

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### WINDOW SHOPPING

**“And you will count...” (23:15)**

Imagine you just won \$25,000,000 in the lottery.

After the initial disbelief and transcendent elation, you start to think about all the things you're going to buy. 25 million is quite a lot of money by anyone's standards, and you hear that you will have to wait a month till the check is cleared and you can go out and spend to your heart's desire.

So what do you do in the meantime? You window-shop. After the paltry business of choosing your limousine and your Saville Row tailoring, you window-shop for a house, or maybe an island in the Caribbean! (Well, maybe you'll need more than \$25,000,000 for that kind of thing...)

Anyway, when your money arrives, you have everything sewn up: What you want, and what color you want it in.

Maybe with this analogy, we can understand why we don't make the blessing *Shehechyanu* (thanking Hashem for bringing us to a joyous event) when we count the *Omer* between Pesach and Shavuos.

To a Jew, the biggest 'check' we could have been given was the Torah. So when we count the *Omer*, we are like a person who has won the lottery and every day waits till he can cash the check!

### BORED WITH BREATHING

**“And you will bring a new ‘mincha’ offering (meal offering) to Hashem.” (22:16)**

Are you 'burned out'?

You seem to hear that phrase a lot these days. I'm 'burned out' from this; I'm 'burned out' from that; I'm bored with this; It's just lost its excitement for me.

Why do people 'burn out'?

Take two people working hard. One self-employed, the other working for a salary. There's a big difference between them. Someone who works for a salary has no particular interest in the company, except that it provides him with a living. And his apathy only increases if the company doesn't do well and there is no bonus to look forward to.

“The Torah is our life's breath. Even though a person breathes millions of times in the course of his life, does anyone get tired of breathing?”

Someone who is self-employed, on the other hand, puts his very soul into his work. He *is* the company. He enjoys the moments of triumph and he grieves over the disasters, but bored and burned out? Never.

Unlike the salaried employee whose remuneration is fixed from the beginning with only limited scope for profit participation, the self-employed person knows that the sky's the limit. The company's success is his success.

When we learn Torah we should think of it like it was our own business. In your own business, if things aren't going right, who is there to put them right? Only yourself. If it takes extra time at the office, we would certainly, and gladly, put in the extra hours.

When we sit down to learn, do we mentally 'punch in'? Are we waiting for the next coffee break? For the check at the end of the month? Or do we feel

the exuberance and challenge of our learning as though it was our own business?

How does the Torah refer to the monumental event of its being given at Sinai?

“And you will bring a new ‘mincha’ offering to Hashem.”

Why is the reference so oblique? It's true that at the festival of Shavuos we do bring a new *mincha* offering to Hashem. But is that the most conspicuous aspect of Shavuos? How about the giving of the Torah? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to spell out that on this day the Torah was given at Sinai? And yet it is with these few covert words that the Torah hints to the central event of Judaism.

Why?

The Torah doesn't specify the date of its giving because it doesn't want us to feel that it was given as a 'one-off' event. **Rather, it wants us to feel like it's being given to us every day**, and for us to receive it every day as though we were hearing it for the first time at Sinai.

The Torah is our life's breath. Even though a person breathes millions of times in the course of his life, **does anyone get tired of breathing?** Why not? Because we understand that our life depends on breathing, it's not a subject for boredom. Boredom can only set in when a person sees something as optional. Breathing isn't optional; it's obligatory.

This is the way we should feel about the Torah, for it is our life and the length of our days.

### READERS' DIGEST

**“...Any man of the House of Yisrael and of the proselytes among Yisrael, who will bring his offering...” (22:17)**

Judaism does not preach asceticism.

Unlike many religions, Judaism does not see the world as the enemy of the

*continued on page four*

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

The *kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They are permitted to attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) may not attend the funeral even of his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *kohanim*. The physical defects that invalidate a *kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *kohanim*, may be eaten only by *kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old and is free from

any physical defects. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name (*Kiddush Hashem*) by insuring that one's behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender one's life rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain *Melacha* - creative work - during these holidays. New grain ("*Chadash*") may not be used until after the second day of Pesach, when the *Omer* of barley is offered when there is a Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the Menorah and baking the *Lechem HaPanim* (show-bread) in the Temple. A man blasphemes Hashem and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

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## FATHERLY ADVICE

*Tidbits From the 'Ethics of the Fathers'  
Traditionally Studied on Summer Sabbaths*

*"ALL MY DAYS I GREW UP AMONGST WISE MEN AND  
I NEVER FOUND ANY BENEFIT DERIVED FROM SILENCE."*

• Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel (1:17)

In contrast to some texts which present this as a praise of silence in response to insult, this version is a critique of silence on the part of a student sitting before his teacher. Such failure to speak up never produces any benefit for the student and is even counterproductive for three reasons. His lack of response will be interpreted by his fellow students

as either a sign of being too dull to understand the lesson or too haughty to bother discussing it; his lack of give and take with his teacher will prevent him from fully understanding the lesson; and finally, his ability to internalize the information and remember it will be adversely affected by his failure to verbalize what he has studied.

