

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE SAME OLD SONG

“His offering was: One silver bowl, its weight a hundred and thirty (shekels); and one silver basin of seventy shekels in the sacred shekel, both of them filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a meal-offering” (7:13-14)

An imaginary conversation. “Wow! What a concert! I’ve never heard the London Symphony play like that. Their Brahms’ First was absolutely superb!”

“I dunno. I heard the Boston Pops last week. They played the same tunes...”

Or how about...

“Ian McKellen’s *Iago* must rate as one of the definitive Shakespearean interpretations of the century...”

“Yeah, but didn’t Shakespeare write any other tragedies? I mean, they do Othello, followed by Hamlet, followed by Macbeth followed by King Lear and then back to Othello again. Occasionally they throw in Timon of Athens or Antony and Cleopatra for a change, but then it’s back to the same old stuff over and over and over...”

After Moshe finished building the *Mishkan*, he sanctified it and all its vessels and utensils. Then, the Princes of Israel brought offerings to inaugurate the *Mizbe’ach* (altar). Each prince, representing his tribe, brought his offerings one day after another. For twelve days they brought their offerings. The Torah faithfully describes each of the offerings of each of the princes and they are all identical. Absolutely identical: “...one silver bowl, its weight a hundred and thirty (shekalim); and one silver basin of seventy shekalim in the sacred

shekel, both of them filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a meal-offering; one gold ladle of ten (shekalim) filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, one sheep in its first year for an elevation-offering; one he-goat for a sin-offering; and for a peace-offering: Two cattle, five rams, five he-goats, five sheep in their first year.”

Not a short list. The Torah records this list over and over again. Twelve times.

Why couldn’t the Torah have just written that all the princes brought

personality of its owner, his own personal devotion, his own spiritual striving.

Like two performers who can take an identical piece of music and imbue it with an individuality that makes both performances unique; like an actor who can wring from lines which have been said for hundreds of years a new and original interpretation, so too each of the twelve princes of the tribes of Israel brought the spiritual uniqueness of himself and his tribe as an offering to his Creator.

“...each of the twelve princes of the tribes of Israel brought the spiritual uniqueness of himself and his tribe as an offering to his Creator.”

identical offerings? The Torah never wastes a word, a letter or even a dot. If the Torah wrote a seeming redundancy twelve times, there must be a good reason.

The answer is that the offerings weren’t identical. Each one was infused with the individual enthusiasm of the prince who brought it. Each one was permeated with the unique

THE HOLLOW “O”

“So Moshe took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levi’im... And to the sons of Kehas he did not give; since the sacred service was upon them, they carried on the shoulder.” (6:6-9)

Imagine you’re sitting in the front row of Carnegie Hall. The orchestra is about to strike up the instantly recognizable opening bars of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. “Da, da, da, Dah ... Da, da, da — and then to your horror, the entire orchestra lands on a note exactly one semitone higher than Beethoven wrote: “Dah!” The sound is like someone dragging his fingernails across a classroom blackboard, excruciating beyond words.

Music is an unforgiving thing. It works totally encased within a closed system. One step outside the scale, outside the system, and our teeth are set on edge.

Arguably, the greatest musician who ever lived was King David. In Psalm 119, David Hamelech praises Hashem. He says “*Your chukim* (laws

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the sons of *Gershon*, *Kehas*, and *Merari*, the *Bnei Levi*. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those who are ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property after having sworn in court to the contrary, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object, and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special

ink that was used for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to Hashem for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nissan* in the second year after the Exodus. The Prince of each Tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

HAFTORAH: SHOFTIM 13:2-25

Shimson (Samson) was the most famous *nazir* in Tanach, and thus this week's *Parsha*, which describes the laws of the *nazir*, is complemented by the story of the birth of Shimson.

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES

"...and now, be careful not to drink wine or intoxicant, and not to eat anything prohibited (to a nazir), for the lad shall be a nazir of G-d from the womb until the day of his death." (13:7)

Medical research has proven that there is a graduated fetal response to maternal inhaled smoke — i.e., the more cigarettes the mother smokes in pregnancy, the greater the risk for the fetus.

