.



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WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

THE GIFT OF GIVING

Ahead of the epic meeting of brothers, Jacob sent his older brother Esau quite a generous tribute, consisting of 550 animals. The Torah uses the word *mincha* four times when referring to this gift (Gen. 32:14, 32:19-22). The word *mincha* is one of many Hebrew words which mean “gift” or “present”. In this week’s essay we will discuss six such words: *mincha*, *matana*, *shai*, *teshura*, *eshkar*, and *doron*.

The word *mincha* is the most common of these six words, and appears more than two hundred times in the Bible. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1880) explains that a *mincha* is a gift of homage, by which the giver shows his subservience to the receiver. This type of gift serves the interest of the giver in demonstrating his dependency on the receiver. Alternatively, as Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) notes, a *mincha* helps the giver achieve atonement.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that a *mincha* can also be a tax or a tribute that a servant pays to his master, like the case of the subjugated Moabites who paid a *mincha* to King David (II Sam. 8:2), or like the last King of Israel, Hosea, who paid a *mincha* to his Assyrian overlord (II Kings 17:3). According to Radak and others, the root of the word *mincha* is *nach/nacha* (“placed” or “rested”), because the giver uses this gift as a means of calming or placating the recipient.

Rabbi Mecklenburg further writes that the more one shows submission to another, the more it can be termed a *mincha*. To that effect, he explains that the afternoon prayers are called *Tefillat Mincha* because during that time the sun is on its way down. This demonstrates the sun’s submission to G-d, as though it were bowing to Him. Similarly, when a poor person brings a meal-offering as a sacrifice, that sacrifice is called a *Korban Mincha*.^{*} This is because the penniless worshipper very clearly demonstrates his submission to G-d by showing that he is willing to offer Him whatever little he has.

Rabbi Wertheimer explains that the word *matan* or *matana* (variations of which appear some twenty times in the Bible) is a gift which focuses on giving. In fact, the root of those words is the same as the verb of giving. In English,

too, the words *gift* and *give* are of the same etymology, for the *f*-sound and *v*-sound are interchangeable. One gives a *matana* when the recipient needs something and the giver enjoys no benefit from offering this gift other than that he has donated to fill the receiver’s need. This type of giving encourages friendship and camaraderie – which is why it is mandated on Purim (see Esther 9:23, which calls for *matanot la’evyonim*, “gifts for the unfortunate”).

Interestingly, Rabbi Mecklenburg writes that it is inappropriate to use the term *matana* when discussing an offering to G-d, but he does not explain why. In light of the above, the explanation seems obvious: a *matana* serves to fill a certain need on the part of the recipient. In the case of G-d, He is complete and has no needs, so He certainly does not require any sort of gift. For this reason, sacrifices to G-d are never described as a *matana* in the Bible.

The next most-common word for a “present” in the Bible is *shai*, which appears three times (Isa. 18:7, Ps. 76:12, and Ps. 68:30). Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (1230-1300) writes that the word *shai* is *yesh* (“has” or “is”) backwards, because a *shai* is an especially substantial gift. Rabbi Wertheimer explains that *shai* refers to a gift which the giver considers significant, but for the receiver is not so special. For this reason, whenever the word *shai* appears in the Bible it refers always to giving a gift to G-d, and does not appear in any other context.

The word *eshkar* appears twice in the Bible (Ps. 72:10 and Ezek. 27:15), but is nonetheless quite obscure. In fact, Radak writes that he is unsure of *eshkar*’s root – whether all four letters of it make up its root (*ALEPH-SHIN-KAF-REISH*) or only the last three letters are its root (*SHIN-KAF-REISH* refers to “beer” or “drunk”). Rabbi Avraham ben Chaim Ibn Ramoch differentiates between *mincha* and *eshkar* by writing that *mincha* is something like gold, silver, and precious gems, while *eshkar* is special types of fruits. He does not explain the logic between the distinction between these two terms, but it seems that the former refer to inedible gifts, while the latter are only edible gifts. This might explain the connection between *eshkar* and *sheichar*.

