

## We know their excuse, what's ours?

This will be a fresh look from different angles at an old - and precious - topic. If any TTreader is inclined to say, "there they go again", then don't just say it about Torah Tidbits, say it about the Torah.

At the beginning of the sedra, G-d instructs Moshe to say to the Jewish People that He will be taking them out of Egypt, will be giving them the Torah ("I will take you unto Me as a nation, and I will be for you G-d"), and will be bringing them into Eretz Yisrael. That, as we've often said, is G-d's Three-Pronged Plan for us. It is His will that we leave Egypt, get the Torah, and live in Eretz Yisrael. It was His will over 3300 years ago, and it is His will today, and forever.

But know reflect upon the pasuk right after this dramatic, monumental promise/ prophecy. Moshe spoke as instructed to B'nei Yisra'el and they didn't listen because of their exhaustion and hard labor. They didn't listen! G-d told them that He was taking them out of slavery to freedom, that they were to be G-d's special nation, etc. and they didn't listen.

Good excuse? Let's say that it was. Note two things. First, when G-d tells Moshe to go to Par'o, Moshe "argues" that he is an ARAL S'FATAYIM and a K'VAD PEH, he cannot/doesn't speak well, and if his own people didn't listen to him, how is Par'o expected to listen. Moshe did not blame the people for not listening to him. Later, after the Torah gives us the genealogy of Moshe and Aharon, the Torah returns us, so to speak, to the point where G-d is sending Moshe to Par'o, and Moshe's contention that Par'o will not listen to him because of his difficulty in speaking; the Torah does not even mention that B'nei Yisra'el didn't listen, a further indication, perhaps, that in their circumstances, it was excusable for them not to have listened to Moshe and the promises he brought to them from G-d.

It is not just promises that we are dealing with here. It is G-d's expectations of His people. It is G-d's desire, so to speak, that we keep the Torah and that we live a Torah life in Eretz Yisrael. Prophets from Moshe Rabeinu and onward

## 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...

**This Shabbat is Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat. Common among those who write about the subject, is the custom to add a special dish (appetizer, side dish, dessert, or other) to our Shabbat meals, in honor of R"Ch, rather than to add a meal (as would be the custom for R"Ch during the week).**

**It was on R"Ch Sh'vat that the Jewish People arrived at their last place of encampment before crossing the Jordan River. It was there that we reviewed the whole Torah with Moshe Rabeinu, until his death on 7 Adar. Sefer HaToda'ah says that it is appropriate to learn something special (in addition to what we usually learn) and to maintain this extra learning from Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat.**

First KL Mon. night, leil 4 Sh'vat. (7-day people: Thu after 10:13pm or next Motza"Sh)

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In the Wolinetz Family Shul OHEL SHMUEL (entrance floor)  
Shabbat Shiur 3:15pm • **Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher** • Mincha 4:15  
Motza'ei Shabbat 8:30pm • **Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Poupko**

**Candle Lighting**  
and **HAVDALA**  
Standard (Winter) time

Correct for TT 749 • Rabbeinu Tam (J'm) - 6:18pm

<b>4:25pm</b>	Jerusalem	<b>5:41pm</b>
4:41pm	Raanana	5:42pm
4:41pm	Beit Shemesh	5:42pm
4:41pm	Netanya	5:42pm
4:42pm	Rehovot	5:42pm
4:25pm*	Petach Tikva	5:42pm
4:41pm	Modi'in	5:42pm
4:43pm	Be'er Sheva	5:44pm
4:41pm	Gush Etzion	5:42pm
4:40pm	Ginot Shomron	5:41pm
4:25pm*	Maale Adumim	5:41pm
4:41pm	K4 & Hevron	5:42pm
4:27pm*	Tzfat	5:38pm

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\* see box page 2

This Shabbat is the 120th day (of 355) and the 18th Shabbat (of 51) of 5767

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ... שֶׁתַּעֲלֵנוּ בְּשִׂמְחָה לְאַרְצֵנוּ... מוֹסֵף ר"ה

have repeated this Divine Plan and Will to the people in a variety of ways. And each new way that the call to faithfulness to G-d, to keeping the Torah, to living in Eretz Yisrael does not replace the previous way it was expressed. It adds to it. Prophecies that are contained in the Torah and the rest of Tanach are for all generations. Every one of those promises and prophecies are spoken to us. Today. Otherwise, we would not even know about them.

There have been generations and periods of Jewish History in which the Jewish People didn't listen to the prophecies because of exhaustion, hard labor, despair. And, perhaps, those who didn't listen can be excused because of their difficulties. Only perhaps. But let's not judge past generations or other Jews.

Just ourselves. When G-d says to us that He is taking us unto Him as a nation and is to be our G-d - do we hear? Do we listen? Do we respond positively? When we hear the call to live in Eretz Yisrael - the old and new call, do we hear? Do will listen? Do we do something about it? If not, G-d forbid, what's our excuse?



121 p'sukim - ranks 20th (4th in Shmot)  
 1748 words - ranks 15th (3rd in Shmot)  
 6701 letters - ranks 17th (3rd in Shmot)  
 P'sukim are above average in length

## מִצְוֹת

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 - 12 p'sukim - 6:2-13

**SDT** The two most common names of G-d in the Torah are E-LO-HIM and A-DO-NOI (as an act of respect for G-d's sacred names, these two are generally pronounced ELOKIM and HASHEM respectively, when referred to other than in prayer or Torah reading). ELOKIM is usually considered to be G-d's name of strict judgment, whereas HASHEM carries the connotation of Divine Mercy. Notice that in the accounts of Egyptian oppression, the predominant name of G-d is Elokim (especially in 2:23-25).

Exile is certainly associated with the stricter side of G-d's treatment of His People. If the quality of mercy were dominant, perhaps we would acclimate too well to conditions and lose our yearning for redemption. (See what has happened in

# Va'eira STATS

14th of the 54 sedras; 2nd of 11 in Sh'mot  
 Written on 221.8 lines in a Sefer Torah; rank 16  
 16 parshiot; 8 open, 8 closed  
 (above average for the Torah; avg. for Sh'mot)

## OTHER Z'MANIM

Correct for Jerusalem  
 Ranges are FRI-FRI • 15-22 Tevet • (Jan 5-12)

Earliest Talit & T'filin - 5:46-5:46am  
 Sunrise - 6:41-6:41am  
 Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma - 9:12-9:13am (8:24-8:26am)  
 Sof Z'man T'fila - 10:02-10:05am (9:31-9:33am)  
 Chatzot (halachic noon) - 11:44½-11:47am  
 Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha) - 12:15-12:18pm  
 Plag Mincha - 3:45½-3:50½pm  
 Sunset - 4:54-4:59 (4:48-4:54pm)

Important clarifications concerning the Candle Lighting times on the Front Page. Petach Tikva officially accepts upon itself to light Shabbat candles according to the Jerusalem custom. (This is due to the fact that the Ashkenazi community of PT was founded by people from Jerusalem who brought their customs with them.) Up until this week, we understood that to mean that in PT one lights candles 40 minutes before sunset, just like we do in Jerusalem. We contacted the Religious Council in PT and found out that the official candle lighting time for PT is the same as Jerusalem's (not 40 min. before sunset, but the same time as J'lem). Petach Tikvians (or whatever they are called) must realize that their sunset is earlier than Jerusalem's and therefore they do NOT have 40 minutes after the posted time until sunset - more like 30-35. So too for Maale Adumim. They light candles at the same time as J'lem too. Sunset is also earlier in Maale Adumim.

One of the rabbis from Ascent of Safed (that's Tzfat) told us that there are differing opinions concerning when Candle Lighting is there. All say 30 min. before sunset, but some say the sunset that does not take into account the elevation of Tzfat, and some say to use the sunset time that does take elevation into account. We print the earlier time, in case.

modern times when exile is accompanied by G-d's Midat HaRachamim and people are quite comfortable, and therefore, complacent - a regrettable state of affairs. Comfortable is not bad; complacent is - it means "contented to a fault".)

