

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

WORLD VIEW

"...let Canaan be a slave to them"
(9:25)

Why did *Canaan*, offspring of *Cham*, have to be a slave to the descendants of **both** *Shem* and *Yafes*?

The name *Yafes* connotes beauty and aesthetic appreciation. Greek civilization and its emphasis on beauty is a product of *Yafes*.

Cham means 'hot.' It implies wild, unbridled animal energy.

The civilizing effects of aesthetics (*Yafes*) can raise us above domination of our desires (*Cham*) to a level where we can make the leap from the world of the sensual — "*The world is what I can feel*" — to the level of aesthetics — "*The world is what I can think*."

Only then can we ascend to the level of "*The world is beyond what I can think*." That's the level of *Shem*.

The Jewish People are descended from *Shem*. It is our job to proclaim that faith is not contradictory to intellect and that Man can aspire to that which is beyond intellect. As Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch put it: "*An essential component of wisdom is the knowledge that man's failure to comprehend truth does not make it untrue*."

DOVE-KA

Even though Noach sent a dove to check whether it was possible to come out of the ark, he waited for Hashem's command before he actually emerged.

If Noach was going to wait for Hashem's command before leaving the ark, what was the purpose of sending the dove?

Many years before Hashem

brought the flood to the world, Hashem told Noach about it. Noach had Hashem's word that the flood was coming, but his faith was meager. It was not until the water actually started to rise around him that he went into the ark.

By sending out the dove, even though he had no intention of going out of the ark until Hashem commanded him, Noach was doing *teshuva*. He was returning to Hashem, fixing his previous lack of faith. He was

"It is our job to proclaim that faith is not contradictory to intellect and that Man can aspire to that which is beyond intellect."

demonstrating that even though he knew it was safe to leave the ark, he would only act when Hashem told him to.

This is what our sages call "*teshuva gamura*" — complete repentance — being in the exact same circumstances as those of the initial sin (with full ability and desire to perform the forbidden action) and *not* repeating it. By sending out the dove, Noach was demonstrating that even though he had the possibility to rely on natural indications, he would act only on the word of Hashem.

THE LION'S ROAR

The Midrash tells us that when

Noach was late in bringing the lion's food one day, it turned around and bit him.

Nothing happens by coincidence. If it was the lion that bit Noach, it must be that Noach had transgressed and that the lion was the fitting agent of Noach's punishment. But what was Noach being punished for and why was the lion the agent of his chastisement?

The *Zohar* says that the First *Beis Hamikdash* is compared to a lion, and the second to a dog: A lion will actively protect its progeny, it will attack and bite, but a dog will usually only bark. The first *Beis Hamikdash* actively protected the Jewish People, whereas the second *Beis Hamikdash* awakened people to repentance, but didn't actively protect them.

When the Jewish People were threatened either physically or spiritually, the *Avos* — Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov — would pray for us. They would actively protect us. They wouldn't just "bark," they would come out and "bite."

Noach, however, was criticized for not praying on behalf of his generation. He built the ark. When people asked him what he was doing, he replied that a flood was coming and that they should repent. But he didn't actually pray for them.

That's why of all the animals it was the lion that bit Noach. It was as if he was telling Noach: "Barking" — telling people to repent — is not enough. You have to "bite" as well. You have to actively protect them. You have to pray for them.

Sources:

- *World View* - Rabbi S.R. Hirsch
- *Dove-Ka* - Rabbi Moshe Feinstein
- *The Lion's Roar* - The Ostrovzer Gaon; Tiferes Zion

PARSHA OVERVIEW

It is now ten generations since the creation of the first man, Adam *HaRishon*. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and Hashem resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants except for Noach, the sole righteous man of his era, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the earth. Hashem instructs Noach to build an Ark in which to escape the Flood. After forty days and nights, the flood covers the entire earth, even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days, the water begins to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the Ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends forth first a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later, Noach again sends out the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive branch in its beak. After seven more days, Noach once again sends forth the dove, which this time does not return. Hashem then tells Noach and his family to leave the Ark. Noach brings offerings to Hashem from the animals which were carried in the Ark for

this purpose. Hashem vows never again to flood the entire world and gives the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to eat meat, unlike Adam. Hashem commands the Seven Universal Laws; the prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating the meat of a living animal, and the institution of a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafes, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Ham is cursed to be a slave to slaves. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in Hashem fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

HAFTORAH: ISAIAH 54:1-10

Just as in the Parsha this week, where Hashem promises never to bring another flood to destroy the world, so too the Haftorah carries Hashem's promise never to exile the Jewish People after the redemption from the current Exile of Edom.

