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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

What a Piece of Work...

"When a man among you brings an offering..." (1:2)

I've just finished reading *"The Innovators: How a Group of Hackers, Geniuses and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution"* by Walter Isaacson. A great read.

Isaacson traces two parallel aspirations in computer history. One, to build a computer that mimics the human brain. The other – and, to date, the much more successful goal – was to harness the vast power of the computer to work together with mankind. Think Wikipedia, Google, YouTube, Facebook, eBay and more.

"A computer's central processing unit can execute instructions much faster than a brain's neuron can fire. Brains more than make up for this, however, because all the neurons and synapses are active simultaneously, whereas most current computers have only one or at most a few CPUs," according to Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig, authors of the foremost textbook on artificial intelligence.

"So why not make a computer that mimics the processes of the human brain? Eventually we'll be able to sequence the human genome and replicate how nature did intelligence in a carbon-based system," Bill Gates speculates. "It's like reverse-engineering someone else's product in order to solve a challenge."

The authors continue: "That won't be easy. It took scientists forty years to map the neurological activity of the one-millimeter-long roundworm, which has 302 neurons and 8,000 synapses. The human brain has 86 billion neurons and up to 150 trillion synapses."

"At the end of 2013, the New York Times reported on 'a development that is about to turn the digital world on its head' and 'make possible a new generation of artificial intelligence systems that will perform some functions that humans do with ease: see, speak, listen, navigate, manipulate and control.'"

We are still waiting for that. In fact, it sounds suspiciously like the phrases the New York Times itself used in its 1958 story on the "Perceptron," which "will be able to walk, talk, see, write, reproduce itself..." etc. etc.

"True artificial intelligence, says Isaacs, "may take a few more generations or even a few more centuries. We can leave that debate to the futurists. Indeed, depending on your definition of consciousness, it may never happen. We can leave that debate to the philosophers and theologians. 'Human ingenuity,' wrote Leonardo da Vinci, whose Vitruvian Man became the ultimate symbol of the intersection of art and science, 'will never devise any inventions more beautiful, more simple, or more to the purpose than Nature does.'"

As interesting a read as the book was, it missed the fundamental point: Only Man was created with a soul, a purpose and a destiny. And a desire to be close to his Creator: *"When a man among you brings an offering..."* Somehow I cannot see a robot doing that.

What a piece of work is Man!

- Source: *"The Innovators: How a Group of Hackers, Geniuses and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution"* by Walter Isaacson

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shekalim 2-8

Monumental Words

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, "The righteous require no monuments – their words are their memorials."

This would appear to be a revolutionary concept in terms of modern (and, perhaps, not so modern) secular thought and custom. However, the Torah teaching expressed by Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel manifests itself in Jewish custom and tradition throughout history.

First, perhaps we should ask ourselves: "Why are there people who want monuments built to themselves or for their idols? Oops, I mean to their heroes?"

Some great Rabbis, and even secular philosophers, offer this innate desire to be remembered as a logical proof that a person's soul and "being" does not end at the time of passing from this world. If so, they contend, why should a person care if and what anyone thinks of him after departing this world, if his fate is oblivion and nothingness. Rather, there is a human instinct – perhaps one might call it a "knowledge" – that his existence lives on, and he is therefore interested – at least to some degree – that his name be remembered in this world, as exhibited by a monument or something that will continue to exist in this world that will remind others of him. He thinks this will offer his soul, which remains after his death in this world, satisfaction and comfort for eternity. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tuchachinsky (Belarus to Jerusalem, 1871-1955) wrote this idea, along with many Torah sources for the eternity of the soul and the eventual resurrection, in an important work called *Gesher Hachaim*. It is available in English under the name *The Bridge of Life*, and is one of the most inspiring and fascinating books I have ever read.

I have also heard this teaching of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel taught as a "practical application" of another fascinating statement in *Shas*. "Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: 'When any Torah scholar's words of Torah are said, he merits that his lips move/speak in the grave.'" (Yevamot 97a) While everything physical decays, the spiritual can live forever. The Torah is eternal and provides eternal life for any person connected to it. Such a person does not require a monument to signify that, although he is now gone, he was once here among the living. He is actually still living, through his connection to the Torah and Hashem, and is even continuing to speak words of Torah forever.

Some burial places may look like monuments due to their size and design, but they are only structures near gravesites that others decided to build in this manner for practical purposes, such as serving as a places for visitors to gather on the *yahrzeit* to say prayers to Hashem, and a sheltered place for reciting Tehillim for continued elevation of the soul. My dear friend and colleague Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein elaborates on the linguistics of tombstones and their significance in the following way: "Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky writes in *Gesher HaChaim* that three different synonyms for tombstones reflect three different reasons as to why such monuments are erected. The word *matzeivah* connotes the tombstone's role in making sure that the deceased's tomb is visible and known for anyone who wishes to visit it and pray there. The term *tziyun* connotes the tombstone's function in delineating exactly where the deceased is buried so that others can refrain from exposing themselves to ritual impurity (especially pertinent for *kohanim*, who are forbidden from coming into contact with human

corpses, see Vaykra 21:1-4). Finally, the term *nefesh* conveys the tombstone's function in honoring the deceased, and especially paying homage to his soul which may loiter around the final resting place of its former body." So, we see that a tombstone is not a mere monument, but rather a construction at the burial site that serves a special, practical function.