In the opening pasuk of this week's sedra, we find the unusual combination of both names. It is ELOKIM Who speaks to Moshe, G-d Who has judged and treated the People strictly and harshly. (And G-d Who is also speaking harshly to Moshe for his outburst at the end of Parshat Sh'mot). However, His message to Moshe is "I am HASHEM" (which comes with VAYOMER, the softer "tell", rather than VAIDABEIR, the harsher "speak" that began the pasuk). And His words of hope and promise to the People begin with the same declaration, "I Am HASHEM". In this context, we are told that G-d will take the People out of Egypt, save them, redeem them, take them unto Him, be our G-d and ultimately bring us into the Promised Land. These stages of redemption are summed up with the reiteration of the statement, "I Am HaShem". It is as if G-d is saying to the down-hearted People: "until now you've experienced Me as ELOKIM, but rest assured that you will now see HASHEM - the G-d of Mercy - in full measure. The Egyptians on the other hand are being punished by the hand of G-d as ELOKIM. (see 5:15).

**[S> 6:2 (8)]** The sedra begins with G-d speaking to Moshe Rabeinu and telling him of the promises He had made to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Also, G-d tells Moshe that He has heard and is responding to the cries of the People of Israel.

[In other words, G-d will be taking us out of Egypt not only because of promises He had made to the Avot, but because of His feelings for us.]

Therefore, G-d will take the People out from under Egyptian oppression, will save them from bondage, and will redeem them with His might. He will then take the People to Him as a Nation and be our G-d. He will then bring us into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe relates this to the People, who are too exhausted to listen.

**[P> 6:10 (3)]** G-d then tells Moshe to go to Par'o and demand the People's release. Moshe questions how Par'o can be expected to listen, if the People (Moshe's own people) themselves didn't listen to him.

**SDT** G-d tells Moshe to go speak to Par'o (about letting the People go). Moshe "demurs", using the logical argument known as KAL VACHOMER - if the People of Israel (my own People) didn't listen to me, how is Par'o going to listen to me. Seems logical, except that the Torah has told us why the people didn't listen to Moshe - they were utterly exhausted from their unusually difficult labors. If so, it does not follow logically that Par'o would not listen to Moshe. Maybe he would listen, not being exhausted. On the other hand, Moshe's KAL VACHOMER is based on his own statement - "I have a speech impediment". In trying to understand his failure to reach the people, Moshe finds fault in himself, not in the People. This is how a leader should behave. When a rabbi or teacher fails to communicate an idea to his charges, he should not conclude that the fault lies with them - they are dumb; they are not committed enough; they are not paying attention; etc. He should rather be critical of himself - I probably didn't explain things well; I wasn't patient enough; etc. This is one of the signs of humility that is such a desirable

characteristic in a leader. This was one of the many qualities that made Moshe Rabeinu The Leader and Teacher par excellence.

**[P> 6:13 (1)]** (Above Moshe's objections, so to speak,) G-d reiterates to Moshe and Aharon, that they are to tell the People as well as Par'o that the People will be leaving Egypt.

Note that this last pasuk of the first Aliya is one whole parsha. Single-pasuk parshiyot seem to say, LOOK AT ME. Perhaps, G-d is saying to Moshe - all your hesitations and protestations aside, it is time for TACHLIS. You and Aharon are going to tell/command the people and Par'o about leaving Egypt. Period.

## Levi - Second Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 6:14-28

**[S> 6:14 (15)]** The Torah begins to enumerate the names of the tribes and family groups. It is obvious that the intention here is not to review the whole of the nation, but rather to focus on Moshe & Aharon. The Torah starts the list with Reuven and Shimon, and when it gets to Levi, there is more detail. In this brief section, we meet many of the "main personalities" of the rest of the Torah. The Torah is also giving us the ability to continue the timeline of Jewish history, by giving us the ages at death of Levi (we already know the ages of the three previous generation, those of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov), his son Kehat, his son Amram. That brings us to Moshe and Aharon. We are also introduced to Korach and his sons and Aharon and his family.

**SDT** Although the purpose of this partial genealogy is to identify Aharon and Moshe, the Torah began with Reuven and Shimon before it gets to Levi. A reason offered for this in one of the sources is that since Yaakov Avinu spoke critically of these three sons, the Torah here lists only them, to teach us that they were important tribes despite their progenitors' "mistakes".

**SDT** There is a symbolic "reason" given for our name BNEI YISRAEL, rather than using the name of the other Fathers or Mothers? YISRAEL is spelled YUD (Yitzchak & Yaakov), SIN (Sara), RESH (Rivka & Rachel), ALEF (Avraham), LAMED (Leah). The name YISRAEL then encompasses the names of all the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. This is not a real reason, but a nice way to look at our main name.

**SDT** When the Torah tells us who Aharon married, she is identified as Elisheva bat Aminadav AND as the sister of Nachshon. Rashi tells us that from here we learn that when a man marries a woman, he should check out her brothers (because children often take after their maternal uncles). The same idea was previously presented in reference to Lavan.

**SDT** On the Torah's statement: HU AHARON U MOSHE, Rashi points out that sometimes (mostly, 34 of 38 times they are mentioned with a connecting VAV) Moshe is mentioned first, and sometimes Aharon is mentioned first, to teach us that they were equals. (That is, on some levels, but on others, Moshe Rabeinu was obviously on a higher standing.)

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 6:29-7:7

[S> 6:29 (2)] After the "digression" of the previous passage, the Torah now repeats that G-d is sending Moshe to Par'o and that Moshe continues to "object" because of his speech-impediment. (But this time, the fact that the people didn't listen is not mentioned.)

BTW, ARAL S'FATAYIM has different meanings in commentaries. Literally, it means: I have uncircumcised lips; it is variously interpreted as, "I have a speech defect", "I can hardly speak", and "I have no self-confidence when I speak".

Rashi says that G-d did not repeat the command, nor did Moshe repeat his objection. It is the Torah that is putting us back where we left off before the genealogical data were presented.

[P> 7:1 (7)] G-d tells Moshe that Aharon will do the talking, that Par'o will refuse the repeated requests to free the People, and that He (G-d) will take His people out, and that it will be clear to Egypt (and everyone else) that it is indeed G-d Who is doing every-thing. Moshe and Aharon do as G-d instructs them; they are 80 and 83 years old respectively.

**Observation** When the Torah is specific about ages, it usually is meant to give us an accurate way of constructing a timeline. Perhaps too, in this case, the Torah is pointing out something that we saw very often in the book of B'reishit - namely, the prominence of the younger brother over the older one.

**SDT** *How is it that Moshe Rabeinu is able to speak to the People of Israel throughout his "career" as leader, in light of the fact that he complained of being "speech impaired"? When Moshe spoke to the People of Israel, it was the Sh'china that spoke from his mouth. He had no trouble with his speech defect. He was, however, concerned when it came to speaking to Par'o. See 6:30.*

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 28 p'sukim - 7:8-8:6

[P> 7:8 (6)] G-d tells Moshe and Aharon, that when Par'o asks for a sign, Moshe shall instruct Aharon to throw down the Staff before Par'o and it will turn into a TANIN. Moshe and Aharon appear before Par'o and do as G-d has instructed them.

Rashi says that TANIN means NACHASH, i.e. snake or serpent. Not everyone see it that way. When G-d first had Moshe throw his staff down, it changed into a NACHASH, a snake. Here with Par'o, it changed into a TANIN. Strong possibility is that we are talking about a crocodile, venerated and worshiped by Egypt. Many Pharaohs identified with the crocodile as the ruling animal of the Nile.

Adds the Baal HaTurim, that the Tanin's reverting to wood was a message to Par'o that just as the mighty crocodile turns to dry wood, so too will the mighty Par'o turn to dust and food for worms.

**SDT** *Baal HaTurim points out that the pasuk says: G-d says to Moshe that when Par'o will ask for a sign, you (Moshe) shall tell to Aharon to take your staff and throw it (on the ground) in front of Par'o, it shall become a TANIN. It didn't say: AND it will become a Tanin. He explains that the staff was thrown down and then he was to command it to become a Tanin. And that's what happened, to show Par'o the power of speech that G-d has given to Moshe. In other words, the staff did not change upon being thrown down. It changed by a spoken command. That carries a pointed message to Par'o that his wizards aren't even in the same class with Moshe and Aharon.*

Par'o calls his wizards who are able to duplicate (sort of) what Aharon does; however, Aharon's staff (note: not his TANIN) swallows those of the wizards. Nonetheless, Par'o refuses to listen to Moshe and Aharon, as G-d had said.

