

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Nasso

STOP THIEF!

“...they shall confess their sin that they committed” (5:7)

If I were to ask you: “What’s the worst crime in the world?” — what would you reply? “Murder? Concentration Camps? Kidnapping? Pornography? Torture?”

Certainly we know the Torah identifies three sins as more severe than all others: Idol worship, Immorality, and Murder.

In one way, however, theft is a more serious sin than any of these. How come?

At the beginning of his Laws of Repentance, the Rambam cites as the source in the Torah for the commandment of *Vidui* (confession of sins) a verse from this week’s Torah portion dealing with the obligation to confess stealing from a convert - *Gezel Ha’ger*.

The first appearance in the Torah of the mitzvah of *Vidui*, however, is much earlier in the Torah in Parshat Vayikra, as it says: “When one shall become guilty...he shall confess what he has sinned.” (5:5)

When the Torah mentions a certain mitzvah more than once, the way of the Rambam is to cite the first appearance of that mitzvah in the Torah. Why then does he omit the first occurrences of *Vidui* in the Torah and choose this instance instead?

The prohibition of theft extends much further than a bank heist, more than a Brink’s van break-in, more than a cat burglar shimmying his way up a narrow chimney.

Everything in the world belongs to G-d.

When we do anything against G-d’s will we have stolen from him. We have distorted the way the world is supposed to be and have misappropriated it to serve our own purposes.

Theft is the root of all sins.

When someone murders, he not only kills, but he steals the potential that life had and the purpose for which that soul was sent to the world. He has “stolen” from G-d.

When someone worships an idol or ascribes power to anything other than the Almighty, he has stolen the honor that belongs to the Creator alone.

When someone indulges in a relationship that the Torah prohibits, he has stolen the true likeness to his Creator in Whose Image he was created.

The world and its purpose belongs only to G-d.

Every evil act is in essence stealing from Him.

• Sources: *The Sfat Emet*
as heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán

Beha’alotcha

A FREE LUNCH

“We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge” (11:4)

It’s axiomatic that there’s no such thing as a free lunch. Or as they say in Yiddish: “Nothing is for nothing.” And yet human nature has a marvelous ability to conjure the proverbial free lunch out of hefty tab.

For a while now, my son has been trying to convince me to invest in about 50 boxes of a certain brand of cereal so that we can be sure of getting a FREE plastic space station. (Of course, he contends that a space station is pretty much *de rigeur* for the average Orthodox Jewish family living in Jerusalem, a notion of which I am not totally convinced.)

The Ibn Ezra says that fish was so plentiful in Egypt that it was virtually free. The Ramban says that in addition to fish, the

Jewish People received fruit and vegetables in abundance from the farmers.

All for FREE!

But was it so free? It seems to me that being a slave is a pretty hefty price-tag no matter how much free fish and veggies there is on offer.

And let us not think that FREE OFFER myopia only affects small Jerusalem children. If we honestly analyze many of our decisions we may realize how many things we do because we have convinced ourselves that we are getting a free lunch.

In life everything has a price. The trick is to know what the price really is.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Nasso

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscrib-

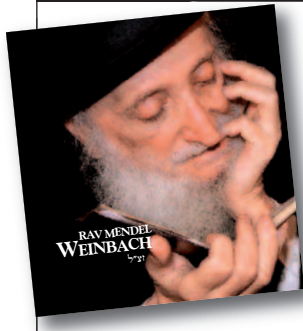
Beha'alotcha

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the first-born, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d commands Moshe concerning the *korban* Pesach. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, allowing a "second chance" to offer the *korban* Pesach one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in the Exodus — some people

ing G-d's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nissan* in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. G-d tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. G-d sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. G-d explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

A Memorial Tribute to Rav Weinbach zt"l



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ROSH HASHANA 23 - 35

“One who learns Torah and doesn’t teach it is like a myrtle in the desert; others say that one who learns Torah and teaches it in a place without Torah scholars is like a myrtle in the desert, which is dear.”

