

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### PRIDE AND PRIVILEGE

*“These are the words that you shall speak to the Children of Israel.” (19:6)*

*Rashi: “These words — no less and no more.”*

**W**e live in a world where inflation is an everyday part of life. But there’s one thing that’s inflation-proof. There’s one thing that costs exactly the same today as it did three thousand years ago.

Being Jewish.

You can join the Jewish People today for exactly the same price as three thousand years ago — accepting the Torah and the *mitzvos*.

Anyone can become Jewish if they want to.

The enemies of the Jewish People accuse the Torah of being racist, setting the Jewish People apart as a treasured people and a holy nation. But how can Judaism be racist and exclusive if anyone can join?

It’s true, the Jewish People are privileged: They have a special place in the purpose of Creation, to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” With every privilege, however, comes responsibility.

Rashi tells us that the above command, to speak “these words” to the Children of Israel, contains an implicit mandate not to add or subtract from Hashem’s words.

However, the Sages tell us that Hashem instructed Moshe to convey the Torah in different ways to different sectors of the Jewish People: For example, when speaking to some people, Moshe was to use gentle words. When speaking to others, Moshe was to use language as tough as sinew.

So how could Moshe on the one hand not change a word, and on the other hand vary his words to suit his audience?

When the Jewish People heard “And you will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy people,” some heard these as gentle words, words alluding to the glowing reward of such an exalted mission. Others heard these same words,

but they heard them as words bespeaking a destiny as tough as sinew. For to be a holy nation and a treasured people is a responsibility of awesome proportions.

Privilege comes only at a price.

### THE HUMAN JUNGLE

*“And G-d spoke all these words saying...” (20:1)*

**W**hy were the Ten Commandments given on two tablets of stone? Why wasn’t one enough?

There’s a difference between the five *mitzvos* on the first tablet and the five on the second tablet: Included with the *mitzvos* on the first tablet is the reward for keeping them and the punishment for failing to keep them. On the second tablet, the *mitzvos* are stated without mention of reward and punishment.

The first five are *mitzvos* where a person honors the Creator: Believing in Hashem, not making idols, not using Hashem’s name for no purpose, observing Shabbos. Thus these first commandments are accompanied by descriptions of reward and punishment.

The second group of five commandments are for the benefit of people. The prohibitions against murder, kidnapping, adultery and false testimony are fundamental to living in peace with society. **Their mere performance is their own reward.** Failing to observe them creates a society which is little more than a jungle — and that’s punishment enough in itself.

### HE AIN’T HEAVY...

*“Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work; but the seventh day is Shabbos to Hashem, your G-d...” (20:9,10)*

**A** poor villager was trekking the many miles to his destination in the next village. He staggered along under the weight of his enormous pack when sud-

“On Shabbos, our bodies feast with the good food and drink, but our souls celebrate the opportunity to be close to our Creator.”

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**H**earing of the miracles Hashem performed for *Bnei Yisrael*, Moshe's father-in-law Yisro arrives with Moshe's wife and sons, reuniting the family in the wilderness. Yisro is so impressed by Moshe's detailing of the Exodus from Egypt that he converts and joins the Jewish People. Seeing that the only judicial authority for the entire Jewish nation is Moshe himself, Yisro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate the smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice. The *Bnei Yisrael* arrive at Mt. Sinai where the Torah is offered to them. After they accept, Hashem charges Moshe to instruct the people not to approach the mountain, and to prepare themselves for three days in order to receive the Torah. On the third day, amidst thunder and lightning, Hashem's voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain and He speaks to the

Jewish People, giving to them the Ten Commandments:

- Believe in Hashem
- Don't have other gods
- Don't use Hashem's name in vain
- Observe the Shabbos
- Honor your parents
- Don't murder
- Don't commit adultery
- Don't kidnap
- Don't testify falsely
- Don't covet

After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay Hashem's word to them. Hashem instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.

