

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

ON AND ON

"In the beginning..." (1:1)

Life is like a film. When we watch a film, we're not watching a homogeneous whole, we're watching hundreds of individual pictures. The "magic" of the cinema is based on a peculiarity of the human brain. When presented with separate images in rapid succession, the brain ceases to discern them as separate images, rather it links them all together. This is called *the persistence of vision*. The result is the illusion of movement — motion pictures. Our eyes and brain retain a visual impression for about 1/30th of a second (the exact time depends on the brightness of the image.)

Persistence of vision accounts for our failure to notice that a motion picture screen is dark about half the time, and that a television image is just one bright, fast, little dot sweeping the screen. Motion pictures show one new frame every 1/24th of a second. Each frame is shown three times during this period. The eye retains the image of each frame long enough to give us the illusion of smooth motion.

Someone once said that "life is a movie." I doubt they realized the truth of their words. Life is like a movie because, like a movie, life is an illusion of continuity. G-d didn't just create the world once. He re-creates it every split second. That's what our Sages mean when they say that G-d "renews the creation every day."

Every second is a separate and distinct creation. It just looks like a continuous whole.

When a craftsman makes an artifact, from the moment of its completion that artifact becomes independent of its creator. Not so the Creation. Even though G-d finished the Creation in seven days, it still needs His support. If for one second G-d would remove his attention from Creation, it would return to nothingness.

From the beginning of the world to this very day, G-d's statement "*In the beginning*" goes on and on, re-created over and over again.

"Shabbos is the end of Creation, but it is also its first purpose and goal: 'Last in action, but first in thought.' "

FIRST AND LAST

"In the beginning..." (1:1)

Beginnings. And endings. The beginning has a quality that the end does not possess, and the end has that which the beginning lacks.

Beginning has its strength in quality, but it is weak in quantity. The begin-

ning of something is its source, its root, its focal point. It is the powerhouse of its strength, the wellspring of its life-force.

On the other hand, ending is strong in quantity, in size, in extent — but it is weak in quality: The end of something represents its maximum span, its fullest extrusion into the physical world — its greatest presence, its most developed incarnation.

However its greatest extent is also the weakest expression of its essence: The leaves of a tree may define its ultimate reach, but they are also the weakest point of its life-force. The roots, on the other hand, may be hidden, but they contain its very essence.

The greatness of an empire is evaluated by its furthest outpost, but it is also there that it is at its weakest, with its lines of communication at full stretch.

This is all true in the physical world. But on the spiritual plane, quality and quantity are identical at the beginning as they are at the end.

This is the hallmark of Shabbos. Shabbos is the end of Creation, but it is also its first purpose and goal. "Last in action; first in thought."

Shabbos has to come after the six working days. Even if you get lost in the desert and forget which day of the week it is, you nevertheless count six days and only then keep a day of Shabbos. Not the reverse.

But Shabbos is not just the end. For every Shabbos throughout the generations is still called "*Shabbos Bereishis*" — the first Shabbos — because every Shabbos contains the primal power of the first, of the root. The source of blessing and the root of holiness.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

In the beginning, Hashem creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, Hashem rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbos, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the Human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing “sin,” Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain in childbirth.

Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to Hashem. Hevel gives the finest of his flock, and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noach. After the death of Sheis, Mankind descends into evil, and Hashem decides that He will blot out Man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noach, finds favor with Hashem.

HAFTORAH: ISAIAH 42:5-43:10

The Haftorah takes up the Parsha’s theme of Creation. It stresses that the Creation was not just a primordial event, but that Hashem creates the world anew at every second. Without this constant re-creation, the world would cease to exist.

Similarly, Hashem did not just create the world and then leave it to its own devices, like winding up a clock. Rather, He involves Himself with the smallest event in creation. The Haftorah also mirrors the creation of Adam (the key player in Hashem’s purpose in creating

the world) with the role of the Jewish People who are to be the key role-model for the world — *a light unto the nations*.

Just as in the Parsha, Adam sins but is given the opportunity to redeem himself, so the Haftorah describes how the Jewish People falter and sin, and yet, through Hashem’s mercy, Israel is never abandoned, for they are the agents of Hashem’s original purpose.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO

“Hashem desires for the sake of His righteousness that the Torah be made great and glorious.” (42:21)

Why are there so many mitzvos in the Torah? You’ve got to do this. You can’t do that. Can’t a person just think holy thoughts?

