

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

DO ANGELS

FEAR TO TREAD?

"...And behold, a ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward; and behold! angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it." (28:12)

Mention the word *angel* and the picture of an improbably non-aerodynamic, overly-plump baby with wings flying around doing target practice with a bow and arrow will probably float into your subconscious.

The word *malach* in Hebrew is very poorly translated as angel. Really, there is no English word for *malach*.

A *malach* is an incorporeal spiritual messenger. If this is so, why do angels need a ladder? Presumably they can reach their destination without recourse to such worldly apparatus.

Yaakov is the third of the Patriarchs. Avraham, the first, represents *chesed*, kindness, going out to people, expansiveness, the emotional way. His son, Yitzchak, represents *din*, self-control, intellectual analysis, judgment.

Avraham represents the idealist, the person with "his head in the clouds," the expansive thinker. Yitzchak has "his feet on the ground." And Yaakov? Yaakov is the ladder between the two. Yaakov is the synthesis.

Yaakov shows that there need be no contradiction between the head and the heart, that emotion and intellect are not at war. Yaakov is the ladder set earthward, with its top reaching to the heavens. On that ladder, that perfect connection between the head and the heart, angels can travel to their appointed destination.

TOP CAT

"And Yaakov departed from Be'er Sheva..." (28:10)

It must be great to be a cat. There's so much food around. Every dumpster and garbage can must seem like the Ritz. There's no difference between that smell and the smell of a freshly fried steak. The fact that your meal has just left someone else's plate doesn't bother you at all. Of course, the disadvantage is — you have to be a cat.

"Only in unity can we fulfill our purpose: To reflect the Oneness of the Creator who unites everything into One."

Personally, even though my gastronomic opportunities are more limited, I'd rather be a human being.

When we develop a closer relationship with G-d, we develop a sensitivity to the world around us. Song lyrics on the radio which we used to hum, suddenly seem coarse and offensive. Billboards which we never even noticed, now seem incredibly indecent. Our eyes and ears have been opened. Now we smell the difference between garbage and steak.

Rashi tells us that the Torah chose the word "depart" rather than just "go" to tell us that the departure of a righteous person makes an impression. When a righteous person is in town, he illuminates it with his presence. When he leaves, his lack is felt.

The question arises, why didn't the Torah also use the verb "depart" when Avraham left his birthplace? Surely, when Avraham left Charan, there was the same lack as when Yaakov left Be'er Sheva?

When Avraham left Charan, all he left was a city of idol worshippers, people whose spiritual sensitivity was about the level of a cat. They never perceived Avraham's spiritual stature when he dwelled amongst them, and thus his departure went unnoticed. When Yaakov left Be'ersheva, however, he left behind his parents, Yitzchak and Rivka. It was upon these spiritual giants that his departure made an impression. Yitzchak and Rivka were sensitive to the barometric difference that Yaakov's departure caused. The people of Charan, however, couldn't tell the difference between garbage and steak.

LAUNCH PAD TO THE STARS

"...And behold, a ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward; and behold! angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it. And behold! Hashem was standing over him..." (28:12)

The *gematria* (numerical equivalent) of the word *sulam* (ladder) is the same as (Mount) *Sinai* — 130. This is so because Mount Sinai is the ladder that connects the physical and the spiritual. G-d "stood" at the top of the ladder that Yaakov saw in his dream, just as G-d "stood" at the top

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out towards Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a fourteen year stopover in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beis Hamikdash*. He lays down to sleep and has a prophetic dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder between heaven and earth. Hashem promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will be guarded by Divine protection everywhere. Yaakov awakes and vows to build an altar there and tithes all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan deceives Yaakov and substitutes Rachel's elder sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears him four

sons — Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda — the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is jealous that she cannot conceive, and gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah now gives birth to Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries again to swindle Yaakov but is unsuccessful, and Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become resentful of his wealth, takes advantage of his father-in-law's temporary absence and flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by Hashem not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

HAFTORAH: HOSHEA 11:7-14:10

A FRIEND IN HIGH PLACES

"You corrupted yourself, Israel, for your help is only through Me." (13:9)

A great king once asked one of the Sages of Israel why it was that at the time of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* so many

thousand of Jews were slain.

The Sage replied that the Jewish People had always put their trust in Hashem saving them, and He had always had protected them. They had never concerned themselves with the strategies of war, rather they had always poured out their hearts in prayer and offerings.

