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PARSHA INSIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Don't Hang around in the Waiting Room

"Your threshing will last till the vintage, and the vintage will last till the sowing; you will eat your bread to satiety..." (26:5)

The British Daily Telegraph writes: Collecting the state pension and bus pass at 65 has traditionally been seen as a watershed moment where middle age ends and the twilight years begin. But new research suggests that old age now starts at 74, with middle age lasting at least nine years longer than current estimates. Academics from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Vienna, Austria, argue that old age should be measured not by age, but by how long people have left to live. In the 1950s a 65-year-old in Britain could expect to live a further 15 years. But today's baby boomers are expected to live far longer after retirement. A recent estimate by the Office for National Statistics suggests that the average retiree can look forward to drawing their pension for up to 24 years — as much as 50 per cent longer than their parents' generation. Researchers say that old age should be defined as having 15 or fewer years left to live, which for the baby boomers means that they are still middle aged until their 74th year. "If you don't consider people old just because they reached age 65 but instead take into account how long they have left to live, then the faster the increase in life expectancy, the less aging is actually going on," said Sergei Scherbov, World

Population Program Deputy Director at IIASA.

One of the problems that an aging population has caused is that people run out of things to do. Miami Beach in Florida is nicknamed "G-d's waiting room." But nowadays the wait has gotten much longer. Certainly one of the factors that causes aging is just sitting around waiting to be called out of the waiting room.

My father used to go into the office well into his nineties. The idea of retirement is not something that finds its place in Judaism. Seeing as a Jew always has an obligation to learn Torah, when someone's pension drops through the letterbox it's an opportunity to work harder and more meaningfully at what really matters — Torah and *mitzvot*.

"Your threshing will last till the vintage, and the vintage will last till the sowing; you will eat your bread to satiety..."

Rashi says about this verse that the prosperity will be so great that people will still be threshing their grain when the time comes to harvest the grapes. There is no greater blessing in old age than having a constant horizon of opportunity and work. It's then that "you will eat your bread to satiety." The satisfaction of feeling useful and productive is the greatest elixir of life.

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Bechorot 37 - 42

Call the Dentist!

“Only if the back teeth are completely missing is it a blemish.”

This statement is found in our *mishna*, which teaches which dental problems render a potential animal offering to be unfit. An animal with a serious blemish of this sort is called a “*baal moom*,” meaning that it has a blemish that disqualifies it from being fit to offer to G-d on the Altar in the Beit Hamikdash.

Our *mishna* distinguishes between the front teeth and the back teeth of an animal regarding disqualifying blemishes. The front teeth, which are in the middle and more visible, are considered a blemish for the animal even if they are merely damaged. The back teeth are only a blemish issue if they are completely missing, including their roots.

In a *mishna* in the next *perek* of our *masechet* we are taught which blemishes disqualify a *kohen* from being permitted to perform the sacrificial service in the Beit Hamikdash. (See Vayikra 21:17) Regarding a *kohen* we are taught that if he is missing teeth he is not considered blemished according to Torah law, but should not serve due to Rabbinical law. (Bechorot 7:5)

This appears to pose contradiction: Why is a *kohen* without teeth not disqualified by the Torah for service, whereas an animal offering with no back teeth is indeed considered an invalid offering according to Torah law?

One answer is offered by the commentaries of the Yachin (Tiferet Yisrael) and the Tosefot Yom Tov, based on the Rambam. They write that it is the way of an animal to open its mouth widely when it howls and shrieks, which exposes its missing back teeth — thus constituting a blemished status. A *kohen*, however, who is a person, does not open his mouth in such a manner that exposes his teeth to this extent.

Another answer is based on the factor of the ages of the animal or the *kohen*. Although a *kohen* may be disqualified with physical blemishes, his age — no matter how old — does not constitute a disqualifying blemish. Since it is the nature of the human body (especially in former times, but also so today) to lose teeth with advanced age, logic would dictate disqualification of an elderly *kohen* due to dental problems. Since there is no age limit for a *kohen*, we see that his dental situation is not an issue that affects his eligibility to serve in the Beit Hamikdash. On the other hand, an animal offering is valid only for a limited number of years, while it is still young. At that early age it should have its teeth in good condition to be considered to be fit as an offering in the Beit Hamikdash. Therefore, certain dental blemishes will disqualify an animal from being an acceptable offering.