Story Time: I will never forget an occasion some years ago, when I accompanied a few other Rabbis from Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem on a *Lag b'Omer* educational and recreational outing. A large number of mostly university-age students had come to the Yeshiva for a special experience that combined learned Torah in the classroom, and learning Torah from travelling the Land of Israel to absorb the unique historical and modern sites. First, we all walked over to the tomb of Shimon Hatzaddik, a few minutes from the Yeshiva, where *chalaka* festivities were taking place. Three-year-old boys were enjoying their first haircut, and plenty of refreshments were on hand. We also said some Tehillim together and offered personal prayers to Hashem.

Afterwards, we all headed by foot to the Silwan Cave and Spring – also known as *Mei Shiloach* in the Torah – that was located in a predominantly Arab village. While in the area, one of the Rabbis told us a story. His name is Rabbi Yisroel Gellis, and he was a teacher in the Hebrew-speaking department of Ohr Somayach. He hailed from a Yerushalmi family who had been in the city for many generations. He told us that he had made a discovery and would try to share it with us. In a rocky setting, not appearing to be in any current

cemetery, after much toil, research and verification, he had located the burial site of none other than Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura. He had left his own markings there, so he could identify it at any time, without the local residents realizing its significance and without there being a risk of the site being defiled. Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura, also known as “the Rav” or “the Bartenura,” is arguably the most well-known and studied commentary on the Mishna.

One of the student participants asked, “How could it be that such a great Rabbi was buried in such an unassuming and ‘unmonumental-like’ way? One of the Rabbis present replied that it is not the way of Judaism to erect monuments to great and righteous people who preceded us. He quoted the teaching on our *daf*: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, “The righteous require no monuments – their words are their memorials.” The words of Torah that a person learns, speaks, writes – and words of Torah that the person originally said, that were afterwards attributed to him and said in his name – are truly the only and the best “monument” for a person.

Then, the Rabbi taught the first *mishna* of Pirkei Avot to everyone present, and explained it according to the commentary of the Bartenura. We all proceeded to dance and sing there in the valley, on this festive day, while the nearby neighbors stood in amazement on their porches. Then, together, we returned to the Yeshiva to have lunch and continue our Torah studies and experiences.

- *Shekalim 7a*

**Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet
on
The Morning Blessings
by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
www.ohr.edu/morning-blessings**

Q & A

VAYIKRA

Questions

1. Who does the word "eilav" in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week's Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an *olah* atone for?
4. Where was the *olah* slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-*kohen* perform?
6. Besides the fire the *kohanim* bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are *torim* (turtledoves) and *bnei yona* (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is *melika*?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a "satisfying aroma"?
11. Why is the term "*nefesh*" used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will *mincha* offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the *mincha*. What is meant by "honey"?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning *shelamim*, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the *kohen* may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the *mizbe'ach*. For which *korban* may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a *chatat*?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burned while in the wilderness? Where were they burned during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*?
19. What two things does a voluntary *mincha* have that a *minchat chatat* lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a *korban asham*?

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

Answers

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2,14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (*torim*), and doves (*bnei yona*).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the *Mishkan* Courtyard (*azarah*).
5. 1:5 - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bnei yona* are too old and *torim* are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one's fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal's food is provided by its owner, so its innards are "kosher." Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with "theft."
10. 1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, G-d regards it as if he had offered his *nefesh* (soul).
12. 2:1 - The *kometz* (fistful).
13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
14. 2:12 - On Shavuot.
15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the *alya* (fat tail). The lamb's *alya* is burned on the altar but the goat's is not.
16. 3:8 - The *chatat*.
17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the *karet* (excision) penalty.
18. 4:12 -
 1. Outside the three camps.
 2. Outside Jerusalem.
19. 5:11 - *Levona* and oil.
20. 5:15 - Two *shekalim*.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

A Perfect Sacrifice

The Torah mandates that any *kohen* or animal with a *mum* (pronounced as *moom* and meaning “blemish”) becomes unfit for ritual sacrifice. The animal may not be brought as an offering, and the *kohen* may not officiate in the Temple’s rituals. To that end, the Torah offers two comprehensive lists which delineate exactly which sorts of physical defects are considered a *mum* (Lev. 21:16-23 for a *kohen*, Lev. 22:17-25 for an animal). In this essay we will explore the etymology of the Hebrew word *mum*, and show how it differs from two seemingly synonymous words: *pgam* and *simpon*. Ultimately, we will see that although the three words in question all relate to “blemishes” in one way or another, their literal meanings actually differ quite widely from one another.

