

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

FISH OUT OF WATER

“And may they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land.” (48:16)

Fish don’t do too well on land. Take a fish out of water and you won’t have to wait too long for it to become an ex-fish. Deceased. No more.

Why, then, did Yosef bless Efraim and Menashe that they would proliferate “like fish within the land.”

The Jewish People take to *Eretz Yisrael* like a fish to water. In exile, the natural result should be that we flounder around and become asphyxiated by the hostile atmosphere. Yosef was giving Efraim and Menashe a blessing that even when they were breathing the spiritual poison gas of exile — “within the land” — they would still flourish like a fish in water.

THE END

“And Yaakov lived...” (47:28)

As every child knows, the school terms goes on forever. Or at least it seems to. The amount of time left till vacation seems like a life term in Alcatraz. Or almost. Almost any affliction, school included, is bearable if we know when it will finish. What really makes it bearable, however, is not so much that we know *when* the term will end, rather that it *will* end. Similarly, when we’re sitting in the dentist’s chair with what feels like a pneumatic drill in our mouth and the dentist says “Just another couple of seconds...” our solace comes, not so much from knowing when the drilling will end, but rather the fact that it *will* end.

This week’s Parsha is unique. It’s the only Parsha in the Torah that is “sealed.” Rashi tells us that Yaakov wanted to reveal “The End,” the time when *mashiach* would come, when history would draw to a close. G-d prevented him. The secret remains as sealed as this week’s Parsha.

Why wasn’t Yaakov allowed to reveal when the final redemption would come? Why wasn’t he permitted to sweeten the bitterness of thousands of years of exile? If the Jewish People would have known the

“The Jewish People take to the Land of Israel like a fish to water.”

date, the time when G-d would finally redeem them, wouldn’t all the years of waiting be so much more bearable?

Maybe G-d didn’t want Yaakov to reveal the End, not so much because we would then know when the End would be, but rather that there would be an End.

Not a leaf falls in the forest unless

its descent is decreed on High. Not a blade of grass grows without the compulsion of G-d’s spiritual messengers. The only thing which is truly ours is the decision to fear G-d. We can look at this world as happenstance with no Beginning and no End. Or we can lift our eyes to Heaven and realize Who created all this.

MIRROR, MIRROR

“Yosef took the two of them — Efraim with his right hand, to Israel’s left, and Menashe with his left hand, to Israel’s right... But Israel extended his right hand and laid it on Efraim’s head though he was the younger, and his left hand on Menashe’s head.” (48:13-14)

Strange things happen to people when they look in a mirror. Their normal expression becomes contorted. An eyebrow is raised. Lips are pursed. The head is turned ever so slightly to the right and then to the left.

When we look in the mirror, we see ourselves not so much as we really are, but as we’d like to be: Head held a little higher, the posture more erect and holding in our breath so that clothes don’t betray the evidence of one too many slices of chocolate cake.

When we look at other people, however, our perspective changes radically. Rather than emphasize the positive, we tend to scrutinize their defects and lay the stress on what’s wrong with them. What we see in ourselves as prudent, in others becomes stingy. Where we are vivacious, others are loud.

When Yaakov blesses Yosef’s chil-

PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He makes Yosef swear to bury him in the cave of Machpela, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov becomes ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Efraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Efraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion which removes the status of the first-born from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Efraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Efraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael and the teacher of

Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving Hashem. Yaakov passes from this world at the age of 147. A tremendous funeral procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Efraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that Hashem will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends *Sefer Bereishis*, the first of the five Books of the Torah.

HAFTORAH: KINGS I 2:1-12

THE HEAD THAT WEARS THE CROWN

As in the Parsha where we read the final will and testament of Yaakov, so too the Haftorah deals with the final words of King David. David commands his 12 year old son, Shlomo, to act as a man of wisdom and piety despite his tender years, and to guard and uphold the Torah. David promises Shlomo that if he

will serve Hashem in truth, with all his heart and soul, he will merit that all the kings of Israel will descend from him. Just as Yaakov illuminated the path to make his children into a people, King David illuminates the path that will make Shlomo the father of kings. However, there is a striking difference between the death-bed scene of Yaakov and that of King David. When Yaakov took leave of this world, he summoned all 12 of his sons, whereas David calls for only Shlomo, for he alone was a comfort to him and worthy to inherit the Davidic line.

• Adapted from Rabbi Mendel Hirsch

where we are going? How often do we pause and ponder in front of Whom we will ultimately have to account for our every thought and deed?

