

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### Devarim

## ABRIDGE TO OBLIVION

*"These are the words... (1:1)*

There once was a man who wanted to become an atheist but he gave it up because there were no holidays. Being an atheist is a full time job. It requires far more faith than believing in G-d. And yet atheism is probably more widespread in our era than at any other time in history. Why?

The Talmud (*Maccot 24a*) says that when the Jewish People stood at Sinai they received 613 *mitzvot*. When King David saw that there had been a spiritual decline since Sinai he advised that people should concentrate on eleven specific virtues: to walk in G-d's ways wholeheartedly; to act justly; to speak the truth in one's heart; not to speak *lashon hara* (slander); not to do evil to one's fellow man; to be lowly in one's own eyes; to honor those who fear G-d; to take an oath to dominate one's evil inclination and to keep that oath; not to take interest; and not to take a bribe.

As time passed, so did the decline. The prophet Micha streamlined the focus from eleven principles down to three areas: to judge truthfully, to do acts of kindness and to perform the *mitzvot* without ostentation.

Seeing yet a further decline, the prophet Yirmiyahu encouraged the people to focus on just two aspects: to do justice and give charity.

Finally, the prophet Chavakuk distilled the focus for his generation into one principle: *emuna* – "belief" – "A righteous person will live by his faith." (2:4)

So you might say to me "Okay Rabbi. I have faith. So now I can drive to the football game on Saturday afternoon, right?" Or "I have faith! I believe! By the way, do you think you could pick me up a Big Mac on the way home?" Doesn't "just having faith" sound dangerously similar to certain well-known Brand X imitations of Judaism?

The section of the Talmud that we quoted above is not a licence to abridge the Torah into oblivion. It is like a drowning man grasping an overhanging branch in order to be able to climb onto the tree.

King David, Micha, Yirmiyahu and Chavakuk were all try-

ing to connect the Jewish People to our Source by focusing on the *mitzvot* that were the key to that age, the branch of survival for that particular generation.

In previous generations the attacks on Judaism took the form of forced conversion or crusade, or inquisition. The existence of G-d was never in doubt. Ours is an age of atheism. Nowadays the battlefield is *emuna*. The battlefield is belief.

It says in Parshat Vayelech "I will surely have hidden My face." (31:18)

In the Hebrew language, the emphatic "to surely do" something is expressed by the repetition of the verb. In other words, the literal translation of the phrase "I will surely have hidden My face." is "Hide - I will have hidden My face." The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this 'hiding'. There are two kinds of concealment. A concealment where you know that someone is there but you just can't see him, and a concealment where you don't even know if he is there at all. In other words, the very fact of their hiddenness is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding — where the very hiding is hidden. G-d has told us that as history draws to a close in the days of darkness that proceed *Mashiach*, He will surely hide His face and "The righteous person will survive by his faith."

It was to such a world as ours that the prophet Chavakuk was addressing. We live in a world where even G-d's hiddenness is hidden. Our only hope is to reach out and grasp the branch called *emuna*.

### Va'etchanan

## PRAYERLINE 2

*"And I beseeched G-d at that time, saying..." (3:23)*

One of the most difficult things to do is to pray. Nobody has trouble praying when someone is going into the operating theater for a life or death operation, G-d forbid. No one has a problem praying when they walk into the exam hall for an exam that they have only half reviewed. No one has a problem praying when his wife is in the delivery room. The difficult thing is praying on a day-to-

*continued on page fifteen*

**Devarim**

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, Sefer Devarim. This Book is also called Mishneh Torah, “Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). Sefer Devarim relates what Moshe told Bnei Yisrael during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into Eretz Yisrael. Moshe reviews the mitzvot, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: from the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe’s guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the meraglim. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn’t sinned by sending spies into Eretz Yisrael. Hashem would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results. The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin. He recounts how they wouldn’t listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of Eretz Yisrael in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

**Va’etchanan**

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special mitzvot. Hashem refuses. Moshe reminds Bnei Yisrael of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on Bnei Yisrael that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that Hashem

spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins Bnei Yisrael to “pass over” the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when Bnei Yisrael dwell in Eretz Yisrael they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to Hashem.

Moshe designates three “refuge cities” to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The parsha ends with Moshe exhorting Bnei Yisrael not to intermarry when they enter Eretz Yisrael, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

**Ekev**

If Bnei Yisrael carefully observe even those “minor” mitzvot that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth. Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that they will conquer Eretz Canaan little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before Bnei Yisrael are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning Bnei Yisrael to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions Bnei Yisrael not to become haughty and think that their success in Eretz Yisrael is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of Bnei Yisrael’s righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites; for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe. Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the 10 Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon’s passing is recorded as is the elevation of the *levi’im* to Hashem’s ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls

who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping mitzvot and the curse that results from non-observance.