Rabbi Wertheimer takes a different approach. He explains that *eshkar* refers to a gift whose value is not in its monetary or utilitarian worth, but in its aesthetic qualities. Such a gift “bribes” the recipient, so to speak, into overestimating its own importance. In doing so, this sort of gift effectively renders the recipient intoxicated (*shikur*), such that he cannot properly focus on the gift’s true value. Interestingly, Malbim writes that *eshkar* is related to *sachar* (“reward” or “payment”), with the letter *SHIN* morphing into a letter *SIN*.

The last Hebrew word for “gift” which we will discuss for now is *teshura*. This word is a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible, which means that it appears only once in that entire text (I Sam. 9:7). The *Midrash Shocheh Tov* (Psalms 87) expounds on the word *teshura*, explaining that it is the type of tribute which “people look at and sing praises”. Rabbi Wertheimer explains that the Midrash understood that the root of the word *teshura* is two-fold: It is derived from *shur* – which is a type of “seeing” – and from *shir* – which is a “song”. *Teshura* denotes the most honorable, flashy, and eye-catching present possible.

Malbim explains that *teshura* refers specifically to a present that is given when one greets an honorable figure. In a way, it is a type of *mincha*. When one would meet with a prophet or holy man in order to receive his blessing, or to consult with his prophecies, one would present the eminent personage with a special gift in order to cement a bond with said person. The purpose of this gift is to

placate the receiver’s physical body. This would then allow the receiver to transcend his physical limitations and allow an outpouring of his spiritual influence onto the giver, whether for the purposes of prophecy or blessings. By creating this bond, the receiver could now become a conduit for G-d’s blessing to the giver, thereby making the receiver a giver, and the giver a receiver. This, of course, is why Isaac requested that Esau present him with a delectable meal before he would bless him (see Gen. 27).

Our final word for “gift” is not actually Hebrew, and does not even appear in the Bible. Targum pseudo-Jonathan generally translates the Hebrew text of the Bible into Aramaic. When discussing the “gift” that Jacob sent Esau, Targum pseudo-Jonathan translates the word *mincha* as *doron*. However, *doron* is not Aramaic. As Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1469-1549) observes in *Sefer HaTishbi*, the word *doron* is actually Greek for “gift”. So, even though *Doron* sounds like a manly Israeli name, it comes from Greek. *Doron* is actually closer in meaning to the name *Theodore* (“G-d’s gift” in Greek), which parallels the Hebrew name *Yonatan* (“Hashem’s gift”).

NOTE: Rabbi Mecklenburg points out that it is inaccurate to say that the word *mincha* translates as “meal-offering”; it simply means “gift”. Nonetheless, in the context of sacrifices, *mincha* does refer specifically to meal-offerings, although this is not its literal meaning.

Chanuka Feature: PLAYING WITH FIRE

When telling of the future downfall of the descendants of Esau, the prophet Ovadiah (Ovadiah 1:18) refers to the House of Jacob as an *aish*, the House of Joseph as a *lehavah*, and the House of Esau as straw. This passage refers to the Houses of Jacob and Joseph by different words for “fire”, and conveys the message that the House of Esau will be fodder for that future fire. But what is the difference between an *aish* and a *lehavah*? For that matter, what do we do with a whole slew of Hebrew words which are related to the idea of “fire”, but are not quite synonymous?

The most common word for fire is *aish*. Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1469-1549) in his work *Metrugaman* points out that most places in which the Hebrew word *aish* appears in the Bible, the Targumim translate the word into Aramaic as

aisha or *aishata*. But, in some places, the Targumim translate the Hebrew *aish* into the Aramaic *nur* or *nura*. HaBachur admits that he does not know what makes the Targumim use one word over the other. Nonetheless, he notes that most times the Bible mentions a fire that burns or roasts something, then the Targumim use the word *nura*.