A dental anecdote: During my first visit to a dentist as a young yeshiva student in Israel, I noticed a framed decorative quotation on the wall. It said in Hebrew, “Open your mouth wide and I (G-d) will fill it.” (Tehillim 81:11) At first I was happily surprised to see this on his wall, appearing to be a lighthearted sign that indicated the dentist to be a G-d-fearing person. (But somewhere in the back of my mind I quickly wondered that perhaps the dentist saw in the verse a command to do as much drilling and filling as he could possibly do! “I will fill it!” However, I quickly put that cynical thought aside.) The meaning of the verse in its context, as explained by Rashi, is that we should open our mouths widely in *prayer* to G-d for all of our needs, And He will fulfill them.

And a Rabbinical anecdote: The great Ponevizher Rav, HaRav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman (Russia-Bnei Brak, 1886-1969) was a *kohen*. Although he suffered great toothache pain, and the dentist wanted to perform an extraction, the Rav exercised mind over matter and resisted pulling the tooth in order to avoid any question about his fitness to serve in the Beit Hamikdash, may it be rebuilt speedily in our days.

• *Bechorot 39a*

PARSHA Q&A?

1. To what do the words “*bechukosai telechu*” (walk in My statutes) refer?
 2. When is rain “in its season”?
 3. What is the blessing of “*v’achaltem lachmechem l’sova*” (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
 4. What is meant by the verse “and a sword will not pass through your land”?
 5. Mathematically, if five Jewish soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Jewish soldiers be able to defeat?
 6. How much is ‘*revava*’?
 7. Which “progression” of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
 8. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel’s state of ruin?
 9. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
 10. How many years did the Jewish People sin in Israel up till the time the northern tribes were exiled?
 11. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written with an extra “*vav*”. From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?
 12. What positive element is implied by the words “and I will bring them into the land of their enemies”?
 13. In verse 26:42, why is the word “remember” not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
 14. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 “*Toros*” (plural) and not “*Torah*” (singular)?
 15. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the *Beit Hamikdash* and doesn’t have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
 16. If a person says, “The leg of this animal shall be an *olah* offering”, the animal is sold and sacrificed as an *olah* offering. What is the status of the money received for the animal?
 17. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the *Beit Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *Yovel* what happens to the field?
 18. Where must “*Ma’aser Sheini*” be eaten?
 19. When a person redeems “*Ma’aser Sheini*” what happens to the food? What happens to the redemption money?
 20. How does a person tithe his animals?
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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week’s questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 26:3 - Laboring in Torah learning.
 2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g. Shabbat nights).
 3. 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
 4. 26:6 - No foreign army will travel through your land on their way to a different country.
 5. 26:8 - Two thousand.
 6. 26:8 - Ten thousand.
 7. 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvot*, rejecting those who observe *mitzvot*, hating Sages, preventing others from observing *mitzvot*, denying that G-d gave the *mitzvos*, denying the existence of G-d. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
 8. 26:32 - No enemy nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
 9. 26:35 - 70 years. Because the Jewish People violated 70 *Shemita* and *Yovel* years.
 10. 26:35 - 390 years.
 11. 26:42 - In five places in the Torah Yaakov’s name is written with an extra “*vav*” and in five places the name Eliyahu is missing a “*vav*.” Yaakov took these vavs as a pledge that Eliyahu will one day come and announce the redemption of Yaakov’s children.
 12. 26:41 - G-d Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies’ land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, G-d will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jews from assimilating into the host culture.
 13. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak’s ashes (who was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before G-d.
 14. 26:46 - To teach that both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah were given to Moshe on *Har Sinai*.
 15. 27:8 - The person whose value was donated goes before the *kohen*, who sets the obligation according to the poor person’s ability to pay.
 16. 27:9 - The money is ‘*chullin*,’ meaning it does not have ‘holy’ status, except for the value of the animal’s leg which does have ‘holy’ status.
 17. 27:16 - It becomes the property of the *kohanim* who are on rotation at the beginning of *Yovel*.
 18. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.
 19. 27:31 - The food becomes permissible to him outside of Jerusalem. The redemption money must be brought to Jerusalem and used to purchase food to be eaten there.
 20. 27:32 - He passes them through a door individually and every tenth animal he marks with a rod smeared with red dye.
-

LOVE of the LAND

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

Meron and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

As Jews throughout Israel and the world gather on Lag B'Omer at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron, many of them will be parents bringing their three-year old son for his *chalake* – the traditional first cutting of his hair.