**Re’eh**

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters Eretz Yisrael they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in Eretz Yisrael meat may be shechted anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. Bnei Yisrael are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

- Carrying from water or from something on it
- Throwing into a pit or at a wall, against the wind, in the ocean and from ships
- Atonement ramifications for unfinished throwing
- Forbidden labors connected with construction and agriculture
- Right and wrong writing
- The secret lessons of Hebrew alphabet
- Forbidden labors connected with making clothes
- Rending of garments as expression of mourning
- The danger of anger
- Eulogy for a Torah scholar
- When destruction is considered creative
- Trapping living creatures

## LESSONS OF THE LETTERS

The letters of the alphabet of *Lashon Hakodesh* – the holy tongue of Hebrew – are no ordinary letters. Important lessons can be learned not only from the words they form but from the shape of each letter and its relation to the letter which follows it in the alphabet.

This was demonstrated by some scholars – referred to in our *gemara* as “children” but identified in the Jerusalem

Talmud as Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua of an earlier generation – who provided fascinating interpretations regarding the names and shapes of all the letters. Following are some examples:

“Aleph” – “Bet” – the first letters (which, incidentally, serve as the source for the word “alphabet”) stand for “*Alef Binah*” which is a command to learn the source of wisdom, the Torah, which is formed from all these letters. Then come “Gimmel” – “Daled” which stand for the words “*Gemol Dalim*” – assist the needy. But why does the foot of the Gimmel reach out towards the Daled? Because it is the caring character of the benefactor to pursue the opportunity to help the poor. And why does the roof of the Daled extend back to the Gimmel? To teach the poor man to have consideration for his benefactor and make it easy for him to reach him. And why does the Daled face away from the Gimmel? To teach the benefactor the importance of providing his assistance in a secret fashion to avoid embarrassing the recipient.

The reason such interpretations can be made, points out Maharsha, is that the letters of the Torah, in varying permutations, form the Divine Names and therefore have an innate sanctity and convey a hidden wisdom.

• *Shabbat 107-113*

## WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“One who in anger tears his clothes, smashes a vessel or tosses away his money should be viewed as if he is already an idol worshipper. For this is the strategy of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) – today he urges one to do this, tomorrow something else until he finally succeeds in getting him to worship idols.”

• *Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri - Shabbat 105b*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Shoftim

Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem’s altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for

himself two *sifrei Torah*, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn’t become haughty. Neither the *kohanim* nor the *levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel, rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased’s family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their prop-

erty. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

- Guarding a trapped creature
- Trapping and wounding creeping creatures
- Killing lice and other insects and removing fish from water
- Trapping a threatening snake to avoid being bitten
- On which skins *Tefillin* chapters may be written
- First encounter of the Sages Rav and Shmuel
- The saltwater issue in food and the salty waters of the Dead Sea
- The importance of washing hands in the morning
- Treatment of wounds and use of medicine
- A variety of cures
- Right and wrong use of vinegar
- Permissible and forbidden tying and untying of knots
- The Sages whose shoestrings snapped
- Tying a water drawing pail and folding clothes
- Honoring Shabbat with clothes, speech and manner of walking
- Insights on Boaz and Ruth

## EYES AT THE DEAD SEA

“No one ever drowned in the Sea of Sodom!” This revelation by Rabbi Dimi concerning the unique nature of the body of water in Eretz Yisrael commonly known as the Dead Sea was not intended to

serve as a lesson in geography or geology but rather as information affecting the laws of Shabbat.

Our Sages prohibited using medicines or applying medical treatment on Shabbat unless there was serious danger to life or limb. The reason for this prohibition is that taking medicine might lead to crushing the ingredients required by prescription, an activity which is forbidden by the Torah.

The saline waters of the Dead Sea were considered to possibly have a therapeutic effect for some condition of the eyes. The question therefore arose whether it was permissible for someone on Shabbat to wash his face in these waters to achieve a partial impact on the eyes and to even open and close his eyes in order to allow these waters to enter them in greater force. Rabbi Dimi's observation regarding the nature of these waters determined that they indeed had medicinal value. It was therefore concluded that it was permitted for one to wash his face in those waters despite their therapeutic effect since such an action could be interpreted as mere washing and does not appear to be intended for medicinal purposes and could therefore not lead to any mistaken sanction for preparing medicine. To open and close the eyes in order to have them absorb the waters, however, is forbidden since this is obviously done for a therapeutic purpose and therefore comes under the general ban on medicines.

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“My clothes honor me,” declared Rabbi Yochanan, an insight which helped us understand the command of the Prophet Yishayahu to “honor Shabbat” as an instruction to ensure that the clothes you wear on Shabbat should not be the same as you wear on weekdays.

*Shabbat 104a*

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

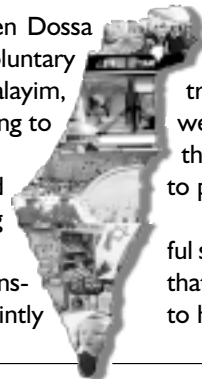
Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

## HOW THE STONE REACHED YERUSHALAYIM

When the great Sage Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa saw the people of his city bringing voluntary gifts to the *Beit Hamikdash* in Yerushalayim, he was pained by the thought that he had nothing to offer because of his self-imposed poverty.

