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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The End of Art

“...for beauty and splendor” (28:2)

Although AI is still very much in its infancy, it seems clear that the basic skills of drawing and painting, of music, and much more, are becoming redundant.

Why spend five years in art school when you can create a Turner or a Dutch Master with a few computer commands? Why labor over music theory when you can generate a Beethoven symphony with AI?

As technical skills in fields like music, art, and engineering become less relevant, the importance of language, the ability to communicate increases significantly. The major skill set for AI will be explaining to a computer what it is you want.

AI will be about words.

AI will require a sophistication of language, an understanding of exactly what it is you want, and the ability to define that in a way which leaves no ambiguity.

The whole world is made up of words. You cannot see them. “For everything exists through Your word.” Says the blessing. The word for ‘thing’ in Hebrew has the same word as the word for “word.”

The Gemara in Bava Basra says that someone who never saw the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple, that Herod built, never saw a beautiful building in his life. The ‘davar Hashem,’ the word of Hashem, was never more manifest than in the Beit HaMikdash. There were never garments as beautiful and splendid as the vestments of the Kohen. Each vestment was an expression of a unique spiritual reality. Each garment represented a ‘word’ of Hashem.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Sanhedrin 93-99

The Ba'al Teshuva's Place

Rabbi Abahu said, "In a place where ba'alei teshuva stand, not even one who was always completely righteous can stand."

Rabbi Abahu bases this well-known teaching from a verse in the writings of the Prophet Yeshayahu (57:19), as is explained on our *daf*. Our *gemara* points out that Rabbi Chiya bar Rabbi in the name of Rabbi Yochanan disagrees with Rabbi Abahu, putting the completely righteous one who never transgressed first, as one might very well think should be the case based on "logic." Nevertheless, the Rambam rules according to the view of Rabbi Abahu in his work called the Mishneh Torah, in the Laws of Repentance, chapter 7, halacha 4:

"Our Sages stated, 'In the place where *ba'alei teshuva* stand, even the completely righteous are not able to stand.' The level of *ba'alei teshuva* transcends the level of those who never sinned at all, since they overcome their inclination to transgress more so than a righteous person who never sinned."

Rashi in our *sugya* explains that the power of the returning Jew is so great that no one is worthy of standing (in a spiritual sense) "in front of him" or along with him in his unique spiritual place.

Another explanation for the higher level of the *ba'al teshuva* is given by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler. He enlightens us on the apparent paradox of why one who returns after transgressing occupies a greater place of honor than one who was righteous his entire life. The purpose of the Creation — and especially Mankind — is to express the glory of the Creator. The righteous do this by always fulfilling the will of the Creator by themselves, so to speak. On the other hand, one who sins and then repents and returns to the way of Hashem, reveals another dimension of Divine glory. He shows that with the acceptance of merciful assistance from Hashem to help begin his return, he is able to make a great effort to successfully conquer his previously unbeatable inclination to transgress.

Another way to help understand this teaching of Rabbi Abahu is the following: One who eats on the day preceding Yom Kippur is attributed as if he fasted for two days. Why? After a person eats on one day, it is often even harder for him to refrain from this activity of eating on the next day. He is accustomed to eating. In a similar fashion, since a *ba'al teshuva* has eaten from "forbidden fruits" by transgressing, it makes refraining from sin that much harder. Therefore, when he repents, does *teshuva* and returns to the way of Hashem, he stands in a place where a person who never transgressed cannot reach. (Torah Temimah)

Here is a personal observation. As one who has taught and interacted with *ba'alei teshuva* over the years at Ohr Somayach, there are numerous times when I have heard this same reaction from students who have returned after going to eat Shabbat meals with host families who have been life-long observant:

“What a surprise! I am a *ba'al teshuva* (or in the process of becoming one) and look up to someone who is an FFB (*frum-* from-birth) as my spiritual superior. However, my hosts told me that they love to invite *ba'alei teshuva* into their homes since it greatly inspires them to improve their spiritual growth when they see how a Jew has changed to become observant, often with some degree of self-sacrifice. *They* look up to *me* for inspiration!”

I have no doubt, however, that in truth they all look up to *each other*. They all help one another in every way possible in their ongoing journeys of having closer connections with the Almighty, through constant growth in passion for the observance of mitzvahs and the study of the Torah.

