

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora • For the week ending Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5756 • Apr. 20, 1996 • Vol. 3 No. 25

FATHERS OF INVENTION

“...on Mount Sinai...” (25:1)

An imaginary conversation — “Sol; Let’s invent a religion. In this religion we tell people that every seven years they have to stop working the fields, down tools, do no planting or harvesting. But we promise them that they’ll miraculously get a bumper crop the year before, in the sixth year, which will keep them going for that year, and the next year and the eighth year.”

“Irv - Are you crazy?! How can you predict the future?! Your religion is going to fall flat on its face in its first seventh year when everyone starts starving and there’s no bumper crop and nothing to eat!”

This week’s *Parsha* starts with the words “*And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai...*” Why, specifically, does the Torah record that it was on Mount Sinai that Hashem told Moshe about the *mitzvah* of *Shmittah*. Weren’t all the *mitzvos* told to Moshe on Sinai?

The reason that the Torah connects Mount Sinai specifically with the *mitzvah* of *Shmittah* is to tell us that just as *Shmittah* provides a **verifiable test of the Torah’s veracity** (for it would be impossible to invent a religion with such a commandment), similarly the rest of the Torah, which was given on Sinai, is authentic in both its generalities and specifics.

• Based on Rashi and the Chasam Sofer

INSIGHTS

FIXING THE ROYAL APPLE

“If you will walk in my statutes and you will guard my *mitzvos*” (26:1)

“...that you should be laborers in Torah.”

When you come before the king to ask him for a request to be granted, you stand before him in fear and trembling. However if you’re the electrician and you have to go into the throne-room to fix the royal computer or the royal telephone, you behave in a normal fashion and go about your work as you would do in any other place. For, if you were to behave with the fear of someone coming before the king with a request, you would never be able to get your work done. If you dedicate your hours to learning and wrestling with the complexities of the Torah, then you become to Hashem like that workman fixing appliances in the throne-room of the king. You can behave with a certain freedom, for ‘You will not find a free man except one who is involved with the Torah.’

However, if you dedicate your life to material pursuits, *even if you do this altruistically*, then you will have to conduct yourself with the fear and trembling of a supplicant in front of an all-powerful monarch. For you will need to be constantly on your guard against acting out of self-interest and aggrandizement. It will require tremendous effort to ensure that all your actions are really ‘kosher.’

• Rabbi Moshe-Leib from Sasov z”l
in *Mayana Shel Torah*

ECO-LOGICAL

“...The land shall observe a *Shabbos* to Hashem...” (25:2)

When the Jewish People were enslaved in Egypt, Moshe went to Pharaoh and tricked him into lightening the work-load of the Children of Israel. He pointed out to Pharaoh that if you work slaves without rest, eventually they die. And so, under the guise of giving Pharaoh advice how to increase production, he suggested that Pharaoh give the Jewish People one day off a week. Pharaoh adopted his advice, and allowed Moshe to choose the day. When subsequently Hashem gave the commandment that *Shabbos* was to be a day of rest, Moses was happy that he had anticipated which day was the day of rest.

In other words, the Jewish People had *Shabbos* in Egypt, but it was only as a respite from the back-breaking work, not as a commandment. However, when Hashem commanded the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*: “You will observe my *Shabbos*”, then Israel rests on *Shabbos*, not because we need a rest, but only and entirely because it is the will of Hashem.

We find a similar idea in this week’s *Parsha*: “...The land shall observe a *Shabbos* to Hashem...” In the seventh year when we let the fields of *Eretz Yisrael* lie fallow, it is not to give them a rest, to improve their performance and allow the ecological processes to rejuvenate them. Rather, we let the fields lie fallow only because it is a command of Hashem.

• *Kedushas Levi*

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BEHAR

The Torah commands the cessation of farming the Land of Israel every seven years. This “*Shabbos*” for the land is called *Shmittah*. (5754 was a *Shmittah* year in Israel.) After every seventh *Shmittah*, the fiftieth year, *Yovel* (Jubilee), is announced with the sounds of the shofar on Yom Kippur; this was also a year for the land to lie fallow. Hashem promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the *Shmittah* and *Yovel* years to sustain the Jewish people. In the year of *Yovel*, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work. A Jewish indentured servant may not be given any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free. The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption

OVERVIEW

is limited to only the first year after the sale. The Levites’ cities belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of each other by lending or borrowing

with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment.

