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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Chukat Big, Brash, and Blonde?

“This is the (unexplainable) decree of the Torah” (19:02)

I couldn't help thinking as I watched pictures of President Donald Trump sitting in the operations room, watching the attack on the Iranian nuclear plant at Fordo, that he epitomized the United States of America.

There he was, flanked by two flags: to his right, the Star-Spangled Banner, and to his left, the seal of the President of the United States.

On his head was America's gift to the headwear of the world: a red baseball cap, with the slogan, “Make America Great Again.” Trump is the perfect American icon: big, brash and blonde.

And then, in his formal announcement about the bombing at the White House, President Trump said, “We love you G-d. We love our great military – protect them! G-d bless the Middle East! G-d bless Israel! And G-d bless America!”

In Genesis 12:3, Hashem said to Avraham, "I will bless those who bless you (i.e., the Jewish People) and whoever curses you, I will curse."

The Book of Daniel opens with Daniel's interpretation of Nevuchadnetzar's dream in which Nevuchadnetzar sees a great statue. The parts of this statue represent the empires that would exile the Jewish People. The head represents Babylon, the two arms represent Media and Persia, the torso represents Greece. The two feet represent Edom (Esav) and Yishmael - Christianity and Islam.

There is a basic difference between the arms and the legs. A person can function with one arm, but with one leg, he is essentially powerless.

The two final exiles work as a team and they cannot oppress the Jewish People without the co-operation and assistance of the other. So, which is it? Are Edom's spiritual heirs, the West, the partners of Islam and its dogmatic concept of a world subjugated to Islam, or do they love Israel like President Trump?

It must have been about ten years ago that I realized that something had changed at the BBC. Suddenly, I saw reports about Muslim festivals, informing their viewers of the details of, say, Eid al-Fitr, and how this was a beautiful time of feasting, prayer, and gift-giving. It's not that the BBC never covers Jewish Festivals, but the tone of the piece was more than informative. To my mind, it bordered on proselytizing. It smacked of a trailer for Islam 101.

Arab investors have significantly invested in the UK. For example, Qatar's sovereign wealth fund owns stakes in Barclays Bank, Sainsbury's, and Heathrow Airport, and they also own Harrods and the Ritz. The UAE has also made major investments, such as Abu Dhabi's investments in the UK's renewable energy sector. All of these investments show the strong economic connections between the Gulf states and the UK. The BBC is primarily funded by the UK television license fee and does not receive direct funding from Arab states, but there is a definite Arab bias there for all to see.

The pro-Arab tendency in British society is not new. The connection between the Brits and the Arabs goes back to the late nineteenth century, and before.

Several notable English Arabists include writer, archaeologist, and political officer Gertrude Bell, who played a significant role in the formation of modern Iraq and was deeply involved in Middle Eastern politics in the early 20th century. Harry St. John Philby, also known as Jack Philby, was an advisor to King Abdulaziz ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. He converted to Islam in 1930 and later became an adviser to Ibn Saud, urging him to unite the Arabian Peninsula under Saudi rule. The Arab Legion in Jordan was founded and led by another Englishman, Glubb 'Pasha,' whose full name was John Bagot Glubb. He was instrumental in organizing and commanding the Arab Legion, which became a key part of Jordan's military forces. And of course, most famous of all was T.E. Lawrence, known as Lawrence of Arabia, who played a crucial role in fomenting the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War One.

Why do the English and the Arabs have this mutual 'love affair?'

It could be that they are so opposite – the climate and topography of Devon could not be more different than the Nedj desert – and opposites attract. Both nations place a high premium on honor.

But there is also a significant pro-Jewish strain that runs through English culture: George Eliot, Lord Palmerston, and Benjamin Disraeli, were notable philo-Semites of the 19th century, along with Sir Robert Peel, who supported Jewish emancipation, and Thomas Babington Macaulay, who spoke in favor of Jewish civil rights. Also, Charles Dickens shifted later in life toward a more positive view of the Jews. Historian Paul Johnson points out that in the First World War, just at the time when the British government was in a position to create a Jewish national home in the Middle East, the leaders of that government, including David Lloyd George were largely low-church Presbyterians who had all been brought up on a diet of Tanach. To them, the return of Israel to its Land was axiomatic.