▪ *Sanhedrin 99a*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the Menorah in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the *Bigdei Kehuna* (priestly garments): A breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate, and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices, dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil.

Hashem commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the Altar in the Mishkan. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. Hashem commands that another Altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this Altar each day.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 8)

“The amount of sleep required by the average person is five minutes more.”
Wilson Mizener – American Playwright

The first paragraph of the Shema continues: “Let these matters that I command you today be on your heart.”

Rashi, citing the Midrash, eloquently depicts to us how we should approach our relationship with Hashem and His Mitzvot. Placing the emphasis on the word “today,” Rashi exhorts us to relate to the Mitzvot as if they are brand new. Not to treat them as if they are boring, dusty relics. Our verse is truly inspirational, as it speaks to the hearts of each and every one of us! Unfortunately, due to a person’s many sins, it is entirely conceivable that they may conclude that they no longer have any right to approach Hashem. Our verse is teaching us that this conclusion is completely incorrect. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth because we can always turn to our Father in Heaven.

Our verse is teaching us that it is never too late. In the same way, there is an old Chinese saying that the best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, and the second-best time is today! This beautiful idea of relating to the Mitzvot as if they have just been given to us repeats itself in the Torah. In Devarim (26:17), the Torah commands us, “This day Hashem, your G-d, commands you to perform these decrees and statutes, and you shall observe and perform them with all your heart and all your soul.” Rashi, in a similar fashion to our verse, cites the Midrash Tanchuma, that our approach to the Mitzvot and the way that we perform them should be as fresh and as new in our eyes as if they were given to us this very day.

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner points out that it is no coincidence that the command to build a healthy and enduring relationship with Hashem appears in the most famous – and possibly the most repeated – Tefillah in the Jewish world. We are being taught that we must always approach our Avodat Hashem with a passion. Our verse is instructing us that one of the most basic and effective ways of “remembering” Hashem in all that we do is by not performing the Mitzvot by rote. I am often asked by my Talmidim and Talmidot how it is possible to approach praying Mincha, for example, with a newness and a freshness every single day. Somewhat ironically, I always offer the same response, “It is true that you prayed exactly the same Mincha yesterday and the day before and the day before that, too. But, this is the first and only time that you will recite Mincha today. And that means that today’s Mincha is absolutely unique!”

Winnie the Pooh, beloved by children all over the world, asks his good friend Piglet, “What day is it?”

“It’s today,” squeaked Piglet.

“My favorite day!” said Pooh.

It is the “today” that Rashi is emphasizing in our verse. Because every day is a new opportunity to fulfil the Will of Hashem in a way that it can never be fulfilled again.

The Talmud (Brachot 29b), characterizing what is considered to be insincere prayer, offers several possibilities. The third option states in the names of Rabbah and Rav Yosef that it is a Tefillah that contains nothing new or different from past Tefillot. As Rashi explains, it is the same Tefillah as yesterday and it will be the same Tefillah as tomorrow.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Hager of Kosov (1768-1825), homiletically interprets the verse, “...Why did Ben Yishai [David, the son of Yishai] not come yesterday or today...?” (Shmuel 1 20:27) as meaning, “Why hasn’t Ben Yishai (i.e., the Mashiach, who will be a direct descendent of King David) come? Because our today is like our yesterday!”

To be continued...

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Q & A

Questions

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of the oil for the *menorah*?
2. How was Aharon commanded to kindle the *menorah*?
3. What does *tamid* mean in reference to the *menorah*?
4. What does *kehuna* mean?
5. Name the eight garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*.
6. To what does Rashi compare the *ephod*?
7. In which order were the names of the Tribes inscribed on the *ephod*?
8. The stones of the *ephod* bore the inscription of the names of the sons of Yaakov. Why?
9. For what sins did the *choshen mishpat* atone?
10. What are three meanings of the word *mishpat*?
11. What was lacking in the *bigdei kehuna* in the second *Beit Hamikdash*?
12. Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
13. When the *Kohen Gadol* wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the *tefillin* situated?
14. What does the word *tamid* mean in reference to the *tzitzit*? (two answers)
15. Which garments were worn by a *kohen hediot*?
16. During the inauguration of the *kohanim*, a bullock was brought as a sin offering. For what sin did this offering atone?
17. Moshe was commanded to wash Aharon and his sons to prepare them to serve as *kohanim* (29:4). How were they washed?
18. What was unique about the bull sin-offering brought during the inauguration of the *kohanim*?
19. How did the oil used for the meal-offering differ from the oil used for the *menorah*?
20. What does the crown on the *mizbeach haketoret* symbolize?