He went out into the forest near his city and found a large stone. After shaping and polishing it he made a pledge to bring it to Yerushalayim.

His first attempt to hire some workers to transport the stone was unsuccessful because this saintly



man lacked enough money to pay them. There then appeared five men who asked only a nominal fee for transporting the stone but insisted that he lend a hand as well. No sooner had he placed his finger on the stone than they found themselves in Yerushalayim. But when he tried to pay the carriers, they were nowhere to be found.

Upon entering the *Beit Hamikdash* to present his beautiful stone and relate how it had been transported, he was told that it seems that those carriers were Heavenly angels sent to help him fulfill his pledge.

- Change of clothes to honor G-d
- Characteristics of a Torah Sage
- Shabbat and Yom Kippur
- Saving sacred writings from a blaze
- Sacred writings in other languages
- The 85-letter Torah chapter, a book unto itself
- What deserves to be saved and what deserves to be burned
- When the *Ketuvim* part of Tanach was read
- What else can be saved from the blaze, how much and to where
- Preparing for Shabbat, welcoming it, enjoying it and taking leave of it
- Why Jerusalem was destroyed
- Stopping the blaze from spreading

## THE SHORTEST SEFER

We are accustomed to referring to the Torah as *Chamisha Chumshei Torah* – the five *sefarim* (books) of the Written Law. There is a perspective based on a passage in *Mishlei* (9:1) which mentions “seven pillars of foundation” that there are actually seven *sefarim*.

This can be understood by looking into a Sefer Torah or a printed *Chumash* at two passages (*Bamidbar* 10:35-36) which are preceded and followed by upside down letters. The rea-

son for these unusual markers, says the Sage Rebbie, is to set apart these two passages (which are familiar to us as the ones we say when the Sefer Torah is taken from the *Aron Kodesh* and returned to it) as a complete *sefer*. This transforms *Sefer Bamidbar* into three *sefarim* and results in a seven-sefer Torah.

Rebbie’s view is contested by Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel who sees these passages not as a separate *sefer* but as a break between the recording of two sins committed by our ancestors. The sin following these passages is explicit in the Torah: “The people were grumbling and it was wrong in the eyes of G-d.” (*Bamidbar* 11:1) The sin preceding them, however, is only hinted at: “They traveled from the mountain of G-d” (*ibid.* 10:33). Tosefot cites a Midrash which explains the sin communicated in these words by comparing their hurry to get away from Mount Sinai to that of a child running away from school. Their rush to leave the mountain where they received the Torah was a tragic expression of their fear that if they remained they might be “burdened” with even more commandments.

But how does inserting the passages which tell us what Moshe said when the *Aron Kodesh* containing the Ten Commandment tablets was transported change the situation of consecutive sins? Perhaps the answer lies in the message which these passages communicated – you must never leave Mount Sinai but rather take it along with you in the form of the Torah you there received.

## WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“Never have I referred to my wife as merely my wife but rather as my entire household (for she is the pillar of my home – Rashi).”

• Rabbi Yossi

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THE MYSTERIOUS AMBULANCE

It is not often that an ambulance arrives at the Begged Yad Leyad used clothing center in Kiryat Mattersdorf in Jerusalem. Rebbetzin Sheindel Weinbach’s front yard serves as a depot for used clothes, toys and almost everything else which she and a team of volunteers sort and send to a network of distribution centers throughout Israel. Throughout the day and night cars, cabs and trucks pull up and dump the items people are happy to part with. There is even the occasional Egged bus delivering items abandoned in

the city buses and unclaimed.

But what is an ambulance doing there?

The answer lies in a phone call received by the Rebbetzin from a staff member of the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem. The caller asked if some clothes could be supplied for ill, homeless people who come to the hospital and lack even elementary clothes to change into from their ragged, unhealthy ones. Begged Yad Leyad was happy to supply the clothes and an ambulance was sent to pick them up.

- Non-Jew or Jewish minor extinguishing a fire for us
- Covering excrement and killing dangerous creatures
- Benefiting from the creative work of a non-Jew
- The laws of *muktzah* – objects that may not be handled
- When fragments of a vessel or an oven may be handled
- A stone in a water bucket or covering a barrel
- Shuttering a window
- Exerting to remove things to make room for guests and students
- The importance of hospitality
- A reward in both worlds
- Judging others favorably
- What may be moved to make room

## FOR THE HONOR OF SHABBAT

When a fire broke out on Shabbat in the home of Yosef ben-Simai, the non-Jewish government officials in Tzipori rushed to extinguish it because he was in charge of the king's finances. He did not allow them to do so because of the honor of Shabbat. Then a miracle happened! It suddenly began to rain and the fire went out. When Shabbat was over he sent a generous reward to each

of the men who had come to put out the fire and a lavish reward to their leader.

When word of Yosef's refusal to allow the non-Jews to put out the fire came to the attention of the Sages, they said that it had not been necessary for him to prevent them from extinguishing the fire even though it had been forbidden for him to do so himself. They cited the *Mishna* which states that if a non-Jew comes to extinguish a fire on Shabbat, one must not ask him to do so but neither must he tell him not to do so.

