

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Ha'azinu

A Copper Penny

"For G-d's portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His heritage." (32:9)

Once there was a young boy standing in the courtyard of the shul in Vilna. He was bent over, his eyes scouring the pavement, searching intently for something. He looked here and there. Occasionally he would stoop lower and examine the ground to see if he could find what he was searching for. In frustration, tears began to well in his eyes.

The time came for *mincha*, the afternoon prayer, and the courtyard began to fill with people. They all noticed the little boy crying and searching. "What are you looking for?" they asked him. "My mother gave me a copper penny and I lost it on my way to *cheder* (school)," was the tearful reply. Everyone started to help him look for the copper penny. They scoured the courtyard. Not a single square inch was left unexamined.

It was not to be found.

Someone said to the little boy, "Show me exactly where you were when you lost it." In all innocence, the little boy replied: "Actually I didn't lose it here. I lost it in the street." "So why are you looking for it

here in the courtyard of the shul?" came the startled reply. "Because the street is all muddy and dirty and I didn't want to soil my shoes."

The mystical sources teach us that there are many worlds above this one. Compared to those worlds, the world in which we live is a very dark dank place. A place of messy physicality. A place of concealment. If "G-d's portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His heritage," then why did G-d put us in this lowly world? Why didn't He put us in a higher, more spiritual world?

The Torah is the essence of the whole creation. If it were not for the Torah, the physical world and all its myriad laws would never have come into being. The Torah does not exist for the benefit of the incorporeal spiritual beings who inhabit the upper worlds. G-d wanted the Torah to be in this lowest of the worlds. Therefore, G-d also put us into this world so that we should involve ourselves with His Torah, day and night.

When a jewel is buried in the mud, there's no alternative but to roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty. If we search for riches where there are none, even if we conduct the search in climate-controlled, air-conditioned luxury, we won't even end up with a copper penny.

De-Construction

"In the beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and the earth..." (1:1)

You drive up to your dream home. It's been two years in the planning, and three to build it. You usher your guests up to the top of the west wing and proudly fling open the doors to the guest suite. The doors bang against their stops. Then a small shudder shakes the house. What sounds like a distant groan starts to get louder and louder and then, before your eyes, the entire west wing parts company with the house and falls away, crashing to the ground like some slow-motion movie. You and your guests are left wide-eyed in horror and disbelief, gazing into fifty feet of nothingness two inches from the ends of your toes.

The Torah is the blueprint of the world. Just as a builder takes great pains to study the blueprint of a

house before a single bulldozer raises its claws in earnest; just as he measures and calculates and evaluates, slide-rule and calculator at the ready, so too G-d creates the world from His blueprint – the Torah.

Therefore, it stands to reason that a Sefer Torah that lacks even one letter is *pasul* – invalid. For just as one missing line in the plans of a building may lead to the west wing crashing into ruins in front of your eyes, so too one letter missing from a Sefer Torah is as though vast tracts of the universe have been erased.

- Source: based on the Chafetz Chaim

Noach

Of Men and Mice

"Behold I am about to bring the flood waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which there is a breath of life under the heavens." (6:17)

The prophet *Yeshayahu* (Isaiah) refers to the flood as the "*waters of Noach*," implying that Noach bears at least partial responsibility for the flood. For, if Noach had taught his generation to know G-d by instructing them to emulate G-d's *midot* (character traits), they surely would have repented.

A story is told about a rabbi who had a dispute with a philosopher as to whether instinct or behavioral training governs the behavior of an animal. The philosopher held that an animal can be trained so completely that it can be made to do almost anything. To prove his point he painstakingly trained a number of cats to stand upright, balance trays on their paws and serve as waiters. He dressed them for the part in white shirts with little black ties, and conducted a banquet with the cats as the waiters. As these feline waiters were serving the soup, the rabbi, who had been invited to the banquet, released a mouse. The banquet room was turned to

pandemonium as the cats, forgetting all their hours of training, let their trays crash to the ground, rushing about on all fours after the mouse.

Without training, a person's baser instincts and desires will drag him onto all fours. However, a human being is different from the animals because he can perfect his character so that it controls his baser instincts. One who has not yet worked on perfecting his character will, like the trained cat, be able to put on a show of discipline for a time, but only so long as no "mice" are released in his path.

Only after a person has anchored good character traits in himself will the Torah reside in him. Only the Torah can bring one's character to ultimate perfection, but where there is no foundation of proper *midot*, the acquisition of Torah is impossible.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Me'ila 16-22

When in Rome

Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Yossi said, "In Rome I saw the parochet of the Beit Hamikdash, and there were drops of blood on it."

The wicked kingdom of ancient Rome issued severe decrees against the religious practices of the Jewish People in order that they assimilate. For example, the Romans banned keeping Shabbat and doing circumcision. At first, one of the Rabbis tried to blend in to the royal council and convinced the king that it was in the best interest of the Roman Empire to revoke the decrees. He argued that the decrees were contrary to the interest of Rome: "By keeping Shabbat the Jews will be poorer, and by doing circumcision they will be weaker. Wouldn't it be better for the king if his enemies were poorer and weaker?" Although his advice was initially accepted and the bans were lifted, eventually, when he was discovered to be Jewish the bans were reinstated.

Following this, our Sages decided to send Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to Rome to seek annulment of their anti-religious decrees. When these Sages saved the king's daughter from the attack of a demon, the king rewarded them with an invitation to take any wealth or item they desired from the royal treasury. What transpired is that when they were looking through the royal treasures, they saw the document with the terrible anti-religious decrees. They took it and destroyed it. Also, while they were checking out the contents of the royal treasures, Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Yossi noticed the blood-stained *parochet* – the partition veil that had been in the Beit Hamikdash between the *Kodesh* and the *Kodesh Kodashim*. The blood was from the bullock and goat sacrifices that were sprinkled towards the *parochet* during the Yom Kippur service.

It is recorded in our sources that not only was the *parochet* kept in secret cellars in Rome – and is still

presumably there – but also that the *Shulchan* (Table), Menorah, the special vessel used for preparing the *Ketoret* (Incense) and the *Tzitz* (the Headband, one of the eight garments of the *Kohen Gadol*), were all kept in storage in Rome. Does this remind anyone of The Arch of Titus? (*Avot d'Rabbi Natan* §41)

Some years ago, a Rabbi I had the merit to study with each morning before dawn told me about an event related to the current state of storage of the holy articles from the Beit Hamikdash that were captured by the ancient Romans and taken into exile with them to Rome. He told me about a relative of his who was a professor of history, specializing in the Roman Empire. She had received great recognition and a special award and was invited to an official visit to the Vatican. She was given a special tour of the normally secret and hidden treasures that ancient Rome had accrued, and, among them, she identified many vessels that were clearly from the Second Beit Hamikdash. She wasn't permitted to film them, but the leaders told her they were authentic, and from her vast studies and experience she was certain that this was the case. Her relative, the Rabbi I studied Torah with, concluded that it was probably better that these holy items remain where they are, for now, instead of trying to bring them back to Israel. What could be done with them without a Beit Hamikdash? And there would always be the risk of using them in an improper manner, debasing them and defiling them. And even possibly transgressing the Torah command regarding the prohibition of *me'ila* – the central topic of the Tractate which we conclude for now.