Answers

1. 27:20 - The olives were pressed and not ground; and only the first drop was used.
2. 27:20 - He was commanded to kindle it until the flame ascended by itself.
3. 27:20 - It means that it should be kindled every night.
4. 28:3 - Service.
5. 28:4,36,42 - *Choshen, ephod, me'il, ketonet, mitznefet, avnet, tzitz, and michnasayim.*
6. 28:6 - A woman's riding garment.
7. 28:10 - In order of birth.
8. 28:12 - So that G-d would see their names and recall their righteousness.
9. 28:15 - For judicial errors.
- 10.28:15 -
 - (a) The claims of the litigants
 - (b) The court's ruling
 - (c) The court's punishment.
- 11.28:30 - The *Urim V'Tumim* -- the "*Shem Ha'meforash*" placed in the folds of the *choshen*.
- 12.28:31 - The fabric of the *me'il* was made only of *techelet*.
- 13.28:37 - Between the *tzitz* and the *mitznefet*.
- 14.28:38 -
 - (a) It always atones, even when not being worn.
 - (b) The Kohen Gadol must always be aware that he is wearing it.
- 15.28:40,42 - *Ketonet, avnet, migba'at* and *michnasayim*.
- 16.29:1 - The sin of the golden calf.
- 17.29:4 - They immersed in a *mikveh*.
- 18.29:14 - It is the only external sin-offering that was completely burned.
- 19.29:40 - Oil for the *menorah* comes only from beaten olives. Oil for meal-offerings may come from either beaten olives or from ground-up olives.
- 20.30:3 - The crown of *kehuna*.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Tetzaveh/Purim: Do the Din

The Scroll of Esther jumps straight into the action, setting the scene of a lavish party that King Achashverosh threw in his third year. After partying for 180 days, Achashverosh made a post-party party for the residents of Shushan, and on the seventh day of that second party, he summoned his wife Queen Vashti to appear before him. When Vashti refused her husband's order, Achashverosh consulted with the wise jurists who were said to “know dat and din,” and tried to determine how he should proceed and if he should punish his wife (Est. 1-13). In this essay we attempt to understand the difference between the nearly-synonymous terms dat and din.

The word dat — often (mis)translated as “religion” — appears twenty times in the Scroll of Esther. Besides being used to describe the body of knowledge that Achashverosh’s lawyers had mastered, dat is also used, for example, when saying that the drinking in Achashverosh’s was “according to the dat, without duress” (Est. 1:8); when saying that Achashverosh consulted with the lawyers to figure out “according to the dat, what to do with the queen Vashti” (Est. 1:15); and when Haman told the king that Jews practice a dat that is different from all other nations and that they do not do the king's dat (Est. 3:8). The word also makes an appearance both when the king promulgated that the Jews should be wiped out and when he later promulgated that the Jews had the right to defend themselves — “the dat was given in Shushan the capital” (Est. 3:15, 8:14).

Turning briefly to the word din (often translated as “judgment”), this term appears multiple times in the Bible, but only twice in the Pentateuch when the Torah states that the Sanhedrin which sits in the Temple is charge with deciding between “din and din” (Deut. 17:8).

The Maharal of Prague explains that dat refers to the laws officially dictated by the established/prevaling norms within a given polity (essentially, common law), while din refers to those laws that are presumed to be true through intellect. Alternatively, he explains that dat refers to the law as it relates to man and himself (like ethics, morality, and religion), while din refers to the law as it relates to man and his fellow men (like civil law). Rabbi Yosef Zecharia Stern likewise writes that dat refers to the norms of a country as needed for general governance or under specific situations (a pragmatic consideration), while din refers to “justice” as set in law (a logical/moral consideration).