## HAFTORAH: YESHAYAHU 6:1-13, 7:1-6, 9:5,6

**T**he revelation of the *Shechina* at Sinai in this week's Parsha is mirrored in the Haftorah by a revelation of the *Shechina* to the Prophet Yeshayahu.

### *No, No, AFTER YOU*

**T**he nature of most people is to want to be first. To demonstrate their superiority over others. This is the driving force behind the desire to have money and power. I'm better than you! **You** go second!

And even when we allow others to go first, it's usually to demonstrate what elevated character traits we have — in other words — *I'm elevated over you!*

In the *kedusha* that we say at least twice a day, we borrow a prayer from the angels to praise Hashem.

We say "They (the angels) call one to another and say 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the L-rd of Hosts. The whole world is filled with His Glory.'"

Man is not an angel. When the angels say *kedusha*, they begin by calling to each other as if to say "You go first because you are greater than me." To which comes the reply "No, you are greater than me!" Finally, they all praise Hashem together.

The angels repeat the word "holy" three times. Anything which is done three times has permanence and perpetuity. Thus the angels never cease saying "holy," for Hashem is infinitely Holy.

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Published by  
**OHR SOMAYACH**  
TANENBAUM COLLEGE  
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

General Editor:  
**Rabbi Moshe Newman**  
Editorial & Web Advisor:  
**Rabbi Reuven Lauffer**  
Associate Editors:  
**Rabbi Mordechai Becher,**  
**Rabbi Reuven Subar**  
Contributing Writers:  
Weekly Daf, Love of the Land:  
**Rav Mendel Weinbach**  
Insights, Overview, Haftorah:  
**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

Web Production: **Lev Seltzer**  
Produced and Designed by the Office of Communications  
**Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro, Director**

© 1998 OHR SOMAYACH INSTITUTIONS - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529

\* THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS WORDS OF TORAH. PLEASE TREAT IT WITH DUE RESPECT.

OhrNet is available from several sources:  
• E-MAIL VIA INTERNET: Write to info@ohr.org.il for information.  
• WORLD WIDE WEB: Our address is: www.ohr.org.il  
• FAX AND REGULAR MAIL WITHIN ISRAEL:  
To subscribe, mail us a letter, or fax a request with your name & fax number to 02-581-2890.  
• US-MAIL WITHIN NORTH AMERICA:  
Call 1-800-431-2272 for subscription information.

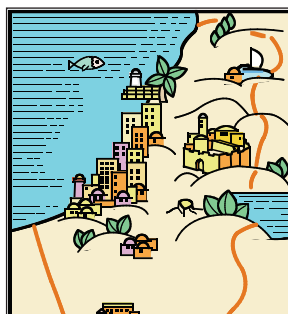
\* You can submit your questions to Ask The Rabbi with your web browser at <http://www.ohr.org.il/askpage/ask.htm>. Or to use standard E-Mail address it to "info@ohr.org.il" To insure correct handling set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi".

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### *A SACRED BIRTHRIGHT*

**T**he most sacred part of the *Beis Hamikdash* was in the portion belonging to the Tribe of Binyamin. Since this included the Holy of Holies and the Holy Ark, Binyamin is referred to as "the host of the Divine Presence."



Why did Binyamin merit that the Divine Presence should be in his portion? Because all the other sons of Yaakov were born outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. Only Binyamin was born in *Eretz Yisrael*.

