

Shabbat Sh'mot is the 110th day (of 354); the 16th Shabbat (of 50) of 5766
הוד והדר לפניו עז ויזדנה במקומו: דברי הימים א' טז:כו (טטרדל)

True, Chava fed Adam from the Tree, but...

This is not meant to criticize Chava, but just look at what role women played 2000 years later.

Avraham Avinu did not want to expel Yishmael and Hagar; Sara Imeinu was more perceptive and pragmatic and insisted - G-d backed her up.

Yitzchak Avinu loved Eisav and wanted him to receive the main bracha; Rivka Imeinu was more perceptive and pragmatic and engineered matters (divinely inspired) so that Yaakov would receive the brachot.

Yaakov Avinu loved Rachel and wanted to marry only her. Rachel Imeinu was more perceptive and pragmatic and sacrificed her happiness so that her sister Leah would become the mother of the majority of Shivtei Kah.

Imagine what would have happened if the Imahot had not prevailed.

Now we come to Sh'mot. The children of Israel are subjected to slavery and oppressive decrees. Two midwives (maybe Yocheved and Miriam and maybe just two unknown heroines among many) risk their lives to save Jewish baby boys so that the nation can survive.

Amram, leader of the community, decrees that husbands and wives should separate and not bring children into their world of misery and hopelessness. Miriam prophesies that Amram's decree is harsher than that of Par'o. As a result, Amram and Yocheved reunite and Moshe Rabeinu is born.

Baby Moshe's life is in danger: his mother Yocheved, his sister Miriam, and the daughter of Par'o save his life. So does Tzipora his wife later in the sedra. The men in Egypt despaired; the women adorned themselves and lifted the morale of their husbands. Because of righteous women, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt. Way to go!

Word of the Month

A weekly feature of Torah Tidbits to help clarify practical and conceptual aspects of the Jewish Calendar, thereby better fulfilling the mitzva of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

SHOVAVIM

This are the initial letters of the sedras Shmot, Vaeira, Bo, B'Shalach, Yitro, Mishpatim. In 13 month years T'ruma and T'tzevah are included to form SHOVAVIM TAT. Some have the custom to fast on the Thursdays of each of the 6 sedras (8 in a Shana M'uberet). Some Rabbanim of the past had recommended Taanit Dibur, a day of silence, as a more productive observance of SHOVAVIM. Fast days, public or private must be accompanied by T'shuva, prayer, tzedaka, and acts of kindness to accomplish what they were intended to. A special aspect of SHOVAVIM can be seen in its origin - namely as an effort by righteous individuals on behalf of less committed Jews who might have misused Simchat Yom Tov. As such it demonstrates the care and concern of Jews for their fellows.



TORAH Tidbits AUDIO
www.radiou.org and www.israelnationalradio.com
New shows from Thursday

OTHER Z'MANIM
Correct for Jerusalem

The OU Israel Center and Torah Tidbits do not necessarily endorse the political or halachic positions of its editor, columnists, or advertisers, nor do we guarantee the quality of advertised services or products

Candle Lighting and HAVDALA
Standard (Winter) time
Correct for TT 700 • Rabbeinu Tam (I'm) - 6:19pm

4:27pm	Jerusalem	5:42pm
4:42pm	Raanana	5:43pm
4:43pm	Beit Shemesh	5:43pm
4:42pm	Netanya	5:43pm
4:43pm	Rehovot	5:44pm
4:22pm	Petach Tikva	5:43pm
4:42pm	Modi'in	5:43pm
4:44pm	Be'er Sheva	5:45pm
4:42pm	Gush Etzion	5:42pm
4:41pm	Ginot Shomron	5:42pm
4:27pm	Maale Adumim	5:42pm
4:43pm	K4 & Hevron	5:43pm
4:28pm	Tzfat	5:39pm
4:42pm	Tel Mond	5:43pm

Ranges are FRI-FRI 20-27 Tevet (January 20-27)

Earliest Talit & T'filin - 5:45-5:43am
Sunrise - 6:38-6:35½am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma - 9:14-9:13am (8:27-8:27am)
Sof Z'man T'fila - 10:06-10:06am (9:35-9:35am)
Chatzot (halachic noon) - 11:50-11:52am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha) - 12:21-12:22pm
Plag Mincha - 3:58-4:03pm
Sunset - 5:07-5:13½pm (5:02-5:08½pm)

OU ISRAEL CENTER
Seymour J. Abrams • Orthodox Union
Jerusalem World Center

Yitzchak Fund, President
Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Senior Vice President
Prof. Meni Koslowsky, Vice President
Rabbi Dovid Cohen, Vaad member
Moshe Kempinski, Vaad member
Sandy Kestenbaum, Vaad member
Simcha Rock, Vaad member
Zvi Sand, Vaad member
Harvey Wolinetz, Vaad member
Menachem Persoff, Director of Programs, Israel Center
Phil Chernofsky, Educational Director and TT editor

22 Keren HaYesod • POB 37015 • Jerusalem 91370
phone: (02) 566 7787 • fax: (02) 561-7432
email: tt@ou.org • website: www.ou.org/torah/tt

Orthodox Union • National Conference of Synagogue Youth
This publication and many of the programs of the Israel Center and NCSY in Israel are assisted by grants from The Jewish Agency for Israel
Produced and printed "in house" at the Israel Center

In the Wolinetz Family Shul
OHEL SHMUEL (entrance floor)
Shabbat 3:30pm (Mincha 4:30pm)
Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Poupko
Motza'ei Shabbat 8:30pm
Roger Mehl on a Roll



SH'MOT STATS

13th of the 54 sedras; 1st of 11 in Sh'mot
 Written on 215.2 lines in a Sefer Torah; rank: 18th
 7 parshiot; 6 open, 1 closed
 124 p'sukim - 15th (tied with Emor) (2nd in Shmot)
 1763 words - 14th (Emor is 22nd) (2nd in Shmot)
 6762 letters - 16th (Emor is 23rd) (2nd in Shmot)
 Its p'sukim are above average in length
 (number of words and letters)
 (Emor was put in for comparison - look at the differences in rank)

MITZVOT:

contains none of the TARYAG (613) mitzvot

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek/Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 1:1-17

[P> 1:1 (7)] Sh'mot begins with the conjunctive VAV to link the birth of the Jewish Nation to the foundation laid

by the Patriarchs and "Sh'vatim" in the book of B'reishit. The sons of Yaakov are lovingly enumerated once again. The starting number of "70 souls" is repeated to impress upon us the tremendous growth of the people even (or especially) under the oppression of Egypt, as described in the p'sukim.

SDT *The opening words of the sedra/book of Shmot - V'EILEH SH'MOT - form the initial letters of*

וְחַיֵּב אָדָם לְלַמּוֹד שְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא וְאֶחָד תַּרְגוּם

(V'chayav Adam Lilmod Sh'nayim Mikra V'echad Targum) - And a person is obligated to review the Torah text twice and once in translation. Baal HaTurim extends this acronym to the next two words. His whole statement is: "One who learns the sedra 2+1, singing it pleasantly, shall merit long life."

SDT *The final letters of the opening words (sofei teivot) rearrange to spell the word T'HILIM. When the People of Israel are in trouble (a play-on-words on Egypt - MITZRAYIM - MEITZARIM), they shall use T'hilim to help them focus their prayers to G-d, thereby meriting redemption.*

SDT *Our first exile was associated with the number 70, the number associated with the members of Yaakov's family who went down to Egypt. The exile following the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash lasted 70 years. The termination of the final exile will be associated with our dominance over, or recognition and respect by the "70 nations" of the world.*

"And Yosef and all his brothers and all that generation died." This pasuk (1:6) has a g'matriya (numeric value) of 981. There is one other pasuk in the Torah with that same g'matriya - D'varim 4:4 -

וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים בְּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים כְּלַכֶּם הַיּוֹם

"And you who cling to HaShem, your G-d, are all alive today." This pasuk is one of the sources of the concept that G-d fearing people live on after their physical death. The pasuk from the beginning of Sh'mot had a certain finality sound to it. The second pasuk (its G'matriya Twin) testifies that the "Shivtei Kah" live on.

[P> 1:8 (15)] A new king "who does not know Yosef" considers the Jewish people a threat and takes measures to enslave and demoralize them. (Iron- ically, he is the first one to refer to us as a nation - "Am Bnei Yisrael" - sometimes it is our enemies who tell us who and what we really are.) Par'o called us the Jewish Nation even before we felt that and knew that ourselves.