Rabbi Sholomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) explains that the etymological source for *mum/meumah* is the two-letter root MEM-MEM, which denotes the “smallest amount.” The word *meumah* (“something”) usually appears in the Bible in the context of “*not even* something” (for example, Gen. 30:31; 39:23, I Kings 10:21), i.e. “nothing.” Accordingly, he explains that the word *mum* refers to a “something” which is either missing or extra such that it makes the object in discussion less than perfect – either on account of it *lacking* something necessary for completion, or having something extra which makes it *more than* complete, which is also an imperfection. Thus, a body with a *mum* lacks “something” that it is supposed to have, or has an extra “something” that it is not supposed to have.

Along these lines, Rabbi Dr. Ernest Klein (1899-1983) writes that *mum* (sans the letter ALEPH) is probably derived from the word *mum* (with an ALEPH, see Iyov 31:7 and Dan. 1:4), or *meumah*, which means “something” or a “point.” He explains that this word originally referred to a “dot” or “speck” on an otherwise pristine background, and was later expanded to mean any type of “blemish” or “defective imperfection.” (See Rashi to Gen. 22:12 who offers an exegetical connection between *mum* and *meumah*.)

Similarly, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) explains that *meumah* represents the smallest possible smidgen of existence. It is a “something” that is only a bit bigger than “nothing.” He explains its root as ALEPH-MEM, which means “mother” (the source of all life/existence) and “if” (the precondition necessary for anything to exist).

In segue to the word *pgam*, Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1469-1549) writes that this word literally means “groove” or “crevice.” He points to the Talmud (*Rosh Hashana* 23b), which refers to the “*pgam* of the moon” as the dark parts of the moon that are visible only at certain phases of its monthly cycle. He also notes that *pgam* is the Talmudic term for a nick in a knife that renders the knife unfit for slaughtering (*Chullin* 10a, 17a). In light of this, Rabbi Dr. Ernest Klein’s contention that the Hebrew *pgam* is probably a cognate of the Arabic word *fajama* (“to break off a bit”) makes much sense. [These two words are, by the way, unrelated to the English word *pajama*, which is derived from the Persian words *pay* (“leg”) and *jameh* (“garment”).]

As we will see below, a slew of sources indicate that the Hebrew word *pgam* literally refers to something “lacking” or “deficient.” Its appearances as a synonym to *mum* are only a borrowed meaning:

1. After the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur reads the relevant passages from Leviticus from a Torah Scroll, he then reads the passages from Numbers by heart. The Talmud (*Yoma* 70a) explains that he does not roll the Torah Scroll from Leviticus to Numbers because doing so would needlessly make the audience have to wait, and he does not take out a second Torah Scroll because people might suspect that the first Torah Scroll had a *pgam*. In that context, Rashi explains that *pgam* means “lack,” such that people would think that the first Torah Scroll was rejected because it “lacked” all the requirements which would render it fit for use.

2. Rashi (to *Ketsuwot* 84a) defines a “familial *pgam*” as something embarrassing, which essentially detracts from a family’s sterling reputation. When the Talmud uses the word *mum* to mean something that disqualifies a person from serving as a judge, Rashi (to *Sanhedrin* 36b) explains that this *mum* refers to a “familial *pgam*.” This is a more abstract usage of the term *mum* than the Biblical usage, which refers specifically to physical blemishes, or to spiritual blemishes resulting from sin (Deut. 32:5, Prov. 9:7).

3. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 73a) characterizes a certain category of rapist as somebody who has caused a betrothed woman a *pgam*. Rashi explains this to mean that he “embarrassed” her and “cheapened” her. Indeed, when discussing the monetary payments which a rapist/seducer is obligated to pay his victim, the Mishna (*Ketuwot* 3:4) refers to *pgam* as one of the forms of compensation due to her. The Mishna (*Ketuwot* 3:7) explains that *pgam* is evaluated by comparing a virgin’s *theoretical* price value on the slave market to a non-virgin’s. Her change in value is then deemed a form of damage and is paid as *pgam*.

4. A less-than-full cup of wine is considered *pagum* and therefore unfit for *Kiddush* (*Pesachim* 106a).

5. Somebody who detracts from the value of a written loan’s document by accepting partial payment of that debt is called *pogem* (male) or *pogemet* (female) that document (see *Ketuwot* 9:7-8, *Tosefta Shavuot* 6:5).