The question arises, however, as to why Yosef insisted on not taking advantage of his right to be passive while the non-Jews put out the fire. The answer, explains Maharsha, lies in the words "because of the honor of Shabbat". No mention is made that his action was prompted by his mistakenly assuming that a violation of Shabbat would occur if he remained silent. What motivated him was his concern that other Jews might suspect that he had actually asked those non-Jews to extinguish the fire.

Even though the halacha does not demand that a Jew be concerned about such a possibility, this did concern our hero because such an impression would be an affront to the honor of Shabbat.

• *Shabbat 121a*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"One who judges another favorably will be judged favorably by Heaven."

• *The Sages in a Beraita*

## ISRAEL Forever

## MOMENT OF TRUTH

"See, I have placed the Land before you, come and inherit the Land which G-d swore He would give to your ancestors..."

In the very first passages of this week's Torah portion Moshe teaches his people a vital lesson with contemporary significance.

In his commentary on this passage Rashi explains that Moshe had told the people he had led out of Egypt that they would inherit Eretz Yisrael without even waging war. It was their lack of faith in G-d, expressed in sending spies to scout the Land to see if it was worth inheriting, which caused them

to forfeit this Divine promise of unopposed conquest.

The agony suffered by the victims of disengagement and their supporters is undoubtedly a result of the government's inability to stand up to international pressure and the wishful thinking of some of our leaders that removing Jewish settlers will achieve greater security against Palestinian terrorists. The message of Moshe's words is that when Jews put all of their faith in force alone they are compelled to resort to force for their survival. The particular tragedy of our time is that force is directed not only at our enemies but at our brothers as well.

- All Jews are princes
- Animal feed and meat that may be handled
- Getting animals and fowl into their places
- Giving birth on Shabbat
- Bloodletting and its aftermath
- When bloodletting is dangerous
- *Milah* (circumcision) on Shabbat
- The mitzvah done with joy and self-sacrifice
- The *mohel* who forgot his knife
- *Mitzvot* which are performed despite violation of Shabbat
- Comparison of *milah* with other *mitzvot*
- All the elements of *milah* which can be done on Shabbat
- What constitutes completing the job
- Some medical advice from the “mother” of Abaye
- When a *brit milah* must be delayed
- Washing the baby before and after the *brit*

## EATING RAW MEAT

“I see something going to waste here,” said Rabbi Chisda when he saw a slaughtered duck lying in the sun in his courtyard. He thus communicated to his attendants to move the carcass into the shade.

A question is raised in regard to his permitting raw, unsalted meat to be handled on Shabbat for it is his position that such inedible meat is considered *muktzah* and cannot be moved on Shabbat. The answer given is that duck flesh is tender enough to be eaten raw and is therefore considered food which may be handled on Shabbat.

Tosefot calls attention to the problem of unsalted meat containing blood and concludes, on the basis of this *gemara*, that it is permissible to eat raw meat unsalted. The prohibition on eating blood that is contained in the body of an animal or fowl after it is slaughtered applies only if that blood has moved from its original source. This is why such meat must be properly salted before cooking which will cause the blood to move, a situation which does not exist when meat is eaten raw.

The *Mishna* on *Mesechta Menachot* (11:7) also mentions that there were *kohanim* who ate sacrificial meat raw. This position of Tosefot forms the basis of the ruling in *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* (67:1) that well-rinsed (to remove surface blood) raw meat may be consumed without salting to remove the blood inside.

• *Shabbat 128a*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“Every mitzvah which Jews accepted in joy such as *milah*, about which King David said ‘I rejoice in your command’, is still celebrated by them with joy (with a festive meal – Rashi).”

• *Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel*

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

### Ohrnet at Camp

I am running an Orthodox youth camp in the summer and am in the process of preparing the my *choveret* for the *madrichim*, one of the topics to be discussed is Teshuva. I would very much like to incorporate some of the articles from your Ohr.edu website in my booklet, particularly “A Pound for Weighing”, and “The Concept of Teshuva”. I will of course comply with the instructions noted on the website, one of which is to inform you of its use. I will be giving it out to 14 *madrichim*, the *rosh* (head) and my *co-sgan* (deputy). I hope this is okay. The camp participants may receive copies at the end of camp for them to look over and hopefully look back and learn again once they are older!

• *Melvyn S. - Sinai Machane, London*

### Ohrnet in Wickliffe, OH

I am writing from Wickliffe, OH, where I have a non-profit newsletter for our small community of about 50 families. I was wondering if I can include your work from time to time, and if so, if I need to ask you each time I want to do so.

Right now, I am interested in reprinting *The Laws of Tisha B'Av* by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman.

Also, assuming you give me permission to publish it, can I condense the article by including only the halachos that are pertinent to the audience? Obviously, I would not change the halachos themselves.