[S> 7:14 (5)] G-d then instructs Moshe to go to the river (Nile) in the morning, where Par'o will be, and to bring the Staff with him. Moshe is to say to Par'o that G-d has sent me (Moshe) to tell you (Par'o) to release the People and you have refused until now. "With this will you know Who G-d is..." Moshe (actually Aharon) will be striking the water of the river, turning it to blood and killing all the fish therein.

[S> 7:19 (7)] G-d tells Moshe to tell Aharon to take the Staff and strike the waters of Egypt. Moshe and Aharon do as instructed and the waters turn to blood, the fish die, and the Egyptians cannot drink the water. Par'o's wizards again duplicate what was done, causing Par'o to stay stubborn. Egyptians are forced to dig for water (and/or buy water from the Jews). This first plague lasts 7 days.

[P> 7:26 (15)] G-d next instructs Moshe to go to Par'o (at his palace) and warn him that if he does not let the People go, Egypt will be smitten by a plague of frogs. Aharon is to raise the Staff above the river, which he does, and the land is blanketed with frog(s). The wizards are again able to simulate this plague with their magical powers. Par'o calls to Moshe and Aharon to pray to G-d that the frogs be removed, promising that he will let the People go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to G-d. Moshe asks Par'o when he wants the frogs to leave. (A strange question, to which Par'o gives a stranger answer). Par'o says "tomorrow", to which Moshe responds "so be it. And that will serve as proof of G-d's powers".

**SDT** *Why would Par'o ask for the plague to be withdrawn on the following day? He and his people were certainly suffering and would want to rid themselves of the frogs as soon as possible. Par'o (still refusing to see the plagues as Divine, and assuming that there was some natural explanation for them) figured that Moshe came before him when he (Moshe) knew that the frogs would leave. Moshe would give the impression that he (in the name of the G-d of Israel) had power over the frogs. So Par'o tried to trick Moshe by asking the unexpected - do it tomorrow. Moshe's answer was that doing so would demonstrate that it was truly G-d's power that was being observed.*

Egypt saw itself as great because of the Nile and because of the fertile land created by the waters of the Nile. The first plague smote the water. The second was a plague that came from the river and attacked the land. The third smote the land itself.

## **Chamishi - Fifth Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 8:7-18**

So it happens, and after the frogs are gone, Par'o reneges on his promise, as G-d had said he would (an oft-repeated phrase to indicate G-d's active role in the events of the Exodus).

**[S> 8:12 (4)]** G-d tells Moshe to tell Aharon to strike the dust of the earth (no warning to Par'o this time). The resultant plague of lice was not able to be matched by the wizards, who acknowledge G-d's might. Par'o remains stubborn.

**[S> 8:16 (13)]** G-d sends Moshe to warn Par'o about the next plague (swarms of insects or wild animals, depending upon which opinion you follow). New element with this fourth plague - the contrast between Egyptian and Jewish experiences.

There was always a contrast between the Egyptians and the Jews - Egyptians had no water during the first plague; the Jews had water. The Midrash even says that if a Jew and an Egyptian drank from the same cup, the Jew would be drinking water and the Egyptian would have blood. Similarly, the Jews did not suffer the plagues and the Egyptians did. Yet it seems that G-d had different messages for each of the plagues. (Or each set of 3 plagues.) AROV was the first plague that the distinction between Goshen and the Jews on one hand, and the land of Egypt and the Egyptians on the other, was so sharp.

## **Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 26 p'sukim - 8:19-9:16**

And so the AROV descend upon the land. Par'o calls for Moshe and gives permission for the people to sacrifice to G-d in Egypt. Moshe says that it must be in the wilderness.

Par'o agrees on the condition that Moshe pray for the removal of the plague. Afterwards, Par'o reneges.

**[P> 9:1 (7)]** G-d next sends Moshe back to Par'o to repeat the demand for the People's release and to warn him of the consequence of his refusal this time, namely DEVER. And so it happens that the livestock of the Egyptians all die, with not a single loss to the Jews. This Par'o checks on, yet he still remains stubborn.

**[P> 9:8 (5)]** The sixth plague (boils) is brought upon Egypt without warning. Although his people are being seriously beaten, Par'o continues to resist (from this point on, with G-d's help).

**[S> 9:13 (9)]** Moshe is next sent to warn about the

seventh (and very powerful) plague.



*In warning about HAIL, G-d says (through Moshe) that this time, I will send ALL my plagues... The Vilna Ga'on explains that G-d uses three main weapons, so to speak, to punish those who violate His commands - Fire, Water, and Wind. For example, to destroy Dor HaMabul, G-d used Water. To disperse Dor HaP'laga, He used Wind, and to destroy S'dom, His main weapon was Fire. The plague of Blood used Water. Plague 6 was the burning Fire of Boils on the skin. The locust came on the Wind. But Hail consisted of the whole arsenal - the Hail itself was Water, it had Fire in it, and the Hail was accompanied by strong Wind.*

## **Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya - 19 p'sukim - 9:17-35**

The threat/warning about hail continues. Never has hail like this been seen. There is also a challenge to the Egyptians in that G-d is allowing servants and animals to be saved by taking them indoors.

**[P> 9:22 (14)]** Moshe raises his hand heavenward and the hail falls. It is extremely destructive, but some plants survive (because they were pliable), as do the animals of those Egyptians who heeded Moshe's warning to bring them indoors. Par'o admits that he has sinned and grants Moshe's demands, if only the hail will stop. When Par'o sees that the hail and thunder have stopped, he yet again reneges, as G-d has said he would.

## **Maftir <sup>(2nd Torah)</sup> - 7 p'sukim - Bamidbar 28:9-15**

Chapters 28 and 29 in Bamidbar (Parshat Pinchas) deal with the daily and Musaf korbanot (sacrifices) in the Mikdash. Since the two Shabbat p'sukim are followed by the five that deal with Rosh Chodesh, both portions are read for the Maftir on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh.

Notice that the Musaf of Shabbat is an expanded version of the weekday sacrifices - i.e. two lambs at a time rather than one (twice a day). Rosh Chodesh's Musaf is like those of the Chagim. Makes sense when you think about it. Six days... and on the 7th - Shabbat is one of the days of the week and the unique one among them. The Chagim belong to the Jewish calendar, which is based on the months and Rosh Chodesh.

## **Haftara - 24\* p'sukim - Yeshayahu 66:1-24**

The special Haftara for Shabbat-Rosh Chodesh, the last chapter of Yeshayahu, preempts the regular Haftara (usually). The obvious reason for the choice is found in the next to the last pasuk, which mentions both Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh. This pasuk is reread after the last pasuk, so that the book of Yeshayahu - and this Haftara - can end on a bright note. This chapter, as all chapters in Yeshayahu from 40 and on, contains a message of

consolation. Specifically, this chapter tells us that G-d cannot be contained in the physical Mikdash, nor is He interested in sacrifices that are not offered with sincerity. This message is appropriate always, and the association with Shabbat - week in & week out - Rosh Chodesh - month in & month out, fits.

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

Lesson #364

### Neighbors, Rights and Responsibilities (part two)

We continue with the topic that so many neighbors get involved in. In some societies there is no way that a person can stop his neighbor from looking into his property. In halacha, however, there are certain rights to privacy and these are the subjects that we have been discussing and continue to discuss.

In the last lesson we were discussing the real estate owner's acquiring a presumption (the right to continue to maintain) a window and once in, it cannot thereafter be blocked out by his neighbor.