So which is it? Is Edom, the West in a symbiotic partnership with Islam to dominate the Jews – or are they like Donald Trump who says, “May G-d bless Israel?”

The Midrash says that when Hashem was giving us the Torah, everything in the world stopped. Everything was silent. The nations of the world, fearing another giant flood, sent for Bilaam, their prophet, to ask him what was happening. Bilaam replied with the words of Psalm 29, that Hashem was not bringing a flood or destruction, but "Hashem was giving ‘Oz’ — the Torah — to His People.” To which the Nations replied, "May Hashem bless His people with peace."

If we want to ingratiate ourselves with the nations of the world, they will turn around and say, “You are not like us. You are a nation that dwells alone. (Bamidbar 23:9)”

But when we, as proud Jews, sanctify the name of the Torah, when we behave like Jews who stood at Sinai, then the whole world will put on its Donald Trump hat and proclaim, "May Hashem bless His people with peace!"

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Chukat

Masechet Avodah Zarah 9-15

The Guard Outside the Door

Onkelos told the Roman soldiers, “A king of flesh and blood sits inside and his servants guard him from the outside, whereas regarding the Holy One, Blessed is He, His servants are inside and He guards them from the outside.”

The *gemara* relates the context in which this was said. Onkelos the son of Klonimos, born into a Roman royal family, was a convert from the Roman paganism of the times to Torah Judaism. The Caesar sent a unit of his soldiers to bring Onkelos to him (presumably to be killed for rebelling by converting), but Onkelos drew them close to Hashem through Torah verses, and they all converted. Subsequently, Caesar sent another group of soldiers to bring him, and warned them not to say anything to him. As they were walking on the way, he said to them that he would like to tell them something ‘secular’: “It is the custom of the world that when a minor official walks with a greater one, the lesser one carries a torch and walks ahead to light the way. This is the manner of all levels of officials, all the way up the ‘power chain’. But does the king light a torch for any person?” Onkelos asked rhetorically. They said, “No”. He told them, “But the Holy One, Blessed is He, takes a torch and goes ahead of the Jewish People, as it is written: And Hashem would go before them by day with a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way, and at night with a pillar of fire to give them light, so they could travel (in the desert) day and night (Shemot 13:21). They also all converted.”

But Caesar didn’t give up. The story continues: Caesar then sent yet another group of soldiers to fetch Onkelos, and instructed them not to have any discussion with him at all. After the soldiers took him and they were all leaving his home, Onkelos saw the mezuzah on his doorpost and placed his hand on it, saying to them, “What’s this?” Their interest was quite piqued, and they said to him, “You tell us.” He said to them, “The custom of the world is that a king of flesh and blood sits inside and his servants guard him from the outside, whereas regarding the Holy One, Blessed is He, His servants are inside and He guards them from the outside — as it is said: “Hashem will guard your going out and your coming in from now and forever (Psalms 121:8).” These soldiers converted

as well, and Caesar — realizing that it was a lost cause to capture Onkelos, and ruining the fact that he had already lost three divisions of soldiers who converted to Judaism — stopped sending any more troops.

Onkelos was a very great Torah scholar who translated the Torah into Aramaic. A translation is a complicated matter, as anyone who has translated an important text can attest. Since every translation is in essence an “interpretation”, more than mere knowledge of the two languages is necessary. The translator must be absolutely true to the meaning of the source text, and therefore Onkelos’ tremendous feat was his ability to translate the Chumash in accordance with the teachings of our Sages that had been handed down from generation to generation, all the way back to Moshe Rabbeinu. His translation, one that we still have today, is known as “Targum Onkelos”, and is widely studied by Jews everywhere as part of the mitzvah of “*Shnayim Mikra v’echad Targum*” — the mitzvah for each individual to study the Torah portion of the week twice each week in the Chumash, along with the “Targum” translation of “Targum Onkelos”.

