

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### FLYING FIRST CLASS

*“This is the ‘chok’ (statute) of the Torah” (19:2)*

If you think about it, strapping small black leather boxes to your arm and your forehead must look pretty weird.

I remember flying on a British Airways morning flight. When it was time for me to pray, the cabin crew were extremely helpful. I was ushered right up to the front of the first class, just behind the cockpit door, and given as much room as I needed. Some of the first class passengers gave me some strange looks though. I guess they weren't expecting live, in-flight entertainment.

There's an interesting contradiction between this week's Parsha and *Parshas Va'eschanan* in the Book of *Devarim*. In *Va'eschanan* it says that the nations of the world will see us observing God's decrees such as wearing tefillin and will say "Surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation!" (4:6) However in this week's Parsha, Rashi notes that the nations of the world laugh at the Jewish People for observing the *mitzvos* which seem to have no logic.

So which is it? Do the nations look at the *chukim*, the supra-logical *mitzvos*, and scoff? Or do they look at them and think that we are a wise and discerning people?

Flying never fails to amaze me. A huge metal contraption hurtles

down a narrow concrete path at over a hundred miles an hour, and then suddenly you're in the air, looking down on match-stick people and houses. I have no doubt in the incredible skill it takes to design and build a plane. If I had any doubts, I wouldn't be on the plane in the first place. However, I have no idea *how* or *why* a plane works. *That* it works is beyond argument. *How* it works is beyond comprehension — at least beyond my com-

“Let's evaluate the eternity we gain when we fulfill a mitzvah and what we lose when we neglect it...”

prehension.

The same is true of the *chukim*. When the Jewish People do the *mitzvos* properly, the nations of the world look at tefillin, or any of the supra-logical *mitzvos*, like an airplane. They don't know how they work — but they ascribe their lack of comprehension to themselves.

If however, we don't do the

*mitzvos* properly — then the world looks at the *mitzvos* as weird. They won't blame it on their lack of knowledge; they will scoff at the *mitzvos* themselves.

It all depends on whether we make the *mitzvos* “fly” or we treat them like a dead weight hurtling down to the end of the runway.

### SO FAR — SO GOOD

*“For Cheshbon — it was the city of Sichon, king of the Emori; and he had warred against the first king of Moav and took all his land from his control until Arnon. Regarding this, the poets would say ‘Come to Cheshbon — let it be built and established as the city of Sichon.’” (21:26-7)*

A man once jumped off the Empire State Building. As he reached the thirteenth floor, someone stuck their head out the window and shouted “Are you okay?”

“So far, so good!” he replied.

The Talmud takes the above verse and extrapolates the subtext: Regarding this, the poets (*moshlim*) would say “Come to Cheshbon.” This means that the *moshlim* — those who rule over their negative drives — say “Come and make a *cheshbon* — a calculation: Let's evaluate the eternity that we gain when we do a mitzvah and what we lose when we neglect it, and weigh that against the damage we do when we succumb to sin as opposed to the minor loss of not fulfilling our every appetite in this

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The laws of the *parah adumah* — the red heifer — are detailed. These laws of ritual purification are to be used when someone comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply which until then has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. Hashem commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a designated rock so that water will flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of Hashem's mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the

rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. *Bnei Yisrael* resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to *Eretz Yisrael*. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him 30 days. *Bnei Yisrael* battle Sichon the Amorite, who fights against them rather than allow them to pass through his land. As a result, *Bnei Yisrael* conquer the lands that Sichon had previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

## HAFTORAH: SHOFTIM 11:1

### THE HISTORIAN

An essential component of wisdom is the knowledge that man's failure to comprehend truth does not make it untrue.

If someone asked us why we eat, we would answer that we must eat in order to live. If we were questioned further as to why we eat bread and not stones, we would

answer that stones don't contain the necessary nutrients to sustain life. However, why humans need these particular nutrients, and — that we would not be able to explain, for that only Hashem knows. The fact that we do not understand these processes in no way mitigates their manifest truth.

Even though we eat to stay alive, Hashem created the world in such a way that our food also has a pleasing taste and aroma. But that taste should never be confused with our reason for eating.

