

# OHRNET

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 IN ISRAEL: FOR THE WEEK ENDING 21 SIVAN 5759 · JUNE 5, 1999

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### TOURIST TRAP

*“And they cut from there a vine with one cluster of grapes, and bore it on a double pole, and of the pomegranates and of the figs...” (13:23)*

It always struck me as somewhat bizarre that the Israeli Tourist Board should have chosen as its symbol the spies carrying a massive cluster of grapes. The spies entire agenda was to denigrate the land of Israel. One would think that a Tourist Board whose raison d’etre is to do totally the opposite, would find the image rather disturbing.

Thankfully, we have more ways of repairing the damage of the spies’ evil words than mere marketing. The mitzvah of *bikkurim* — the bringing of the first fruits to Jerusalem — was given to us as an atonement for the spies. The spies showed revulsion for the Land, and in the era of the Holy Temple, the mitzvah of *bikkurim* gave us the opportunity to show our love of the Land. Thus, the mitzvah of the *bikkurim* was applicable only to the seven species for which the Land is praised: Wheat, barley, grapes, dates, figs, olives and pomegranates.

The Mishna explains the mitzvah of *bikkurim*: “A person going down to his field and seeing the first fig, the first grapes or the first pomegranate, ties a reed around the fruit and says ‘These are *bikkurim*.’”

It’s interesting that out of the seven species for which the Land is praised, only three are mentioned in the

Mishna. It’s not by coincidence. For it was just those three species that the spies brought back with them from the Land: Grapes, pomegranates and figs.

Those very fruits that the spies used for their smear campaign against the Land became the subject of a mitzvah whose whole purpose was to show the dearness of the Land.

### THE WORD

*“Because he has disgraced the Word of G-d” (15:31)*

I’m not much of a gardener. My thumbs always seem greener than my lawn. However, an expert gardener can take any part of a tree, even the smallest leaf, and from that leaf re-grow the entire tree. Not only from little acorns do mighty oaks grow. You can grow an oak from any of its parts.

The Book of Proverbs calls the Torah a tree: “It is a tree of life to those who hold onto it.” The Book of Proverbs isn’t mere poetry. If the Torah is called a tree, it means something about a tree expresses the essence of the Torah.

The Torah’s subject matter is vast, but contained in every word of the Torah is the whole Torah. If a person plants a word of Torah in his heart, be it from any of its myriad subjects, he can grow the tree of the entire Torah.

Separate entities grafted together result not in a true whole, but rather a collection of parts. True unity exists

when every part can independently express the whole, when every part contains the potential to be the whole.

Drawing its source from this week’s parsha, the Talmud (*Sanhedrin 99a*) lists several definitions of what can be termed “because he has disgraced the Word of G-d.” One of these is someone who says that the whole of the Torah is of Divine origin except for one sentence. Denying one word of Torah is equivalent to boring a small hole in an ocean liner. Eventually the whole ship will sink.

Maybe, however, we can understand his failing on a much more fundamental level.

The verse doesn’t say that he has disgraced the “words” of G-d. It says “the word” in the singular. Why?

When a person denies a single word of Torah, he attacks its indivisible unity. Thus, it is the “Word” he has disgraced, and not just the words.

### ONE WORD THAT CONTAINS ALL

The world was created with ten statements. “Let there be light...Let the earth sprout vegetation...Let us make man...”

Count them, however, and you’ll only find nine. Where is the tenth statement? The answer is that the first word of the Torah, “*Bereishet* — *In the beginning*,” was also a statement.

This first utterance, however, was unique. It doesn’t say “And G-d said *In the beginning*...” It just says “*In the*

*continued on page three*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

At the insistence of *Bnei Yisrael*, and with Hashem's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that Hashem not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the men are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favor of the invasion, try to bolster the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt! Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation, however, Hashem declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass

away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land based on Hashem's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. Hashem instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when *Bnei Yisrael* will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove *challah*, a donation for the *kohanim*, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against Hashem and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbos, and is executed. The laws of *tzitzit* are taught. We recite the section about the *tzitzit* twice a day because it reminds us of the Exodus.

## HAFTARAH

This Haftara narrates the story of the two spies sent by Joshua to explore the city of Jericho in preparation for the first conquest of the Promised Land. Our Sages teach that the two spies were Calev and Pinchas, two very righteous people, for Joshua wanted to be sure to avoid an outcome similar to that of the twelve spies sent by Moses, recorded


in this week's Parsha. The spies entered the city as earthenware dealers and sought lodgings by Rachav. After they were detected by the locals, their hostess proved a great ally by hiding them. She then told them that the psychological warfare had been won already, as the inhabitants were petrified from the mere idea of waging war with the Israelites, after hearing about the miracles performed for them. After sending them off safely they in turn promised her to save her and her family.

