

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT BO • 10 SHVAT 5781 JANUARY 23, 2021 • VOL 28 NO.13

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Not Quite Kindled

*"...and you shall not break a bone of it (the Pesach offering)." (12:46)*

Living in Israel makes it somewhat difficult to buy and read English language books. Even before Corona, buying a real paper book and shipping it out from the States or the UK could take a month. Kindle promised to change all that. Amazon Kindle is a series of e-readers, devices that enable users to browse, buy, download and read electronic books, newspapers, magazines and other digital media via wireless networking to the Kindle Store – pretty much instantly.

I bought a Kindle over a year ago and I must have read twenty or more books on it. It is very convenient and certainly instant, but I realized after a while that there is something lacking in my reading experience. Having a real book, picking it up, seeing it age and spilling coffee on its pages – create a relationship with the reading matter of the book itself. The way we interface with the objects in our lives has an impact on our intellectual experience. The form influences the content.

When I cast my eyes over my bookshelves, I sense a visceral relationship with the physical books there,

### Tu B'Shevat

The Torah likens man to a tree: "For man is a tree of the field" (Deut. 20:19). Man is like a tree in that his head is rooted in the Heavens, nestled in the spiritual soils of the Eternal, and nourished by his connection to his Creator. His arms and legs are like branches, through which he accrues good deeds, and upon which the "fruits" of his labor are laden.

Therefore, on Tu B'Shevat one should revitalize his connection to G-d, and rejuvenate his commitment to keep the mitzvahs (Midrash Shemuel on Pirkei Avot 3:24).

and I feel in some way more connected to the content of their pages.

What remains from the Kindle experience of reading is somehow more abstract, more distant, and cold. It is not just the lack of a good cover. I do not have the same connection to the material of the book because I did not have the physical experience of touching it, opening it, cracking its cover and remembering it whenever I see its spine of my shelf.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 16) asks a famous question about why we need so many mitzvahs to remember the Exodus. One entire volume out of four of the *Shulchan Aruch – Orach HaChaim* – is devoted to the minutiae of every aspect of the observance of Pesach. Says the *Chinuch*, surely to remember our leaving Egypt all we should need is to eat a bit of matzah each year. He then outlines a key principle of human psychology: Feelings are created by actions. Our actions influence the way we feel about something. A mitzvah is a physical embodiment of a spiritual reality. The experience of the spiritual reality can only be "kindled" by physical experience.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

**Bo: *Pesachim* 65-71**

## The Torah Is For You

Rav Elazar said, “Everyone agrees that Shavuot requires also (the element of) ‘for you.’ Why? Because it is the day on which the Torah was given.”

**A** *beraita* is quoted on our *daf* that teaches a dispute between two great Torah Sages regarding how to celebrate Yom Tom. Rabbi Eliezer says that it should be celebrated and dedicated in one of two ways: Either entirely “for Hashem” in prayer and study, or “for you” with food and drink. Rabbi Yehoshua disagrees and says that a holiday should be commemorated “half for you and half for Hashem.”

Rabbi Yochanan explains that both of these opinions are learned from the same words in the Torah. In Devarim 16:8 the verse refers to the Yom Tov as being “for Hashem,” and in Bamidbar 29:12 the verse refers to the Yom Tov as being “for you.” Rabbi Eliezer explains these verses as offering a choice: A person may choose the day to be all “for Hashem” or all “for you.” Rabbi Yehosua, on the other hand, explains that the Torah means to “divide” the day to be “half for Hashem” and “half for you.”

The *gemara*, however, cites three Sages who teach exceptions – i.e. days when even Rabbi Eliezer agrees that there is a need of “for you.” There is no choice on these days of “all for Hashem.” Rabbah said that on Shabbat there is also a need “for you” since the verse says “and you will call Shabbat a delight” in Sefer Yeshayahu 58:13. Rav Yosef said that everyone agrees that on Purim there is also a need “for you” since the verse in Megillat Esther 9:18 calls it “a day of feasting and joy.”

The *Amora* Rav Elazar said that Shavuot is also an exception. On that day, he teaches, everyone agrees that there is also a need “for you.” Why? “Since it is the day on which the Torah was given.”