Therefore, when the Jewish People sinned, and consequently lost Hashem's protection, they were left bereft of any defense at all. They fell

before their enemies like the standing crop before the scythe, like lambs abandoned by their shepherd, torn by the teeth of wolves.

The Jewish People are the lamb amongst the 70 wolves. The lamb is not protected by F-16s or the military might of any world-power, however broad its shoulders may be. The Jewish People have only one Friend. But He is the only Friend we need.

*• Based on Ahavas Yehonason
in Mayana shel Torah*

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

of the mountain when the Torah was given. The angels going up and down parallel Moshe and Aharon who brought the Torah down to this world.

There is only one ladder out of this world. Only one way to reach the stars. The launch pad is called Sinai. The spaceship is called the Torah.

TALKING STONES

“And he took from the stones of the place, and he placed them around his head, and he lay down in that place.” (28:11)

The Midrash tells us that the twelve stones all wanted the merit of being the stone on which the great tzaddik, Yaakov, would lay his head.

A few verses later (verse 18), the Torah talks of one stone, implying that the stones had subsequently all become one. What is the significance of the stones being transformed into one?

The twelve stones represent the

twelve tribes of Israel. The argument between the stones was about which tribe was the essence of the Jewish People.

Was it Levi and the priesthood that were to serve in the Holy Temple? Or was it Yissachar who would study Torah? Or was it Zevulun who through his business acumen would support Yissachar so that he could study the Torah?

Each of the stones claimed that it was the essence of the Jewish People, until Hashem took them all and made them into one. For no one part of the Jewish People is its essence. Rather the essence of Israel is unity, for only in unity can we fulfill our purpose: To reflect the Oneness of the Creator who unites everything into One.

ULTIMATE NAME-DROPPING

“It is in my power to do you all harm; but the G-d of your father addressed me last night, saying, ‘Beware of speaking with Yaakov either good or bad.’” (31:29)

If Lavan was trying to frighten Yaakov by telling him “It is in my power to do you all harm...” why does he then destroy his credibility by admitting that Hashem Himself told him to “beware of speaking with Yaakov either good or bad?”

Such is the way of those who lust for status. They are quite prepared to trip themselves up just to “drop” an important name. And Lavan could not resist the ultimate name-dropping — telling Yaakov that Hashem had spoken to him — even though it would completely enfeeble his threats.

Sources:

- Do Angels Fear To Tread?** - Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Menachem Nissel
- Top Cat** - Chasam Sofer
- Launch Pad To The Stars** - Midrash
- Talking Stones** - heard from Rabbi Calev Gestenter
- Ultimate Name-Dropping** - heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

BEIT EL

“He called that place Beit El, but its original name was Luz.” (Bereishis 28:19)

Beit El — Luz, where Yaakov had his prophetic dream of a ladder reaching to Heaven, reappears in the Biblical account (*Shoftim 1:23*) of the tribe of Yosef conquering the city. The entrance to this city was perfectly concealed. A giant luz tree stood in front of a cave which served as the entrance, and only the city’s inhabitants were aware that the tree was hollow and could be walked through. The Hebrew scouts waited until someone exited, and induced him to reveal the entrance by promising him protection from the war they were about to wage against his town.

They thus succeeded in invading and conquering the



city, and allowed their guide and his family to safely leave. He went to the Hittite area of the land and established a city which he named Luz. The new Luz was where the techeiles dye for tzitzis was pressed, and its secret location made it invulnerable to the invasions of foreign kings who exiled the inhabitants of all the other cities. The kindness the guide had shown the Hebrews by just pointing his finger towards the entrance received its ultimate reward in the city’s invulnerability to death itself. When its aged inhabitants grew weary of life, they went outside the walls of the city to die.

The modern Jewish settlement of Beit El, established after the Six-Day War on the approximate site of the ancient city, is fifteen minutes north of Jerusalem and near the Arab city of Ramallah.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

And Lavan gathered all the people of the place and made a feast (lit. drinking repast). (Bereishis 29:22)

Lavan wanted Yaakov to get intoxicated so that he could more easily fool him into marrying Leah. That’s why he made a festive meal which included alcoholic beverages. But when Yaakov married Rachel, Lavan made no feast at all.