• *Tiferes Yisrael*

לע"נ  
הרה"ח ר' יהודה בן ר' דוד זצ"ל  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Which male descendants of Aaron are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *Kohen Gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. If the daughter of a *kohen* marries a “zar” she may no longer eat *Terumah*. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* (vow) and a *nedavah* (free-will offering)?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of Hashem?
12. Apart from Shabbos, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *esrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

## BONUS QUESTION?

“And you shall count from the day after Pesach, from the day you bring the *omer* offering, seven complete weeks...” (23:15) ‘Counting the *omer*’ is not the only place the Torah commands a mitzva of counting. A man or woman who has a certain type of emission must count seven clean days after the emission ceases and then immerse in a *mikveh*. This commandment is stated clearly in the Torah. Why, then, do we make a blessing each day when counting the *omer*, but a person counting the seven clean days does not make a blessing at all?

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The Torah forbids slaughtering a mother animal and its offspring on the same day. Therefore, if someone sold an animal to be slaughtered later that day, it is then forbidden for him to sell its offspring, unless he informs the second buyer of the sale of the mother.

• Aruch Hashulchan 16:9, Chullin 83a

## HAFTORAH: YEchezkel 44

### BASIS AND DIRECTION

The literal meaning of the word *kohen* includes both the idea of *basis* and *direction*. Even when the masses are infatuated by heathen concepts, and immorality is rife amongst the powerful, the *kohen* has to guard the sanctuary of the Torah, re-affirming both the *basis* and the *direction* of Jewish life.

However, the priests did not always live up to their calling and their name, and Hashem proclaimed that they were to be barred from the priestly functions of bringing the offerings.

However in contrast to these, the Haftorah depicts those priests who, revering their ancestor *Zadok*, showed a brilliant contrast and kept the true spirit of the tribe of *Levi*.

### NATURAL BREAK

“And on the day of his coming to the Holy, to the Inner Courtyard, to minister in the Sanctuary, let him bring his sin offering...” (44:27)

According to the commentaries, this verse means that when a *kohen* serves for the first time in the Sanctuary he should bring an Inauguration Offering,

one tenth of an *eipha*.

However, this halacha is spelled out in the Torah itself, so what new aspect can the prophet be revealing to us?

Between the destruction of the first *Beis Hamikdash* and the construction of the second, there was an interval of some seventy years. Thus, there were *kohanim* who served in both *Batei Mikdash*.

The prophet here is revealing that these *kohanim* were also required to bring an Inauguration Offering at the beginning of their service in the Second *Beis Hamikdash*, even though they had already brought one at the time that they first served in the First *Beis Hamikdash*.

The reason was that the gap between the two *Batei Mikdash* was considered a *hefsek* (an interruption) and this nullified their original status.

Similarly in the future, when former *kohanim* are restored to life after the Resurrection of the Dead, they too will need to bring an Inauguration Offering after the long pause of the exile.

Sources:

- *Basis And Direction* - Rabbi Mendel Hirsch
- *Natural Break* - Ahavas Yonason, Mayana shel Torah

## WEEKLY DAF

### TEMURAH 30 - KRISOS 3

## THE BURNED AND THE BURIED

There are two categories of forbidden matter which must be eliminated so that no one will derive any benefit from them. One category requires burial. This includes, among others, meat and milk which have been cooked together, and a non-sanctified animal which has been slaughtered in the Sanctuary. The second category, of which *chametz* on Pesach is one example, requires burning.