In this verse, King David commands three things to his son Shlomo. The first two are obvious: "Be strong" and "become a man." The third lies in the beginning of the sentence "I go the way of all the earth." David is not merely describing his end, he is actively commanding Shlomo to remember these words constantly: "I go the way of all the earth."

• Tzoari Shalal

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

"I go the way of all the earth; be strong and become a man."

We live our lives as though we were immortal. How much of the time do we think about

לע"נ
הרב ברוך משה בן ר' חיים זצ"ל
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

dren Efraim and Menashe, Yaakov crosses his hands. He places his right hand, his stronger hand, on the younger son Efraim, and his weaker left hand on Menashe, the elder son. But wouldn't it have been easier for Yaakov to have told Efraim to stand opposite his right hand and Menashe opposite his left? That way there would have been no need for him to cross his hands.

The right side symbolizes strength and importance. The left symbolizes weakness and insignifi-

cance. When we look at ourselves in the mirror, our right hand is reflected on the right side of the mirror. In other words, our strengths are reflected as being important. Our left hand, the hand that characterizes weakness, corresponds to our left hand in the mirror. Meaning that we see our weaknesses as insignificant. However, when we stand opposite someone else, our right hand corresponds to their left hand, meaning we emphasize their shortcomings. Our left hand is

opposite their right — we play down their strengths.

This is what Yaakov was teaching the two brothers Efraim and Menashe. When you look at each other, use the eyes that you use for yourself. See the other person's weakness as secondary, and his virtues as being his essence.

Sources:

- Fish Out Of Water* - Chasam Sofer as heard from Rabbi Nota Schiller
- Mirror, Mirror* - Rabbi Chaim M'Velozhin in Beis Yitzchak, Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter

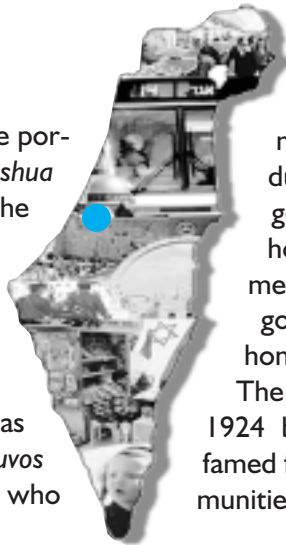
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

BNEI BRAK

Mentioned as one of the cities in the portion of the Tribe of Dan (Yehoshua 19:45), Bnei Brak is famous in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin 32b*) as the seat of Rabbi Akiva's court, and in the Pesach Haggada as the site of the all-night Pesach Seder of Rabbi Akiva and his distinguished colleagues.

The city had an agricultural dimension as well, as appears from the account (*Kesuvos 111b*) of the Sage Rami bar Yechezkel who



declared that he understood the meaning of the Torah's description of Eretz Yisrael as a "land flowing with milk and honey" after witnessing a scene during a visit to Bnei Brak. He observed goats grazing beneath fig trees. The honey oozing from the very ripe figs merged with the milk dripping from the goats and formed a stream of milk and honey.

The Bnei Brak of today was established in 1924 by charedi Jews from Poland, and is famed for its many yeshivos and Chassidic communities.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"His smaller brother will be greater than him...." (Bereishis 48:19)

Efraim was chosen above his older brother Menashe because of his greater humility. Thus, the verse emphasizes that he was the "smaller," i.e., the more humble, brother.

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WEEKLY DAF

SHEKALIM 16 - 22

THE MARBLE TABLE

Two tables were placed outside the entrance to the Sanctuary in the *Beis Hamikdash*, in which stood the sacred Golden Table on which was displayed the *lechem hapanim* showbread. One table was made of marble, the other of gold. On the marble table, the twelve freshly baked showbreads were placed until the time came on Shabbos for the *kohanim* to place them on the sacred table inside the Sanctuary in place of the ones which had been there the entire week before. The loaves which were removed were placed on the golden table outside until they were consumed by the *kohanim*.

Why was this second table made of gold? The reason is spelled out in the *Mishna*: Since they had been on the sacred golden table inside the Sanctuary, we do not demote their sanctity by placing them on a less dignified table. This is in accordance with the rule that “we ascend in matters of holiness; we do not descend.” But why should we not place the freshly baked loaves on a silver table outside the Sanctuary and then elevate them to the status of the golden table inside?