#### *Mitzvos are spiritual food for the neshama*

Hashem wanted the *mitzvos* to be palatable, so He infused them with taste — ideas and lessons — that we

can understand. However, we should never confuse the *taste* of a mitzvah with its real reason, as we should never eat merely to satisfy our taste buds. For why or how a particular mitzvah sustains our soul, we cannot know, anymore than we know why a particular protein sustains our body.

Just as in the Parsha this week, we are left uncomprehending the law of the *parah adumah* — the workings of the spiritual world — so too are the workings of history mysterious to all except He who writes history. Thus, the Haftorah depicts the "unhistorical" rise of Yiftach to the position of chief despite his lowly beginnings.

• Rabbi Zev Leff, Rabbi Mendel Hirsch

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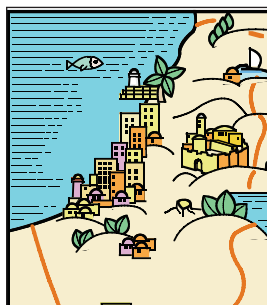
## LOVE OF THE LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael*

### STONES LIKE IRON

"...A land whose stones are iron" (*Devarim* 8:9)

The simple meaning of this praise of *Eretz Yisrael* is that it is rich in metals. The places in it where you expect to find only stones you will find metal deposits. But the



*Jerusalem Targum* offers another perspective: The land is rich in stones as solid as metal which will enable you to build stone houses, walls and towers, unlike many other lands which lack such material and must settle for flimsy structures.

• Ramban, *Commentary on the Torah*

world.

Superficially, it's difficult to see how the Sages saw in this verse a hint to the eternal battle between man and his own negativity.

Moav knew that G-d had commanded the Jewish People not to attack them and therefore they felt complacent about their future. "So far, so good!" However, they didn't foresee that Sichon would conquer them and that they would thus lose their immunity. For Hashem had placed no similar restriction against the Jewish People fighting Sichon. Thus Moav lost both its defense and its complacency.

When tragedy strikes, the natural reaction is to examine our lives

and ask ourselves why these things are happening. Not so when everything seems to be going to plan. Then it's much more difficult to see where we're heading. Then it's very easy to think "So far, so good."

## IN THE DOG HOUSE

*"And Hashem sent the fiery serpents amongst the people" (21:6)*

A dog is not a very bright animal. When you throw a stick at it, it grabs the stick in its jaws and proceeds to growl and bite it. Who threw the stick doesn't cross its little mind for an instant; it's too busy punishing the stick for

attacking it.

The Talmud describes our generation, the generation of the "footsteps" of the Mashiah, as follows: "The face of the generation is like the face of a dog."

When we find ourselves threatened and attacked by a hostile world, rather than growl and bite at the stick, maybe we should consider Who it is that threw the stick at us in the first place, and why He is throwing it at us.

### Sources:

- *Flying First Class* - Divrei David, heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer
- *So Far — So Good* - Malbim, heard from Rabbi Elimelech Meisels
- *In the Dog House* - based on Chafetz Chaim

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

**"Why have you brought the congregation of Hashem to this wilderness... not a place of seed, or fig, or grape or pomegranate..." (20:4-6)**

The above complaint contains all the species that represent the good of the Land of Israel, except for olives and dates. Why didn't they complain about a lack of olives and dates? Because they tasted these flavors in the manna, which tasted like *tzapichis b'dvash* (cakes of date honey) and *leshad hashamen* (dough needed with olive oil). For the same reason, the spies brought only grapes, figs and pomegranates, but not olives and dates, for these they tasted in the manna.

• *Meshech Chochma*

## BONUS QUESTION?

Mud flew as the carriage moved through the rain. In the distance trudged two dark figures sharing one umbrella. "Driver!" called out world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, "Please stop and pick up that poor father and son up ahead."

"How, from this distance, can you tell it's a father and son?" asked Watstein.

"It's pouring rain, yet the one is holding the umbrella over the head of the other as only a father would do for a son. For better or worse, parents have a strange tendency to put their children first."

"Speaking of parents," said Watstein, "perhaps you could unravel this mystery for me. The verse quotes Moshe as saying: *'And the Egyptians did evil to us and to our fathers (20:15).'* Rashi comments: *'From here we see*

*that the Forefathers (Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov) experience pain in their grave when bad things befall the Jewish People.'*"

"Does a parent ever lose concern for a child?" said Sherlock.