He instructs the midwives to kill the baby boys at birth to prevent the development of his "potential enemies" (and to kill off the potential redeemer of the People). They refuse to do his bidding and save the lives of the boys.

SDT *VA'T'CHAYENA ET HAY'LADIM ...and they gave life to the boys". The Midrash says that not only did the midwives defy Par'o by not killing the boys, they also were responsible for saving those that might have died during childbirth. It is natural that some babies do not survive birth. The midwives were concerned that if they happened to deliver a stillborn, that it might appear as if they had carried out Par'o's orders. Their prayers were answered, and miraculously none of the babies died. Thus they are credited, not just with assisting in the births, but also with giving life to the babies.*

There is a parallel idea concerning the night of the Exodus. It is

said that even the normal deaths that might be expected in a large population did not occur on the night of the Exodus, lest it detract from the miraculous nature of the Night. Thus, we have then similar miracles at either end of the Mitzrayim experience.

SDI *AND THEY EMBITTERED THEIR LIVES...* The trup (Torah notes) on these words seem unduly happy for such sad words. The GR"A points out the "happy" result of the unusually harsh oppression, namely, that G-d reacted to Egypt's excess by cutting down our time in bondage to 210 years from the original prophecy of 400, by counting from the birth of Yitzchak, rather than from Yaakov's descent into Egypt. Understand that this is not just an exchange of 210 years of extra harsh conditions for 400 years of regular slavery. Commentaries say that if we did not get out when we did, we would not have made it to Nationhood.

Levi - Second Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 1:18-2:10

When Par'o sees that his goal is not being accomplished, he orders that all male babies (Jew & non-Jew alike) be drowned. The People of Israel miraculously flourish under these adverse conditions.

[P> 2:1 (22)] Amram reunites with Yocheved and a baby boy is born. When he is no longer able to be hidden (some say that Moshe was three months premature; that the Egyptians knew when Yocheved was due; therefore she was able to hide him only for those three months), Yocheved prepares a water-proof basket and sets him on the river under the watchful eye of his sister.

Bat-Par'o finds Moshe and sends Miriam to bring a wetnurse for the crying infant who apparently will not nurse from an Egyptian breast. Miriam brings Yocheved, Moshe's mother, who takes Moshe until he is weaned. From that point on, Moshe is raised in the royal palace by Bat Par'o (Bitya). She names him Moshe.

SDI *Egyptian astrologers read in the stars that Israel's redeemer was soon to be born. They recommended the systematic drowning of all baby boys (including non-Jews, since they were not sure from what nation this redeemer would come). When Moshe was floated on the Nile, the astrologers reported to Par'o that Israel's redeemer was indeed "cast into the river". As a result of this not quite accurate reading of the stars, Par'o withdrew the decree to drown the boys.*

SDI *On the phrase: VAYEILECH ISH... And a man (from the house of Levi) went... the Baal HaTurim points out the only other occurrence of that phrase, in the book of Ruth: VAYEILECH ISH MI'BEIT LECHEM YEHUDA... In both cases, a redeemer of Israel results. In our case, Moshe Rabeinu. In Megilat Ruth, the progenitor of David HaMelech, his line, to Mashiach ben David.*

"And she called his name Moses, for from the water he was drawn."

Does not quite make it in English. This is one of the demonstrations that the Torah was written in Hebrew. Similarly, ADAM was made from the ADAMA. Try that in English. Copper snake? No, N'CHASH NECHOSHET.

(go easy on us YL)

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 2:11-25

It is amazing how many significant events are packed into these 15 p'sukim. Moshe goes out to see what is happening with the Jewish People. He kills an Egyptian who was beating a Jew. He breaks up a fight between two Jews (Datan & Aviram). They had seen him kill the Egyptian and report him to Par'o. Moshe flees to Midyan where he saves Yitro's daughters from danger. He takes Tzipora as a wife. She gives birth to son Gershom.

[P> 2:23 (3)] Meanwhile, after much time passes, the king of Egypt dies (or maybe got so sick that it was like he died) and the oppression in Egypt is greatly intensified. The People react by calling out to G-d. He too, "reacts"...

SDI *Yosef was identified by the Wine Steward as a NAAR IVRI, a Jewish lad. Moshe was identified by Yitro's daughters as ISH MITZRI, an Egyptian man. Yosef was privileged to have his remains buried in the Land of Israel. Moshe did not have that same "z'chut", although it was mainly Moshe who brought Yosef's remains from Egypt to the threshold of Eretz Yisrael. Gives you pause for thought. No criticism is intended.*

SDI *When Moshe realized that Datan and Aviram informed on him to Par'o, the Torah tells us that Moshe was afraid. Rashi says that we can understand that literally, and also on a deeper level. With Jews like Datan and Aviram, Moshe feared that the people of Israel might not merit redemption.*

(Note that Rashi includes the p'shat (plain) meaning as well as the additional meaning. Both apply in this case. It isn't always so that the plain meaning is retained when there is a drash that is the preferred way of understanding the text.)

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 3:1-15

[S> 3:1 (39)] Moshe is tending Yitro's sheep. An angel appears to him from a "burning bush that is not consumed". Moshe turns aside; G-d calls to him. He tells Moshe that He has heard the people's screams and that he is going to take them out of Egypt and bring them to a Land of Milk and Honey.

Moshe asks "why me?". G-d assures Moshe that He will be with him and that as proof of the Divine nature of his mission, Moshe will be bringing the people back to "this spot" (Sinai) to "serve G-d" (and receive the Torah). Furthermore, Moshe is to "reintroduce" G-d to the People. Moshe asks G-d what he should tell the People when he comes to them at G-d's command. G-d's answer spans nine p'sukim (3:14-22). G-d identifies Himself as EH-YEH ASHER EH-YEH (Alef-Hei-Yud-Hei is one of the 7 names of G-d that may not be erased. Probably the least known of the list of seven.) This name of G-d's has the meaning: I will be with you (Bnei Yisrael) in your time of trouble (in Egypt) as I will be with you in future situations of enslavement and oppression.

SDT Baal HaTurim points out that the letters of this unusual name of G-d total 21. The initial letters of the first three names of G-d in the Thirteen Divine Attributes are YUD, YUD, ALEF = 21 (HaShem, HaShem, Keil...). The initials of the Patriarchs are ALEF, YUD, YUD = 21. The initials of the Five Books of the Torah are BET, VAV, VAV, VAV, and ALEF = 21.

At Moshe's suggestion, so to speak, G-d agreed to be identified to the people as EH-YEH, with the more comforting connotation of "I will be with you", without the implication that there will be other periods of oppression in the future. (based on Rashi).

G-d gives Moshe detailed instructions as to what to say to the people. He tells Moshe how the people will react and how Par'o will react. He tells him about the plagues and about the "friendly" reaction of the Egyptian people.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 3:16-4:17

The prophecy at the Bush continues... G-d tells Moshe: (a) to gather the elders of Israel and tell them that G-d will be taking them out of Egypt and bringing them to the Land of Israel, (b) the elders will accompany Moshe to present the demand for release before Par'o, (c) Par'o will not acquiesce, (d) I will smite Egypt and then they will send you out, (e) the Egyptians will "lend" the People of Israel many belongings.

Moshe asks "on what basis will they believe me?" G-d gives Moshe three signs to perform for Par'o and the People.

The three signs are the staff becoming a snake and then turning back to a staff. His hand inserted into his cloak and emerging stricken with TZORAAT and then being restored. Taking water from the river and spilling it on the ground and it turns to blood.

SDT Rashi says that the first two signs were also reprimands to Moshe for speaking against the people and doubting in advance their potential to believe what he would tell them. This is Lashon HaRa, and both the snake and the Tzoraat are associated with Lashon HaRa. The third sign seems to have been specifically selected by G-d (so to speak) to be a bridge and introduction to the MAKOT (plagues), the first of which was an extension, shall we say, of the third sign.

Moshe still questions G-d as to "why me"; G-d gets angry at Moshe for doubting His choice of leader. G-d informs Moshe that Aharon will assist in these matters. Moshe is instructed to have his special staff with him when he presents himself to the People and Par'o.