Rabbi Pappenheim traces the etymology of *pgam* to the biliteral root PEH-GIMMEL, which means “weakened.” For example, when Jacob was first told that Joseph was still alive and became the ruler of Egypt, the Torah says, “His heart became weak (*vayafag*) because he did not believe them” (Gen. 45:26). As a corollary of this meaning, the word *pag* (Song of Songs 2:13) refers to unripe figs, whose sweetness is “weaker” than fully-ripe fruits. (In Modern Hebrew, *pag* refers to a baby born “prematurely” and to the “expiration date” of, say, a coupon.)

The Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 67a) rules that “taste” from a forbidden food can render otherwise permitted food forbidden. However, if that added taste is *taam l’fgam*, meaning it does not *improve* the taste of the permitted food but actually *detracts* from it, then the taste of a forbidden food does not prohibit the permitted food. Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the Mishnaic Hebrew word *pgam* is also derived from the PEH-GIMMEL root, as all its various meanings relate back to the concept of “weakness,” whether in terms of the “weakness” of taste, “weakness” of a knife’s blade or the “weakening” of a girl’s worth.

We now turn to the word *simpon*. The Mishna (*Ketuwot* 5:3) relates that originally the halacha was that if a *kohen* betroths a non-*kohen* woman with *Kiddushin*, she may already begin eating *terumah* even before the marriage is fully effectuated. However, the Mishna explains that later courts decreed that a woman betrothed to a *kohen* may not eat *terumah* until she is fully married to him. The Talmud (*Ketuwot* 57b) explains that one of the reasons for this ruling is that we suspect the woman in question may have a *simpon* – ostensibly, a “blemish” – that might retroactively nullify her betrothal, such that she will have been eating *terumah* without having been married to a *kohen*. In order to avoid this situation, the Rabbis decreed that women betrothed to a *kohen* cannot eat *terumah* until the marriage is consummated in such a way that a *simpon* cannot retroactively invalidate it.

This discussion leads to the common misconception that the word *simpon* means “blemish,” but as we will see below, it’s not so simple. The Hebrew word *simpon* actually has three different meanings, each of which ultimately derives from a different Greek word.

In the Mishna (*Chullin* 3:1), the word *simpon* appears in the sense of a bronchial artery, which “branches” off from the lungs. In this sense, *simpon* is actually derived from the Greek word *siphon* – which refers to a “pipe” (like it does in English), and denotes the use of pipe-like blood vessels to carry blood to the lungs.

The Hebrew word *simpon* or *sumponia* is derived from the Greek word *symphonia*, and refers to some sort of musical instrument (possibly a bagpipe). Rabbi Binyamin Mussafia (1606-1675) writes that Greek words had already entered the Aramaic lexicon as early as in the times of the Biblical Daniel. To that effect, he cites the word *sumponia* in the Bible (Dan. 3:5, 3:10, 3:15) as an example of this phenomenon. This word also appears in the Mishna (*Keilim* 11:6). The *Sefer HaAruch* explains that the musical instrument in question is a type of wind instrument and comprises a hollow pipe. This explanation connects *simpon* in the sense of a “musical instrument” to *simpon* in the sense of a “blood vessel.”

In another Mishna (*Bava Metzia* 1:8), the word *simpon* refers to extra clauses or conditions added to a legal document as a sort of postscript. This word is derived from the Greek word *symphoneo*, which means “agreement” or “harmony,” and it refers to all those party to the agreement coming to terms with one another. The Hebrew word *simpon* was later expanded to refer to an implicit stipulation that was not actually added to the text of a legal document but could nonetheless invalidate the contract.

Rashi (to *Kiddushin* 10b, *Ketsuvot* 57b, and *Bava Metzia* 20a) explains that the word *simpon* literally means “cancel,” and refers to any sort of clause that can “cancel” a deal – whether implicit or explicit. An early commentary to Targum Oneklos ascribed to Rabbi Yaakov Dienna (published under the names *Patshegen*, *Tzintzenet HaMan*, and *Sefer HaYair*) suggests a Semitic etymology for the word *simpon* by explaining that it is derived from the Hebrew/Aramaic root SAMECH-YUD-MEM, which means “erase” or “destroy,” and *pon* which (somehow) refers to something from the past. Like Rashi, he too understands that *simpon* literally refers to the retroactive cancellation of a deal. Either way, *simpon* does not actually mean “blemish” or “defect,” but rather refers to anything which can void an agreement. A physical blemish on a woman whom one is marrying is just one example of something that can cancel an agreement, but does not reflect the word’s full definition.

To summarize, *mum*, *pgam*, and *simpon* can all mean “blemish” in some sense, but the core meanings of those words differ from one another: *Mum* means “something,” *pgam* literally means “hole” or “lacking” and *simpon* literally means “cancellation.”