• Da’as Zekeinim Miba’alei Hatosafos

WEEKLY DAF

PESACHIM 100 - 106

HAVDALAH WITH A DIFFERENCE

When a Yom Tov festival begins *motzei Shabbos* (Saturday night) the usual *havdalah* over wine which ushers out the holy day undergoes an addition and a subtraction.

The addition is the *kiddush* which declares the holiness of the incoming Yom Tov. There is a difference of opinion among the Sages as to which comes first — *kiddush* or *havdalah*. We follow the opinion that *kiddush* comes first. Two reasons for this are offered by the commentaries.

One reason is that it is more important to declare the holiness (*kiddush*) of the Yom Tov than to stress the distinction (*havdalah*) between Shabbos and all other days. *Kiddush* therefore deserves precedence.

Another reason for putting *havdalah* second is that putting it first would create the impression that one is eager to be free of the burden of Shabbos and therefore ushers it out at his earliest opportunity.

The subtraction is in regard to the blessing we usually make on *besamim* (spices or fragrant substances) in our *havdalah*. Two reasons are offered by the commentaries for deleting this blessing on the eve of a Yom Tov.

One reason is that there is no need for the *besamim*. The reason we sniff them at the conclusion of a regular Shabbos is to provide comfort for our spiritual essence traumatized by the departure of the *neshama yesera* (extra dimension of soul) which has been part of us during this soulful holy day. Since we are endowed with a *neshama yesera* on Yom Tov as well, we suffer no such trauma, and have no need for the comfort of *besamim*.

Tosefos, however, finds this explanation problematic since it raises the question as to why we do not sniff *besamim* in the *havdalah* we make at the conclusion of Yom Tov to comfort us for the loss of our Yom Tov *neshama yesera*. The alternative explanation offered is that the joy of the Yom Tov and the abundance of delicious food and drink serve the same comforting purpose as *besamim* and therefore render them redundant.

• Pesachim 102b

THE GREAT KIDDUSH

Upon his arrival in an unfamiliar community, Rabbi Ashi was honored with saying *kiddush* on wine Shabbos morning on behalf of the congregation.

“Please say *kiddusha rabba* for us” they requested.

“*Kiddusha rabba?*” Rabbi Ashi silently pondered. He had never heard that phrase before and he began to wonder what sort of a *kiddush* was traditionally said in this community. Then he hit on a foolproof plan.

Every *kiddush* begins with the blessing on wine — “*borei pri hagefen*.” He therefore said that blessing and paused. If no one in the congregation would drink from

the cup of wine before him, he would assume that the communal tradition was to say the longer *kiddush* said on Shabbos eve, and he would continue with its text. When he observed one of the older congregants bending down to partake of his wine, he knew that their tradition was no different from his, and that the *kiddush* consisted of no more than that one blessing.

But why is this *kiddush*, which consists of only a single blessing (the passages from Torah and Prophets traditionally recited before the blessing are customary but are not an essential part of the *kiddush*), called by the paradoxical name of *kiddusha rabba* — the “great *kiddush*”?

The Torah commands us to “remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it,” which obligates us to verbally declare its holiness. Our Sages directed us to fulfill this command by making this declaration in the *kiddush* we say at the onset of the holy day, and therefore designed a special text for it which concludes with the praise of Hashem as the “One Who sanctifies the Shabbos.” Since the Shabbos meal eaten during the day gives more honor to the holy day than the one at night, our Sages commanded us to make a token *kiddush* before it as well. But in order to distinguish this *kiddush* of rabbinic origin from the Torah-mandated one at night, they limited its text to the single blessing on wine.

Rashbam (Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, grandson of Rashi) explains that this *kiddush* of a single blessing is accorded this grandiose title because it is the universal opening for every Shabbos and Festival *kiddush*.

Rabbeinu Nissim (RaN) takes an almost opposite approach by suggesting that this title is a euphemism to cover up the brevity of the *kiddush*, in the same way that we euphemistically refer to a blind person as “one with much light.”

• Pesachim 106a

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. In his dream, Yaakov saw angels going up and down. What were the missions of these angels?
4. Hashem compressed the entire land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why was Rachel tending her father's sheep; that is, why didn't her brothers tend the sheep as was customary in those days?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Who was Elifaz, and why didn't he kill Yaakov when he had the chance?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
10. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
11. How old was Yaakov when he married Leah and Rachel?
12. Why did Rachel envy Leah?
13. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
14. How do you say "dudaim" in Arabic?
15. "Hashem remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. How many times did Lavan change Yaakov's wages?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's Parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

SHERLOX

SHERLOX HOLMES AND THE MYSTERY OF REUVEN

“Little Falswell will have an inferiority complex when he grows up,” said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes.