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer writes that dat refers to “the rule of law” (whether that law is dictated by Divine revelation or simply societal norms), while mishpat refers to the “judiciary discretion” in choosing between various legal outcomes and din refers specifically to the “penal system” that metes out punishments to those who violate the law.

In the context of Achashverosh, Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin explains that din refers to a system of promulgating law based on logic and rationality, while dat refers to a ruler's royal prerogative to pass laws by fiat, even if they do not fit the test of rationality. When Haman slandered the Jews by saying they do not follow the dat of the king, he alluded to the Halachic notion that dina d'malchuta dina (see Gittin 6b), which means that when the ruling government promulgates a din, it is recognized as Halacha. Haman claimed that the Jews only followed Achashverosh's din (which are rules rooted in rationality), but not his dat (which could be irrational), thus demonstrating their disloyalty to him. Rabbi Tzadok further writes that when it comes to Judaism, the terms dat and din are a tandem that refer to the Written Torah and Oral Torah, as both are necessary in order for one to properly keep the Law.

**For the full version of this essay, visit our website:*

http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/

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TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

REMEMBERING AMALEK

Mitzvos #603-605; *Devarim 25:17-19*

In *Parashas Ki Seitzei*, Hashem commands us: *“Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you left Egypt, that he met you on the way and smote all those straggling behind you, while you were fatigued and weary — and he did not fear Hashem. When Hashem shall grant you peace from all your enemies around you in the land that Hashem your G-d has given you as a heritage, obliterate every vestige of Amalek from beneath the heavens — do not forget!”*

We do not find such a commandment regarding any other enemy of the Jewish people. What is unique about Amalek? Amalek displayed great evil and also caused us great harm. They displayed evil by coming from a very distant land, crossing through five nations, to attack weak stragglers of a weary nation who posed no threat to them (*Mechilta* and *Rav Hirsch*). Moreover, by seeking to destroy the nation that Hashem had just acquired for Himself, they showed that they did not fear Him, even after He had revealed His power and awesomeness to the world through the miracles of the Exodus. Their wicked attack included contaminating their victims through sodomy and severing their signs of circumcision, which they cast up heavenward in gross blasphemy (*Rashi*). They also caused us more harm than any other nation, for all the nations of the world were scared to fight with the seemingly invulnerable Jewish people until Amalek “cooled the boiling water” with their impudent attack (*Shabbos 118b* and *Rashi*). It is therefore a mitzvah to hate and eliminate this evil enemy of Hashem and His people.

On a deeper level of understanding, Amalek represents evil itself, and they are diametrically opposed to the Jewish people, who represent Hashem’s kingship and all that is good. Thus, Hashem’s Throne and Name are said to be incomplete as long as Amalek exists (*Rashi* to *Shemos 17:16*). The conflict between the Jewish people and Amalek may be traced to the opposition between their respective patriarchs, Yaakov and Eisav, about whom it is written that they would battle each other in a see-saw-like manner, that when one rises the other falls (*Rashi* to *Bereishis 25:23*). This relationship was clearly apparent during the Purim story, in which Hashem the Jewish people sank at the depths of their period of exile and Haman the Amalekite stood to annihilate them; and then, Haman fell and the Jewish people rose.

There are two ways to lower the far side of a see-saw: either by lowering it directly or by raising the near side. Just as it is easiest to lower the far side by raising the near side, the easiest way to battle Eisav is by raising our religious standards. We may apply this idea to all the

enemies of the Jewish people in the current exile, which is associated with Eisav. Our national rectification depends on the elimination of evil and those who represent it, and this depends on our conduct.

In light of the above, we gain insight into the circumstances of Amalek's attack and the method by which we defeated them. Amalek attacked because of the Jewish people's lack of faith, for immediately prior to the attack, they had lacked water and asked, "Is Hashem with us or not?!" (*Rashi to Shemos 17:8*). When we are lacking, Amalek fills the void and gains power to attack. For this reason, when Yehoshua led the Jewish troops against Amalek, Moshe focused on the real battlefield: the Jewish people themselves. He raised his hands heavenward to direct the Jewish people direct their hearts to Hashem, knowing that once they did so, they would rise and Amalek would fall.