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

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COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

TO BELIEVE IS TO BEHAVE (PART 3)

(LAILAH GIFTY AKITA)

“These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in this world, but whose principal remains intact in the World to Come. They are: honoring one’s parents; acts of kindness; early arrival at the study hall in the morning and the evening; hosting guests; visiting the sick; providing the wherewithal for a bride to marry; escorting the dead; praying with concentration; making peace between two people; and Torah study is the equivalent of them all.” (Tractate Shabbat 127a)

The second mitzvah mentioned is *Gemilut Chasadim* – acts of kindness. There is a fascinating dialogue in the Tractate Sotah (14a) that gives us insight into the potency of this mitzvah. Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina asks, “What is the meaning of the verse that commands us to follow in the ways of G-d?” (Deuteronomy 13:5) After all, he points out, it is impossible for a human to do even a fraction of what G-d does. Obviously, the Torah is not commanding us to do things we cannot do. Rather, as our Sages explain, we are being instructed to emulate the attributes of G-d. Especially, we are taught to emulate His attribute of kindness.

Elsewhere in *Shas*, Rabbi Simlai explains that the Torah begins with an act of kindness – with G-d clothing Adam and Chava after they sinned – and the Torah concludes with an act of kindness – when G-d, Himself, buries Moses. Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg (1910-2012), one of the foremost Torah educators and leaders in our times, points out the apparent incongruity in describing the act of G-d clothing Adam and Chava as being the *first* act of kindness that He did. After all, there are many things that G-d did for Adam *prior* to clothing him. Rabbi Scheinberg explains that true *Gemilut Chasadim* is acting kindly even towards those who offend us. G-d’s creation of the world with kindness is obvious. But, Rabbi Simlai is teaching us that even after Adam and Chava sinned, Hashem continued to relate to them with kindness – even though they may not have deserved it. Rabbi Scheinberg’s teaching is truly remarkable. *Gemilut Chasadim* is not reserved only for those who meet with our approval, for those who act in the correct way. *Gemilut Chasadim* is something that we are obligated to do for everyone.

What is the significance of the Torah beginning and ending with acts of kindness? The Vilna Gaon clarifies that anyone who wants to know the central theme of a book should read its beginning and its end, as they will reveal the topic that wends its way throughout the book. Accordingly, if the Torah begins with *Gemilut Chasadim* and concludes with *Gemilut Chasadim*, it is clear that the entire Torah is founded on the precept of kind deeds. In fact, the Vilna Gaon, in one of the letters he wrote to his wife while travelling, emphasized that the underlying message imparted by the majority of the Torah is to bring joy to others.

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher (1255-1340), one of the most brilliant and distinguished early authorities in Spain, writes in his fundamental philosophical treatise entitled *Kad Hakemach* that *Gemilut Chasadim* permeates every dimension of our existence – in both the spiritual realms and in the physical dimensions. All of these realms cannot exist without it. Everything requires kindness – and kindness has no end or limits.

The concept of *Gemilut Chasadim* is so intrinsic to the Torah that Rabbi Yishayahu Horowitz (1558-1630), an expert in the entire Torah, including its more abstruse dimensions, and the recognized rabbinic authority in Prague and Jerusalem, among other prestigious locations, writes in his magnum opus called *Shnei Luchot Habrit* that the *gematria* – a system that affords a numerical value to each Hebrew letter – of the words *Gemilut*

Chasadim and the word *Torah* are identical: 611. In the more esoteric realms, concepts sharing the same *gematria* are not coincidental. Rather, they are an indication of a deep and spiritual association. If the *gematria* of *Gemilut Chasadim* and *Torah* is equal, it means that they share the very same essence.

In a beautiful insight, Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, doyen of the Torah V'Daath Yeshivah in New York and spiritual mentor and teacher to thousands of students around the world, explains why the classic engagement ring given by a *chatan* to his *kallah* is a diamond. One aspect of the beauty of a diamond is that, even though its base color is white, it refracts light in a way that causes the colors of the rainbow to be seen within its different facets. In the Kabbalistic texts, every color represents a different character trait. So, too, it is in marriage. Every trait and characteristic needs to be refined so that a person can become the most attentive, respectful and loving partner to their spouse that they can be. The Kabbalists teach that white represents kindness. And it is the trait of kindness that must serve as the foundation of every Jewish home. When *Gemilut Chasadim* permeates the house, it will be the catalyst that allows the marriage to thrive and blossom. Rabbi Wolfson explains that this is the hidden and sparkling message behind the diamond engagement ring.

To be continued...

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* – the Laws of the Priests – deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called a *korban olah*, a burnt-offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards, it is slaughtered, and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the Altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the Altar.

A similar process is described involving burnt-offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal-offerings are described. Part of the meal-offering is burned on the Altar, and the remaining part is

eaten by the *kohanim*. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burned on the Altar and part is eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats.