At first glance, this reason might not seem all that appropriate and cogent. The Torah is not just a physical book or two stone Tablets of the Covenant. In its essence it is the way that Hashem speaks to us and teaches us how to be close to Him. It is an expression of the Will of Hashem, as it were. So, how does our receiving this seemingly purely spiritual gift of Torah lead to the need for us to celebrate the day on which it was given with food and drink? If anything, it would seem more logical to spend the entire day immersed in Torah study (and not just all night, as has been the widespread custom in many Jewish communities throughout history, and nowadays as well)!

One answer is found in the words of Rashi on our *daf*. He explains that our celebrating the day of Shavuot, the day on which the Torah was given, with food and drink, shows that our being given the Torah is “pleasant and acceptable” to us – and is not at all a burdensome list of tasks to do and activities to refrain from doing. Just the opposite! It is our way to connect to Hashem and merit eternal life, and with our physical celebration we show our great happiness in having been given it.

Another explanation that our commentaries offer for the need to experience physical pleasure on Shavuot is one that is based on the *gemara* in Masechet Shabbat 88b. Chazal relate that when Moshe Rabbeinu went up Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the angels challenged him, saying, “What is Man that You should remember him, and the son of Man that You should be mindful of him?” (Tehillim 8:5) They asked why this mortal was intruding into their “personal space” and their spiritual domain.

Moshe Rabbeinu stated, “I have come to take the Torah for the Jewish People.” The angels then turned to Hashem, pleading, “Please leave the Torah with us and we will honor it and cherish it.” Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to “go ahead and answer them.” Moshe Rabbeinu said, “My dear angels, just look at what the Torah commands: 'I am the Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out from the land of Egypt.' Also it commands, 'Honor your parents.' Do you have a father and a mother? Were you enslaved in Egypt? Do you have a *yetzer hara*, an 'evil inclination' that tempts you to disobey the word of Hashem?”

Moshe Rabbeinu presented the winning argument, the reason why the Torah should not be given to the angels in Heaven but rather to Mankind. This reason clearly shows that the Torah is meant for physical beings with an immortal soul – to guide the Jewish People and Mankind in the “way of Hashem.” The Torah teaches physical beings how to tackle the challenges of our physical world in a way that leads to closeness to Hashem and eternal life.

Our very physicality is the reason that we, and not the angels, were deemed suitable and worthy to receive the Torah – and we should therefore celebrate the giving of the Torah with the physical pleasure of food and drink for the sake of Heaven.

- *Pesachim 68a*

**Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet  
on  
The Morning Blessings  
by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer  
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# Q & A

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## BO

### Questions

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makat bechorot* took place at *exactly* midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at *approximately* midnight.
6. Why did the first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
8. G-d told Moshe "so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
9. Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what *mitzvot* involving blood did G-d give to the Jewish People?
12. Rashi gives two explanations of the word "*Pasachti* ." What are they?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makat bechorot*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makat bechorot* ?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael* ?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose first-born is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

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

### Answers

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
6. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
7. 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
8. 11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
9. 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
10. 12:5 - One year.
11. 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
12. 12:13 - "I had mercy" and "I skipped."
13. 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of his home.
14. 12:31 - "Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?"
15. 12:32 - So he wouldn't die, for he himself was a first-born.
16. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matzah was dear to them.
17. 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between the parts" was decreed.
19. 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
20. 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### Bo: Come To Pharaoh

In the lead-up to the Plague of Locust, G-d tells Moses: *bo el parah*, which means “come to Pharaoh” (Ex. 10:1). Many commentators have been bothered by this somewhat bizarre verbiage, as one would have otherwise expected G-d to tell Moses *lech el parah*, which means “go to Pharaoh” – the exact phraseology He used when telling Moses to warn Pharaoh about the Plague of Blood (Ex. 7:15). In exploring this issue we will study the difference between *biah* (“coming”) and *halicha* (“going”), as well as *attah*.

The *Baal HaTurim* (to Ex. 10:1) writes that the word *bo* has a *gematria* of three (as BET = 2 and ALEPH = 1), which alludes to the fact that right before the Plague of Locusts there were three more plagues left until the Jews would exit Egypt. However, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher (1895-1983) notes that this cannot be why the Torah uses the word *bo* instead of *lech*, because G-d uses the word *bo* when telling Moses to meet Pharaoh two other times (see Ex. 7:26, 9:1) and at neither of those points were there three plagues remaining.