A very pragmatic reason is supplied by the Sages. Silver may cause the loaves to heat up and become stale, whereas the coolness of marble retards that process.

This explanation is challenged by citing the ongoing miracle which took place in the *Beis Hamikdash* in regard to the *lechem hapanim*. Even though the loaves lay on the Sanctuary table for an entire week, they remained as fresh and warm as on the day they were placed there, a miracle which finds expression in the words of a passage in *Shmuel I 21:7*. If they miraculously retained their freshness, why was it necessary to take the precaution of placing them on a marble table to retard staleness?

The response to this challenge is the reiteration of the classic principle that “we must not rely on miracles.” Man is obligated to serve Hashem with consideration for the laws of nature which He created. We must therefore be wary of the natural process of bread becoming stale, while appreciating the special love Hashem shows by repealing His own laws of nature so that the loaves miraculously remain fresh and warm for a full week.

• *Shekalim 17b*

THE COLLECTION BOX

When Yehoash ascended the throne after the popular overthrow of his grandmother Asalyahu, he found the *Beis Hamikdash* in a state of disrepair. That wicked woman and her sons had caused serious damage to the sacred building which was only 125 years old and in perfect condition until then.

In order to carry out a massive renovation project, the king needed funds. He therefore made an arrangement with the *kohanim* whereby all money contributed by the people for maintenance of the *Beis Hamikdash* would go to the *kohanim*, and they in turn would assume responsibility for funding the renovations. When he discovered in the twenty-third year of his reign that the *kohanim* had become lax in fulfilling their responsibility, he ordered the head of the *kohanim*, Yehoyada, to institute a new system. Contributions would no longer go to the *kohanim*, but directly to the *Beis Hamikdash* treasury, from which funds would be drawn for renovations and maintenance.

To enable the public to make such direct contributions, a collection box had to be set up in an area of the *Beis Hamikdash* to which all would have access. Two apparently contradictory passages relate what was done. One (*Melachim II 12:10*) records that Yehoyada took a box, made a slit in it to receive the contributions and placed it near the altar. Another (*Divrei Hayamim II 24:8*) reports that at the king's command a collection box was placed outside the gate to the House of Hashem.

Rabbi Yonasan's resolution of this conflict is that there were two boxes. In the Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael, however, a different approach was offered. Both passages refer to the same single collection box. Yehoyada had initially placed it in the *Beis Hamikdash* proper, next to the altar. When the king realized that this would create a problem for those who were ritually impure and forbidden to enter that area, he ordered that it be placed outside so that even they would be capable of making their direct contribution.

• *Shekalim 19a*

Weekly Parsha newsletter, Monthly Seasons of the Moon, Weekly Daf, Ask the Rabbi, Holiday specials, Ohmet magazine, Yossi & Co., Poetry, Essays on Jewish thought and contemporary issues, Excerpts of books by Ohr Somayach faculty, Audio catalog on-line, Ohr Somayach - University on-line, Explore Jerusalem, Mark Twain's Concerning the Jews, JLE summer & winter programs in Israel, ChoppedLiver cartoons, Meet the children of Odessa, The Center for Torah Studies, Simcha's Torah Stories, A road map to Jewish learning, Top Ten lists, and much, much more...two billion bytes of Torah literature and information. Join tens of thousands of people from around the world and...get connected to Ohr Somayach on the Web at...

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “*chesed shel emes*” — kindness of truth?
2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn't want to be buried in Egypt.
3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?
4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat....” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?
6. What does *pillalti* mean?
7. What does “Shechem” mean as used in this week's Parsha? (two answers)
8. What individual is called “the Emori?” Why? Give two reasons.
9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?
10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?
11. What congregation from Yaakov's offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?
12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?
13. What does milk do to teeth?
14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey?”
15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?
16. To whom was Yaakov referring in Yosef's blessing when he said “They embittered him...?”
17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

SHERLOX

SHERLOX & THE VISION MYSTERY

Watstein held the white handkerchief up to the light and squinted. “Do you see that tiny puff of yellow thread caught in the fabric?” asked world famous detective Sherlock Holmes. “A sample from Mr. Burnshire's yellow cardigan will match it, no doubt.” “I still can't see it,” said Watstein. “Hold the kerchief out of the direct light,” said Sherlock. “Too much light impedes vision.” “Speaking of vision,” said Watstein, “I'm perplexed by the following verse: ‘Yaakov saw Yosef's sons and said: *Who are these?*’ (Genesis 48:8) On the words ‘Yaakov saw Yosef's sons’ Rashi explains that Yaakov wanted to bless Yosef's sons, Efraim and Menashe, but the Divine Presence left him due to their future wicked offspring.” “Now that's what I call vision,” said Sherlock.