Why do we have to do so many things?

You are what you do. What a person does dictates who he is. G-d gave the Jewish People a multitude of mitzvos so that we would be constantly involved in actions of holiness. Through these actions, inevitably we would become holy and deserving of an eternal existence.

It’s not enough to think holy thoughts. Holy thoughts are banished by unholy actions. However if a person does mitzvos and studies Torah — even if his motivation is self-serving, the mere process of studying the Torah and performing the mitzvos will impact on his personality and he will immediately start to change for the better. You become what you do — not what you think.

• Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 16

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

“Yet your longing will be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (3:16)

There once was a thief who stole a credit card from a wealthy woman. The card actually belonged to her husband. After a few days, the thief was surprised to find that no one had put a stop on the card. The months came and went and he was able to run up extremely large sums. Eventually he was caught on another offense and when he was searched the stolen credit card was found.

The credit card company obviously wanted to know why no one had reported the theft of the card. They contacted the husband and asked him

why he had not reported its theft to the police.

“I decided not to report it” said the husband “when I saw that the thief was spending less than my wife.”

The Talmud (*Bava Metzia 59a*) tells us that when a husband honors his wife, it bodes well for the state of his bank account — he will become rich.

If you think about it, the reverse should be true. Honoring one’s spouse with one’s credit card is unlikely to be a harbinger of wealth to come.

G-d, however, always rewards us measure for measure. When a husband honors his wife, he lightens the curse that was decreed on her at the time of the sin of Adam and Chava “he shall rule over you.”

The Torah views man’s domination

of woman as a curse, something to be avoided. Just as no one walks barefoot in the forest in order to help the snake fulfill its curse of “you will bite his heel,” so must a husband strive to avoid being the cause of the curse “he shall rule over you.”

So, when a husband lightens his wife’s curse by not behaving like a despot, Hashem also lightens his punishment — “by the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread.” Instead of having to work hard for a living, Hashem sends him riches, lightening the amount of sweat it takes to put bread on the table...and his credit card remains without a dent.

Sources:

On And On - *Mayana shel Torah*
First And Last - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in *L'Torah U'Imoadim*
Credit Where It's Due - Rabbi Mordechai Druck, heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE LOFTIEST LEVEL

Adam and Noach were not given more than seven commandments by Hashem. If these were sufficient for them to achieve spiritual perfection, why was it necessary for the Jewish Nation to be commanded so many hundreds more, and for Jews living in *Eretz Yisrael* to be required to observe all of the 613 mitzvos?

The answer is supplied by the Torah in these words:

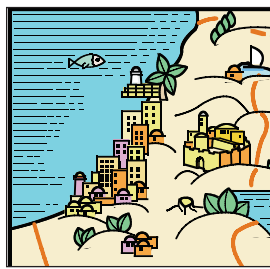
“Every mitzvah which I command you today you shall observe and fulfill in order to live and prosper, and to inherit the land which Hashem has vowed to give to your forefathers.” (*Devarim 8:1*)

Spiritual perfection has different levels. The level achieved through the seven Noachide commandments is a successful,

disciplined life in both the relationship to G-d and to man. But in order to prosper spiritually and achieve a level which transcends time and place, it was necessary for

Jews to be given the mitzvos of the Torah which prepare them for eternity and an intimacy with Hashem. To achieve the loftiest level, they must also fulfill those special mitzvos connected with *Eretz Yisrael* so that they will inherit the land whose spiritual power makes possible prophecy, the constant presence of the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) and a miraculous existence. This is what Hashem promised the first of the patriarchs when He vowed (*Bereishis 17:8*): “I will give you the land...and I shall be your G-d.”

• Rabbi Leibish Meir Malbim - *Parshas Eikev*



I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

All 49 “gates of understanding” which exist in the world were given by Hashem to Moshe. And all 49 are written in the Torah; some are written explicitly, some are hinted in the words, some are hinted in the *gematria* (numerical values) or in the shapes of the letters, or in the “crowns,” the ornamental frills written on top of the letters. All of King Solomon’s wisdom came to him through the Torah.