- *Me'ila 17 a-b*

SUCCOT FEATURE

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

When Less is More

A few years ago, after some home improvements, I set out to buy some new boards to build the walls of my *succah* (the temporary hut that Jews live in for seven days during the Festival of Succot). Not only had my *succah* area doubled but, due to the way the construction had been done, the original boards that I had always used in the past were now too tall. So off I went to look for some new ones. Living in Jerusalem there was no problem finding cheap *succah* boards for sale. In fact, the area that I ended up in seemed to consist of one carpentry shop after another, each storefront graced with a huge pile of boards ready to be carted away and built into someone's *succah*. And that is when the trouble began.

Every board was exactly the same height. One of the reasons that they were so cheap was because they were all of uniform dimensions, mass produced by a machine. Each one cut in exactly the same way and completely indistinguishable from the next. Which meant that they were all too tall for my needs.

At this point it really didn't occur to me that this might end up being a particularly difficult exercise. I approached one of the stores and asked the owner if he could cut boards for me according to my specifications. Nothing seemed to be a problem so I excitedly started explaining to him how many boards I needed and how tall they had to be. At first I rather naively thought that my boards, being about a third shorter than the ones being sold, were going to cost a third less than the going rate for the standard size, so you can imagine my amazement when the storekeeper quoted me a price that was almost double the regular price. Not wanting to pay any more than I had to, I asked around in some of the other stores and, more or less, I got the same answer everywhere. It transpires that in the mysterious world of *succah* boards, less is actually more!

Not having any real alternative, I went back to the first store and made my order. A few days later I returned to collect my newly shortened boards, bring them home and begin the putting them all together.

It was, in my humble opinion, a very beautiful and spacious *succah*. We enjoyed every moment that we spent in it. We ate all our meals in it, learned Torah in it, had lots of guests in it and we slept in it each night. My children especially enjoyed lying down on their camp beds in the darkness looking at the twinkling stars that peeked through the "holey" covering serving as a roof.

Late one night while I was sitting in the *succah* it suddenly occurred to me that sometimes the world of mitzvahs and the world of *succah* boards coincide with each other. We are commanded every year to leave our permanent homes and spend a week in a temporary abode. What is the reason? Among other things it is to instill in us an appreciation that ultimately almost everything in this physical world of ours is transient. The only commodities that have eternal value are G-d's commandments. We pick ourselves up and leave the comfort and the safety of our homes to spend a week living that concept in its entirety so that when we finally move back into our homes at the end of *Succot* we are supposed to have absorbed that lesson.

Who doesn't want a beautiful residence? The Torah's description of such a dwelling is a home dedicated to fulfilling G-d's commandments. A home to invite guests to and introduce them to the indescribable grandeur of Shabbat and the Festivals. A place that is permeated with *gemilut chasadim* (kind deeds). That rings with the sound of Torah. Somewhere that serves as a magnet for those who want to taste and experience what it means to truly live the commandments.

What *Succot* and the *succah* are teaching us is that to build such a palace requires that we take a "time out" from the physical world so that we can remember where all our blessings really come from. We divest ourselves of some of our material trappings so that we can recognize just how close we really are to G-d. For the whole week of *Succot* we leave the creature comforts behind for the "Spartan wilds" of our *succah* and we bask in the knowledge that G-d is watching over us. Why bother? So that when we finally return to our homes it will be with the knowledge that G-d watches over us there as well.

What that means is that in the long run – less really does become more!

SEASONS – THEN AND NOW

JUDGMENT OF HOSHANA RABBA and SHEMINI ATZERET

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

Rabbi Kruspedai said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: *Three books are opened on Rosh Hashana. One [book] for the completely wicked, one [book] for the completely righteous, and one [book] for the intermediate. The completely righteous are written and sealed right away for life, the completely wicked are written and sealed right away for death, and the intermediates are held in balance from Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur. If they merit, they are written for life, and if they don't merit they are written for death (Rosh Hashana 16b).*

The deeper sources add that the judgment still continues until Shemini Atzeret. According to these sources, on Rosh Hashana one is judged and his verdict is written, on Yom Kippur his verdict is sealed, and at midnight on Hoshana Rabba his verdict is sealed with an additional outer seal, and the papers containing his verdict are given over to the messengers who will carry them out. These messengers though are not allowed to carry out the verdict until Shemini Atzeret (see Shlah, Masechet Succah, Perek Torah Ohr 70, Ben Ish Chai I V'zot Habracha 2 and Kaf HaChaim 664:1-5, 18-19 who quote the Zohar and the Arizal).

Based on the above, many *minhagim* surround the day of Hoshana Rabba. For example, many have the custom to add parts to the *tefillah*, to stay up at night learning Torah, to wear a *kittel* or other white clothing like on Yom Kippur, or Shabbat clothing. All this is because this day and Shemini Atzeret are the final days of judgment. While, obviously, even after Shemini Atzeret one can always do *teshuva*, it becomes much harder to change one's verdict after this grace period.

However, this additional judgment that continues until Shemini Atzeret needs to be understood. Firstly, why is it that we need another judgment? Secondly what additional *teshuva* is required after going through Yom Kippur? And finally, why is it that we don't focus on *teshuva* through *viduy* on Succot as well?

Judgment and Accounting

The Mishna in Avot (3:1) teaches: *Akavia ben Mahalalel says, "Look at three things and you won't come to do transgressions: Know where you came from, to where you are headed and in front of whom you will in the future give*

judgment and accounting." The Vilna Gaon explains that judgment and accounting refer to two different accountings of transgressions. He explains that for every transgression, one will be held accountable for the transgression itself, and, furthermore, he will be held accountable for all the good deeds he could have been doing at the time that he was busy committing the transgression. Practically speaking, we need to understand how this applies to us. Granted that for the transgression itself one can do *teshuva*, but how can one fix the fact that he didn't do mitzvahs at the time that he was busy with the sin?

The answer to this is in the *gemara* that says one who does *teshuva* out of love causes his transgressions to turn into mitzvahs (Yoma 86b). Why is this so? The commentaries explain that one who serves out of fear is like a worker who is doing his job only to get paid, and will therefore try to do as little as possible. Someone who serves out of love, though, sees no boundaries in his service. He will go out of his way and do as much as he can to improve his devotion. He will dedicate his time thinking about how he can serve better, and he will dedicate every spare moment and all of his energy and resources to the task at hand. The Maharsha explains that this is the meaning behind the *gemara* that says one who does *teshuva* out of love, his transgressions turn into mitzvahs. It is the extra time and effort that the one who is serving out of love will put into his service of Hashem, which will make up for the time he wasted when doing *aveirot*. Based on this it is clear that the way to fix the time wasted on *aveirot* is by doing *teshuva* out of love.