“But why does Rashi resort to this midrashic explanation, instead of the simple explanation that Yaakov saw Yosef's sons?”

“Well, isn't it odd that Yaakov would ask ‘*Who are these?*’ about his own grandchildren? Perhaps that's what's bothering Rashi?”

“But Rashi is commenting on the words ‘*Yaakov saw,*’ not on the words ‘*Who are these.*’ Besides, it seems it was standard to ask for formal identification before a blessing. The angel who blesses Yaakov first asks ‘What is your name?’ although he certainly knew it (Genesis 32:38). And Yitzchak does the same, even *after* identifying Esav (Genesis 27:24). So I ask again, why does Rashi depart from the simple meaning of the words: “Yaakov saw?”

“Sometimes,” said Sherlock, “too much light impedes vision.”

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. 47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.
2. 47:29 - a) Egypt's ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn't make him into an idol.
3. 47:31 - Bow to him.
4. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef's mother, Rachel, in the *Ma'aras HaMachpela*.
5. 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
6. 48:11 - “I thought.”
7. 48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.
8. 48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (*imrei pi*).
9. 49:1 - When *mashiach* will come.
10. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
11. 49:6 - Korach and his congregation.
12. 49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.
13. 49:12 - It makes them white.
14. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
15. 49:20 - Oil-rich land.
16. 49:23 - Yosef's brothers, Potifar and his wife.
17. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
18. 50:5 - From Esav.
19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh's ignorance of Hebrew.
20. 50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the *aron* (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

ALL TRIBES CREATED EQUAL

Gabriella from Tampa, FL wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
For the first time in my life, I went to Synagogue on Friday night! It was such an interesting experience. I found the people there to be so open, honest and nice. What I liked the most was the singing and the chanting of the man (I forget what you call him.) Anyway, I met this really nice girl there who is the Rabbi's daughter. Her name is Shira Chana and she showed me around and explained some things to me. I must say I felt very much at home there.

I'm very interested in the 12 tribes. Someone there told me that you can determine which tribe you are from by your last name. My real mom's last name was Levin. What tribe would I be from? I would also like to know the ranks and orders of the tribes. Like who was the best tribe and which tribe wasn't so good.

These past few weeks have been so interesting for me. I have had an opportunity to really learn a lot about who I am and I'm really proud and happy to call myself a Jew. Thank you so much for your friendship and your kindness. I know one Hebrew word besides "shalom" which is "mitzvah," and that is what you do for me. Shalom, Gabriella.

Dear Gabriella,

It's wonderful to hear about someone returning to Judaism and to their heritage. May G-d help you on your path.

The tribes are: Reuben, Shimon, Levi (from whom come *kohanim* or Priests), Judah (the Royal line, from whom King David and *mashiach* are descended), Issachar, Zevulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naftali, Gad, Asher and Ephraim and Menashe. There are actually 13 tribes, but since Ephraim and Menashe are Joseph's sons, they are sometimes counted as one tribe, the tribe of Yosef.

The name Levin commonly indicates that a person is from the tribe of Levi, but it's not conclusive proof. Unfortunately, it's impossible in most cases to determine the tribe you are from just from your surname, as family names are a relatively

recent addition to Jewish names and may be based on other factors. Most Jews don't know what tribe they are from.

Regarding which tribes are "better," we believe they all have unique qualities and are all of equal value in the eyes of G-d. Here is what one of the great sages, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, says: "The nation is to represent agriculture as well as commerce, militarism as well as culture and learning. The Jewish people will be a nation of farmers, a nation of businessman, a nation of soldiers and a nation of science. Thereby, as a model nation, to establish the truth that the one great personal and national calling which G-d revealed in His Torah, is not dependent on any particular kind of calling or trait, but that the whole of mankind in all its shades of diversity can equally find its calling in the one common spiritual and moral mission and outlook in life."

By the way, "the man singing" is called the *chazan*.

Sources:

- Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on Genesis 48:3-4*

OHR-DESSA

Name@Withheld from Atlanta, GA wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

As part of my son's bar mitzvah celebration, we want to make a donation to a Jewish charity that is concerned with children's welfare. Can you make a suggestion?