Rabbi Yochanan bases this statement of the importance of teaching Torah on a verse in the Prophet Yeshayahu. The first statement refers to one who learns Torah and is compared to a good fragrance (as in the Midrash about the Four Species on Succot), but since he doesn’t share his Torah knowledge he is like a fragrant myrtle in a desert with no one else around to benefit. The second statement refers to a person who shares his Torah with others in a place where there are no other scholars normally found. He is like a lone myrtle in the desert that is very greatly appreciated. Since this person is learning and teaching in a “deserted” place, he is also appreciated and valued greater than he would be in a populated city, just as the lovely fragrance of a myrtle is more outstanding in the barren desert. (Maharsha)

• Rosh Hashana 23a

“Like which opinion do we pray nowadays (on Rosh Hashana): This is the day of the beginning of Your deeds, a reminder of the first day? Like whom? Like Rabbi Eliezer who said that the world was created in Tishrei.”

This statement in the *gemara* on our *daf* teaches that we say this prayer on Rosh Hashana according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer that the world was created in Tishrei, and not like the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua that it was created in Nissan. The Maharsha points out that the creation of the world actually began on Elul 25, and the sixth day of Creation when Man was created was on the 1st of Tishrei (according to this opinion). The prayer refers to Rosh Hashana as “the beginning of Your deeds” since Man was the purpose and fundamental reason of Creation, and it is as if nothing else was really created before Man.

• Rosh Hashana 27a

“All of the berachot can be said by a person for another person to hear and fulfill that person’s obligation, even though the person saying the beracha has already said it for himself and fulfilled his own obligation; however, regarding berachot for bread and wine, he may say them for others only if he is saying them for himself as well, but not if he is not.”

The Sage Ahava the son of Rabbi Zeira is quoted as teaching this halacha on our *daf* and it is cited in the Shulchan Aruch. The first statement refers to *berachot* such as those said before doing a mitzvah, such as the *beracha* for the mitzvah of shofar, or when the *beracha* is itself a mitzvah, since all of Klal Yisrael are “guarantors” for each other and are responsible to help ensure that each person fulfills his obligation. However, when it comes to a *beracha* on food, although it is forbidden to eat without a *beracha*, and therefore the *beracha* is also a mitzvah, one is not obligated to eat this particular food. Therefore, his *beracha* is for taking his personal enjoyment and benefit and the enjoyer needs to say his own *beracha* for himself. One is not a “guarantor” for the other in this case and cannot say a *beracha* for the other unless he is also eating and has enjoyment and benefit from the food as well. (Rashi)

• Rosh Hashana 29a

“On the first day of the week they sang ‘To God is the world and all that is in it, the world and all the dwellers in it.’”

Rabbi Akiva teaches a *beraita* that begins with this verse, and he describes the *shir* (song) for each day that was sung while offering the daily sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash. The first day’s song was the entirety of chapter 24 of Tehillim: “To G-d is the world and all that is in it....” The essence of Day One was that that G-d created a heaven and earth in order to give them to Mankind to have and use, while He was the only Ruler in existence. (Rashi)

• Rosh Hashana 31a

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT NASSO-BEHA'ALOTCHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

Nasso

In this Parsha the Torah discusses the subjects of the *Sotah*, or suspected adulteress and the *Nazir*, the individual who, for a minimum of thirty days, refrains from wine and all grape products, lets his hair grow and does not come into contact with the deceased, even members of his own family. Abarbanel cites the Talmudic statement that the reason the subject of *Nazir* follows the subject of *Sotah* is that “One who sees the disgrace of the suspected adulteress will vow to abstain from wine, since it is wine that can bring one to adultery.” Abarbanel states that this reason seems insufficient. Since the *Nazir* has to bring sacrificial offerings either at the end of this period or if he did become ritually impure due to accidental contact with a deceased individual, this whole section should have been included in the book of Vayikra where all the sacrificial offerings are detailed.