Ramban, Introduction to the Torah

לע"נ
 מרת בתיה בת ר' יונה ז"ל
 כ"ה תשרי תשנ"ד
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

WEEKLY DAF

PESACHIM 58 - 64

STILL MY SACRIFICE

If one slaughters the Pesach sacrifice while he is in possession of *chametz*, he has violated the Torah prohibition of “You shall not slaughter, upon *chametz*, the blood of My sacrifices.” (*Shmos* 34:25)

What is the status of this sacrifice? Does the fact that a sin was involved in its slaughter disqualify it?

There is no explicit ruling on this in our *gemara*, but Tosefos cites a *tosefta* to the effect that the sacrifice is valid, and the offending slaughterer thereby fulfills his obligation to offer a Pesach sacrifice.

Tosefos here quotes the Riva who explains that the sacrifice is kosher because the Torah does not reiterate the ban on slaughtering it while possessing *chametz*; the general rule in sacrificial matters is that where such reiteration is absent, the sacrifice is *post facto* kosher. But Tosefos elsewhere (*Temura* 4b) cites an interpretation found in the Jerusalem Talmud. There the Sage Chizkiya explains that Hashem’s reference to the sacrifice as “My sacrifice” even after it has been slaughtered upon *chametz*, indicates that the sacrifice is still valid.

One of the commentaries makes an interesting observation regarding this interpretation. Why does Chizkiya assume that the term “My sacrifice” means that it is still a valid sacrifice? Perhaps it refers to what was *intended* as a sacrifice but which was disqualified because of the sinful slaughtering?

The secret lies in the unusual structure of the aforementioned passage. In order to communicate the prohibition, the verse should have read “You shall not slaughter the blood of My sacrifice on *chametz*.” Why were the terms “My sacrifice” and “*chametz*” so interposed if not to inform us that even after the “*chametz*” violation has taken place, it still remains “My sacrifice.”

• Pesachim 63a

RELYING ON A MIRACLE

The slaughtering of the Pesach sacrifice in the *Beis Hamikdash*, says the *mishna*, had to be done in three shifts. After the Temple courtyard was filled with Jews bringing their sacrifices, the gates closed and the sacrificial process began.

Who closed these doors and when?

The Sage Abaye says that no human effort was made to close the gates; people were permitted to enter through them until they miraculously closed by themselves. The Sage Rava, on the other hand, contends that such a policy could have led to all the people entering at once, thus rendering it impossible to divide them into three shifts as the Torah insists. His understanding therefore is that when the *kohanim* evaluated that there would not be enough people to form a second and third shift, they took the initiative of closing the gates on the earlier shifts.

The *gemara* explains their dispute: Abaye’s opinion is that it was proper to rely on the miracle that the gates would close on their own while Rava’s view is that they did not rely on such a miracle.

We are aware, asks *Iyun Yaakov*, that in human affairs there is a hard and fast rule that we trust in Hashem but do not rely on miracles. Why should Abaye hold that in this case it was proper to rely on a miracle?

Two solutions are proposed. One is that an entire community performing a mitzvah has sufficient merit to rely on a miracle. The second is that the *Beis Hamikdash* was the site of so many regular miracles (see *Pirkei Avos* 5:10 re: the ten miracles which attended our ancestors in the *Beis Hamikdash*) that it was reasonable to rely on the miracle of automatically closing gates as well.

• Pesachim 64b

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. Hashem blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire Earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from Hashem?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked?"
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

BONUS QUESTION?

SHERLOX AND THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING PLANETS

Two cloaked figures moved beneath the starry sky. "I'm in the dark about the following verse," said Watstein. Regarding the fourth day of Creation, the verse says: *Yehi me'oros — Let there be luminaries in the heavenly firmament...* (Bereishis 1:14)

"Seems a simple enough verse," said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes.

"My question exactly!" said Watstein. "The verse is self-explanatory. Why, then, do we need Rashi's comment? Rashi writes: 'The word *me'oros* (luminaries) is written without a *vav* (and it can be read as *me'eras* — 'plague'). This indicates that the fourth day of the week is predestined as a day of *me'era* (plague), when children are

prone to contract diphtheria.' Why does Rashi need to comment?"