What is the etymological basis for the word *nura*? Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1714-1814) explains in his work *Cheshek Shlomo* that the letter *REISH* itself denotes “throwing”, and different roots that use the letter *REISH* are derived from that. He explains that the word *ohr* (*ALEPH-VAV-REISH*), “light”, is related to “throwing” because the light rays which emanate from sources of light act as if they are “thrown” from that source. The object which holds the source of light is called a *ner* (*NUN-REISH*),

and the vessel within which a *ner* is fixed is called a *menorah* (MEM-NUN-REISH-HAY). In light of this, I would add that the word *nura* also fits this theory, although Rabbi Pappenheim does not openly mention that Aramaic word.

There is another word related to this discussion which Rabbi Pappenheim does not explicitly mention – that is, the word *ur* (spelled the same as *ohr*, but pronounced differently). That word appears a total of six times in the Bible (only in the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel), and clearly means “fire”. It is the preferred word for “fire” in the Mishnah, where it appears quite a few times (*Challah* 4:8; *Shabbat* 1:11, 8:7, 16:5; *Yoma* 6:7; *Beitzah* 4:4, 4:7; *Rosh Hashana* 2:3; *Bava Kama* 6:4, 9:4; *Sanhedrin* 9:1; *Avoda Zara* 5:12; *Avot* 2:10; *Zevachim* 12:6; *Menachot* 10:4; *Chullin* 3:3; *Tamid* 1:3; *Keilim* 5:11, 29:8; *Ohalot* 11:7). *Ur* was also the name of an ancient Mesopotamian city where Abraham lived. According to tradition, the name *Ur* alludes to the fact that its king tossed Abraham into a fiery furnace, from which he miraculously emerged unscathed. The Malbim (to *Ez.* 2:5) writes that *ur* differs from *aish* in that *ur* denotes a smaller fire than *aish* does.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau explains in *Yeriot Shlomo* that while *aish* is a general term for “fire”, the word *lahav/lehavah* refers specifically to a flame which spurs forth into the air. A *lahav* is attached to a bigger fire, and serves as an outlet for that fire to spread outwards. The word *lahav* also refers to the blade of a knife/sword. Because *lahav* refers primarily to the part of a fire which affects things outside of the fire, it was borrowed to also refer to the part of a sharp tool which affects other things. Moreover, because the word *lahav* denotes the shimmering glimmer of a fire, it also refers to the glistening edge of a metal instrument.

With this in mind, we can now better understand Ovadiah’s prophecy. It means that the fire from within the House of Jacob will spread outwards via the flame of the House of Joseph, and finally burn up the straw, that is the House of Esau.

Returning to fire-related words, the word *shalhevet* is closely related to *lahav*. However, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *shalhevet* refers to a flame which is attached to a tangible object. He explains that *shalhevet* is related *lahav*, but is also related to the word *meshulav* (“mixed”, see *Ex.* 26:17, *I Kings* 7:29). In that sense, a *shalhevet* is a flame that is mixed with some other material which it burns up.

The word *lahat* refers to the fast movement of fire, which, as the expression goes, “spreads like wildfire”. *Lahat* is related to the root LAMMED-TET, which refers to “bending”, and can also be used to refer to the sleight of hand that Pharaoh’s magicians used (*Ex.* 7:11, 7:22, 8:3). Both *lahav* and *lahat* primarily refer to a flame or a blade, and both terms are also borrowed to refer to enthusiasm.

The word *lapid* (commonly translated as “torch”) is used when one’s focus is on the object that carries a fire, as opposed to the fire itself. Some linguists creatively connect the Hebrew word *lapid* to the Akkadian word *diparu*. They justify this by arguing that the l-sound can be interchanged with the r-sound, on top of which a metathesis can be employed to rearrange the consonants of *rapid* to become *diparu*. Interestingly, this is similar to an explanation found in the Radak (to *Nachum* 2:4) who wrote that *aish-pladot* is an alternate way of saying *lapid-aish*.