• *Golda R.*

**Ohrnet replies:** Yes, please feel free to do as you request, with credits of course.

## PARSHA Q&A?

### Devarim

1. How do we see from the beginning of Parshat Devarim that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the avot in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "Apikorsim" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did Hashem instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refa'im?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Devarim's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 – Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 – So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the Land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the mishkan and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the avot possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 – They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a halachic question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the mashiach.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.



## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Va'etchanan

1. "And I prayed to Hashem at that time." Why "at that time"?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by Hashem's "strong hand"?
3. What is ha'levanon?
4. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the mitzvot properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word v'noshantem?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
9. "You'll serve man-made gods." Is this literal?
10. Why is east called mizrach?
11. "Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you." When had Hashem previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
13. What is meant by "Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is One"?
14. What are two meanings of loving Hashem "with all your might"?
15. How well-versed must one be in Torah?
16. Where does the word totafot come from?
17. Who is fit to swear in Hashem's name?
18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
19. When someone serves Hashem with love, how many generations receive reward?
20. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Va'etchanan's Questions!

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

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of Eretz Canaan, Moshe thought perhaps Hashem had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - Ha'levanon means the Beit Hamikdash, which makes "white" (lavan), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The gematria of v'noshantem, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines (mizrach means shining).
11. 5:13 - Before Matan Torah, at Marah. (Shmot 15:25)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (Shmot 15:25).
13. 6:4 - Hashem, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether Hashem treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - Tot means two in Caspi. Fot means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves Hashem and reveres His name.
- 7:7 - B'nei Yisrael are the humblest nation.
- 7:9 - 2,000.
- 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Ekev

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a. wonders b. strong hand c. outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by Hashem?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving Hashem with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to Hashem"?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Ekev's Questions!

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

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 - The: a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 — Since they served in the Temple, thus they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Re'eh

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from Hashem?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of Hashem and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “to Him (Hashem) you shall cleave.” How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the “source” of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under Hashem’s “special protection”?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Re'eh's Questions!

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

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it; his descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate Hashem's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Shoftim

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept “seek out a good *beit din*”?
5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of “*chazeh, shok and keiva*.” Which ones?
11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to “prepare the way” to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
15. “Through the mouth of two witnesses....” What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four “scare-tactics” the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Shoftim’s Questions!

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

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof...*”
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don’t understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - a. Clanging their shields b. Making their horses stomp and whinny c. Shouting d. Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 21:9- He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

## MOURNING ON THE MOUNT

From: Monica in Israel

Dear Rabbi,

During this period of mourning over the destruction of the Temple, I was wondering if it permissible to go up to the Temple Mount in order to enhance our feeling of loss, and also to demonstrate our desire that the Temple be rebuilt. Thank you.

Dear Monica,

I cannot give a definitive halachic answer to your question, but I can bring some sources that will shed light on the matter.

First, we mustn't think that the absence of the Temple is a result of the shortcomings of prior generations, and no fault of our own. The Sages taught, "Any generation in which the Temple is not built, it is as if it had been destroyed in their times" (*Yerushalmi, Yoma 1a*). The same lack of merit resulting in its destruction has resulted in its not being rebuilt. In fact, the Midrash states a frightening outcome of not yearning for the rebuilding of the Temple, "All the communities that fell, it is only because they didn't inquire after and demand the *Beit HaMikdash*" (*Midrash Socher Tov, Shmuel 31*). What can we do to demonstrate our interest in, and increase our merit that the Temple be rebuilt? The Rabbis taught, "Those who study about the Temple, it is as if the Temple was built in their days" (*Menachot 111a*). Accordingly, the main way to enhance our feeling of loss, and also to demonstrate our desire that the Temple be rebuilt, is through study.

Still, the idea of actually going up to the Mount under very specific conditions is not unfounded. Rambam (*Beit HaBachira 7:1-7*) enumerates several ways in which one is required to show fear and awe for the Temple: One may not enter with his staff, shoes on his feet, his money belt, dust on his feet, nor spit. He may not use the Mount as a short cut and may not go on the Mount except for a mitzvah. One who has finished his service may not leave with his back facing the Temple, rather he must walk backward toe to heel. He concludes by saying, "Even nowadays that the Temple has been destroyed, one is obligated to act as when it was built: He may not enter except in a place where it's permitted to go, he may not sit in the area of the Azara, and may not act frivolously opposite the eastern gate facing the Holy of Holies." It is explicit from Rambam that it is permitted to go on the Mount. The question is, where and under what conditions?

Since there are different levels of holiness in the Temple, and different degrees of impurity affecting a person, where it's permitted or forbidden to go is going to depend on who and where. There are three general areas on the Mount. The innermost, and most holy is the Azara, which includes the Temple building itself and the place of the altar. The next

is called the Ezrat Nashim, which is the open courtyard outside the Temple. The least stringent area is called Har HaBayit, which is the open area outside the Temple complex. The consequence of entering any of these areas while in a condition of most types of impurity is extremely serious (1).