It is important to point out that the halachic authorities write that the practice of kissing the mezuzah has a basis in this historical event recorded in our *sugya*, in which Onkelos touched the mezuzah as he left his house in custody of the Roman soldiers. Besides our showing love for the mitzvah of mezuzah by touching and kissing a mezuzah when passing by one, we also recall the message of Divine Providence taught to us by Onkelos: Hashem protects us and our homes. (See the Rema in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah 285:2, and the commentaries there, for a discussion of various customs regarding touching the mezuzah, and what is said when doing so.)

The *Aruch Hashulchan*, by Rabbi Yechiel Michal Epstein (Eastern Europe, 1829-1908), states that some great halachic authorities write that when one leaves his home, he should place his hand on the mezuzah and say the following prayer: “May Hashem guard me in my going out and in my coming back.” And he should do this and say this likewise when he returns home. (285:3) Rabbi Epstein writes that this practice is to some extent based on what we learn on our *daf* regarding what Onkelos did and said when he was passing by his mezuzah.

▪ *Avoda Zara 11a*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The laws of the Parah Adumah, the Red Heifer, are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. Hashem commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a designated rock so that water will flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of Hashem's mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. The Jewish People resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to Eretz Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him for 30 days. Sichon, the Amorite, attacks Bnei Yisrael when they ask to pass through his land. As a result, Bnei Yisrael conquer the lands that Sichon had previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

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Questions

1. "Take a perfect Para Aduma (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" temima mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a Para Aduma?
3. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
4. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the Para Aduma; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
5. Why was the mitzvah of the Para Aduma entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?
6. Why does the Torah stress that all of the congregation came to Midbar Tzin?
7. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of Para Aduma?
8. During their journey in the midbar, in whose merit did the Jewish People receive water?
9. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second time?
10. When Moshe told the King of Edom that the Jewish People would not drink from the well-water, to which well did he refer? What do we learn from this?
11. The cloud that led the Jewish People leveled all mountains in their path except three. Which three and why?
12. Why did the entire congregation mourn Aharon's death?
13. What disappeared when Aharon died?
14. Which "inhabitant of the South" (21:1) attacked the Jews?
15. For what two reasons did G-d punish the people with snakes specifically?
16. Why did the Jewish People camp in Arnon rather than pass through Moav to enter Eretz Canaan?
17. What miracle took place at the valley of Arnon?
18. What was the "strength" of Amon that prevented the Jewish People from entering into their Land?
19. Why was Moshe afraid of Og?
20. Who killed Og?

Answers

1. 19:2 – Perfectly red.
2. 19:2 – Two.
3. 19:14,15 – The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
4. 19:21 – a) Remains tahor; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts tumah; c) He and his clothing contract tumah.
5. 19:22 – Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the Golden Calf.
6. 20:1 – To teach that they were all fit to enter the Land; everyone involved in the sin of the spies already died.
7. 20:1 – To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous.
8. 20:2 – Miriam's.
9. 20:11 – After he hit it the first time, only a few drops came out since he was commanded to speak to the rock.
10. 20:17 – To the well that traveled with the nation in the midbar. This teaches that one who has adequate provisions should nevertheless purchase goods from his host in order to benefit the host.
11. 20:22 – Har Sinai for receiving the Torah, Har Nevo for Moshe's burial, and Hor Hahar for Aharon's burial.
12. 20:29 – Aharon made peace between contending parties and between spouses. Thus, everybody mourned him.
13. 20:29 – The clouds of glory disappeared, since they sheltered the Jews in Aharon's merit.
14. 21:1 – Amalek.
15. 21:6 – The original snake, which was punished for speaking evil, is fitting to punish those who spoke evil about G-d and about Moshe. And the snake, to which everything tastes like dust, is fitting to punish those who complained about the manna which changed to any desired taste.
16. 21:13 – Moav refused them passage.
17. 21:15 – The Amorites hid in caves in the mountain on the Moabite side of the valley in order to ambush the Jews. When the Jews approached, the mountain on the Eretz Canaan side of the valley moved close to the other mountain and the Amorites were crushed.
18. 21:24 – G-d's command, "Do not harass them" (Devarim 2:19).
19. 21:34 – Og had once been of service to Avraham. Moshe was afraid that this merit would assist Og in battle.
20. 21:35 – Moshe.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Chukat