Dear Name@Withheld,

Ohr Somayach International runs a boys and girls orphanage in Odessa in the Ukraine, and a free Jewish day school there as well. These organizations are totally dependent on private donations and they make good use of the money. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to:

Ohr Somayach International
38 East 29th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10016 USA

ACCOUNTING FOR THE PROPHETS

Phil <BondmanP@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Who were the seven female prophetesses (*nevi'ot*)?

Stanley Turtletaub

<doctorkf@gte.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Someone asked me if Rachel and Leah were prophetesses like Sara and Rivka. I answered yes. For Leah, I responded that she foresaw that she was to marry Esav and cried and pleaded with Hashem until her lot was changed. But how do we see that Rachel was a prophetess?

Dear Stanley Turtletaub and Phil,

The Talmud states: "48 prophets and 7 prophetesses prophesied to the People of Israel." The prophetesses are identified as Sara, Miriam, Devora, Chana, Avigail, Chulda and Esther.

The Talmud goes on to explain that, although there were actually thousands of other prophets, these were the ones whose prophecy was written down to teach repentance and give direction to future generations.

Both Rachel and Leah were prophetesses. For example, Leah foretold that Reuven would lose his birthright to Yosef, and that Reuven would try to save Yosef's life. Rachel knew prophetically that Yaakov would only have twelve sons; thus when she bore Yosef, Yaakov's 11th son, she prayed only for "another son" and not for "more sons."

Sources:

- Tractate Megillah 14a, Rashi *ibid*.
- Bereishet 29:32, 30:24
- Siftei Chachamim, Bereishet 29:32

THREE PARTS OF SOUL

Eliezer Shifrin from Capetown SA

<shifrin@mweb.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the difference between spirit, soul, and neshama, according to the kabbala, and how long does the spirit or soul linger after death? Thank you for your help.

Dear Eliezer Shifrin,

A soul is like a chain with one end linked into the brain and the other to a certain spiritual source. There are

five levels of the soul like the five links in a chain, each one parallel to the spiritual sphere where it exists. However, we only relate to the three bottom links as we have no understanding about the two top ones. The three are 1) *Nefesh* 2) *Ruach* 3) *Neshama*. The *nefesh* is the spiritual existence which resides in the body and keeps the physical metabolism working and the person alive. The *ruach* is a connection between the *neshama* and the *nefesh*. It is the cause of feelings and personal qualities. The *neshama* is the spiritual existence which pulls the man towards G-d, to the performance of good deeds, to be pious and humble and to seek knowledge and achievement in spiritual fields. It resides around the head.

When a person dies, it takes seven days before the parts of the soul understand that it's all over and leave the body. Until then they hover around the grave and travel to and fro between the grave and the house of the deceased, waiting for the body to start functioning again. The *nefesh* does not completely leave until the body is decomposed.

PAN HANDLING

Bob Kaplan <bailymaker@hotmail.com>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We were told that in order to open a kosher bakery all of our pans would have to go to the mikveh. Do the new disposable pans that can be used for baking and selling require that treatment also? Thank you.

Dear Bob Kaplan,

Although some stringent opinions say one should immerse them, in general we rely on the other opinions which hold there is no need to do so, and some of the best kashrut supervisions do not require this to be done. What does your kashrut supervisory board say? Good luck in all your endeavors.

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

While Ohrnet welcomes feedback by post or fax,
we can respond personally to email only.

RE: Ohrnet:

Since the day I started reading your publication, my family and I always, but always, have a nice chat about the *Parashat Hashavua* at our Shabbat table, and my kids wait days for the questions. *Yashar Koach*.

• Tzvi Szajnbrum and Family <rina@inter.net.il>

Re: The Luz Bone (Ohrnet Vayeitzei):

In Parshas Vayeitzei, we read that Beis El (Jerusalem) was originally called Luz. Just like we will be reconstituted from the luz bone, so too the world will be reconstituted from the city Luz at the time of *mashiach* (heard from Rabbi Moshe Schechter). Also: Death was brought into the world when Adam ate from the *eitz hada'as*. This potential for death entered every part of his body except the luz bone, since it receives its sustenance only at *melave malke* (the post-Shabbat meal). This is why it

is indestructible (heard from Rabbi Shmuel Shmeltzer).

• Philip Rosen <feivel@mindspring.com>

Re: Top 10 Lists (Top Ten Jewish Books Not Yet Published)
(www.ohr.org.il/judaism/humor/top10/books.htm):

Thank G-d it's OK to be Jewish and also laugh.