BECHUKOSAI

The Torah promises prosperity for the Bnei Yisrael if they will follow Hashem’s commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose purpose is to bring Yisrael to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. *Sefer Vayikra*, The Book of Leviticus, concludes with a detailed description of *Erachin* – the process by which someone can make a vow to give to the *Beis Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.



ברוך ה' יום יום

“BARUCH HASHEM YOM YOM ...”

“May the Merciful One bless Israel with peace, and may they merit to see children and grandchildren studying Torah and engaged in mitzvos, bring peace upon Israel.”

If three consecutive generations of a family are Torah scholars, say our Sages, there is a guarantee that succeeding generations of that family will be Torah scholars as well. This guarantee applies, however, only when these three generations of scholars see each other and thus absorb the influence of example and form an unbreakable chain of family tradition. We therefore pray in this song that we may actually merit to see the next two generations involved in Torah study, for this will bring peace upon Israel by developing families with an unbroken Torah tradition.



THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Published by OHR SOMAYACH TANENBAUM COLLEGE
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PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529

TWO HEADS, ONE BODY,
THREE QUESTIONS

Ephraim from Jerusalem wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Time magazine (March 25, '96) had an article about a six-year old girl, or two six-year old girls rather, with two heads and one body. They're like 2 totally different people with different personalities and preferences. They have separate urges to eat, sleep and go to the bathroom. What if anything does Judaism say about such a situation. Is there any source in the Talmud that talks about this? Would they be considered one person or two?

Dear Ephraim,

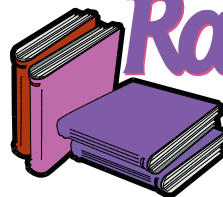
Ever hear the phrase, 'Nothing's new under the sun?'

The Talmud records an exchange in which Phlmo asked Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, "A person with two heads, upon which head does he place the tefillin?" Rabbi Yehuda thought Phlmo was merely jesting, when suddenly someone arrived and announced, "My wife had a baby with two heads! How much must I give for the redemption of the first-born?"

The Talmud concludes that the father must give double the normal amount. The Torah says the firstborn must be redeemed at "five sela'im per head." So here, where there are two heads, the father must give ten sela'im.

From the above, you can't necessarily extrapolate to other cases, because there are two opposite ways to understand it:

- Since the father gives double, they must be considered two people.
- They are one person who simply pays extra for the extra head.



Ask the Rabbi

According to the Midrash, a two-headed man lived in the time of King Solomon. He fathered six normal children and a seventh with two heads like himself. When the father died, the son with two heads came before King Solomon demanding a double share of the inheritance. King Solomon covered one head and poured hot water on the other. "Ouch!" both heads cried out. From this King Solomon meant to show that genetically they are one, and should be judged as one for inheritance purposes. The Talmud, however, does not record this incident.

The Zohar records a tradition about the descendants of Cain, stating that they were born with two heads.

Actual instances of conjoined twins are found in the works Sha'ar HaShamayim (Ralbag 1547), Cheshek Shlomo (1773) and Shvut Yaakov (Rabbi Yaakov Reisher of Prague, 1739) and others.

The Shvut Yaakov himself saw twin boys, normal in all ways, but whose heads were joined side by side. In such a case, he writes, they are certainly separate people. He distinguishes between this case and the case in the Talmud where the two heads share one body.

There's really nothing new under the sun: Adam and Eve, says the Talmud, were created as a single male/female being with two faces. The subsequent creation of Eve was actually the splitting of the male and female into two separate parts!

Sources:

- Tractate Menachot 37a
- Tractate Berachot 61a
- Kohelet 1:9
- Sefer Zohar quoted in Seder Dorot, Tanaim and Amoraim, Phlmo
- Shita Mekubetzet to Menachot 37a, & Binyan Shlomo
- Shvut Yaakov, Orach Chaim 1:4

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Three members of the Jewish People whose names are mentioned in the Torah (and were alive at the time) did not go out of Egypt during the Exodus. Who are they?

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THE BEAUTY
AND THE SINNER

The delicate balance maintained by the Torah in regard to the sacrifices a sinner offers to achieve atonement comes into sharp focus in our Talmudic section.

The *mincha* (meal offering) which is offered in atonement for certain involuntary sins by one who can afford neither animal or bird as a sacrifice is offered without the oil and frankincense which accompany regular *mincha* offerings. The regular *chatass* sacrifice offered as an atonement for a broad range of involuntary sins is not accompanied by the meal offering and wine libation which accompany the *olah* and *shlamim* sacrifices.