"No. But why does Rashi seem to take the word 'fathers' out of context? The Egyptians oppressed Moshe's parents' generation as well. Why can't the word 'fathers' refer to the previous generation who indeed suffered directly from the Egyptians? Why must Rashi go 'digging' in order to explain that the 'fathers' mentioned suffered posthumously?"

Just then the carriage stopped and the door opened. "Climb in son!" said a voice outside.

"Always putting their children first," said Sherlock.

answer on page eight

## WEEKLY DAF

ERUVIN 56 - 62

### MEASURING JERUSALEM

In measuring the distance of 2,000 *amos* which constitute the *techum* of a city — the distance which one may walk beyond the city limits without the need of an *eruv* — there are specific requirements for both the nature of the measuring instrument and its length.

The instrument must be a rope made of flax and its length must be fifty *amos* — no more and no less. As an explanation for the size of the rope, the *gemara* tells us that if it is shorter it is so flexible that it can easily be stretched by the people holding it at opposite ends and this increases the distance. If it is longer than fifty *amos* its weight is likely to cause some sagging in the middle and the distance is shortened.

But why not use a metal chain for measuring which would eliminate both the danger of stretching and that of sagging?

The answer is that our Sages saw in the words of a passage in the book of Zecharia (2:5) an indication that measuring in connection with a city must be done with a rope. The prophet Zecharia describes his vision of a man with a rope in his hand who informed him that he was measuring Jerusalem to determine its breadth and length. This was a Heavenly message that the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem which took place in Zecharia's day would result only in a limited settlement in the city.

Then came an angel, Zecharia continues, to inform him that there will be another redemption and return to Jerusalem which will render measuring the city obsolete. At that time "Jerusalem shall be inhabited like unwalled towns because of the multitude of men and cattle in it."

Will this population explosion which leaves Jerusalem without protective walls endanger the security of the city's inhabitants?

"I, says Hashem, will be to her like a wall of fire all around her and will be the glory in her midst."

• Eruvin 58a

### BALANCE OF FORCES

An interesting problem of violent conflict between two Jewish communities in Eretz Yisrael came before the leader of the generation, Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi (Rebbi). The inhabitants of Geder were a rather rough bunch, and when they became a little inebriated on Shabbos they would attack the residents of the neighboring city Chamsan who came to visit their town.

Rebbi's solution to this problem of violence was to forbid the residents of Chamsan to enter Geder on Shabbos. Since he did not wish to create a complete rift between these two neighboring communities he did permit the residents of Geder to enter Chamsan on Shabbos.

But does this eliminate the danger of violence, asks the *gemara*, if the spirited visitors from Geder are let loose on their neighbors in Chamsan?

"A dog removed from his habitat will not bark for seven years" is the folk saying applied to explain Rebbi's strategy. Although the fellows from Geder may be aggressive on their own turf, there was little likelihood that they would make trouble away from home.

"What about the residents of Chamsan?" asks the *gemara*. Won't they take advantage of this weakness of their visiting neighbors to attack them in retribution for the pain they suffered at their hands on earlier visits?

The answer given is a brilliant application of the principle of coexistence based on a balance of forces. The edge which the Gederites had over the Chamsanites in terms of aggressiveness was offset by their being on foreign ground, so that each side was deterred from any action against the other.