The Parsha depicts the terrible flood which destroys the earth and its myriad creatures at the decree of the merciful G-d. It looks like the end, but it is, in reality, the beginning. Out of the ashes of a degenerate world sprouts the pure seed of Noach.

Similarly, the destruction of the First *Beis Hamikdash* and the dispersal of the Jewish People was like a "flood" which seemed like a total disaster.

The prophet tells that rather than being the ruin of the nation, in reality this was its preservation,

and like a mother left lonely and grieving, Zion will be comforted when the exile has achieved its appointed task of purification, and her children return to her.

JEWISH DIETETICS

"Come all who are thirsty... go to the water... get wine and milk"
(55:1)

Just as water, wine and milk keep best in plain inexpensive containers, so Torah, which satisfies the thirst of all who learn it, stays with one who is humble.

The revealed part of Torah is like water: Just as the human body cannot exist without water, so too the Jewish People cannot survive spiritually without the revealed Torah.

The secrets of the Torah are like wine: They must be imbibed with care and are not equally tolerated by all.

The *Midrashim* of the Torah are like milk and honey: They are sweet and nourishing, instilling love and fear of Hashem.

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• If you have a question about Judaism, you can submit it to **ASK THE RABBI**. Just send your question using E-Mail to "ohr@virtual.co.il" and set the subject to "ASK THE RABBI". We can't include all questions submitted in the column, but we do try to respond to everyone personally.

New Feature!

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

AWARE THROUGH THE AIR

Rabbi Zeira, one of the leading Sages in Babylon, disputed the opinion of a colleague, Rabbi Eila, in regard to a legal matter concerning inheritance. After Rabbi Zeira

finally realized his dream of settling in Eretz Yisrael he reconsidered his position and concurred with that of Rabbi Eila.

"This is conclusive proof," exclaimed Rabbi Zeira, "that the very air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wiser."

• *Bava Basra 158b*

לע"ג

מרת בתייה בת ר' יונה ז"ל

נלב"ע כ"ה תשרי תשנ"ד

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What are the “offspring” of a righteous person?
2. Which particular sin “sealed” the fate of the Flood Generation?
3. Being that Hashem is all-powerful, why did He choose to save Noah by means of an ark, as opposed to some other method?
4. The Ark had three stories. What function did each story serve?
5. What indication do we have that Noah was familiar with the Torah?
6. Why did Hashem postpone bringing the Flood for seven days?
7. What demonstrated Noah’s lack of faith?
8. Why did the first water of the Flood come down as light rain?
9. What did people say that threatened Noah, and what did Hashem do to protect him?
10. What grouping of animals escaped the punishment of the Flood?
11. How deeply was the Ark submerged in the water?
12. How long did the punishment of the Flood last?
13. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
14. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
15. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
16. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” follow directly after the prohibition of murder?
17. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the Flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called “Yiscah”?

BONUS QUESTION?

Rashi never ‘just’ comments; something in the text always impels him to do so. Rashi’s comments are answers to unspoken questions and difficulties arising from a thoughtful reading of the Torah. Therefore, anyone who wants a true understanding of Rashi’s classic Torah commentary must always ask “What’s bothering Rashi?”

“And he sent the dove to see if the water had abated from the face of the earth.” (Bereishis 8:8) Rashi comments: **“And he sent”**: This does not mean ‘sending on an errand,’ but

rather ‘sending away,’ setting it free to go wherever it wanted, and thus Noah could see whether the waters had abated, because if it could find a resting place it would not return to him.”