One may not bury what requires burning nor burn what must be buried. Burial does not suffice for what is to be burned, explains Rashi, because there is the danger that someone may unearth it and make illegal use of it. Burning is improper for what is to be buried, explains the Gemara, because there is a difference in the legal status of the ashes. Anything which the Torah commanded us to burn ceases to retain its forbidden status once we have fulfilled this command; its ashes are therefore permitted for use. An item which we bury because the Torah did not command us to burn it has no limit set on how long it remains forbidden; its ashes are therefore still forbidden. The result is that if we burn what needs only to be buried we run the risk of using the ashes which are still forbidden.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger challenges the

reason given by Rashi for not burying what must be burned because of the fear that it may be unearthed and used. Since there is a Torah command to burn such an item, he asks, is this not sufficient reason to prohibit us from burying it since this prevents its being burned?

•Temurah 34a

## TOO EARLY, TOO SUDDEN

The name of the *Masechta* we begin this week — *Krisos* — is the multiple form of the word for the heavenly punishment of *kares* incurred by serious, intentional violations of Torah law. Our very first mishnah lists 36 such sins mentioned in the Torah.

What does *kares* actually consist of?

The first time it is mentioned in the Torah (*Bereishis* 17:14) is in regard to the heavenly punishment for a male descendant of Avraham (later narrowed down to descendants of Yaakov) who will fail to become circumcised. Rashi explains that this means he will die childless and before his time. This approach is repeated in Rashi's commentary in *Masechta Shabbos* (25a) where he explains the difference between the *kares* meted out for graver sins and "death at the hands of Heaven" incurred for lesser ones. Both consist of premature death, but *kares* also includes the loss of the children (if they were minors at

the time of the parent's punishment — Tosefos).

While Rashi does not delineate the age for premature death, the Gemara in *Masechta Mo'ed Katan* (28a) indicates that *kares* means death before sixty, while no exact figure is mentioned for the other form of premature death. The Talmud Yerushalmi, however, defines *kares* as dying before fifty, whereas the other form of premature death takes place before sixty.

An interesting problem is raised in the Yerushalmi. What sort of *kares* is there for a man who eats forbidden animal fats (or any other sin deserving *kares*) when he has already passed the age of fifty (or sixty according to our Babylonian Talmud)? The answer given is that he dies a sudden death which is also a form of *kares*.

This form of *kares* is mentioned in an incident related in the aforementioned Gemara about Rabbi Yosef who made a feast for his fellow sages when he reached the age of sixty since he saw this as an indication that he had not committed any sin deserving of *kares*. His disciple, the Sage Abaye, reminded him that even though he was beyond the *kares* of years he still faced the danger of a *kares* of days — a sudden death. Rabbi Yosef's response was that passing the *kares* of years alone was a cause for celebration, but his disciple's challenge introduced the concept of a *kares* of days which threatens a sinner at any age.

•Krisos 2a

continued from page one

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

soul, to be despised and rejected. Rather, it sees the physical as a resource; as neutral as clay in the hands of the potter.

You can make the world into a vessel to contain the Divine light, or you can leave it to be a dull dead weight that drags the soul down with itself.

The world is like a pyramid. At its apex is the *kohen* who represents the ultimate in *kedusha* (holiness) in this world. The power of the *kohen* is such that by his *physical* actions he is able to affect not just his own spirituality but even that of others.

When a person brought an offering in the *Beis Hamikdash*, the *kohen* who offered the animal would, in most cases,

partake of its meat. Through the act of the *kohen's* eating, the supplicant received atonement. In other words, **the physical process of the kohen's eating affected the spirituality of the owner of the offering.**

Rav Chaim of Volozhin once sent a *meshulach* (fund-raiser) to gather funds for his Yeshiva in return for a percentage commission. There happened to be one very wealthy businessman who was prepared to make a substantial donation, but he did not want the *meshulach* to take his percentage; rather he sent the money directly to Rav Chaim, stating that he wanted the whole sum to go only for the benefit of the Yeshiva.

Rav Chaim sent him back his money with a note pointing out that this was the non-Jewish way of giving money, that everything should go only to their place of worship and nothing to those who gather it.

The Jewish way, however, is that the *meshulach* should also benefit. As it says "The *kohanim* eat and the supplicant receives atonement."

Sources:

- **Bored With Breathing** - *Kli Yakar, Moser Derech, Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, Rabbi Yaakov Niman, Rabbi Meir Chadash*
- **Window Shopping** - *Bnei Yissaschar, Rabbi Shalom Schwadron, Rabbi Calev Gestetner*
- **Readers' Digest** - *Sifra, Vayikra 10: 17, Pardes Yosef*

# ASK the RABBI

## APOCALYPSE NOW? THE HALE-BOPP COMET

**David A. Schiffmann**  
<das1002@cus.cam.ac.uk>  
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I heard that a letter published in the 'New Scientist' magazine refers to a statement in the Talmud that if a comet passes through the constellation of Orion, it signifies the end of the world, and that the 'Hale-Bopp' comet will pass through this constellation on 23 April. I would be grateful if you could confirm if there is such a passage in the Talmud, and how one should understand it. Thank you for your help.

