

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### “I’M ALL RIGHT, JACK!”

*“Yosef sustained his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food according to the children” (47:12).*

One of the less pleasant aspects of survival in the corridors of power is “protexia.” It’s not *what* you know it’s *who* you know. Protexia is totally contradictory to the way a Jew behaves in public life. We learn this from Yosef in this week’s Parsha.

Yosef is the archetypal “court Jew.” He is respected and needed by the state. He commands tremendous power. But he never uses his power to feather his own nest. When Yosef’s father and his brothers come down to Egypt in the midst of a ravaging famine, he could quite easily have cut through the red tape and given them a disproportionate amount of food. However, he gives them only “*according to the children*,” according to their number and no more. Yosef’s family received no more than anyone else in the country despite their protexia.

At a time when your community is suffering, how can you go home and say “Sling a steak on the grill; I’m all right, Jack!”?

A Jew in public life has a G-d given obligation to sanctify the name of his Creator just as Yosef did, by feeding his family “*according to the children*.”

### JEWISH DISTINCTION

*“Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there.” (46:3)*

It’s said that over 25% of Nobel Prize nominees are Jewish. If that’s true, it’s a remarkable statis-

tic seeing as the Jews are but one-half percent of the world’s population. Jews have a history of distinguishing themselves in all the societies to which they have contributed.

But there’s another kind of Jewish distinction.

In the Passover Haggada we read that in Egypt we were “a nation there,” meaning that we were a *distinctive* entity. The Egyptians would not break bread with the Jews; it was distasteful to them. But it was this very antipathy which allowed us to

“The survival of the Jewish People throughout history is secured only by creating spiritual centers for them wherever they will be...”

become a nation in Egypt. If we had stayed in Canaan where there was no similar repugnance, we may have totally intermarried and been lost.

When we apply to the local golf club and get turned down, we could feel slighted because “the Egyptians” won’t break bread with us. However, it is precisely this “distinction” which has helped us to remain a nation throughout two thousand years of exile. That’s real “Jewish distinction.”

### HISTORY LESSON

*“He sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to teach ahead of him in Goshen” (46:28)*

Yaakov’s descent into Egypt is the paradigm of the descent of the Jewish People into every exile in history. The actions of the fathers are a roadmap with which their children navigate their way through every exile. What does Yaakov do before he enters the land of Egypt, before he arrives in exile? He sends Yehuda “*ahead of him to teach*.” He sends Yehuda to Egypt to open a house of study. Yaakov was sending a message to all his children until the end of history: The survival of the Jewish People in exile, whether that exile is in Egypt or Spain, Babylon or Brooklyn, is secured only by creating a spiritual home for the Jewish People before their bodies arrive. Not the reverse.

### ALL FOUR ONE

*“He sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to teach ahead of him in Goshen” (46:28)*

Yehuda is a very special name. The name Yehuda, spelled “yud, hey, vav, dalet, hey” contains the Tetragramaton, the ineffable four-letter name of G-d. But it also contains another letter, the letter *dalet*. No name in Hebrew is merely conventional. Name defines essence. What is the essence of Yehuda that is represented by a combination of the Tetragramaton and *dalet*?

*Dalet* is the fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It equals four. There are four points of the compass, four directions. Four connotes movement away from a central point,

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of selflessness, Yosef has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and he now reveals his identity. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of Hashem's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. Hashem communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences,

because it is there that Hashem will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring, and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe. Seventy souls in total descend to Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves, as slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

## HAFTORAH: YEchezkel 37:15-28

### CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK

One of the ways that a prophecy becomes irreversible is when it is reinforced by a symbolic action.

In this week's Haftorah the prophet Yechezkel foretells that in the time of the final redemption the two halves of the Jewish People, symbolized by Yehuda and Yosef, will be

brought together like two blocks of wood. Hashem tells Yechezkel "Join them together (so that they) look like one. They shall be one in your hands." (37:17)

Even though nothing could be more separate than two blocks of wood, eventually these two blocks will become one. And even though only Hashem can perform the miracle of making one block out of two, for us to deserve that Hashem will accelerate the redemption we must "look like one." The Jewish People must be united and free from malice and baseless hatred.

For although the redemption is irreversible and inevitable, it is in our hands to delay it or to make it happen today.