There is no cutoff point below which it can be said not to affect the unborn child. The best advice is no smoking during pregnancy (or at all for that matter). The more cigarettes the mother smokes, the more dangerous it is for the fetus. Not only does smoking have repercussions on the unborn child, but research has demonstrated that the mother's entire physical and emotional state directly influence the unborn child.

It should therefore come as no surprise that our spiritual state also has a tremendous impact on our children-to-be. From the moment of conception and onwards, thoughts and feelings mold the personality of the unborn child.

If we want our children to be holy people, we would be well advised to start their education at an early age — a very early age. Long before they emerge into this world, we have already given them the matrix of their spirituality. Who we are — our spiritual level — has an impact on our children even before the time when the first cell divides.

• *Mayana shel Torah*

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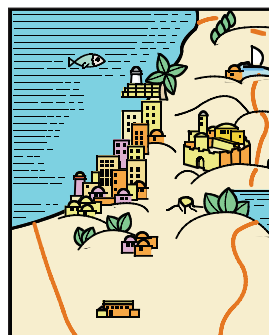
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

“Let my tongue cleave to my palate if I do not remember you, if I do not bring up the memory of Jerusalem at the peak of my joy.” (Tehillim 137:6)

This is the source for breaking a glass at a wedding. It reminds us that our joy is not complete as long as the *Beis Hamikdash* has not yet been rebuilt. Another dimension is added by the great eighteenth century



scholar, Rabbi Yonason Eybshutz of Prague, in his classic “*Ya'arot Devash*” (*Drush 14*).

Even if a Jew should have achieved all his heart's desires, he writes, it is incumbent on him to remember that he is still missing the most important ingredient for success as long as he is not in *Eretz Yisrael*, where he can achieve ultimate fulfillment and happiness.

which surpass human understanding) were to me songs.” What a beautiful sentiment! King David praising Hashem by telling him that the mysteries of Hashem’s laws — the *chukim* — sang to him like songs.

And yet the Talmud (*Sotah 35a*) tells us that because of that sentiment, Hashem allowed King David to falter by making a mistake that a child in kindergarten wouldn’t make. A mistake that led to the death of Uzza, the son of Avinadav.

King David’s mistake was to bring the Holy Ark up to Jerusalem in a wagon. This week’s *Parsha* tells us that the reason *Bnei Kehas* did not receive any wagons from Moshe was that they had no need of them. The *Bnei Kehas* were charged with carrying the Holy Ark on their shoulders. It was never to be moved around in a wagon.

So what was inappropriate about King David’s praise of Hashem that led him to such an error, and what was appropriate about his punishment? What do songs have to do with a wagon?

The word in Hebrew for a wagon is “*agala*.” It is related to another word “*igul*,” meaning circle. Music exists in a limited system, encircled by the strictures of tonality. Every octave, it essentially repeats itself. Music may be “the deepest of the arts and deep beneath the arts” (E.M. Forster), but it nevertheless exists within a finite structure. A note outside the scale is an excruciating impossibility. Fingernails on a black-

board. A violation beyond the boundaries of the musical sphere. Like a circle outside of which nothing can exist, music is a fixed system.

The essence of a *chok*, statute, is that it exists *outside* of the systems that we can ever understand. It exists outside the tightly-drawn, all-encompassing “O” of this world. It is forever beyond the grasp of man, outside his system of recognition.

King David, on his level, thought that he could relate to the *chukim* as though they were songs: “*Your chukim were to me songs.*” Songs, however greatly they praise Hashem, can only exist within the finite tonality of music; songs can never break through the hollow “O.”

Now we can understand the aptness of the punishment that he received. King David stumbled by putting the Holy Ark, the quintessential representation in this world of the *chok*, the supernal wisdom, on a wagon. He tried to make it ride on an *agala*, on an *igul*. On a circle. On the musical scale. He tried to make the infinite mysteries of the *chok* ride on the circle of this finite world.