What’s bothering Rashi? (Hint: In the previous verse (Bereishis 8:7), the Torah uses the exact same phrase “And he sent out the raven, and it went out, flying back and forth...” — yet in that verse Rashi makes no comment.)

answer on page 6

I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

According to the Midrash Tehillim (*Mizmor Alef*), one third of the people at the Tower of Babel were punished by being turned into monkeys. So, in a sense, Darwin was “right” about one thing: Humans and monkeys share common ancestry!

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 6:9 - Good deeds.
2. 6:13 - Robbery.
3. 6:14 - So that people would see Noah building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noah would answer, “Hashem is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
4. 6:16 - The top story housed the people, the middle story — the animals, and the bottom story — the refuse.
5. 7:2 - Hashem told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
6. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
7. 7:7 - He did not believe the Flood would come. Therefore, he did not enter the Ark until the rain forced him to do so.
8. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
9. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” Hashem surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
10. 7:22 - The fish.
11. 8:4 - Eleven *amos*.
12. 8:14 - A full solar year.
13. 8:14 - Eleven days.
14. 9:3 - After the Flood.
15. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
16. 9:7 - To equate one who abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
17. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, convincing them to rebel against Hashem.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called *Yiscah* because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

WEEKLY DAF

BERACHOS 30 -36

IN THE MOOD FOR PRAYER

“One should not enter into prayer from amidst sorrow, nor indolence, nor laughter, nor idle talk, nor frivolity, nor nonsense — only from amidst the joy of a mitzvah.”

This is the Talmudic formula for preparing to stand before Hashem in the prayer of *Shmone Esrei* three times daily.

What produces this mood of joy which must serve as the preface to prayer?

We subsequently learn that there is an equation between “words of praise and comfort” and “joy of a mitzvah.” Rashi spells out how we recite such words of praise and comfort to achieve this joy in each of our three daily services.

In the morning we precede our *Shmone Esrei* with a recounting of the Exodus from Egypt. At *Mincha* we say “*Ashrei*” which contains the passage “Hashem protects all that love Him.” In the evening we again have the Exodus theme, and even outside of *Eretz Yisrael* where a long blessing separates it from the *Shmone Esrei*, that blessing contains such words of praise and comfort as the passage “For Hashem will not abandon His people.”

In order for a person come before Hashem and sincerely peti-

tion Him for all his personal and national, material and spiritual needs, he must be filled with confidence that his Creator both cares about his creations and that He is absolutely capable of providing their needs. Only by recalling the Exodus in which Hashem so powerfully demonstrated both His profound concern and His unlimited ability, or in reciting Biblical passages which echo this comforting message in their praise of Hashem, can one achieve that “joy of a mitzvah” which puts him into the proper mood for prayer.

• *Berachos 31a*

WOE TO THE SERPENT

A dangerous serpent threatened the residents of a certain community. When a number of people had been stricken by this creature it was brought to the attention of Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa.

There are different versions in our Babylonian Talmud and in the Jerusalem Talmud as to how the sage eliminated this menace.

In the version before us Rabbi Chanina asked to be shown the hole in the ground which served as the serpent’s lair. He then placed his heel upon the opening of the hole and the serpent bit his heel. Rabbi Chanina remained unaffected but the serpent died. He then carried the dead serpent on his shoulder to the *Beis Midrash*

where he declared:

“See, my sons, it is not the serpent which kills. It is sin that kills.”

The reaction of people who learned of this incident was to exclaim: “Woe to the man who encounters a serpent and woe to the serpent which encounters Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa.”

The Jerusalem Talmud version is that Rabbi Chanina was standing in prayer in his regular spot when he was struck by the serpent. He did not interrupt his prayers, and when he had completed them he discovered the body of the dead serpent next to him.

Maharsha points out that the first version is problematic because a person is not permitted to put himself into a dangerous situation and to rely upon a Heavenly miracle to save him. The resolution proposed by *Iyun Yaakov* is that the sage felt that the security of the community was dependent on his utilizing his exalted standing which had already been acclaimed in a Heavenly echo which declared “The entire world is nourished in the merit of My son Chanina.” (*Berachos 17b*) He decided that the communal need justified risking his own safety, and it was the merit of the community and his own merit which made the miracle possible.