SDT The Staff, HaMateh. Baal HaTurim says that there is/was a scribal custom to put Torah crowns on the TET in the word THE STAFF. This, to say that Moshe was the ninth (TET=9) righteous individual who had the miraculous staff in hand. (Pirkei Avot tells us that the Staff was one of the items created in the instant between the Six Days of Creation and the first Shabbat B'reishit.) The previous eight are: Adam, Chanoch, No'ach, Shem, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef.

The Midrash says that Moshe had several names - Yered, Chever, Y'kutil, Avigdor, Avi-Socho, Avi-Zanu'ach, Tovia, Heiman, Sh'maya. The Midrash

further tells us that of all his names, he is only called Moshe - even by G-d - to give honor to the acts of kindness of the one who found him and saved him from the water - Bat Par'o, the future Batya (Bitya).

Rashi says that Moshe's experience at the Burning Bush and his communication with G-d there lasted for SEVEN DAYS! All during that time, G-d was trying (so to speak) to convince Moshe to undertake his mission.

Try this on your kids and/or Shabbat guests. Ask them how to say MATEH (staff) in Aramaic. If they don't know, give them a hint: Pesach Seder. The answer is found in CHAD GADYA - CHUTRA.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 14 p'sukim - 4:18-31

[P> 4:18 (9)] Moshe returns to Yitro and tells him that he must go to his brethren. Yitro sends Moshe on his way. G-d tells Moshe that it is safe for him to do so. Moshe takes his wife and sons and returns to Egypt. G-d reminds Moshe about the signs he is to use before Par'o, that Par'o will not listen, and that he (Moshe) is to say to Par'o that if he does not release the People, G-d will kill his firstborn. (Thus the last Plague was really the first warning to Par'o. All the other Plagues served their purposes, but all pointed to MAKAT B'CHOROT.)

On the way, Tzipora circumcises her son. Commentaries explain that Moshe had neither circumcised his son Eliezer because of the danger in traveling when recently circumcised, nor did he postpone his return to Egypt, which would have been in defiance of G-d's command. It seems that he was in error in not having circumcised him, hence his life was in jeopardy until Tzipora performed the circumcision. Another question on this episode concerns the acceptability of a female circumcising. Commentaries solve that problem in different ways.

[P> 4:27 (29)] G-d tells Aharon to greet Moshe. Moshe tells Aharon all that has happened. They gather the elders and Aharon tells them what will occur. The People believe what they hear and bow to G-d.

SDT Rashi says that the donkey that Moshe used to bring his family to Mitzrayim was the same one that Avraham took to the Akeida and the one that the Mashiach will ride upon. Why not a regular donkey? To tell us that these monumental events were not haphazard, but rather specially prepared parts of G-d's master plan for the world.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 50:21-26

"And then, Moshe & Aharon go" to Par'o and say to him "Thus says G-d - Let my People go..."

SDT Notice that the elders are not mentioned. Rashi tells us that one-by-one, the elders "disappeared" (in fear of Par'o) as the entourage was going to Par'o, until only Moshe and Aharon were left. Because of this, it was to be this way at Sinai also. The elders were left at the foot of the mountain and Aharon and Moshe ascended. (Then Aharon stopped and Moshe proceeded to the top alone.)

Par'o refuses, questioning who this G-d of Israel is. He then increases the burden on the People (who obviously have too much free time because they ask for a 3-day release) by requiring them to also collect the straw for the raw materials of the bricks they have to make.. The leaders of the People bear the brunt of the new edicts and complain to Par'o. Par'o blames Moshe; the People react with anger and disappointment. Moshe tells G-d that his efforts were counter-productive. G-d says that NOW you (Moshe) will see what G-d will do to Par'o...

Maftir is the last 3 p'sukim.

Haftara - 23 p'sukim -

Yeshayahu 27:6-28:13 and 29:22-23

As the sedra tells of the family of Yaakov in exile, so does the prophet tell of the exiles of the People of Israel. The sedra contains G-d's prophecy to Moshe Rabeinu at the Burning Bush of the redemption of Israel, the subsequent Standing at Sinai, and the entrance into the Land flowing with Milk and Honey. The Haftara contains the prophecy that there will come a day when the Great Shofar will sound, and the exiles will come from their places of dispersion, and they will come to serve HaShem and bow to Him in Jerusalem. The sedra speaks of the First Redemption; the haftara refers to the Complete Redemption.

S'fardim read the first chapter of Yirmiyahu as the haftara of Sh'mot. That chapter is the first haftara of the Three Weeks, Bein HaMeitzarim. Interesting parallel to the first haftara of enslavement in Mitzrayim. There are other sedra-haftara connections too.

20 Tevet is the 801st yearzeit of the Rambam. At the same time we mark the passing of that great Moshe, we read in Parshat HaShavua of the arrival of the original great Moshe

THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW - Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson # 316 (part four, PIT part 2)

Damage caused by a Pit (BOR)

In the last lesson it was stated that there is a difference in legal result if the pit dug or uncovered by Reuven was in a public street, Reuven's domain or Levy's (a third party's) domain.

Public domain

Reuven is liable for digging or uncovering a pit in a public street or in a lot that opens into a public street. He has no more right to the public street than anyone else or animals belonging to others do. Similarly Reuven is liable if he digs in a side alley off a public street, in the marketplace or in any place not owned by Reuven and where people have a right to go. However, Reuven is not liable if he illegally digs a pit under a public street but the opening is in Reuven's domain.

Reuven's domain

Reuven digs a pit in his own domain with the opening of the pit

in his own domain. When damage occurs due to the pit Reuven is not liable. He may do as he pleases since it is on his own premises. Thus Reuven is not liable if Shimon's himself is injured and/or if Shimon's animal is injured or killed in the pit. Reuven can plead successfully that Shimon had no right to enter into his domain. Assume that Shimon enters into Reuven's yard with permission and falls into the pit or his animal falls into the pit. According to one opinion, the permission is neither an invitation nor an open license but Shimon must proceed with due diligence upon entering Reuven's domain. According to this opinion there is no liability unless Reuven specifically invites Shimon to enter his premises alone or with his animal. According to a second opinion, as soon as Reuven grants Shimon permission to enter into his domain, Reuven is liable if Shimon and/or his animal are injured in Reuven's pit.

Reuven as a good citizen digs a pit in an area on the side of the public street so that it will be filled with rainwater, so that passersby will have water to drink or to water their animals. Once he advises Beth Din of what he has done or if gives a cover to Beth Din to place it on the pit he is no longer liable, once Beth Din has enough time to cover the pit.

Reuven in his own domain digs a well for the public and donates the well to the public. As soon as the public officials are made aware of and accept the donation, Reuven is no longer liable to those who fall into the pit.

Levi's domain

Reuven digs a pit in Levi's domain. If the pit causes injury or damage prior to Levi becoming aware of the pit, only Reuven is liable for any damage caused by the pit, under circumstances that would have deemed Levi liable had he dug the pit. Reuven is also liable to Levi for damage done to his premises and for injuries to Levi and his animals as if the pit were in a public domain. Once Levi becomes aware of the pit, he must cover or fill it. Should Levi fail to do so, Levi becomes liable in those situations in which he would be liable if he dug the pit himself.

Depth of height of the pit

In halacha, there is a distinction between two depths and heights regarding Reuven's liability for damage or injury caused by his pit. If the pit is ten or more tefachim deep, the liability that it entails is different than a pit that is less than ten tefachim deep.

[Ed. note: 10T ranges from the calculation of R' Chayim Na'eh - 8cm per tefach to that of the Chazon Ish - 9.6cm per tefach. 10 tefachim then is 80-96cm or 31.5-37.8 inches.]

Similarly, if a mound built up by Reuven in a public street is ten or more tefachim above the ground level the liability it entails is different from a mound that is less than ten tefachim high.

In order for Reuven to be liable to Shimon for the death of Shimon's ox that fell into the pit, it must be at least ten tefachim deep. If the pit was less than ten tefachim deep and Shimon's ox fell in and was killed, Reuven is not liable. However, if Shimon's ox was injured, as distinguished from being killed, Reuven is liable even if the pit was less than ten tefachim deep, no matter how shallow. The ten tefachim measure also applies above the ground. For example, if Reuven places an object such as a carton or a pile of sand in the public domain, the height for Reuven to be liable to Shimon's animal that is killed by falling or tripping over it will be ten tefachim above the ground. If less than ten tefachim in height, Reuven will not be liable for the death of Shimon's animal but will be liable if Shimon's animal

is injured. There is an opinion that if the mound or object is less than three tefachim in height there is no liability at all if Shimon's animal falls over it.