The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal-offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt-offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

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the students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

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Yeshivat Mir, Yerushalayim



Rebbe in the Beis Medrash Program at Yeshivat Ohr Somayach (beginning 2018)

The history of English Jewry is embedded in our distinguished *rebbe* of the *Beis Medrash*, Rabbi Uriel Moshe Goodwin. As many of us know from the *Kinos of Tisha B'Av*, there was an established Jewish presence in England from at least the time of William the Conqueror in 1066 until 1290, when King Edward I expelled the remaining Jewish population. Jews were prominent merchants and financiers, and Aaron of Lincoln (1125-1186) was said to be the richest person in England during his lifetime – even richer than the king. Oxford had a relatively large Jewish community and one of the earliest colleges, Merton, was established with a grant from the learned and wealthy Rabbi Jacob of Oxford.

Jews were a major source of revenue for the Crown and the noblemen, and, as such, were afforded special protection by the Crown, but were also subjected to extra heavy taxes and property confiscation. The common English folk, although initially quite friendly to Jews, were later periodically incited by the Catholic Church's many rabidly anti-Semitic priests to kill and maim that defenseless community and steal and destroy their property. These priests also fabricated the notorious and totally false "blood libel" charge against the Jewish communities. After a series of pogroms, including the one in York in 1190, where it seems the entire Jewish population was either massacred or had committed suicide *al Kiddush Hashem*, England was *yudenrein* from the expulsion in 1290 until the end of the English Civil Wars in 1649, when Oliver Cromwell, a Protestant and the head of the Republican forces, overthrew and beheaded Charles I, the last Catholic King of England.

Sensing the winds of change, the Jewish community of the Netherlands, which consisted of descendants of Jews or *Anusim* (forced converts to Christianity) who had been expelled from Spain and Portugal centuries before, sought permission to establish a community in England and to engage in commerce. The head of the Amsterdam community, Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael, was granted an audience with Cromwell, who was so impressed with his erudition and wisdom that he eventually approved of the request and Jews began to resettle in England.

Among those families that came in the middle of the 17th century was the Levy family – Rabbi Goodwin's paternal grandmother's ancestors.

His paternal grandfather's family came to England with a wave of immigrants from the Pale of Settlement in 1906. Like most English Jewish families at the time, strict adherence to *Halacha* was not a priority. Rabbi Goodwin's paternal grandfather became a professional accountant, and his son, Rabbi Goodwin's father, went to a well-known English private school - Haberdashers - and later to Cambridge University. A friendship with a religious student on campus eventually led him to become a *baal teshuva*. After graduation, with a degree in Economics, he studied at *Yeshivat Dvar Yerushalayim* in Jerusalem. After his return to England, he learned as a *bochur* and then as a young *avreich* in Rabbi Hager's Kollel in Golders Green for a number of years. Eventually, he joined his father's accounting firm and is today at its head.

Reb Uriel's maternal grandfather's family arrived in England from Germany shortly before the start of the Second World War. His maternal great-grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Rottenberg, for whom he is named, had been the Rav of Nuremberg before the war. He was a first-hand witness to the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany. Uriel's grandfather spent the war years in the recently formed Gateshead Yeshiva.

Reb Uriel's maternal grandmother escaped Germany with her mother and sister in 1942. In exchange for all their worldly possessions, a smuggler led them over the Tyrol Mountains to temporary safety in Northern Italy. But as the war progressed and the Jews in Italy were rounded up and sent to the Death Camps in Poland, they escaped again by hiding in a cattle truck to Montreux, Switzerland, where they remained until the end of the war.

Reb Uriel grew up in Hendon and then Golders Green, two Jewish neighborhoods in London, as the oldest of four siblings. He attended Pardes House, a *Charedi*-oriented primary and secondary school with an excellent secular curriculum. Reb Uriel excelled at both Torah and secular studies. By the age of fifteen, he completed his GSCE's (General Certificate of Secondary Education), and by sixteen he had completed his A Levels (Advanced Levels), which are required for placement in university. He did well enough that he could have gone to any university in the United Kingdom. His secular Head Teacher encouraged him to follow "in his father's footsteps" and attend Cambridge University. Uriel, however, wanted to continue in his father's "other footsteps" and attend Yeshiva Gedola.

At the age of sixteen, Reb Uriel left Pardes House to go to Manchester to study Torah under Rabbi Knopfler at the *Shaarei Torah Yeshiva*. There he learned for four years, including one and a half years as a *chavrusah* of the *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Shmuel Goldberg, who was a *talmid* of Rav Chazkal Levenstein.

His next stop was the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim and to the top *Gemara* shiur of Rav Osher Arieli. Reb Uriel's questions and passion so impressed his *rebbe*, that after only a year he became his *rebbe's* morning *chavrusah*. He describes his experience as follows:

"Reb Osher is known for his building the *sugya* (topic material) as a whole unit; for his *diukim* (inferences), *lomdus* (depth in learning), tremendous clarity and bringing out the *yesodos* (underlying principles) from the *sugya* instead of inserting them. His *shiur* is unusually fast in the Yeshiva world and can cover thirty *daf*, *b'iyun*, during a *Zman*.