"Rashi himself points out the problem," said Sherlock. "*Me'oros* is missing a *vav*; instead of 'let there be luminaries,' the verse can be read 'let there be a plague.'"

"You know as well as I, Mr. Holmes, that a 'missing' letter is no reason for Rashi to comment! In fact, the next 'missing' letter occurs in this very verse (Bereishis 1:14): 'Osos' — 'signs' — is written without a *vav*! Yet Rashi makes no comment there; nor does he comment in hundreds of such instances that occur throughout the Torah. So my question stands: Why does Rashi feel compelled to explain this instance? What's bothering Rashi!"

"There's more than one star in the sky, eh Watstein?"

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. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that Hashem, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - Hashem saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He placed it in the World to Come for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Man was vegetarian until Noah emerged from the ark.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. Hashem created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die the Earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god; The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. Hashem commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to His command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives; Only one for bearing children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - He perfected the work of Cain by making weapons for murder. Tuval comes from the word "*tavlin*" (spice).
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore Hashem took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

TONIGHT IS ANOTHER DAY!

Evan Libeskind
<CrazyMan49@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Why do all Jewish Holidays start at
sundown?

Dear Evan Libeskind,

In the Jewish calendar, the day begins with the evening. This is true not only for the holidays, but for any calendar date. For example, a baby born in the evening has a different birth-date than a baby born before sundown. Why is this so?

In describing the order of Creation, the Torah says "There was darkness on the face of the deep; and G-d said 'Let there be light' and there was light." Clearly, the darkness existed before the light. Similarly, the description of each day ends with the phrase "and it was evening, and it was morning..." Again, the evening precedes the morning. Thus, the Jewish day begins in the evening.

This symbolizes classic Jewish optimism: If it's dark in the beginning, don't despair! It will end in great light!

IN THE WAKE OF THE SNAKE

Shlomo
<shlomi@mofet.macam98.ac.il>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
How come G-d punished all the generations for the sins of Adam and Eve? The Torah says if the children do not continue with the sins of their fathers they will not be punished for those sins. Did their children continue the sins of Adam and Eve?

Dear Shlomo,

A good question. To answer that "the children are punished because they continue to sin" might be true generally speaking, but it's not sufficient in light of the Talmudic statement listing four people who never sinned, yet died

nevertheless "from the bite of the snake." That is, they died from the curse that followed Eve's encounter with the snake. So why were those four people punished?

There are different approaches to answer this question. One is that Adam's sin changed the whole of creation, creating a new reality. Therefore, we were furnished with a new type of life, new parameters and new tools to deal with this new reality, to complete our task in the new creation. The curses, such as toil, pain of childbirth and death, are all part of the plan now, somehow necessary to give us the opportunity to accomplish our purpose. Those who died sinless, therefore, weren't being "punished." Rather, they were simply born into a new reality in which these negative factors are a necessary part.

Another approach is found in the Kabbalah. The Kabbalistic works say that Adam's soul was a very "large" soul, a mosaic of all future souls. These souls were then dispersed after his death among all his descendants. In this sense, every soul participated in the sin and so has to atone.

Sources:

- Shabbat 55b
- Shelah Shavuot 213

FINICK-KID

Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I like to be shomer Shabbos (Sabbath observant) but my son will not eat anything that I have made for Shabbos. He is nearly four years old. I have been cooking for him on Shabbos as otherwise he would not eat and I feel bad for breaking Shabbos like this. Can you please advise me what I should do.

Dear Email@Withheld,

Aren't children wonderful? Firstly and most importantly, you should not compromise on your mitzvah observance. As a parent myself, I understand the importance of listening to one's children and trying to accommodate them. However, this should not be at

the expense of breaking Shabbat.

It sounds like your son doesn't like the traditional Shabbat foods. So find food your son likes and give it to him. Doesn't he like "French fries?" How about macaroni and cheese? Pizza? These can be cooked before Shabbat and kept warm. They can even be re-warmed on Shabbat under certain conditions (for the permitted method, write back or consult your local orthodox rabbi). These aren't traditional "Shabbat" foods, but it doesn't matter. The main thing is that he eat and that you observe Shabbat.