There are some authorities who give precise depths to be applied for different types of creatures. If the pit is at least the depth determined for the particular animal, then there is liability. It seems to me to that the better view is not to have these differing measurements for different creatures, but to hold Reuven liable for any depth that causes injury to any animal. In determining depth, one tefach of water in a pit is deemed to be equivalent to two tefachim of pit depth. Thus if the pit is nine tefachim deep, but one tefach is of water, it is deemed to be ten tefachim deep. The depth exacerbates the lack of air that asphyxiates the ox. Thus if here is no doubt that the ox died from concussion rather than asphyxiation, Reuven is free of liability since the pit was only nine tefachim deep and the ox did not die of asphyxiation. It is not clear if this two tefachim equivalent for water extends to other depths as well; for example, if the pit is eight tefachim deep and two are water or seven tefachim and three are water.

IYH in the next lesson we shall discuss the extent of liability.

The subject matter of this lesson is more fully discussed in volume X chapter 410 of A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law by E. Quint. Copies of all volumes can be purchased via email: orders@gefepublishing.com and via website: www.israelbooks.com and at local Judaica bookstores. Questions to quint@inter.net.il

Meaning in Mitzvot

Each week we discuss one familiar halakhic practice and try to show its beauty and meaning. The columns are based on Rabbi Meir's Meaning in Mitzvot on Kitzur Shulchan Arukh by

Rabbi Asher Meir

CHOLENT

Some pronounce it in one syllable: CHOLNT

Virtually all Jewish communities evolved some form of cholent, some kind of bean or barley stew which is sealed up in the oven to stay warm until Shabbat morning. This custom evolved as a kind of necessity: since it is forbidden to cook on Shabbat, yet we want to have hot food in the morning, the only viable option is to seal the food in a warm place and leave it all night.

But this necessity became in time something close to an actual minhag, or obligatory custom. The Rema writes: It is a mitzva to seal CHAMIN [literally hot food, but more specifically, the Hebrew word for cholent] for Shabbat, in order that he should eat CHAMIN [here in the literal meaning of hot food] on Shabbat, for this is the honor and enjoyment of Shabbat. And anyone who doesn't believe in the words of the Sages, and forbids eating hot food on Shabbat, there is a suspicion that he may be a denier. (SA OC 257:8.)

The Mishna Berura cites an early source for this view, a little poem found in the Baal HaMaor commentary on the Rif: Some say that it is a decree of the Sages to have Shabbat delight with CHAMIN, and anyone who doesn't eat CHAMIN is suspected perhaps he is a MIN [denier]... and to prepare to cook CHAMIN and to make the Shabbat a delight and fatten, this is the true believer and he will merit to see the end of days (16b on the Rif pages).

The simple understanding of why a person who doesn't store away CHAMIN would be suspected of denial is that the Karaites, who professed a literal reading of scripture, did not allow fire in their houses at all on Shabbat and thus could not seal CHAMIN in the oven. But this is only a partial explanation. After all, there must be many things which the Karaites forbid which we could distinguish ourselves by permitting. From the words of both the Rema and the Baal HaMaor it seems that an equally important factor is the importance of oneg Shabbat, Shabbat delight.

Of course, it is vitally important to refrain from Melacha, forbidden labor, on Shabbat, whether forbidden by Scriptural or Rabbinical decree.

But a person who is so strict with these rulings as to deny himself one of the most basic delights of Shabbat, namely a warm meal on Shabbat day, is suspected of misunderstanding the entire point of Shabbat. It is true that Shabbat is a ZECHER LEMAASEH BERESHIT, a commemoration of the Creation, and our rest from creative labor on Shabbat mirrors and testifies to God's rest on the seventh day of creation. But Shabbat is equally a forward-looking holiday, ME'EIN OLAM HABA, a taste of the World to Come. A person who recognizes only the first of these foundations has an understanding which is not only incomplete, because it is missing the second foundation, but it actually erroneous, because it misunderstands even that foundation which it adopts.

When God made the world with a limit, by refraining from Creation at a certain time, he made it finite and thus perfectable, ensuring that human effort is capable of bringing about an ideal future existence, which will reach its full fruition in the time of Moshiach. So the testimony to God's rest at the beginning of history is in fact inseparable from the anticipation of God's redemption at its end. The intimate relationship between these two aspects of Shabbat is thus embodied in the most mundane and yet sublime emblem of our Shabbat experience: our cholent.

Rabbi Asher Meir has two wonderful books in print - Meaning in Mitzvot (ask for it at your local s'farim store) and The Jewish Ethicist, available at some bookstores and through the Business Ethics Center of Jerusalem, (02) 632-0222. Both works are highly recommended

TANACH

SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE BEREISHIT STORIES by Dr. Meir Tamari

"Grant me a burial place" [1]

Death is for Mankind the great unknown, and all religions and cultures have concerned themselves with it and its challenge to man's thoughts or hopes for immortality. Priests, witch doctors, temples, and shamans of all shades and identities have arisen throughout time to satisfy human fears and spiritual issues concerning death, burial, and the hereafter. Judaism, in contrast, is the only religion that denies a place to its priests, the Kohanim, in all that relates to death and mourning, yet provides a different perspective. There are two elements to this special perspective, both to be taught by the verse: "And Avraham retired to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her".

1. "If we take BA to mean 'came', then we have to explain that

before Avraham left from Beer Sheva for the Akeida, he sent Sara from there to Hevron to prevent her suddenly receiving the tragic news. However, the real original meaning of BA is to take oneself out of the public space into privacy; as in BA HASHEMESH in contrast to YATZA HASHEMESH. So Avraham shut himself in to mourn; [similarly we withdraw during the period of our SHIVA], making no parade of grief. This may also be indicated by the small KAF in V'LIVKOTAH from which Chazal learn that one should not mourn excessively" (Rabbi S. R. Hirsch).

2. At the same time, the death of loved ones often causes people to revolt against what they view as a miscarriage of, or even as the absence of, Divine Justice. In order to express our knowledge and acceptance of the power and intervention of His Divine Justice and Wisdom, there is Kaddish; our prayer for the dead which makes no mention of death or the dead.

We can easily understand Avraham's mourning for Sara and the concern of Bnei Chet for his sorrow. After all, Chazal taught: "One whose wife's death precedes his own, it is as though the Bet HaMikdash were destroyed in his time" (Sanhedrin 22). Less obvious is his feeling the essential need for a special place for her burial and the importance of the Ma'arat HaMachpeila in that need.

"Why should Avraham acutely feel that need? Why bother with burial at all; surely the body could simply be left to rot? And if it is necessary, what difference does it make to the dead or to the living, where that place is? A philosopher of the nations (one of the ancient Greeks) said that if the dead are aware, then their burial would only cause them much sorrow; and if they feel nothing why bother?

Burial is beneficial to Mankind both as far as the body and the NEFESH are concerned. Since the body of a person without the soul is far more useless than that of an animal, which does not possess a soul, (as) the human body decomposes far quicker, the smell is more noxious and therefore the [environmental] damage to other people, incurred by leaving it lying around unburied, is far greater. Death marks the decomposition and transformation of the body back into the physical components that it was formed from; however, it also marks the return of the soul to its spiritual source. 'And the dust shall return unto the earth from where it was taken and the soul unto the Lord who granted it.' Yet the severance between the two is not immediate as the soul cannot return on high until the body has become completely reduced to its components. '12 months a dead man's body continues to exist and the soul rises and descends from heaven. At the end of that time the body may be negated and the soul ascends without descending again' (Shabbat 122). So, through burial, the body is granted time until it disintegrates into the materials from which it was formed and the soul is finally released.

Furthermore, the entity that is a human being, body and soul, bears the TZELEM of G-d, so it is a place for the SH'CHINA to reside, it has divinely granted wisdom, it is the pinnacle of the whole creation and has a connection with Him. It is not fitting therefore, that after death it should be treated with dishonor, disrespect and abuse, to be cast aside like redundant garbage. So burial is needed in order to give the dead that honor and respect due to a person's divine origins. The honor rendered by proper burial is directly commensurate with the moral, social and religious status of the person. So we find that Shaul, who was not the founder of Jewish Kingship, was simply buried together with his forefathers, since now in death he was their

equal. However, David, whose dynasty was to continue forever, was not buried in Bet Lechem, his hometown, but rather in Zion, Ir David, that was the burial ground of all the House of David, the King.

