

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE

“Yosef gathered all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt...and...brought the money into Pharaoh’s palace.” (47:14)

Commerce is usually a matter of sophisticated back-scratching. You know. You scratch my back, and I’ll buy your F-16s at an inflated price.

“What’s in it for Number One?” is the subtitle on the business cards of the world.

It’s like a breath of fresh air when you find someone who wants to complete the job for no other reason than that he made a commitment to do so. A person who puts his integrity above his bank account.

The prototype for this kind of person is to be found in this week’s Parsha.

Yosef’s rise to pre-eminence in Egypt was in order to fulfill his prophecy that his father and brothers would bow to him. And to make good Hashem’s promise to Avraham that his descendants would be slaves in Egypt and emerge from there with great wealth. Yosef’s ascendancy to power was no more than a preparation to fulfill these ends.

Thus, after his father and brothers were safely ensconced in Goshen, logically Yosef should have stopped working with the enormous vigor that characterized him.

This was not the case whatsoever. Even after there was no need for Yosef to carry on serving Pharaoh, Yosef launched into an agrarian plan which consolidated all the wealth of Egypt under the dominion of Pharaoh. Yosef continued to act as a prince to the manner born.

Why?

Yosef was the ultimate man of

integrity. Even after his own interests had been served and there was no further need to enrich Pharaoh, Yosef returned the trust that Pharaoh had placed in him and secured the financial underpinnings of Pharaoh’s dynasty.

In doing this, he sanctified Hashem’s Name in the eyes of the people. For it was clear to all that Hashem grants success to those who fear Him.

Yosef was looking after “Number One.”

“It’s like a breath of fresh air when you find someone who puts his integrity above his bank account.”

PIECES OF EIGHT

“Then Yosef said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me, please...I am Yosef your brother — it is me whom you sold into Egypt.’” (44:4)
“...He (Yosef) showed them that he was circumcised.” - Rashi

All but eight verses in this week’s Parsha start with the letter “Vav.”

Why?

The letter Vav connotes the expression “Vey!” — “Woe!”. It is as though all the other verses are crying out “Oy

Vey!” to the selling of Yosef; “Oy Vey” to the parental anguish of Yaakov.

The whole of this week’s Parsha cries “Woe!” — with the exception of eight verses.

What is the significance of the number eight?

The number seven defines the natural world: There are seven days in the week; seven notes in the diatonic scale. Eight is that which reveals the supernatural in the natural. *Bris mila*, the mitzva of circumcision, is performed on the eighth day after birth. *Bris mila* reveals the metaphysical in the physical.

Bris mila removes the covering of nature. It takes off the mask of the natural world to reveal that Man’s body has a holy purpose. It teaches us that our physicality is to be elevated; that we can use our most physical aspect to strive for that which is above nature. *Bris mila* represents the natural within the supernatural.

When the brothers stood in front of Yosef before he revealed his true identity, they thought they were in the middle of a protracted and worsening nightmare: They had wrongly been accused of theft. One of their brothers was already being held in custody, and now Binyamin, the youngest, was about to be taken into slavery. They knew that this would break their father Yaakov. They thought to themselves — “Why is all this happening to us?”

With three small words — “I am Yosef” — everything became clear. All the distress and the heartbreak of the past months were dispelled in an instant of recognition. All the twists and turns in this convoluted plot had now reached their final dramatic denouement.

In an instant, *the covering was removed from nature*. Suddenly everything became transcendentally clear.

So will it be in the future. When the

continued on page four

PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of selflessness, Yosef has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and he now reveals that he is none other than their brother Yosef. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of Hashem's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. Hashem communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt

and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that Hashem will establish the Children of Yisrael as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring, and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Yaakov/Yisrael become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

HAFTORAH: YEchezkel 37:15-28

TWO CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK

One of the ways that a prophecy becomes irreversible is if it is reinforced by a symbolic action.

In this week's Haftorah, the prophet Yechezkel foretells that, in

the time of the final redemption, the two halves of the Jewish People, symbolized by Yehuda and Yosef, will be brought together like two blocks of wood. Hashem tells Yechezkel "Join them together [so that they] look like one. They shall be one in your hands." (37:17)

Even though nothing could be more separate than two blocks of wood, eventually these two blocks

will become one. And even though only Hashem can perform the miracle of making one block out of two, but for us to deserve the acceleration of the redemption, we must "look like one." We must be united and free from malice.

Although the redemption is inevitable, it is in our hands to delay it or to make it happen today.