The post-Biblical word *avukah* primarily refers to a bundle of twigs used for fueling a fire. As an outgrowth of that meaning, *avukah* came to refer to any candle or torch of which more than one wick is lit. According to Halacha, some situations call for specifically an *avukah* (such as *Havdalah*), while others call for specifically a *ner* (such as *Bedikat Chametz* and *Chanuka* candles), which has only one wick.

The Hebrew word *ner* (“candle/lamp”) is generally translated by the Targumim into Aramaic as *shraga*. *Shraga* later became a popular Jewish name (much like the Arabic name *Siraj* is quite popular in the Arab world). The Yiddish counterpart to the Hebrew name *Shraga* is *Feivish*. Interestingly, some scholars explain that *Feivish*, like *Shraga*, is also associated with the concept of light. They argue that *Feivish* is derived from the Greek/Latin name *Phoebus*, which was actually the name of the Greek/Roman god of light. It is a fascinating turn of events that the name of a pagan god was eventually adopted as a Jewish personal name. Nonetheless, Dr. Alexander Beider dismisses this explanation as mere “folk etymology”, and argues that *Feivish* is actually derived from *Vivus* (“life” in Latin), making it more closely associated with the Hebrew name *Chaim* (“life”), than with *Shraga*.

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch
by Rabbi Yosef Herman

Parshat Vayeshev Divisive Dreams

The *parsha* opens with a providential pair of dreams. Yosef first dreams of himself and his brothers working together, piling sheaves in the middle of the field. Then, Yosef's sheaf arose and remained upright, while the brothers' sheaves surrounded Yosef's and bowed down to it. In the second dream, the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to Yosef.

Upon hearing these dreams, the brothers begin to hate Yosef and resent his aspirations to rule over them. But they did not yet fear him, because they did not believe that these wild dreams could ever come true. When they heard his second dream, which promised him not just a high rank within his own family but supreme authority over all the earth, and more, when they saw that their father did not take these dreams lightly, their envy was ignited.

More than mere envy, Yosef elicited a fearful response. The brothers were threatened by his intention to tower over them as king. And indeed, had Yosef's future position been as they imagined, their future would have been in jeopardy. Not much time had passed since Nimrod introduced the concept of kingship. Their neighboring cousins – Esav's children – were already enslaved to chiefs and kings. The brothers understood that this type of monarchy debases human dignity, turning individuals into building blocks in the edifice of one man's ambition. The threat of a ruler emerging in their midst was not merely a threat to their personal rights, independence or honor. The entire society which the family of Yaakov was to build – a society rooted in freedom and equality, and the innate nobility of the individual – was in danger of being erased by Yosef's dreams.

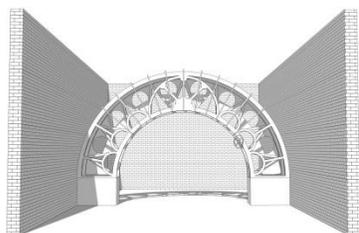
Immediately after hearing these dreams and their father's interpretations, the brothers went far away to Shechem, some 85 kilometers from Hebron. In the verse that states that they went to Shechem to "tend to their sheep," several dots appear on top of one of these words. According to the *midrash*, these dots indicate that they only pretended to go in order to tend the sheep, but in reality they went to "tend" themselves. They sought to preserve their independence.

It is noteworthy that they choose Shechem as the place to convene and assess the situation. The brothers have a history in Shechem. This was the city where the prince violated their sister Dina and then took her captive. In the first great show of brotherhood and solidarity, Shimon and Levi stood up for her honor and wiped out the city. Shechem is the site where they first demonstrated how a family will stand united as one when any one of its members is threatened by a foe. Then, it was one family member – Dina – being threatened by a foe from without. But here it is the entire family being threatened by a foe from within. This may be why they return to the site of fraternal solidarity to contemplate their next steps. Although the outcome may have been wrong, perhaps because of the personal hatred and jealousy that tainted their assessment, their essential motive was a good one. In fact, it reveals what they understood to be the inviolable foundations of the future nation: freedom, equality and the worth of every individual.