Abarbanel answers that this is actually the most appropriate point to discuss the subject of *Nazir*. The previous *parshiot* represent the progression of the spiritual purification of the nation. Starting with the construction of the Tabernacle, the Torah has divided the nation into the *Kohanim*, the *Levi'im* and each of the tribes under its individual banner. The nation is further purified by the separation of those afflicted by *tzara'at* and other forms of ritual impurity, and in this Parsha there is the implied separation of the illegitimate child of a proven adulteress. This sets the stage for the *Nazir*, who represents an even higher level of personal spiritual purification. His level of sanctity differs from the *Kohanim* in that it is not inherited nor is it permanent. It is entirely voluntary. Furthermore, he has the additional restriction of not cutting his hair which is not shared by the *Kohanim*.

Abarbanel explains that the word *Nazir* is rooted in the concepts of ‘turning away’, ‘distancing’ and ‘vigilance’. It is also related to the word for ‘crown’ since the Torah explicitly states “...for the crown of his G-d is upon his head.” His first obligation is to refrain from wine and, as an additional precaution, all grape products, since intoxication can obviously interfere with proper judgment and prevent him from attaining the goal of cleaving to G-d. The second obligation, to refrain from cutting his hair, symbolizes that since the head is the repository of all the wisdom and intelligence that G-d has granted him, he must refrain from removing even a part of a single hair emanating from that head. Additionally, just as a king is recognized by the crown upon his head, so too the unruly hair of the *Nazir* is his crown of sanctity. To fortify that striving for a higher level of

spiritual purity the unruly physical appearance serves to minimize the natural tendency toward exaggerated emphasis on our physical appearance. His third obligation is to refrain from all contact with the deceased. This puts him on an even higher level than the *Kohen* who is permitted to come into contact with his deceased close relatives. Abarbanel states that a verse in the prophet Amos is also an indication of this heightened spiritual level: “I established some of your sons as prophets and some of your young men as Nazarites” — an indication that a Nazarite is on an even higher level than a prophet.

The language of the Torah itself attests to the difficulty of accepting these obligations. At the beginning of the section, the Torah states, “A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazarite vow of abstinence for the sake of G-d...” The Hebrew word which is here translated as ‘dissociate’ is the word ‘*pela*’ which literally means ‘wondrous’ or ‘astounding’. Abarbanel explains that this vow is truly astounding and unusual. Finally, the heightened spiritual level implied by the vow of the Nazarite is also indicated by the fact that one of the sacrificial offerings that he is required to bring at the conclusion of his commitment is a transgression offering to atone for his ‘transgression’ of giving up his status and returning to the world of physical desires.

Beha'alotcha

The end of this Parsha relates an event which is very difficult to understand. The Torah relates that “Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe regarding the Cushite woman that he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman.” They go on to say that G-d had also spoken to them through prophecy. The next verse then states that Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any other man on the face of the earth. All the commentators agree that they are criticizing Moshe for having abstained from marital relations with his wife, and Abarbanel explains that these three verses represent, in the eyes of Miriam and Aharon, three possible explanations for Moshe’s behavior, each of which they reject. First of all, he could not be rejecting her due to her lowly status as a Cushite because the Torah’s repetition of her status indicates that he had married her willingly years before. Secondly, his separation from his wife cannot be explained on the basis of his need to be on the highest purely spiritual level in order to receive prophecy since Miriam and Aharon also were capable of receiving prophecy and they were not required to separate from their

continued on page eight

Abarbanel

ON SHAVUOT

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

On the Giving of the Torah

The Parsha we call “Yitro” describes the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, the culmination of the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt. Abarbanel poses two simple but important questions: Why didn’t G-d give the Torah much sooner in history, to Adam or Noach or at least to one of the Patriarchs. Secondly, why did G-d choose to give the Torah at that particular location? Why not give it when the people were in Egypt, or in the Land of Israel, perhaps on the very spot where the Temple would be built?