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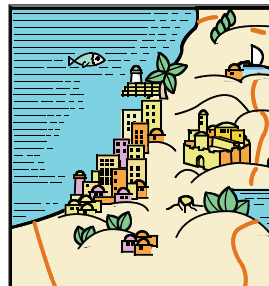
* If you have a question about Judaism, you can submit it to **ASK THE RABBI**. Just send your question using E-Mail to "ohr@virtual.co.il" and set the subject to "ASK THE RABBI". We can't include all questions submitted in the column, but we do try to respond to everyone personally.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

FOUR CUBITS TO ETERNITY

“Whoever walks a distance of four cubits in Eretz Yisrael is assured of being a member of the World to Come.” This statement cited in the name of Rabbi Yochanan is based on the passage (Yishayahu 42:5) in which Hashem is described as forming Eretz (Yisrael) and “giving life to those who walk



in it.” Our Sages saw such a powerful link between Eretz Yisrael and the World to Come that one of them even declared that resurrection of the dead will take place only in Eretz Yisrael, and the remains of those buried elsewhere will have to roll to Eretz Yisrael through tunnels created for them.

• Kesuvos 111a

This issue is dedicated by
AVI ROTHENBERG AND FAMILY
in memory of his mother

שיינדל ליבה בת חיים יהושע ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What threatening words did Yehudah say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehudah the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he told his brothers "Don't dispute along the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized that Yosef was alive?
10. Why did Hashem tell Yaakov, "Do not fear going down to Egypt"?
11. Hashem told Yaakov: "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Shaul ben HaCanaan is listed as one of Shimon's sons. Who was his mother?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds an abomination in the eyes of the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, forcing the inhabitants to move from city to city. What were his two motives for doing so?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

BONUS QUESTION?

"And it was pleasing in the eyes of Pharaoh...." (45:16)

Why was Pharaoh pleased that Yosef's brothers had arrived?

answer on page six

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Yosef said: "You will dwell in the land of Goshen...." (45 10)

The land of Goshen was already legal property of the Jewish People because Pharaoh had given it to Sarah as a present. Yosef feared that if they would settle on Egyptian property, the Egyptians might one day claim that the Jews lived on land that did not belong to them and expel them. He therefore preferred that the brothers stay in Goshen, which belonged to them by right.

• Midrash Aggada

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand that he be brought to Egypt.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that Eretz Yisrael is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *Lashon Hakodesh* (Hebrew).
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave Eretz Canaan.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Canaan.
12. 46:6 - He gave it to Esav in exchange for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - Dina bas Yaakov.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the house.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - He did not want Pharaoh to see their strength and draft them into the army as warriors.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh when he approached the river.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

WEEKLY DAF

SHABBOS 30 - 36

WHOSE CANDLE MUST GO?

When Rabbi Tanchum of Noi received the following question he decided to use it as a topic for his public lecture:

"If there is a candle whose light is preventing a mortally ill person from sleeping and thus endangering his life — may one extinguish this candle on Shabbos?"

He began his lecture with a reference to the words of King David in *Tehillim* that "the dead cannot praise Hashem," and stressed the urgency of studying Torah and performing *mitzvos* during one's lifetime because there is no opportunity to do so after death. After a lengthy discourse on the circumstances of David's own death on Shabbos, the sage concluded his lecture with this ruling on the halachic question put to him:

"The light created by man is called a candle and man's soul is called a candle (*Mishlei 20:27*). It is preferable for man's candle to be extinguished in favor of Hashem's candle."

Maharsha points to the similarity between this *gemara* and one further on in *Mesechta Shabbos (151b)* in which Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel states:

"The Shabbos may be violated to save the life of a one-day old baby but not to bury King David. In regard to the child we say that it is preferable to violate one Shabbos to enable this child to observe many future Shabbosos, but in regard to King David there is no longer any possibility for him to perform any *mitzvos*."

The interesting thing about both of these two aforementioned rationales for violating the Shabbos to save a life is that neither of them is

the conclusive source for the ruling. In the Talmudic discussion of this source (*Mesechta Yoma 85b*) the explanation about the candle is not even mentioned and the one about observing future Shabbosos is rejected as inadequate. The only fully adequate source, concludes the *gemara*, is the passage (*Vayikra 18:5*) "You shall live in them," which teaches us that wherever there is even a reasonable possibility that Shabbos observance may endanger life it must be abandoned.

Rashi explains that since uneducated people came to public lectures it was the policy of sages like Rabbi Tanchum to embellish their halachic rulings with such homiletic explanations which would be more effective in getting their point across.

• *Shabbos 30*

TWO OF EACH

After spending twelve years of intense Torah study in the cave where they hid from their Roman pursuers, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar found difficulty in reconciling themselves with an imperfect world in which people neglected Torah study. Even after being sent back to the cave for another year by Hashem for being too destructive in their criticism, Rabbi Elazar still could not make peace with the world despite his father's efforts to change his perspective. He finally succeeded in doing so on one occasion so dramatically described in the *gemara*.

