

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

HEADLIGHTS ON

(Moshe said to Hashem): “Show me Your Glory”... (Hashem said to him): “You will see My back, but My face cannot be seen.” (33:18,23)

Have you ever driven down a country road on a moon-less night and turned your headlights off?

Don't do it for more than a second because it's like driving into nothingness!

It's amazing how those two small pencil-beams of light allow you to navigate a tortuous country road, even on the darkest night.

Mind you, you sometimes wonder why the road is making such switch-backs. “Why can't they just make this road straight?” you think to yourself.

This world is like night. The World-to-Come is like day.

It's possible to see at night if you turn on your headlights, but there your vision is restricted to what's illuminated in the beams. It's local.

By day, however, you can see the whole picture.

In daylight it becomes clear why the road twists and turns so much, why sometimes you go up, and sometimes down: Over here there's a hill; there, a river; over there is a chasm.

In this world, a person sees but through a glass, darkly. He catches a few brief excerpts of reality, mere flashes of the way the Creator runs His creation.

The rest is night.

With only the few chapters of world history at our disposal we can't visualize the whole of existence — from where it comes and to where it's going.

That's why this world is like night.

In the World-to-Come everything becomes as clear as day. Distance

lends perspective and comprehension. We are able to understand the reasons Hashem does what He does: Why the road had to have this bend, why we had to go down there so far...

That's what Hashem was telling Moshe when he said “My face, cannot be seen.”

In this world we cannot see Hashem's ‘face’ — Hashem's direct control of the world; but His ‘back’ — the tell-tale foot-prints in the snow of History — that's clear for all to see, if we keep our ‘head-lamps’ turned on.

“The writing was the writing of G-d, who indelibly engraved them on the heart of the Jewish People for all time.”

HEART AND STONE

“And the tablets are the work of G-d, and the writing, the writing of G-d.” (32:16)

Next time you're in *shul*, take a look at the Ten Commandments above the Ark. The tops of the two Tablets are curved. Why are the Ten Commandments in this shape? The Talmud describes the Tablets as being cubes. There is not a single classical Jewish source which describes the Tablets in the form with which we are familiar today.

Where did this shape come from?

Another question. If the Children of Israel had already **heard** the Ten

Commandments, why was it necessary for these Commandments to be engraved on Tablets? Wasn't the overwhelming experience of hearing Hashem speaking sufficient?

When the Ten Commandments were engraved on the Tablets, they were also being engraved on the hearts of the Jewish People for all time. Engraved in stone. Engraved on the ‘tablet’ of the heart. The writing was the writing of G-d, who indelibly engraved them on the heart of the Jewish People for all time.

Take another look at those Ten Commandments above the Ark. Their rounded tops symbolize the shape of the heart, the heart of the Jewish People, where they have been engraved for some three thousand years.

SPIRITUAL RAYBANS®

“When the Children of Israel saw Moshe's face, that Moshe's face had become radiant, Moshe put the mask back on his face, until he came to speak with Him.” (34:33)

Moshe wore a mask to spare the Jewish People the embarrassment of not being able to look at him.

Before the sin of the golden calf, the Torah says that ‘the appearance of the glory of Hashem was like a consuming fire before the eyes of the Children of Israel.’ After the sin of the golden calf they couldn't even look at Hashem's prophet, Moshe.

Such is the power of evil.

When we violate Hashem's will, we muddy up the windows of our soul so that the light cannot come in. We have to put on spiritual dark glasses because our souls can no longer bear the light.

continued on page four

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men, age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the *Mishkan* (the women donate the necessary metal). The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and Hashem instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the *Mishkan*, its vessels, and Aaron and his sons. Hashem selects Betzalel and Oholiav to be the master craftsmen for the *Mishkan* and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that Hashem made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude that left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aaron to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aaron stalls and tries to delay them. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people

immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the orgy of idol-worship he smashes the Tablets, and destroys the golden calf. The Sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and Hashem accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the *Mishkan*, and Hashem's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks Hashem to show him the rules by which He conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. Hashem tells Moshe to hew new Tablets, and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke His mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage, and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of *Pesach*, the First-born, the First-fruits, Shabbos, *Shavuos* and *Succos* are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of Tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

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SING MY SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

אתקינו סעודתא

ASKINU SEUDASA

Melave Malka - Escorting the Queen
"This is the meal of the holy King David"

King David asked Hashem to reveal to him how long he would live. When informed that there is a Divine decree to withhold such knowledge from any man he asked to at least know on which day of the week he would perish.