Alternatively, the *Baal HaTurim* and other Tosafists (see *Hadar Zekanim* to Ex. 9:1 and *Moshav Zekanim* to Ex. 10:1) note that when G-d tells Moses to meet Pharaoh in the latter's house, then He says *bo el parah*, but when He tells Moses to meet Pharaoh at the river, He says *lech el parah*. This seems to suggest that the difference between *lech* and *bo* is that *bo* somehow implies “entering” a building, while *lech* simply implies “going” somewhere, but not necessarily *inside* a building (see also Ramban to Ex. 8:15). Interestingly, this same idea seems to be echoed by the *Zohar* (*Bo* 34a), which explains that the wording *bo el parah* as opposed to *lech el parah* teaches us that G-d brought Moses into some sort of Heavenly Inner Chamber that was somehow associated with the sea-creature that characterized Egypt. This mystical explanation also

seems to presume that *bo* implies “entering,” while *lech* does not.

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786) offers two more explanations for the difference between the wording *bo el parah* and *lech el parah*: First, he explains that *bo* implies *repeatedly* “coming” to Pharaoh, while *lech* implies a one-time occurrence. Second, he explains that *bo* implies willingly “coming” to Pharaoh, while *lech* simply implies the physical act of “going,” which can be done even if one has to go against his own will.

As an English speaker, I am tempted to say that the difference between *bo* and *lech* reflects the difference between *come* and *go*. Meaning, *bo* primarily focuses on one's destination (“come to”), while *lech* focuses on one's place of departure (“go from”). Alternatively, we could also argue that *biah* denotes a change in location from one place to another, no matter how it may have occurred. In contrast, *halichah* specifically denotes the act of “walking.” We would have to consult a Biblical concordance to see how well any of these theories truly pan out.

Another way of dealing with these words is by tracing them to their core roots and comparing them to other words derived from those roots to hone in on more precise meanings.

The Hebrew verb “to bring” (*l'havi*) is actually a conjugation of the word *bo*, as “bringing” something from one place to another essentially causes that item to “go” from one place to another. Accordingly, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) suggests reading *bo el parah* as “bring [the following message] to Pharaoh...” In this vein, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) actually explains that the word *navi* (“prophet”) is derived from the same two-letter root from which *bo* comes (BET-ALEPH), because prophets “bring” G-d's words to their listeners.

Rabbi Pappenheim further explains that the type of “coming” denoted by the word *biah* can imply both reaching one’s destination (“I came home”) and the journey towards one’s destination (“I am coming home”). This is why Rachel was said to be “coming” while she was still on her way to the well where Jacob stood (Gen. 29:9), or why Joseph was said to be “coming” while his brothers spotted him approaching from afar (Gen. 37:19).

Rabbi Pappenheim and Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) trace the root of *bo/biah* to the monoliteral root BET, which means “inside.” This also fits with the function of the letter BET as a non-root prefix. They explain that when one “comes” to a certain place, he goes “inside” that realm and ceases to continuing “coming” – because he has already arrived (even though *bo/biah* can be used while one is still on the way). This can perhaps give us a better understanding of the Tosafists’ and *Zohar*’s assumption that *bo* implies “going inside” someplace.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) similarly connects the word *bo* with the phonetically similar *po* (invoking the interchangeability of BET and PEH), explaining that *bo* focuses on one’s final destination, just as *po* (“here”) focuses on one’s present location. He even adds that *peh* (“mouth”) also relates to this set of words, because the mouth is food’s final terminus into which it is destined to go.

Another word in the Bible for “coming” is *attah* (e.g., Deut. 33:2, Isa. 21:12). This word appears both in Hebrew and Aramaic passages in the Bible. As Rabbi Pappenheim puts it, the word *attah* implies a “coming” with more finality. Meaning, although *attah* focuses on one’s destination, like *bo* does, *attah* exclusively refers to arriving at one’s destination and never to the journey of getting there. (The Malbim in *Yair Ohr* cites Rabbi Pappenheim’s explanation of the difference between *bo* and *attah*.)

In sharpening this last point, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the word *attah* is derived from the monoliteral root TAV. That letter represents the notion of “bordering” because it bookends the

Hebrew alphabet as the last letter. A border is a sort of invisible line that “connects” and “links” two bodies, but also “distinguishes” between them.

Thus, words derived from this one-letter root are related to “bordering” and “connecting.” For example, the word *et* functions as a grammatical sign that “connects” a verb to the object of that action, and sometimes bears the meaning of “with.” Similarly, an *oht* (“sign”) forms a semiotic “connection” between the sign and the signified. In the same way, the word *attah* can be understood in the sense of “connecting” the traveler with his destination – it means that he has finally come to his destination, as opposed to the term *biah*, which could represent him still making the journey *en route* to “coming” there. (Perhaps the finality and closure of *attah* is hinted to in the fact that its root comprises the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, while *biah* comprises the first and second letters.)