In regard to the first question, Abarbanel offers three perspectives. First of all, the Torah had to be given to a large congregation of people that constituted an entire nation. Even though Adam and Noach observed the universally applicable Noachide laws and the Patriarchs observed the commandments of the Torah prophetically even before they were given, they did so only as individuals with a personal intellectual and prophetic connection to the will of G-d. Also, according to Kabbalistic thought the 600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60 present at Sinai constituted all the different character types in the totality of Mankind. In effect, the Torah, although it was only directly given to one distinct nation, was actually transmitted to all of Mankind.

Secondly, the monumental task of receiving and transmitting the vast scope of the Torah and ensuring that it would be accepted by the nation could only be achieved through Moshe. Although the Jewish nation produced hundreds of prophets, Moshe stood alone, unique in the history of Mankind. That uniqueness can be characterized as follows: 1.) Maturity at an early age and physical strength undiminished by age. 2.) Total control over his physical desires. 3.) The wisdom to understand almost completely the nature of G-d’s total creation. 4.) A spiritual make-up that allowed him to receive prophecy at any moment, unlike any other prophet. 5.) Since he had led the nation out of Egypt and fought battles and performed miracles on their behalf, it was fitting that only he should be the one to transmit the Torah. 6.) He combined all the positive characteristics of the Jewish People into one individual: royalty, priesthood, scholarship, material and spiritual accomplishment. 7.) Most importantly, the nature of his prophecy was unlike any other. He received his prophecies when fully conscious. They were never

shrouded in metaphors, images visions or dreams. His prophecies came clearly and directly from G-d. This is what is meant by the fact that he spoke with G-d ‘face to face.’

Thirdly, in order to emphasize the fundamental difference between Torah Judaism and all other religious beliefs and philosophies, the giving of the Torah had to be a clearly miraculous Divine intervention. It was the culmination of the Exodus, from the plagues to the splitting of the sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army, to the miraculous manna from heaven, to the victory over Amalek, and finally to the thunder, lightning, smoke and fire that surrounded the mountain.

In regard to the second question, the Torah was given specifically at Mount Sinai for the following reasons: 1.) Since it required Divine intervention, the Torah had to be given in a desert setting where the nation could only be sustained miraculously. It also had to be given soon after the Exodus so that those miracles would be fresh in their minds. 2.) Mount Sinai possessed a unique measure of spiritual sanctity. It was there that Moshe first encountered G-d in the burning bush. 3.) They could not receive the Torah in Israel since they would be overwhelmed by the physical necessities of conquering and developing the Land. At the same time, they could not receive it in Egypt as they were still affected by the spiritual contamination of the immoral and idolatrous Egyptian society. They required a cleansing experience of a period of travel which brought them to Mount Sinai. 4.) Finally, the Torah had to be given in a desolate wilderness that was not claimed by any other nation. This symbolizes the availability of the Torah to all peoples. If the Torah had been given in Israel, the nations of the world could claim that since the Torah was given only in the territory of the Jewish People, they had no connection to it, were not bound by the dictates intended to apply to all of Mankind, and were not welcome to accept it in total, even voluntarily. Additionally, disputes could arise among the Jews themselves, each tribe claiming that the Torah was given in its portion of the land.

Therefore the Torah had to be given publicly and dramatically in a place owned by no one and thus owned by everyone, to a prophet and a nation uniquely prepared to receive the message which would enlighten all of Mankind.

ON SIGHT IN TZEFAQT

From: Peter

Dear Rabbi,
What is so significant about the city of Safed in Israel,
and what major events took place there?

Dear Peter:

The Hebrew name for the city of Safed is “Tzefat”, which has several connotations relating to the significance of the city’s location, character and essence.

The most obvious and literal meaning is based on the word “tzofeh” which means “to view” and relates to Tzefat’s breathtaking and commanding panoramic view which includes Mount Hermon to the north, the Golan heights to the east, Lake Kinneret to the south and Mount Meron to the west. The spectacular view from Tzefat is both awe-inspiring and strategic.

Another connotation of Tzefat is related to the word “tzaf” which mean elevated or floating. Physically, this describes the way Tzefat floats and hovers like a shimmering jewel above the surrounding plains and valleys. Spiritually, it refers to the elevated, and elevating, quality of the city. Rabbi

Avraham Azulai, the 17th century Kabbalist, writes that the refined air of Tzefat is especially conducive to Torah learning and spiritual growth.