“ARE YOU RECEIVING ME? OVER.”

“*May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you...*” (2:22)

The largest radio transmitter in town can be blasting out 50,000 watts of power, but if

the radio at the other end isn’t turned on you won’t hear a thing.

In the above verse, “*be(ing) gracious*” means finding grace in the eyes of others. But the question arises — if Hashem illuminates His countenance for us, surely there can be no question that we will find favor in the eyes of others. So what can the additional *bracha* of Hashem being gracious — of giving us favor in the eyes of others — mean?

We can have all the best qualities, but they can still go unrecognized. Our good qualities can live like a princess locked in the top of a castle.

When Yosef was in prison in Egypt, Hashem gave Yosef grace in the eyes of the prison guard. Yosef is called *Yosef Hatzadik* — Yosef the righteous. Not Yosef a *tzaddik*, but Yosef the *tzaddik*. Yosef was the essence of righteousness, and yet Hashem still had to give him favor in the eyes of the prison guard.

Some people are unable to see the true virtue of a person, often perceiving the very opposite of the person’s true self. It needs a special *bracha* for a person’s virtues to be recognized by the world. That’s the *bracha* of finding favor in the eyes of others — that their receiver will be turned on.

Sources:

The Same Old Song - The Ramban as heard from Michael Treblow

The Hollow “O” - Talmud *Sotah 35*, Rabbi Moshe Shapiro

as heard from Rabbi Yosef Brown

“*Are You Receiving Me? Over.*” - Degel Machane Ephraim

I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

“*And he instructs the woman to drink the bitter, cursing water...*” (5:24).

Verses from the Torah are written with ink on parchment, and the parchment is then erased into the water. The dissolved ink is what gives the water its bitter flavor.

• Ramban 5:18 quoting Sifri; Abarbanel

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WEEKLY DAF

ERUVIN 28-34

Since this week's issue is in such proximity to the Shavuot Festival of the Giving of the Torah we have chosen two selections from the seven pages of Talmud which highlight the importance of the scholars who study Torah.

RESPECT FOR TORAH SCHOLARS

When Rabbi Zeira felt too exhausted to continue his regular Torah study he was in the habit of seating himself at the entrance to the yeshiva of Rabbi Yehuda bar Ami. He did this so that he would be required to stand up in honor of the Torah scholars who entered and exited, and thus receive a reward for this activity.

Rabbi Zeira was certainly deserving of a heavenly reward for fulfilling the mitzvah of "You shall show respect for an elder (Torah sage) (*Vayikra 19:32*)." But how do we reconcile his motivation of seeking reward with the counsel of the Sage Antigonos of Socho (*Pirkei Avos 1:3*) who urges us not to be like servants motivated by a desire for reward?

The answer lies in a closer look at the conclusion of the aforementioned passage and at the beginning of another passage much later on in the Torah. Right after the command to show respect for a Torah scholar we are told "and you shall fear your G-d." This connection between respect for the Torah scholar and fear of G-d is reiterated in the verse (*Devarim 10:20*) "You shall fear Hashem, your G-d." This command is preceded by the seemingly superfluous word "es." Wherever such a word appeared in the Torah passage it was interpreted by the Sage Shimon the Amsonite to include something not explicitly stated in that passage. But when he came to this particular "es" he abandoned this approach even though it cast a doubt on the validity of all his other interpretations of this word. It was Rabbi Akiva, who did offer an interpretation here as well "to include Torah scholars." (*Mesechta Pesachim 22b*)

Shimon the Amsonite hesitated to interpret the "es" in this passage because it was inconceivable that the respect due to Hashem could be extended to anyone else, even a Torah scholar (especially since *that* respect also stemmed from a fear of retribution of which Hashem is the only source). Rabbi Akiva, however, may have viewed the respect due to a Torah scholar not as an equivalent of that due Hashem but rather as a step towards achieving a full sense of awe for Him.