- *Mechilta Yisro 4:18*

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Yisro had 7 names. Why was one of his names *Yeser*?
2. News of which two events motivated Yisro to come join the Jewish people?
3. What name of Yisro indicates his love for Torah?
4. Why was Tzipora with her father, Yisro, and not with Moshe when the *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt?
5. Why does verse 18:5 say that Yisro came to the desert — don't we already know that the *Bnei Yisrael* were in the desert?
6. Why did Moshe tell Yisro all that Hashem had done for the Jewish People?
7. According to the *Midrash* quoted by Rashi, how did Yisro respond when he was told about the destruction of Egypt?
8. Who is considered as if he enjoys the splendor of the *Shechina*?
9. On what day did Moshe sit to judge the Jewish People?
10. Who is considered a co-partner in Creation?
11. "Moshe sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moshe...." What bothered Yisro about this arrangement?
12. Why did Yisro return to his own land?
13. How did the encampment at Sinai differ from the other encampments?
14. To whom does the Torah refer when it uses the term "*Beis Yaakov*"?
15. How is Hashem's protection of the Jewish People similar to an eagle's protection of its young?
16. What was Hashem's original plan for *Matan Torah*? What was the response of the Jewish People?
17. How many times greater is the "measure of reward" than the "measure of punishment"?
18. How is it derived that "don't steal" refers to kidnapping?
19. In response to hearing the Torah given at Sinai, how far backwards did the Jewish people retreat in fear?
20. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?

## BONUS QUESTION?

*Rashi never "just" comments; something in the text always impels him to do so. Rashi answers unspoken questions arising from a thoughtful reading of the Torah text. Anyone who wants a true understanding of Rashi's classic Torah commentary must always ask: "What's Bothering Rashi?"*

**"And Yisro, priest of Midian, Moshe's father-in-law, heard all that (*asher*) G-d did for Moses and for Israel, His people, that (*ki*) G-d took Israel out of Egypt." (Exodus 18:1)**

**Rashi:** "What report did he hear that motivated him to come? The splitting of the Red Sea and the war with Amalek."

Why does Rashi ask what Yisro heard, when the Torah states that he heard that "G-d took Israel out of Egypt?" Isn't this event, Hashem taking them out of Egypt, specific enough for Rashi?

**What's bothering Rashi?**

*answer on page five*

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 18:1 - Because he caused a Parsha to be added to the Torah. *Yeser* means addition.
2. 18:1 - The splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek.
3. 18:1 - Chovav.
4. 18:3 - When Aharon met Moshe with his family on their way down to Egypt, Aharon said to Moshe: "We're pained over the Jews already in Egypt, and you're bringing more Jews to Egypt?" Moshe, hearing this, sent his wife and children back to Midian.
5. 18:5 - To show Yisro's greatness. He was living in a luxurious place, yet he went to the desert in order to study the Torah.
6. 18:8 - To draw Yisro closer to the Torah way of life.
7. 18:9 - He grieved.
8. 18:12 - One who dines with Torah scholars.
9. 18:13 - The day after *Yom Kippur*.
10. 18:13 - A judge who renders a correct decision.
11. 18:14 - Yisro felt that the people weren't being treated with the proper respect.
12. 18:27 - To convert the members of his family to Judaism.
13. 19:2 - The Jewish People were united.
14. 19:3 - The Jewish women.
15. 19:4 - An eagle carries its young on top of its wings to protect them from human arrows. So too, Hashem's cloud of glory separated between the Egyptian and the Jewish camp in order to absorb Egyptian missiles and arrows fired at the Jewish People.
16. 19:9 - Hashem offered to appear to Moshe and to give the Torah through him. The Jewish People responded that they wished to hear the Torah directly from Hashem.
17. 20:6 - Five hundred times.
18. 20:13 - Because it is written immediately after "Don't murder" and "Don't commit adultery," it is derived that "Don't steal" refers to a crime carrying the same penalty as the first two — namely, the death penalty.
19. 20:15 - They backed away from the mountain twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2000 cubits).
20. 20:22 - The altar was created to extend life; iron is sometimes used to make weapons which shorten life.