However, regarding the impurity resulting from contact or exposure to a dead body (2), even though entering the Azara and Ezrat Nashim is also severe (3), entering the rest of the Mount (the third area) is permitted (*Beit HaBachira 7:15, Biat Mikdash 3:4*). While this is a surprise to most people, the Mishna (*Kelim 1:8*) explicitly states that a *Tameh Met* is allowed on the Mount. In fact, the Bartenura comments that even a dead body itself is allowed to be brought onto the Mount. Tosefot Yom Tov explains that the source of the Bartenura is from the Tosefta on the verse, "and Moshe took the bones of Joseph with him," which explains the verse to mean "with him — into the camp of the Levites", corresponding to the Har HaBayit (see also Tiferet Israel who cites Pesachim 67).

Interestingly, the more stringent forms of impurity pose less of a problem than the less severe *Tumat Met*. This is because even though the other forms of impurity prevent one from going anywhere on the Mount, one can become purified from them, which would enable a person to go on most parts of the Mount. However, regarding *Tumat Met*, even though one may enter some parts of the Mount, there is currently no way to be purified of it to enter the rest of the Mount.

Therefore, in order to go onto the Mount at all, both men (4) and women (5) would have to be pure from seminal discharge, and in addition women would have to be pure from menstrual impurity (this would generally exclude unmarried women who do not immerse, 6). Even then, the remaining impurity from contact with the dead would prevent one from entering anywhere other than the outermost area described above as Har HaBayit. Also, since there are different opinions about exactly where the Temple was located within the current dimensions of the Mount (see *Where was the Temple?*), one would only be able to enter areas that according to all opinions were not the location of the Temple. It is only under these conditions that rabbis such as Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *zatzal*, (*Iggrot Moshe, O. Ch. 1:39, 2:113 (end); Y.D. 4:65*) and others (7) permit going on to the Mount.

A point for further study is the idea that for the purpose of building the Temple, one might be able to enter all areas of the Mount, even with *Tumat Met*, and even in the Holy of Holies. Rambam writes (*Beit HaBachira 1:1*) that it is a positive Torah commandment to build a house for Hashem that is fitting to offer in it sacrifices. Later (*ibid. 7:23*) he quotes the teaching of the Sages (*Tosefta Kelim 1:9*) "When the builders go in to build or repair the sanctuary, it is best that those who enter be unblemished priests. If none can be found, blemished ones enter. If there are no priests, Levites

continued on page fourteen

## TURN OFF THAT RADIO!

**Question:** It often happens that when I am traveling in public transportation or in a taxi my ears and senses are subjected to an invasion by music which is offensive to my esthetic (and sometimes religious) sensibilities and my peace of mind. Since plugging my ears with earplugs or Walkman wires is not always an option, what is the right thing for me to do?

**Answer:** The driver of the bus or taxi is not playing that music in order to disturb you. He is trying his best to stay awake and alert while carrying out his boring and sometimes nerve-racking responsibility to get his passengers safely to their destination. The driver is well aware that he has no legal right to create noise which disturbs his passengers but is usually not aware that anyone really objects to what he finds is pleasing music.

A simple request to turn down the volume or shut off the radio will usually result in compliance just as the request to refrain from smoking will. While this is easily achieved in a taxi where you are the only paying customer, the situation on a bus demands some sensitive diplomacy. Avoid shouting at the driver from your seat and thus avoid publicly embarrassing him and a possible confrontation with other passengers who enjoy the music which bothers you. Just walk over to the driver and gently whisper in his ear that you would appreciate him eliminating the noise which disturbs you. Should you encounter the rare driver who refuses your request you have a right to demand his particulars for the purpose of reporting him to his superiors.

Remember that even though you have a right to some privacy in a public place, you should protect your rights in the right way.

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*continued from page thirteen*

enter. If there are no Levites, Israelites enter. They should be pure, but if there are no pure individuals, impure people enter." Based on this, and coupled with the fact that the law may be less severe when the Temple is in ruins, some authorities maintain that searching, digging, measuring and other pre-requisites for building are considered part of the building process, and would be permitted anywhere on the Mount, even with *Tumat Met*, when otherwise impossible to purify, for example without the Red Heifer.

We are not advocating going up to the Temple Mount under any circumstances. Since there are many halachic considerations involved, only the greatest rabbis of each generation could make such a decision. In addition, there are security, civil and political ramifications that must be responsibly considered as well. Still, insofar as studying the laws of the Temple catalyze its rebuilding, it is our hope that we have added another stone.

This is in keeping with the words of the Vilna Gaon (in *Aderet Eliyahu*) that initially we must desire to build the Temple of our own initiative; afterwards G-d will answer our request. Malbim echoes this sentiment when he writes, "We find that David sought to build the Temple himself and didn't wait for a prophet to come to tell him. David learned this from the verse, 'You shall inquire after His dwelling and come there' (*Deut. 12:5*). Inquiring means probing into the matter oneself until one brings it to fruition. This is the

meaning of Sifri 8 'Inquire and find'. It teaches that G-d will not reveal the Temple's location through a prophet until the Jewish people make an effort to inquire and search for it. Only then will he send a prophetic spirit from above to reveal it."