This allure accounts for the many Torah giants, *tzaddikim* and Kabbalists who settled there: Rabbi Yosef Karo (author of the Shulchan Aruch), Rabbi Yitzchak Luria - the Arizal, Rabbi Yisrael Najara (author of the Shabbat song “Ka Ribon Olam”), Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz (author of the Friday Night prayer “Lecha Dodi”), Rabbi Chaim Vital and others.

During one 50-year period in the 16th century, Tzefat’s sages reinstated ‘*semicha*’ - the official Rabbinic ordination that began with Moses but was discontinued after the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabbi Yosef Karo and Rabbi Chaim Vital were among those who received this renewed *semicha*.

A third meaning associated with Tzefat is based on “*tzapot*”, to foresee or harbor hope for the future. This refers to the fact that in addition to its illustrious past, Tzefat also anticipates a glorious future. According to the Zohar – the ancient work of Jewish mysticism – at the future time of Resurrection, the dead will initially arise and gather in Tzefat; there the Mashiach will be revealed to the world; and together they will march to Jerusalem to usher in the final Redemption!

TORAH WITH DERECH ERETZ

Shimshon Ulano - Beit Midrash and Kollel Alumnus

Shimshon is a native of Holyoke, Massachusetts. From 1971-73 he attended nearby Amherst College, one of America’s most prestigious and selective institutions. He decided to take a year off and, as he puts it, “What you don’t know, your *mazal* knows.” He attended a kibbutz ulpan, and when a few others at the kibbutz decided to spend some time at a yeshiva he followed. Like other major decisions, he wasn’t sure just exactly how conscious that decision was, but in any case a friend who was studying at Neve Yerushalayaim introduced him to Rabbi Refson who literally drove him to Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem and dropped him off at the office.

Two days after arriving at Ohr Somayach Shimshon had an

interesting experience: “While attending a wedding in the Old City, Rabbi Meir Schuster z”l saw me and asked me what I was doing in Jerusalem. I told him that I was studying in a Yeshiva — an answer that I don’t think he received from too many people.”



After two years in Ohr Somayach Shimshon married and spent an additional four years in their Kollel. Realizing that he wanted to settle in Israel, support a family and continue to pursue his scientific interests and talents, he then enrolled in the Jerusalem College of Technology (Machon Lev) and received a degree in Computer Science in 1984. Since then has worked as a software engineer and is currently involved in ‘embedded real-time software’, while continuing to maintain a serious learning schedule.

“I Have Heard that Song Before”

BRIDGING PESACH AND SHAVUOT

By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach Zt”l

“What a beautiful melody!” Taking a solitary stroll through a forest in order to get away from the pressing affairs of state in his palace, the king was captivated by the strains of the melody coming from some distant, invisible, shepherd’s flute. He hummed the tune to himself on his way back to the palace, but by the time he got back into the business of ruling his country he had completely forgotten it.

Haunted by the memory of the beautiful melody, the king was unable to resume his usual routine. Watching his ruler’s growing aggravation, one of his advisors suggested a plan for enabling him to hear the melody once again. A royal proclamation would be issued throughout the land, offering a generous reward to the shepherd who could play the desired tune for his majesty.

Shepherds by the dozens lined up in front of the palace, each awaiting his turn to play his favorite melody for the king in the hope that this was the one his majesty had heard and the reward would be his. One after the other they departed the royal chambers in disappointment, as the king positively declared that the tune he played was not the one that he heard while walking in the forest. One frustrated shepherd got up the nerve to challenge his sovereign:

“Is your majesty capable of playing on this flute the melody he heard?”

When the king replied in the negative, the shepherd closed in with what he thought was a victorious thrust.

“Then how can your majesty be so certain that the melody just played is not the one he heard?”

“My dear fellow,” parried the king, “I may not have such a fine ear for music as to be able to play that melody, but when I hear it once again you may be sure that I will recognize it!”