## WEEKLY DAF

### SHABBOS 72 - 78

#### WHEN A LITTLE IS STILL A LOT

In his interpretation of a *beraisa* concerning the laws of *borer* (separating the desirable food from the undesirable) on Shabbos, Rabbi Chisda suggests that if one makes such an act of separation on an amount less than the size of a dried fig, he has done nothing wrong. His view is challenged by Rabbi Yosef, who argues that even though one is not obligated to bring a sin-offering if he involuntarily performed *borer* on less than that amount, it is still forbidden to do so.

Rashi explains this challenge on the basis of Rabbi Yochanan's ruling (*Mesechta Yoma 74a*). There, Rabbi Yochanan rules that even if one eats less than an olive size of forbidden animal fat (an olive size is the amount which would obligate him to bring a sin-offering if he ate it involuntarily) he has still violated Torah law.

Two sources are offered for this ruling. One is logic: Since this small amount has the potential to combine with another small amount to form a quantity requiring a sin offering, then it must by itself also be prohibited. The second source is the Torah's terminology forbidding "all fat" (*Vayikra 7:23*), indicating that even the smallest amount is forbidden.

What is Rabbi Chisda's defense against this challenge? Two approaches are suggested by the commentaries:

Tosefos' view is that Rabbi Chisda holds that only when one separates a fig-sized amount is he considered to be doing any sort of creative labor on Shabbos, because less than that amount is considered a part of the normal process of eating which the Torah permitted.

A second approach, which Pnei Yehoshua and other later commentaries put forward, is that Rabbi Chisda understood Rabbi Yochanan's ruling to apply only to matters of eating. Even though the first of the sources for Rabbi Yochanan's ruling — the logical one, that something which can combine with another amount to create a quantity obligating a sin offering must by itself also be forbidden — would logically extend to the forbidden labor of *borer*, the second source, which is based on a prohibition in a case of eating, does not apply to prohibitions where eating is not involved.

Rabbi Yosef, of course, takes issue with this. He contends that even in non-food matters, there is still a prohibition even in the most minute amount.

• Shabbos 74a

#### WHO NEEDS A MOSQUITO?

Whatever Hashem created in this world, declared Rabbi Yehuda, was created for a purpose. Nothing is superfluous.

This observation was directed at those who see insects and reptiles as not only of no benefit, but even as harmful.

Rabbi Yehuda, in our *gemara*, points out how some of these harmful creatures can be used to supply healing for damage caused to man by other creatures. Another approach suggested by the Midrash is that sometimes the harmful creatures serve the purpose of punishing the wicked who deserve the damage inflicted upon them.

The classic example is the case of the Roman Emperor Titus who defiled and destroyed the *Beis Hamikdash* in Jerusalem, and returned to Rome on a ship loaded with the sacred vessels he had looted from it. The *gemara* (*Mesechta Gittin 56b*) relates that when Hashem sent a giant wave to drown the ship, Titus defiantly challenged the Creator to fight him on dry land and not on the water where He had crushed Pharaoh and Sisera.

Hashem's response was that He would send the tiniest of His creatures to battle Titus on land. When Titus landed, a mosquito entered his nose and crept into his brain. It remained there for seven years, eating away at the brain of this haughty sinner and causing him the most severe pain. One of the Sages, Rabbi Pinchas ben Aruva, related that he was present when the Romans performed an autopsy on Titus after his death. In his skull they discovered that the tiny mosquito had grown into a substantial bird — a classic example of a seemingly superfluous creature carrying out its Divinely dictated mission.

• Shabbos 77b

GET CONNECTED TO OHR SOMAYACH ON THE WEB

[WWW.OHR.ORG.IL](http://WWW.OHR.ORG.IL)

OVER A BILLION BYTES OF TORAH LITERATURE AND INFORMATION



## PARSHA INSIGHTS

denly a horse and wagon pulled up alongside him. “Climb aboard!” the wagon driver shouted down to him. The villager huffed and puffed his way up onto the back of the wagon, the driver shook his reins and the horses obediently started to trot.