For these reasons Avraham saw it fitting that there should be a significant place for Sara's burial" (Don Yitschak Abarbanel).

The spiritual significance of burial may be further seen from the verse "His body shall not hang on the gallows overnight [the prolonged exposure of the unburied body of a human being is an insult to G-d in whose Image it was created], rather you shall surely bury him" (D'varim 21:3). "From this we learn that it is a positive mitzva to bury the dead. By commanding us to do so, Hashem shows His concern for the welfare of His Creatures" (Sefer Hachinuch, 537).

"Achuza refers only to landed property, property that grips, holds and outlives the owner. So Avraham, the wanderer and stranger, does not ask for permission just to bury his wife. He asks for land for a sepulchre since he wants her to rest in her permanent resting place, that is the first and only need that he has: to acquire a piece of land in the Promised Land. This will be the bond that attaches him to that land" (Rabbi S. R. Hirsch).

That achuza where: "Avraham and Sara were buried; there they buried Yitschak and Rivka and there I buried Leah", (B'reishit 49:31); these were Yaakov's words to his sons and there they buried him. Indeed Ma'arat HaMachpeila is such an achuza, where all the generations of Israel can know who their ancestors were, can draw strength and inspiration from them and can see themselves as the eternal owners of that Land.

This is the 112th installment in Dr. Tamari's series on "Tanach and its messages for our times"

MISC section - contents:

[1] Vebbe Rebbe

[2] Candle by Day

[3] From Aloh Naaleh

[4] A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit

[5] Parsha Points to Ponder

[6] Portion from the Portion

[7] Torah from Nature

[8] From the desk of the director

[1] From the virtual desk of the OU **VEBBE REBBE**

The Orthodox Union – via its website – fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and the Israel Center. The following is a Q&A from Eretz Hemdah...

Q Do hard liquors require a hashgacha (rabbinical supervision) and why?

A There was a fascinating exchange of letters on the topic between Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Pinchas Teitz some 50 years ago (Igrot Moshe, YD I, 62-64). Rav Teitz gave a hashgacha on blended whiskey, which he felt was forbidden to drink without one. Rav Feinstein countered that whiskey did not require a hashgacha. His presentation reveals that he felt that it was important to substantiate the leniency because rabbis and religious laymen drank such whiskey regularly. Rav Feinstein wrote that he personally avoided drinking it because of halachic preferability, except when it looked like he was showing off if he refused to drink like others. He praised Rav Teitz's hashgacha for the opportunity it gave to those who wanted to be extra-careful. (This story is typical of Rav Moshe.)

Over the last 50 years, kashrut standards in America (and elsewhere) have risen. (Detractors call it the tendency toward stringency.) We do not know what Rav Feinstein would recommend today, and one should ask his personal/community rabbi whether and/or when to be strict. We note that the standard-bearer of the Orthodox community regarding kashrut, the OU, requires verification that liquors do not contain non-kosher ingredients (See "Hard Truths About Hard Liquor" on the "OUKosher" website). Differences exist between different types of liquor, and one can find lists of products that have been checked out even if they lack a kashrut symbol. We feel it is appropriate, in this forum, to only discuss certain of the issues that poskim have argued, rather than state our own opinion.

Wine and grape juice that are not specially prepared are rabbinically not kosher. Pure whiskey and other grain-based alcoholic beverages are fundamentally permitted. However, American and other laws permit producers to include "blenders" from other ingredients up to the rate of 2%. This is above the standard rate (1/60th) at which a non-kosher ingredient is batel (null). Blenders are commonly used, and they can include products of animal origin such as glycerin and often non-kosher wine. Furthermore, scotch is often aged in casks used previously for sherry (a non-kosher wine). As it is impossible to determine how much taste is imparted, we assume the worst-case scenario (Shulchan Aruch, YD 98:5). Thus, there is room for concern.

However, Rav Feinstein bases his leniency on the Shulchan Aruch's (Yoreh Deah 134:5) ruling that non-kosher wine is batel in water at the rate of one to six. There is significant dispute as to whether this (not unanimous) leniency is particular to water (upon which that amount of wine impacts the taste negatively - Shach, ad loc.:21) or applies to all liquids (Taz, ad loc.:5). Rav Moshe accepts the lenient opinion; Rav Teitz and the OU accept the stringent one.

There is also discussion whether the rules of bitul apply when one purposely puts a non-kosher additive into a product. There are two issues:

1) One should not purposely set up situations in which a non-kosher item becomes batel and if he does, bitul does not work (Shulchan Aruch, YD 99:5).

2) Ingredients with a pungent taste are not nullified even at 1/60th (Rama, YD 98:5). Rav Moshe rejects these claims in our case. The problem of purposely nullifying applies only when Jews do so for Jews. Here, even if Jews own a company, their actions relate to the majority of customers, who normally are

non-Jewish. While pungent taste may be a factor if one puts wine in blander foods, Rav Moshe posits that it is not in hard liquor, which is at least as pungent as the wine.

Rav Moshe says that the rationale for stringency is stronger according to those who forbid benefiting from non-kosher wine even in our days (see Shulchan Aruch, YD 123:1).

Again, we have only scratched the surface and leave the ruling to other forums.

Ed. note: The liquor kashrut article referred to above can be found at <http://oukosher.org/index.php/articles/single/2392/>

See also Star-K's "Kashrus in High Spirits"

Ask the Rabbi Q&A is part of Hemdat Yamim, the weekly parsha sheet published by Eretz Hemdah. You can read this section or the entire Hemdat Yamim at www.ou.org or www.erezhemdah.org. And/or you can receive Hemdat Yamim by email weekly, by sending an email to info@erezhemdah.org with the message: Subscribe/English (for the English version) or Subscribe/Hebrew (for the hebrew version). Please leave the subject blank. Ask the Vebbe Rebbe is partially funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel

[2] **Candle by Day**

Let us not be annoyed by the constant repetition of truths. Just as our muscles are strengthened by the constant repetition of certain movements, so are our convictions strengthened by a similar repetition of the truths behind them.

From A Candle by Day by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein

A Candle by Day • The Antidote • The World Of Chazal by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein • Now available at 054-209-9200

[3] **CHIZUK and IDUD**

(for Olim & not-yet-Olim respectively)

And these are the names of the children of Israel who came down to Egypt... (Sh'mot 1:1)

Rashi indicates that enumerating the names of the children of Yaakov, who we have already met in the book of B'reishit, is a sign of how precious they (we) are to God. They are compared to the stars which God lovingly displays in the heavens, calling each by its name.

The Chatam Sofer comments that we, the Jewish people are indeed compared to stars because it is our task and privilege to illuminate what can sometimes be a very dark universe.

Generally we see stars from a distance, hundreds, thousands or millions of light years away. That distance prevents us from viewing them as they really are - huge orbs of pulsating energy and light with a tremendous influence on other celestial bodies and the very space around them. In Egypt (the Diaspora) we too are a pale reflection of our potential power. Viewed from the right perspective and setting however, we are a blazing source of energy and light.

Israel is the setting in which a Jewish soul can come to full expression of its potential power. Leaving Mitzrayim (Egypt) is not easy. The Lubavitcher Rebbe wrote that we all have our "meitzarim", narrow places that can keep us confined. Sometimes those narrow places can even take the form of a lovely home on five acres. But leave Mitzrayim we must, if we

are to arrive at our true destiny.

Aloh Naaleh! As sons and daughters of Israel, let us shine forth as a beacon of faith, illuminating the world with the message of "Shma Yisrael" from the holiest place in the universe, the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Reich, Efrat

[4] **A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit**

When R' Shmelke came to Nikolsburg to serve as its Ravi, the whole city came out to welcome him. As soon as R' Shmelke got off the wagon in which he had come, he asked for permission to be alone for a while and he retired to a room. The time stretched on, and everyone waited for the rabbi to come out. Finally, someone unable to restrain himself crept up to the room and put his ear to the door. He heard R' Shmelke speaking to himself: "Good morning, Rav of Nikolsburg! Good morning, Rebbe. Please take a seat, distinguished rabbi."

The man couldn't believe what he had heard.

When at last R' Shmelke emerged, he went over to him and said: "Excuse me for being so forward, Rebbe, but I heard you say to yourself: 'Good morning, Rav of Nikolsburg! Good morning, Rebbe. Please take a seat, distinguished rabbi.' Could you tell me what that was all about?"