Your situation brings to mind a story told about the famous Talmudic giant, Rabbi Yosef Rozen, known as the Ragotchover. There was once a woman whose newborn baby would not nurse on Shabbat. This was endangering the baby's life, as once a week, from Friday afternoon before sunset until Saturday night after dark, the newborn refused to eat. He was losing precious weight at a time when he needed to be gaining. All the doctors were stumped. Finally, the mother brought the baby to the Ragotchover for a blessing. Instead, the Ragotchover told the mother that on Shabbat she should not change into her special Shabbat clothing; rather, she should remain in her regular weekday clothing. That Friday night the mother did as told: Instead of Shabbat clothing, she wore her weekday garb, and the problem was solved! The baby nursed!

To explain how he solved this mystery, the Ragotchover cited the *Tosefot* commentary to the Talmud. The Talmud (*Bava Kama 37a*) says that an ox which establishes a pattern to gore on Shabbat is considered "wild" only regarding Shabbat, but that during the week it retains its "tame" status. *Tosefot* gives the reason: The different clothing people wear on Shabbat causes the ox to fail to recognize them. From this, explained the Ragotchover, we see that low-level intelligences recognize differences in clothing and can exhibit changing behavioral patterns based on this recognition. The newborn didn't nurse because he didn't recognize his mother when she wore her Shabbat clothing.

JINGLE BELLS

Henry Soussan from Brighton, England
<ahsoussan@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Why are the bells on the Torah crown not muktzeh (forbidden to handle) on Shabbat?

Dear Henry Soussan,

I've never met you, but your question rings a bell. The Shulchan Aruch forbids sounding any type of musical instrument on Shabbat. Why, then, do some synagogues use Torah scrolls which are decorated with crowns that have bells attached? These bells clang against the crown when the Torah is taken from the

Holy Ark. Shouldn't this be forbidden on Shabbat?

Actually, some authorities did forbid using these ornamental bells on Shabbat. The common custom, however, is to permit them. Why?

The answer is that the bells are not intended to ring musically; rather they are intended to alert the congregation to the fact that the Torah is being removed from the ark. The people can then stand in honor of the Torah and ready themselves for the Torah reading. So, since this is done in order to honor the Torah, plus the fact that there is no "musical" intention, it is permitted.

Sources:

- Aruch Hashulchan 338:3
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 338:1, Mishna Berura 6
- Mishna Berura 339:8
- See also Rema 339:3

PUBLIC DOMAIN
Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Paying for Praying (Ohrnet Nitzavim):

Regarding paying synagogue dues, you wrote: "When a person pays for something, he comes to value it more than had he received it for free."

I get the "Ask the Rabbi" column for free over e-mail, and I think that I value it quite a lot. In my opinion, the best things in life are free, because they are given selflessly. As Pirkei Avot teaches us: "Love which is dependent on something, when that thing is gone, the love is gone."

- Ari Trachtenberg, University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign <trachten@uiuc.edu>

Re: Conversion (Ohrnet Ki Seitzei):

You wrote: "We believe that when a non-Jew keeps the seven Noachide laws, he merits a portion in the World-to-Come, and therefore there is no imperative for him to become Jewish. If, like the Christians and Moslems, we believed that those of other religions are condemned to damnation, then we also would desire to convert people. However, we believe that a person can be completely righteous and merit the World-to-Come without conversion, by adhering to the basic moral laws revealed to Noach. Therefore we feel no compulsion to convert others, unless they show a desire to convert."

With this statement, you have earned my complete and everlasting respect.