• *Berachos 33a*

GET CONNECTED

To OHR SOMAYACH on the WEB
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Dear Readers,

This week starts the fifth cycle of Ohr Somayach's "Ask the Rabbi." Originally, "Ask the Rabbi" consisted of one rabbi answering the few questions which trickled in each week. **Four years and over fifty thousand questions later**, our team of rabbis answers more than **one hundred questions daily** which pour in from **all over the globe**.

"Ask the Rabbi" replies to each and every person who writes in. Most people receive a personal answer to their question **within 48 hours**. Often, you will be answered the same day!

Besides answering everyone personally, we select a few questions and publish them in our weekly "Ask the Rabbi" column. By popular demand, we are expanding the "Ask the Rabbi" column to allow for greater diversity of subject matter. We're also introducing a new feature called "**PUBLIC DOMAIN**" to encourage feedback from **you!**

SHALOM BY US

[Name withheld] wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is more important: Shalom Bayit — harmony in the home — or mitzvah observance? Neither I nor my wife were raised observant, but a few years ago I decided that I wanted to become more observant. Our children, who have always attended Jewish day school, also were in favor of this. My wife was not altogether opposed to the idea, but wanted to move very slowly. She has become more observant (i.e., keeping Shabbat, stricter kosher) but is reluctant to change any more.

Unfortunately, I began moving too quickly and problems soon arose. In the meantime 3 years have passed and we have had some very difficult times; our marriage nearly ended several times. My wife has asked me to back off several times, but I find it difficult to "undo" certain mitzvah observances once I have undertaken them (i.e., kippah, tzitzit). Because of her unwillingness to conform with the rest of the family, she now has a very strong resentment for Orthodox Judaism, and believes it is "too demanding." When Yom Tov

approaches, especially like this year when we had two days of Yom Tov followed immediately by Shabbat, she gets in a state of depression. To keep our marriage together I feel that I have to undo what I have done. This, however, presents a terrible inner conflict because I do not wish to transgress Torah law. We have been to counseling, but nothing has ever come out of it. Also, I have told my wife that she is free to do whatever she is comfortable with, and I will not think less of her. She feels, though, that she has become an outcast in the family and that she is the "bad guy" while I get to be the "good guy" by observing the Torah along with our children. I love my wife, but I also fear Hashem. What should I do? Thank You!

Dear [Name withheld],

From your question it sounds like you're putting "Harmony in the home" on one side of a scale, and "Torah observance" on the other side. This is incorrect: Harmony in the Jewish home is itself a fundamental pillar of Torah observance.

Therefore, you need to discuss each issue — *kippah*, *tzitzit*, *Yom Tov*, etc. — with a competent Halachic authority. Preferably someone with whom you and your wife feel comfortable and open. May Hashem grant you and your wife the strength to overcome your difficulties and to approach the New Year with renewed commitment to each other and to the Torah.

WAYWARD DAUGHTER

[Name withheld] wrote:

My name is [withheld]. I am 8 years old. I have a question. In Parashat Ki Tavo, we read about the ben sorer u'moreh, the wayward son. Why isn't there a 'bat' sorer u'moreh, a wayward daughter?

Dear [Name withheld],

What a great question! Maimonides, in his classic work "Mishneh Torah" addresses this question. He explains that a *ben sorer u'moreh*, a youth who steals and gorges himself on meat and wine, will eventually commit robbery and even murder in order to satisfy his desires. A woman, says Maimonides, is less likely to sink to the level where she will actually commit robbery and murder.

Sources:

• Rambam, *Hilchot Mamrim* 7:11

MEAT AND POTATOES

ALAN SAUER from Chile

<dum-dum@interactiva.cl> wrote:

Dear Rabbi? What happens if I cook potatoes in a pan that I usually use for cooking meat in? Do I have to wait six hours like if I had eaten beef?

Dear Alan Sauer,

If you eat food that is *parve* — neither milk nor meat — which was cooked using clean "meat" utensils, you don't need to wait six hours before eating milk foods. Likewise, *parve* foods cooked in clean "dairy" utensils may be eaten immediately after meat.