## JOSHUA 2:1 - 2:24

selves as traveling earthenware merchants. The Chidushei HaRim explains that Joshua had reason to choose clay vessels as the ware for the disguise, in order to remind them not to stumble as had the previous spies. Earthenware vessels differ from other vessels in that they do not accept spiritual defilement unless their *interior* comes into contact with the spiritually defiled. This is because, unlike metal, wood or glass, the clay from which they are formed has no importance; its sole significance is due to its form as a vessel. Spiritual impurity passes only when it contacts the important aspect of an entity, so regarding clay vessels, unless it touches the interior, which symbolizes the usefulness, the impurity will not pass on. Joshua wished the spies to understand that a man is like an earthenware vessel: His significance lies in his duty, he has no self importance. This thought would prevent them from diverting from their assignment.

## EARTHENWARE

The passage begins with the fact that they were sent in secrecy; the term used is "*cheresh*." Since this term reminds us of the word "*cheres*" — Hebrew for earthenware — our Sages deduct that they took along pottery to disguise them-



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In Memory of

RABBI MOSHE YITZCHOK ELEFANT ז"ל

הרב משה יצחק בן ר' גרשום אליעזר ז"ל

THE ELEFANT, SCHWARTZ, SCHILLER AND BERGMAN FAMILIES

continued from page one

beginning...” Because in *Bereishet*, in that first word, everything was created together at once. Everything that would eventually be the words of G-d was brought into existence with just one word.

## TEN COMMANDMENTS THAT ARE ONE WORD

Similarly, the Ten Commandments were first spoken “as one word.” One Word that no mouth could speak, that no ear could hear. Only after that first utterance did G-d explain the ten separately.

What is this Word that no mouth can speak nor no ear hear? It is that Word which is beyond human comprehension, forever beyond our grasp.

When G-d first spoke the Ten Commandments, the Jewish People perceived them as one sound. One sound that was impossible to grasp. They heard but did not understand. They couldn’t distinguish one word from another.

Our understanding operates only through the perception of each part, each voice by itself. The human ear cannot hear an individual sound as a separate entity when it is mixed with another sound. We perceive by identifying separate entities, distinguishing one thing from another.

However, there is another kind of perception, one that doesn’t deal with what things are, rather that they *are*. This is the perception of existence itself. That there is an existence. This perception, the mouth cannot speak nor the ear hear. The perception of existence defies categorization. It is the perception of *is*.

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF IS

This perception is called the One Word that contains all words. All other perception is in the realm of explanation and distinction. But the perception of existence itself cannot be understood by means of

explanation.

The Hebrew word for explanation is *perush*, from the root “to separate.” From where is it separated? From the First Word. An explanation separates a thing from the original Word which contained everything — *Bereishet*. The grasp of existence itself, however, transcends explanation. It is the perception of *is*.

Existence is synonymous with the Word of G-d, the Word with which the Heavens and the Earth were created. That Word, the mouth cannot speak nor the ear hear.

All the Torah is one. When a person seeks to make its ineffable unity into mere words, he disgraces and cheapens it. He has brought down the Word to the merely human level of explanation: he imposes “*perush*” separation upon the transcendent Unity of our Holy Torah.

Sources:

**Tourist Trap** - Rabbi Menachem Ziemba in *Iturei Torah*

# LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## JERICHO

The first city to be conquered by Joshua and the Israelites, Jericho relied on its impenetrable fortifications to withstand any attack. After receiving his spies’ report that the fear of Israel gripped the city’s inhabitants, Joshua led his army in a march around Jericho’s massive walls for seven days. On the seventh day the walls miraculously gave way, allowing the Israelites to conquer the city.



The walls did not actually “come tumbling down” as the old spiritual has it. Since they were as thick as they were high, such a tumble would have been meaningless. They sank into the ground, with only a small portion remaining above the ground to mark the miracle.

Modern Jericho is populated by Arabs, but there is an ancient synagogue which Jews have made repeated efforts to preserve as a Jewish holy place.