*make them one wooden tablet, and they shall become one in My hand." (37:19,20)*

Throughout the centuries of exile, the eye of the prophet sees the Jewish People still divided into the two antagonistic kingdoms of Yehuda and Efraim.

The stamp of Efraim/Yisrael is religious nihilism: Fanatical enmity towards every Jewish point of view, and indiscriminate acceptance of every non-Jewish religious point of view.

On the other hand, Yehuda/Yisrael cannot escape the reproach that he picks out which *mitzvos* he wants to keep, and those he keeps more or less mechanically.

When these two shattered halves of the Jewish People are again united, it will not be a sad compromise. Rather, Hashem promises that both will be refined and purified, assured of help to achieve this purity, and these "two wooden tablets" will become "one in My hand."

• Rabbi Mendel Hirsch

### THE SHATTERED HALVES

*"Say to them 'Thus says my L-rd Hashem/Elokim: Behold! - I take the wooden tablet of Yosef which is in Efraim's hand, and of the tribes of Israel his comrades, and shall place them with it together with the wooden tablet of Yehuda, and I will*

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לע"נ  
הרב אפרים זלמן בן ר' משה יהודה הלוי זצ"ל

In Memory of  
RABBI SAM GENAUER זצ"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

deviation. The mystical writings tell us that G-d created this world with the letter *heh* and the next world with the letter *yud*. What does it mean that G-d created this world with the letter *heh*?

If you open up a Torah scroll you'll notice that the letter *heh* is really made up of two other letters. *Dalet* and *yud*. Look at the *dalet*. The *dalet* is like two lines at right angles to each other. One line travels north/south and the other east/west. The *dalet* represents the idea of movement in four directions. Now look at the *yud*. In its simplest form, the *yud* is no more than a dot. A dot has no direction. In order for us to write a *yud* we have to give it some form of substance. To the naked eye, a dot seems devoid of substance, of direction. It's no more than a point. However, if you magnify that dot under a microscope you'll see that however small you write that dot, it still occupies space. It is still contained within the parameters of length and width; of direction. The ideal dot cannot be drawn in this world. A point which occupies no space is something that can only exist in a world which is above space — the World to Come. That's why the *yud* represents the World to Come.

The ideal form of this world is

encapsulated in the letter *heh*. A *dalet* — the epitome of direction, of dimension — whose focus is the *yud* — the point which is beyond this world. The very shape of the letter *heh* teaches us what we are supposed to be doing in this world: To take all the multiplicity of this world, all its direction and variety, to take the four corners of the world and make them revolve around that *yud*, that ineffable point outside of space and time. The purpose of this world is to center itself on that which is beyond this world.

That's the *ideal* incarnation of this world. However, when the *dalet* "forgets" the *yud* and focuses only on itself, when this world seeks to become all of existence, then it denies the Creator and becomes a travesty of existence.

The Jewish People were destined to be exiled by four kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. It's no coincidence that there are four kingdoms and four exiles. Those four kingdoms epitomize separation from the center of all creation, from G-d.

Yaakov sent Yehuda to Goshen. If you look at this verse in Hebrew, you'll see that *Goshna* ("to Goshen") consists of four letters. Each letter hints to one of the exiles of the Jewish People.

It was not by coincidence that, of all

the brothers, Yaakov sent Yehuda to Goshen. Yaakov was pre-figuring the journey of the Jewish People into the four exiles that are contained in the word *Goshna*. Yehuda carries in his name the very spiritual DNA of the Jewish People's mission in this world: To center the *dalet* of this world on the *yud*. Yehuda's name contains the antidote to those four exiles: To take the four directions, the four corners of the world, and focus them on that which is above the world, the point that can never be seen, the still point at the center of this turning world.

It's also no coincidence that the fulfillment of this task will come through the *mashiach* (gematria *Goshna*), who is the scion of Yehuda. He will take the four corners of this world and make them one. When that day comes all the apparent separation and fragmentation of this world will vanish. On that day, G-d will be One and His name One.

Sources:

*I'm All Right, Jack!* - Sforno, as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer

*Jewish Distinction* - Sforno,

as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer

*History Lesson* - Bereishis Rabba 95:3; Rashi

*All Four One* - Maharal, B'nei Yissaschar, (see also

*The Secret of the Dreidel* -

<http://www.ohr.org.il/special/chanukah/chan95.htm>)

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### HAIFA

**H**aifa, home of Israel's largest port, is first mentioned in the Talmud in an unusual context which may shed light on the history of a community whose source is otherwise obscure.