Shabbos was approaching and an elderly Jew was rushing home clutching two bundles of *hadassim* (myrtle branches) in his hands. "What are these for?" the sages asked him.

• *Shabbos 33b*

"To honor the Shabbos," he replied. "But isn't one bundle enough?" they wondered. "One is for *Zachor*," he explained, "and the other for *Shamor*."

"See how Jews love their *mitzvos*," said Rabbi Shimon to his son, who finally made peace with an imperfect world.

In the two Torah accounts of the Ten Commandments, the commandment regarding Shabbos is once introduced (*Shmos 20:8*) with the words "*Zachor* (remember) the Shabbos" and another time (*Devarim 5:12*) "*Shamor* (observe) the Shabbos." Although both *Zachor* and *Shamor* were said in one Divine word, as we say in our *Lecha Dodi* prayer on Shabbos Eve, they refer to two different dimensions of this holy day. *Zachor* relates to the positive actions we do on Shabbos to sanctify it — *Kiddush*, prayers, meals and *zemiros* songs — while *Shamor* is the title for the vast category of creative labors prohibited on the Day of Rest.

The custom of lighting at least two candles in honor of the Shabbos is also based on the need to focus on both of these dimensions. The *hadassim* in their role of fragrant beauty serve as a source for the flowers which decorate the Shabbos table. But Maharsha sees another dimension in the choice of *hadassim* which appear in Tanach (*Zecharia 1:8*) as a symbol of the righteous. Just as we learned (*Shabbos 23a*) that one who is diligent in lighting Shabbos candles will merit having sons who are Torah scholars, so will Shabbos-honoring *hadassim*, representing righteousness, achieve the same goal.

• *Shabbos 33b*

continued from page one

world hears just three words — "I am Hashem" — all the paradoxes and conundrums will be revealed to be no more than an overture to the final crescendo of world history.

Then Hashem will reveal the faithfulness of His covenant, His *Bris*, with the People of Israel and the covering will be removed from the natural world once and forever.

WITH ALL MY HEART

"He (Yosef) fell on his (father's) neck and wept exceedingly." (*45:14*)

Imagine you haven't seen your father for twenty-two years. When you finally see him again, naturally you break down in a flood of

tears.

Now imagine you are the father, and not only have you not seen your son for twenty-two years, but for most of that time you thought he was dead. Wouldn't you cry even more than your son?

When Yosef finally was reunited with his father Yaakov in this week's Parsha, he poured out his heart in a sea of tears at the emotional release of seeing his father after so many years. Interestingly, the reaction of his father Yaakov is not mentioned at all.

Our Sages tell us that in fact, at that very moment, Yaakov was reciting the *Shema*.

Why did Yaakov choose just this, of all times, to say *Shema*?

A *tzadik* harnesses every opportunity and emotion to serve Hashem. When Yaakov felt the supreme surge of joy and love at the sight of his beloved son, his first thought was to channel his own personal joy, to direct his emotions into a sublime expression of his love for his Creator. And so he recited the *Shema*.

"And you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart..."

Sources:

Looking Out for Number One - Ramban, Rabbi Meir Schlessinger, Rabbi Moshe Zauderer
Pieces Of Eight - Rashi, HaRokeach al HaTorah, Maharal, Rabbi C. Z. Senter
With All My Heart - Maharal

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KABBALAH-WANNABEE

Ofer Gamliel
<ofer647@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Why is it recommended not to read the book of Raziel the Angel? Thank you.

Dear Ofer Gamliel,

I heard the following from known Kabbalists here in Jerusalem. There is an ancient authoritative Kabbalistic work called *Raziel HaMalach* (Raziel the Angel). This book is cited by the Zohar, but the book itself was lost over a thousand years ago.

What is known today as the book of *Raziel HaMalach* is actually a distorted version of a genuine Kabbalistic work written by one of the *Rishonim* (11th - 15th century commentators). One of the *Rishonim* wrote a Kabbalistic work, not called *Raziel Hamalach*. Later, probably before the time of the *Arizal* (16th century), somebody took this work, added his own ideas to it and added pieces from sources inconsistent with traditional Jewish thought. He then published it under the title *Raziel HaMalach*. This work is not studied in the Kabbalistic schools.

IMMUNITY IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Jeff Levin from Lakewood, NJ
<jlevin0905@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Are we required to immunize our children? Since the scientific knowledge is not 100% accurate and there is ample proof that vaccines in fact damage children permanently and some-

times they can cause death ... are we allowed to vaccinate children?

