

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT BESHALACH · FOR THE WEEK ENDING 15 SHVAT 5760 · JAN. 22, 2000 · VOL. 7 NO. 16

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE ABC OF ECOLOGY

“This is the thing that Hashem has commanded, ‘Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats — an omer per person — according to the number of your people, everyone according to whomever is in his tent shall you take.’” (16:16)

The world gets smaller every day. One of the fears of living in a global village is that the village store is going to run out of food. Will we wake up one day and find our planet can no longer support its population? For years, science fiction has dwelled on highly imaginative schemes to “farm” the solar system. Here’s the good news. You can relax and stop planning your trip to Andromeda. It isn’t going to happen.

The letters of the Hebrew language are the building blocks of Creation. When G-d created this existence, He did so using “speech.” “And G-d said: Let there be light...And G-d said, let there be sky...And G-d said...” This is not merely a narrative tool, a stylistic convention; it means that existence consists of nothing more than G-d speaking, that it is built out of letters and words. This explains why the Hebrew word for “thing,” *davar*, is comprised of the same letters as the word for “speech,” *dibur*.

Ultimately, “things” are no more than G-d’s “words.”

There’s a prayer we say three times a day called *Ashrei* (*Ashrei* is the first word of this prayer.) *Ashrei* is a combination of two of the Psalms of King David. What is so important about these particular Psalms that we say them three times a day?

If you open a *siddur*, you’ll notice that the first letters of each line of *Ashrei* go in alphabetical order: The first line starts with *aleph*, the second with *beit*, etc. *Ashrei* also contains the verse “*You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of all life.*” This is a promise that G-d will sustain each one of us. What is the connection between having enough to eat and the *aleph-beit*?

With that same *aleph-bet* that G-d created the world, He creates a sufficiency for every living thing. G-d created this world with a plan. Man is the centerpiece of this plan. Just as he created the ABC of Creation, He has made sure that His plan will be fulfilled, right down till XY and Z. Every creature will receive its needs. We don’t have to worry that there won’t be enough for everyone to eat. We don’t have to worry that the world will become overpopulated. With

that same “whole cloth” that G-d fabricated existence, the *aleph-bet*, He provided a sufficiency for His creation at all times.

“This is the thing that Hashem has commanded, ‘Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats — an omer per person — according to the number of your people, everyone according to whomever is in his tent shall you take.’”

In this week’s Parsha, we learn of the manna, the miraculous food that sustained the Jewish People for 40 years in the desert. Manna is the prototype of G-d sustaining Man miraculously, providing for his every need. Just as in *Ashrei*, the above verse illustrates that every person receives according to his needs. And interestingly, it also contains all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Also, if you count the Hebrew letters of this verse, you will find they add up to 70. This corresponds to our global village’s seventy nations who are constantly sustained by the Creator.

You don’t have to worry. The “village store” is never going to be “out of bread.”

Sources:
Rabbi Sholem Fishbane in the name of
Rabbi Uziel Milevsky from *Rabbeinu Bachye*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *B’nei Yisrael* out of Egypt. Hashem leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* with pillars of cloud and fire on a circuitous route, avoiding the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but Hashem protects them. Moshe raises his staff and Hashem splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by Hashem, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days’ travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miracu-

lously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain to Moshe and Aharon that they ate better food in Egypt. Hashem sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

TWO GREAT WOMEN

After 20 years of Canaanite oppression, the core of the Jewish people are lead to repentance by Devorah the Prophetess. The Sages compare the results of her inspirational leadership to “the restoration of the wick for the light of the Sanctuary.” Through her shining example, she rejuvenated the bearers of the light of Torah.

In the merit of this mass repentance, Devorah receives a prophecy that she

should lead 10,000 men into battle and that G-d would deliver the Canaanite General Sisera into the hands of the Jewish army. G-d causes confusion amongst Sisera’s camp, and the Jews overpower them. Sisera flees to the encampment of Chever, who was at peace with the King of Canaan. There he seeks refuge in the tent of Yael, Chever’s wife. Yael invites him into her tent, guaranteeing his safety. When he requested water to drink, she gave him milk to make him drowsy. When he was fast asleep, she picked up a hammer and

drove a tent peg through his temple. Thus Israel was saved. After the victory, Devorah leads the Nation in a song of praise to G-d. This song outlines the recurring theme in the history of Israel: Oppression — Repentance — Victory.