The residents of ancient Haifa, say our Sages (*Megillah 24b*) could not lead the services in the synagogue nor could its *kohanim* bless the congregation. This was because they were unable to differentiate between the guttural sounds in



Hebrew, and their mispronunciation could turn a blessing into a curse. Some historians suggest that this language defect was the result of the exposure of Haifa's Jews to the many foreign merchants who settled on the coast for commercial purposes.

These historians also suggest that the name Haifa is a contraction of two Hebrew words: *Hof Yafe* — beautiful coast. A major feature of its beauty is Mount Carmel, site of the famous showdown between the Prophet Eliyahu and the idolatrous prophets (*Melachim I, 18*). A major part of the modern city has developed on this mountain.

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

**Yosef said to his brothers: "I am Yosef..." (Bereishis 45:3) Yosef said to his brothers: "Draw near to me...I am Yosef your brother whom you sold to Egypt." (Bereishis 45:3)**

At first, Yosef said merely "I am Yosef." He didn't mention his sale into slavery because Binyamin was listening. Binyamin didn't know about the sale, and Yosef didn't want to embarrass the brothers in front of Binyamin.

Then, Yosef told his brothers to "draw near," and he separated them from Binyamin. Only then, out of Binyamin's earshot, did Yosef say "I am Yosef your brother, whom you sold to Egypt."

• *Da'as Zekenim m'Ba'alei Hatosefos*

## WEEKLY DAF

### SHEKALIM 9 - 15

#### A MOUTHFUL OF CAUTION

“You shall be pure in the eyes of Hashem and of Israel.”  
(Bamidbar 32:22)

**M**oshe Rabbeinu’s counsel, given to the tribes of Reuven and Gad in regard to fulfilling their end of the bargain in exchange for their desired portion of *Eretz Yisrael*, serves as a warning to all generations. It is not sufficient for a person to be right in the eyes of Heaven alone; he must also avoid raising suspicion in the minds of people.

The *shekalim* contributed during the month of Adar were tithed three times a year to buy animals for the communal sacrifices. In so doing, every caution was taken to assure that the tither remained above all suspicion of having appropriated some of the coins for himself. Not only did he avoid wearing any item of clothing in which a coin could be concealed, but steps were taken to ensure that he could not even hide a coin in his mouth.

How did they prevent such oral embezzlement? They engaged him in conversation from the time he entered until he left the office where the coins were stored. “But isn’t there a simpler way?” ask our Sages. He could have been required to perform this brief action of tithing with his mouth filled with water, rendering it impossible to open it and hide a coin.

The response to this challenge is that this would have created a problem regarding the blessing. One of the early commentators understood this to mean that working with a mouth filled with water could result in his inadvertently swallowing some water, upon which he had made no blessing beforehand.

This approach is challenged by the great seventeenth century Amsterdam scholar, Rabbi Chacham Zvi Ashkenazi (*Responsa Chacham Zvi 121*) on the grounds that when someone drinks water not to relieve his thirst but for other reasons (e.g., to relieve congestion in his throat or to help him swallow medicine), no blessing is necessary. His explanation of the aforementioned

*gemara*, which has been adopted by mainstream commentaries, is that the blessing referred to is the one which the tither was to make before doing the mitzvah of tithing, a blessing impossible to make with a mouth filled with water.

• *Shekalim 9a*

#### THE CHALLENGE OF RESPONSIBILITY

**A** problem faced the Jewish community of Kufrah. There was a desperate need for some people to assume responsibility for the affairs of the community, but there was a reluctance upon the part of the qualified citizens to become trustees.

When Rabbi Yossi visited this community he attempted to persuade these qualified members to assume trustee responsibility. They refused to do so, apparently because of a desire to avoid the honor and responsibility of leadership. In order to convince them, this sage quoted the Mishna which lists all the distinguished officials in charge of different departments in maintaining the *Beis Hamikdash*. On the same list with those in charge of the properties, finances and services is Ben Bavi who was in charge of the wicks. Although his job was limited to the relatively insignificant responsibility of assuring that the wicks should be straight he is placed in the same Mishna with all of those who had the most important responsibilities.