"Let me explain myself," said R' Shmelke. "I saw a huge crowd of people coming to pay their respects, and I became afraid that I might become conceited. I therefore took some time off and paid my respects to myself. That sounded absolutely ludicrous. From now on, whenever anyone pays his respects to me, I will let it affect me as the respect I paid myself."

Shmuel Himmelstein has written a wonderful series for ArtScroll: Words of Wisdom, Words of Wit; A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit; and "Wisdom and Wit" — available at your local Jewish bookstore (or should be). Excerpted with the permission of the copyright holder

[5] **Parsha Points to Ponder - SH'MOT**

1) Why does this new book in the Torah begin with the word AND?

2) Why didn't the Jewish midwives simply step aside from their position instead of risking their lives by keeping the Jewish babies alive? (see 1:17)

3) The Torah records that the Jewish people did not listen to Moshe BECAUSE OF THE BROKENNESS OF THEIR SPIRIT AND FROM THE HARD WORK (6:9). Why, then does Moshe tell G-D that THE JEWISH PEOPLE DID NOT LISTEN TO ME, HOW WILL PAR'O LISTEN TO ME? How could Moshe extrapolate from the unenthusiastic response of the slaves that the well-rested and strong-spirited Par'o would also ignore his message?

THESE ARE THE ANSWERS

Ponder the questions first, then read here

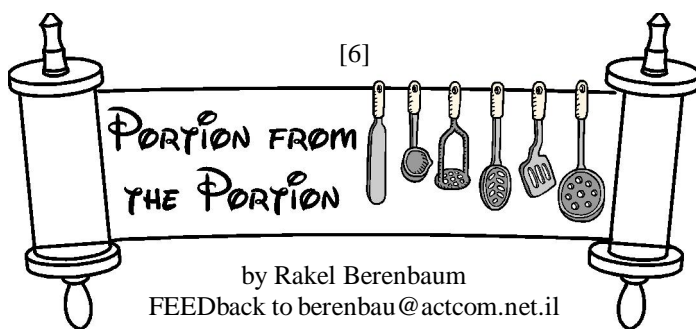
1) The Kli Yakar answers that that we see that the Egyptians completely changed their attitude towards the people of Israel after the death of Yosef. They made them feel unwanted. They

made the Jews feel as if they were newcomers who just came to Egypt. This is captured by the word AND in the context of the description of the Jews coming to Egypt. It was if they came once AND they came again.

2) The Chofetz Chayim teaches that this displays the true greatness of these women. They feared that if they stepped aside, new midwives could arise who would heed Pharaoh's decree leading to the deaths of Jewish babies. While they could have simply avoided dealing with the situation and absolved themselves, they recognized that risking their lives could be the only hope for these babies.

3) The Kedushas Yom Tov points to the Midrash which teaches that the Jewish people can only be saved from exile if they have faith. Thus, Moshe concluded that since the Jewish people did not believe, regardless of the reason, Par'o wouldn't listen. Salvation could not possibly come without the impetus of the Jews' faith.

Parsha Points to Ponder is prepared by Rabbi Dov Lipman Mashgiach Ruchani, Yeshivat Yesodei HaTorah in Bet Shemesh, author of "DISCOVER: Answers for Teenagers (and adults) to Questions about the Jewish Faith", soon to be republished by Feldheim - ppp@israelcenter.co.il



Moshe was in the desert guarding the sheep when he saw a (sneh) (thorn bush) on fire, and yet the bush was not being consumed. When Moshe moved closer to see why the bush wasn't being consumed, Hashem began to speak to him. Here in Moshe's first revelation from Hashem not only does he hear G-d's voice, but he also sees a "great sight". Was this revelation through fire designed merely to attract Moshe's attention or, alternatively was the bush really meant to be symbolic? Are we supposed to try to find a message in the Burning Bush?

Some commentators don't deal with this question. Either they feel that the burning bush was just a means to get Moshe's attention, or they feel that if there was some specific significance to the sign, it would be beyond our grasp (Avraham son of the Rambam).

Nechama Leibowitz brings many other midrashim and commentators who have tried to find the symbolism in the vision.

For example, Shmot Rabba and Chizkuni say that the vision came to answer Moshe's fear that maybe Israel would be totally lost in the Egyptian exile. The bush that burns and isn't devoured symbolizes that Egypt will never be able to completely destroy the children of Israel. This message is true for all the exiles.

We can ask another question on this vision. Is the fact that Hashem chose a thorn bush and not a tree or other kind of shrub coming to teach us something as well? The lowly prickly thorn bush is hardly the likeliest object to be chosen for a Divine revelation. There must be some lesson to be learned here.

Some midrashim say the thorn bush teaches us about the bondage in Egypt. When a person inserts his hand into a thorn bush it doesn't hurt because the thorns are bent downwards, but when he tries to pull his hand out, the thorns catch it and he cannot pull it. The same with Egypt. At the beginning they welcomed Yosef's family but then they enslaved them and would not let them leave.

There are other midrashim that show how we learn about Hashem's attributes by His choice of the thorn bush. R' Eliezer b. Arakh states in the Mechilta that Hashem prefers the lowly unassuming medium to a grandiose one. (We see this same idea when Hashem gave the Torah on the smallest mountain - Sinai). We should follow in Hashem's ways and shed some of our obsession with grandeur and outward appearances and be humble instead.

In another Midrash, R' Yehoshua b. Karcha speaks of Hashem's presence in every place (even a thorn bush) and His nearness to man wherever he may be (Egypt). This is a message of comfort to us all. Hashem is always with us. Not only that - but in Shmot Rabba they explain Hashem's speaking from within the thorn bush as symbolizing Hashem's suffering when we suffer. Hashem is pictured as a father chastising His children for their good. Even when He chastises us he suffers along with us, as it says in T'hilim (91:15), "I will be with them in trouble". It is comforting to know that even in hard times Hashem is there with us.

According to R' Arye Kaplan, the Sneh was probably the black raspberry (*rubus sanctus*) which has berries that turn red and then black.

Spicy (burning) fruit (blackberry) salsa

5 kiwis, peeled & diced

1 quart strawberries, chopped

1 pint blackberries, chopped

4 Granny Smith apples - peeled, cored & coarsely shredded

2 Tbsp. jelly (any flavor)

¾ cup brown sugar

1 Tbsp. cayenne pepper

1 (7 ounce) jar salsa (choose mild, medium or hot to taste)

1/3 cup lime juice

Combine fruit with all other ingredients. Mix. Serve with tortilla chips.

Ed. note: Another suggestion (obvious, perhaps) for a Sh'mot "portion of the portion" appetizer (first course) is Moshe BaTeiva, a hot dog in a filo dough wrap. They are the Israeli version of franks in jackets, with a much more substantial dough wrap, and are named for baby Moshe in a basket, from Parshat Sh'mot. They are available in some bakeries, or they can be simply made at home by wrapping a hotdog (meat or parve) in a square of filo dough and baked until golden brown. Serve with mustard and/or ketchup according to your family's taste. Variations on this theme include batter-dipping the hotdog rather than wrapping it in dough. Or spread a thin layer of mashed potato on the dough before wrapping it around the hotdog. As an added touch, serve Moshe BaTeiva covered with

string beans or sprouts to simulate Moshe's basket being placed in the reeds near the shore of the Nile. Also, served with a sauce, that can represent the water of the river. If you use a tomato based sauce or ketchup, it can further represent the Nile, which will turn ketchup-color in next week's sedra. If you have a Yocheved at home, she should definitely be the one to prepare this dish. If you or a daughter is Miriam, you or she can watch through the oven window on Erev Shabbat when the Moshe BaTeiva are baking. And a Batya - if you have one - can serve them. Have fun. Be creative.

The purpose of the "Portion of the Portion" column, besides giving you a D'var Torah and a recipe appropriate for the weekly sedra, is to demonstrate how the mundane can be elevated to a higher spiritual level.

[7] Torah from Nature • Nile Crocodile

When young crocodiles are hatching, either parent may help them out of the egg by rolling it between their tongue and palate... If baby crocodiles are in danger, the adult female may pick them up and flip them into her mouth for protection... crocs provide the most parental care for their offspring of any reptile... For 3-4 months a mother croc closely guards the nest, viciously attacking any intruder... She will guard her babies for over a year after they've hatched... nonetheless, only 2% survive to maturity.