**William Zambrano MD**  
<eyedoctor@worldnet.att.net>  
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Shalom, Shalom. According to the November 1995 issue of 'Sky & Telescope,' Comet Hale-Bopp will pass through the constellations of Perseus, Taurus, and Orion. The fact that it passes through Orion is a very ominous sign. The Talmud states that "if a comet would pass through the constellation of Orion the world would be destroyed."

Hale-Bopp will pass through Orion starting the day after Passover, during the counting of

the Omer, and will complete the transit on Shavuot, June 11, 1997. An earlier celestial sign occurred on the 9th of Av, 1994 when the 21 fragments of the Shoemaker-Levi comet slammed into Jupiter for 7 days. Is there any increase in Messianic expectation as a result of the above? Any comments on these spectacular affairs in the heavens? Respectfully,

Dear David A. Schiffmann and Dr. Zambrano,

Talmudic teachings can be divided into two categories: Halacha and Aggada. While the halachic teachings are always meant to be taken literally, the aggadic teachings are not always meant to be taken literally.

According to the Maharal of Prague, one of the most authoritative commentators on the aggadic portions of the Talmud, they are always, with only a few exceptions, meant as metaphors. He writes that the Talmudic statements in Tractate Berachot 58b regarding astronomical events should be understood as metaphors as well.

Some commentaries explain that this Talmudic passage is not referring to comets at all, but rather to meteors ('shooting stars'). If so, this passage is irrelevant to the Hale-Bopp comet.

This is not to say that comets have no 'gravity.' According to traditional sources, a new star appeared in the sky 4,100 years ago. That was the year the world was destroyed by a flood in the time of Noah. This star, apparently a comet, traveled through all the constellations in a month's time. It was an omen for the people

in the world to reconsider their wicked lifestyles and practices. (Interestingly, NASA reports that Hale-Bopp last appeared about 4,200 years ago [Astronomy Magazine Feb. '97].)

Whether or not this comet is a sign of destruction, I think it's important to point out another Talmudic teaching: "When the People of Israel do the will of Hashem, they need fear none of these astronomical omens, as indicated by the following verse: 'So says Hashem: Don't imitate the ways of the wicked, and don't be afraid of heavenly omens.'"

### Sources:

- Talmud Berachot 58b
- Be'er Hagolah, Rabbi Yehuda Loewe of Prague
- Netzach Yisrael, Chapter 60
- Mishna Berurah 227:1
- Seder Hadorot
- Talmud Sukka 29a
- Research Credit: Rabbi Zev Rosen

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

### Last week we asked:

There is a person mentioned in Tanach whose last part of his name is the English translation of the first part of his name. Who is this person?

### Answer:

1. Yonadov. The English translation of Yona is dove! Yonadav ben Rachav was originally named Yehonadov, but his name was shortened to Yonadov when he joined with King Yehu.

2. Michayhu of Kings 22:8. 'Hu' (who) in English is 'mi' in Hebrew. (Thanks to Andy & Rochie Kohlenberg from Efrat, Israel)

### Sources:

- Jeremiah 38:19
- II Kings 10:15
- Midrash Hagadol Shemot 18:1

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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.

1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters, and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its *mother* on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of *Nissan*.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be *complete*.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidas* (binding of) *Yitzchak*.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemos* 2:12).
20. 24:21 - Death.

## BONUS ANSWER!

If a person has a recurrence of the emission during the seven days, he must start counting all over again from the beginning. Therefore, he can not make a blessing on the counting, because it's impossible for him to know if his counting will be successful. The 49 days between Pesach and Shavuot, on the other hand, are certain to occur. Therefore, we make a blessing.

• *Tosafos Kesuvos 72a*

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

21:6	<b>RAMBAN</b> Holiness	23:40	The <i>Esrog</i>	306	Counting the <i>Omer</i>
22:32	Sanctifying G-d		<b>SEFER HACHINUCH</b>	313	Yom Kippur
23:17	Leavened Bread	291	Perfection of Creation	324	The <i>Lulav</i>
23:27	Judgment and Repentance	294 296	Divine Providence Purpose of Creation	325	The <i>Succah</i>

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this summer — 1997 — in israel