If Ben Bavi deserved this tribute, Rabbi Yossi concluded, for honorably discharging a relatively unimportant responsibility, how much credit will you receive for assuming responsibility for matters affecting the actual lives of the community!

By comparing their responsibility to lifesaving Rabbi Yossi intended to convey the idea that just as saving a life takes precedence over all *mitzvos*, so should the opportunity to save the lives of the community through leadership, push aside all of their hesitations.

• *Shekalim 14a*

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said "Don't dispute on the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt"?
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanis?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

## SHERLOX

### SHERLOX AND THE CHARIOT MYSTERY

“The first clue to a mystery,” said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, “is the motive. And to discern a person’s motive, you sometimes have to consider *all* his actions.”

“Speaking of motives,” said Watstein, “I’m puzzled. The verse says that Yosef ‘harnessed his chariot and arose to meet his father...’” (Genesis 46:29).

“Indeed strange,” said Sherlock, “that the viceroy of Egypt should do the work of a stable boy.”

“Rashi explains that by harnessing the chariot himself, Yosef was acting with alacrity in order to give honor to his father.”

“‘Love spoils protocol.’ Isn’t that the expression?” asked Sherlock.

“Yes! Or rather, no!” said Watstein. “What I mean is, I expected Rashi to say exactly that, but he didn’t. I expected Rashi to say: ‘Love spoils protocol,’ just as he explains regarding Avraham.”

“Please elaborate,” said Sherlock.

“The phrase ‘love spoils protocol’ is the expression Rashi uses to explain an identical scenario: Avraham saddling his own donkey. (Genesis 22:3) Avraham was commanded to journey to a distant mountain and to sacrifice his son there. Because of his great love for G-d, Avraham undertook this journey. And although it was beneath Avraham’s dignity to saddle his own donkey, Avraham did so nevertheless, as Rashi there explains, because ‘love spoils protocol.’”

“So your question is: Why doesn’t Rashi say the same thing here?” asked Sherlock.

“Exactly! Why doesn’t Rashi say “Yosef harnessed his own chariot because ‘love spoils protocol?’ Yosef loved his father dearly and hadn’t seen him since he was a boy 22 years ago. Wouldn’t Yosef’s love be enough to explain his unusual behavior? Why must Rashi say it was the desire to honor, not love, that motivated Yosef?”

“To discern a person’s motive,” said Sherlock, “you sometimes have to consider *all* his actions.”

*answer on page eight*

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took “soul” responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *Lashon Hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef’s territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave *Eretz Canaan*.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in *Eretz Canaan*.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav’s portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - Dina bas Yaakov.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the house.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn’t see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

## FOOD FIGHT

**Gerry Sutofsky from NY**  
<gerest1@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I am a teacher at a public school in New York. Every year we have a luncheon sponsored by the school PTA. As there are a number of observant teachers who require kosher food, it is always provided for them. My question is, there are also a number of non-observant Jewish teachers who eat non-kosher almost all the time but request kosher food for this luncheon. This has caused conflict between certain observant and non-observant teachers who feel that it is causing an undue financial burden upon the parents who sponsor this. As one teacher puts it, you have to differentiate between those who require and those who request. My question is: Is there a halachic source that I can refer to for solving this problem? Are we not obligated to give kosher food to any Jew if he/she requests it? Anything you can cite would be quite helpful. Thank you!

Dear Gerry Sutofsky,

According to Jewish law, one should give kosher food even to a non-observant Jew. Giving non-kosher food is a transgression of the commandment "Do not place a stumbling block before a blind person" (Leviticus 19). The fact that these teachers are not consistent does not affect the fact that they are obligated to eat kosher food. Even a Jew who has sinned is still a Jew.

Sources:

- Talmud, Tractate Avodah Zarah 6b
- Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh Deah 151:1

**YAHOO!**

**Email@Withheld** wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Explain the "yahu" ending on many

names. In our English Scripture we have the name Elijah but I see it spelled Eliyahu in Jewish texts. Many other names have the same ending. I understand the "Jah" refers to the name of G-d. But please explain the "yahu" spelling.

Dear Email@Withheld,

"Yahu" is the original Hebrew ending of many Hebrew names. For instance, Elijah is Eliyahu (my middle name!), Isaiah is Yishayahu. Yahu is a short term used as the name of G-d, as it is spelled with the first three letters of the Holy Name. For example, Eliyahu means My G-d (Eli) is called Yahu; the name Shemaryahu means "my guard" is Yahu.