“How do you figure?” asked Watstein.

“His mother constantly compares him to her other children. Comparing siblings always causes problems.”

“Speaking of problems with mothers and children,” said Watstein, “Help me with this problematic text concerning Leah and her son Reuven: *‘And she called him Reuven, for she said: G-d has seen my affliction...’*” (*Bereishis 29:32*).

“What’s problematic?” asked Sherlock.

“Rashi’s comment. According to Rashi, Reuven stands for *‘reu ben’* — *‘look at the difference;’* with this name, Leah prophetically declared: *‘Look at the difference between my righteous first born, Reuven, and Yitzchak’s evil firstborn, Esav.’*”

“Do you deny Leah her natural right as a mother to brag about her children?”

“No. But I deny the right of anyone to say that Rashi quotes a midrash for no reason! The verse itself clearly gives a reason for Reuven’s name! Why, then, does Rashi bring a midrashic reason for no apparent reason?”

“Comparing siblings always causes problems,” said Sherlock.

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. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:12 - The ascending angels accompanied Yaakov in *Eretz Canaan*. The descending angels accompanied Yaakov outside of the Land.
4. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:11 - Elifaz was Esav's son who chased Yaakov in order to kill him. But because Elifaz had grown up under the tutelage of Yitzchak, he relented.
9. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
10. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
11. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
12. 30:1 - She envied her *mitzvos*, thinking they were the reason Leah merited having children.
13. 30:5 - Dan.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel prayed to Hashem for another son, in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:7 - One hundred times.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahadusa*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

LIGHTEN UP

Leora from South Africa
<613@netactive.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rabbi

I have 2 questions: I have a non-observant guest who comes to me every Friday night and sleeps here. She will switch off the light if it's on when she goes to sleep, and if the light is off when she comes into the room, she will switch it on. Is it better for me to leave it on, knowing she will switch it off (one Shabbat violation), or is it better for me to leave it off knowing she will switch it on and off (thus doing two Shabbat violations)? I know that even if I try explain to her not to do anything with the light, she won't listen.

My second question is, what is the purpose of writing "beit, samech, daled" at the top of the page? And when is it necessary? Thank you.

Dear Leora,

If those were your only choices, then it would be better to leave the light on. That way she will only do one prohibited act instead of two.

But there are other options. (Don't worry, I won't suggest removing the light bulb. I assume you've thought of that and decided it wasn't an option!) Get a "Shabbat clock" (a timer) which turns the lights on and off automatically. Any hardware store has them. Till then, how about lighting a candle in a safe place before Shabbat? Candles are the original Shabbat clocks, shutting themselves off automatically! Get the proper length candle, timed to extinguish approximately when she usually goes to sleep.

Or, how about a small fluorescent desk lamp which she can cover with an upside down waste basket? (Caution must be taken against fire, even with a fluorescent bulb.)

Regarding your second question, "beit, samech, daled" stands for b'siya-

ta d'Shmaya, Aramaic for "with G-d's help." It's a custom to write it on top of the page as a prayer for success in what we are about to write, but it's not an absolute requirement. I've never noticed anyone writing it when they write a check. Before an exam, I used to make sure to write it right on top of the form.

MAKE ME AN OFIR

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am asking this question for a friend at work. His wife is expecting a baby boy and he asked me whether the name Ofir (Bereishet 10:29) is OK to use. He and his wife are both Jewish, anti-religious and want a name from the Bible. However, they do not want any names that sound too religious. For example he does not want the name Yeshayahu, etc. Ofir is the name of one of Yoktan's sons. They are asking for a rabbi's opinion because I told them sometimes people mistakenly choose names of wicked people or unclean animals. (He did say that the name Nimrod sounds nice and is becoming popular in Israel.) Ofir's lineage does not apparently lead to any righteous people mentioned in the Torah. Someone said that it is not good to use a name that is not of a righteous person. Can you shed light on what names should be used from the Tanach?