This concept of showing respect for the person who studies Hashem's Torah as a building block towards full respect for Hashem may be why the Torah follows the command to respect a Torah scholar with the need to fear Hashem, since one inevitably leads to the other.

This approach gives us another perspective of Rabbi Zeira's declaration that he was going to stand up for the Torah scholars in order to gain a reward. The reward he had in mind was not compensation, but rather the result which the Torah says will come from showing respect to sages — the reward of achieving a full fear of Hashem.

• Eruvin 28b

THE INDISPENSABLE SAGE

After eating a particularly toxic vegetable, Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa became mortally ill. His colleagues prayed for his recovery because he was indispensable to them at that hour, and he did indeed recover.

Maharsha calls attention to the fact that there are many instances in the Talmud of sages praying for one another without any mention of their doing so because of the indispensability of the sick man. His explanation is that the *gemara* wishes to point out why Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa, who is so frequently mentioned in the Talmud as the great *tzadik* who successfully prayed for others, could not be relied upon to achieve his recovery with his own prayers, but rather needed to rely on the prayers of others. The prayers of the *tzadik* for himself, say our Sages (*Mesechta brachos 5b*), are not as effective as those of others in his behalf "because the prisoner is incapable of releasing himself from his confinement." As powerful as the prayers of Rabbi Chanina were, his colleagues, who so desperately needed him, were reluctant to rely on those prayers when they were offered in his own behalf, and they therefore made a collective effort of prayer to achieve his recovery.

Iyun Yaakov offers another approach. Even though Rabbi Chanina's colleagues might have been tempted to think that his questionable action — endangering his life by eating dangerous food — might preclude him from their consideration and prayers for his recovery, they nevertheless prayed for that recovery because he was indispensable to them as a teacher and guide.

It should be added to this explanation that Rabbi Chanina certainly was not guilty of premeditated suicidal action; rather, he ate the toxic vegetable not knowing of its poisonous nature. His colleagues, however, might have been critical of a sage of Rabbi Chanina's stature failing to exercise proper caution in his food intake. Nevertheless, they prayed intensely for his recovery because of his importance to the world.

• Eruvin 29b

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's *Parsha*?
2. Besides transporting the *Mishkan*, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is mentioned in this *Parsha*?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *teme'im* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnos kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnos kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the name of Hashem is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people 'with a full heart.' What word in the *Parsha* conveys this idea of 'a full heart'?
18. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem bless you and guard you?"
19. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem lift up His countenance upon you?"
20. The tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

BONUS QUESTION?

SHERLOX HOLMES AND THE #1 MYSTERY

"One young cow," Dr. Watstein muttered. "One young cow..."

"That's that new Chinese restaurant, isn't it," said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes. "Their food is good, but they serve small portions. Well, quality is more important than quantity, I always say."

"You're thinking of *Wun Yung Kow*; I said *one young cow*."

"My mistake," said Sherlock. "But what of it?"

"I'm puzzled. The verse describes the offering of Nachshon, son of Aminadav: 'His offering was one silver

basin...one silver basin...one young cow, one ram... (Bamidbar 7 12-16).' Rashi explains that 'one cow' means his finest cow."

"Would a Prince of Israel offer anything less than his one and only best?"

"But where does Rashi see it in the text itself? The verse says: '*Par echad ben bakar*' — One young cow. What forces Rashi to translate the word 'one' as anything other than a simple number?"

"Remember, Watstein, quality is more important than quantity."

What did Sherlock mean?

answer on page eight

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
4. 5:2 - The Camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the Camp of *Levi* which was surrounded by the Camp of *Yisrael*.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the Camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the Camp of the *Shechina*.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of Hashem is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shlamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - '*Amor*.'
18. 6:24 - "May Hashem bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissachar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

WAITING TABLES

David Walles from Australia
<walleds@fast.net.au> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I have a question that recently had practical implications. We were sitting in a restaurant and some older people walked in as they had a booking. The restaurant management confused the booking and it turns out that there was no space for them to be seated. They were angry that we as the younger generation did not show "derech erez" by getting up for them and offering our table. We were surprised at this and my question is, is there an obligation to get up for older people in a commercial setting where we are paying customers like all other customers? What is the halacha and would there be a difference between a bus situation and a restaurant?