## STOLEN CHARITY

**Rivka from Manchester, England**  
<majw@mcmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
If money that had been put aside for charity is stolen, must one replace it?

Dear Rivka,

I spoke with Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, and he said that although a Torah court would not force one to do so, the person has a moral obligation to replace the money.

## THE PLACE

**Ilana Rosansky from NYC**  
<Ilana@oursquare.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
G-d is called Hamakom, which literally means "The Place." For example: "HaMakom y'nachem etchem — May the Omnipresent comfort you," or "Baruch HaMakom, baruch Hu — Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He." What is the origin/source of this name for G-d?

Dear Ilana Rosansky,

The Pesikta Rabbati, Parsha 21, explains that "Hamakom" — The

Place — as a name for G-d means "He is the place of the world, the world is not His place." This name stresses the concept that G-d created space, and that space is within G-d, and not the reverse.

## WHERE'S PAGE ONE?

**Michael Braitman from Pittsburgh, PA**  
<mabst102@pitt.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Why does each tractate in the Talmud begin with the page number of two (beit) and not one? Thank you.

Dear Michael Braitman,

The real reason is because the front page of the volume is considered page one. Look at printed books today, Jewish and secular, which usually begin with page nine because of all the pages before the beginning of the actual book.

I once heard a "cute" explanation of why they began with page two: When a person sits down to study, even though he has not yet begun to study, yet he has overcome his evil inclination by merely opening the book of Talmud. This is considered as if he has begun already, and that is the "first page."

## TRUE LIE

**Rafael de Lucca from Brazil**  
<santoamaro@inprima.com.br> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I was reading the questions and your answers, and became very curious about Yaakov and Esav, who were part of one of the questions you were asking. I would like to ask you why Yaakov and his mother lied to his father to get blessed? Thank you so much.

Dear Rafael de Lucca,

Esav sold his birthright to Yaakov,

including the right for the blessing, so Yaakov was only trying to get something which actually belonged to him. Viewed this way, it was in fact Esav who was trying to steal the blessing.

On a deeper level, Judaism doesn't limit the definition of truth to the factual occurrences as they seem to happen. Judaism defines truth as "the will of G-d." Subsequently, there are certain scenarios where the will of G-d is not to relate to the factual occurrence as is, and this is not considered a lie. We see in the Torah (*Genesis*

*18:13*) that even G-d changed, so to speak, Sarah's words when reporting them to Avraham, in order to preserve domestic tranquility. The Talmud (*Bava Metzia 24a*) states three cases only when one may do so; all of them are specific scenarios where one wishes to avoid harm or discomfort from others, or to maintain one's own humility. For Yaakov to gain the blessings was the will of G-d (as they belonged to him), so any speech which was "untrue" is considered truth.

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Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

#### Re: Kabbalists (Ohrnet Vayishlach):

In a recent "Ask the Rabbi," a woman named Sharon wrote about her meeting with a reputed kabbalist. I believe you missed something very important in your answer to her. Kabbala is something which even many of our greatest *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars) don't pretend to fully understand, while many unlearned people, incompetent in other areas, pretend to be fully well versed in. As Rabbi Ezriel Tauber said, anyone who says he's a kabbalist knows a lot indeed about kabbala (lit. "reception")...he knows how to take your money. You should have pointed out to Sharon to make sure that her contact is a valid Torah guide.

I'm not saying that she didn't speak to someone knowledgeable about kabbala, only that you should have warned her, as she may have spoken to one of the many charlatans masquerading as "kabbalists."

• Yosef Kenner <Hawkjoe@aol.com>

#### Re: Talking after Bedtime Shema (Ohrnet Vayeitze):

Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef has a rather lengthy responsum on the topic (*Yechaveh Da'at*, 4:21 pp. 114-124). If I understand it correctly, Rabbi Yosef is of the opinion that one may speak if necessary after having said *hamapil* and *shema*.