[8] Divrei Menachem

Parshat Sh'mot opens by informing us that, "These are the names of Bnei Yisrael who were coming to Mitzrayim; with Ya'akov, each man and his household came."

Clearly, to endure and survive the enticing and unclean flesh pots of Egypt (the Hebrew name Mitzrayim itself indicates suffering), the Children of Israel were in need of a wellspring of inner strength and commitment, of which we can learn more from this opening sentence.

The Meir Eynei Yesharim, invoking the priestly breastplate that contained the names of the tribes, reminds us that these names served as a reminder to G-d of the virtues of Bnei Yisrael, thus protecting them. The tribes are associated first with Yisrael, a name of grandeur, and then with Yaakov (which evokes lowliness), implying that the overriding quality of Jewish pride coupled with perseverance served as critical virtues that contributed to this goal.

The Chafetz Chayim stresses that Yaakov's presence was a key factor. Perhaps he contributed to that continuous feeling of "coming" that motivated replenishment of ties with the old traditions and acted as a barrier to assimilation. For Rav Moti Alon the fact that the Children of Israel maintained their family units intact is the lesson to be learned. Surely we would do well to imbibe all these factors in our lives today.

Shabbat Shalom, Menachem Persoff

Towards Better Davening and Torah Reading

Look carefully at these words

וְתִירְאֵן
וְתִירְאֵן
וְתִרְעִינָה

The first is from this week's sedra, referring to the midwives - And they feared G-d. The ALEF is unvoiced and is therefore totally silent, absent really. VA-TI-RE-NA.

As opposed to the second word (which does not appear in Tanach) which is VA-TIR-E-NA, the ALEF contributes to that word's pronunciation. It means and they saw.

The third word is only a sound alike for Ashkenazim who consider AYIN to be a silent letter. The word is from Par'o's dream and means they were grazing.

Watch for totally silent ALEFs.

SHEYIBANEH BEIT HAMIKDASH...

A series of articles on Beit HaMikdash-related topics by Catriel Sugarman intended to increase the knowledge, interest, and anticipation of the reader, thereby hastening the realization of our hopes and prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash.

"Meir, You got a Tzav from your Mishmeret!" - A Story

Entering her building, Yehudit passed her mailbox and saw a white envelope jammed inside. Seeing the gold seal, she nodded her head and smiled. Her husband Meir, a venerable Kohein, had just received a Tzav (a call-up order) from his Mishmeret informing him that he was to serve in the "Mishmeret HaKehunah" for two weeks! Mikdash Milu'im! Yehudit knew that all Kohanim were divided into twenty-four Mishmarot ("companies of priests"), that representatives of every Mishmeret served in the Mikdash for a week at a time, and that the Mishmarot were broken into smaller family groups called Batei Av. The Kohanim of the Mishmeret would spend the first of their two weeks "refreshing" their Kohanic skills in a restricted area near Har HaBayit. Having honed their skills, the Kohanim of the Mishmeret would serve in the Mikdash during the second week. Meir had described the routine to her many times. He had been receiving similar Tzavim around this time of year and before the Shelosh Regalim for decades, so the envelope bearing the gold seal of the Mishmeret did not come as a surprise.

Meir, and the other Kohanim of his Mishmeret, arrived in Jerusalem more or less at the designated time and immediately reported to the restricted area, where, under the guidance of Mikdash experts, they would spend a week "refreshing their priestly proficiencies". As Kohanim kept arriving, the Mishmeret authorities efficiently(?) lined them up; made sure they signed in, divided them into groups, and sent them off to the infirmary for physical examinations. Since the Torah forbade Kohanim who had certain specific bodily defects to

perform Avoda, Mikdash doctors under the supervision of Chief Physician, Dr. Ben Achiya (Shekalim 5:1), carefully examined them to ascertain their fitness to serve. Sometimes Dr. Ben Achiya reluctantly had to send disappointed Kohanim home. Having concluded his physical, Meir, together with the rest of "his brethren the kohanim", began the process of purification by first showering and then immersing in a Mikve. When the Kohanim immersed, they had to be completely clean, and entirely free from any substances that might prevent the water from reaching all parts of their bodies. Such interpositions invalidated the immersion and the impurity would remain. The setting sun signaled their purification from most forms of ritual impurity. On the third and seventh day, Mikdash appointees would sprinkle them with Mei Nida, spring water mixed with the ashes of the Para Aduma. Then they would immerse again and thereby be purified of Tum'at Meit (corpse-impurity), the most virulent form of impurity. They would eat and sleep on the premises. Since it is forbidden to wear authentic Bigdei Kehuna (priestly garments) outside the Mikdash, they would be issued similar looking "work-clothes". The Milu'imnikim lined up to collect their Tzi'ud (equipment). As the line inched forward ever so slowly, Meir saw a window beckoning in the distance. Hours later (it seemed), Meir reached the window and a Levi handed him a bulky packet that consisted of two pairs of four "Kohanic practice work-clothes" wrapped in two grey wool blankets. Meir knew what to expect and he was not wrong. One set was much too big and the other set was much too small. Meir knew that giving them back simply was not an option. "Tistadru Beineichem" the Levi yelled out ("Manage among yourselves." i.e., trade with each other so that everyone has clothes that fit). Miraculously by shrewd horse-trading, Meir did acquire two sets of work-clothes that more or less fit. Suitably appareled, everyone was shown his quarters, i.e. a marked off place on the floor. "Don't complain! Next week, when you'll be in the Mikdash, you'll be sleeping on the floor in the Beit HaMo'keid! So get used to it!" Meir knew the routine. Besides, smart Kohanim brought air mattresses!

Meir, a "Zariz old-timer" thoroughly familiar with the Avodot of the Mikdash, was quickly co-opted by the instructors as an assistant and began reviewing with some of the younger Kohanim what they had learned. In groups, barefoot, and under the watchful eyes of instructors, they began their week's intensive study. They practiced how correctly to slaughter animals according to Halacha. (Since the animals were slaughtered "only for practice" the meat was distributed to the poor by "Mikdash Relief".) They were reminded which blood applications applied to which Korbanot. "Remember, before you do anything in the Azara, you wash your hands and feet at the Kiyor!" "Don't forget! Only a Kohein can receive the blood from the neck of the slaughtered animal." "All Avodot are done with the RIGHT hand!" "When you sacrifice an Olah, after you receive the blood, you begin by tossing the blood at the northeast corner of the Mizbei'ach." "You there! The blood has to spatter on the north AND east side of the corner! Do it again." "The receptacle for the Nisuch HaYayin (wine libation) is in the southwest corner of the altar." One day when assistant instructor Meir was showing a group of Kohanim how to apply blood on the "horns" of the altar for a Chatat, the heavens opened up and everybody got soaking wet. "Don't stop!" he cried, "The Avoda is not called because of rain! Be thankful it's not snowing!" A more fortunate group of Kohanim, going through their paces in a roofed area remained dry. Kli Shareit (serving vessel) in hand, they were practicing "taking the Kemitza (the "handful of flour")" for the Mincha (meal

offering). They practiced putting their right hand into the flour, closing the three middle fingers thereby enveloping some of it, and lifting it up. Meir, his all around expertise appreciated, was enjoying himself a lot! He couldn't wait to enter the Azara!