Both Pesach and Shavuot celebrate great moments in the history of the Jewish nation. The “Season of our Freedom” offers us an opportunity to relive the great Divine revelation enjoyed by our ancestors on the eve of their liberation from Egyptian bondage, when the Almighty Himself slew the first-born of their masters and did a “pass-over” on the Jewish homes. This was a powerful experience of intimacy with G-d. There was, however, one problem with it. Jews had not really prepared themselves with spiritual growth for this Divine revelation. It was handed to them on a silver platter by the Creator, who had fulfilled His promise of liberation. When one is not properly prepared through his own efforts, it is impossible for him to internalize such an experience and truly incorporate it into his consciousness. This is why the liberated slaves had to wait seven weeks until they reached the “Season of the Giving of Our Torah.” During these weeks, they would grow spiritual-

ly day by day, and thus properly prepare themselves for the next great revelation at Sinai which they would be capable of internalizing and incorporating.

But why is it necessary to first be exposed to a “silver platter” revelation which cannot be internalized, if it will not last?

The parable of the king supplies the answer. If someone has never before heard the sweet melody of Divine revelation, he is incapable of searching for its replay. Only after the Heavens had virtually unfolded before our ancestors on the first Pesach Eve were they capable of envisioning what spiritual horizons they could reach. Then they could begin a seven-week process of growth through effort, confident that when they would hear the sweet melody of the Divine voice speaking to them at Sinai, they could say, like the king, that they had heard this song before.

This concept, prevalent in the writings of Chassidic masters such as “Bnei Yissaschar,” is applied as well to solving another dilemma:

While yet in his mother’s womb, our Sages teach us, a Jew is taught the entire Torah by an angel. When he is about to enter the world, the baby is gently struck by that angel and caused to forget all that he learned. If it is the will of Hashem that we gain Torah knowledge through our own efforts, what purpose is there in prenatal education doomed to be forgotten?

Torah knowledge is not like any of the human sciences and philosophies. It is Divine in nature and cannot be acquired through ordinary human effort. Only if a Jew has once heard the melody of Torah before birth is he capable of recognizing it when he eventually learns it through his own efforts.

We connect these two epic seasons of revelation - Pesach and Shavuot - with the counting of the days and weeks of the Omer. These days and weeks help us relive the days and weeks of the move our ancestors made from a transient “silver platter” revelation to a lasting earned one. So when we finally reach the last station in this growth, we too are capable of making it a permanent part of our consciousness.

“Return us to Your Torah,” a Jew prays three times a day. How can you return to where you have never been? The answer is that we have all heard the melody of Torah before. Our souls heard it at Sinai, and we learned it in our mother’s womb. That is why a Jew prays only for Divine assistance in achieving what that king sought - an opportunity to hear that melody again - so that we can gaze with wonder and joy at the *déjà vu* experience and proudly proclaim: “I have heard that song before!”

THE SHEMONEH ESREI - THE FIRST BLESSING (3)

“Possesses (*Koneh*) Everything”

We say in Pirkei Avot that we and everything that is ours belongs to G-d. All is in His hands: health, wealth, even the ability to digest the food we eat, to see and hear along with the rest of our abilities, are all given to us by G-d. We therefore owe our lives to Him.

An example of our total dependence on G-d can be learned from how the Egyptians sold themselves as slaves in exchange for food during the time of famine, saying: “Take possession of us and our land for bread, and we, along with our land, will become slaves to Pharaoh.” (See Rabbi Schwab on prayer.)

A Deeper Explanation

The simple meaning of the word “*Koneh*” is “possesses.” Others, however, explain this word in connection to this *beracha*, to mean “creates” — as in the verse “Creator (*Koneh*) of heaven and earth.” According to the latter opinion, one may ask: Why wasn’t the usual word for “creates” — “*Boreh*” chosen?

A possible answer is that since G-d constantly recreates the world from utter nothingness (*ex nihilo*), He therefore, by definition, possesses all of His creations in His act of creating. Accordingly, the word “*Koneh*” can be understood to encompass *both* ideas — “possession” and “creation”.