# I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The minimal volume of dough requiring that *challah* be separated from it is 43 egg-volumes plus a fraction. The word *challah* hints at this number by the combined numerical value of its letters: 43! (*Challah* is spelled *chet lamed hey*. *Chet*=8, *lamed*=30, *hey*=5)

• *Midrash Tanchuma*

## PLAY BALL!

Playing ball on Shabbat and holidays hardly sounds like the sort of activity fitting for such holy days. There is even a report in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Ta'anit* 4:5) of a city in *Eretz Yisrael* which was destroyed because its inhabitants made it a regular practice to play ball on Shabbat.

But is such ball playing actually forbidden?

The obvious problem with ball playing is that it involves moving the ball from one place to another, which is forbidden under certain circumstances: If the activity is restricted to a closed-in private domain, or to an area enclosed by an *eruv*, this problem would not apply. In a public area, however, this would be ruled out on Shabbat. What about on a holiday?

The *mishna* informs us that one may carry a child on a holiday into the public domain in order to perform a circumcision, and one may also carry a Sefer Torah or the “four species” on Succot in order to fulfill his obligation. This is based on the fact that even though the Torah prohibited all categories of creative work on holidays as it did on Shabbat, it permitted many of them for the purpose of preparing food for use on that day. Once a labor was permitted for food, it was also permitted for any other purpose which will bring enjoyment to that day. Tosefot rules that this extends to ball playing as well.

This ruling of Tosefot is cited by Rema in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 308:45 regarding the permissibility of playing ball on Shabbat in an area where carrying is permitted. This does not extend, however, to games such as soccer which are played on an unpaved field, because this may lead to making adjustments in the earth which comes under the category of agricultural labor forbidden both on Shabbat and holidays. (*Mishna Berura* *ibid.* 158)

This lenient ruling based on Tosefot is challenged by the Beit Yosef who forbids playing with or even handling a ball on Shabbat. A ball is considered *muktzeh* like a stone which has no practical use; it's not even fit for covering a pot because it is usually covered with dirt. According to this ruling the ball's function as an instrument of sport fails to remove it from this category of *muktzeh*.

Jews of Sephardic origin follow the ruling of the Beit Yosef while the Ashkenazic Jews abide by the ruling of the Rema.

• *Beitza* 12a

## EYES OF THE DOVE

A weeping rabbi, a Russian general and a wandering dove — what is the connection? It was the custom of Rabbi Chaim Berlin, who spent the later years of his life in Jerusalem, to melodiously chant the verses of *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs) on late Friday afternoons as a welcome to Shabbat. Neighbors were so enchanted by the beauty of his

recitation that they stood beneath his window to listen. But they were always mystified by the manner in which his sweet singing was interrupted by a tearful rendition of passage 1:15 in which the Jewish People are extolled as having a special beauty and “the eyes of a dove.”

When someone finally had the courage to ask for an explanation the rabbi told him the following story:

“When I served as rabbi of the Jewish community in Moscow, one day an army general came into my chambers and ordered me to remove all the people who had come to consult me so that he could discuss something privately. He then confided to me that he was a Jew and that his wife had given birth to a son for whom he wished to have me arrange a circumcision. Any public knowledge of this would endanger his career and even his life, so it all had to be done with the greatest secrecy.

“Anticipating my question as to why such an assimilated high ranking officer in the czar's army was so determined for his son to have a *brit milah*, he explained that although he had strayed so far from Judaism, he maintained his Jewish identity because of what he saw and experienced in the home of his observant parents. His son, however, will not have the privilege, he added, so unless he is circumcised he will have nothing to remind him that he is a Jew.

“At that moment I recalled what the *gemara* says about doves that are found outside their nest on a holiday. Since only a dove which had been designated before the holiday for use on the holiday may be slaughtered for consumption, it is necessary to determine whether or not these doves came from a designated nest. If these doves are old enough to fly, say our Sages, we must assume that these birds could have come from far away, from an undesignated nest, and cannot be used on this day. But if they are so young that they are only capable of wandering from the nest on foot, we assume that if there is no other nest within fifty cubits of where the doves are found that they must definitely have wandered from the designated nest. This criterion is based on the established principle that a dove will not wander by foot more than fifty cubits from its nest. Even if there is another nest within this distance, but the dove must go around a corner in order to reach it, we still assume that it did not wander from that undesignated nest. This, once again, is based on another facet of the dove's nature — it will wander from its nest only as long as it still can see that nest.

“This,” concluded the rabbi, “is the meaning of Jews being compared to the eyes of a dove. A Jew may wander from his faith, but he always keeps his eyes on the Jewish nest from which he came and it is that awareness which preserves him as a Jew. Whenever I say these words in *Shir Hashirim* I recall that encounter with the Russian general and I cannot help but cry.”