Teshuva of Yamim Noraim vs. Teshuva of Succot

The Beit Efraim explains that often the *teshuva* that we do on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is *teshuva* out of fear. As Chazal tell us, the reason we don't say Hallel on Rosh Hashana is because the books of the living and the books of the dead are in front of Hashem. Since Hallel needs to be said with joy, and that is not possible on Rosh Hashana, we don't say Hallel. As mentioned above, this kind of *teshuva* does not fully account for the time wasted on *aveirot*.

However, on Succot things take a different turn. The Torah mentions “happiness” three times when it comes to the holiday of Succot. This is more than any of the other holidays. Also in our prayers we refer to Succot as the time of our happiness. It is clear from here that one main service of the days of Succot is to serve Hashem with joy, which can then lead to doing *teshuva* out of love.

On a simple level, the happiness of Succot stems from the forgiveness we received on Yom Kippur, which immediately precedes Succot. However, some commentaries say that the joy of Succot is the source of joy for the whole year (see Ibn Ezra on Devarim 16:15 and Peleh Yoetz “*succah*” in the name of Gurei HaArizal). How are we to understand this?

Temporary Dwelling

The Alshich explains that every soul is taken from its permanent home in the spiritual world to a temporary home in this physical world at birth to accomplish its unique task. Once its job is done, the soul is removed from this temporary dwelling back to its permanent home in the World to Come. Most people, however, often forget that the physical world is only a means to an end, and not an end in and of itself. By leaving our seemingly permanent homes for seven days and dwelling in the temporary *succah*, we put our bodies in a state where it can feel the dilemma of the soul, which left its permanent spiritual home and entered this temporary physical world. This mitzvah, therefore, reminds us of the fact that our stay here, in the physical world, is a temporary one, in order to fulfill our specific spiritual mission in this world (Alshich on Vayikra 23:33).

The Chida suggests this is one reason why we read Megillat Kohelet on Succot. In Kohelet, Shlomo HaMelech, who owned nearly every physical possession of any value or worth, speaks of the transience of this world. Its main lesson is that pursuing the physical will never satisfy a person’s spiritual soul, as the *midrash* says: No one dies with even half of his wishes fulfilled (Kohelet Rabbah 1:34). This reminds us that it is not the physical accomplishments that matter but rather it is the spiritual ones that count, which is the perfect message to take away from the holiday of Succot.

Secret to Happiness

The commentaries explain that naturally there is no way for a person to constantly be happy because every person goes through some times of suffering. However, if one understands that the suffering is only temporary and for his own good, since it is meant to cleanse him and increase his eternal reward, then he can rejoice even in the worst situations (see Ben Yehoyada on Ta’anit 8a). Furthermore, through contemplating on the fact that this world is only a corridor to the World to Come, he will come to appreciate the opportunities Hashem gave him in this world to earn his eternal reward. This will then cause him to appreciate his spiritual accomplishments a lot more, which will lead him to perform mitzvahs with more fervor and happiness. All this will then lead a person to loving Hashem and serving Him out of love rather than fear. These are all ways that the joy of Succot can be the source of joy for the rest of the year as well.

We can now begin to understand on some level why there is another judgment at the end of Succot. We mentioned above that the *teshuva* we do on the *Yamim Noraim* is often only *teshuva* out of fear, which only makes up for the transgression itself. However, one still has to give an accounting for the good deeds he could have been doing at the time that he was occupied with transgressions. Unlike the *Yamim Noraim*, the *teshuva* we do on Succot is *teshuva* out of love, which is why the focus of the *teshuva* is not *viduy* but rather on serving Hashem with joy. As mentioned above, unlike a person who serves out of fear, one who serves out of love sees no boundaries to his service and will always try to add to his service. This devotion will then lead him to make up for the time lost through committing transgressions in the past and will thus complete his *teshuva*. Shemini Atzeret, which follows Succot, is the final day when we are meant to internalize the lesson of Succot, and is a special time to serve Hashem with joy. Hashem, out of His infinite kindness, continues the judgment until Shemini Atzeret to give us another chance to do *teshuva* out of love, which will lead to completing the *teshuva* that we started on the *Yamim Noraim* (based primarily on the *hakdama* of the Beit Efraim). May we all merit making the most of this time and internalize the message of serving Hashem out of love and joy.

Q & A

HA'AZINU

Questions

1. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses?
2. How is the Torah like rain?
3. How is Hashem "faithful without injustice"?
4. Why is Hashem called "tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did Hashem bring upon the world?
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did Hashem separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"?
9. How is Hashem's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, Hashem says "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
11. How does the idea of "chillul Hashem" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When Hashem overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When Hashem punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will Hashem's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People?
16. On what day was *Ha'azinu* taught to the Jewish People?
17. Verse 32:44 calls Yehoshua "Hoshea." Why?
18. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
19. Why did Hashem tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon?
20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?

Answers

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

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Eliyahu "My Father." (*Melachim II 2:12*).
7. 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avot*.
9. 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings."
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. Hashem would not let His name be desecrated like this.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to Hashem.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys Hashem's commands, all the more so should they.

Q & A

SUCCOT

Questions

1. According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a *succah* roof?
2. If the *succah* causes discomfort (e.g., it's too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?
3. What two things are forbidden to do outside of the *succah* all seven days of the festival?
4. What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the *succah* during the seven day holiday?
5. Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word *etrog* mean literally?
6. What is the minimum length of a lulav?
7. What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his *etrog* in order to obtain one of greater beauty?
8. On the Shabbat that occurs during Succot, we read the Book of Kohelet, in which King Solomon refers to himself as "Kohelet." Why is King Solomon called Kohelet?
9. What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the *succah* on the eighth day of Succot?
10. We hold a *tallit* over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

Answers

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

1. It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to *tumah* (ritual defilement).
2. Because the commandment of living in a *succah* is to dwell in the *succah* for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year. (*Mishneh Berura* 640:13)
3. Eat (an 'established' meal) or sleep. (*Orach Chaim* 639:2)
4. One. Eating a meal in the *succah* the first night of Succot is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat 'snacks' which are not required to be eaten in a *succah*. (Outside Israel, one must eat a meal the second night of Succot as well. However, there is no requirement to live outside Israel!) (*Orach Chaim* 639:3)
5. Beauty. (*Ramban Vayikra* 23:40)
6. Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic handbreadths).
7. 33.3% (*Orach Chaim* 656:1)
8. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succot after the Sabbatical year. (*Rashi, Kohelet* 1:1)
9. *Bal Tosif* - "Do not add to the mitzvahs." The commandment to live in the *succah* applies for only seven days. To sit in the *succah* on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses "*bal tosif*." (*Orach Chaim* 666:1)
10. It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to Hashem.