We will now discuss the size of a window for which Shimon may acquire the presumption. It is not every window opening for which Shimon can acquire a presumption. If it is large enough for a man's head to pass through, or the bottom of the window is lower than four cubits (about 7 feet) above the ground but not large enough for a man's head to pass through, Shimon may acquire a presumption to maintain the window opening. Once Shimon has acquired the presumption to maintain the opening, Reuven cannot block it up and must build any wall or other obstruction that he wishes to build at least four cubits away from the opening. If the opening is small so that the head of a man cannot pass through it or if the bottom of the window is more than four cubits above the ground, Shimon does not acquire a presumption to maintain the window opening. And Reuven may block the opening when he builds a structure on his land opposite the opening. These rules apply if Shimon makes the opening for ventilation. But if he makes the opening for light then Shimon can obtain a presumption even if the window opening is small or more than four cubits above the ground. There is an opinion that the window opening to qualify for the presumption must have a frame or the shape of the window. The standards of the community are controlling when questions arise as to whether it is a window opening.

Presumption for light not may be disturbed

If Shimon's window faces the public street, there are no prohibitions for Reuven as to obstructing the light of Shimon coming through the window from the street. However, if Shimon's window faces the street, Shimon may not overview Reuven. All that is said here applies when Shimon has a presumption and a window that faces Reuven's property. Once Shimon has a presumption to maintain his window, Reuven may not build any structure

that will block such window. Shimon can obtain an order from Beit Din to compel Reuven to comply with the laws stated in this lesson. Reuven must leave a space of seven feet (four cubits) between any structure and Shimon's window. The halacha demands a space of four cubits. If Reuven leaves a space of seven feet and builds his structure, Shimon cannot complain if the structure built by Reuven does not permit light to enter into Shimon's window. Although Reuven may obstruct the light coming through Shimon's window by building his structure seven feet from Shimon's window, it must be built in such a way that Reuven will not be able to overview Shimon's window. For example if the window in Shimon's wall is low, Reuven must build his wall at least seven feet away from Shimon's window and its top must be at least seven feet higher than the top of Shimon's window so that if Reuven stands on the top of his wall he will not be able to see into Shimon's window. In the wall that Reuven is building, there cannot be any window opening facing the window of Shimon through which Reuven can look into Shimon's house. The distances depend upon the angle at which Reuven can possibly look into Shimon's window. Thus if Reuven's wall is more than seven feet from Shimon's window the wall built by Reuven will have to be taller than 7 feet above the top of Shimon's window. If the window in Shimon's wall is high, Reuven must build his wall so that its top is at least 7 feet lower than the bottom of Shimon's window. In such a situation, Reuven's wall need not be removed from Shimon's wall since he is not obstructing Shimon's light. If Reuven's wall is perpendicular to Shimon's window, it need be removed only one tefach (handbreadth) from the window opening, provided that Reuven's wall is at least seven feet higher than the top of Shimon's window or the top of Reuven's wall is slanted so that Reuven is not able to sit or stand on the wall and look into Shimon's window. The opening must be a tefach from the end of the window. It need not be removed a tefach from the outside of the window frame but from the actual window. If Reuven builds two walls perpendicular to the window, one on each side of Shimon's window, they must be at least 7 feet between Reuven's two walls, with Shimon's window in the middle. If Reuven wants to put a cover over his two walls, the covering must be removed at least seven feet from Shimon's wall that has the window in it. It must be the kind of cover on which Reuven cannot stand. The reason for this is not to block out the light to Shimon's window. If Reuven builds a roof on his structure facing Shimon's window, the roof, even if it slopes, must still be at least seven feet below the bottom of Shimon's window. A skylight is not considered a window for the purpose of this lesson.

Protecting against the presumption of light

Until such time as Shimon has acquired his presumption for light, Reuven may take what ever legal action he can to prevent Shimon from obtaining the presumption to maintain his window opening or door opening whether or not it overviews Reuven's property. These are some of the situations in which Reuven may complain that Shimon's action will lead to a presumption and if Shimon does not heed the protest of Reuven, Reuven can apply to Beit Din for an order precluding Shimon from acquiring a

presumption. Assume that Shimon had built an opening in his wall that will permit his overlooking Reuven. In an attempt to avoid Reuven's commencing a law suit in Beit Din to enjoin the potential overlooking, Shimon transfers title to his land to his minor child. Beit Din will permit Reuven's law suit to proceed without having to wait until the owner child attains his majority. If Shimon sells his property to a Gentile, Beit Din will order Shimon to remove the overlooking. This assumes that Reuven is too timid or too frightened to commence a law suit against the Gentile since he feels threatened by suing a Gentile.

More IYH next lesson.

*The subject matter of this lesson is more fully discussed in volume 5, chapter 154 of A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law by Emanuel Quint. Copies of all volumes can be purchased at local Judaica bookstores. Questions to quint@inter.net.il*

## Spiritual and Ethical Issues in the B'reishit Stories

### BEIT YAAKOV IN EGYPT [4]

by Dr. Meir Tamari

"It came to pass, miketz, at the end of two full years, to the day' (B'reishit 41:1). From the use of the word miketz, instead of the more usual vayhi, we learn that the events now portrayed came at the exact end of the period mentioned, not approximately but exactly two years to the day. We see this from the cancellation of debts at the end of Shmita; miketz sheva shanim. 'Hashem placed an end to darkness' (Iyov 28); for 2 full years He placed darkness in the prison that held Yosef, then when the time allotted came to an end, Par'o dreamed" (B'reishit Rabba 89,1).

In this Midrash there is an important lesson ranging far beyond a mere understanding of the story of Yosef's release that extends to our moral living in all walks of life.

"When the time approaches for a person to die, we always mistakenly understand that the death comes because of some disease or illness. In reality however, it is because it is at the end of the period that G-d has allotted to that person, that they contract the disease or the illness that kills them. So too, it was because the 2 years after the release of the Sar HaMashkim that were determined by Hashem to be the end of Yosef's captivity, had elapsed, that Par'o dreamed his dream. The period determined by G-d was the cause of Yosef's release and the dream only the means or implement thereto" (Lev Eliyahu). "A person surveys his wealth or achievements and ascribes them all to his own wisdom, luck or his hard work. He does not understand that the real cause of any material or other success is G-d's plan and that their work is only the materialistic form of that plan. We learn the same lesson from Yosef's reconciliation with his brothers, when he shows them that he bears them no ill-will, as their action was not the real cause of his sale. "Now, do not worry nor let it be disturbing in your eyes that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that G-d sent me ahead of you" (B'reishit 45:5) (Bet Halevi). There are innumerable mitzvot that seem to bear the same message: Ribit, Bikurim, Shmita, Yovel, Omer and the offering of the 2 loaves on Shavuot, that all demonstrate that even though the crops and harvests are the legitimate fruits of our legal possessions and work, nevertheless, there is a real source and

owner that has to be acknowledged by the way we treat those fruits and results.

We must not make the common error of equating the idea of a Divine Plan with the teaching of determinism that would make all human efforts meaningless and irrelevant, including their moral or immoral acts. Just as in the story of Yosef, so too in our lives and histories there are two parallel stories - human actions and the Divine Plan - even though we may be aware only of the one being played out in the human acts before us. Alongside and guiding these acts at one and the same time there is both G-d's judgment and His Plan for us and for the world. We plough, sow, harvest and prepare our wealth in normal and human ways, but the results are ultimately His Plan and His Justice; any other scenario would either make everything open miracles or fatalism. In his Moreh Nevuchim (Part 2:48), Rambam uses Yosef's words in the verse we quoted, as an example of how G-d is the First Cause of acts accomplished by humans. "Although the brothers had Free Will, G-d Himself used their judgment to accord with His Plan" (Abarbanel).

Hashem had told Avraham in the Brit Bein Habetarim that prior to inheriting the Land of Israel they would have to endure slavery in a foreign land; that prophecy did not stipulate the country. The descent to Egypt therefore was the result of the action of the brothers even though it served the Divine Purpose. So that Yosef's correct understanding of his sale and subsequent history as G-d's Plan to save Beit Yaakov, nevertheless, does not imply that the brothers were guiltless. They sold him without any idea or knowledge of the Divine Plan and therefore had to be punished for their wrongdoing, even though because of Hashem's plan their action had a beneficial result. "If one was cooking on Shabbat and then a sick person ate thereof, the cook is not thereby freed from the wrong deed of cooking on Shabbat. This is because it was not his intention in the cooking to prepare food for the sick person. So too, since the brothers intended to harm Yosef, they were not absolved even though only good came of it" (Yalkut Yehuda).