• *Beitza* 11a

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's *tzara'at*?
2. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land?"
3. Who built Hebron?
4. Which fruits did the *meraglim* bring back?
5. How many people carried the grape cluster?
6. Why did Hashem shorten the *meraglim's* journey?
7. Why did the *meraglim* begin by saying the land is "flowing with milk and honey?"
8. Why did the *meraglim* list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
9. How did Calev quiet the people?
10. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants?"
11. Besides the incident of the *meraglim*, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
12. On what day did *Bnei Yisrael* cry due to the *meraglim's* report? How did this affect future generations?
13. "Don't fear the people of the land...their defense is departed" (14:9). Who was their chief "defender"?
14. Calev and Yehoshua praised *Eretz Canaan* and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
15. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" Hashem is referring to the ten *meraglim* who slandered the Land. What halacha do we learn from this verse?
16. How is the *mitzvah* of *challah* different from other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What is the minimum amount of *challah* to be given to a *kohen* according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
18. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?
19. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the *mekoshesh etzim* (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
20. How do the *tzitzit* remind us of the 613 commandments?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:2 - To show the evil of the *meraglim* (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for *lashon hara* (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
2. 13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attack?
3. 13:22 - Cham.
4. 13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
5. 13:23 - Eight.
6. 13:25 - Hashem knew the Jews would sin and be punished with a year's wandering for each day of the spies' mission. So He shortened the journey to soften the decree.
7. 13:27 - Any lie which doesn't start with an element of truth won't be believed; therefore, they began their false report with a true statement.
8. 13:29 - To frighten the Jews. The Jews were afraid of Amalek because they had once attacked the Jewish People.
9. 13:30 - He fooled them by shouting, "Is this all that the son of Amram did to us?" The people quieted themselves to hear what disparaging thing Calev wished to say about the "son of Amram" (Moshe).
10. 13:32 - Hashem caused many deaths among the Canaanites so they would be preoccupied with burying their dead and not notice the *meraglim*.
11. 13:33 - The golden calf.
12. 14:1 - The 9th of Av. This date therefore became a day of crying for all future generations: Both Temples were destroyed on this date.
13. 14:9 - Ivov.
14. 14:10 - They wanted to stone them.
15. 14:27 - That ten men are considered a congregation.
16. 15:18 - The obligation to observe other *mitzvot* associated with *Eretz Yisrael* began only after the possession and division of the Land. The *mitzvah* of *challah* was obligatory immediately upon entering the Land.
17. 15:20 - No fixed amount is stated by the Torah. Rabbinic Law requires a household to give 1/24 and a baker to give 1/48.
18. 15:22 - Idolatry. "All these commandments" means one transgression which is equal to transgressing all the commandments — i.e., idolatry.
19. 15:34 - Moshe knew that the *mekoshesh etzim* was liable for the death penalty, but not which specific means of death. Regarding the blasphemer, Moshe didn't know if he was liable for the death penalty.
20. 15:39 - The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* is 600. *Tzitzit* have eight threads and five knots. Add these numbers and you get 613.

### KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

**Barry Weiss from New York wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,

*Efraim and Menashe were both sons of Yosef, so why in Parshat Shlach is only Menashe's tribe called "the sons of Yosef" and Efraim's tribe isn't? (13:8,11)*

Dear Barry Weiss,

Yaakov gave Yosef's sons Menashe and

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Efraim "tribe" status. Yaakov stipulated that Yosef's future sons would not have "tribe" status; rather they would become part of the tribe of Menashe or Efraim, at Yosef's discretion. Yosef chose Menashe as the tribe to absorb these children. Hence, the tribe of Menashe includes not only Menashe's offspring, but the "sons of Yosef" as well. (*Rabbi Yaakov*

*Kaminetzky*)

Also, the spy from Menashe's tribe was one who spoke ill of the Land; hence, he is identified with his ancestor Yosef, who spoke ill of his brothers. The spy from Efraim's tribe, on the other hand, did not speak ill of the Land; hence, he is not identified here as Yosef's descendent. (*Musaf Rashi*)

## JUDGE KNOT

**Jill Schlessinger**  
<jill\_s@socrates.berkeley.edu>  
wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*  
*Is there anything in the Torah (or in other Jewish writings) that addresses the issue of interpreting someone else's feelings? For example: Something bad happens to someone and they are upset about it, and someone else tells them they are "over-reacting" and "irrational." What do Jewish writings say about making judgments about the legitimacy of other people's feelings?*

Dear Jill Schlessinger,

In "Ethics of the Fathers" Hillel states, "Don't judge another until you reach his place;" meaning, until you have been in the exact same position. Therefore, you can almost never judge another's feelings.