A few miles down the road, the villager said to the driver “I can’t thank you enough. This is really very kind of you!” “Not at all” said the driver and turned to smile at the villager at the back of the wagon. It was then that he noticed that the villager was sitting crumpled forward with his heavy pack still on his back. Exclaimed the driver, “Why haven’t you taken your pack off!” The villager replied in all innocence “Well, you’ve been so kind carrying me, ***I didn’t want to burden you with the extra weight of my pack as well!***”

If Hashem can “carry” us all week — making sure that we have food to eat, clothes to wear, cars to drive, and even air to breathe — He can certainly bear the “added load” of supporting us on Shabbos, even if we don’t go to work!

### WINING AND DINING

***“Remember the day of Shabbos to sanctify it... Because six days Hashem made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day...”***  
(20:8-11)

Once upon a time, a prince was captured by his father’s enemies. After a long time, the king managed to get a secret message to the prince encouraging him not to give up, and to retain his princely manner even amidst the wolves of prey among whom the prince was forced to live. Soon, the message said, the king would obtain his son’s release, either through war or peaceful means.

The prince was overjoyed and wished to celebrate, but

he could not, of course, reveal the secret of his joy. Therefore, he invited his lowly companions to the local inn and ordered drinks for everyone.

They celebrated because of the wine and liquor, while the prince celebrated because of his father’s letter. Similarly on Shabbos, our bodies feast with the good food and drink, but our souls celebrate the opportunity to be close to our Creator.

### THE RULES OF THE GAME

***“Remember the day of Shabbos to sanctify it.”*** (20:8)

“**W**hat a terrible day — Shabbos! You can’t drive! You can’t write! You can’t even turn on a light! You can’t do this! You can’t do that! What a terrible day!” (Sound familiar?)

Have you ever played basketball?

What a terrible game — Basketball! You can’t stand in one place for more than thirty seconds. You can’t run with the ball. You can’t be a moving block. You can’t do this! You can’t do that! What a terrible game!

It’s precisely the rules of Basketball that make Basketball Basketball. If there were no rules, someone would grab the ball, hold onto it until everyone else got bored and went off for tea. Then he’d grab a ladder, set it up and pop the ball in the net. Great! But that’s not Basketball!

Just as the rules of Basketball *define* Basketball, so the rules of Shabbos define Shabbos.

Sources:

- ***Pride And Prejudice*** - Sfas Emes
- ***The Human Jungle*** - Ramban
- ***He Ain’t Heavy*** - The Dubner Maggid
- ***Wining And Dining*** - Toldos Yaakov Yosef
- ***The Rules Of The Game*** - Rabbi Yehoshua Hartman

## BONUS ANSWER!

The verse presents two apparent problems: First the verse mentions what was done for “Moshe and the Children of Israel” and then it says “that Hashem took *Israel* out of Egypt.” Why is Moshe left out of the second phrase?

Furthermore, the verse uses two different words, “*asher*” and “*ki*,” both of which can mean “that.” Less often, they can both mean “when.” If here both words mean “that,” why did the verse not use one term consistently — why did the verse **switch** from “*asher*” to “*ki*”?

Rashi, sensitive to these subtle changes, therefore translates the word “*ki*” as “when.” Now the verse reads, “Yisro heard all that G-d did *when* He took the Jews out of Egypt.”

With this reading of the text, the verse is **not** specific about any particular event. Therefore, Rashi says “Yes, Yisro heard everything G-d did, but what specific event actually motivated Yisro to come join the Jewish people.”

Hashem didn’t “take Moshe out of Egypt” because Moshe was never enslaved there. But G-d did many things for Moshe *when* Israel went out of Egypt. The splitting of the sea and the war with Amalek were things done for both Moshe and the Jewish People. (Part of Yisro’s motivation may have been that Moshe was Yisro’s son-in-law, explaining why no other leader came to join the Jewish People.)