If the brothers would have done t'shuva then they would have been forgiven. "However, we learn that they did not from the verse (B'reishit 42:20-21). When Yosef took Shimon and made the presence of Binyamin a condition for his release and their future purchase of grain, they did not repent over selling him. Rather they only said that it was because they did not have pity on him and did not consider his suffering that this trouble came upon them. To the end they maintained that their judgment that he was a rodef and therefore liable to the death penalty, was a correct one" (Soforno).

In view of the lack of t'shuva, the sin remained, only to be claimed from the Jewish People many centuries later, in the death of the Ten Martyrs and perhaps many other tragedies. In the Musaf of Yom Kippur we read that the Roman Emperor ruled that from the Torah itself one who steals another and enslaves him is liable to the death penalty (D'varim 24:7). Since the brothers were no longer alive, justice demanded that the leading Torah Sages should be so punished in their stead. "The cause of Yosef's brothers' sin was needless hatred, brought about by their inability to subject themselves to the will or guidance of others. For that needless hatred that persists among us, Bayit Sheni was destroyed, the 10 Sages killed and we have suffered the tribulations of all these generations since then" (Yalkut Yehuda).

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[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...*



When one hears a b'racha being recited over the radio or telephone, can/should he answer AMEN. Can he be yotzei a b'racha this way?



In order for one to be yotzei with a b'racha he hears, it must come from a person who is obligated in the mitzva (Rosh HaShana 29a). Even in order to answer AMEIN, he must hear the b'racha from a person whose b'racha is meaningful (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 215:3 regarding a small child's b'racha). Therefore, all agree that one is not yotzei and does not answer AMEIN to that which he hears on a recording, when no one is actually speaking.

Almost all poskim agree that one cannot fulfill the mitzva of hearing Shofar via microphone, telephone or radio, because one must hear the authentic sound of a Shofar (Rosh HaShana 27b). The ruling regarding Megila reading via microphone is not as clear. Although one does not hear the actual voice of a valid BK (ba'al korei), but a device-generated reproduction, it is better than a recording in two ways. First, the sound is produced directly based on the sound waves from the BK. Secondly, the reproduction is heard at essentially the same time the BK reads. Therefore, although most poskim believe one cannot fulfill the mitzva via microphone, the lenient position is marginally tenable (see Tzitz Eliezer VIII, 11); Igrot Moshe (OC II, 108) leans toward permitting it, but he appears to be

based on a lack of related scientific information.)

The Gemara (Sukka 51b) minimizes the importance of hearing the voice of the person reciting, if one knows what is being said. It tells of a huge structure in Alexandria, where flags were waved to inform people when to answer AMEIN. However, Tosafot (ad loc.) limits this precedent to cases where participants were not attempting to fulfill any mitzva at the time. On the other hand, it does seem to indicate that one can answer AMEIN without hearing the voice in a case where one knows what b'racha it is and is not obligated to be yotzei (see Shulchan Aruch and Rama, OC 124:8).

Rav Sh. Z. Orbach (Minchat Shlomo I, 9), while agreeing that one can answer AMEIN to that which he hears in shul via microphone, disagrees regarding radio and telephone. The distinction is that the people in Alexandria were close enough to be connected to the b'rachot without hearing them. However, there is no physical connection between the person reciting and the one "listening" at a distance via telecommunication. One can raise the following counter argument to Rav Orbach's claim (which is based on logic, not sources). Even though, scientifically, the reproduced voice is new and is not the transfer of the original voice, the immediacy and realistic reproduction creates a palpable connection even over great distances. Although to be yotzei with someone, one likely requires hearing the original sound emanating from the valid halachic entity, we learn from Alexandria that this is unnecessary in order to answer AMEIN; a feeling of connection may suffice. Indeed, Rav O. Yosef paskens that one cannot be yotzei via telephone but can answer AMEIN and answer along with prayers that require a minyan (Yechave Da'at II, 68).

Another factor which might preclude answering AMEIN is the possibility that the voice travels over a place that is filthy or contains idol worship (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 55:20). However, there are a few reasons to be lenient here. First, it is not clear that we pasken that this is a problem, especially when there are other points of leniency (see opinions in Yechaveh Da'at, ibid.). Also, even if it were certain that "the voice" travels over such a place, the fact that it travels as electrical signals alone may be reason for the halacha not to apply.

In conclusion, it is unclear whether one should answer AMEIN to b'rachot heard via telecommunication. If one likes, he may rely on ample grounds to do so, realizing that the stakes regarding an unwarranted AMEIN are lower than regarding b'rachot (see Igrot Moshe OC IV, 91). However, one need not feel halachically mandated to answer (see also Piskei Teshuvot 215:3).

*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](http://www.ou.org) or [www.erezhemdah.org](http://www.erezhemdah.org). And/or you can receive Hemdat Yamim by email weekly, by sending an email to [info@erezhemdah.org](mailto: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*

*Mazal Tov to  
Eliezer & Linda Edelman and family  
on the birth of their granddaughter,  
born to Natan & Devorah Edelman*

## [2] Candle by Day

If you have missed the boat, go by train.

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

Why does the Torah tell us about Moshe's yichus and age just before he begins negotiating in earnest with Par'o?

R' Shimon Raphael Hirsch explains that we need to know Moshe's lineage now, before he embarks on an unprecedented mission to deliver an entire nation from slavery, so that his absolutely human origin will be firmly established for all time. We are given his family tree, including his mother, father, siblings, cousins, so that no one will later be able to claim that he is the "son of G-d".

And why do we need to know that he was 80? Answers the Sforno, so that we should appreciate that even though Moshe was getting on in years (by this time people were no longer living hundreds of years) he responded with energy and enthusiasm to do the will of his Creator.

Moshe was only 12 when he killed the Egyptian who was beating a Jew and had to run away to Midian (Sh'mot 3:18, Sifte Chachamim). After being a shepherd in the employ of his father-in-law for nearly 70 years, he might well have been contemplating retirement. But he pursues a new dream at an old age. And it's not just about taking the Jews out of Mitzrayim; it's about bringing them to their destination.

The Chazon Ish was once speaking to an American Jew who had come to see him in Bnei Brak for advice and a bracha. "Did you come here to live?" asked the Chazon Ish.

No, answered the Jew.

"Is it permissible for you to leave Eretz Yisrael?"

"Well, I heard that if you come with the intention of not settling then you're allowed to leave," answered the flustered Jew.

The Chazon Ish smiled and said, "How strange that you make such an effort to find a heter to leave Eretz Yisrael at a time when the rest of us are looking for ways to reach Eretz Yisrael." (This was the time of the British Mandate.)

The Chazon Ish could not understand how Jews who grew up learning Chumash, who learned the moving plea of Moshe at his death of "Let me cross over [the Jordan] and see" the land, could fail to feel a love for Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe Rabbeinu showed us, among so many other things, that it's never too late to act on a love for Eretz Yisrael.

**Joel Rebibo, Beit El**

*TORAH THOUGHTS as contributed by Aloh Naaleh members for publication in the Orthodox Union's 'Torah Insights', a weekly Torah publication on Parshat HaShavu'a*

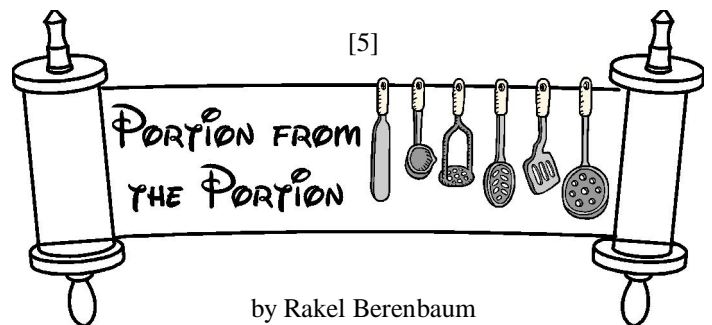
## [4] Wisdom & Wit

R' Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavich would beseech Hashem: "Hashem, the halacha is that a person may not strike his grown up son, lest the son strike back and by that action he will be guilty of a capital offense. Similarly, do not afflict us with such afflictions that we are unable to withstand, lest we strike back at You and incur retribution."