Both the Parsha and the Haftara contain a national song of praise to G-d. Perhaps another similarity is to be found in the words our Sages that the Exodus took place in the merit of the righteous women of Israel, who played as great a role then as would Devorah and Yael in the future.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

MOTZA

This small settlement just outside Jerusalem is mentioned in the Talmud (*Mesechta Succah 45a*) as the source of the *aravah* willow branches that were brought daily to the *Beit Hamikdash* during the Succot Festival and placed alongside the altar. This place was also known as Kalania, both names referring to the special status



it enjoyed of being exempt from government taxes.

Motza is an attractive suburb of the capital, and home of an old Jerusalem winery. Its numerous *aravah* willow trees continue to supply the branches used by Jerusalemites for the fulfillment of the *mitzvot* on Succot.

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I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“Macho Emche ... I will obliterate the remembrance of Amalek” (Shemot 17:14).

The phrase “I will obliterate” (*macho emche*) has the same numeric value as the phrase “this refers to Haman” (*ze haman*), Amalek’s most infamous descendant.

• *Ba'al HaTurim*

לע"נ
 ר' שמואל בן ר' יהודה ז"ל
 ת.ג.צ.ב.ה.

HOW RELIABLE IS THE RECORD?

A *mamzer* is prohibited by Torah Law from “entering the community of Hashem,” which means that there are strict restrictions as to whom he can marry.

But what exactly is a *mamzer*? Contrary to the concept of any child born out of wedlock being “illegitimate,” the Torah defines a *mamzer* as a child born from parents whose union is forbidden by law. How serious the violation must be to produce a *mamzer* is a matter of dispute.

The strictest approach is that of Rabbi Akiva who rules that even if the relationship is punishable only by lashes — and not with death — its product is a *mamzer*. On the opposite extreme is the view of Rabbi Yehoshua that only if the violation is punishable by death at the hands of the court is the child considered a *mamzer*. In between is the position of the Sage Shimon the Timnite, that even if the violation is punishable by *karet* (extirpation, or premature death) the child is a *mamzer*.

An interesting support was provided for the position of Rabbi Yehoshua by Rabbi Shimon ben Azai. (Rashash notes that the title “Rabbi” is not appropriate here because this Sage passed away before he was ordained, as Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura points out in *Mesechta Avot* 4:1). He found an old family record in Jerusalem which stated that a certain person was a *mamzer* born from the illicit union of a man with another man’s wife. This would seem to indicate that only because the violation was punishable by death at the hands of the court was he considered a *mamzer*, and not if the violation had been punishable by a lesser penalty. The *halacha*, nevertheless, is like the position of Shimon the Timnite. The record cited by Shimon ben Azai is not considered a conclusive proof because it may simply have been reporting the facts on the case rather than describing halachic parameters.

Shimon ben Azai, however, interpreted this record as a halachic statement that only a violation punishable by death at the hands of the court creates a *mamzer*. Why then, asks Tosefot, did the record not simply state that he was a *mamzer* because his parents had committed a capital crime, rather than mention the specific nature of their offense? His answer is that the record wished to stress that even though adultery is punishable by the least severe of the four categories of death penalties, and even though a married woman can become permissible by divorce in the lifetime of her husband (a situation unique to a married woman, which does not exist by relatives forbidden through marriage; such relatives remain forbidden even with the end of that marriage), the product of such a union is nevertheless a *mamzer*.

• *Yevamot* 49a

ABUSING THE AGENT

Even though the penalty of lashes mentioned in the Torah applies only to one who has transgressed a Torah prohibition, the Sages had the power to punish with lashes (“*makot mardut*”) one who transgressed certain prohibitions of rabbinic nature as well.

Among those violations for which the Sage Rav decreed such a punishment was the abusing of an agent of the Rabbi. Rashi explains that this refers to the agent of a rabbinical court. Tosefot, however, contends that this is a reference to an agent of any Torah Sage and not necessarily of a rabbinical court. As support for this position, Tosefot cites the following incident related in *Mesechta Kiddushin* (70a):

A resident of the Babylonian community of Nehardea entered a butcher shop in the city of Pumpedita and ordered some meat. He was told that he would be served only after they filled the order of the agent of Rabbi Yehuda ben Yechezkel. Upset by having to wait he shouted: “Who is this Yehuda ben Shviskel (an abusive reference to a gluttonous consumer of broiled meat – Rashi) that deserves to come ahead of me?”

When it was reported to Rabbi Yehuda how this rude fellow had abused his agent, he excommunicated him. This, concludes Tosefot, proves that abusing the agent of a Torah Sage, even when he is not acting in the capacity of an agent of the court, deserves punishment.