One of the most touching sights on this day, which is the anniversary of the death of the great Sage, is that of little boys with long pre-haircut hair dancing on the shoulders of their fathers, while all around them Jews are singing the praise of Rabbi Shimon.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow G-d's commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose pur-

pose is to bring the Jewish People to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. *Sefer Vayikra*, the Book of Leviticus, concludes with a detailed description of *Erachin* – the process by which someone can make a vow to give to the *Beit Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אֲחֵינוּ בְּכָל בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

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BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

The Pious Word

From: Helen

Dear Rabbi,

Are the words and the speech of the righteous different or more powerful than that of ordinary people? Why would this be?

Dear Helen,

The Talmudic Sages taught (Berachot 6b): A G-d fearing person's words are heard and accepted, as it is written (Ecc. 12:13), "In the end, all having been heard, fear G-d and keep His commandments, for this is the entire man." Furthermore, based on various readings of this verse, the Sages presented three observations: The world was created for only such a person. He is equivalent to the entire world. The entire world was created only to hearken to him.

Why are the words of such a person heard more than that of other people?

For one, a G-d fearing person is humbled before G-d and man. This enables people to accept his words. It is the nature of people to oppose and reject the ideas and words of the haughty and the arrogant because it threatens their sense of self-worth and is demeaning. However, the non-threatening humility of the righteous is so disarming that people generally find it pleasurable to listen to them.

Another reason is that the ideas and words of ordinary people are jaded by self-interest, personal desires, and imperfect character traits. Thus, the words of even a well-meaning person are naturally suspect of bias and subjectivity. However, the extent to which a righteous person is free of all that, his perspective and words on any matter are naturally regarded with more sincerity, insight and truth.

In addition, an ancient Jewish adage asserts: "Words which emerge from the heart, enter the heart." This means that while vacuous words of no substance are not even heard by the ears, sincere, earnest, heartfelt, substantive ideas penetrate deep

into the heart of the listener. And since the righteous speak from a pure, unoccluded heart, their words have a profound effect on others.

The previous explanations are based on the understanding that the verse refers to the words of the righteous being heard and accepted by other people. However, the fact that the words of the G-d fearing are heard applies as well to being accepted in the metaphysical realm.

One example would be through the venue of prayer. A pure and pious person's speech is very spiritual. It is thus able to penetrate the supernal realms and rise directly before G-d. Such pristine and powerful prayer is heard, received and granted by He whom the righteous fears.

Another example of this would be regarding the way in which the righteous are actually able, with their "power of speech," to make decrees that can be realized in the heavenly or worldly realms. This is because, through "aligning" themselves with G-d, they actually become G-dlike, whereby their will, insofar as it is in tune with the Will of G-d, is acted upon by G-d in order to bring the will of the righteous into being. This is exemplified by another proverbial teaching in Jewish sources: "The *tzaddik* decrees and G-d fulfills."

This understanding is particularly harmonious with one of the observations of the Sages mentioned above, namely that the entire world was created in order to hearken to the G-d fearing person. However, since the word for hearken in this teaching is *l'ztavot*, which can also mean "join," an additional meaning is that it is fitting for the entire world to join or attach themselves to a righteous, G-d fearing person. In so doing, one would be connecting himself to the earnest, enlightening, and inspiring influence of his speech, the transformative power of which, through prayer and blessings, makes a better world for all.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

Boys and Bars

On Lag B'Omer, Jews all over the world celebrate Rashbi's *hillula*. Rashbi, of course, is an acronym for the Tannaic sage, Rabbi Shimon *bar* Yochai. Or, is it Rabbi Shimon *ben* Yochai? Why do we sometimes use the word *ben* to mean "son," and sometimes use the word *bar*? What is the difference between these two words? Moreover, why is a Jewish boy coming of age called a *bar mitzvah*, why not a *ben mitzvah*?

Simplistically speaking, the words *ben* and *bar* both mean the same thing — but in different languages. *Ben* means "son" in Hebrew, while *bar* means "son" in Aramaic. Indeed, whenever the word *ben* appears in the Bible, the Targumim translate it into Aramaic as *bar*. For this reason, *ben* is found in Hebrew texts, while *bar* is used in Aramaic texts. (The one possible exception to this is Prov. 31:2, which is written in Hebrew, but uses the word *bar*. However, see the Malbim who argues that in that context *bar* is a Hebrew word meaning "choicest," not the Aramaic word for "son.")