Learning with him, I experienced and learned firsthand his *Derech Halimud* (method of learning), profundity, *yishuv hada'as* (clarity of thinking) and preparedness to relearn, as well as experience his exceptional *middos* (personal character) — in particular, his humility. Attending his *shiur*, one can observe his mastery of the *Gemara* and the swiftness with which he can summarize a *sugya*. When learning, however, despite this clarity, he would carefully contemplate and reflect on the material as well as consider alternative approaches. He would frequently relearn a text the following day. He always learned in a manner that was calm and almost serene, albeit very focused. He has

tremendous *yashrus* (correctness) and ‘demanded’ that leaning be *yosher* even when saying a *chiddush* (novel idea). A tremendous *masmid*, (serious and focused learner), he never spoke any words not relevant to learning whilst in the *Beis HaMedrash* during all the time I spent with him. Out of the *Beis HaMedrash*, I would discuss with him many other matters. The *shiurim* I give are very much influenced by the learning, *shuirim* and *derech* I learned from him.”

In all, Reb Uriel learned for four and a half years in Rav Osher’s *shiur*. During that time, and afterwards, Reb Uriel also attended *shiurim* given by HaGaon HaRav Rafoel Shmulevitz, Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel, Rav Aryeh Finkel and Rav Chaim Zev Schneider.

Not only was Rav Arieli, Reb Uriel’s *rebbe*, mentor and *chavrusah*, he was also his *shadchan*. Rav Arieli introduced him to the daughter of his first cousin, Rav Wasserman, a *Rav* and *Mashgiach* at a yeshiva in Bnei Brak. They married and now Rav Arieli is also his relative.

During his more than twelve years at the Mir, Reb Uriel gave classes on many subjects, including *Gemara*, *Hashkafa*, *Siddur*, and *Chumash*. He also took courses in counseling and teaching methods. And he has published a number of articles in Torah journals.

A few years ago, Reb Uriel was asked to substitute teach in the Ohr Somayach Intermediate Program. He was already familiar with Ohr Somayach because his uncle, Reb Dovid Speyer, *z”l*, was a *rebbe* and the head of the Beis Medrash Program.

Three years ago, when a position opened up in the *Beis Medrash*, the Yeshiva asked Reb Uriel to give the *shiur*. He has taken to his position with an enthusiasm and warmth that has made a major contribution to the *Beis Medrash* and to the entire Yeshiva.

When asked about his philosophy of teaching, Reb Uriel responded as follows:

“The great Rav Yeruchum Lebovitz, *Mashgiach* of the Mir Yeshiva, is often quoted as having said: ‘It is not good when one does not know his or her faults, but even worse is someone who does not recognize his or her good qualities. A person who does not understand his strengths and talents is like a craftsman who is unfamiliar with his tools.’

“This is equally true from the perspective of an educator. A *rebbe* must view his students with genuinely high esteem. He should recognize their strengths, abilities and achievements, and believe in them. Equally important is to empathize with and sincerely understand the struggles and weaknesses they may have.

“Indeed, it is told that a few months after joining the Mir Yeshiva, Rav Yeruchum said that he already studied and recognized the unique talent of each of the 400 students. He then added that he had now started to study their weaknesses so he could direct them in self-improvement.

“A *rebbe* should also be concerned with all other areas of the students’ welfare, such as physical health, financial stability, social connections and so on. The genuine love,

respect and care of a *rebbe* for the student is an essential part of the *rebbe*-student relationship, and a catalyst for growth.

“Achievement in learning is often related to emotional equilibrium. Spiritual growth can often be directly interlinked to emotional tranquility. When talking with or counseling a student, you have to see and address the full person you are speaking to. His parents, his broader family, his upbringing, experiences, talents and challenges all make up his uniqueness.”

As to his thoughts on his experience so far at Ohr Somayach, Reb Uriel said:

“Ohr Somayach is a most remarkable Yeshiva. Jews from very different spiritual backgrounds find the Yeshiva a home, whilst benefiting from a true Yeshiva experience. I find the beautiful synthesis of the different backgrounds incredible. The atmosphere of spiritual growth, the aspirations of the students, and the love of the *Rabbeim* stimulate this fusion.

“The *bochurim* of the *Beis Medrash* are unique in their thirst for knowledge, diligence and desire to grow. The *Beis Medrash* is set up to enable the students to experience high-level *Iyun Gemara* learning, and the *shiurim* are built to facilitate this. It is somewhat astonishing to see *bochurim* transforming into *lamdonim* — able to understand and accurately build a *sugya* with its *yesodot* in just a few months of being in the *Beis Medrash*. After leaving our program, the students graduate to the highest level *shiurim* in other renowned yeshivos, where they excel.”

The Yeshiva is proud to have Reb Uriel on its staff and looks forward to the contributions he will surely make in the coming years, *b'ezrat Hashem Yisborach*.