Sources: Commentary, Bereishet 37:7-12

MEZUZAH MAVEN

by Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines



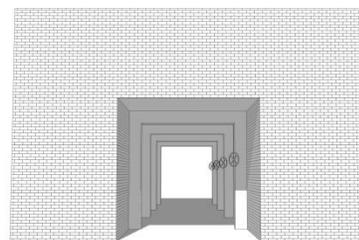
Garage Archway

Q: My garage doorway is arched from the ground to its top. This could either mean that it has no side-posts or that it has no lintel. Does this mean that it does not need a mezuzah at all?

A: Although your garage door lacks identifiable posts and a lintel, when a curved archway is surrounded at its top and sides by a wall or a fence, we conceptually “carve out” virtual doorposts and a virtual lintel from the surrounding structure. Even then, its obligation is doubtful, and we affix the mezuzah without a *beracha*. Obviously, in this case, there is no choice but to place the mezuzah on a curved area.

To calculate the top-third of the doorway, you need to measure from the floor to the point at which the two sides of the arch come within four *tefachim* of each other. This point is deemed the halachic “top” of the doorway, because the space above that point is too narrow to be considered a serviceable entrance.

- Sources: *Shulchan Aruch* 286:21; *Chovas HaDar* 7:14, 2:19; *Kuntres HaMezuzah* 287:15-16; *Pischei She'arim* 287:52. *Shevet HaLevi* 2:157; 5:160; *Agur B'Ohalecha* 22:15:30, 23:24



Freestanding Garden Archways

Q: We enter our front garden through a beautiful archway in the form of a half-circle, cut into the perimeter fence. As we walk down the path to our home we pass under two other identical archways which are free-standing. Do all or any of them need mezuzahs?

A: Your front archway is part of the perimeter fence, and consequently we conceptually “carve out” virtual doorposts and a virtual lintel from the surrounding structure, and it deserves a mezuzah without a *beracha*.

But the archways over the garden path are not within a structure and are therefore exempt according to many authorities.

Some authorities recommend that even free-standing arches deserve a mezuzah, albeit also without a *beracha*. However, your garden-path archways are exempt for another reason: They are purely decorative. As such, even if they would be in the rectangular form of a normal doorway, and even if they would be indoors, they would not need a mezuzah. An example of this would be a long hallway that an architect has designed with repeated doorways for purely aesthetic rather than utilitarian purposes. Another example would be a decorative archway, inside a room, that serves no real function.

Got a mezuzah question or story? Email rabbi@ohrsandton.com or submit on my website mymezuzahstory.com. Free “Mezuzah Maven” book for every question or story submitted (when published in the near future!)

@OHR

Profiles of Ohr Somayach students, alumni and staff
by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

OHR SOMAYACH CONQUERS AUSTRALIA

According to Rabbi Shlomo Wiener, a frequent visitor to the Land of the Antipodes, aka “Down Under”, Ohr Somayach graduates have been transforming the landscape of this South Indian Ocean continent. They have taken a leading role in outreach and community development there.

Dateline Melbourne:

About three years ago, a former South African and Ohr Somayach Center alumnus, Rabbi Evan Widmonte, began a *kiruv* organization that he called “OHR SOM” (which happens to be the name of another very successful Ohr Somayach outreach offshoot organization in South Africa). OHR SOM targets non-religious university students in Melbourne. In July of 2017 OHR SOM and Rabbi Widmonte brought a group approximately 70 young men to the Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Jerusalem for a two-week learning and touring trip. A follow-up trip in January (summertime in Australia) of 2018 brought 10 of those students back to the Yeshiva to learn full-time for a month. We are happy to report that all 10 are fully *shomer Shabbat* and *shomer kashrut*. This past July, the OHR SOM trip was comprised of approximately 50 participants. We expect at least 15 OHR SOM students for the January 2019 full-time learning program. These large numbers of interested young Jewish men eclipse any other similar program from anywhere else in the world. This is a tribute to the talents of Rabbi Widmonte and his staff. OHR SOM center is located in South Caulfield, a Melbourne suburb with a large, but mostly non-religious Jewish population. Many classes are offered throughout the week, and there is also a Friday night *minyan*. Two *avreichim* (young, married Torah scholars) of the famed Melbourne/Lakewood Kollel also tutor for OHR SOM. Both are former Ohr Somayach Center alums: Rabbis Myron Sacher and Dovid Cohen.