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 18)

Kriat Shema al Hamitah continues: He said, “If you carefully listen to the Voice of Hashem, your G-d, and do what is proper in His Eyes, and you listen closely to His commandments and observe His decrees, the entire malady that I afflicted upon Egypt I will not inflict upon you, for I am Hashem your Healer. (Shemot 15:26)

The closing words of our verse are incredibly significant. Despite the fact that there are times when, in our perception, we feel as if Hashem is treating us harshly, we are being taught that it is always for our benefit. Even when Hashem metes out “punishments,” He is doing so only to help us overcome our seeming inability to connect to Him in the most effective way. Can there be anything more uplifting than knowing, “For I am Hashem your Healer”? To recognize that Hashem’s reactions are determined by His immeasurable love for us, even though it might sometimes require great effort to remember that?

Once, at *Shalosh Seudot*, the Chofetz Chaim made a truly disquieting statement. He told those present, “The entire world is filled with heresy and denial of Hashem. I’m not only referring to the non-religious and the non-Jews who don’t believe in Hashem. I’m referring to Jews who fear Hashem. Very often, if you pay attention to what they say, you will hear heresy! If a businessman says, ‘What can I do to earn money? And how should I go about it? What are the details?’ - and throughout his discussion he forgets that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in charge and that without His Will nothing will happen - that is heresy.”

The Chofetz Chaim concluded, “In my opinion, everyone should spend an hour a day thinking about *emunah* [belief] and *bitachon* [faith]. A person should think about the fact that our Sages teach us (*Chullin 7b*), ‘No one hurts their finger below (in this world) unless it was decreed above,’ and also ponder other fundamentals of *emunah*. They should clear their thoughts from all other matters, speak to themselves about *emunah*, and engrave *emunah* onto their heart.”

There is a well-known joke that illustrates the ability we all have to ignore Hashem. A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As he sat there, he and the barber began an enjoyable conversation. They talked about so many things and various subjects. When they eventually touched on the subject of Hashem, the barber told his client, “I don't believe that Hashem exists.”

“Why do you say that?” asked the customer.

“Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that Hashem doesn't exist. Tell me, if Hashem exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be so much sorrow in the world? If Hashem existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can't imagine a loving Hashem who would allow all of these things!”

The customer decided not to respond because he really wasn't interested in getting sucked into a never-ending argument. The barber finished his job and the customer paid, and left the store. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, matted hair and a wild, untrimmed beard.

The customer turned back and entered the barber shop again and he said to the barber, “You know what? Barbers don't exist!”

“How can you say that?” asked the surprised barber. “I am here, and I am a barber. And I just cut your hair!”

“No!” the customer exclaimed. “Barbers don't exist, because if they did, there would be no people with dirty, long hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside.”

“That's ridiculous! Of course, barbers exist!” he answered. “The problem is not that barbers don't exist. The problem is that people like that fellow outside don't bother going to one.”

“Exactly!” affirmed the customer. “That's the point! Hashem, too, *does* exist. What happens, is, people don't go to Him. They simply don't look for Him!”

As jokes go, it may not be the funniest one you've ever heard. But it is quite thought-provoking.

Regardless of how many times throughout the day we ignore Hashem, despite how many times we might choose to disregard His messages, our day draws to a close with the declaration, "For I am Hashem your Healer." As we go to sleep for the night, we follow the directive of the Chofetz Chain to reinforce our belief and our faith that everything that happens to us is for our benefit. Even, or perhaps especially, those things that we perceive as being not good.