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Q & A

BEREISHET

Questions

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. Hashem blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from Hashem?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked"?
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

Answers

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

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that Hashem, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - Hashem saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. Hashem created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god; The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. Hashem commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore Hashem took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

Q & A

NOACH

Questions

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did Hashem tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did Hashem postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did Hashem do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to "be fruitful and multiply" directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

Answers

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

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, "Hashem is bringing a flood," it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - Hashem told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. "Kosher" and "non-kosher" are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Metushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13, 15 - People said, "If we see him going into the ark, we'll smash it!" Hashem surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven *amot*.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that its better to eat food "bitter like an olive" but which comes directly from Hashem, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22, 24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach's disgrace to Cham. And because Cham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Cham's fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against Hashem.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word "Yiscah" is related to the Hebrew word "to see." Sarah was called Yiscah because she could "see" the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Succot – the Majestic Holiday of Gathering

There are three Hebrew words for “a gathering” which are associated with the holiday of Succot: *asifah*, *aggadah*, and *kehillah*. The Torah (Ex. 23:16, 34:22) refers to Succot as the “Holiday of the Ingathering” (*Chag HaAssif*). Rashi explains that this is because Succot is the last chance a person has “to gather” (*asifah*) his produce and bring it indoors before the onset of the rainy season. On the holiday of Succot we are commanded to take the Four Species, and we traditionally bind three of them (the palm, myrtle, and willow branches) into what the Talmud calls an *egged/aggudah* (Succah 11b, 13a). Finally, on the Sabbath that falls out during Succot we customarily read the *Scroll of Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes). Kohelet is a nickname for the book’s author, King Solomon, who is called Kohelet because his wise teachings were relayed in “gatherings” (*hakhell/kahal/kehillah*), as it says, “Then, Solomon gathered...” (I Kings 8:1). Alternatively, Rashi (to Ecc. 1:1) explains that Solomon is called Kohelet because he “gathered up” many forms of wisdom. In addition to the three words for “a gathering” that we have just mentioned – *asifah*, *aggudah*, and *kehillah* – there are also three more – *kovetz*, *eidah*, and *agur* – and it is our job to untangle the differences between all of these words.

Asifah vs. Kovetz

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Edel (1760-1828) explains that *asifah* refers specifically to gathering up disparate items in order to bring them to their proper place. This fits with Rashi’s explanation that *Chag HaAssif* is one’s last chance to “gather” one’s produce and bring it inside to protect it from the rain.

Moreover, *asifah/asaf* is also used as a respectable way of referring to a person’s death (e.g. Gen. 49:33, Num. 27:13). Rashi (to Gen. 49:29) explains that death is called *asifah* because the soul is “gathered up” and brought to the trove in which the souls are placed. Here too, Rashi explains that *asifah* implies gathering and putting something in its proper place. Based on this, Malbim explains that when *asifah* refers to multiple items/people, it denotes gathering them together in a specific place. But when cognates of *asifah* are applied to an individual (e.g. Num. 11:30 says that Moses “gathered” unto the camp), it *only* means arriving at the appropriate destination.

Malbim uses this idea to sharpen his understanding of the difference between *asifah* and its counterpart, *kovetz*. *Le’esof* (the infinitive verb form of *asifah*) connotes bringing inside what one has gathered, while *le’kavetz* means gathering without necessarily bringing inside. Malbim illustrates this point by noting that when Achashverosh gathered up the virgins of his kingdom, the Bible uses a cognate of *kovetz* (Est. 2:3) instead of *asifah*, because while he gathered all the women from far-flung places, he brought only one of them into the palace as his new queen.

Similarly, the Vilna Gaon (to Hab. 2:5) explains that *asifah* refers to bringing things inside, while *kovetz* refers to taking all the different items that are already inside and putting them in one place. With this in mind, the Vilna Gaon accounts for an interesting word-switch found in the Torah. On his deathbed, Jacob called twice for all his sons to gather before him so that he could bless them. First Jacob used a cognate of *asifah* (Gen.

49:1) so that his sons who were outside would come inside, and then in the next verse he used the word *kovetz* so that his sons who had now come inside would gather together before him.

Despite our review of the meaning of *asifah* and how it differs from *kovetz*, it seems that Rabbi David Kimchi (1160-1235), also known as Radak, disagrees with this assessment. In his work *Sefer HaShorashim*, Radak explains that *asifah* applies to “death” because death entails one’s gathering together with his deceased forefathers. In this way, he disagrees with Rashi’s assertion that *asifah* implies arriving at one’s proper place. Instead of following the explanations we gave above, Radak writes that the difference between *asifah* and *kovetz* is that the former connotes gathering items which are close by, while the latter connotes gathering items which are more distant and dispersed from one another.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) writes that *asifah* connotes gathering up all the components at once, while *kovetz* connotes gathering them little by little until one has accumulated an entire collection. Interestingly, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that the word *asifah* focuses on the “border” or “boundary” that defines the confines of a group. He argues that *asifah* is derived from the two-letter root SAMECH-PEH, which means “edge,” “end,” or “threshold,” and recalls the movement of the group’s “boundary” when more items are added.

Aggudah

The word *aggudah*/*egged*/*iggud* implies more than just “a gathering.” It means taking all the items that one has gathered and attaching them, thus joining them to form one unit. In a physical sense this means tying them together with a string or rope. In a more abstract sense this refers to a social contract or agreement that ties people’s fates together. Rabbi Pappenheim traces the root of *aggudah* to the two-letter string GIMMEL-DALET, which denotes “attaching.” Other words derived from this root include *gad* (a “spiritual force” that is attached to a specific physical entity), *gid* (“sinew” which holds together different parts of the body), *gedud* (“squad,” a unit of soldiers joined together), and *haggadah* (the act of presenting new information by weaving it into a broader narrative).

Kehillah vs. Eidah

Turning to the word *kahal* – the basis for King Solomon’s nickname Kohelet – Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (1230-1300) explains that its cognate *kehillah* refers to any gathering of people, while *eidah* (“congregation”) denotes a group whose members have joined together for a specific purpose or devoted to a given cause. Along the same lines, the Vilna Gaon (to Prov. 5:14) explains that *kehillah* refers to any ordinary gathering of people, while *eidah* refers specifically to a gathering of righteous people.

Rabbi Pappenheim notes that *kehillah* always refers to an assembly of human beings. It never applies to a gathering of animals or inanimate objects. He explains that it is related to the word *kol* (“voice”/“sound”) because people heed the sound of whatever indicates that they ought to band together (e.g. in the wilderness the Jews gathered at the sound of the trumpet, see Num. 10:2). Alternatively, he explains the connection by noting that a gathering with many people will always be noisy. Rabbi Pappenheim further explains that the word *kol* itself is derived from the two-letter root KUF-LAMMED (“light”, i.e. the opposite of “heavy”), because sound is so light that it can travel within air and does not sink, or because sound travels so fast like something light and agile that is not bogged down by weight.

Agur

Another eponym given to King Solomon is Agur (Prov. 30:1), which refers to the fact that he “gathered up” (*agar*) the Torah’s wisdom. Notably, *Midrash Agur* (S4) teaches that Solomon’s names, Kohelet and Agur, both different forms of “gathering,” allude to the Jewish People being “gathered together” (i.e. united) in his times, with no in-fighting – the *pax Judaica*.