Even if one feels sure that the other person is over-reacting, he should carefully consider if, how and when to express it. As Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says, "Don't try to appease your friend at the moment of his anger, and don't try to comfort him when his dead lies before him." Trying to cheer someone up at the wrong time, or to tell him he's over-reacting, can cause even more pain.

There are, however, "inappropriate" emotions. For example, the Talmud forbids "crying too much" — i.e., for too long a time — at the loss of a loved one. Eventually a person must get over his losses and move forward.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter is reputed to have said: "When a child's toy breaks, he feels as bad as an adult would feel if his factory were destroyed." In short, people experience losses at different levels, so it's nearly impossible to judge others' feelings.

Sources:

- Pirkei Avot 2:5, 4:23
- Mo'ed Katan 27b

## TOO FAR SIDE

**Yisroel Rupp**  
<yisroelrupp@hotmail.com> wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*  
*Are comic strips and cartoons depicting G-d as a human (such as The Far Side) against Rambam's Third Principle of Faith?*

Dear Yisroel Rupp,

Yes, indeed they are. The third of Rambam's "principles of faith" is that G-d is not physical, nor affected by physical phenomena and that there is no comparison to G-d whatsoever.

## PRIVATE NURSE

**Name@Withheld** wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*  
*I am a nursing mommy. Sometimes, my baby will cut short the interval between feedings. Some ladies' rooms tend to be a little too dirty for me to sit on the floor and I end up having to duck into the back seat of the car. I feel like I am breaking modesty laws by feeding my baby in the back seat of the car. Could you explain modesty laws and how they relate to nursing in public? Thank you.*

Dear Name@Withheld,

If your baby "cuts short the interval between feedings" the solution is simple: Give your baby a Swiss watch and a copy of his feeding schedule, and teach him how to tell time.

Seriously, though, babies don't work their feeding habits around their mother's "modesty schedules." When a baby is hungry, he should be fed right away, and it's cruel not to do so. Therefore, you should feed your baby in a public place if necessary, but you should do so in a way of maximal modesty; e.g., drape a blanket or cloth over your shoulder.

## BUTTER FAT

**Hazel Moeller from Nelspruit, South Africa**  
<hazel@mweb.co.za> wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*  
*The Bible says that one should not eat animal fat (Leviticus 7:23). I would like to know in which category does butter fall — an animal fat? Do Orthodox Jews use butter, and on which scriptures do they base their choice? Thank you for this service!*

Dear Hazel Moeller,

Yes, Torah Jews use butter; and no, butter is not an animal fat in the sense of the verse you refer to.

Actually, your question is based on a misunderstanding of the word "chelev." The Torah forbids eating "chelev." Chelev refers only to specific fats found in certain places on the animal's body, such as the fat on the stomach, kidneys and liver. Thus, the vast majority of animal fat is permitted; so even if butter were considered an "animal fat" it would be permitted. In reality butter is considered milk.

For Biblical indication that butter is permitted, Deuteronomy (32:13,14) says: "[G-d] nurtured them [the Jews]...with butter from cows and milk from sheep." Would G-d give us food that wasn't kosher?

Sources:

- Leviticus 7:23-25
- Leviticus 3:3,4

## CREMATION

**Name@Withheld** wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*  
*I am a ba'alas teshuva (newly observant). My parents are close to 90 years old, and my mother has directed that her body be cremated. I have tried to bring up this issue with no success. Do you have any advice*

for me? Perhaps you know of an article I can send them which may be easier than me speaking to them about it. Thank you.

Dear Name@Withheld,

I suggest "The Bridge of Life" by Rabbi Y. M. Tuchichinsky.

In the right time and place, you might respectfully point out to your parents that according to Jewish law, one should not "sit *shiva*" (observe Jewish mourning rites) for someone who was cremated voluntarily, nor is one obliged to bury their ashes. You will not be able to properly mourn

for her, and no *kaddish* will be said for her. This may have an impact. In addition, the body of a voluntarily cremated person is not liable for resurrection; this is not so much because of the physical impediment, but rather in line with the concept that one who doesn't believe in resurrection will not experience it.