**To be continued...*

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)

Chukas

ACCEPTING THE EDMITE

Mitzvah #563; Devarim 23:8

The Torah relates in *Parashas Chukas* that when our ancestors travelled through the Wilderness and approached the border of Edom, Moshe sent a messenger to ask for permission to cross through. Moshe reminded the Edomites that they are relatives, for their ancestors Yaakov and Eisav were brothers. He also recalled that the Jewish people had undergone many years of slavery and deserved pity. He added that the Jewish people would not cause any harm in crossing and they would pay for food and drink. Moshe added a word of caution: Even if you have many weapons, we can call out just once to Hashem and He will make your armies drop to the ground.

Edom replied, “You rely on Yaakov’s blessing, ‘the voice is the voice of Yaakov,’ while we rely on Eisav’s blessing, ‘the hands are the hands of Eisav.’” You have the power of prayer, but we have the power of the sword. Edom refused to allow their travel-weary Jewish brothers entry and instead came out to attack. The Jewish people had to turn away because Edom had not yet accumulated enough guilt to make it possible for the Jewish people to conquer them. In the future, though, our power of prayer will overpower Edom’s power of the sword, and we will establish Hashem’s kingship in the world (*Midrash HaGadol*).

One would think that we should trade our feelings of brotherhood with feelings of hatred. However, the Torah enlightens our moral senses by commanding us not to detest the Edomite. An Edomite may join the Jewish people as a convert should he desire, and the third generation may marry any Jew. This is because the third generation has lost any significant connection with Edom, as a person’s relationship with his descendants extends primarily until his grandchildren (*Chizkuni*).

We are obligated not to forget that they are our brothers even though they did not treat us this way. Even descendants of the Edomite Haman, who sought to obliterate us, were accepted as converts. Rav Shmuel bar Shilas, one of the great disciples of Rav, was descended from Haman (*Sanhedrin* 96b, *Ein Yaakov* ed.).

Rambam writes in *Moreh Nevuchim* (3:42) that we see from here how important it is to strengthen relationships with relatives and draw them close. Even if a relative has caused harm and monetary loss, and even if he is a despicable person, one is obligated to recognize the relationship and treat him favorably. *Radvaz* in *Metzudas David* writes similarly that even when a person has to distance relatives who do not conduct themselves in the proper way, “the left hand should distance, but the right hand should draw near.” The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 76b) expounds that about a person who draws his relatives near, it is written, “They you shall call, and Hashem will answer” (*Yeshayah* 58:9). When we recognize our relatives, it is a merit for Hashem to treat as His relatives and to grant special attention to our prayers.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Chukas: Words for War

At the end of Parashat Chukat, the Jews fought their inaugural battles in the long war to conquer the Holy Land. Their first enemies were Sichon and Og, Emorite kings who ruled over territories in the trans-Jordan region. The common word for “war” in Biblical Hebrew is milchamah, and its associated verb to mean “warring” is lochem. This essay explores the various words for “war” in Hebrew, including the apparent synonyms milchamah, krav, pulmus, batrunya, and knigi (the last three are actually Greek).

The noun milchamah (inflections of which appear over 300 times in the Bible) and the verb lochem (inflections of which also appear around 300 times in the Bible) are almost unanimously traced to the triliteral root LAMMED-CHET-MEM. That root yields words with three different meanings: “bread,” “meat,” and “war.” Menachem Ibn Saruk in Machberet Menachem lists these three different sets of meanings as distinct declensions of LAMMED-CHET-MEM without insinuating any connection between them. However, Ibn Janach in his Sefer HaShorashim collapses the difference between the first meanings of this root by explaining that it refers broadly to “[staple/primary] food” with most instances of lechem in the Bible used in reference to “bread” and some remaining instances in reference to “meat.” This approach can be confirmed by looking to cognate languages, like Arabic, where in lahm usually means “meat,” yet in the South Arabic dialect spoken on the island of Soqatra, it actually means “fish.” Radak in his Sefer HaShorashim further collapses the gap between these meanings derived from LAMMED-CHET-MEM by explaining that war can be figuratively characterized as the sword of the combatants “eating” the fatalities of war.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 3:19, 10:9, 14:2) takes the discussion in a slightly different direction, explaining how the root LAMMED-CHET-MEM denotes the “struggle,” especially when it comes to the struggle for survival. In order to eat bread (lechem), man must “struggle” against nature (which only provides raw wheat, but not processed bread) and his fellow man (who might try