The Sages illustrate the double-sided nature of the mitzvah to remember Amalek with a parable: A king fenced off his royal vineyard and placed within it a ferocious watchdog, and one day, his son breached the fence and got bitten. Whenever the king sought to caution his son against repeating his error, he would say, "Remember how the dog bit you." So too, Hashem tells us to remember what Amalek did to us primarily so that we do not repeat the error of losing faith in Hashem and doubting His presence (*Tanchuma, Ki Seitzei §9*). He is always with us and ready to provide our needs with boundless love, and whenever we lack something, it means that our behavior is lacking and needs improvement.

This idea is also reflected in the Torah's description of Amalek's attack, "*they did not fear Hashem.*" Some interpret this to mean that Amalek did not fear Hashem, while others interpret it to mean that the Jewish people did fear Hashem. These two interpretations of "*they did not fear Hashem*" are two sides of the same coin: since the Jewish people did not fear Hashem sufficiently, He placed them in the hands of those who lacked any fear of Hashem whatsoever: Amalek.

Amalek's power is especially linked to the extent to which the Jewish people devote themselves to Torah study. We thus find that Amalek's attack in Wilderness followed a laxity of Torah study (*Tanchuma §25*). The Sages expound similarly that whenever the voice of Yaakov is heard in synagogues and study halls, the hands of Eisav are powerless (*Zohar, Beshalach 58b*). In light of what we have explained, this is because Torah study is the elixir for the *yetzer hara* (*Kiddishin 30b*), and when we raise ourselves, we lower Amalek.

Just as Amalek is hidden among the nations, the evil inclination lurks within, swaying our every decision and tugging us downward ever so gently, in its deviously imperceptible way. And just as our national struggle against Amalek and the evil they represent will last until the coming of Mashiach, so too, we must struggle to better ourselves and develop our relationship with Hashem for as long as we live.

INSIGHTS INTO HALACHA

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

5785 – The Rarest Year of Them All

Part VI

As detailed in previous installments in our series, our current year, 5785, is not only a rare one, but calendarically speaking, actually the hands-down **rarest** of them all. 5785 is classified as a *HaSh”A* year in our calendars. This abbreviation is referring to Rosh Hashana falling out on Thursday (*hei*), both months of Cheshvan and Kislev being *shalem* (*shin* - 30 day months instead of possibly 29; these are the only months that can switch off in our set calendar), and Pesach falling out on Sunday (*aleph*).

A *HaSh”A* year is the rarest of years, and out of the 14 possibilities in *Tur*'s 247-year calendar cycle, this year type occurs on average only once in about 30.19 years (approximately 3.3 percent of the time). Indeed, at times there are 71 years (!) in between *HaSh”A* years. The last time this year type occurred was 31 years ago in 5754 / 1994. The next time will be 20 years hence in 5805 / 2044. The next several times after that are slated to be 27 years further, in 5832 / 2071 and then a 51 year gap in 5883 / 2122.

The reasons and rules governing the whys and whens this transpires are too complicated for this discussion; suffice to say that when the *Mishnah Berurah* discusses these issues he writes “*ain kan makom l’ha’arich*,” that this is not the place to expound in detail, which is certainly good enough for this author.

Obviously, such a rare calendar year will contain many rare occurrences. This series sets out to detail many of them. As we get nearer to the actual events, we will perhaps discuss them in greater detail. Let’s continue on our journey through our unique year.

The Arba Parshiyos Puzzle

As we move along into the “*simchah* season” known as the joyous month of Adar, it is well known that many changes were instituted to the normal weekly Torah readings, in the *Maftir* and *Haftarah*, each for their own purpose and reason, and this year is no exception.

First up is *Parashas Shekalim*, on the Shabbos before or of *Rosh Chodosh Adar* (to be read this Shabbos), which commemorates the communal *mitzvah* of the giving the *Machtzis Hashekel*, used to pay for the daily *Korban Tamid* for the whole year.

Next is *Parashas Zachor*, which is always read on the Shabbos before *Purim*, as it evokes and condemns the unprovoked attacks of the evil Amalek on *Klal Yisrael*, paralleling and foreshadowing the genocidal plot of his wicked descendant, Haman, detailed in *Megillas Esther*, which is read on Purim.