• Eruvin 61a

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. "Take a perfect *parah adumah* (red heifer) which has no blemish..." What does the word "perfect" — *temima* — mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a valid *parah adumah*?
3. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
4. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the *parah adumah*; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
5. Why was the *mitzvah* of the *parah adumah* entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?
6. Why does the Torah stress that *all* of the congregation came to *Midbar Tzin*?
7. Why is Miriam's death taught after the section of the *parah adumah*?
8. During their journey in the *midbar*, through whose merit did the Jewish People receive water?
9. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second time?
10. When Moshe told the King of Edom that the Jewish People would not drink from the well-water, to which well did he refer? What do we learn from this?
11. The cloud that led the Jewish People in the *midbar* leveled all the mountains that were in their path except for three. Which three and why?
12. Why did the *entire* congregation mourn the death of Aharon?
13. What disappeared when Aharon died?
14. Who was "the inhabitant of the South" (21:1) that attacked the Jewish People?
15. For what two reasons did Hashem punish the people with snakes specifically?
16. Why did the Jewish People camp in Arnon, rather than pass through Moav to enter *Eretz Canaan*?
17. What miracle took place at the valley of Arnon?
18. What was the "strength" of Amon that prevented the Jewish People from entering into their land?
19. Why was Moshe afraid of Og?
20. Who killed Og?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 19:2 - Perfectly red.
2. 19:2 - Two.
3. 19:14,15 - The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
4. 19:21 - a) Remains *tahor*; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts *tumah*; c) He and his clothing contract *tumah*.
5. 19:22 - Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the golden calf.
6. 20:1 - To teach that they were *all* fit to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, because anyone who was involved in the sin of the spies had already died.
7. 20:1 - To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous.
8. 20:2 - Miriam's.
9. 20:11 - After he hit it the first time, only a few drops came out since he was commanded to *speak* to the rock.
10. 20:17 - To the well that traveled with the nation in the *midbar*. This teaches that even if one has adequate provisions he should purchase goods from his host in order to benefit the host.
11. 20:22 - The mountains that were spared were *Har Sinai* for the giving of the Torah, *Har Nevo* for Moshe's burial place, and *Hor Hahar* for Aharon's burial place.
12. 20:29 - Aharon made peace between contending parties and between spouses. Thus, when he died, everybody mourned.
13. 20:29 - The *ananei hakavod* (clouds of glory) disappeared, since they sheltered the Jewish People in the merit of Aharon.
14. 21:1 - Amalek.
15. 21:6 - The original snake, who was punished for speaking evil, is fitting to punish those who spoke evil about Hashem and about Moshe. And the snake, for whom everything tastes like dust, is fitting to punish those who complained about the manna which changed to any desired taste.
16. 21:13 - Moav refused to let them pass through their land.
17. 21:15 - The Amorites concealed themselves in caves in the mountain on the Moabite side of the valley in order to ambush the Jewish People. When the Jewish People approached, the mountain on the *Eretz Canaan* side of the valley moved close to the other mountain and the Amorites were crushed between the two mountains.
18. 21:24 - Hashem's command, "Do not harass them" (*Devarim* 2:19).
19. 21:34 - Og had once been of service to Avraham. Moshe was afraid that this merit would assist Og in battle.
20. 21:35 - Moshe.

## VOTE!

Lena <Lena45AD@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
My question is: Does a Jew have an obligation to vote in an election?

Dear Lena,

In countries where you're obligated by law to vote, such as Australia and Belgium, one would be obligated to vote based on the concept "*dina d'malchuta dina* — the laws of the land are law." This means that a Jew is obligated to follow the laws of the country in which he lives.

In countries where voting is not obligatory by civil law, a Jew nevertheless has a responsibility to actively help in establishing a just society. As our Sages say "Pray for the peace of the kingdom (government) for if not for the fear of it, people would swallow each other alive." Voting is one way of helping establish a better society, and hence one has a responsibility to do so.

### Sources

- *Bava Kama 113b*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat, 369:2*
- *Ethics of the Fathers 3:2*

## ADAM'S TONGUE

Monte Stimmel from Orlando, Florida <cyber1@iag.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
What language did Adam & Eve speak? Was it Hebrew?

Dear Monte Stimmel,

We see evidence that Adam spoke Hebrew because he gave Eve two names, each of which makes sense only in Hebrew. He called her *isha* (woman) because "she was taken from *ish* (man)," and he called her *Chava* (Eve) because "she was to be Mother of all *chai* (life)." The very name *Adam* is from the Hebrew word *adamah* (earth), referring to the fact that G-d created Adam from the

earth. From the time of Adam and Eve until the generation of the Tower of Babel, everyone spoke Hebrew.

### Sources:

- *Bereshet 2:23, 3:20*
- *Midrash Bereshet Rabbah 38*

## TWO'S COMPANY, TEN'S A MINYAN

Barnet Shapiro from Cape Town, South Africa <shapiro@iafrica.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Why is the quorum "minyan" 10 people?

Dear Barnet Shapiro,

We find that the Torah uses the word *eidah* (congregation) to refer to a group of ten people. Ten is the smallest group about whom such a term is used.

Moshe sent 12 spies to scout out the Land of Israel. Ten of the spies returned with an evil report. The verse refers to these 10 as an "evil congregation." We know this refers to only 10 of the 12, because two of the spies, Calev and Joshua, were righteous and gave a good report about the Land.