#####

R' Naftali of Ropshitz: "People think that the greatest faculty that man has is the power of speech, but I say the greatest faculty is the power to hear."

*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*



## HAIL AND FIRE WITHIN IT

Par'o can't seem to let the Jewish people leave. In this week's sedra we see seven of the ten plagues that were brought down on Egypt to teach them, Israel, and the whole world a few lessons about Hashem. Whether the plagues came as a punishment MIDA KNEGED MIDA, tit-for-tat for things the Egyptians did to the Jewish people while they were slaves in Egypt, or as a way to show them that their gods were no match for Hashem, Páro was not quick to catch on.

We are all familiar with the way that Rabbi Yehuda divided up the plagues into three different categories, D'ZA"CH ADA"SH B'ACHA"V. That is because there are connections that can be found between the plagues in each group and similarities that can be found between the plagues that are the first, second and third in each one of the groups. For example in the first, fourth and seventh plagues (each of which are the first plagues in its group), G-d tells Moshe to meet Páro early in the morning: HASHKEM near the Nile (9:13).

Let's look a bit deeper into the seventh plague BARAD (hail), the first plague in the third and last group of plagues. With a climate like the one in Egypt, they probably never saw hail before as the verse says "Never before in Egypt... has there been anything like it." (9:18) So bringing hail onto Egypt was already a miracle, but this hail was unique in other ways. First of all, the hailstones were very large, but the most interesting thing about this hail is that the ice balls contained fire as well. It is true that storms are accompanied by lightening in the

sky, but here the fire was actually mixed with the ice of the hail. The midrash, as brought down by Rashi, says that this was a special miracle, that two diametrically opposed objects - fire and water - made peace in order to do the will of Hashem.

The midrash in Bamidbar Rabba relates the story of a king who had two legions that hated each other. One time the king was fighting a war and he made peace between the two legions so they could go out and fight against the common enemy together. The same is true here in the plague of hail - fire and water worked together to fight the common enemy, Egypt. If only we could learn this lesson and unite to fight all our common enemies around us.

## ICES & FIREBALLS

Fireballs:

- 12 ounce package semi sweet chocolate chips
- ¼ cup margarine
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- 2 Tbsp. rum
- 1½-2 tsp. Tabasco sauce
- 3 cup sugar

Melt chocolate and margarine over low heat. Stir in walnuts, rum and Tabasco sauce. Mix well. Put in fridge for about 15 minutes. Shape into 1 in. balls. Roll in sugar then store in refrigerator.

Brandied Ice:

- ½ gallon ice cream
- 5 oz. brandy
- 2 tsp. creme de cacao (optional)

Mix a bit of the ice cream and a little brandy at a time. Using too large a portion doesn't produce satisfactory results. Pour into container. Repeat until all ice cream and brandy is used. Then stir all to blend well. Freeze uncovered. Keeps up to 4 days before ice crystals form. You can substitute equal amounts of unsweetened orange or apple juice and 1 tsp. vanilla for ¼ cup brandy if you prefer.

## [6] Parsha Points to Ponder

### VA'EIRA

1) G-D tells Moshe to inform the Jewish people that He would redeem them from Egypt and would bring them to the Land of Israel (see 6:7-8). How could G-D promise to do something which He did not do in the end since most of the people in this generation died in the desert before actually being brought to Israel?

2) The Jewish people did not listen to Moshe's message from G-D that they would be redeemed from Egypt and brought to Israel (6:9). Why does G-D seemingly ignore this response of the Jews when a few verses later He tells Moshe and Aharon to

return and tell the Jews that they are going to leave from Egypt? (6:13)

3) The Torah relates that when Moshe prayed for the hail to end, hailstones which were in the air did not fall to the ground (see 9:33 and Rashi). Why did G-D perform that miracle instead of simply allowing those stones which were in the air to follow their natural course and fall to the ground?

## THESE ARE THE ANSWERS

Ponder the questions first, then read here

1) The Ohr HaChayim points out that a careful reading of the verse yields the answer. Between promising to take them out of Egypt and to bring them to Israel, G-D says **AND YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR G-D**. That, explains the Ohr HaChayim, was a condition for the second part of the promise to come true. The Jews would be brought to Israel only if they lived as those who know G-D. The sins in the desert displayed otherwise and, therefore, they did not merit the fulfillment of the promise to be brought to Israel.

2) The Meshech Chochma suggests that the Jews accepted from Moshe that they would be redeemed from Egypt. When someone is in trouble they would likely believe anything which might lead to their freedom. However, it is not the nature of a slave to believe all kinds of promises regarding a glorious future elsewhere. As such, the Jews did not accept Moshe's words regarding G-D bringing them to Israel. Thus, in verse 13, G-D responded by telling Moshe to focus solely on the fact that they would be redeemed from Egypt and not to mention the other aspects of His promise.

3) Rav Moshe Feinstein answers that this miracle is right in line with the message of the rest of the plagues. The plagues demonstrated G-D's control over nature. A basic rule of nature is that something in the air falls to the ground. By stopping the hail in mid-air, G-D demonstrated that even a basic rule of nature such as the pull of gravity happens through G-D's willing it to happen and He can change that rule if He so chooses.

*Parsha Points to Ponder is prepared by Rabbi Dov Lipman, who teaches at Reishit Yerushalayim, Tiferet, and Machon Maayan in Beit Shemesh and RBS and is the author of "DISCOVER: Answers for Teenagers (and adults) to Questions about the Jewish Faith", just re-published by Feldheim ppp@israelcenter.co.il*

[7]



*A new Torah Tidbits column with a Parshat HaShavua insight geared towards the young reader... or their parents and grandparents to read to them.*

Do you know what the Hebrew word LISHMO'A means? Sure you do! It's an easy word, probably one of the first words you ever learned, just as Shema Yisrael is one of the first prayers a Jewish

child learns to say. LISHMO'A means to listen, or to hear.

In Parashat Va'era, the word LISHMO'A is repeated many times in different forms. Everyone seems to be listening or hearing or telling someone else to listen. Hashem commands Moshe to go to Par'o for He has heard the groans of the enslaved Jewish people. Moshe says that if the Jews did not listen to him, how can he expect to listen? G-d answers that the Jews did not hear because of their hard work and suffering. Then G-d punished Par'o so that he could no longer hear Moshe even if he wanted to.

But hearing means more than just using your ears. It means accepting what you are hearing. In fact, when the Jews said NA'ASEH V'NISHMA, they accepted the Torah even before they heard what it had to say.

In all of G-d's world, we are the only creatures who can think thoughts and put them into words. We can describe our ideas, what happened yesterday, what we plan to do tomorrow. We can tell stories. We can learn and study. No other creatures can do these things. That is because Hashem created us with the ability to speak, and words are truly powerful.

But what good are powerful words if no one is listening? We don't want to be like Par'o who couldn't "hear". However, the world is so noisy that sometimes it's hard to hear. The phone is always ringing, the radio is blaring, a tape or disc is playing. We need quiet in order to think or speak or listen.

Hashem doesn't usually make loud announcements nowadays either. In order to hear His Voice and the message in the Torah, in order to hear what our parents and family and teachers and friends are trying to say and tell us, we need to learn how to be quieter and to listen. (It would be nice if we learned how to speak quietly too!)

And who knows? Just as Hashem heard the cries of the Jews in Egypt, if we follow His example and learn how to listen, maybe he'll listen to us too!

## [8] **MicroUlpan**

An emulsion is a mixture of two unblendable substances with one substance dispersed in the other. Mayonnaise is an emulsion. TACHLIV (same root as milk, because an emulsion is often milky in appearance).

## [9] **Torah from Nature**

### **Buffalo, buffalo...**

The class of mammals is subdivided into several orders, one of which is artiodactyl, or even-toed ungulates. One of the families of this order consists of bovines, which includes several tribes, including bovines, which are further

subdivided into genera, and then species. This column will introduce four different bovines, different from each other, but all called buffalo.

The American buffalo is also known as bison - in fact, its scientific name is *bison bison*. (Believe it or not, one of its subspecies, the plains buffalo is *bison bison bison*.) The wood bison is the largest land animal in North America.