Recognizing the need for a similar program in Sydney, Rabbi Widmonte recently added another staff member,

Rabbi Kosovsky, to head up a new OHR SOM branch in Sydney.

Dateline Sydney:

About eight years ago, a *minyan* of mostly Ohr Somayach alumni, including Gary Sher, Brett Cohen, Gavin Rosetenstein and Lior Stein, disturbed by the bars, beach party culture and lack of modesty in dress that is

characteristic of many of the eastern suburbs such as Bondi, decided to move *en masse* to the northern part of the city. They chose St. Ives, which has both a large modern Orthodox Jewish South African community and is far from the beaches. They moved to St. Ives about six years ago and established their own Shabbat *minyan* in the large Masada shul there. They appropriately and eponymously

named their *minyan* “Ohr Hatzafon” (a name with a double meaning: “Northern Light” and “Hidden Light,” and, of course, contains the “Ohr” of Ohr Somayach). There are now approximately 40-50 men praying there on Shabbat. They hired a rabbi, another Ohr Somayach Center graduate, Barak Cohen, who is originally from Des Moines, Iowa. Not content with the level of Jewish education at the local Jewish school, three years ago they decided to start their own Torah-centered school, with *limudei kodesh* in the morning and secular studies in the afternoon (different from the main Jewish day schools in Sydney which have *limudei kodesh* in the afternoon). Rabbi Cohen is also the principal of the Day School, which now has an enrollment of approximately 50 children, and growing every year.

Dateline Jerusalem:

Three of OHR SOM’s students are now learning full-time in the Center Program at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem. They are Aidan Nussbaum, Daniel Katz and Gabe Chait (shown in photo).



BUSINESS ETHICS

by Rabbi Ari Wasserman

Yichud issues for a female worker in a male office

Q: My wife got a new job in a third floor office of a large building. Her two male employers and one male co-worker are religious Jews; there is also one religious female co-worker.

There are rarely any visitors in the office. I was advised that the door should literally be left open in order to avoid a problem of seclusion. My wife's employers initially agreed to this, but there is a lot of traffic in the hall and people were constantly peeking in. They have now advised my wife that they prefer the door be closed, although it will be left unlocked. Her boss told her that this is also because the office can get very cold/hot if the door is left open.

Is there a requirement that the door be left open, or are there other solutions? Her boss suggested she ask her rabbi if it helps that the door has a small window. He also stressed that people can open the door and walk in unannounced. Would it help if my wife asked people in the neighboring offices to pop in a few times a day without notice?

HALACHIC BACKGROUND

It is forbidden by halacha for a male to be in seclusion (*yichud*) with any female older than three, and for a female to be secluded with any male older than nine. The only exceptions to this prohibition are mother and son, father and daughter, grandmother and grandson, grandfather and granddaughter, and husband and wife.

Yichud does not apply exclusively to one-on-one situations. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules strictly regarding *yichud* even with more than one member of the opposite gender – a woman may not be alone with several men, and a man may not be alone with several women, unless one of the exclusions (*heterim*) applies.

The Rema is more lenient and writes that one woman may be alone with two men if they are Torah observant Jews. But if the men are promiscuous individuals (*prutzim*), they are not considered to be reliable chaperones (*shomrim*) for one another, and it is forbidden for a woman to be alone with even ten such men.

This *heter* only applies in the city, where there are generally other people around, and only in the daytime. But out in a field or other desolate location, or at night even in

the city, three observant men are required. Two observant men would not be enough, because one may fall asleep or walk away, leaving the other man alone with the woman.