Hashem disclosed to David that he would die on Shabbos. When every Shabbos came to an end and David realized that he had at least another week to live he celebrated with a great feast. The meal which we eat after Shabbos in order to accompany the "Shabbos Queen" on her way out is therefore particularly identified with King David for whom it had a special significance.

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Herschel Kulefsky

New York

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many 'geira' are there in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after *Yom Kippur* and again after *Pesach*. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19 year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called 'malachim'?
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'as* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbos is a 'sign.' What does it signify?
9. How many books are there in Tanach?
10. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aaron build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, Hashem says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did Hashem show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

BONUS QUESTION?

"The rich man should not give more nor should the poor man give less than a half shekel to atone for their souls (30:15)." Why shouldn't the rich man give more?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Hashem said to Moshe, "Whoever sins against Me, I will him erase from My book (32:33)." This should be read as a rhetorical question: "Whoever sins against Me, will I erase him from My book?!" Hashem was telling Moshe: "You have asked Me to erase you from My book. But it is not My way to erase a person from My book, even a person who has sinned against Me."

• Maharil Diskin

HAFTORAH: MELACHIM I 18:1-39

Just before the *Shofar* sounds on *Yom Kippur*, bringing to a close 25 hours of prayer and fasting, we repeat the closing words from this week's Haftorah seven times. "Hashem; He is the G-d."

Eliyahu HaNavi had challenged the idolatrous prophets of *ba'al* to a public demonstration of Who was really G-d, and who was a fraud. When a miracle happened and Israel saw the truth, they shouted in unison "Hashem; He is the G-d."

In the same way as the week's *Parsha* describes Israel wavering on the brink of idol worship, so too the Haftorah tells of one of the worst kings to rule Israel — *Achav*. His queen *Izavel* was a non-Jew who worshiped idols, murdered righteous prophets and filled the palace with idols. In spite of the danger to his life, *Eliyahu* successfully challenged *Ahav* and *Izavel*. The culmination of his victory was on Mount Carmel where it became clear to all Yisrael who was G-d.

THE VOICE OF APPEASEMENT

**"How long will you dance between two opinions?
If Hashem is the G-d, follow Him!
And if the ba'al, follow it." (18:21)**

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* was descending from Mount

Sinai with the Tablets, and the Children of Israel were busy making the golden calf, Yehoshua tried to comfort him by saying "The sound of battle is in the camp." This meant that not all of Israel has been infected by idol worship; there is still a battle between the worshippers of the golden calf and those faithful to Hashem.

Moshe replied to him that it was "Not a sound shouting strength nor a sound shouting weakness." I don't hear an ounce of resolve in either the worshippers of the calf or in those loyal to Hashem.

The way you see a real struggle is that one side beats the other!

It seems that even those who were not worshipping the calf were taking the stance of tolerance, of neutrality. They were "open to both opinions." That was "the sound shouting weakness." Just a voice, nothing more; the voice of appeasement, devoid of action and expectation of improving the situation.

In the fight against idol-worship, whatever that idol may be, only the "sound shouting strength" must be heard, because then it is impossible to dance between two opinions.

• D'var Hamelacha

WEEKLY DAF

BECHOROS 46 - 52

NO EXEMPTION FROM REDEMPTION

A Jew who is neither a *Kohen* nor a *Levite*, nor is his wife descended from such a family, is obligated to redeem his *bechor* (male first born) by giving five *shekalim* to a *kohen*. If the father failed to fulfill this obligation then the son must redeem himself in this manner.

What happens if a Jew who is about to redeem his *bechor* discovers that he is himself an unredeemed *bechor* but has only enough money to cover one redemption? There is a dispute in the Mishnah regarding priority and the halacha is that he must redeem himself rather than his son.

An interesting question arises in regard to this halacha. A Jew is not required to impoverish himself in order to fulfill a mitzvah and is even urged not to spend more than a fifth of his resources for such a purpose. How then can one be required to spend his entire “fortune” of five *shekalim* in order to fulfill the mitzvah of redeeming himself?

One resolution is offered by the Chafetz Chaim (Mishnah Berurah 656:1, Biur Halacha) who points out that the limitation of a fifth applies only

to someone whose livelihood depends entirely on his resources and a severe reduction in the size of his resources will seriously threaten his economic stability. One who possesses only five *shekalim*, however, is obviously living on wages received for labor or services and his economic situation will hardly be influenced by the spending or saving of five *shekalim*. He is therefore not exempted from spending this amount on redemption.