Sources:

(1) *Zavim, zavot, nidot and yoldot: in the Azara and Ezrat Nashim – Karet (Beit HaBechira 7:18); Har HaBayit – 80 Lashes (Biat Mikdash 3:9-14).*

(2) *This applies to everyone since it is transmitted not only by contact, but by being in the same building, such as in a hospital.*

(3) *Tumat Met: Azara - Karet (BM 3:12); Ezrat Nashim - lashes d'rabanan (Biat Mikdash 3:9); Har HaBayit - permitted (Beit HaBachira 7:15, Biat Mikdash 3:4).*

(4) *Regardless of the circumstances of the discharge, a man would have to immerse in a proper mikva with all the requirements that a menstrual woman needs, since immersion for this purpose is more stringent than for learning Torah and prayer.*

(5) *A woman is considered impure from this discharge as long as it's viable, up to 72 hours after relations. Only then could she immerse for this purpose.*

(6) *Nowadays, unmarried women do not immerse after menstruation, even on Erev Yom Kippur, as a precaution against immoral relations. Perhaps an unmarried bride who has immersed in preparation for marriage could go up to the Mount.*

(7) *Avnei Nezer Y.D. 450; Binyan Tzion 2; Minchat Yitzchak 5:1; Yabia Omer Vol. 5, Y.D. 26-27; Yechave Daat 1:24; Migdal David, Kuntres 1:27*

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

day basis. Day in, day out. That's difficult. How many times do we catch ourselves drifting off in the middle of praying, thinking about business, or someone we saw the other day, or the new toy we want to buy/have bought/shouldn't have bought? It's not by coincidence that Hebrew word for prayer is *avoda* which literally means "work." Prayer is work. There's no way around that. But prayer can also be one of the most uplifting human activities. Anyone who ever prayed well, even once, knows that the world is a completely different place after such an experience.

Apart from our own in-built problems with prayer, there's something else that stops us from being able to pray properly. We are literally bombarded from cradle to grave, morning till night with thousands and thousands of images. Images on billboards, in newspapers, books, billboards, buses. Everywhere you look. Everywhere you look an image is trying to invade your head and take up vast amounts of valuable real estate in your consciousness.

It is said of Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz, one of the great pre-war Torah luminaries, that when he went to the store to buy something, he would pull out some loose change from his pocket and motion the storekeeper to take the necessary amount from his cupped hand. The reason was that Rabbi Baruch Ber had never learned the difference between a five *kopek* piece and a ten. Why would someone of Reb Baruch Ber's stature have omitted learning the currency system of the country in which he lived? The answer is that everything takes up space in one's head, and he was not prepared to give up even the smallest piece of mental real estate that might interfere with his Torah learning or his prayer.

Part of the curse of living in exile is that we have so much "stuff" floating around in our heads that it makes it very difficult to focus on our spirituality.

*"And I beseeched G-d at that time, saying..."*

In the above sentence, the phrase "At that time..." hints to a prayer for generations unborn. Whenever the Jewish People will find themselves in times of anguish, unable to pray properly because of the mental subjugation of exile, Moshe's prayer will arise for us.

And even in the most mind-numbing apathy, when the cord of prayer to the lips has been disconnected from our hearts and all we can do is merely utter the words, Moshe's prayer will arise for us. "At that time", when all we will be able to do is "saying" and there will be no feeling in our words, Moshe's prayer will arise in front of G-d to breathe life into our empty words.

*Based on the Amshenover Rebbe*

Ekev

## THINGS

*"...Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones..." (10:1)*

Even though G-d told Moshe to make the second two Tablets like the first ones, there were fundamental differences between the two sets. In the first set, not only did G-d write upon the Tablets, He fashioned the Safire stone himself. Both the medium and the message were G-dly. The second tablets were hewn by the hand of Man, only the inscription was Divine.

However, there was a deeper difference between the two sets of Tablets.

When we think of the Tablets, we think of words engraved on stone – words like any other words. However, in the case of the first Tablets this was not so. The first Tablets did not contain words, they contained *speech*. This doesn't mean the Tablets were like some kind of Biblical tape recorder. It means that when you saw the words, you saw in them G-d speaking at Sinai. Usually, when someone speaks, their words are present as long as they are still speaking them. When they stop speaking, the words vanish. The first Tablets perpetuated G-d's giving the Torah at Sinai, His speech at Sinai. That is what the Torah means when it says *"all the people saw the voices..." (Shmot 20:15)*

The word *davar* — "thing" — in Hebrew has the same root as the word for "speech" – *dibbur*. What is the connection between a thing and speech?

Nothing in this physical world can have an existence without it having a spiritual underpinning. What sustains every object in this physical world is G-d speaking through that object. That object is no more than G-d speaking; it is a *dvar*, an expression of something God wishes to reveal in His world. In the future, we will clearly see the intention behind every thing in Creation, the *dibbur* behind every *davar*. This is what the prophet Yishayahu means when he writes, *"...the Glory of God will be revealed and all flesh together will see that the Mouth of G-d has spoken" (40:5)* Just as at Sinai G-d's speech assumed a concrete form, so too at that time in the future every concrete form will reveal its purpose, its *dibbur*.