The wisent (first syllable sounds like the letter V), a.k.a. European buffalo, a forest-dweller, is usually more massive than its American cousin, less shaggy, longer tail and horns. It is Europe's largest land animal, and is endangered.

The African or Cape buffalo, different genus, is a powerful animal that evens lions respect and fear. Humans are its only predator. Dominant male of a herd is called the "boss" (perhaps a take-off on BOS, the genus that cows and yaks belong to. Or not.)

Water buffalo are widespread in many parts of Asia. They are often divided into river buffalo, swamp buffalo (a.k.a. Caraboa), and wild buffalo (a.k.a. Arni). Some water buffalo are domesticated, some wild, and some feral (formerly domesticated, now back to the wild). Some adult males weigh well over a ton. All buffalo are kosher. Buffalo horns may not be used as Shofar (buffalo and cow are in the same family).

There are several species of fish known as buffalo fish. They are kosher too.

[Buffalo wings can be made from kosher chicken wings, but are supposed to be dipped in a blue cheese dressing, making them non-kosher.]

## [10] **Divrei Menachem**

Parshat Va'eira introduces the Ten Plagues that afflicted the Egyptians in the period preceding the Exodus. Our rabbis tell us that the plagues were broken into three consecutive categories so that Par'o - who not only believed that he was a god but also believed in gods for various circumstances - would finally recognize Hashem's singular mastery over all the elements in the universe, on earth, in the air and in the heavens above.

Surprisingly, this week's parsha opens with a message from G-d in which Hashem also appears to clarify for Moshe the nature of His character. For after Par'o defies Moshe and Aharon's demands to free the people and increases the burden on the Jewish slaves, Moshe - seemingly ignoring Hashem's former prediction of Par'o's negative attitude - complains to G-d saying, "Since I came to Par'o to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people" (Sh'mot 5:22:23).

In reply, G-d reiterates His promises to redeem the people of Israel. The soliloquy begins with the words, "I am G-d" and finishes with the words, "I am G-d." And no less than seven times in this divine response, the same G-d Who appeared to the Avot is revealed in the first person ("I") as the One Who fulfills His promises. Clearly, if Moshe needed such reinforcement, how much more do we need to consistently recall Hashem's divine providence over our people.

**Shabbat Shalom, Menachem Persoff**

## Towards better Davening and Torah Reading

Review of a classic TBDATR topic. This is actually the topic that led to the whole column. And this week's is the sedra to review it for.

"Four terms of Redemption" (really more than four) are from Sh'mot 6:6-8 --

G-d says, am I will \_\_\_\_\_.(Take you out, save you, redeem you, take you, be for you, and you will know - skip this one - bring you, give you.) With the exception of v'ha-YI-ti, which keeps the MIL'EIL accent of its past tense form when it is flipped to future (because of its root's third letter HEI), all the other terms must be accented on their last syllable because of the tense shift. v'ho-TZEI-ti means "and I took you out", which is not what G-d is telling Moshe to say to the people. v'ho'tzei-TI means and I will take you out. It makes a real difference.

### 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.*

### Sacred Space - "There are Ten Grades of Holiness ..."

"There are ten grades of holiness: [1] Eretz Yisrael is holier than all other lands. And what is the nature of its holiness? That from it are brought the Omer, Bikurim, and the Sh'tei HaLechem which may not be brought from any other land. [2] Walled cities are holier (than other areas of Eretz Yisrael) for Metzora'im ('lepers') must be sent out of them and a corpse, though it may be carried about them as long as it is desired, once it is brought out, it may not be brought back. [3] The area within the walls (of Jerusalem) is still more holy because it is (within the walls, and not outside of them) that Kodashim Kalim and Ma'aseir Sheini may be eaten. [4] Har Habayit is still more holy for no Zavim, Zavot (men or women who suffer from a 'flux'), Nidot, or Yoldot may enter it. [5] The Cheil (the "ramparts", the area behind the Soreg, a fence 10 Amot distant from the outer walls of the Mikdash complex) is still holier because neither non-Jews ('idolaters') nor Temei'ei Meit (those who have been rendered ritually impure by coming into contact with a corpse) may enter it. [6] The Ezrat Nashim is still holier because no Tevul Yom (a person who has immersed in a Mikva at the end of his period of defilement but must wait until sunset to complete his ritual purity) may enter it. [7]...Ezrat Yisrael is still more holy because a Mechusar Kipurim (a man whose atonement is incomplete because he has not yet brought his prescribed Korbanot, e.g., a Metzora or a Zav), may not enter it. [8]...Ezrat Kohanim is yet more holy because no Israelite may enter it unless he is performing S'micha, slaughtering, or 'waving' (his Korban). [9] (The area) between the Ulam (the entrance hall of the Bayit) and the Mizbei'ach is still more holy for none (i.e. no Kohanim, non-Kohanim are not permitted in this area) that has a Moom (a physical blemish that precludes him from serving at the Altar) or a wild growth

of hair may enter it. [10] The Heichal is still more holy for no one whose hands and feet are unwashed may enter it. [11] Kodesh Hakodashim is still more holy because no one may enter therein except the Kohein Gadol on Yom Kippur at the time of the Avoda..." (Keilim 1:6-9)

Midrash Tanchuma (K'doshim 10) reflects the same sentiments. "Just as the navel is found at the center of a human being, so is Eretz Yisrael found in the center of the world... Yerushalyim is in the center of Eretz Yisrael, the Beit Hamikdash is in the center of Yerushalyim, Kodesh Hakodashim is in the center of the Beit Hamikdash. The Aron (Habrit) is in the center of the Kodesh Hakodashim and the Even Shetiya (the "foundation stone", upon which the Kohein Gadol placed the fire-pan with the Ketoret during the Avoda on Yom Kippur during Bayit Sheini [Yoma 5: 2]) is in front of the Aron and from it (the Even Shetiya) was the world founded..." (However, the Even Shetiya has a subsequent history that is no less awesome. When Ya'akov Avinu fled "from before the face of" his brother, he passed Har Hamoriya, the site of the future Beit Hamikdash. Even though it was high noon, a miracle occurred and the sun set. "HaKadosh Boruch Hu said, 'This Tzadik has arrived at My lodging place. Shall he pass by without lodging there?' (Rashi, B'reishit 28:17). Ya'akov took stones from the altar upon which Avraham had bound Yitzchak "and arranged them around his head". The next morning, one large head stone miraculously coalesced from the smaller stones! Ya'akov "set it up as a Matzeiva and poured oil on its top". Later G-d sank the anointed stone into the abyss. When Shlomo Hamelech built Bayit Rishon, G-d raised up the stone from the depths and placed it in the Kodesh Hakodashim. When the Mikdash was destroyed, the Even Shetiya, G-d again buried the stone beneath the surface of the earth. It will be returned to its place in Kodesh Hakodashim when the Beit Hamikdash is restored, Bemheira b'yameinu.)

The above-mentioned Mekorot (among countless others) delineate a series of concentric circles enclosing progressively smaller areas blessed with ascending levels of holiness. The Kodesh Hakodashim, and more specifically the Even Shetiya, is in the center. The structural relationship between the "subdivisions" is determined by access and exclusion. The hierarchic status of the person (e.g., Kohein Gadol, Kohein, Yisrael) entering a particular area, his level of purity (e.g., Tahor, Tamei, Tevul Yom, Zav, etc.) or having undesirable physical or behavioral characteristics (e.g., a Ba'al Moom, being drunk, etc.) will either legitimize or effectively effectuate his exclusion from the more sacred areas. An Israelite who enters the Mikdash compound or the Kohein who enters the Azara to perform Avoda must prepare themselves. Even if they are ritually pure, they still must immerse in a Mikva again before passing through Sha'ar Nikanor and entering the Azara. Male Israelites immersed in Mikva'ot located in Lishkat Hametzora'im in the northwest corner of the Ezrat Nashim: Kohanim immersed in subterranean Mikva'ot accessible only to them. Both Moshe and Yehoshu'a bin Nun were commanded to remove their shoes when they were vouchsafed a divine revelation (Sh'mot 3:5, Yehoshu'a 5:15). Nevertheless, neither the area around the burning bush, nor Yehoshu'a bin Nun's lookout "by Yericho" acquired permanent sanctity. On the other hand, the site of the Mikdash "was consecrated for its time and for all time to come." Rambam writes, "It is a well known tradition that the place where David and Solomon built the altar in the threshing-floor of Ornan is the place where Abraham built the altar and bound Isaac. It is the place where No'ach built an altar when he went forth from

the ark. It is the place where Kayin and Hevel sacrificed and it is the place where Adam offered a sacrifice when he was created and from that very place was he created." In contradistinction to merely transitory holiness, the site of the Mikdash became "sacred space" for eternity. Its holiness remains even today when the Mikdash is not physically present.