The Rema goes on to say that some halachic authorities permit one man to be secluded with many women (at least three, or at night, four) if his profession is not related to women. A man in this profession – for example, the owner of a women's clothing shop or the male principal of a girls' school with a female staff – is considered to be at a higher risk, because he is constantly around women, which requires a greater degree of caution.

RESPONSE

Based on the ruling of the Rema, as long as two observant men are present in the office during the day hours, and three observant men are present at night, there's no problem of *yichud*. The rationale for this is that each of the men serves as a chaperone for the other. This would be the case if the front door of the office is open, closed or even locked.

In your wife's case, since three observant men are typically working in the office, *yichud* would not be a problem at any time, even at night. However, when some of the men are out for meetings or are on vacation or are sick, *yichud* may become a problem.

However, in that case, *yichud* with a closed door would be permitted if people can still walk in at any time. For example, the door can be closed – but left unlocked – if there is a reasonable expectation that people can walk in unannounced. In fact, according to some *poskim*, the door can even be locked if a number of people who have keys or keypad access could enter at any time, or they have been specifically given keys and asked to occasionally drop in without notice in order to prevent *yichud*. This possibility would be considered a sufficient deterrent.

In addition, the small window in the front office door is helpful in permitting *yichud*, as long as onlookers from outside can see your wife. If they are not able to see your wife, there would be no deterrent effect, and *yichud* would remain a problem.

In summary, given that there are typically three observant men in the office, and certainly if your wife can

be seen through the little window of the office door, there is no problem whatsoever with the door being closed. At times when the required number of observant men (two in the day and three at night) are not present, and your wife cannot be seen through the window in the door, she is relying on the “open door” *heter* and needs to comply with its requirements.

I have discussed the *heter* of having “a door open to the public domain” in detail in “*Yichud* Issues for a Male Attorney and His Female Secretary.” This particular *heter* is

the subject of extensive discussion among the *poskim*. If the required number of observant men to permit *yichud* is not present, and it turns out that there are rarely visitors in the office (and therefore no real fear that someone could walk in at any time), I would suggest that you drop by the office unannounced every so often – on varying days and varying times during the day – to bolster the “open door” *heter*.

L'iluy nishmas Yehudah ben Shmuel HaKohen Breslauer

Chanuka Special Feature!

SEASONS — THEN AND NOW by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

Chanuka: The Greeks versus the *Kohanim*

There are sources that match up each of the four kingdoms that subjugated the Jewish People to one of the four primary sins – i.e., spilling blood (murder), illicit relations, idol worship and *lashon hara*. The Greek empire, say the sources, matches up with the sin of murder. The Ohr Gedalyahu points out that this idea is not easily understood. The Levush points out that one of the main differences between the holiday of Purim and Chanuka is that in the story of Purim Haman’s main attack was against the physical bodies of the Jewish people, whereas the Greek decrees were against the *neshama* and soul of the Jewish People. The Greeks were not interested in destroying the Jewish people physically, as long as they gave up their religion. Based on this, the parallel between the Greeks to the sin of murder seems completely out of place. How then are we to understand the words of the sources that make this parallel?

Beginnings of Atheism

In order to understand the essence of what ancient Greece is about, we first need to study the time period in which the Greeks ruled. The Greeks’ rise to power took place following the period of prophecy. What is the significance of this? The Gemara points out that the desire to serve idols was not as easy to overcome in the past as it is today (Sanhedrin 102b-103a). As is evident from the constant rebuke of the prophets to the Jewish People, idolatry was a powerful force in the world, which

many people stumbled over. What caused this desire to be weakened? The Gemara explains that as a response to the people’s failure to overcome the desire to serve idols, Chazal prayed to G-d to take away the temptation for it altogether. They felt that even though the reward for overcoming this desire was great, it was not worth losing the number of people who simply couldn’t withstand the test.