Only the first Tablets contained the level of revelation where it was possible to see the *dibbur* as though it were an object. Usually a physical object does not reveal the intent of its maker. The first Tablets, however, revealed G-d's intent; they were a *davar* that revealed *dibbur*. However, after the sin of the golden calf the world was a different place. It could no longer contain the level of revelation epitomized by the first set of Tablets. That is why the Tablets grew suddenly heavy in Moshe's hands and they fell to the ground. From that time until *Mashiach*, things will not reveal their true identity as being no more than the Word of G-d.

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

Re'eh

### IN G-D WE TRUST

“...You shall open your hand to your brother, to your poor, and to your destitute in your Land.” (15:11)

Sign seen hanging in a store: “In God we trust, everyone else pays cash.” A philosopher once asked Rabban Gamliel, “Your Torah commands you over and over again to give charity, and to not be afraid of it affecting your financial security. Isn’t such a fear natural? How can a person give away his money without worrying that perhaps he should have saved it for a “rainy day”?”

Rabban Gamliel asked him, “If someone asked you for a loan, would you agree?”

“Depends on who that someone is,” replied the philosopher. “If it’s someone I didn’t know, then yes, I would be afraid of losing my money.”

“What if he had guarantors?” asked Rabban Gamliel.

“Well, if I knew I could rely on them, I would agree.”

“How about if the guarantor was the President, how would you feel about that?”

“Well, of course, in those circumstances I would have total confidence that I’d get my money back.”

“When someone gives charity” said Rabban Gamliel, “he’s actually extending a loan to the “President” of the Universe. It says in the book of Mishlei (Proverbs) “One who gives graciously to the poor extends, as it were, a loan to G-d, Who will pay back all that is due.”

G-d pays us back in this world by making sure we get back what we ‘loaned’ Him. And, in the next world, we get the full reward for our ‘loan.’

No one is as trustworthy as G-d; if He guarantees to return our money, why should anyone have the slightest hesitation in giving charity?”

• Based on the Midrash

Shoftim

### AS LOVELY AS A TREE?

“You shall not plant for yourselves an idolatrous tree – any tree – near the Altar of G-d.” (16:21)

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth’s sweet flowing breast;  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
A tree that may in Summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

In this week’s Torah portion we learn that it is forbidden to plant trees in the *Beit Hamikdash*, the Holy Temple. What is the reason for this prohibition? Wouldn’t trees have been a wonderful way to enhance the beauty of the Holy Temple?

At one time, it was the custom of idolaters to plant beautiful trees, called *asheiros*, at the entrance of their temples.

These trees would be venerated as ‘holy’. In the Book of Shoftim G-d commanded the Judge Gidon to “Destroy the altar of Ba’al that belongs to your father, and cut down the *asheira* next to it.”

The Torah prohibited the planting of any tree in the *Beit Hamikdash* or its forecourt. The Torah Masters then extended the prohibition to include the entire Temple Mount.

However, apart from the connection to idol worship, there is a more subtle problem here.

When something is very beautiful, it’s always a challenge to place that thing in its correct perspective. Whether it’s a beautiful person or a beautiful view, or a beautiful tree, the nature of beauty is to say, “Look at me! I’m so beautiful!” It’s difficult to look beyond the surface of the beauty.

In Hebrew, one of the words for beauty is *shafir*. The name *Shifra* comes from this root, as does the common Jewish surname *Shapiro*. In the Book of Iyov it says, “By His breath the Heavens are spread (*shifra*)” (Iyov 26:13). Iyov describes how G-d’s ‘breath’ spreads aside the cloud cover to reveal the Heavens beyond. The word to ‘spread aside,’ ‘to reveal’ is from that same root, *shifra*. In Jewish thought, something is only beautiful to the extent that it reveals what is beyond, what is inside. The part of the body where the personality of a person, his inside, is revealed is the face. In Hebrew the word for ‘face’ and ‘inside’ are the same – ‘*p’nim/panim*.’

In Jewish thought, a beauty that reveals nothing more than itself cannot be called beautiful. “Art for Art’s sake” has no place in the lexicon of Jewish thought. Jewish beauty is the revelation of the inner.

On Friday night, a Jewish husband sings a song of praise to wife called *Aishet Chayil* – a Woman of Valor. Towards the end of the poem, it says, “Charm is false and beauty empty. A woman who fears G-d, she should be praised.” When charm and beauty don’t reveal their source, their *p’nim*, then they are false and empty. Charm and beauty *by themselves* are false and empty, but when they are ennobled and animated by an interior life of holiness and spirituality they radiate the purpose of their gift.

Similarly in the Holy Temple, the beauty of a tree can lead the mind in one of two ways: It can either lead to thoughts of the kindness of the Creator of the tree, how He brought into being such a beautiful thing, or it can stop at the surface: “Wow! That’s beautiful!”

Mother Nature is so beautiful that it’s easy to forget that Mother Nature has a Father.

• Sources: Joyce Kilmer — For Mrs. Henry Mills Alden