to take away his food resources for his own purposes). The latter type of struggle typifies a milchamah, which is a battle or war fought between two or more human parties struggling for survival in a bid to win against the other. Using his signature phonetic etymology system, Rabbi Hirsch points to the existential nature of the struggle by connecting LAMMED-CHET-MEM to LAMMED-ALEPH-MEM (leum, "nation/state"). Just as the latter represents the existential essence of a nation or polity that oftentimes must overcome its enemies in order to survive, so too does the former refer to bread (or food in general) as the means of human existence and war as the means for preserving one's bread.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim in his work *Cheshek Shlomo* has a totally different approach. He traces the words lechem and milchamah to the biliteral root CHET-MEM. This is noteworthy because in general Rabbi Pappenheim understands that core biliteral roots can only be joined with the letters HEY, ALEPH, MEM, NUN, TAV, YUD, or VAV to create a three-letter root, but in this case, he understands the biliteral root CHET-MEM as joining with an initial LAMMED to form the words lechem and milchamah. Either way, Rabbi Pappenheim explains the core meaning of CHET-MEM as "heat." He lists a whole bevy of words as deriving from this: cham ("hot"), cheimah ("anger," when a person's wrath had been heated up), chamah ("sun," the world's main source of heat), chaman (a pagan idol formed in the shape of the sun), chum ("brown," the color of what appears to be sun-burnt), chemah ("butter," a dairy product derived from milk by agitating the liquid and thereby heating it up), cheimat ("flask," a vessel commonly used for storing butter or one that resembles the vat used for making butter), and chami/chamot ("parents-in-law," because a woman's husband's parents shower her with warm love). To this, he adds the word lechem ("bread") on account of the heat used to bake the dough into bread and the word milchamah on account of the heated nature of battle. As Rabbi Pappenheim explains, two sides only resort to war when things have heated up so much that they are ready to fight.

Another approach is adopted by the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 7) which suggests that the basic idea of LAMMED-CHET-MEM refers to "coming together." In the case of lechem ("food") it refers to people joining together for a meal or eaters coming into direct contact with foodstuff, while in the case of war, this root refers to enemy combatants coming into close contact on the battlefield as they fight. The scholars of that dictionary also point to the Arabic word lahhama ("soldering/welding") as evidence of their hypothesis that LAMMED-CHET-MEM primarily refers to "coming together." The truth is that this last meaning is not just found in Arabic, but is already found in Rabbinic

Hebrew where halchamah already refers to "soldering/welding" (Jerusalemic Talmud Beitzah 1:5, Vayikra Rabbah §3:3, Shir HaShirim Rabbah §4:30, 5:10) as it does in Modern Hebrew. In fact, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, also known as the Netziv, in his work Ha'Emek Davar (to Num. 28:2) already partially makes this point by explaining that lechem relates to halachamah in the sense that food is what solidifies the connection between the body and soul by keeping a person alive. He further expands on this idea to explain that ritual sacrifices are called lechem because they likewise cement the bond between the Jewish People and Hashem. Nonetheless, the Netziv does not explicitly connect this to the idea of milchamah like the scholars behind TDOT did.

Before we move on to the next word for “war,” I just wanted to point out that the name Lachmi appears in the Bible as the brother of the Phillistine warrior Goliath (I Chron. 20:5), and Lachman ben Ristak was the name of a gentile mentioned in the Talmud (Eruvin 63b).