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LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Duty of Conscientiousness

The *parsha* ends with commandments that find their atonement through the same offering – the *korban asham*, the guilt offering. These include *meilah* – mundane use of a sacred object – and *safek* – uncertainty with regard to certain severe transgressions. The common denominator of these three mitzvahs is that the offender displays indifference about the legality of his property and actions.

If a person inadvertently commits *meilah* – by using a sacred object or by transferring it to another’s possession – this shows that he has not distinguished properly between the sacred and the profane in his possession. The duty of guarding a sacred object should have moved him to make an exacting and careful separation. Interestingly, *inadvertent* misappropriation of a sacred object profanes it, whereas *willful* misappropriation does not. In that case, the object maintains its sanctity.

Safek, which makes one liable to bring a guilt offering, reveals the same attitude of indifference. The typical example of this *safek* is when one has two pieces of meat before him, where one is forbidden *cheilev*, punishable by *karet*, and the other is permissible – and he eats the forbidden meat, thinking it is the permissible one. The very existence of the uncertainty proves that he lacked a proper measure of conscientiousness, for he failed to separate properly between the permitted and the prohibited so as to keep far from sin. Interestingly,

when one is uncertain whether a *single* piece before him is prohibited or forbidden, he is not liable to bring a guilt offering. The fact that the forbidden and permissible could be placed side by side evidences a greater carelessness.

From these laws, we learn that both the Sanctuary and the Law fear indifference more than transgression. The Sanctuary is exalted far above transgressors – they will never be able to detract from its sanctity. Indeed, their very opposition attests to sanctity. But the inadvertent acts that result from indifference – thoughtless inattentiveness – are a far greater threat.

In mitzvah observance, uncertainty that perhaps a transgression was committed is more serious than certainty of it! When the carelessness is a product of extreme indifference, Torah observance is at the height of vulnerability.

The Torah expects us to watch our step, and take reasonable precautions to safeguard the commandments. If we are careless and haphazard about our actions – so that doubt arises as to whether or not we have acted lawfully – then we already “bear sin.” But if we are conscientious and vigilant, we have been true to our duty.

- Sources: Commentary, Vayikra, 5:26

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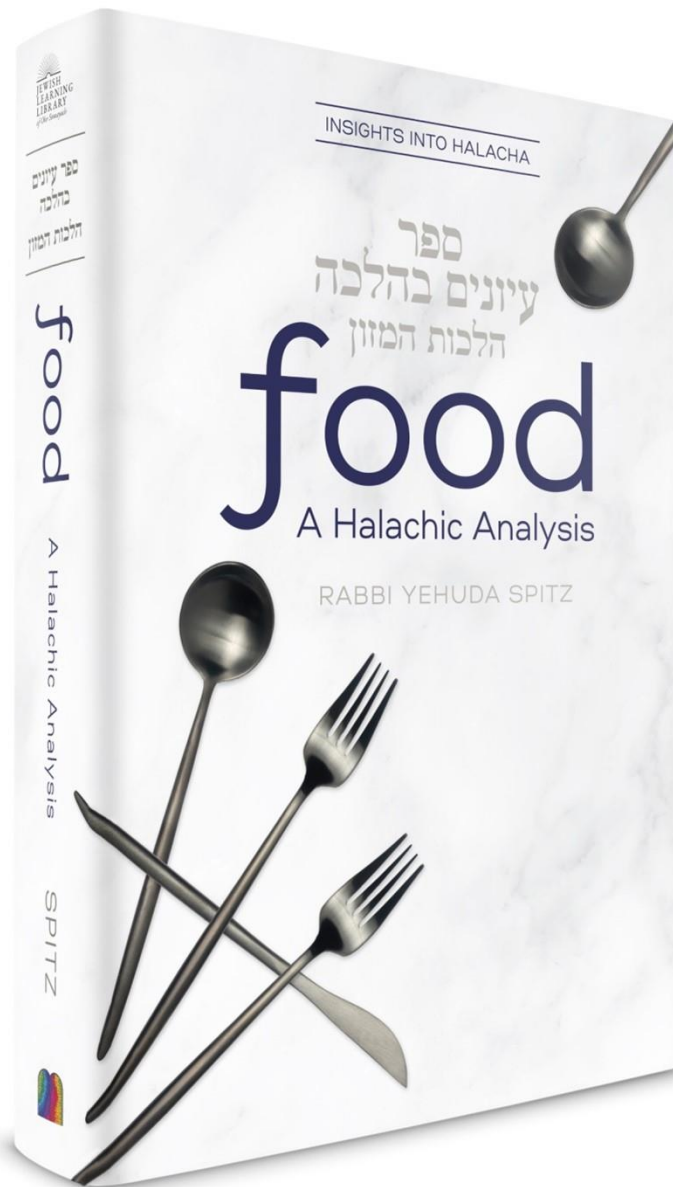
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