“And Recalls the Kindness of the Forefathers”

The Forefathers fulfilled the entire Torah before they were actually commanded to do so. Their deeds are therefore referred to as “kindness” (*chessed*) rather than mere actions. This is in accord with the definition of the title “Chassid”, one who serves G-d beyond the letter of the law, out of pure love.

Since we assume that we are not worthy of redemption on our own merit, we request that G-d remember the kind deeds of our Forefathers and send us a Redeemer in their merit (*Arbah Turim, Levush*).

Perhaps the idea here is that since the Forefathers fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given, their actions were therefore not done out of obligation. We likewise ask G-d to provide for us, their descendants, not because He is obligated, but rather as an act of kindness.

Recalling the Divine Promise

Another explanation of the phrase “And recalls the kindness of the Forefathers” refers to the kindness that G-d promised to the Forefathers; namely, to redeem their descendants from exile and give them the Land of Israel (*Ben Ish Chai*).

According to this explanation, we also depend on the merit of the Forefathers, since it was based on their merit that G-d promised to redeem us and give us the Land of Israel.

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spouses. Finally, if Moshe’s humility led him to believe that such relations were somehow unacceptable, this would be very puzzling since he would be rejecting an acceptable and normal aspect of human behavior.

What Miriam and Aharon did not understand was that Moshe’s level of prophecy was fundamentally different from their own. In order to demonstrate this symbolically, the Torah relates that G-d summoned all three of them to the Tent of Meeting. G-d then appeared in a pillar of cloud and instructed Miriam and Aharon to step outside the Tent of Meeting in order to demonstrate the fundamental difference between themselves and Moshe. The Torah explains that G-d speaks to all the other prophets in a vision or a dream. The prophet is never awake and the prophecies are cloaked in riddles and metaphors. In regard to Moshe, however, the Torah states, “...in My entire house he is the trusted one. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles.” Abarbanel explains that the image of ‘my entire house’ is an indication of Moshe’s grasp of the highest levels of understanding of G-d of which mortal man is capable. He is familiar with every single ‘room’ of ‘G-d’s house.’

All the prophets besides Moshe experienced a tension

between their purely rational and spiritual side and the demands of the physical body. When an individual’s physical and non-physical dimensions are operating in opposition, then the prophet’s contact with the physical world and physical reality must be reduced in order to allow that other aspect of his being to receive the prophecy. This is expressed by dreams, riddles, metaphors and visions which partially remove him from the physical world. Since prophets like Miriam and Aharon could not eliminate this tension anyhow, there was no need to require them to do something unnatural like separating from their spouses. On the other hand, because Moshe was capable of completely separating himself from the influence of the physical dimension and had to be prepared to receive this highest level of prophecy at any time, it was necessary for him to separate from his wife.

Because Miriam was the instigator she suffers the punishment of *tzara’at*, which G-d inflicts upon her immediately without giving Miriam and Aharon a chance to respond to G-d’s anger at their criticism of Moshe. Aharon recognizes the gravity of the transgression of viewing Moshe through their standards and reality, not his, and immediately admits his error.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Nasso

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's *Parsha*?
2. Besides transporting the *Mishkan*, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is referred to in this *Parsha*?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *teme'im* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnot kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnot kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the Name of G-d is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people "with a full heart." What word in the *Parsha* conveys this idea of "a full heart?"
18. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d bless you and guard you"?
19. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d lift up His countenance upon you"?
20. The tribe of Yissaschar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Nasso's Questions!

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

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
4. 5:2 - The camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the camp of Levi which was surrounded by the camp of *Yisrael*.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the camp of the *Shechina*.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of G-d is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shelamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - "*Amor*."
18. 6:24 - "May G-d bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissaschar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Beha'alotcha

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the menorah burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the menorah made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *Levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*t'nufot*" (wavings) are in the parsha?
5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *Levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the menorah and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Beha'alotcha's Questions!

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

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the menorah was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *para aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show G-d's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the *avoda*; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic - these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.