The late Rav Moshe Feinstein *zatal*, offered another approach. When a man must spend money in order to buy the object required for a mitzvah, such as an *esrog* or a pair of *Tefillin*, he is exempt from doing so when the expenditure is greater than a fifth of his resources because he is then considered as helpless in acquiring the object. But when the mitzvah consists of spending money which he has, as in the case of redemption, no such exemption applies.

• *Bechoros 49a*

RETURN OF THE REDEMPTION

Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Chanina were both *kohanim* who were in the

custom of returning to the father, as a gift, the five *shekalim* they received from him for the redemption of a *bechor*.

An interesting challenge is presented to this practice from an earlier ruling (*Bechoros 26b*) that one should not give the tithes due to a *kohen* to one who tries to drum up business by helping out in the grain warehouses. Such commercial behavior on the part of a *kohen* is described by the prophet Malachi as “corrupting the covenant of the Levite.” How then did the two aforementioned sages make a practice of returning redemption money as a gift when this was tantamount to encouraging every prospective redeemer to favor them above all other *kohanim*?

The Rosh offers two resolutions of this problem. First of all, the redeemers had no guarantee that their money would be returned to them so that at the moment of redemption nothing had been done by the *kohen* to encourage favoring him above others. This, therefore, is not considered a corruption of the Levite covenant. Secondly, it is possible that these sages only returned the redemption money to redeemers who were truly needy so that no one was certain that he would qualify for such a gift.

• *Bechoros 51b*

continued from page one

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE REST IS EASY

“And on the seventh day, a
Shabbos of Shabbosos” (31:15)

There are two kinds of rest.

The first kind of rest is a rest from weariness, a chance to recharge our batteries, to enable us to continue to work. For no one can work indefinitely. Everyone needs a break.

The second kind of rest comes at the end of a project. The last brushstroke of a painting. The final sentence of a novel. The last brick in a new home. Then you take a step back and look at your work. You feel the satisfaction of completion. It’s finished. It’s done. A time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labors.

“You shall labor for six days and do all your work.”

How can you do all you work in six days? Can you build an entire house in six days?

The Torah teaches us that when Shabbos arrives, even though we’re only half-way through a project, we should think of it as though it was completely finished.

In other words, on Shabbos we should picture ourselves experiencing the rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done — not just taking a break.

In a sense, this is what Hashem did when the world was six days old. He looked at the Creation and saw that it was finished. The greatest building project ever, the Heavens and the Earth, were completed.

Our rest on Shabbos is a commemoration of that rest.

This is the essential difference

between our Shabbos and the secular idea of a ‘day of rest.’ The secular concept of a day of rest is a break, so that you can return to the week revitalized and refreshed. It’s only a break.

Shabbos, on the other hand, is not just pushing the pause button on life. It’s the creation of a feeling that everything in one’s life is complete. There’s nothing left to do — except to sit back and enjoy the fruits of one’s labor.

Sources:

- ‘**Headlights On**’ - Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, ‘*Moser Derech*’ - Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, Rabbi Yaakov Niman, Rabbi Meir Chadash
- ‘**Heart And Stone**’ - Sfas Emes in *Mayana shel Torah*, Rabbi Moshe Shapiro
- ‘**RayBans**’ - Rashi, Be’er Moshe, *Artscroll Chumash*
- ‘**The Rest is Easy**’ - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in *L’Torah Ul’Moadim*

THE MERCHANT OF VEGAS

Lee Vyner
<vynerl-m@actcom.co.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

The Talmud says that someone who earns their salary from gambling is invalid as a witness in a Jewish court because the person who lost doesn't really pay with a full heart. Therefore, the money that he wins is considered theft. If so, what about the stock market? People literally gamble as to the price of a particular commodity or stock, and the person who has a holding of this particular item certainly does not want the price to deteriorate. So is someone who gambles on the stock market invalid as a witness?

Lots of love, Lee Mandy and Laivy Avraham (the cutest baby in the world bi'h)

Dear Lee and family,

Stocks are a legitimate investment. Buying stocks is essentially no different than buying diamonds, land, or wheat. True, the stock market has an element of risk, but don't confuse 'lost wages' with 'Las Vegas.' Do you know of any business which involves no element of risk? If so, do you know their phone number?

Gambling, on the other hand, is a game where each person hopes to guess the right number on the dice, or pick the right horse. Gamblers are invalid as witnesses in a Jewish court.