One problem, however, remains. The *gemara* (*Pesachim* 52a) states that excommunication is a more severe penalty than lashes. Why then, asks Tosefot, did Rabbi Yehuda not settle for the lashes dictated by the Sage Rav?

The answer, suggests Tosefot, may be that giving lashes is a sufficient punishment for one who abuses the agent of the Sage because this is only an *indirect* affront to the Sage himself. The culprit in Rabbi Yehuda’s case insulted the Sage *directly* by twisting his father’s name in an abusive manner, and was therefore deserving of the more severe penalty, excommunication.

• *Yevamot* 52a

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish people died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish people "took hold of their fathers' profession" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did Hashem cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the *Parsha* indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that Hashem would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we know this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's *Parsha*?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the *manna*?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's *Parsha* alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of Hashem and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to Hashem.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring *them*" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever *manna* remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted *manna*.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river...."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

"Behold I am going to rain bread from the Heavens..."

Shlomo Kagan <email@withheld> asked:

We say a blessing on all food before we eat it, and different types of food have different blessings. So, what blessing did they say when they ate manna in the dessert?

Answer: The Rama from Pano writes that they said "Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, Master of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the Heavens." Others write that no blessing

was said, as the obligation is only to bless upon food that comes from this world, whereas the manna was Heavenly food from the World to Come. A third opinion is that they said "*borei minei mezonot...* Who creates types of sustenance." And a fourth view is that there was no fixed blessing because each person tasted in the manna any flavor he desired; therefore, the blessing said depended on the flavor that the person wanted to taste.

Source:
Sefer Ebaya Lehu, R. Greenbaum p.107

Do you have a **KASHA**? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

SHE WAS A DAY TRADER

From: Name@Withheld

Dear Rabbi,

Do you have anything to say about the phenomenon of “daytrading?” It seems to me that it’s not a very “kosher” thing to do. People that know what they’re doing can make a lot of money at it. To supplement our income, we have taken a portion of our savings (which would not make or break us) and opened an account for that purpose. So far I’m not doing very well. Daytraders try to take advantage of the intraday swings in the price of a stock. The more volatile the price swings, the better. If the stock is falling in price, it does not matter, because a trader can borrow the stock to “sell it short” and then buy it back at a lower price to return it, thereby pocketing the difference. If a stock went up in price 10 dollars and then fell 10 dollars, ending up the day at the same starting price, a day trader could earn \$20, whereas an investor who held on to the stock throughout the day would not make a penny. It seems like gambling to me. I do not see how it contributes anything to society. My husband says it serves a valuable service by providing liquidity to the market and narrowing the spreads between the buy and sell price. If I could be successful at it, it would solve a lot of our problems.

Dear Name@Withheld,

Stocks are a legitimate investment. Buying stocks is essentially no different than buying diamonds, land, or wheat. According to everything that I know about “daytrading,” I cannot see why it should be classified as a forbidden form of gambling.

Everyone agrees about one thing:

Daytrading requires nerves of steel, tremendous concentration and an understanding of the markets. It can make one a lot of money in a short time; however, most people seem to lose money at it. Think long and hard about whether you really want to do this.

My FAVORITE MARTIN

From: Ron Newton, Roanoke, Alabama
<newron@teleclipse.net>

Dear Rabbi,

Shalom and thank you again for your wonderful site. I have always heard of the wonderful and unselfish life of Martin Luther, but have recently read he was a devout anti-Semite. My question is, was Martin Luther anti-Semitic, and if so to what degree?

Dear Ron Newton,

Martin Luther, the 16th century German theologian (not to be confused with Martin Luther King, the 20th century American Civil Rights leader), is considered the founder of Protestantism.

The list of Martin Luther’s anti-Semitic remarks could fill books, and indeed they do! His own work, “The Jews and their Lies” is a harangue against the Jews in which he claims, among other things, that Jews live from the excrement of the Devil! Luther had a five point plan for the solution to the “Jewish problem in which he proposed that all synagogues be burned and that all Jews be enslaved at hard labor, instead of living off the goodness of others, as he claimed they did.

Hitler read Luther, and Hitler’s “Mein Kampf” quotes from this plan of Luther’s.

But Luther’s stance regarding the Jews

is not surprising or out of line with his times, or with the history of Christianity up until his day.

Sources:

- *Why the Jews*, Telushkin & Prager

COLORS

From: Name@Withheld

Dear Rabbi:

I heard that colors have meanings in Judaism. What is the history behind this and could you explain the meaning of certain colors like red, green, blue, yellow, violet, black, orange, and white.