• David Wilk <wilkda@mail.biu.ac.il>

#### Re: Lighten Up (Ohrnet Vayeitze):

Regarding your answer to Leora regarding her house guest who "is definitely going to" turn off the light on Shabbos, I do not understand why you didn't tell her to tell the guest that she *may not* use the lights? After all, it is her (Leora's) house. It shouldn't matter if this "guest" were even a parent. A person has every right to ask that someone else not be *mechalel Shabbos* (desecrate Shabbat) in their own home. Your suggestion of using a Shabbos clock, candle, or whatever is not going to show the guest the beauty and true meaning of Shabbos.

• Menashe Katz <mkatz@sysnet.net>

#### Ohrnet Responds:

Our answer provided a tactful alternative to confrontation, while in no way compromising the sanctity or spirit of Shabbat.

#### Re: Ophir (Ohrnet Toldos):

Regarding usage of the name Ophir, it is possible the name currently common in Israel refers to the Biblical land known for its gold, and not the son of Yoktan. It is in vogue in Israel to name children after geographical locations. The names Arnon, Efrat, Kineret are a few that come to mind, and none of those names sound "too religious." A lot of common Israeli names are Biblical in origin, though some are hesitant to admit it.

• Benjie Gerstman, Jerusalem <gerstbpg@netvision.net.il>

#### Re: Teaching Them to Your Children:

*Toda Rabba* for all the great information. I'm a Director of Education at Temple Akiba in Culver City, California. I love what your web site has to offer. I pass it on to my teachers, and they pass it on to our 205 students. It helps us in the mitzvah of "Ve'shinantam Le'vanecha — You shall teach them to your children." Thank you again.

• Miriam <Hamuda133@aol.com>

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

# GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

*Judging favorably is a powerful weapon in the war against anger and evil speech. Take the case of..*

## GRANNY GET YOUR GUN

A friend assures me that the following story is true: Recently, a friend of his grandmother, a woman about 65 years old, was out shopping. When she returned to her

car there were three men sitting inside it. Being the kind of feisty woman who had a gun for such emergencies, she whipped it out and yelled, "I know how to use it, and I'm quite prepared to. Get out!" The men were petrified and quickly jumped out and ran away.

The woman then got into the car, and to her dismay, the key wouldn't fit in the ignition. Wrong car. Oops!

Realizing her mistake, she thought

she better report what she had done at the Police Station. Which she did. When she told the officer on duty the story, he laughed and pointed at the three still visibly shaken men sitting at the other end of the room. They had just reported being hijacked by an elderly lady.

• Submitted by Peter Fine, South Africa  
<finefarm@iafrica.com>  
Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story"  
by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

"The long, the short, the black, the white, the his, the hers and the theirs." What seven similar days, i.e., days which are observed with similar forms of observance, in the Jewish calendar do these describe?

• Riddle submitted by Dons Hool, Kollel Ponevez, as heard from his mother

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## SHERLOX ANSWER!

"When you considering *all* Yosef's actions, it's clear that his primary motivation was to honor his father," said Sherlock.

"How so?" asked Watstein.

"Simple. Look at the rest of the verse: Yosef 'harnessed his chariot and went up towards Israel his father in Goshen and he appeared to him....' Rashi comments: 'Yosef appeared to Yaakov.'"

"So?" said Watstein.

"Didn't Yosef also see Yaakov?"

"Ah!" said Watstein. "Yosef saw Yaakov, yet the verse stresses that Yosef 'appeared' to Yaakov!"

"Exactly. By stressing that Yosef *appeared* to his father, it tells us of Yosef's main intent. His main intent was to be seen by his father."

"I see!" said Watstein. "Yosef certainly yearned to see his beloved father, yet his major motive was to do his father's will by *appearing* before him. He came not primarily to see, but to be seen. Hence, regarding harnessing the chariot, Rashi ascribes to Yosef his major motive, i.e., honoring his father."

• Sherlock is by Reuven Subar  
Inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek's "What's Bothering Rashi"

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

44:19 Yehuda's Diplomacy  
45:16 Egyptian Reaction to Yosef's Brothers  
45:26 Yaakov's Disbelief  
45:27 The Lifetime Secret

46:15 Hidden Miracles  
46:29 Who Cried?  
47:9 Yaakov's Age  
47:18 The Seven Lean Years

### SFORNO

45:16 Pharaoh's Invitation  
46:3 The Advantage of Exile  
**OHR HACHAIM HAKADOSH**  
45:26 Why Yosef Didn't Tell Yaakov  
46:4 The *Shechina* in Mitzrayim

**derech**  
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