Dear Name@Withheld,

According to the Chida in the name of our Sages, one should avoid using names of people from before the time of Avraham. Ofir was before Avraham. However, many people are named Noach, which is apparently an exception.

Regarding names in general, the verse states "zecher tzadik livracha, v'shem reshaim yirkav." The Talmud sees this verse as a support for our custom not to use names of wicked

people. Thus it's wrong to name a person Nimrod, especially since Nimrod tried to murder Avraham, the founder of the Jewish nation. It would be like naming a child Haman or Adolf.

How about Efraim?

Sources:

- Mishlei 1:7
- Tractate Yoma 38b

LUZ-ERS ARE WINNERS

Dr. Aharon Altabe from Paris, France
<aharon@club-internet.fr> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

The Sefer Ta'amei Haminhagim states in the name of Eliyahu Rabba and Zohar that there is a bone in the brain which never vanishes. You can't burn it, break it or mill it. I believe it b'emuna shelemah — with utmost faith — but I would like to know if someone could tell me more about it: Did you see it or read about it or hear a Rav ... or a physician who could give the name of such a bone? Thanks to you.

Dear Dr. Aharon Altabe,

Yes, according to tradition there is a kind of bone or organ no bigger than a barley corn called the *luz* or *neskvi*; its shape is almost cubic and apparently it lies at the top of the spine, inside the skull underneath the brain. It is described as having within it many intertwined spider-like blood vessels.

It has curious properties: It receives nourishment only from food eaten Saturday night at the *melave malka* meal. And, yes, it is indestructible and doesn't decay in the grave. The Midrash says that the Roman Hadrian once took a *luz* and tried to grind it, burn it, and dissolve it in water, to no avail. When he hammered it against an anvil, the hammer and anvil broke!

The future resurrection of the dead will be from this bone; that is, a

person will be resurrected from his *luz* bone.

The idea behind it is this: The *luz* symbolizes the point where physical and spiritual meet. Thus, it is nourished only from *melave malka*, the meal eaten between the spiritual Shabbat and the physical weekday. It's like the Western Wall: Just as the Western Wall will never be destroyed, and from it the Third Temple will be built, so too the *luz* is never destroyed, and from it the person will be re-built during the future resurrection.

Regarding the precise identity of the bone, I advise asking Dr. Eli Temstet from Paris. I am sure he can be of help.

Sources

- Sefer Ta'amei Haminhagim 425
- Bereishet Rabba 25
- Mishna Berurah 300:2

JACOB'S RIGHT

Jeff <JRKatz@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

In last week's Parsha summary (Toldot) you wrote: "Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of soup, clearly demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of the firstborn." Why didn't Yaakov simply give his brother something to eat? Wouldn't that be the brotherly (not to mention humanly decent) thing to do? I do, however, understand how sell-

ing the birthright for food demonstrated his unworthiness.

Dear Jeff,

You're asking a good question. Interestingly enough, there's no clear indication from the text that Yaakov withheld food from Esav.

On the contrary, the verses indicate that Yaakov actually *did* give Esav the food immediately. The verse says: "He sold his birthright to Yaakov, and Yaakov *had* (already) given Esav bread and lentils..." According to the rules of Hebrew grammar, "*had given*" is past perfect: When Esav sold the birthright for money, Yaakov had *already* given him free food!

But assuming that Yaakov withheld the food, why would he do that? The Talmud states: "Said Rabbi Yochanan: Five sins that wicked one (Esav) transgressed on that day — adultery, murder, heresy, denial of the future resurrection and despising of the birthright."

Yaakov knew who his brother was. Esav was totally unworthy to serve G-d. He would desecrate that service. Esav was a fraud. The very fact that Esav sold the birthright showed just how unworthy of it he was. Therefore, Yaakov saw this opportunity as an obligation to relieve Esav of the birthright.

Sources:

- Haktav V'hakaballa 25:31
- Tractate Bava Batra 15b

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

Re: Non-Jewish Spouse (Ohrnet Vayera):

A recent Torah Weekly article titled "Body and Soul" refers to "saving souls" and to the intermarriage rate in the US (it is probably similar in Canada). My comment/question is, could we not consider this situation an opportunity as well? That is, if we are judicious and caring in our efforts to bring these people back to *Yiddishkeit* (or for the non-Jewish spouse, to convert them), could we not strengthen our People, both in numbers and vitality? I recognize the difficulties associated with this course of action, and the need to attempt it with sensitivity and understanding. I hardly advocate seeking converts for the purpose of increasing our numbers. However, since

we are presented with the situation, would it not be right to try and "win" two "strong" Jews as opposed to "losing" one "weak" one?