These restrictions are obviously intended to limit the esthetics of a sacrifice related to sin. But they are also present in this paradox expressed by the sage Rabbi Shimon:

Logic would have dictated that the *mincha* of a sinner should be accompanied by oil and frankincense so that he should not gain by being spared the expense of these items. But the Torah

did not wish that his offering should be as attractive as those brought voluntarily by people who did not sin. And logic would have dictated that the animal sacrifice of a sinner be accompanied by the meal offerings and wine libations accompanying other sacrifices in order that the sinner not gain - but the same reason prevails of denying the sinner's sacrifice the same esthetic quality.

Despite this reasoning Rabbi Shimon also agrees that if a non-Kohen performs the service of offering the sinner's *mincha* it is invalid, and we do not say that allowing this service to be per-



Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

formed by an unqualified person should be another expression of denying beauty to such a sacrifice. There is clearly a distinction between limiting the accompaniments which enhance beauty and allowing it to be offered by someone who is not qualified to do so.

• Menachos 6a

ANOTHER DIMENSION OF EFFORT

The Sage Avimi came to Rabbi Chisda to learn *Mesechta Menachos*. When this was reported to a later generation it raised many eyebrows. Rabbi Chisda was, after all, a disciple of Avimi and once even went on record regarding the tough time that his master had given him in the analysis of a particular section in *Mesechta Erachin*.

The explanation provided is that as a result of an illness Avimi forgot *Mesechta Menachos* and went to his disciple Rabbi Chisda in an effort to relearn it.

But why, asks the Gemara, did Avimi not summon his disciple rather than travel to him?

The answer is that he felt that this exertion on his part would increase his chances for success. This, Rashi points out, is based on a Talmudic formula (*Megillah 6b*) that "if a man tells you I exerted myself in the study of Torah and did not succeed in gaining it - do not believe him." Success in the study of Torah is guaranteed for one who sufficiently exerts himself to achieve that goal.

The usual understanding of exertion is in the academic sense - perseverance and thinking. Avimi's exertion to travel to his disciple reveals a new dimension, one of physical effort which is also a prerequisite for success in Torah study.

• Menachos 7a

BEHAR

1. Why does the Torah specify that the laws of *Shmittah* were taught on Har Sinai?
2. If one possesses *Shmittah* food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
3. Which two "returns" are announced by the shofar during Yovel?
4. What is the punishment for neglecting the laws of *Shmittah*?
5. If *Shmittah* is observed properly, how long is the crop of the sixth year guaranteed to last?
6. Under what circumstance may one sell ancestral land?
7. After selling an ancestral field, when can one redeem it?
8. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
9. Who is a "ger toshav"?
10. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Jewish indentured servant.



2. What is the blessing of "v'achaltem lachm'chem l'sova" ("and you shall eat your bread until satisfaction" 26:5)?
3. Which "progression" of seven transgressions are taught in chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
4. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
5. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 "Toros" (plural) and not "Torah" (singular)?
6. If a man dedicates an ancestral field to the *Beis Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *Yovel*, what happens to the field?
7. When a person dedicates a field that he bought from the original owner of an ancestral field, what happens to that field in *Yovel*?
8. Where must "Ma'aser Sheini" be eaten?
9. When a person redeems "Ma'aser Sheini", what happens to the food? What happens to the redemption money?
10. How does a person tithe his animals?

BECHUKOSAI

1. To what do the words "bechukosai telechu" (walk in My statutes) refer?

I Didn't Know That!

"I will remember my covenant with Yaakov, and also my covenant with Yitzchak, and also my covenant with Avraham I will remember, and the land I will remember." (26:43)

The verse begins with remembrance and ends with remembrance to teach that Hashem never forgets the merit of the Avos (patriarchs).

• Baal Haturim

Bonus Question ?

If a house in a walled city is sold, it does not revert to the original owner in *Yovel*. Rather, the Torah gives the original owner only one year to buy it back. Why?

Answers on back page

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

BEHAR

- 25:1 - To teach us that just as *Shmittah* was taught in detail on Har Sinai, so too, all the *mitzvos* were taught in detail on Har Sinai
- 25:7 - Remove it from his house or property and make it "hefker."
- 25:10 - The return of the land to its original owner, and the "return" (freedom) of the slave from slavery.
- 25:18 - Exile.
- 25:21,22 - From Nissan of the 6th year until Succos of the 9th year.
- 25:25 - Only because of poverty.
- 25:24 - Anytime after two years following the sale until *Yovel*. At the beginning of *Yovel* it returns to the family automatically.
- 25:29 - Only within the first year after the sale. Afterwards, even in *Yovel* it does not return.
- 25:35 - A non-Jew who lives in Eretz Yisrael and accepts upon himself not to

worship idols.