Dear David Walles,

First of all, let's not confuse "old" with "sick." The Torah teaches us to honor the elderly even if they are healthy, and to help sick people even if they are young. So, in order not to confuse these issues, let's assume we are talking about healthy 70 year olds who need no physical assistance. Assuming this, you were not obligated to give up your table. Depending on the situation, however, it may have been a good thing to do.

The Torah says, "Rise before an old person, and honor the presence of a sage." The *Shulchan Aruch* defines "old" as age 70. If a 70 year old person walks by, you must stand. This is not in order to offer him your seat, but rather as a way of showing honor by recognizing his presence.

The obligation to show honor is not limited to standing up, but can also involve giving your seat, helping with a package, or otherwise offering assistance. However, one is not required to incur a financial loss as a result. Since there is a definite monetary

value in having a seat in a restaurant, you were therefore not required to offer your seat. Although the same argument can be made for a bus seat, as you have paid for the right to sit there (again, assuming the older people are physically able to stand in relative comfort) nevertheless one should stand for an elderly person on a bus or subway.

That having been said, keep in mind that "derech erez kadma l'Torah" — good manners and character traits are a prerequisite to observing the Torah. Depending on the situation, simple etiquette and common sense may require you to stand. This is especially true if you wear a *yarmulke*, because people tend to generalize about others based on their dress — therefore, when you wear a *yarmulke* you are "Judaism's ambassador" and must therefore keep to a higher standard than the letter of the law requires.

In the case of a restaurant booking, I don't think this applies, as it is normal to be seated on a reservation or "first come first served" basis, and one is not expected to relinquish his seat for another. In a pizza shop, or other informal setting where people "eat and run," you should give up your seat.

Sources:

- *Leviticus 19:32*
- *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 244:1*

MERCY ON MOSHE

H.J. Erner from Lake Worth, Florida
<HJE67@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If Moshe was unable to realize his dream of entering Israel because of one transgression (so-called) how are we who are nowhere near what he was to aspire to our dreams? I really do not believe that he should be held to a higher plane because of who he was.

Dear H. J. Erner,

You say Moshe was held to a higher standard. Higher than what? True,

Moshe was held to a higher standard than others. However, Moshe wasn't held to a higher standard than Moshe. That is, the standard of conduct expected of Moshe was a standard of conduct befitting of him. That is something of which G-d is the perfect Judge.

The problem is: We are so far removed from the high level of righteousness achieved by Moshe that we can barely understand what it was that he did wrong. But to say that all people should be judged by the same yardstick is to deny the difference among people.

Furthermore, a leader must consider not only the propriety of an action, but also how others will perceive the action. People look to a Torah leader as an example, and therefore his actions have far reaching effects. The more influential the person, the more careful he has to be in this regard. Since Moshe missed an opportunity as the leader to bring the people to greater heights of spiritual awareness, he lost the privilege of being the leader.

There's another reason Moshe was denied entrance into the Promised Land. That is to enable dispersion when the people of Israel sin, because Moshe symbolizes eternity, as the Torah he passed on is eternal. If he would have brought the people of Israel into the promised land they would never have been exiled from it, and when they sinned they would have been destroyed, G-d forbid, instead of dispersed among the nations.

MYSTIC SIXTY

<Name@Withheld> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the significance of the number 60? 1/60 appears in several things: "Bittel b'shishim" (halachic nullification of an item mixed with 60 times its volume of another item), a dream is 1/60 of

death, a person visiting the sick takes away 1/60 of the illness, etc. Does the number 60 or 1/60 have any mystical significance?