D'rashot given by the greatest Sages were interspersed with the practical work. The Sages stressed repeatedly the importance of the Avoda and that the Kohanim, by performing the Avoda correctly in the Beit HaMikdash, were bringing Kapara to Am Yisrael! After all, was not the Avoda one of the three pillars upon which the world stood (Avot 1:2)? One evening, the Segan, (deputy Kohein Gadol) spoke to them about various aspects of the Avoda. He particularly emphasized the great importance of Kavana - special intent. A Kohein who offered a Korban without proper intent invalidated it. Moreover, there were quizzes daily. "On what does the Shoheit have to concentrate when he slaughters the sacrificial animal?" "What does the Kohein have to think about when he is offering the Korban?" "What happens when a Kohein slaughtered a sacrificial animal, thinking it was an Olah, when really it had been designated as a Chatat?" "How was the Menorah cleaned? How did they light it?" "Briefly describe the Ketoret and how was it offered?" "How was it decided which Kohein performed which Avoda?" On the last day of their week long refresher course, the instructors tested them on their practical skills, graded them, and then determined who could be group leaders. Of course, Meir qualified! After the exam (it was the seventh day), the Kohanim lined up and Mikdash appointees sprinkled them with Mei Nida for the second time. They immersed and when the sun set, their purification was complete. Tomorrow, Shabbat, they would enter the Azara. -to be continued-

Catriel's book in progress: The Temple of Jerusalem, A Pilgrim's Perspective; A Guided Tour through the Temple and the Divine Service



- Pyramids, of course, represent our descent into Egypt.
- The head of lettuce is MAROR from the Seder table. It relates to the pasuk in the beginning of the sedra which describes the Egyptian's embittering the lives of Bnei Yisrael. Lettuce, explains the Yerushalmi, is a kind of vegetable that is tasty when picked ripe. The longer it stays in the ground, the more bitter it becomes. Lettuce, therefore, is very appropriate for the Seder table, even more so than horseradish, which is only bitter and misses the extra commemorative feature that lettuce has.
- That pasuk continues to specify the work with bricks (see the trowel and bricks) and the field work (see the planting of the seedling).
- The ball and chain represents enslavement in Egypt.
- Davka Graphics of baby Moshe floating on the Nile with sister Miriam watching over him.
- Another Davka Graphics of Moshe at the Bush.
- Point the sheep out to your children and ask them if they know any of the stories about sheep. Don't restrict the discussion to Moshe; extend it back to the Avot.
- Along the left side of the Pix is the MATEH, Moshe's staff.

- In the middle of the top of the ParshaPix, you find the three signs that G-d gave Moshe to catch Paro's attention.
- The snake, the hand that turned leprous like snow (represented by the snowman), and the turning of water into blood (symbolized by the 4 common bloodtypes: A, B, AB, and O).
- The goal of the Exodus: the land flowing with milk and honey (lower-right of the Pix).
- This leaves one unexplained item - a visual TTriddle.

TTRIDDLES...

are Torah Tidbits-style riddles on Parshat HaShavua (sometimes on the calendar). They are found in the hard-copy of TT scattered throughout, usually at the bottom of different columns. In the electronic versions of TT, they are found all together at the end of the ParshaPix-TTriddles section. The best solution set submitted each week (there isn't always a best) wins a double prize a CD from Noam Productions and/or a gift (game, puzzle, book, etc.) from Big Deal

Last issue's (VAI-CHI) TTriddles:

- [1] taxicab fleece euro • start 5/4/3
- [2] cold water, dishwashing liquid, club soda will help
- [3] Yitzchak's and the Rabbis' sons
- [4] Did he bless the major in charge of the squadron or the one who uses creative activity to rehabilitate disabled people?

NachKay Jewish Trivia Question:

CD from Noam Productions to the FIRST correct answer received. Duplicate prizes at the discretion of the NKJTB committee

Looking for a bracha that is said at most once in a lifetime

And the envelope, please...

- [1] This is a TTriddle for serious puzzle solvers. Start 5/4/3 tells you where to start reading each word. Ignore the first 4 letters and read from the 5th letter, from the 4th letter and 3rd letter respectively. This gives you CAB, ECE, and RO. Put them together and you get CABECERO, which, as everybody - all right, not everybody, but most Spanish speakers - is Spanish for HEADBOARD, as in Rosh HaMita from the beginning of the sedra.
- [2] This one's a nicer TTriddle than [1]. These three liquids should be identifiable as useful in the field of stain removal, in general, and recommended specifically for wine stains. If one were to take a phrase in Yehuda's bracha literally - KIBEIS BAYAYIN L'VUSHO... he washes his clothes in wine, then these stain removers would greatly help. What it he bracha might mean - there are different opinions - is that vineyards will be so lush and extensive in his territory that he could wash his clothes in the wine produced. Or something like that.
- [3] This is a TTriddle, unfortunately, was based on erroneous information. The solution was supposed to be HAMALACH HAGO'EL OTI... first said by Yitzchak's son (Yaakov) and then

sung (many years later) by the Rabbi's sons. Except, it seems, that HaMalach was not one of the songs of the Rabbi's Sons. If, in fact, it was introduced or made popular by D'veykus (it's on vol. 4), and not the Rabbi's Sons, then at least the TTriddle holds a semblance of truth in that one of the Rabbi's Sons sings the D'veykus songs - Rabbi L.S.

[4] This one works. The major (the common rank for this position) in charge of a squadron (in the British Army) is the OC, officer in charge. (Similar to the CO, commanding officer in the American Army.) The professional who uses creative activities to help rehabilitate physically or mentally disabled people is the Occupational Therapist, known as an OT. This TTriddle is based upon the Ashkenazic and S'fardic pronunciation of Yaakov's statement - VAIVARECH OTI (or OSI).

And now... the NachKup Jewish Trivia Question

First, we realized that people who get the email version of TT or download from the website will usually see the TTriddles (and everything else) before most readers of the hard copy. Hence, awarding prizes to the first solvers is unfair. IY"H beginning next week, prizes will be awarded to the winner of a drawing from among correct solvers whose answers we receive by email, fax, phone, owl, or in person, by Monday at noon. Solutions after that time will not be included in the drawing. If late solutions are the only correct ones submitted, they will qualify for the prize(s).

The NKJTQ in the Vai-chi issue of TT was:

Looking for a bracha that is said at most once in a lifetime

There has been a steady flow of solutions since soon after release of TT 699. There seems to be three possible answers - brachot that are said at most only once in a person's lifetime. This implies that most people never say them, but no one legitimately says it more than once.

Pidyon Haben was the first received answer, but - as was pointed out by several subsequently received solutions - a man can have two firstborns (or more) if each of two wives give birth to their first child. These two wives can be concurrent or successive. The point is that Pidyon Haben status depends on the first issue of the womb of the mother. A man can have

several B'CHORIM, each requiring a bracha for their Pidyon. (For inheritance purposes, a man has only one B'CHOR - his first child, if it is male.) However, Pidyon HaBen is not far off the mark. A firstborn who was not redeemed as a baby, is required to redeem himself when he reaches the age of mitzvot. In that case, the bracha is different from AL PIDYON HABEN. There are two opinions as to what the self-redeemer says: AL PIDYON HAB'CHOR or LIFDOT HAB'CHOR. In either case, it is a bracha that can be said at most once in a lifetime.

Another correct answer is AL T'VILAT GEIRIM, for the ritual immersion of a convert, said by the convert after he emerges from the Mikve. This too can be said at most, once in a lifetime. The possible wrinkle for this solution is whether a bracha is said for the immersion (and conversion) of a baby, who says the bracha, and if the text is the same. Depending upon the answers to these questions, this bracha might be able to be said more than once in a person's lifetime. The jury is still out on this one.

The third possible bracha that can be said at most once in a lifetime is the one for giving up one's life to sanctify G-d's name. ...L'KADEISH SH'MO BARABIM. The wrinkle in this bracha is that if a person survives the situation at the last moment, the bracha can be said subsequently if there is another situation of Kidush HaShem. So it might be possible to say this bracha more than once in a lifetime. So, you might argue, if a GER makes his Mikve bracha on a non-kosher Mikve or a person redeems himself inadvertently from a non-kohein, they too will make their once in a lifetime brachot a second time. Different - their first brachot are null.

One more possibility for the at most once-in-a-lifetime bracha - maybe. Does one who circumcises himself have a unique bracha?

One further suggestion for last week's NKJTQ (max. once in a lifetime bracha) was for building the Beit HaMikdash. This would have been a good answer, except for the fact that there is no bracha for that mitzva - several reasons why not

Winners of the NKJTQ: Gitta Neufeld for T'vilat Ger, Jan Meisler for Self-Pidyon, and Gil Reich for Kiddush HaShem (and living to see the Cubs win a WS)

This week's TTriddles:

- [1] 34 to 4 but it means they're equal
- [2] For openers, who (female) and what?
- [3] Father-in-law, son and grandson of Y's son and brother, and whose father?
- [4] all of a sudden it's a supply center
- [5] 5th and then first
- [6] ma, mama, mama
- [7] one visual TTriddle in the ParshaPix
- [8] Special visual TTriddle, Separate prize for its correct solution, Personal challenge to the great PPP solvers of the past (including MS) or anyone wanting to join their ranks (see hard copy of TT, or website)

NachKay Jewish Trivia Question

Tanach names in the regular weekday Amida - CDs for the best lists

Hold this date
Mark your calendars
Watch for developing details

Third Annual Israel Center Gala Dinner

**Leil Yom Yerushalayim,
Thursday, May 25th '06
at the Jerusalem Renaissance**