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) writes that *agur*-cognates refer to gathering up little by little for long-term storage. Similarly, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that cognates of *agur* refer to collecting or stockpiling items for later use. Rabbi Bedersi explains that cognates of *agur* refer only to collecting inanimate objects, like wine (Deut. 28:39) or silver (I Sam. 2:36), while *asifah*, *kovetz*, and *kehillah* can also refer to a gathering of living creatures, like human beings.

Rabbi Pappenheim argues that the root of *agur* is GIMMEL-REISH, which denotes “temporary residence.” Other words derived from this root include *ger* (“sojourner” in Biblical Hebrew) and *goren* (“granary,” which is the grain’s temporary home until it is finished being processed). More derivatives of this root which also denote “gathering” include *gargir* (a grape with juice gathered inside it) and the small currency *geirah* (Ex. 30:13), also called *agurah* (I Sam. 2:36). These coins have almost no value on their own but do have collective value when gathered together. [The Aramaic word *agra* (sometimes mispronounced as *igra*) means “wages” or “reward” (see *Avot* 5:22 and Targum Onkelos to Gen. 15:1), and may be derived from *agurah*. In Modern Hebrew, one hundred *agurot* comprise a *shekel*, just like one hundred cents/pennies make up a dollar.]

Bereishet - Be a Man

The first man and all his descendants who collectively make up the human race share the same name: Adam. However, there are other words for “mankind” (or, as Justin Trudeau insists on calling us, “peoplekind”), and each term has its own connotations. *Adam* is the name that represents humanity’s potential to reach the heights of spirituality. The Zohar (*Tazria* 48a) says that the three other words for humankind – *enosh*, *ish*, and *gever* – connote successively lower levels of spirituality. In this essay we explore the etymology of the Hebrew word *adam*, as well as its three synonyms.

Adam is the most all-encompassing word for “person/people,” as it encompasses both singular and plural (see Gen. 1:26-27 and *Zohar, Nasso* 141b), as well as male and female. Malbim notes that the word *adam* is treated like a name. This is why, regardless of to whom the term *adam* refers in any given context, it is never modified to plural or female forms, because proper nouns are not conjugated that way. In other words, just as it is grammatically incorrect to refer two men named Reuven collectively as *Reuvenim*, so is it incorrect to refer to two people as *adamim*.

Some explain that Adam was called so because *Adam* is derived from *adamah* (“ground”), and Adam was created from the earth. However, *all* the animals were created from the earth (Gen. 1:24), and yet the word *adam* never refers to them. So why was Adam called *Adam*?

The Maharal of Prague (1525-1609) explains that Adam’s name is associated with the ground to remind him that just as dirt is worthless, yet has great potential to foster growth, so too a person is physically worthless – for he is only made of dust and ashes – but has great potential for growth. Alternatively, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) explains that *adam* is actually related to *adamah*, and he directly addresses

our question about the animals: Adam differs from all the other animals because they were not *created* from the earth, rather they simply *emerged* from the earth, while Adam was actually *created* from the earth.

Alternatively, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) explains that the word *adam* is related to the word *hadom* (“footstool”), an allusion to the expectation that Adam was destined to reach such high spiritual planes that he would sit at G-d’s “footstool” as His “deputy”, so to speak.

Rabbi Pappenheim also argues that the root of *adam* is DALET-MEM, which means “similar.” Other words derived from this root include *domeh* (“resembles”), *demut* (“likeness”), and *dimyon* (“imagination,” which may be *similar* to reality but does not truly mirror it). Man is called *adam* because he is created “in the image of G-d” (Gen. 1:27), and so he “resembles” G-d in some ways. The most obvious example of this is that just as G-d’s decisions and actions reverberate throughout the entire world, so do man’s decisions and actions have repercussions throughout all of creation. Given that the term *adam* denotes man at his highest potential, it is quite apropos that it would invoke man’s similarities to or relationship with G-d.

The Vilna Gaon explains that even though Adam was created “in the image of G-d,” technically this only applies to Adam and his son Seth. Mankind lost this status in the time of Seth’s son Enosh when idol worship began to develop. When mankind lost its spiritual resemblance to G-d, this devolution was reflected in physical ways, leaving man in a weakened state that, according to the Midrash, even caused the faces of people to look like apes.

Herein lies the difference between the terms *adam* and *enosh*. Like his grandfather Adam, Enosh’s name also became a term for all of humankind. However, while *adam* recalls man’s spiritual grandeur, *enosh* usually describes humanity in a state of degradation (Isa. 51:12), lost hope (Iyov 14:19), and/or pursuit of Epicurean physical fulfillments (Ps. 104:15). Along these lines, when the angels disputed G-d’s decision to give man the Torah and spoke disparagingly of man, they called mankind *enosh* (Ps. 8:5). Similarly, Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim* writes that ALEPH-NUN-SHIN, the root of the word *enosh*, means “weak” and “sickly.”

Rabbi Pappenheim also concludes that *enosh* reflects humanity’s weakness, but from a slightly different angle. He writes that the root of *enosh* is NUN-SHIN, which means “moving something from its natural condition.” Some words derived from this root include *nosheh* (“lender,” who moves his money from his possession to the borrower’s), *nashah* (“forgetting,” i.e. the mechanism through which information stored in the brain is moved/removed from its place), and *anush* (“a sick, weakly person,” whose compromised state of health has deviated from its proper place). Rabbi Pappenheim understands *enosh* to be a derivative of *anush* because, in some ways, man’s powers are “weak” in comparison to more powerful spiritual entities.

Alternatively Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) writes that the root of *enosh* is *ish*, with the additional NUN to serve as a diminutive.

In this lowly state, man’s only hope is to unite with other people and become important collectively. For this reason, Rashi (to Num. 13:3) explains that the plural of *enosh* – *anashim* (“men”) – connotes “important people,” even though the word *enosh* (singular) connotes man in his lowest state of being. This is because when a person is in a group with other people and views himself as lowly (i.e. humbles himself before others), he actually becomes very important.

Our third term for “people” is *ish* (“man”). While *adam* and *enosh* are inclusive terms for humanity at large, *ish* is a more exclusive term: Sometimes it means “man” as opposed to woman, and sometimes it means “man” as opposed to child. While *adam* is the name of the species of humankind, *ish* can refer to a single specimen of any species (not just humans). This is why the word *ish* in the Bible can refer to an angel (Ezek. 9:11), an image of a cherub (Ex. 25:20), a star (Isa. 40:26), an animal (Gen. 7:2), or even a curtain (Ex. 26:3).

Ish in its common usage simply means “man.” Rabbi Pappenheim writes that the root of *ish* is YUD-SHIN (*yesh*), which means “has,” “is,” or “exists.” This is because “a man” – a mature adult – “has” everything he needs to be successful in life, and stands at the pinnacle of his physical existence.