Interestingly, the name of the letter TAV also relates to the word *tav* (“sign” or “mark”). This word also derives from the monoliteral root TAV because a *tav* serves as a type of “border” that distinguishes something from the rest. In fact, the prophet Yechezkel relates that he saw G-d command an angel to make a mark (*tav*) on the foreheads of the righteous men who bemoaned the abominations that took place in Jerusalem, and the Talmud (Shabbat 55a) explains that this refers to writing a letter TAV on their forehead. Similarly, the Bible (Gen. 4:15) reports that G-d promised to protect Cain in exile by giving him an *oht* (“sign” or “letter”), which some explain refers to the letter TAV. Thus, the letter TAV not only serves a semantic role but also assumes a semiotic role as a symbol or sign.

What is perhaps even more fascinating is that in the original *Ivri* Script of the Hebrew Language, the letter TAV was written in the same shape as the English letter *x* (and the Greek letter *chi*). Thus, just as “X marks the spot” and stands for a word or number that is missing (e.g., in algebra, *x* commonly appears as the unknown variable), so too does the letter TAV symbolizes something as “distinguished.”

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## A BLESSING ON YOUR HEAD (PART 1)

“May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His Countenance upon you and be gracious to you. May Hashem turn His countenance to you and establish peace for you.” (*Numbers 6:24-26*)

These three verses are the words with which G-d commanded Aharon and his descendants to bless the Jewish nation (see *Numbers 6:23*). Seeing as they are the verses that G-d uses as His means to bestow His favor upon us, it stands to reason that they contain everything we could possibly want. These are also the verses that many Jewish parents recite when blessing their children on Friday nights. Undoubtedly, every parent wants only the very best for their child.

Let us begin with the first verse, “May Hashem bless you and guard you.” Rashi, the foremost commentator on the Torah, explains that this is a blessing for material success. All wealth comes from only one source – G-d.

There is a delightful story that is told about a destitute Jew living in Jerusalem. He and his wife were extremely worried because Pesach was almost upon them and they still didn’t have money for the most basic necessities. Dejected, he went to the Western Wall to pray. His heart opened and he cried out to G-d in complete submission. A wealthy American standing nearby noticed how this impoverished Jew was praying with such heartfelt sincerity and trustingly reaching out to G-d for help. When the person finished his prayer, the American introduced himself, telling him that he had never been so touched before. And that he wanted to help him. On the spot, he wrote a check that would cover

all Pesach expenses – with plenty left over to keep him going for several months afterwards. When the poor Jew told his friends what had transpired, about his most unanticipated salvation, they asked him whether he had taken the rich American’s address for future reference. The needy Jew looked at them in astonishment and said, “Why do I need *his* address? I didn’t ask *him* for money. I asked G-d, and G-d gave me whatever I needed through this person. When I am in need again, I know exactly which address to go to!”

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, one of the greatest Torah leaders in Europe in the nineteenth century and head of the legendary Velozhin Yeshiva, writes that the language of the blessing is deliberately left undefined because each person has their own set of needs and desires. Accordingly, the blessing uses a “generic” form: “May Hashem bless you.” And because the blessing refers to material matters, it ends with the request that G-d guard us. As Rashi points out, it is clear that the first blessing is referring to material wealth and prosperity, because physical affluence must be safeguarded vigilantly so that it is not stolen or lost. Not so in the case of spiritual wealth. Spiritual wealth requires no physical protection. In the timeless words of the Midrash, “May G-d bless you with riches and children. And may He protect you from thieves”.

*To be continued...*

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Bo

## Like a Lamb

If we were to point to one act as the moment of the birth of our nation, it would be the *korban Pesach* undertaken by our ancestors more than three thousand years ago. The words conveying this instruction are, in Rav Hirsch's words, the Magna Charta of Israel, setting forth the foundational elements of Jewish nationhood.

The way in which the people were counted for this service (highlighting the prominence of the family unit), the permission of one individual to act on behalf of his brethren (declaring that all are equal before G-d, so that one is authorized to act for another), the permission for self-determination in the formation of household units (emphasizing the right to independence and free choice), and the way in which communal sharing was instructed (to those who perceive their own abundance to seek out their neighbor) – are all facets of this foundation stone in the edifice of Jewish nationhood.