The Biblical Hebrew word krav also means “war/battle/combat” and appears in such phrases as yom krav — “Day of Battle” (Zech. 14:3, Ps. 78:9, Job 38:23) and klei krav — literally, “Instruments of Battle [Weapons] (Ecc. 9:18). This word derives from the trilateral root KUF-REISH-BET, which means “approaching,” “inside/innards,” and “war.” While the classical Hebrew lexicographers (like Ibn Saruk, Ibn Janach, and Radak) presents these three meanings as distinct, the truth is blurrier than that. The closer one approaches towards something, the more one is closer to coming “inside” a certain perimeter and reaching its “innards.” Similarly, when two sides are pitted against each other in battle, those on the offense “approach” their enemies, while those on the defense eared try to protect whatever lies within the innards of their line of resistance. There are instances of the verbal form of KUF-REISH-BET that literally referring to “approaching” but contextually refer to potentially “batling” (for examples, Ex. 14:10, Lev. 20:10, Deut. 2:19, 20:10).

The root KUF-REISH-BET is also used in the word korban (“sacrifice”), which literally refers to bringing something close to the alter, but in a metaphysical sense also represents the worshipper coming closer to Hashem. This root also appears in the context of sexual relations, which represents two people physically coming together (for examples, Gen. 20:4, Lev. 18:6 Deut. 22:14, Isa. 8:3). And Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ps. 140:2) writes that the word akrov (“scorpion”) is also related to this three-letter root (with the addition of an initial AYIN) because that poisonous creature is always ready and poised to attack. Interestingly, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh of Carpentras in his work Aholei

Yehuda connects the word garav (a type of “boils/pimple”) to the krav (via the interchangeability of the GIMMEL and KUF), explaining that the garav is so itchy that a person feels impelled to “wage war” against himself and scratch the garav, even though it could lead to bleeding.

The word pulmus appears in the Mishnah in the sense of “war/battle.” It appears three times in the same Mishnah (Sotah 9:14) when listing various rabbinic enactments that were respectively instituted at the time of the Pulmus of Vespasian, the Pulmus of Titus, and the Last Pulmus. This Mishnaic Hebrew word is actually a loanword borrowed from the Greek πόλεμος (Πόλεμος), which means “war.” This Greek word is also the etymon of the English word polemic (meaning, “warlike,” “hostile,” and “contentious”), although the meaning has shifted slightly to refer more commonly to a strong verbal or written attack on someone or something (i.e., a “war of words”). In other words, the English polemic retains the core idea of “combat,” but it is now used in a verbal or intellectual context, rather than a military context. The same is true of the Modern Hebrew word pulmus which often refers to a “controversy” or “debate,” but not an actual war.

The Talmud relates that in the future Messianic Times, Hashem will punish the nations of the world for failing to uphold the Seven Noahide Laws even while the Jews continued to observe the more cumbersome 613 Commandments of the Torah. The gentiles will attempt to deflect the criticism levelled against them by answering that Hashem should have given them the Torah. The Talmud continues to explain how Hashem will then test those gentiles’ sincerity in saying that they would have kept the Torah had it been given to them by Him offering them the commandment of Sukkah. As the Talmud foretells, the non-Jews will end up spurning that commandment and showing that they indeed deserve whatever punishments He had planned for them (Avodah Zarah 2b-3a).

During that lengthy discussion, the Talmud asks how Hashem could give the non-Jews the commandment of Sukkah, if the whole concept of commandments only applies in This World, but not in the future Messianic World to Come, by when people will no longer have a chance to accrue more merits because it will be too late. To this, the Talmud answers that Hashem does not enter in a batrunya with His creations.

I was always under the impression that the word was pronounced batrunya and means “battle,” and the Talmud means that Hashem does not try to “fight” against those whom He created. However, after further investigation, it appears

the word should actually be read as b'tarunya, with the initial BET not serving as part of the core root, but rather as grammatical function to mean “with/through.” Rabbi Binyamin Mussafia in Mussaf He'aruch writes that tarunya is a Hebraization of the Greek word tyronia (τυραννία) meaning “tyranny” — a type of state in which power is taken by one person (i.e., the tyrant), either by force or by fraud. Obviously, that Greek word is the etymon of the related English words. According to this, what the Talmud means by saying that Hashem does not engage in tarunya is that He does not want to impose His will upon people like a dictator in order strongarm them through coercive, combative ways into following His decisions. Rather, Hashem in His eternal benevolence always wants to give people a chance to “prove” or “disprove” the soundness of His decisions by giving them another chance.