The word *bar* in Aramaic also means "outside" or "separate" and it is routinely used this way in the Talmud. For example, a *baraita* is a Tannaic teaching outside of the Mishna. *Bar*'s two meanings are reflected in a halachic discussion surrounding how to properly write a *get* (bill of divorce).

Rabbi Yaakov Margolis of Regensburg (1430-1501) writes in *Seder HaGet* that when writing a *get* one should refer to the divorcer as "so-and-so *ben* so-and-so," not "so-and-so *bar* so-and-so." He explains that although the Aramaic word *bar* is used in all other legal documents, given that a bill of divorce must be as clear as possible, *bar* (with its multiple meanings) should be avoided in favor of *ben*. Rabbi Shlomo Luria (1510-1573), sometimes known as the Maharshal, supports Rabbi Margolis' ruling but for a different reason. He contends that although in this context nobody would think that *bar* means "outside," *bar* might be misconstrued as an acronym for the Hebrew phrase "*ben reb*" (son of Reb...). This creates a problem because it goes against the custom of refraining from using honorifics in bills of divorce. For this reason, explains Rabbi Luria, one should avoid writing *bar*, and use *ben* in writing a *get*.

Although Rabbi Yosef Colon (1420-1480), also known as Maharik, contests this ruling, the Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1520-1572) — who died on Lag B'Omer — twice codified Rabbi Margolis' ruling in his glosses to the Shulchan Aruch (*Even HaEzer* §126:30, 129:7).

As is his way, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) traces both of the words in question to their respective two-letter core-roots. He explains that the root *BET-NUN* refers to "building" and "producing." The word *ben* fits with this explanation because children are "produced" from their parent's marriage. Other related words include *binyan* ("building"): the building materials *even* ("stone") and *teven* ("straw"), and even *avnayim* (a "birthing chair," which helps facilitate the birthing process). He also writes that the words *binah/tevunah* ("understanding") are related to this root as they are the "products" of contemplation and thought.

Rabbi Pappenheim maintains that the word *bat* ("daughter") is also derived from the root *BET-NUN* and should really be spelled *banat* (like it is in other Semitic languages). However, the *NUN* is generally dropped, rendering the actual word *bat*. That *NUN* returns in the plural form *banot* ("daughters").

Now, let's continue on to the core-root of the word *bar*. Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the two-letter root *BET-REISH* refers to "exclusion" or "separation." For example, the word *bahr* refers to grains which have been "separated" from the chaff, *bor/borit* is a cleaning agent used to "separate" and "exclude" filth, and *bari* (versus *shemma*) refers to a sort of certainty by which all other options have been conclusively "excluded." We can add to this the common expression *bar minan*, "except from us". In this spirit, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *bar* means "son" because the child was "separated" from his mother's person by the act of childbirth.

Now what does all this have to do with a *bar mitzvah*? But once we're on the topic, if we call a boy a *bar mitzvah* in Aramaic (as opposed to the Hebrew *ben mitzvah*), then why do we call a girl a *bat mitzvah* in Hebrew? What would the Aramaic form of *bat mitzvah* even be? Although technically the Aramaic word for

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Letter & Spirit

Insights based on the writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

Correspondence, Consequence, and Correction

This *parsha* contains one of two mournful rebukes in the Torah, foretelling and warning us of our eventual defection and its consequences. It is read in a low tone to reflect its solemn content. At the very end of this rebuke, after a description of the nation's seven levels of descent, and of the difficult circumstances that G-d sends their way in response, the Torah concludes with the following commentary about the difficulties the nation will encounter as a result of its disloyalty: *...and they shall satisfy the debt of their iniquity — all in accordance with, and by that which accords with, the fact that they despised My social ordinances [mishtapati] and their soul abhorred My statutes [chukotai].*

In this curious phrase — *ya'an u'vayaan* [in accordance with, and by that which accords with] — Rav Hirsch understands the entire mechanism of punishment. The fate decreed for the Jews in exile will 1) be in direct relationship to their sins and will 2) require actions and forbearance amounting to the antithesis of those sins to directly atone for them.

Two sins are described as weighing heavily on the people as debt. First, they rejected the G-d given *social* ordinances, and sought to establish their national communal life on the basis of other values. Second, they abhorred G-d's statutes, specifically those intended to function as moral restraints on sensual gratification. In their minds, those restraints deprived them of their personal happiness and enjoyment.