- 25:39-43 - a) Do not make him perform humiliating tasks; b) Do not sell him publicly; c) Do not make him perform unnecessary jobs.



BECHUKOSAI

- 26:3 - Laboring in Torah learning.
- 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
- 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvos*, rejecting those who do keep *mitzvos*, hating Sages, preventing others from keeping *mitzvos*, denying that Hashem

gave the *mitzvos*, denying the existence of Hashem. They are listed in this order because each transgression begets the next.

- 26:35 - 70 years. Because the Jewish People violated 70 *Shmittah* and *Yovel* years.
- 26:46 - To teach that both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah were given to Moshe on *Har Sinai*.
- 27:16 - It becomes the property of the *Kohanim* who are on rotation at the beginning of *Yovel*.
- 27:22 - It returns to the person who originally sold the field.
- 27:30 - In Jerusalem.
- 27:31 - The food becomes permissible to him outside of Jerusalem. The redemption money must be brought to Jerusalem and used to purchase food to be eaten there.
- 27:32 - He passes them through a door individually and every tenth animal he marks with a rod smeared with red dye.

Recommended Reading List

BEHAR

Ramban
25:3 First Six Years
25:9 Two Kinds of "Shofar"
25:10 The Word "Yovel"
25:20 Three Year Blessing
25:23 Ban on Perpetual Sale
25:36 Two Kinds of Usury
26:1 Commitment in Hostile Environment

Sefer Hachinuch
330 Counting until *Yovel*
331 Call of the Shofar
337 Unfair Profit
342 National Land
343 Usury
Sforno
25:4 "A Shabbos to Hashem"

BECHUKOSAI

Ramban
26:6 Taming of Wild Animals
26:11 Theology of Medicine
26:12 Promise for the Future
26:16 Analysis of Jewish History
Sefer Hachinuch
350 Dedicating One's Value
352 Switching *Korbanos*
360 Animal Tithes

Bonus Answer!

Walled cities were fortresses designed to protect the inhabitants in case of attack. For that reason, it was essential that the inhabitants be familiar with the secret passage ways and shelters located in the city. If after the *Yovel*, the houses in the cities would revert back to the ancestral owners, the new inhabitants would be unfamiliar with the strategic aspects of the city, and the city would lose its effectiveness as a fortress. Thus, the Torah limited the seller's right of repurchase to one year. • *Meshech Chochma*

HAFTORAH: Yirmiyahu 16:19-17:14

GILT-EDGED SECURITY

"Blessed is the man who will trust in Hashem, and Hashem will become his security." (17:7)

"Rabbi" said the disgruntled congregant. "Rabbi. I once prayed and prayed to G-d for something I really wanted but my prayers

weren't answered."

"Yes, they were." said the Rabbi, "The answer was 'No!'"

The greatest blessing you can have is to trust Hashem. Because, even if you don't get what you prayed for, nevertheless you succeeded in gaining faith and trust in Hashem. And what blessing can be greater than that!

But if you put your trust in Man, even if you get what you asked for, you've turned "your heart away from Hashem." (17:5)

However, when someone puts his trust in Hashem, he wakes up in the morning and goes to sleep at night a happy man, confident that all is for the best. That's what you call security!

INSIGHTS...continued from page one

THE CRITICAL MASS

"But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not be revolted by them nor will I reject them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them - for I am Hashem, their G-d." (26:44)

'He who thinks that Berlin is Jerusalem...there will come a thunderous and violent wind that will uproot him from his source.' These words, written by Rav Meir Simcha, the *Ohr Somayach*,

are an uncanny prediction of the storm which was to engulf Europe a number of years later. From the moment of Hashem's irreversible covenant with *Avraham Avinu*, the survival of the Jewish People becomes a natural imperative, no less than the rising of the sun or the flowing and ebbing of the tides. Anti-Semitism is placed into nature with its sole purpose to prevent the Jewish People from disappearing into the melting pot amongst the nations, and 'annulling' the irreversible covenant with *Avraham Avinu*. Assimilation is like a nuclear chain reaction -

when a certain critical mass is reached, then the atom bomb of anti-Semitism results. There was no nation that represented the summit of culture and refinement more than pre-war Germany, and yet within a few short years it turned into a savage animal. When the Jewish People forget their purpose to be a holy nation, separated from the other nations, then the non-Jewish world will turn around and remind them of their purpose, and the degree of the ferocity of that reminder will depend on the determination of the Jew to assimilate and disappear.

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