### Sources:

- *Megillah 23b*

## STICKS AND STONES

Joel L. Nafziger <naf@triangleret.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Why was the prescribed method of execution for extreme transgressions stoning? Why not some other method?

Dear Joel L. Nafziger,

First of all, it should be noted that the death penalty was rarely carried out. Our sages teach, "a court which puts a person to death once every seventy years is called a violent court."

*Sekila*, usually translated as stoning, involved pushing the condemned off a high place backwards so that he broke his neck when he fell. He was first given a heavy sedative.

The *Arizal* (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria) points out that *sekila* was the sentence for offenses directly against G-d or against the "image of G-d" within mankind. Therefore this method was prescribed by the Torah, since by destroying the human form, it destroys the *tzelem Elokim* — image of G-d — as part of the process. Also, death by falling from a great height symbolizes the person, created in G-d's image, falling spiritually and morally by doing the sin, and hence causing his own destruction.

## SHOP TILL YOU STOP

Dan Roth

<Beckdan@netmedia.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
We are told that all one's income is Divinely ordained each year with the exception of the expenses for Shabbat, Yom Tov and educating one's children (*Beitzah 16a*). For these expenses we are Divinely reimbursed. We are also told that one is obligated to gladden one's wife on Yom Tov by providing her with nice clothes (*Pesachim 109a*). My question is: Is this expense of buying clothes for one's wife included in the expenses of Yom Tov for which we are assured isn't part of our budget, and for which we are reimbursed?

Dear Dan Roth,

Buying your wife festive clothing for Yom Tov is certainly a legitimate Yom Tov expense; a person is reimbursed for added expenses he incurs buying Yom Tov clothing just as he is for other Yom Tov expenses. So, if your wife comes back from a holiday shopping spree and says, "Guess how much money I saved you today, dear!" you should realize that she is, in fact, right.

## JET FAST

Shlomo <Selenk36@ccvax.mmc.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I will be traveling from the United States to Eastern Europe on Tisha B'av. When the sun sets after I arrive, it will be much less than 24 hours after the sun sets in the states that I'm leaving. Other than changing the day of my travel, how should I time my fast? Thanks!

Dear Shlomo,

There are reasons not to travel on Tisha B'av. For one, you shouldn't occupying yourself with matters which divert your attention from the sense of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem.

However, if you do fly, you fast according to local time. That is, you go according to the time wherever you are. So if you travel from west to east you will indeed have a short fast.

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

### Re: Intermarriage (Ohrnet Naso):

I am really touched by the thought and sincerity of Louis Alexander's letter in the Naso issue of Public Domain regarding intermarriage. I was born Jewish, but I am the first in generations to actually be observant. I'm sure it's no coincidence that I'm also the only one of my relatives in a few generations to maintain a healthy family environment (only one marriage, etc.). Among religious Jews this is normal, but among my non-religious friends (Jewish and non), this is a bizarre anomaly! It occurs to me often that one either intuitively that there is a higher, objective Reality, a Designer behind the scenes — the realization of which bestows the dual blessing of purpose and responsibility — or one does not. Certainly a person's *raison d'être* hinges on this distinction — the realization upon which all other realizations are made. Living this realization is the light unto nations.

• Saul Stern <sjstern@med.cornell.edu>

### Re: The 1:60 ratio and the Taste Threshold (Ohrnet Naso):

I once had the privilege to write about the late Dr. David Israel Macht of Baltimore who strongly believed there was no contradiction between Judaism and science and in a number of studies offered experimental proof to support this view. In a fascinating article entitled "The Bible as a Source of Subjects for Scientific Research" (Medical Leaves 1940; 3:174-184), Dr. Macht showed the harmful physiological effects of meat and milk combinations and the diminution of this toxicity at a ratio of one part of one ingredient to fifty-nine of the other. Among his many other findings were the demonstration of the toxic effects of the blood and various tissues of animals slaughtered through conventional means as opposed to those slaughtered in accordance with Jewish law (*shechita*) and the differences in puerperal blood according to gender of the child (see Leviticus 12:1-5).