As we discussed above, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that because the word *adam* is related to *adamah* it connotes man’s natural proclivities to all things material. It recalls the far distance between materialism and spirituality, and the great accomplishment of one who transverses that distance. The Zohar asserts that the term *adam* represents man’s greatest potential: It denotes man’s ability to transcend his inclination towards materialism and approach the sublime. On the other hand, explains Rabbi Mecklenburg, the word *ish* implies a more abstract and immaterial form of existence, and so the journey towards transcendental spirituality is much shorter and less noteworthy. For this reason *ish* does not denote man’s greatest possibilities but can still refer to “angels” or other other-worldly beings.

The final word for “man” is *gever*. Ibn Ezra (to Ex. 10:11) asserts that *gever* always refers to male humans as opposed to females. However, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Edel (1760-1828) disputes this assertion and cites several passages in which the word *gever* appears in a gender neutral context, referring to both men and women equally. Malbim explains that the word *gever* is related to the word *gevurah* (“power”), as it recalls strength and potency, and thus usually refers to men as opposed to women. However, a woman who holds a position of power may be referred to with a cognate of *gever*, as either a *gevurah* (Jer. 13:18) or *giveret* (Isa. 47:5). Those two words can be translated variously as “queen,” “queen-mother,” “lady of the house,” “mistress,” “madam,” or “Missus.”

In short, the word *adam* refers to man’s highest spiritual level because it focuses on the ways in which he is similar to G-d. By contrast, *enosh* highlights man’s weakness when compared to other spiritual entities, and *ish* focuses on physical maturity, but does not reference spiritual endeavors whatsoever. The word *gever* refers to man as he dominates womanfolk, and this too speaks about a physical reality as opposed to a spiritual one.

Interestingly, Ibn Yachya explains that these four terms correspond to four stages in man’s life: a child is called *adam* because he is chronologically closest to his origins (i.e. the ground); an adolescent is called *gever* because physical maturity brings physical strength; an adult is called an *ish*, which is related to the word *aish* (“fire”) because he is at the apex of his power like a raging fire; and finally an elderly person is called an *enosh* because his stamina has been diminished and weakened.

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Ha'azinu

Most of the portion of Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons heaven and earth to stand as eternal witness to what will happen if the Jewish People sin. He reminds the people to examine world history and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation – that Hashem "pulls the strings" of world events so that Bnei Yisrael can fulfill their destiny as Hashem's messengers. Hashem's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become self-satisfied and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt their morals. They worship

empty idols and indulge in depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, the purpose of these nations is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is to make mankind aware of the Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

Bereishet

In the beginning, Hashem creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, Hashem rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava – the Human pair – are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing "sin" into themselves, Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain in childbirth. Now begins the struggle to

correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the subject of the history of the world. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to Hashem. Hevel gives the finest of his flock, and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel, and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noach. After the death of Sheit, Mankind descends into evil, and Hashem decides that He will blot out Man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noach, finds favor with Hashem.

Noach

It is now ten generations since the creation of the first man. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and Hashem resolves to bring a flood which will destroy

all the earth's inhabitants except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to repopulate the earth. Hashem instructs Noach to build an ark in which to escape the flood. After forty days

and nights, the flood covers the entire earth, even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days, the water begins to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends forth a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later, Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After seven more days, Noach once again sends forth the dove, which this time, does not return. Hashem tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to Hashem from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. Hashem vows never again to flood the entire world and gives the rainbow as a sign of this covenant.

Noach and his descendants are now permitted to eat meat, unlike Adam. Hashem commands the Seven

Universal Laws: The prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating the meat of a living animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yefes, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Bavel, which results in Hashem fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Torah portion concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

LOVE OF THE LAND

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

In the Holy of Holies in the Beit Hamikdash there was a stone called *Even Shatiyah* (Foundation Stone) on the Holy Ark rested. Even after the Ark was removed, the stone was the surface upon which incense was offered on Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Yossi explains the name given to this stone: "It was from this stone that the universe was founded."

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LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch
by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Ha'azinu – Rock of Creation

The song of Ha'azinu begins with reference to G-d as *Tzur*, the Rock. According to the Sages, *tzur* contains a dual idea: the One who is *strong* [like a rock], and *tzayar*, the One who forms and shapes. A rock is the natural symbol of something firm and strong, immutable and unconquerable. But the verb that stems from the root *tzur* expresses two ways of exerting the strength represented by the noun *tzur*.

As a verb, *tzur* usually means to besiege a city – to exercise power through restrictive confinement. But *tzur* also means to shape or to form. Thus, *tzurah* is a shape. For all shaping and forming entails the permanent and firm limitation of the material within the demarcation lines of the desired purpose.

The noun *tzur* expresses two related concepts: unchanging stability and the hardness that overcomes all other material. As applied to G-d, He is immutable and has the power to overcome everything absolutely. What He has ordained to exist finds in Him its eternal support and every form that He intends it to take is realized with absolute certainty.

Here, the name *Tzur* is used not in relation to Creation, but in relation to Israel. In this context, the name expresses a dual certainty. Israel knows that G-d is the everlasting support of its existence in history. It is G-d's Will that Israel should exist – therefore, Israel will never perish. However, it is also G-d's Will that Israel should exist in a certain way, which He revealed to Israel in His Torah, and which is emphasized in this song. Israel can never release itself from these immutable demands. Indeed, the heaven and earth are called upon as witnesses to these demands. Whatever turns of fate Israel will endure, they will all service only one purpose: to bring about the ultimate realization of G-d's objectives for and through Israel. They are nothing but the formative hammer blows of G-d's power which shapes His world.

Tzur, the verse continues, “His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice.” This dynamic formative activity expressed in the name *Tzur* is “perfect.” Not only is the *product* perfect, but the *work* – the creative activity, the action-in-progress – is perfect. Man's unfinished work is incomplete. Human activity is made up of a range of incomplete actions that are joined together, complementing and correcting one another with difficulty, trying to reach completion. By contrast, G-d's formative activity – at every stage of the process – is finished and complete. At every moment it is complete and finished and perfectly in accordance with the requirements of the moment.

All His ways, not only the ultimate goal, are justice: they carry out justice and they realize at every moment what is right for those affected by His ruling. He is *Tzur Olamim*, the Rock Whose justice is perfect and immutable.

- Sources: Commentary, Devarim 32:4

Bereishet – Be Fruitful and Educate

Man, the crown of creation, is introduced as *Adam*. The term *adam*, explains Rav Hirsch, is not derived from the word *adamah*, earth. It is not man's earthliness that defines him. In fact, this is the characteristic which he shares with the rest of creation. The uniqueness of man is that he is *not* created entirely from earth. The breath of G-d, breathed into his earthly frame, is what makes him man.

Instead, the name *adam* can be understood in its relation to the word *adom*, red. Red light is the least refracted of all light. *This* captures the essence of man: He is the closest manifestation of the Divine; the least “refracted” of G-d's creations. *Adam* is also related to *hadom*, footstool, and *chatam*, seal. Man is both the ‘footstool’ of G-d's presence in the world and the seal through which the world can recognize G-d as Creator. His humanity is defined by his ability to freely choose morality, by his *likeness* to G-d. He is *domeh* – similar to G-d. *Adam* indicates the individualized purpose of man, as if to say, *I will resemble [G-d]*.