- Tom Gorham, Chicago, Illinois <gorham@famvid.com>

My uncle, *zatzal*, told me a story about Harav Yehezkel Abramski, *zatzal*. Harav Abramski arrived in England to head the *bet din* (Jewish court) just after a non-Jew decided to sue the *bet din* for not accepting him as a convert. The non-Jew wanted to marry a Jewish girl, and when asked by the *bet din* whether he would observe Shabbat, he said that he would behave just like his Jewish father-in-law to be: He would go to synagogue Saturday morning and then go to a football match in the afternoon. The judge asked Rav Abramski why the non-Jew should not be accepted as a convert. Rav Abramski's reply was that we are "*Am Yisrael*," our laws are the laws of a nation, our Torah is both the Divine law of a religion and the requirements we have from every member of the nation. He asked the Judge "Do you have law-breakers in England?" "Yes." "If I had put on my immigration form that I am a law-breaker, would you have let me in the country?" "Of course not!" "For us Jews, Shabbat desecration is against the laws of our Torah and our nation. True, we have Shabbat desecraters amongst us; but when someone like that comes to the *bet din* and asks to join our nation, we tell him we do not need any more." The judge accepted the argument and ruled in favor of the *bet din*.

- Gershon Kandler Rehvot, Israel <gershon_kandler@yahoo.com>

Re: Curling Payot (Ki Savo):

It is common among the Bobover Chassidim to use curlers, mainly for young children, so that when they grow up, they will have beautiful curly *payos* (sidelocks). Other Chassidim drench their *payos* in water in which sugar has been dissolved (an older custom than the curlers...) effectively making their own version of hair spray.

- Arie Folger <afolger@ymail.yu.edu>

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Being actively involved in a campaign for studying *Sefer Chafetz Chaim*, I am constantly putting up signs on notice boards in various places in Jerusalem. One of the most frustrating things about the campaign is that the notices are so often removed or covered over by other notices and I have to make sure that I have a reserve supply of notices.

It is not unusual that when I arrive at a notice board where two hours earlier I had put up a sign, I now see a sign for a computer for sale instead of my sign. My immediate reaction is to rip down

the computer sign and put my sign back up — after all, I had my sign up there first!

However, I know that perhaps the person selling his computer didn't pull down my sign at all — perhaps someone else did it or the wind blew it off — and he just innocently came and found an empty space on the board. So I leave his sign alone and find somewhere else to put it or wait until the board is cleared for the week.

Just recently I caught someone red-handed sticking up a notice on a board obscuring about six other notices. I've

caught him, I thought to myself. I'll tell him what an inconsiderate person he is, taking away the opportunity from six other people to sell their goods. So I told him! He replied, "This is not my notice. I just took it down for two minutes to photocopy it because I needed some of the information. All I'm doing is putting it back in the same place I found it."

• Submitted by Rabbi Dovid Alexander, Neve Yaakov, Jerusalem
Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Shmuel Bendel <sybendel@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi, I have a riddle for you. What is the shortest word in the Torah? Answer next week...

continued from page four

BONUS ANSWER!

"There's more than one star in the sky, Watstein, yet the verse says *yehi me'oros* — let there be luminaries."

"What's wrong with that?" asked Watstein.

"*Yehi* — let there be — is a singular verb," said Sherlock, "yet *me'oros* — luminaries — is a plural noun. *Yehiyu* would have been the proper verb."

"Heavens!" shouted Watstein. "How could I have missed something so obvious! Yes, it should have said

yehiyu me'oros; *yehiyu* is plural, and *me'oros* is plural. The verb should agree with the noun!"

"Hence," said Sherlock, "Rashi offers a midrashic teaching which reads the plural noun *me'oros* as the singular noun *me'eras* — plague — thus accounting for the singular verb *yehi*."

"Most enlightening, Mr. Holmes."

• Gur Aryeh; "Sherlock" is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek's "What's Bothering Rashi"

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN
1:1 The Need for Bereishis
1:14 The Sun and the Moon
1:26 Man
1:29 Vegetarianism
2:3 Shabbos
2:20 Names

3:16 Punishment of Chava
5:4 Length of Life
SFORNO
2:3 The Blessing of Shabbos
2:25 Naked and Unashamed
3:17 The Curse of Work

4:26 Calling Out in Hashem's Name
5:1 The Image of Hashem
6:8 Noach

RASHBAM
1:27 What's Missing?
2:23 The Birth of Chava

Do you know where you want to go this winter?

OHR SOMAYACH'S JLE WINTER PROGRAM IN ISRAEL

For information contact Rabbi Zalman Corlin at Ohr Somayach/JLE in New York (212) 213-3100 or (800) 431-2272 Email: rzcorlin@aol.com