• Barbara <barbarag17@aol.com>

Re: Medical Circumcision (Ohrnet Vayeshev):

Regarding circumcision by a doctor versus a mohel: Some mohels are doctors. All mohels are trained carefully and use aseptic (sterile) technique and are highly experienced. I am a doctor who gets the New England Journal of Medicine, one of the most prestigious medical journals. It recently had an article which should give anyone pause before subjecting a son to a standard "medical" circumcision. The article states that the average time for a medical circumcision is in the range of one hour! The point of the article was whether to inject local anesthetic first to spare the infant pain. Of course, the anesthetic shot takes a few seconds and causes pain. As anyone knows who has witnessed a *bris*, the mohel performs it in, at most, a few seconds. In the typical cases I have seen, the baby doesn't even cry. So, even if a Jew does not understand the need for the mitzvah of a kosher (valid) *bris*, which would a loving parent prefer for his baby — an instant or an hour of pain?

• Rochelle Pudlowski Eissenstat, M.D.
<eissenstat@aol.com>

If his friends had judged favorably, the fellow in the following incident wouldn't be saying....

CALL ME MR. CATS

Recently we have had serious cat problems in my neighborhood. So much so that people have joked about actually going out and killing them. Anyway, one night about a month ago I was bringing the trash cans up to the front of my house when I noticed that there was a cat inside. I yelled "Go away cat," and chased it out of the can. The cat jumped up, screamed, and in the process of running away it squeezed an open

ketchup bottle at me, staining me from head to toe with red gook! Some neighbors, hearing the commotion, ran to check if everything was all right; embarrassed, I nodded politely.

The next day, my co-worker, who also lives in the neighborhood, commented how he was grateful that someone had finally taken some serious initiative in destroying the cats. Turns out one of the neighbors had spread a nasty rumor that I had violently bashed a cat's head in. Even though I have repeatedly denied this and explained the situation several times, some people in my neighborhood still insist on calling me "Cat-the-Ripper," which not only does not make sense but has made this awkward inci-

dent all the more uncomfortable. If only they would have assumed correctly that the red gook on me was ketchup. Please inform your readers of how to properly judge people.

• Isaac Goldfine, Brooklyn, NY
<holyjew@usa.net>
• Concept based on
"The Other Side of the Story"
by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

If you know negative information about someone, you are not allowed to "let the cat out of the bag" except under the strict conditions set forth in the sefer Chafetz Chaim. All the more so when your information is based on mere hearsay or circumstantial evidence.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked: "The long, the short, the black, the white, the his, the hers, and the theirs. What seven similar days — i.e., days which are observed with similar types of observances — in the Jewish calendar do these describe?"
Answer: The *long* — 17 Tammuz (longest daytime fast); the *short* — 10 Tevet (shortest fast); the *black* — 9 Av (day of mourning, when we sit in the dark); the *white* — Yom Kippur (we wear white kittles frocks and cover the Torah with white); the *his* — 3 Tishrei (Fast of Gedalia); the *hers* — 13 Adar (Fast of Esther); the *theirs* — 14 Nissan (Fast of the Firstborn).

• Dons Hool, Kollel Ponevez, as heard from his mother

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SHERLOX ANSWER!

"What kind of vision did Yaakov have?" asked Sherlock.

"What do you mean?"

"Read two more verses: 'Israel's eyes had become heavy from age; he was unable to see...' (Genesis 48:10) The text says that Yaakov saw Yosef's sons, and then goes on to say Yaakov was unable to see."

"Of course! The answer is right before my eyes: Yaakov was unable to see! So how could he 'see' Yosef's sons? Therefore, Rashi explains that Yaakov 'saw' their future offspring through the lens of Divine intuition."

• Based on Sifsei Chachamim
Sherlox is by Reuven Subar
Inspired by "What's Bothering Rashi" by Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN
47:28 Egypt and Rome
47:31 Necessity for the Oath
48:1 The Division of Eretz Yisrael
48:7 Rachel's Tomb
48:15 (first part) Yosef's other children
49:10 (first part) Kings of Israel
49:17 Shimshon

49:31 Burial in the Ma'aras HaMachpela
49:33 The Death of Yaakov
SFORNO
47:31 Yosef's Oath
48:18 The Laying of Hands
49:7 The Humility of Dispersion
49:11 Signs of Mashiach