D.R. from Rehovot asks, "How could the kohanim climb the golden chains in the ulam (Midot 3:1)? We know that the kohanim didn't ascend the altar on stairs. The Mishna says that "there was a sloping platform (kevesh) at the south of the mizbei'ach, 32 amot long and 16 wide..." that enabled the kohanim to ascend to the top of the mizbei'ach without 'uncovering their nakedness to it.' In fact, Rashi (Sh'mot 20:23) derives an important ethical lesson from this. "If about these stones, which have neither understanding nor sensitivity to their shame, the Torah said not to act towards them in a disrespectful manner, how much more so should you be careful not to act disrespectfully to your fellow man who is created in the image of your Creator and is sensitive about being shamed?" But the Mishna also says (ibid. 3:8), "There were chains of gold fixed to the roof-beams of the Ulam by which young kohanim used to climb up and see the crowns in the windows (in the western wall of the Ulam overlooking the Heichal, CS).' Isn't their climbing up golden chains in Bigdei Kehuna in the Ulam, and exposing their bodies for all to see, even more disrespectful than merely climbing to the top of the altar on stairs?" (Excellent question! I had no answer! CS)

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

## from page 3 PARSHA PIX

7 of the 10 images from the Davka Judaica graphic of the 10 plagues. The final three are in next week's sedra. (BO = BET+ALEF = 2+1 = 3 final plagues that are to be found in Parshat BO.)

Notice the Staff, prominent in the middle of the ParshaPix.

Above it is a sword. This can represent Z'RO'A N'TUYA, the "outstretched arm" with which we were to be taken out of Egypt. Also, the sword is prominently mentioned in the Haftara as that which will befall Egypt.

Next to the staff and sword is a shovel used by the Egyptians to dig for water - only way to get a drink during the plague of Blood.

The oven is what some frogs went into, producing a Kiddush HaShem and a lesson to us that G-d is still in charge of nature - He renews, every day, the acts of Creation. (Each element of nature that was used by G-d in the process of the Plagues and Exodus sanctifies G-d's name because we see His control and involvement in this world. Famous re the non-barking dogs, but frogs, etc. too.)

The Staff is burping from its recent meal of Wizard Staffs (see Sedra Summary for details).

Four cups of wine corresponding to the Four Terms of Redemption, which we find at the beginning of the

sedra.

Triple-S J, Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, slogan was Let My People Go.

Pictorial representation of Par'o's heart strengthening, as is mentioned in several places in the sedra and next week's.

Upper-right corner - the emblem of the Hogwarts School. Par'o's wizards might have been dropouts from Hogwarts since they were not able to cope with the plague of KINIM.

Below BARAD (hail) are the standing wheat and the broken barley in the aftermath of that plague.

In the lower left corner are a pair of Crocs, comfortable shoes whose logo is a crocodile, as in the staff-turned-to-TANIN.

The compass needle points north, EL TZAFON, as in ELTZAFAN b. Uziel, brother of Misha'el (see [9]) and Sitri.

C (atomic number 6, atomic weight 12.01) is the symbol for carbon, the main ingredient in the furnace soot that Moshe and Aharon used to bring about the plague of SH'CHIN (boils). Last year, this was a visual TTriddle and one solver came up with a different solution: it stands for the KORBAN we asked to sacrifice...

The flag is that of Vietnam. The key makes it KINAM, a.k.a. KINIM, plague #3. (The lice are referred to as KINIM, which is plural, 3 times and KINAM, which is singular, twice.)

Elazar b. Aharon HaKohein married one of the daughters of PUTI'EL; they had Pinchas. Elazar's wife was BAT-POOH-T-L.

### 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 (SH'MOT) TTriddles:

#### [1] His shoes, his shoe?

When Moshe sees the bush is burning but is not consumed, he approaches it to see this "great site", why doesn't the bush burn. G-d calls to him from within the bush and tells him not to approach further, SHAL NAALECHA ME'AL RAGLECHA, remove your shoes from your feet. The word SHAL appears only one other time in Tanach - when Yehoshua is at Yericho and he sees a man (angel) standing with drawn sword, and this "man" identifies himself as a SAR-TZ'VA HASHEM, and then tells Yehoshua SHAL NAALCHA ME'AL RAGLECHA... remove your shoe (singular) from your feet. That's the TTriddle - Moshe was told to remove his shoes and Yehoshua was told to remove his shoe. The question mark in the TTriddle represents the question about why there is a difference. Based on Baalei

HaTosefot, the explanation is that Moshe had not yet stepped onto the holy ground and therefore was told to remove both his shoes before he proceeded. Yehoshua had stepped one foot onto the holy ground and the angel told him to remove that shoe. It is assumed (and stated by the commentary) that he would conclude on his own that he has to remove the other shoe if he continued walking into the restricted area. Another commentary, the RIV"A, adds that the difference reflects the fact that Moshe did not step foot into Eretz Yisrael and that Yehoshua did.

Side point: In searching Tanach for the word SHAL, unless you can specify the NIKUD (which in DavkaWriter you can, but not in many Tanach searching programs), you will also get the word SHEL. Know how many times the word SHEL occurs in Tanach? Not one single time! Surprising, no?

## **[2] She ran backwards**

RAN in Hebrew is RATZ, REISH-TZADI. Backwards, that would be TZADI-REISH, which spells TZOR. Aside from meaning the city Tyre in what is now Lebanon, TZOR is a flint-knife. Tzipora took on and circumcised her son (some say Eliezer, others say Ger'shom). So it was Tzipora who ran backwards. (Of course if she ran, the word would be RA-tza. And backwards would be HATZOR, which is not the word in the pasuk, but...

## **[3] king, house, song, heart, name...and?**

A frequent type of TTriddle revolves around a word and its other occurrences in Tanach. It usually starts as a curiosity, and sometimes results in a TTriddle, when the results are surprising or interesting. CHADAH, meaning NEW, refers to the king, Par'o, in Parshat Sh'mot. So the computer (actually, Davka- Writer) was put to the task of searching Tanach for other things called "new". A search for the letter sequence CHET-DALET-SHIN turn up 349 occurrences. Restricting the search to the specific NIKUD of CHADASH, resulted in the much more manageable number of 20 occurrences. BAYIT CHADASH is found twice in the context of military exemption for someone who has built a new house. SHIR CHADASH was a popular result, occurring 6 times in the book of Tehilim and once in Yeshayahu. LEV CHADASH occurs twice in the book of Yechezkeil in the context of the prophet's call to repentance. Yeshayahu prophesies about Israel being called by a new name in the time of the Geula (referring to how the nations speak of us, not our actual name). And? The "and" is a MORAG CHARUTZ CHADASH, a threshing tool of some sort. That's also from Yeshayahu (41:15). If the search would be extended to the feminine form of the adjective, CHADASHA, there would be other items on the list. But that's for another TTriddle.

**MM/Bklyn had a hat-trick (sports term, associated with succeeding at anything three times in three consecutive attempts, and extended often to three successes in one game, or solving three out of three TTriddles).**

**Honorable mention to the Feder Family for their fine submissions these past two weeks.**

## **This week's TTriddles:**

**[1] Western Canada (BC-Alberta), ~2000km long**

**[2] What time is a fish?**

**[3] He in sedra, had nephew with same name, and a namesake with famous wife & son**

**[4] deaf plowing wizards?**

**[5] His, his half-brother's grandson's, and his grandson's ages**

**[6] 2 singular; 1 plural without, 2 with**