Dear Name@Withheld,

The Talmud and Midrash state: “Fire is 1/60 of hell, honey is 1/60 of the manna, Shabbat is 1/60 of the World to Come, sleep is 1/60 of death, and dreams are 1/60 of prophecy. Dreams are the buds of prophecy.”

Some commentaries say the above are all based on the rule that non-kosher food which gets mixed into a kosher food is annulled in a ration of 1/60, assuming that it is not sour, salty, bitter or spicy. This is related to the taste threshold of the average human (see Pfeiffer’s Handbook of Physiology). Accordingly, something which is on the threshold of existence but not quite “there” is called “one sixtieth.”

Maimonides states: “As you are aware, our Rabbis state that a dream is one sixtieth of prophecy; and you know, that

it is inappropriate to make comparisons between two unrelated concepts or things...and they repeated this idea in Midrash Bereshet Rabbah and said, ‘the buds of prophecy are dreams.’ This is indeed a wonderful metaphor, for just as a bud is the actual fruit itself that has not yet developed fully, similarly, the power of the imagination at the time of sleep is exactly that which operates at the time of prophecy, in an incomplete and unperfected state.”

There is a mystical idea behind one sixtieth (at least regarding dreams) which is based on the statement in the Zohar which states “There are six levels [each one encompassing ten sub-levels] between *netzach* (eternity) and *ratzon* (will).” Therefore dreams, which have their source in *ratzon*, because they are of the world of freewill, are one sixtieth of prophecy which is from the world of *netzach*.

Sources:

- Talmud Tractate Berachot 57b
- Midrash Rabbah Genesis 17:7
- Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed 2:36
- Zohar Pekudei 254a

Hachodesh — Moshe was shown the size of the moon in reference to the mitzvah of setting the calendar. Hope it’s been interesting.

- James Franks, King Solomon High School <KSHS@ort.org>

Re: Red Thread (Ohrnet Bechukosai):

Here in Brazil (which was first settled by Jews evicted from Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition) a red thread is placed on an infant’s forehead to stop hiccups! It is thought of exactly as protection against the evil eye (supposed cause of the hiccups)! Thank you for all the good work you do. I enjoy reading Ask the Rabbi.

Julia Michaels from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
<eleazar@unisys.com.br>

PUBLIC DOMAIN
Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous “Ohrnet” features

Re: Intermarriage (Ohrnet Emor):

What a powerful essay you provided regarding reasons for-bidding Jewish intermarriage! And I say that as a non-Jew who reflects the feelings and sense of amazement provided by Tolstoy and Mark Twain. Thank you for the great amount of courage you display in this secular world, which continues to denigrate the sacredness of being Jewish. The “modern” world will disparage you as being “elitist” and will try to destroy you spiritually and literally. But G-d will never permit that, if you stay true to His word. But you will have to hang tough, because you have the forces of the media, the entertainment industry, and agnosticism at all levels aligned against you. And against we non-Jews who support your views. We always look for that “light unto the gentiles” promised in G-d’s word, and your email service helps provide that light. Thanks for standing up for the laws promulgated by the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

- Louis Alexander, Houston Texas
<louis@alexander.hd.co.harris.tx.us>

Re: Moshe’s Name (Ohrnet Tetzaveh):

You explained why the Torah uses the name *Moshe*, and not the name his mother gave him. I have heard that the letters of Moshe — *mem*, *shin*, *hey* — refer to three objects that Moshe was unable to comprehend until Hashem showed them to him. They are: *Mem*: Menorah — Moshe was shown a Menorah on fire; *Shin*: Shekel — Moshe was shown the Shekel; *Hey*:

WHAT I DO WITH OHRNET

I believe a couple thousand high school students like myself access your **Parsha Q&A** page as a study aid.

I represent 50 students in yeshiva high school in Los Angeles. We are required to learn the entire *Parsha* with *Rashi* for a test on content on Sunday. Your **Parsha Q&A** page gets printed out by about ten of us and is circulated throughout the classes.