The *korban Pesach* was the foundation of not only the communal and social structure, but also of the individual's relationship to G-d. At this moment of emergence into a new life, each individual, each household, each family and the entire community as a whole are to see themselves as lambs – they are to accept G-d as their Shepherd and place themselves under His guidance and direction. This concept – that G-d is our Shepherd and we are His flock – became the most comprehensive and lasting view of our relationship to G-d. (*Psalms* 100:3; 80:2, 79:13)

Indeed, our daily Temple service of one sheep in the morning and one sheep in the afternoon would symbolize this relationship – the way in which Israel was to present and dedicate itself to G-d at the start and end of each new day. This was but a continuation of the first instance of Israel, the lamb, submitting to the leadership of the Shepherd.

This Jewish lamb, however, is not a meek, sad creature, that allows itself to be led to the slaughter without offering resistance. The Paschal lamb was “complete, male, in its first year” – whole in body, with manly vigor and fresh with eternal youth. Complete and independent, but vis-à-vis G-d, forever young and following.

Both sheep and goats were fit for the *korban Pesach*. A goat characteristically shows greater independence toward the outside than does the sheep. Thus the word for goat – *ez* – denotes stiff resistance. While the goat assumes an outward posture of defiance, showing his horns to every stranger, to the shepherd he is obedient and pliant, as the sheep.

- Sources: *Commentary Shemot* 12:3-6



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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**G**-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned.

G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too.

Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the firstborn, and then the

Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month.

The Jewish People are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their doorposts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the doorpost will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the firstborn of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating chametz on Pesach.

Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the firstborn, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the firstborn son) and *tefillin*.

- *Pesachim 68a*

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions  
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel - Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. ohr@ohr.edu

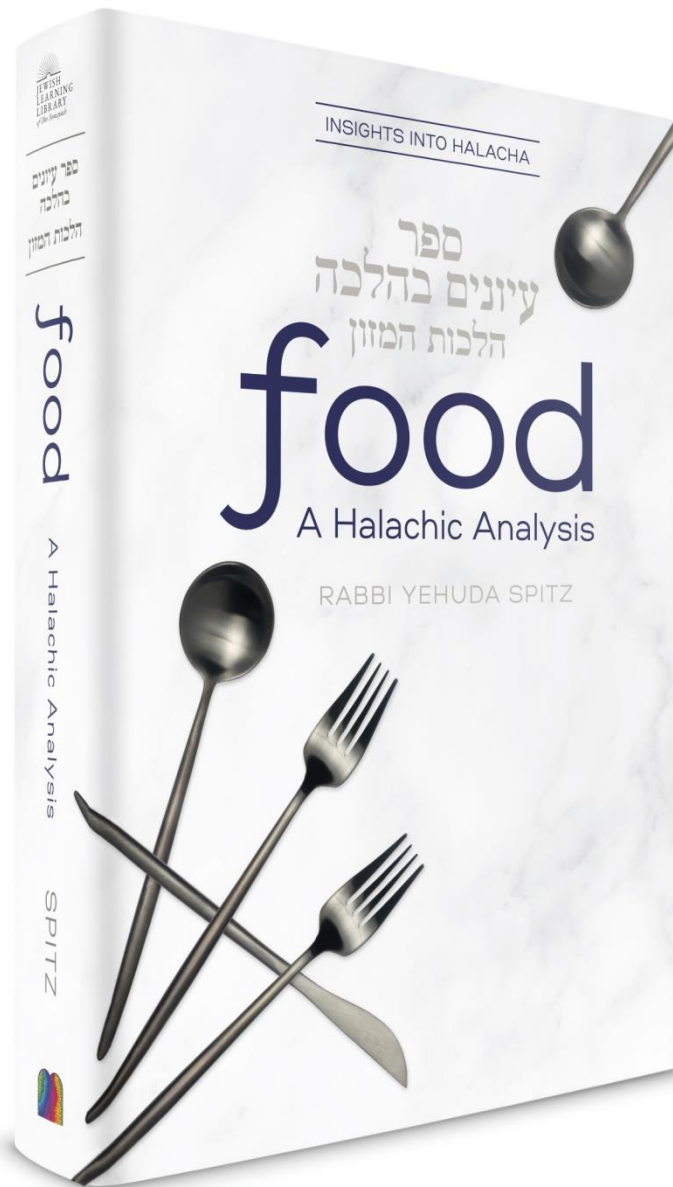
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