Cremation declares that this world is the beginning and end of Man. A basis of Jewish faith is that this is not true. The body is held on deposit, and together with the soul, it really belongs to G-d. G-d decides when and where a person should die, and what should be done with the body once it has fulfilled its "this-worldly" purpose.

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

### Re: The Mitzvah System ("Ask the Rabbi" Bamidbar):

Thanks for the wisdom of your article entitled "The Mitzvah System." I'm a school teacher and I can use that piece of wisdom when my students ask the sort of questions that the answers would only serve to confuse them at a point in their studies where a full explanation would be of no benefit. Even for me! Thank you. Sincerely,

• Phil Ryder <PRyder1043@aol.com>

### Re: Agnostoramous ("Ask the Rabbi" Acharei - Kedoshim):

The following anecdote may serve as an interesting side-light on your astute answer to the person who asked about his atheist friend:

A young man approached Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor of Kovno and said, "Rabbi, I am an atheist." Rabbi Spektor answered, "Really, my son? How long did you study in yeshiva? Have you studied the Talmud?" The young man replied, "I did not attend a yeshiva. I never studied the Talmud." To this Rabbi Spektor replied with a smile, "My son, you are not an atheist, you are merely an ignoramus."

• Raphael N. Levi  
<rnlevi@earthlink.net>

### Re: Candle Waving ("Ask the Rabbi" Ki Tisa):

Regarding waving the hands three times when lighting the Shabbat candles: I remember my grandmother from Kovno making three circles over the candles before she covered her eyes and *davened* (prayed). She told me she did this to gather the light.

She passed away when I was only 12, but I remember she pronounced out loud a *bracha* to the effect of "Baruch ha-Shemay" three times as she made the circles. As I've gotten older I would like to honor her memory and say this *bracha* correctly. Any help from you or your readers is appreciated. Shalom and long life to you. PS. I'm curious if any other women remember their grandmothers saying anything before the silent prayer.

• Helen Block, San Francisco <HBlock@FM.UCSF.EDU>

I actually heard of someone who remembers her grandmother saying "*bo-ee kallah* — come Bride" three times while waving the hands before saying the blessing.

• Name@Withheld from Jerusalem

### Re: Ask the Rabbi:

Just a note to say that this feature is fantastic.

• S. Yosef Pudell, Teaneck, NJ <Gmachine9@aol.com>

**derech**  
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I have a friend on the Internet who is a recent *ba'al teshuva* (newly observant of Judaism). I live in Israel and he in the United States. One *motzei Shabbat* here, I went on-line. To my astonishment, I see my friend also on-line, when in the U.S. it was still Shabbat, and logs off after a moment. (I have him on my buddy list.) Now I said to myself, what *zechut* (positive judgment) could I give him? Perhaps he was in Europe now? (It happened once before, and I found out afterwards that he had been in France where it wasn't Shabbat anymore.) I didn't think so. Perhaps, he forgot that it was Shabbat now? That didn't seem good either, since I

knew him to be a *ba'al teshuva* for some time now, and that couldn't have happened.

Two days later I see him again on-line, and I ask him, "Were you on-line this past *motzei Shabbat* by any chance?" He says, "I don't think so." I tell him "I think I saw your screen name signed on when it was still Shabbat by you." So he tells me "Oh, that was a relative. She's not religious and since she doesn't have her own screen name she was using mine."

• Yair Guttman <ydgutt@aol.com>

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

### Last week we asked:

My friend told me the following Yiddle Riddle: Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid writes in his famous will that nowadays a person should not have a *mechutan* (someone whose son married his daughter or vice versa) with the same name as he. What three people in the *Chumash* had a *mechutan* who had the same name as they?

### Answer:

- Adam (See Rashi to *Bereishet* 4:1 that Cain married his twin sister, thus Adam's son Cain married Adam's daughter which made Adam his own *mechutan*).
- Yaakov (See Rashi to *Bereishet* 46:10 that Yaakov's son Shimon married his sister Dina).
- Lemech (See *Bereishet* 4 that Lemech had a daughter Na'amah, who according to the Midrash in *Bereishet* 23:3 was the wife of Noach, whose father was also named Lemech).

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

13:4	Order of the <i>Meraglim</i>
13:27,32 & 14:1,3	Tactics of the <i>Meraglim</i>
14:17	Moshe Rabbeinu's Prayer
15:2	Order of the Chapters

### SEFER HACHINUCH

385	<i>Challah</i>
386	<i>Tzitzit</i>
387	Avoiding Intellectual and Physical Temptations
11:22	Never Satisfied

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