Dear Jeff Levin,

Our Sages teach that in medical matters we should rely on the experts in each generation. Today, there are differences of opinion among doctors concerning which immunizations are helpful, safe or advisable to receive. Therefore, as with any medical issue, you are required to find a doctor with sufficient expertise in the subject such that his opinion may be relied upon.

There's no blanket answer concerning all vaccines, but certainly many childhood diseases have been practically eliminated or reduced since their introduction. Smallpox, for example, once a great killer of children, is today extremely rare. On the other hand, some vaccinations are of highly questionable value. Find a doctor whom you trust to help select the proper immunizations for your child.

BUNNY BUGS

Steven Stone from West Bloomfield, MI
<sjstone@oakland.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
How can the Torah say that the rabbit chews its cud (Leviticus 11:5-6) when science knows that it does not?

Dear Steven Stone,

The Torah says that we should not eat "the *arnevet*, for it chews its cud but its hoof is not split." Most commentaries translate *arnevet* not as *rabbit* but as either *coney*, *rock badger* or *hyrax*, all of which do in fact chew their cud.

Some point out that the rabbit is auto-coprophagous, which can be seen as a form of cud-chewing, where the cud "ferments" externally.

Sources:

- *Living Torah* by Aryeh Kaplan
- *Encyclopedia Hamikrah*, Arnevet

BOOK OF HEALING

Victor Rodriguez, Thornhill, Canada
<yaakov@cpol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

This question is regarding an illness that has been around me for a while, and it is not a tangible thing to treat [arthritis]. Most medical advice only relates to the fact that they say my immune system went out of control and my own immune system is attacking my own body. Can you tell how can I fix this problem? I heard that a long time ago we were able to diagnose our illnesses and cure ourselves consulting a certain book and using only herbs. Is this book still available? The name of the book is "Chizkiyah Hamelech." Thanks.

Dear Victor Rodriguez,

First of all, may G-d grant you a complete cure and recovery. The book you refer to was in the possession of Chizkiyah, King of Judea. Its cures were so effective that people began relying on the book and ceased to realize that it was in fact Hashem who was healing them. To remedy this, King Chizkiyah hid this book. The book does not exist today and so cannot help you. The best that you can do is to continue to seek competent medical advice and treatment and pray to Hashem for a complete healing.

Sources:

- *Tractate Pesachim 56a* continued on page six

CHOCOLATE LOCKS

Brandon Raff <brandon@ElectroCity.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

At my shul my dad has a locker where talleisim and chocolates for children at the services are kept. This locker is locked using a combination lock. Is there any

problem keying in the combination in order to open the lock on Shabbat? Thanks

Dear Brandon Raff,

There is no prohibition against using a combination lock on Shabbat. Many people have combination locks on their front doors in places where it's forbidden to carry keys outside on Shabbat.

New Feature!

PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: "Hungarian Bat-Mitzvah." It seems that the question about Bat-Mitzvah celebrations is not the real issue. This congregation is "adrift at sea" without a pilot. This is clearly an appeal for guidance and help on a general and permanent level. Maybe it would be possible to organize for a Rabbi to be sent to encourage and lead them with a view to their future immigration to Israel. Having lost so many of our brethren in the holocaust, every effort should be

made to save the remnant of Eastern European Jewry.

Yours faithfully, David Brass

Thank you for the adorable Yiddle Riddle on the 6 Tanachic couples with the same first letter of their names. My kids were kept busy all Shabbos afternoon and we were able to sleep. The only problem is that they came up with 11 answers. Now my kids want to know what they won?

Eli & Zahava Gross <ezgross@netvision.net.il>

I imagine that with 1000 wives, at least one of Shlomo's wives must have had a name beginning with a *shin*.

Chaim Budnick <Chaim.Budnick@iso.mts.dec.com>

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Here's a Yiddle Riddle my son Dovid is submitting: Which person in Tanach was born before his mother ever was, died before his father, and is buried in his grandmother?"

Rabbi Chaim Salenger <chaim@ohr.israel.net>

Answer next week.

continued from page three

BONUS ANSWER!

Pharaoh was happy that Egypt would no longer bear the stigma of being ruled by an ex-slave and an ex-convict of unknown origins. Now it was known that Yosef was a member of a prominent and respected family.

• Ramban

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

44:19 Yehuda's Diplomacy
 45:16 Egyptian Reaction to Yosef's Brothers
 45:26 Yaakov's Disbelief
 45:27 The Lifetime Secret
 46:15 Hidden Miracles

46:29 Who Cried?
 47:9 Yaakov's Age
 47:18 The Seven Lean Years

SFORNO

45:16 Pharaoh's Invitation
 46:3 The Advantage of Exile

OHR HACHAIM HAKADOSH

45:26 Why Yosef Didn't Tell Yaakov
 46:4 The Shechina in Mitzrayim