Accordingly, two consequences resulted: their

national *communal* life was shattered, and their *personal* happiness was eclipsed. For centuries they had to live in foreign states as aliens without any civil rights or protection of the law. Their pleasures in joys of life were likewise curtailed. *Ya'an — in accordance with... U'vya'an — and by that which accords.* Just as the reproving punishment corresponded to the sin, so too, their atonement is to be effected by a *corresponding* virtue. Social advantage, personal gain and pleasure had been their primary concern, whereas the Torah and its commandments were made secondary to these and were left to chance.

For centuries the Jews were forced to live in circumstances and situations in which almost every observance of a *mitzvah* would entail the sacrifice of one of life's pleasures or the renunciation of a human right. During many periods of the bitter exile Jews were challenged to remain faithful to the *mitzvot*, paying with imprisonment or martyrdom. No matter what sacrifice and hardship, persecution and sorrow that would befall them and their children, the Jews were to regard observance of the *mitzvot* as their first and essential concern. All other concerns — including the material prosperity and social position that once lured them away from Torah — must be sacrificed for a committed life. In order to atone for their former indifference to Torah, they will now have to forgo promotion of their personal happiness. *U'vya'an* — by this corresponding virtue — will they atone for their sin and return to the Land.

• Sources: *Commentary, Vayikra 26:43*

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BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

The Parsha Dual Dichotomy of 2019 Which Week Is Which?

By now we should all realize that we are amidst a *parsha* Dual Dichotomy, with Eretz Yisrael being one *parsha* ahead of the rest of the world. What is patently unique is that this un-synchronization is uncharacteristically lasting more than three months, although there are several opportunities for amalgamation that are being passed over.

This article sets out to explain why the calendars don't re-sync much earlier. Many ask: Why not catch up right away by *Acharei Mos/Kedoshim* or *Behar/Bechukosai*? Or even *Chukas/Balak*? Why should three separate double *parshiyos* be passed over, with the world only amalgamating on the fourth possibility, months later? In layman's terms, why should we wait so long for the whole world to be realigned?

But to properly understand the 'whys' of this fascinating dual dichotomy, one must first gain an understanding of the *parsha* rules and setup. In fact, this is not a new question, as several early *Acharonim*, including the *Maharit*, Rav Yosef Tirani, addressed this exact issue almost 500 years ago.

Managing Mnemonics

While it is true that technically *Eretz Yisrael* does not have to take *Chutz La'aretz* into account, or vice versa, to slow down or join *parshiyos* together, due to their independent *luachs* (or to be grammatically correct, '*luchos*') and cycles, nevertheless, there is more to the story.

The *Tur*, when codifying the halacha, offered special codes, mnemonics, to help remember the proper order of *parshiyos* as they relate to various *Yamim Tovim*. In a regular year, he writes, '*Pakdu U'Paschu*'. This refers to *Tzav* being Shabbos Hagadol directly before Pesach. However, in a leap year, like ours — 5779/2019, the mnemonic is '*Sagru U'Paschu*,' meaning that *Metzora* is right before Pesach, '*Manu V'Atzru*,' meaning that *Bamidbar* is directly prior to Shavuos, '*Tzumu V'Tzalu*,' that the fast of Tisha B'Av is directly before *Va'eschanan* (also meaning that *Devarim* is always Shabbos Chazon and *Va'eschanan* always Shabbos Nachamu), and '*Kumu V'Tik'u*,' meaning that *Netzavim* is before Rosh Hashanah. These mnemonics are accepted by all later authorities.

Bamidbar = Buffer Zone

Several of them directly affect our split situation. *Tosefos*, and later seconded by the *Levush*, states that since *Bechukosai* contains *tochachah* (rebuke) there must be a noticeable "buffer week" (practically, *Bamidbar*) between its reading and Shavuos. This is because we pray that a year and its curses should end in order to usher in a new year with its blessings. This is apropos for Shavuos as it is the Rosh Hashanah for *peiros ha'ilan*, the tree fruits (*Gemara Rosh Hashanah* 16a). Therefore, *Bamidbar* must be the stand-alone "buffer week" before Shavuos in order to emphasize that we are getting *Bechukosai* in just before Shavuos. Accordingly, the *Maharit*, citing Rav Yissachar ben Sussan, one of the foremost experts on intercalation of the Jewish calendar and its *minhagim*, in his renowned *sefer Tikkun Yissachar*, explains that if *Chutz La'aretz* would catch up to *Eretz Yisrael* prior to Shavuos then *Nasso* (the *parsha* following *Bamidbar*) would be read on Shabbos Erev Shavuos, as it will be in *Eretz Yisrael*, and then all of *Klal Yisrael* will miss the 'buffer week' from the *tochachah* of *Bechukosai*. Therefore, he avers, it is more important and preferable that at least *Chutz La'aretz* fulfill this dictate than it is that they catch up to *Eretz Yisrael*.