Dear Name@Withheld,

The color red represents blood and sin. White represents purity from sin. Ironically, a white skin coloration marks a person impure, making him into a “met-zorah” (leper). Blue is the color of sky and hence of spirituality, reminding of “G-d’s Throne of Glory.”

*Red, white, and blue, represent fire, water, and air, respectively. They also stand for strength, kindness, and splendor, respectively; or, similarly, judgement, kindness, and mercy.

Furthermore, the color white is associated with the Angel Michael, red with Gabriel, and blue with the Angel Uriel. And white is associated with Abraham, red with Isaac, and blue with Jacob.

(From the asterisk and on, “yarok” is translated as blue, although there are divergent views regarding this.)

Sources:

- *Iggeret D’kala* page 300
- *Yitav Panim I* page 193
- *Megalleh Amukot, Ofan 8, 57, and 86*

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

- 14:4 The Miracle of Egyptian Pursuit
- 14:13 Promise or Command?
- 14:15 No Need to Cry
- 14:21 Nature or Miracle?
- 15:19 When the *Shira* was Sung
- 16:4 The Purpose of Trial (part 2)
- 17:9 The War Against Amalek

IBN EZRA

- 14:13 Slave Mentality
- 14:29-30 Drowning and Dry Land

MALBIM

- 14:11-12 Red or Dead
- 14:16 The Ten Miracles of the Crossing of the Sea

About 10 years ago I was visiting my old country. I was in my brother's area when it was time to *daven ma'ariv* (pray the evening service). I went into one of the well known *shteibels* (small synagogues) and stood at the back. At the end of the *davening*, the Chassidic man to my left recited *kaddish* (sanctification prayer). In the middle, the person next to him got a phone call on his cellular phone. Not only did he answer it, but he turned to the man saying *kaddish* and said: "Shssh, I can't hear."

I lived off this story, telling it every time the subject of talk-

ing during prayer came up. I told it in order to ridicule the people of that *shtiebel*, to illustrate their improper attitude toward prayer.

About three months ago, I told it to my brother. He said, "Oh, that must have been Moshe Poloni (name changed). He's from *Hatzalah*, the Jewish emergency and ambulance service, and his Rabbi said he's not allowed to come to *ma'ariv* unless he brings his phone with him and answers it instantly, no matter where he is in the *davening*."

• Submitted by an Ohrnet reader

YIDDLE RIDDLE

What two Friday nights of the year is there no *shalom zachor*? (*Shalom zachor* is the Friday night celebration held in honor of the birth of a boy.)

Answer next week....

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: KOSHER COSTS:

"Ask The Rabbi" recently featured an article about the father of a disabled daughter having a hard time affording kosher food on a low income. We want to thank our readers for their overwhelming response with suggestions and offers of help. The following is a sample of some of those responses. We hope to publish a follow up on this subject in the near future.

I was quite poor last year. Thank G-d, I am more well off this year, though by no means rich (except in that I am happy with what I have). I realize kosher meat and food in general in the UK can be pricey, but there are alternatives to a meat-intensive diet. First off, I use coupons wherever possible. I shop in one of the cheaper stores and even there I look for sales whenever possible. I have been known to buy three months of toilet paper because the price was

right. Shopping ahead and buying from the really good sales helps lower total yearly food bills. I stock rice, pasta, dried and canned beans (high in protein), split pea and other dried soup mixes, tomato sauce, canned tuna, etc. I work two jobs so time is limited, but my cupboard is full and my food bills are within reason.

Name@Withheld,
Ohio, USA

A kosher food bank was established last year and helps people in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Jewish community, seniors, Russians, observant and not. It is confidential and available to all who demonstrate need. I would be glad to put you in touch with the administrators of the kosher food pantry for information. Perhaps one could be set up in your area.

Batya Moses,
Pittsburgh, PA
<batya7@hotmail.com>

Many items in regular supermarkets not marked "kosher" do have London Beit Din approval. The Beit Din puts out a handbook of their products yearly and they can be found on the Internet. Thank you so very much for an excellent publication.

Suzanne Havivi
<shavivi@barak-online.net>

We live mostly on dairy and grains, fruits and veggies. With the most costly kosher food being meat, we only eat it on Shabbat. We do not feel that we are lacking anything and the meat lovers in the family have an additional reason to look forward to Shabbat!

I want to commend you on the wonderful and sensitive way in which you answered this person's question. Your e-mails are always a light in my day. Keep up the wonderful work!

Judith Amrani, Houston, Texas
<jamrani@gardere.com>