The Gemara tells us that G-d responded to their plea and weakened the desire for idol worship. However, it was at a cost. Once the desire to serve idols was taken away from the world, prophecy also needed to come to an end (Yoma 69b). The simple reason for this is that if prophecy existed without the counterbalancing desire for serving idols, there would be no real free will to choose. Therefore, once G-d took away the desire for serving idols, He decided to take away prophecy from the world in order to retain the balance of the revelation of good and evil. Following this, the test for mankind shifted from worshipping idols to worshipping nature (see the Vilna Gaon on Seder Olam, chapter 30).

With this we can understand the significance of the Greeks rise to power following the era of prophecy. The Ramban points out that Greek philosophy strongly rejected the existence of anything that could not be seen, heard, felt or tested in the laboratory. This philosophy made them reject the existence of a spiritual world. As long as prophecy was around, there was no way to deny

the existence of a spiritual world. The mere fact that the words of the prophet turned out to be true was a testimony to the existence of a Higher Being. However, following the period of prophecy there was suddenly room for doubting the existence of a spiritual world altogether.

This is precisely why the Greeks, whose ideology consisted of denying the spiritual world, began to rise to power at this time (Sefer Re'eh Emunah in the name of Rav Moshe Shapira *zatzal*).

Defiling the Holy

In order to give credence to their philosophy, the Greeks tried to contaminate any spiritual idea and bring it down into pure physicality. This was the Greek approach to anything having to do with spirituality, and thus the Greeks did not destroy the Beit Hamikdash but rather contaminated it; they did not throw us out of the *Eretz Yisrael* but rather brought *galut* into *Eretz Yisrael*; they did not destroy the Torah but rather had it translated to make it like any other history book. To the Greeks, the Beit Hamikdash was just another building, *Eretz Yisrael* was just another country, and the Torah was just another book of legends (see Pachad Yitzchak, Chanuka 6:4).

The Greeks' approach to the Jewish People was no different. In essence the Greeks were more interested in infiltrating Jewish spiritual life than destroying their physical existence. Although it is true that many Jews were killed under the Greek rule, it was only due to their rejection to Greek philosophy. Through banning anything that set Jews apart from the other nations (such as *brit mila*), they wished to proclaim that the Jews were just another race. Through all this, the Greeks wished to gain acceptance for their motto of "physicality is everything".

Spiritual Killing

Based on this idea we can begin to understand the connection between Greece and the sin of spilling blood.

Death in Judaism is defined as the separation of the soul from its physical garment – i.e., the body. The Maharal explains that murder is referred to as spilling blood because the *nefesh* of a person resides in his blood. Hence, spilling blood is akin to separating the body from the soul. The Ohr Gedalyahu explains that when *Chazal* tell us that the kingdom of Greece represents spilling blood they mean that the Greeks, more than any other nation, tried to separate the spiritual depth behind everything by emphasizing only its physical make up. By ignoring the soul and concentrating only on the body, they, so to speak, took the spiritual reality out of the world, leaving behind a body without a soul. This is the "spilling of blood" that the Greeks represent (*Ohr Gedalyahu al Ha'Moadim, Chanuka, Choshech zo Lavan*).

Based on the above we can also understand why it was specifically the *Kohanim* who fought off the Greeks. The *Kohanim*, more than any other group, represented the exact opposite ideology to that of the Greeks. While the Greeks came to separate the physical world from its spiritual root, the *Kohanim*, through their service in the Beit Hamikdash, were the ones who were in charge of connecting the physical world to its spiritual core. While the Greeks brought darkness to the world, the *Kohanim* illuminated the world by lighting the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash. Finally, while the Greeks represented the power of spilling blood in the world, the *Kohanim* are specifically commanded to stay away from a dead body. This is because the physical body without the soul represents the opposite of the *Kohen's* job of bringing together the physical and spiritual components of the world (Shem M'Shmuel, Emor 5673). This is precisely why the Greeks' ploy to take away spirituality from this world had to be defeated by the *Kohanim*, whose entire purpose was to be a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds. May we merit continuing the work of the *Kohanim* and eradicate any remnant of the Greek ideology that still plagues us today.

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