This word also appears in rabbinic literature in other contexts. For example, the Phillistine governors/lords are known in Biblical Hebrew as sarnei plishtim (Josh. 13:3, Jud. 3:3, 16:5-27, I Sam. 5:8-11, 6:4, 6:16, 7:7, 29:7, and I Chron. 12:20), but which the Targumim translate into Aramaic turnaei plishtaei, using an Aramaicized form of the Greek tyronia. [In Modern Hebrew, seren is an official rank in the military/police that is roughly the equivalent of “captain.”]

Additionally, the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah §42:4) identifies Rome as the kingdom that has imposed a tironya on the nations. The commentary Matnot Kehunah (there) explains this refers to the Romans imposing “tyranny” (i.e., sovereignty/lordship) on those nations that came under their control. On the other hand, it should be noted that Rabbi Natan of Rome (in Sefer He'Aruch understands that tironya refers to a sort of tax used for military funding, and Dr. Alexnader Kohut (in his He'Aruch HaShaleim) writes at great length to defend that understanding.

Finally, the Talmud teaches that in the End of Days, the archangel Gabriel is destined to do kenigia with the Leviathan (Bava Batra 74b-75a). The word kenigia is a hapax legomenon in the Babylonian Talmud, so its precise meaning is not readily apparent. The Mainz Commentary ascribed to Rabbeinu Gershom (to Bava Batra 75a) defines the word kenigia as milchamah (as does Rashba). However, Rashbam (to Bava Batra 75a) explains that kenigia actually refers to “hunting,” thus Gabriel is said to hunt down that powerful sea creature in the future. Rashbam buttresses his understanding from another Talmudic passage which rhetorically asks whether Moses was a kenigi or balistiri (Chullin 60b). In context, the Talmud meant to stress that the level of detail in which the Torah enters when discussing the kosher and non-kosher animals could only mean that

the Torah came from Above because — as Rashi and Rabbeinu Gershom (there) interpret the two terms in question — Moses was not a “hunter” (kenigi) or “archer” (balistiri).

The word kenigia in Talmudic Hebrew is indeed a loanword from the Greek word kynigia (κυνηγία in Ancient Greek, or κυνήγι in Modern Greek), which in fact refers to the act of “hunting/chasing/pursuing” predatory beasts. According to linguists, this word is etymologically derived from the Greek kyōn/kwon meaning “dog.” Two obvious derivatives of that term in English are canine (“dog”) and cynicism (because Cynic philosophers compared themselves to “dogs” through their shamelessness and boldness in guarding the truth like a watchdog).

But after a brief lesson in comparative linguistics, you will understand that there are some more, less obvious English words that are etymologically related. When we compare Greek words like kardia (“heart”) and keras (“horn”) with their English counterparts of heart and horn, we notice a pattern: while the Greek words start with the letter k, the English words start with the letter h. The same is true of the Latin centum that became hundred in English. That is not because English borrowed from Greek/Latin and changed the initial sound, but rather it is because both English and Greek/Latin come from a common linguistic ancestor known as Proto-Indo-European (PIE). The Greeks kept the original k-sound, while English, through its Germanic roots, shifted the k-sound to an h-sound. In the same way, the Greek kyōn (“dog”) is related to the English word hound (“dog”) and the Yiddish/German word hünt (“dog”). The same is true of kynigia (with an initial k) which is also likewise a cousin of the English hunt (with an initial h). Although I originally thought that kenigia might be related to the English word king, German Koenig and Yiddish kenig, Rabbi Shaul Goodman assures me that those Germanic words are actually related to kin, kind, and genus to denote the regent’s rightful parentage as the royal heir.