The Sages of the Talmud differ as to why gamblers are invalid. According to one opinion, someone who wins a bet is like a thief, because he collects prize money that he didn't 'earn' and to which

he has no true legal claim.

According to another opinion, only a professional gamester — who has no other source of income — is invalid as a witness. His integrity is suspect, because he spends his day in pursuits which contribute nothing to society. According to this opinion, someone who gambles only part-time can be a valid witness, provided he's involved in some productive activity.

The following story is told about the Chafetz Chaim: A man once asked the Chafetz Chaim to bless him that he should win the lottery, but the Chafetz Chaim refused. "But you give blessings to people who gamble on stocks, why not when they gamble on lotteries?" the man asked. The Chafetz Chaim answered that he gives blessings to stock investors because if the stock goes up, no one loses money. But blessing one lottery ticket is a 'curse' upon the other lottery tickets.

Source:

- Talmud Sanhedrin 24b
- Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 34:16
- Story thanks to Will Shulman

LEGAL LANGUAGE

Bill Baldwin from
<Hbal@ewol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I would be very grateful if you could give me some information. Could you please tell me what the word 'shoftim' means? The matter arose because of a letter I received from a group using the name 'The Shoftim Society.' They asked me to participate in a forum entitled 'The Nuremberg Trials: An Inside Story.' The Jewish attor-

neys comprising the group are based in Columbia, South Carolina. The reason for the invitation came about because I was one of the U.S. Prosecutors at the trial. I told them that I'm sorry but I won't be able to attend, since at the proposed time of the forum we will be in the process of moving north to New Hampshire.

Dear Mr. Bill Baldwin,

'Shoftim' means 'judges.' It's a noun, not a verb. One judge is called a 'shofet.' Shoftim is also the name of one of the 24 books of the Torah, the Book of Judges, which teaches about the era from the time of Joshua until the time of Samuel. As an American/Israeli, and son of a holocaust survivor, I want to personally thank you for your role in bringing some of the offenders to justice.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

*Good is no good
Whenever I'm near.
As his I'm mistaken
When taken by ear.
'Thou shalt' by my side
Is an order for quitting,
And spelling me backwards
Is no less forbidding.
Have you guessed the nature
Of my little 'con' game?
If you're right then I'm not.
Now what is my 'name'?*

Answer: My name is 'Lo' — spelled 'lamed alef.' 'Lo' means 'no' and 'not.' It sounds like the word spelled 'lamed vav' which is Hebrew for 'his.' 'Lo' spelled backwards is 'Al,' which also means 'not.'

• Reuven Subar

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>1. 30:13 - Twenty.
 2. 30:14 - Twenty.
 3. 30:15 - For the <i>Adanim</i> (socks), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the <i>Mishkan</i>.
 4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
 5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
 6. 30:35 - Because they stir (<i>malach</i>) the water with their oars.
 7. 31:3 - <i>Chochma</i> is knowledge acquired from others. <i>Bina</i> is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. <i>Da'as</i> is holy inspiration.
 8. 31:13 - It is a sign between Hashem and the Jewish People</p> | <p>that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
 9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
 10. 31:18 - 24.
 11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
 12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
 13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (<i>Pesach</i> sacrifice), surely the <i>entire</i> Torah cannot be given to a whole nation who has estranged itself from Hashem!
 14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
 15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say</p> | <p>“Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people.”
 16. 32:34 - Whenever Hashem punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
 17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the <i>Girgashites</i>, voluntarily emigrated.
 18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His <i>Shechina</i> dwell among them.
 19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. Hashem commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
 20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.</p> |
|--|---|---|

BONUS ANSWER!

So that by counting the half shekel coins, they will know how many people there are.

• *Da'as Zekenim Miba'ale Tosfos*

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

<p>30:13 30:19 31:2 32:1-4 32:18 33:11 34:27</p>	<p>RAMBAN <i>Lashon HaKodesh</i> Washing Hands Betzael The Golden Calf Sounds Yehoshua's Age A Renewed Covenant</p>	<p>34:28 105 107-8 28:5 28:30</p>	<p>The Second Tablets SEFER HACHINUCH Equality in Sacrifices Anointing MALBIM Trustworthy Treasurers The <i>Urim V'Tumim</i></p>	<p>29:9 30:1 30:12 31:2 31:13</p>	<p>Donning of the Kohen's Garments The Incense-Altar The Concept of Counting People The Name Betzael A Taste of the World-to-Come</p>
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