So, it turns out that the issue it is not why *Eretz Yisrael* doesn't simply slow down for *Chutz La'aretz*, but rather that *Chutz La'aretz* will not speed up to catch up to *Eretz Yisrael*. This 'Buffer Zone' preference answers up for *Acharei Mos/Kedoshim* and *Behar/Bechukosai*. However, there is still the subject of not catching up by *Chukas/Balak*.

Pondering the Pearls of Parshas Pinchas

The *Maharit*, and later the *Knesses Hagedolah*, explain that since *Chukas* and *Balak* are not commonly read together, whereas *Matos* and *Masei* are (there is an important reason for this, addressed a bit further on), we do not simply combine the former, as opposed to the latter, just in order to save what amounts to a discrepancy of one week.

The renowned *Bnei Yisaschar* adds an additional reason. He explains that whenever possible we attempt to

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What's in a Word...continued from page six

“daughter” is *barat*, the Targumim tend to leave the Hebrew word *bat* untranslated, so *bat* can also be used in Aramaic (as Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur writes in *Meturgaman*). Hence, a young lady’s coming of age makes her a *bat mitzvah* — even in Aramaic.

For some reason, the nomenclature for a young man’s coming of age is *bar mitzvah*. Why do we refer to the Jewish boy’s rite of passage as a *bar mitzvah* as opposed to a *ben mitzvah*? After scouring different sources I came up with three possible lessons that we may be teaching the *bar mitzvah* boy by using the word *bar* instead of *ben*:

Rabbi David Ovadiah of Tiberias (a nephew of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef) explains in the name of Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926) that because the word *bar* also means “outside” it serves to teach the young *bar mitzvah* boy that he is now standing “outside” — on the threshold to entering his adult life. At this fateful juncture he has the capacity to decide whether he will choose the correct path or the incorrect path.

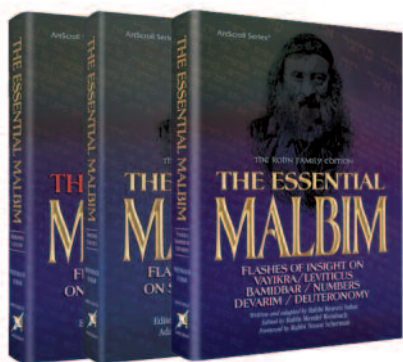
The late Rabbi Alexander Sender Feuerstein of London explains that the Aramaic word for “son” is used to convey the lesson that the young man is not only expected to master the entire Written Torah — which is mostly written in Hebrew — but must also master the Oral Torah, which is mostly written in Aramaic.

Rabbi Meir Mintzberg (son-in-law of the late Rabbi Leib Mintzberg, the spiritual leader of the Jerusalemite “Masmidim” movement) takes a different approach.

Like Rabbi Pappenheim he explains that the word *ben* is related to “building” and “producing,” and connotes that the son is the product of his parents’ building and nurturing. The word *bar*, on the other hand, has the opposite connotation: *Bar* implies the “son” as somebody independent (“separated” or “excluded”) of his parents. It is thus an appropriate term for the *bar mitzvah* boy because it stresses that his personal growth is no longer in the hands of his parents who have “built” him up, but is now his own responsibility. (See *Haksav V’hakabbalah* to Ex. 12:43 who explains how the word *ben* in the construct form can be attached to a noun to become an adjective.)

By the way, you should know that whenever the Mishna or Talmud refers to the Tannaic sage “Rabbi Shimon,” this is actually Rashbi. Why then is he sometimes called “Rabbi Shimon” and sometimes called “Rabbi Shimon ben/bar Yochai?” In his lexicon of Talmudic sages *Yechusai Tannaim V’Amoraim*, Rabbi Yehuda ben Kalonymos of Speyer (a 12th century Tosafist) writes that anything Rashbi said before he was famous is ascribed to “Rabbi Shimon ben/bar Yochai” in order to clarify who said it, but what he said once we was already an important figure is attributed to simply “Rabbi Shimon” because everyone already knew who he was.