• Based on Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s new book “What’s Bothering Rashi?” Feldheim Publishers

## I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

***“Zachor es Yom HaShabbos L’kadsho — Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it.”***

This verse, which commands us to honor the 7th day, is the 7th verse of the Ten Commandments. It begins with “*zayin*,” the 7th letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the following verses, 7 entities are commanded to rest: “You, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your animal, and the sojourner within your city gates.” Corresponding to these 7 are the 7 expressions of *menucha* — tranquility — in the “*atah echad*” paragraph of the Shabbos afternoon prayer.

## SON FEELS GUILTY

<name@withheld> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
My father died in February. He believed in G-d, went to shul and led a both modern and religious life; he was 87 years young. He was active, stressed physical well-being to my brother and I and was physically and mentally in great shape. I loved my father very much. I am a man in his late forties and have the following problem. My Dad went to the hospital for a “minor surgery” that the doctor said would take 15 minutes. The surgery was OK but my father was almost totally disorientated when they told me to take him home the next day. I took him home and he fell down the stairs. I rushed him back to the hospital where he died. The doctor said he would be given a local anesthetic to freeze him below the waist only. My mom and I encouraged my dad to get the procedure done. It was a minor thing on his bladder. Rabbi, in this country-to sue a doctor is a terrible financial burden to bear. My mother said to drop the subject and my brother has a family and other responsibilities. I am burdened with tremendous guilt for encouraging my Dad to do the 15-minute procedure that killed him, I am not financially secure enough to embark with lawyers and my mother won't sign to get his file released from the hospital records. My wife died eight years ago, my dog died soon after. Please help me understand what a caring individual can do and what would my father thinks of me now (I'm crying at this terminal, in a library).

Dear <name@withheld>,

First, let me offer sincere condolences at the loss of your father. I'm moved by the depth of anguish so apparent in your letter. There's no easy answer to your question. I can only try to put things into a perspective which might be helpful.

Judaism maintains that our bodies and souls are not our possessions with which we can do whatever we want. Rather, they are on loan from Hashem. We must care for them in the way commanded by the Torah. According to the Torah we have an *obligation* to engage in healing and medicine. Therefore, you were right and obligated to encourage your father to undergo the procedure.

As for suing the hospital, keep in mind that there is a Torah commandment to honor your mother. Since your mother seems to be against suing, I think you should listen and bow to her wishes.

Sources:

- Bava Kama 85a
- Shmot 21:19

## IDLE IDOL

Louis Orzech from Toronto, Ont.

<lumiray@sympatico.ca> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
In Parshat Vayeitzei, Rachel had at least 3 days to destroy the idols she took from her father. Why didn't she?

Dear Louis Orzech,

The verse says: “Yaakov didn't know that Rachel had stolen them.” Nobody, not even Yaakov, knew that Rachel had taken her father's idols. Obviously, Rachel was trying to conceal her action from everybody. Consequently, she could only get rid of the idols when she was out of sight of the others. For the first three days after leaving Lavan's house, Jacob's camp was on the move in order to put as much distance between themselves and Lavan as possible. Therefore, Rachel had no opportunity to rid herself of the idols.

Sources:

- Bereshet 31:32

## READING THE SCRIPT

Larry Korn <lakornola@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Are you allowed to analyze someone's handwriting without their permission? Is that considered an invasion of their privacy? Thanks.

Dear Larry Korn,

In some cases, “privacy” is protected by halacha. For example, someone who causes a loss of privacy by knocking down a wall or constructing a building such that it overlooks another property may be liable for damages. It's prohibited to read someone's mail without their permission. Taking someone's notebook without their permission and reading it could be considered stealing.

But when you're *allowed* to read the writing — if someone sends you a letter, for example — there's no prohibition against picking up clues about the person's personality contained in the writing. It's not essentially different than making judgments about a person based on the way he acts, speaks or dresses. For example, if a person speaks very quickly and nervously, you are not “invading his privacy” by thinking “he seems nervous.”