• David Wilk <wilkda@mail.biu.ac.il>

### Re: Sum-Buddies (Ohrnet Bamidbar):

Whether the numbers of each tribe were rounded off or not, two numbers were obviously exact: The number of first-born Israelites and the number of non-firstborn Levites. There were 22,273 firstborn Israelites. That's not a round number. Therefore, when the Torah tells us that there were 22,000 non-firstborn Levites who redeemed 22,000 firstborn Israelites, the number must also be exact, since the Torah tells us of the 273 remaining firstborn Israelites who paid 1365 silver coins, five coins per person. If so, the number of non-firstborn Levites is exact, not to the tens or hundreds but to the thousands. This means that Hashem obviously "arranged" the numbers miraculously, for whatever purpose. If so, there should be no reason to assume that any other numbers were rounded off.

• Yoni Bokow, Yeshivat Itri, Jerusalem

## WHAT I DO WITH OHRNET

**S**halom aleichem. First, I would like to thank you all very much for doing the work you do. I have been a subscriber from the beginning of 1997. Since I installed Internet I constantly visit the Ohr Somayach Homepage. (I attended your Yeshiva for 2 months and liked it very much). I have been a *baal teshuva* for as long as 3 years — currently I study at a yeshiva in my home town, Tbilisi in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia.

Every Friday I go to the Charitable Center "Hesed Eliyahu" with one of my yeshiva friends to make Kabbalat Shabbat for the elderly people. Most of them are almost totally ignorant of their Jewish heritage. The local rabbi sent us there to conduct Kabbalat Shabbat. Before we started it consisted only of lighting candles, making Kiddush and singing Shabbat songs. It now includes a Torah lesson — I try to deliver a *dvar* Torah including the Weekly Parsha as well. Your Ohrnet publications help me a lot in preparing my class.

Thank you again.

Shalva Davitashvili  
Tbilisi, Georgia

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## GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

*Jumping to conclusions is a natural human tendency, but we must learn to be very careful not to do this. I regret that I have jumped to conclusions in the past, but at least I can tell you from personal experience about the dangers of..*

### JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

A friend with whom I always eat lunch refused to meet one day. I kept asking her if she was fasting, but she would not answer. I assumed (always be careful not to assume) that she was avoiding me for some reason, and that was why she would not tell me why she refused to meet.

Later, I found out that her brother had been in court that day and was sentenced for six months seemingly unjustly. She had been fasting in order to direct all her thoughts to her prayers for him during his trial. She did not want to tell me she was fasting, because she did not

want to have to explain that her brother may have to go to jail. I felt so bad for accusing her of just wanting to avoid me.

*What we perceive is not always what is really going on! Remember to give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and that jumping to conclusions is not the best exercise.*

- Story contributed by Ayelet Chana Bunner <kcauto@access.mountain.net>
- Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

### DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

Were you ever in a situation with potential to judge negatively, but there really was a valid explanation? Has a friend or a relative ever told you how they were in such a situation? Share your stories with us for inclusion in future columns of *The Other Side of the Story*. To submit your story, send it to <info@ohr.org.il> or write to Ohrnet POB 18103 Jerusalem or Fax 02-581-2890.

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

Which verse in the Torah begins and ends with the same word.\*

\*The word beginning the verse begins with a *vav* (meaning *and*), while the word ending the verse does not, but otherwise it is the same word.

- Riddle Idea: Rabbi Dr. Avigdor Boncheck

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## BONUS ANSWER!

“Although parents tend to put their children first, the verse should have put the parents first,” said Sherlock. “The verse should have said ‘The Egyptians did evil *la’avoseinu v’lanu* — to our fathers and to us.’”

“*La’avoseinu v’lanu*. That has a familiar ring,” said Watstein.

“Yes, it’s from the Passover Hagaddah,” said Sherlock. “Here too, had the verse been referring to the oppression

of the previous generation, the verse should have gone chronologically, listing the fathers first.”

“I see,” said Watstein. “Since the verse say that the Egyptians did evil ‘to us and to our fathers’ — since the children come before the fathers — the implication is that the oppression of the children was first, and the oppression of the parents came only as a result.”

“Precisely, Watstein.”

- Based on Gur Aryeh

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

20:1 The Whole Congregation  
21:9 The Serpent  
21:21 Imperative for Peace  
21:34 Fear of Og

### OHR HACHAIM

20:8 The Sin of Moshe  
**SFORNO**  
19:2 Parah Adumah  
20:26 Aharon’s Special Shroud