The very first command given to newly created *adam* was that of procreation: *P'ru u'r'vu*, translated as “be fruitful and multiply.” But these two words seemingly imply the same concept: fruitfulness implies numerosity. What does *r'vu* (multiply) add?

According to Rav Hirsch the instructions *p'ru* and *r'vu* are separate and distinct. *P'ru* refers to marriage: the union for production of human fruit. But the mere perpetuation of humanity is only the beginning. This human fruit must also be worthy of the name *adam*. After a child is formed, the parents are instructed: *R'vu! Multiply!* Even in the case of many species of animals, increase in the breed is dependent on care of the young; in the case of humans, such physical care is absolutely critical. Our young, by design, cannot survive without physical care. It is not the *birth*, but the *care* of human offspring which is the true cause of increase.

But the word *r'vu* connotes much more than physical sustenance and care. The linguistic root, *r.v.h*, implies instruction. For example, the Torah refers to Yishmael as *roveh keshet* – a shooting instructor. The words Rabbi, Rebbe, Rav – teacher – also derive from this sense. The main task of a parent – *r'vu* – is to *instruct*. For *reproduction* includes producing fruit that resembles the tree. It is not sufficient to physically care for our young. Instead we are instructed to also form and educate them spiritually and morally. Only then to do children recur in the image of their parent and fulfill the mitzvah *r'vu*.

Another semantic cousin of this root *r.v.h* – *r.f.h* – reveals insights into the process of spiritual and moral education of the young. *Rafeh* means weak or loose. Rav Hirsch understands this ‘weakness’ to be self-limitation. Education in general, and in the family in particular, always entails devotion to others through self-limitation. Parenthood forces the parent out of self-centeredness – his ego becomes *rafeh*, weak. The greater this devotion, the greater – the more *rabah* – is the blessing.

The two commands form a single whole: *p'ru* attains its high moral import only when accompanied by *r'vu*. Only with selfless and loving guidance may we reproduce true human beings.

- Sources: Ber. 1:26-28

Noach – Branches of Humanity: Wisdom, Sensuality and Beauty

Noach begets three children, from whom humanity as we know it descends. They are Shem, Cham and Yefet. Names in the Torah are of extraordinary significance, and these names particularly so. We find in them allusions to differences in character which will define and challenge humanity for the rest of history. The affirmation of these differences in these ancestral roots – and the fact that G-d permitted all three to survive

the flood – indicates that this diversity was Divinely designed. It signals to us that G-d’s plan is to realize the ultimate purpose of mankind despite all the national and cultural differences, or perhaps precisely through the interaction between the different nationalities.

Shem means *name*, the conception and demarcation of a given object. Human wisdom originally consisted of man’s ability to give names to things. To express the conception of a thing and thereby assign it its spiritual “place” (*sham*, “there,” is a close conjugate of *shem*). Thus, *shem* implies an intellectual or spiritual activity, that of discernment and of expressing or ‘naming’ concepts and ideas – still the stuff of modern wisdom.

Cham means *hot* and it denotes inflamed excitement of the senses, burning sensuality.

Yefet relates to *patah*, *patach* (enticement, open). The term *peti* refers to one whose mind is open and gullible and will believe anything. Every external impression overwhelms him. *Yefet* also relates to the root *yafah* (beautiful), and denotes the emotions and the imagination, which are attracted by beauty. *Yefet* represents the meeting point of *Shem*’s intellect and *Cham*’s sensuality: emotion, sentiment.

These three aspects – wisdom, sensuality and beauty – comprise the inner life of man. In a man like Noach, all three were subordinated to a higher principle. Noach is described as a “righteous man, morally pure” who “walked with G-d.” The intellect is trained to “walk with G-d”; sensuality is elevated by becoming “morally pure”; and man’s will and aspirations are elevated through becoming “righteous.”

Noach’s children represent the splintering of these characteristics. *Shem* is the thinker and his task is to walk before G-d. *Cham* is the sensualist and his task to purify the desires of the senses. *Yefet* is the aesthetic who is to become righteous, to be guided by the ideal of goodness instead of beauty.

Rav Hirsch takes us on a tour of world history through the lens of the three children of Noach. The nations that have created the greatest stir in world history are those dominated by *Cham*: the sensuality that harnesses mind and emotions to its chariot and permits the spirit to function only as a vehicle for the physical. These are the nations that conquer and destroy by brute force and sensuality. Noach curses *Cham* that he will be a slave. Man cannot blossom by means of coarseness and burning sensuality. *Cham*’s lust will lead to his own slavery.

Other nations devote their energies to beauty, to the cultivation of the arts and aesthetics. They recognize that there is a higher ideal to which man must ascend, spreading a cloth of elegance over crude sensuality. Their fruit is poetry, music and the other fine arts. The fullest flowering of *Yefet*’s line was in Yavan, ancient Greece – to where aesthetic refinement can trace its roots.

However, education of mankind cannot be accomplished by the sense of beauty and harmony alone, for those are necessarily subjective. There must be an ideal outside of man that raises man to his higher calling. *Shem*, then, who promotes spiritual values and contributes to the recognition of truth, makes the greatest contribution to the welfare of mankind. *Shem*’s grandson, *Ever*, from whom the Jews (*Ever* – Hebrews) descend, represents the pinnacle of wisdom and truth-advancement.

Noach expresses the wish that *Cham* become the servant of *Shem*. Noach blesses “G-d, the G-d of *Shem*,” for unlike the brute-force “gods” of *Cham*, the G-d of *Shem* invests man with dignity, exalting him and uplifting him above nature. But when sensuality is subjugated to the wisdom and G-dliness of *Shem*, it too can fulfill its Divine mission.

Yefet mediates between *Cham* and *Shem*. The uncivilized must first become cultured – refined by appreciation of beauty and decency – before they are prepared to receive the teachings of *Shem*. This is what Noach envisions: *G-d will open [people’s] emotions to Yefet, but He will dwell in the tents of Shem.*

- Sources: *Ber.* 6:10; 9:28

ASK!

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Succot Assortment

Succot: Six Months Late?

D. Rubinstein wrote:

Dear Rabbi:

Why does Succot fall on the calendar after Yom Kippur, and not after Passover? Succot deals with the fact that we sat in huts in the wilderness after we left Egypt, and the clouds that protected us. We were sitting in those huts and had those clouds right when we left Egypt, so historically, Succot should come right after, or during, Pesach.

Dear D. Rubinstein

Passover is in the spring when the weather starts getting warmer; if we were to make huts in the spring, it might seem like we were just building vacation bungalows to escape from the heat. Therefore, the Torah commanded us to build our *succah*-booths in the fall when it starts getting cool, making it clear that the *succah* is a commandment and not a cabana.

The Vilna Gaon offers another explanation: The *succah* represents the clouds of glory with which G-d protected us in the desert. Hashem took away these clouds when we made the Golden Calf, and when He forgave us that year on Yom Kippur, the clouds came back. So, Succot celebrates the *return* of those clouds after the first Yom Kippur in the desert.