You should be wary, however, of indiscriminate use of your skill to pigeonhole others. We are commanded to judge others favorably and give them the benefit of the doubt.

## ASK the RABBI

### A SMASHING ENGAGEMENT

<Name@withheld> from New York wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My son is marrying, G-d willing, in June and we have heard of a pre-marriage ceremony called "The Breaking of the Plate." Would you be so kind as to share the significance of this ceremony as well as the actual performance (ritual). Thank you.

Dear <Name@withheld> from New York,

Firstly, Mazal Tov!

When a couple decides to marry, they announce the occasion with an engagement party. In Yiddish this event is called a *vort*, which means a "word." At the *vort* the man and woman traditionally give their "word" and formally commit to marry.

There is a custom to break a ceramic plate at the *vort*. This symbolizes the seriousness of their commitment to each other: Just as breaking the plate is final, so too the engagement is final and not easily terminated.

Breaking the plate also tempers the intense joy of the occasion, similar to the glass which is broken under the *chupah*. It reminds us that the Temple is not yet rebuilt.

Customarily, the couple's mothers are the ones who break the plate. They hold the plate together and drop it onto a hard surface. It's important to wrap the plate well to ensure that no one gets hurt from the broken pieces. I once attended a *vort* where a flying splinter from a not well-wrapped plate went into the leg of one of the mothers.

Some have the custom to make a necklace for the bride from the broken pieces. Others give the broken pieces to eligible "singles" as if to say "may a plate soon be broken for you." Some break the plate at the wedding before the *chuppa*.

### SUPREME LOVE

Laurie Zimmet from Los Angeles, CA  
<zimattpp@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I know in the Torah G-d specifically commands us to

love Him, the stranger, and our neighbor. In the Torah (not the Tanach, apocrypha or oral law) does G-d specifically state that He loves us?

Dear Laurie Zimmet,

If the existence of chocolate isn't proof enough that G-d loves us, here's a verse from the Torah:

"You are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d. Hashem chose you to be His treasured people among all the peoples on the face of the earth.... Because of Hashem's love for you, and because He keeps the oath He swore to your ancestors, Hashem took you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from enslavement to Pharaoh, King of Egypt."

Why doesn't the Written Torah talk more about Hashem's special love for the Jewish People? Perhaps emphasizing this love would arouse jealousy among the nations, who have access to the Written Torah but not to the Oral Torah.

Source:

- Devarim 7:6-8

### RABBEINU BACHYA

Aviva Yocheved Krems, <krems@netmedia.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I'm studying *Chovot Halevavot* (Duties of the Heart) with a group of women and we were wondering what the author's background was. He refers to religious and secular life and we were wondering if he lived in a "Jewish ghetto" or amongst religious and non-religious Jews and/or non-Jews? What else can you tell us about him?

Dear Aviva Yocheved Krems,

*Chovot Halevavot* was written by Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Pakudah. Rabbeinu Bachya lived in Sargasso, Spain in the eleventh century. As a leading Talmud scholar, he was an expert in ethics and philosophy. He also composed many poems that were introduced into the liturgy. He wrote *Chovot Halevavot* in Arabic so that it could reach out to the largest possible audience. Aside from the fact that Rabbeinu Bachya served as the Rabbinical Judge of the Jewish community in Sargasso, very little is known of his personal life.

### YIDDLE RIDDLE

A neighbor asked me the following riddle:

*Shemoneh Esrei* consists of 19 blessings. Who, when, where and in what situation does a person say 21 blessings during the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*?

- Avraham Rosenthal <rosentha@netmedia.net.il>

New Feature!

# PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ask-the-Rabbi" features

## Re: Wine Fermentation (Ohrnet Parshat Vayeshev):

You wrote that grapes react with oxygen and naturally produce wine. Actually, it is the yeast that naturally occurs on the skins of the grapes that eats the sugar (I think fructose) of the grape, and along with the water contained in the grape produce carbon dioxide and alcohol. The same process produces beer from various grains, although I believe that the only fruit or grain that has naturally occurring yeast is the grape. To make beer (which is actually what is then distilled to make whiskey, vodka, etc.) one has to add yeast. I have brewed beer as a hobby so I happen to know this and wanted to share it. It presents an opportunity for me to give back a little for the wonderful work that you do.

• ssdssi <ssdssi@aol.com>

**Re: Immunity in the Jewish Community (Ohrnet Parshat Vayigash) which stated:** "On the other hand, some vaccinations are of highly questionable value. Find a doctor whom you trust to help select the proper immunizations for your child."

Some corrections: Smallpox has been eradicated due to vaccination. This deadly scourge is gone, and not "extremely rare" as you wrote. Polio is nearly eradicated due to vaccination. This crippling scourge is almost gone. All vaccinations are approved by the FDA. Their benefit to risk ratio is greatly in favor of benefit. Just as one should not shop around and decide which mitzvot to obey, one should not shop around for which approved vaccine to administer. It is a public health issue and a personal one. You state some vaccinations are of "highly questionable value." You do a great mis-service with this statement. Exactly which ones are you questioning and on what basis?

• Seth Corey, MD, Division of Hematology-Oncology Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh <scorey+@pitt.edu>

## Ohrnet's Clarification:

All approved vaccines are effective; we did not mean to imply otherwise. Rather, we meant that not all vaccines are needed by all individuals. We wrote that individuals should seek a doctor with sufficient expertise in the subject such that his/her opinion may be relied upon. See following comment.

All approved vaccines are considered safe and effective by the vast majority of knowledgeable doctors. The only question is who shall take them; i.e., some are recommended only for the sick, debilitated and elderly. While a few others should NOT be taken by those who are immunosuppressed. The famous dangerous vaccine was for pertussis (whooping cough) but far more people died or became dangerously ill because they failed to take the vaccine than would have had they taken it. A much safer version is now available.

• Edward Simon, Professor of Biology Purdue University <esimon@bilbo.bio.purdue.edu>

As a student of immunology, I would like to let you know that vaccines are extensively tested before being used on humans and with very few exceptions are safe and save lives. In spite of the hype over the "cocktail" treatments, probably the best hope we have for an end to the AIDS epidemic is a vaccine (which, incidentally, they are beginning to test). While no one should be required to immunize his children, it would be doing them an immense disservice by withholding such an established, effective medical treatment.

Lori Sheiman <ls335@is8.nyu.edu>

**Re: "Where does the word 'Chanukah' appear in Parshat Miketz? (all the letters written together, although out of order.)" (Ohrnet Parshat Miketz):**

I really enjoy your Ask the Rabbi column and Yiddle Riddle. My son found another occurrence of the word "Chanukah" in Parshas Miketz. In Chapter 43, verse 8 the *chaf* and *hey* of "v'nailaicha" and the *vav*, *nun*, and *ches* of "v'nichye."

• Avraham Rosenthal <rosentha@netmedia.net.il>

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

18:6,10	<b>RAMBAN</b> Yisro's Communication and Conversion	20:8	Remembering Shabbos	32	Shabbos Rest
18:11	Why Egyptians were Punished	20:17	The "Test" of <i>Matan Torah</i>	33	Gratitude to Parents
18:15	The Role of Moshe	19:3, 8:9, 20:15, 24:1	The Chronology of <i>Matan Torah</i>	35	Promiscuity
18:22	Availability of Justice		<b>SEFER HACHINUCH</b>		<b>MALBIM</b>
20:2	Belief Based on Experience	25	Faith	20:2	The Essence of Belief in Hashem
20:6	The Beloved of Hashem	30	Respect for Divine Name		<b>IBN EZRA</b>
		31	<i>Kiddush</i> on Wine	20:14	Discipline of Desire