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The Parsha Dual Dichotomy...continued from page eight

ensure the public reading of *Chalukas Ha'aretz*, the apportioning of *Eretz Yisrael*, during the period of communal mourning known as *Bein Hametzarim*, colloquially called 'The Three Weeks.' This period commemorates the heralding of the beginning of the tragedies that took place prior to the destruction of both *Batei Mikdash*, from the breaching of the walls of ancient Yerushalayim on the 17th of *Tammuz*, until the actual destruction of the Beis Hamikdash on Tisha B'Av.

The reason for these readings, which are found in the *parshiyos* of *Pinchas*, *Matos*, and *Masei*, to be read specifically then, is to remind us of G-d's promise that although we are currently in *golus*, exile, nevertheless, '*le'aileh techalek ha'aretz*' — we will still inherit *Eretz Yisrael*.

A similar assessment is given by the *Minchas Yitzchok*, albeit regarding *Korbanos*, especially the *Korban Tamid*, the daily offering, which is also detailed in *Pinchas*. He explains that the *Korban Tamid* protected *Klal Yisrael* from sinning with *Avodah Zarah* (idolatry). When the *Korban Tamid* was no longer offered, it enabled the *Yetzer HaRa'ah* of *Avodah Zarah* to strengthen. And this sinning eventually led to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

As such, and since we no longer have the ability to offer *Korbanos*, but at least we still have their recital (in the vein of '*v'neshalmah parim sifoseinu*' — that our prayers are their current replacement), the reading of the *Korbanos* takes place specifically during The Three Weeks, when we are mourning the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This serves to embolden and enable us to fight the reasons and causes for its destruction, and in this way assist its rebuilding.

An additional point the *Bnei Yisaschar* raises is that *Pinchas* contains the *Parshas HaMoadim*, the reading detailing all the *Yamim Tovim* and their observances. He explains that this is also an apropos reading for The Three Weeks, to comfort us in our time of mourning. This is as the Prophet Zechariah (Ch. 8: 19) prophesized, that when the *Geulah* comes this period will be turned into one of great rejoicing ('*l'sasson u'lsimcha ul'moadim tovim*').

For all of the above-mentioned reasons it is simply not worthwhile for *Chutz La'aretz* to make *Chukas* and *Balak* into a double *parsha* merely to catch up to *Eretz Yisrael*, since if it would, then *Pinchas* would not fall out in The Three Weeks. Therefore, it is proper for *Chutz La'aretz* to wait and not catch up to *Eretz Yisrael* until

Matos/Masei, thus ensuring that *Pinchas* be read during *Bein Hametzarim*, and enabling us to glean and appreciate its veiled significance and promises for the future.

The Code for Consolation

The *Maharit* continues that the reason *Matos* and *Masei* are generally combined is for a similar, yet reverse, reason to *Bamidbar*. As the *Tur* wrote, the code for this time of year is '*Tzumu V'Tzalu*,' meaning that the fast of Tisha B'Av is directly before *Va'eschanan*. This is not merely by chance.

Va'eschanan contains the verses of '*Ki soleed banim u'vnei vanim v'noshantem ba'aretz*' (Devarim 4: 25). Although this is not a pleasant reading, being a *tochachah*, *Chazal* nevertheless saw a hidden message of redemption buried within. "*V'noshantem*" in *gematria* equals 852, informing us that after 852 years of living in *Eretz Yisrael* the *Galus* would begin. Yet, we find that the *Galus* actually started two years early, after 850 years. This is because G-d did not want to destroy us (ad loc. verse 26), and therefore, as a kindness, brought the Exile two years early, to ensure *Klal Yisrael's* survival.

Therefore, explains the *Maharit*, we commonly combine *Matos* and *Masei* to make certain that the *parsha* of *Va'eschanan* is always immediately following Tisha B'Av as *Shabbos Nachamu*, thus offering us a message of consolation even amidst the destruction.

In conclusion, although it may seem complicated and confusing, on the contrary, each calendar calculation is clearly consistent with the clarion call of our *Chazal* — *parsha* combination and separation that is synchronized to showcase hope and consolation when we need it most, as well as serve as a buffer from condemnation.

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