Rain, Go Away

Elizabeth S. wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

The Talmud says rain during Succot is considered a curse. I am aware of the analogy of the servant and his master asking for a jug of water etc. My question is this: The fact that it rains on Succot - is this considered a curse no matter which country one lives in, or does it only apply in Israel, being that at that time it is NOT yet the rainy season?

Dear Elizabeth,

Yes, rain during the Succot is not a good 'omen.' The Sages compare it to a servant who comes to pour a drink for his master, but instead of accepting the cup, the master splashes water in the servant's face. Likewise, we desire to perform the mitzvah of sitting in the *succah*, but instead, Hashem pours water on our heads.

So if it rains in Cleveland or Miami, is that a bad omen during Succot? It normally rains in those places during Succot. Or is it a bad omen only in Israel, where rain is highly unusual at that time of year? (I've lived in Israel seven years and remember only once feeling a few drops of rain on Succot.)

Logically, the bad omen should apply only in a land where it's not yet the rainy season. This would include not only Israel, but the whole Middle East and anywhere that isn't yet the rainy season.

However Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein writes that the 'bad omen' applies *only in Israel*. This can be explained as follows:

The mitzvahs were chiefly intended for the Land of Israel. Even mitzvahs having no obvious connection to the Land – mitzvahs such as Shabbat and Kashrut – were intended mainly for performance in Israel. Although mitzvahs certainly apply wherever you are; nevertheless, the mitzvahs are "laws of the G-d of the Land" and are performed ideally in "The Land."

Hence, the analogy of the servant and the master can be seen as applying specifically to Israel.

- Sources: Aruch Hashulchan 639:20; Ramban, Leviticus 18:25

Southpaw Species

Mel Tanen wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am left-handed so I hold my lulav (palm branch) in my left hand and the etrog (citron) in my right hand. Do I still place the haddasim (myrtles) to the right of the lulav and the aravot (willows) to the left of the lulav?

Dear Mel Tanen,

According to Ashkenazic custom, a lefty holds his *lulav* in his left hand. However, the setting of the *haddasim* and *aravot* is the same as everyone else, which is that the *haddasim* go on the right of the *lulav* (as you hold the *lulav* with its spine facing you).

The Sephardic custom is that even a lefty holds the *lulav* in the right hand.

- Sources: Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 651:3 and Rema; Mishna Berura *ibid.* note 12 in the name of the Pri Megadim

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The students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach
by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

Eliyahu (Arthur) Masyuk (26) Born: Minsk, Belarus Raised: Omaha, Nebraska
Indiana University (Bloomington, IN): Bachelor of Music - Violin Performance; Bachelor of Arts - French Language
DePaul University (Chicago, IL): Master of Music - Violin Performance

When he was six months old, Eliyahu's family moved from Minsk, Belarus, to Omaha, Nebraska. His parents and grandparents, raised in the Soviet Union, had absorbed much of that country's disdain for religion and its atheistic philosophy. His mother, however, had a certain respect for her heritage and encouraged her children to be proud Jews. This didn't translate into religious practice (with the exception of lighting the Chanukah candles with the *brachot*), but the family was involved with the Russian Jewish community in Omaha. They were, along with most of the other Russian immigrants, dutiful attendees at the May 9th VE (Victory in Europe) annual dinner at the Jewish Federation of Omaha.

As is common among many Russian émigrés, Eliyahu's parents encouraged him to study music. At a young age he started learning the violin. He was captivated by the instrument and its sound and practiced diligently. During high school, his career path tended towards the concert stage, but he also excelled in academics.

After graduating from high school he entered the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University

Bloomington, one of the preeminent music conservatories in America. He graduated with a degree in Violin Performance. At the same time, he also received a BA in French language.

In order to advance his professional career, he went on to get a Master's degree in Violin Performance from DePaul University in Chicago. Upon finishing his Master's, he got a coveted position as a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, a feeder to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and other major orchestras in North America.



After one season with the Civic, Eliyahu became disillusioned with his life as a musician. The schedule was punishing, and the compensation was quite modest for an expensive city like Chicago. He saw that, unless one could secure a position with one of the top

orchestras, the future would be cloudy. Jobs are few and the competition fierce. In the gig economy of the music world, every day is spent either giving concerts or auditioning for jobs. There was a pervasive nihilism that was common among his peers, and Eliyahu started to rebel against its accompanying decadent lifestyle. He wanted to do something he loved.

After a friend took him to tour the Chicago Tribune Freedom Center – a print production facility for the Chicago Tribune and its sister publications – Eliyahu decided that he would pursue a different career. He had always loved languages, their grammar, their structure and their visual representation. He was fluent in French, Russian and English, and had a basic knowledge of Polish and Spanish. As the tour ended, he introduced himself to a well-known reporter for the Chicago Tribune, Chicago's largest newspaper. He asked him what jobs were available and was told to submit writing samples and a resume. A month later he was contacted by the human resource department at Tribune Publishing Company and was offered a job starting in April 2018 as an Editorial Assistant for Print Production, a job entailing graphic design, layout and newspaper editing. Eliyahu had, at last, found his career, but he had not yet found his soul.

In January 2019, Eliyahu's mother, Karina Brown, died at the young age of only 48, succumbing to a brief but fatal illness. Eliyahu was very close to her and grieved deeply. He felt a need to express his grief in a Jewish way – one that would be a tribute to her. While at the Jacobs School of Music, he had been a regular attendee at Friday night Shabbat services at the Hillel on campus. Since arriving in Chicago he had not made a connection with a Jewish community. Now he sought it out. The Chicago Loop Synagogue was close to where he worked, and Eliyahu would regularly go there for *shacharit* and to say Kaddish for his mother. He also connected with Rabbi Dovid Kotlarsky of Chabad of East Lakeview for Shabbat services. He taught himself the basic prayers in Hebrew so that he could participate with the congregation. Of that experience Eliyahu says, "I

started to realize that this is the one heritage that I can really be proud of." He also realized that what he was doing was not enough.

Not being content with minimal mastery over a serious interest, Eliyahu decided to take his three-week vacation at Ohr Somayach's Mechina Program on the advice of Rabbi Doron Lazarus, an Ohr Somayach alumnus and Chicago *kiruv* Rabbi. He has just recently completed these studies. Eliyahu has nothing but the highest praise for the *rebbeim* and students. He cannot wait to return. Nor can we. May the New Year bring a fulfillment of all his deepest wishes, and comfort to him among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem, and an *aliyah* to the *neshamah* of his mother, Karina Brown, ז"ל.

The Ohr Somayach family you and your families "Succot Same'ach" – a Joyful Succot – and that the coming year will be one of much happiness and success for you.

Ohr Somayach Jerusalem

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Rosh HaYeshiva
It Isn't (ain't) Over Till it's Over

1:15 am - RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR
The War of Gog and Magog

11:15 pm - RAV YITZCHOK BREITOWITZ
Rav Kehillas Ohr Somayach
The Breaking Down of the Barriers

2:15 am - RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER
Holy Circles: Simchas Torah