Name@Withheld from Thornhill, Ontario, Canada

Ohrnet responds:

Each situation is unique and halachic guidance *must* be sought in each individual case.

Re: Moon Worship (Ohrnet Vayera):

Regarding *kiddush levannah* being mistaken for moon worship, it is interesting that the ArtScroll Siddur notes that many congregations recite *aleinu* following *kiddush levannah* to publicly refute this idea, since a basic statement in *aleinu* is "it is only to G-d that we pray."

Stanley Nachamie, JLE Israel Summer '88
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Re: Ask the Rabbi's Interactive Email:

Thank you, Ask the Rabbi, for your kind and sensitive (and speedy) response to my questions. What a wonderful service! Truly Heaven sent!

Maddi Yaacobi, Hollywood, Florida
<zohary@icanect.net>

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Judging favorably helps avoid igniting the forbidden fire of anger, especially on Shabbos. Shabbos is Hashem's special gift, it's ...

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T RE-FUSE

For the *aufruf* (Shabbat pre-wedding celebration kiddush) of our son, we hired a small hall in the basement of a yeshiva. On Friday, on our way to carry cartons of stuff into the hall, I met a friend who warned us: "Be careful, the electricity there

has a tendency to overload and pop the fuse. Several people had to make do with cold *kugel* at their kiddush." After taking precautions and checking the electricity long in advance, we usher in the Shabbos. We had a great evening meal. In the morning as we prepare for the *kiddush*, my wife tells me that the hot plates and the air conditioning are off.

Baruch Hashem, it apparently happened that morning, since everything was still warm. But I asked myself: "Why can't the hall's managers improve their maintenance?"

After Shabbos as we pack up, my wife shows me that the wire of one of the hot plates was melted due to contact with the hotplate. The short circuit had been caused by my own carelessness in setting up the hot plate!

By the way, when I approached the hall manager to offer to fix their hot plate at my own expense, he said: "These accidents are part of the deal!" and had his assistant fix it at no cost to me!

• An Ohrnet Reader
Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

YIDDLE RIDDLE

The Year 2000 will, G-d willing, be very special; so much so that we will not fast on *Asara b'Tevet* (the Tenth of Tevet) that year. Why not? (Ohrnet's note: The Tenth of Tevet commemorates the beginning stage of the destruction of the Temple. It never occurs on Shabbat). **Answer next week...**

• Submitted by Zvi Freund <miltonf@villagenet.com>

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SHERLOX ANSWER!

"Compare Reuven's naming to that of his brothers," said Sherlock. "Notice anything?"

"Hmm," said Watstein, thumbing through the text. "Now that you mention it, I notice an oddity regarding the order of the naming."

"Continue," said Sherlock.

"At the birth of Yaakov's other sons, the reason for the name is stated first. Then the name is stated: 'This time I will praise (*odeh*) G-d, therefore she called him *Yehuda*,' or 'G-d has judged me (*dan-ani*)...therefore she called him *Dan*.'" (Bereishis 29:35 30:5) Reuven is the one exception!"

"Exactly," said Sherlock. "Regarding Reuven the order is reversed: Leah first names him — 'and she called him

Reuven' — and only as an "afterthought" does she give a reason — 'for G-d has seen my affliction....' Thus the text indicates that her decision to name him Reuven preceded the stated reason. She must have had another, unstated reason."

"I see," said Watstein. "By reversing the order, the text hints that the name Reuven came first and that the stated reason was secondary. Leah would have named him Reuven regardless of the stated reason, because she had another reason not stated in the text. Rashi answers the question: What was her other reason?"

"Spoken with reason," said Sherlock.

• Based on *Haemek Davar*
Sherlox by Reuven Subar

Inspired by "What's Bothering Rashi" by Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

28:12 Yaakov's Dream
29:2 Three Flocks
30:2 Yaakov's Anger
31:19 The *Terafim*

SFORNO

28:12-13 Yaakov's Dream
29:6 A Proper Guest
29:11 Why Yaakov Cried
31:32 Yaakov's Curse
32:1 A Father's Blessing