Third is *Parashas Parah*, on the third week of Adar, commemorating the *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer) used to purify *Klal Yisrael* for the upcoming *Korban Pesach*.

Lastly, on the Shabbos before or of *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*, is *Parashas Hachodesh*, to properly honor the coming of the “First Month” that we were commanded in the Torah to observe, *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*. These four changes to the *Maftir* and *Haftarah* are collectively known as the “*Arba Parshiyos*”.

The *Gemara* in *Megillah* (29a-30b) devotes considerable attention to the details of the “*Arba Parshiyos*,” including how to compute the Jewish calendar’s nineteen year cycle of which exact week will host which special reading. It seems a bit confusing, but luckily several of our great early authorities, including the *Rif*, *Rashi*, and the *Rosh*, give a simple mnemonic that allows anyone to figure out which week is which. This is especially practical for a *shul’s gabbai* who has to arrange the *Sifrei Torah* to the proper places on each of these weeks. In fact, this code is so useful that it is even cited as *halacha* by the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 685:6).

ZAVD”U - זאבד"ו - Unlocking the Code

In our Jewish calendar, the second day of *Rosh Chodesh Adar*, meaning the first actual day of the month of Adar (in leap years this is referring to Adar Sheini), can only fall out on four days of the week - Shabbos, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The mnemonic for these days that *Rosh Chodesh Adar* can occur on is *ZAVD”U*. Following basic *Gematria*, where each of the letters of the Hebrew *Aleph-Beis* has an equivalent numerical value, allows us to figure this out. For example, *Aleph* equals one, *Beis* equals two, *Dalet* equals four, *Vav* equals six, *Zayin* equals seven, etc.

Hence, in our case, *Beis*, which equals two, refers to the second day of the week, Monday. *Dalet*, which equals four, refers to the fourth day of the week, Wednesday. *Zayin* refers to the seventh day of the week - Shabbos, and *Vav* the sixth day of the week – Friday.

Double Codes

The *Rishonim* teach us that each of these letters stands for an additional code: **ZAT”U**, **B”O**, **DA”D**, **U”BIV** (or **U”BYU**); and knowing their meanings will help us calculate which week each of the *Parshiyos* will fall out on. The **first** letter of each of these codes refers to which day of the week *Rosh Chodesh Adar* falls out on, and the **remaining** letters refer to which day(s) of the week during the month is a “skip week,” with no special reading.

ZAT"U – ז"א

ZAT"U refers to when *Rosh Chodesh Adar* falls out on a Shabbos ("Zayin," the seventh day of the week), then that day itself - Shabbos (the first week), *Parashas Shekalim* is read, the subsequent Shabbos is *Parashas Zachor*, the next Shabbos - "TU" or the fifteenth of Adar - is a "skip week" with no exceptional attributes for most of the world, the following Shabbos is *Parashas Parah*, and the last one is *Parashas Hachodesh*. This breakdown of the code applies for all the rest as well.

This year, 5785 is classified as a rare ZAT"U year, with Rosh Chodesh Adar falling out on Friday-Shabbos.

Rarest Aliyah

Moreover, due to our unique year type, this occurrence has several interesting effects. *Parashas Shekalim*, which falls out on a stand-alone *Parashas Terumah* this year, is also Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Adar. Hence, it is a Three-Torah *Parashah* (one Torah for *Parashas Mishpatim*, one for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, and one for *Parashas Shekalim*); also a rarity. In fact our rare year type is the only year type that *Parashas Shekalim* can actually fall out on *Parashas Terumah*. Hence, this also makes the 6th *Aliyah* of our reading (the 6th and 7th *Aliyah* combined; to make room for both extra readings – Shabbos Rosh Chodesh and *Shekalim*) the hands-down rarest *Aliyah* ever *leined*! As it can only occur in a *HaSh"á* year, this rare combined *Aliyah* is only read on average once every 30.19 years! Interesting, no?

Our fascinating journey, detailing the many remarkable facets of our rare year, will IY"Y be continued...

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch famously wrote that "the Jew's catechism is his calendar." It is this author's wish that by showcasing the uniqueness of our calendar year and its rare *minhagim*, this series will help raise appreciation of them and our fascinating calendrical customs.

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