- Ellis Hecht <eshhole@usa.net>

What do YOU do with OhrNet? Let’s hear your feedback!

Write to: whatido@ohr.israel.net

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

The ability to judge favorably is a priceless tool for living. Its value is...

FAR ABOVE PEARLS

My necklace needed a new clasp. It was a string of cultured pearls my mother-in-law had given me as an engagement present years ago. I brought it to the store and — for the fun of it — asked the jeweler if he could tell if it were real or not. He ran his teeth over it (if it feels gritty, it's real). "Nope," he said, "but it's a good quality imitation."

How could that be? I took the pearls after they were washed and ran my teeth across them. The jeweler

was right, they weren't real. Had my in-laws given me a fake? I left the necklace at the jewelry store.

On my way home, a thought struck me. My married daughter has a string of imitation pearls that looks like mine. Maybe the one I brought to the jeweler was really hers; she must have left hers with me when it broke. Where are my pearls, the genuine ones? I don't know; maybe they're lost — but at least the mystery is solved. A day or so later my daughter showed up ... wearing her pearl necklace! So, the one in the store was mine after all! My in-laws had given me a fake!

Well, some people don't make a big deal about material things, I rationalized. If it looks nice, who says it has to

be real? It doesn't mean that they love me any less, right? Despite these thoughts, I felt "done in." The next day, I brought the necklace home from the jeweler. While putting it away, I noticed something nestled at the bottom of the jewelry box, something white buried under all the other jewelry. I dug it out. It was a pearl necklace! I ran my teeth over it. Guess what? It was the real thing! My engagement present!

Where did the imitation necklace come from? I still don't know. Maybe it was put there to teach me a lesson: Don't jump to conclusions, no matter how strong the evidence seems.

• Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Two exactly identical people in the exact same place on the exact same day do the exact same act with the exact same intentions. However, the first one is fulfilling a *mitzvah d'oraita*, a Torah commandment, and the second one is transgressing an *issur d'oraita*, a Torah prohibition.

(Note: The people are exactly identical. The answer is *not*: "One's a *kohen* — or member of any special group — and one isn't," or "One's life is in danger and one's isn't." In other words, the riddle could equally be asked about the same person acting twice.)

Hint #1: The first person says a blessing before his action. Hint #2: The order of their actions is important.

• Submitted by Rabbi Yaakov Bradpiece

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BONUS ANSWER!

"In Hebrew," said Sherlock, "the description of a thing usually precedes the number. We first need to know *what*, and only then *how many*."

"Can you give me an example?" asked Watstein.

"Certainly. The verse above, verse 13, states 'ka'aras kesef achas' — a plate of silver, one...."

"I see. In other words, *ma* (what) precedes *kama* (how many)."

"Precisely, Watstein. Therefore, our verse should have said '*par*,' a cow, '*ben bakar*,' which is young — and only then '*echad*,' one. The verse should first describe what a thing is, and only then tell us how many."

"Go on," said Watstein.

"So, if *echad* is a number, it's in the wrong place; it interrupts between "cow" and "young." Rather, it must be an adjective, describing what type of animal it is: It is "The One" with a capital "T", the "one and only" best of the flock."

"Lovely. But clarify one thing. You cited verse 13 which states "a plate of silver, one...." to support your theory. But the very next words contradict it: '*mizrach echad kesef*... A basin, one, of silver.' There, the number precedes the description, and Rashi there makes no comment!"

"Yes he does, Watstein. See Rashi's comment to verse 19."

• Based on Taz

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN		SFORNO			
5:2, 5:6	Organization of this Parsha	7:13	Gifts of the Nesi'im	364	Confession
5:20	Waters of the Sotah			365	Marital Peace
6:11	Sin of the Nazir			366	Sotah Offering
6:24	Blessings of the Kohanim	362	Tumah and Kedusha	374	Appropriate Asceticism
				378	The Blessing of the Kohanim