Sources:

• *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah, Rema* 89:3

CHOSEN PEOPLE?

AHMAD FAIZ BIN ABDUL RAHMAN

from Malaysia <afaiz@ikim.gov.my>

wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

According to the Talmud, have the Jews been chosen to exercise control and authority over the life and property of non-Jewish people? Would this not be in utter contradiction of the liberal notion of the political and civil liberties of the individual, something which is considered especially important in Western liberal thought and tradition? Are the Jews superior to non-Jews? If so, how does one begin to qualify this so that it would not be viewed as racist and bigoted? I have referred to Muslim professors of comparative religious studies on such matters. They have given the mainstream Muslim ideas or beliefs on what the Talmud says of non-Jews. I would now like to know the Jewish view of such matters so that my research will be balanced. Wassalam.

Ahmad Faiz bin Abdul Rahman
Research Officer, IKIM Malaysia

Dear Ahmad Faiz bin Abdul Rahman,

Jews have not been chosen to control other nations. Rather, we have been chosen to act as an example of morality for the nations of the world and to instruct them in the teachings of ethical monotheism.

As G-d states in the Torah:

“Now, if you obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be My special treasure among all the nations...”

“And you shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...”

“G-d has similarly declared allegiance to you today, making you His special nation... you are called the priests of G-d, the servants of the Almighty...”

The emphasis, as you can clearly see, is on being *priests*. Priests are not rulers or kings; rather they are teachers and examples.

Sources:

- Exodus 19:3,6
- Deuteronomy 4:20, 26:17-19
- Isaiah 61:6

New Feature !

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles, and reactions concerning previous "Ask-the-Rabbi" features.

Kabbalistically (I think) it is ideal to have twelve challot (I don't know why). Some Chassidim do this. German Jews do not braid, but make a regular loaf and then stretch a line of dough from tip to tip. I've heard this is a letter 'vav' which equals 6. Both challot together make twelve. Oh! I just realized as I'm writing! Twelve is reminiscent of the 12 "lechem hapanim" — the "show breads" offered on Shabbat in the Beit Hamikdash. Now it all comes together!

Daniel Loew, Yeshiva University
<dloew@ymail.yu.edu>

One would understand from your words that our present usage of the word "challah" is not linguistically biblical. I would point out that the word challah in the Torah and Tanach always means "loaf" or "roll" and it appears many times not in connection with mitzvah of "separating challah" from the dough. Check a concordance.

Dovid Solomon
<solomons@mail.netvision.net.il>

Your answer was interesting but smacked of being after the fact. I always thought that the braids were there to make it easier to distribute the bread to the participants as quickly as possible, for those who break the bread by hand. Don't some people have a custom to avoid knives at the table?

Edward Simon
<esimon@bilbo.bio.purdue.edu>

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Shira Aliza Phillips from Brooklyn, New York
<philfam@erols.com> wrote us the following:

I have a Yiddle Riddle for you, as told to me by Mora Vered Goldfarb:

Of which two people in the Torah can it be said that their names spelled backwards are words used by the Torah to describe them?

Answer next week...

continued from page 3

BONUS ANSWER!

The verse says "Noach sent the dove to see..." But who was supposed "to see" — the dove or Noach? It sounds as if the dove was sent on a mission to see if the waters had abated. This makes no sense, for how could a bird understand the purpose of its mission! On the other hand, how would sending out the bird allow Noach to "see" anything? Thus, Rashi explains that the word "sent" doesn't mean "sent on an errand" but rather "set free," and Noach would "see" — understand — by the dove's actions if the waters had abated.

• Adapted from Dr. Avigdor Bonchek's new book "What's Bothering Rashi?" Feldheim Publishers

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

6:19	RAMBAN Miracle of the Ark	10:9	Nimrod	9:6	The Crime of Murder
7:1	Preserving the World	10:15	The Land of Canaan	9:9	The Conditions of the Covenant
8:11	The Olive Leaf	11:32	The Death of Terach	9:13	Meaning of the Rainbow
9:12	The Rainbow		SFORNO		
9:18	Ham and Canaan	8:21	The New World		
		8:22	The Pre-Flood World		