

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Two Dollars A Jew

"...An offering to Esav his brother" (32:14)
When we remember the fanatical hatred of the Nazis, we would imagine that nothing could have stopped their desire to kill every last Jew in Europe. There is considerable evidence, however, that even their blind insane hatred was susceptible to good old-fashioned bribery.

During the height of the war, Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandel managed to stop the deportation of 25,000 Romanian Jews by bribing Adolf Eichmann's second-in-command. The price: \$50,000. Two dollars a head. Two dollars a Jew. About the price of an evening at the cinema.

Encouraged by this success, Rabbi Weissmandel conceived an incredibly bold plan. If the Nazis were susceptible to bribery on this relatively modest scale, why not on a grand scale? Why not try and buy the life of every Jew in Europe? The Europa plan, as it was called, was an attempt to rescue every remaining Jew by giving the Nazis a massive bribe.

Rabbi Weissmandel saw that the tide of the war was turning. He surmised that those Nazis who still hoped to win would want to use the Jews to put pressure on the Allies. Others, who feared future Allied retribution if they were defeated, would view such a deal as a way to curry favor after the war. In any event, Rabbi Weissmandel's intention was simply that the Nazis should start to appreciate that live

Jews were more useful than dead ones.

Rabbi Weissmandel's "Working Group" again made contact with Eichmann's aide. After protracted negotiations, the word came through from Berlin that the highest echelons would agree to stop all deportations everywhere except from Poland, for a price. How much? Two million dollars. For two million dollars, literally millions of lives would be saved. With the

"The actions of the fathers are a sign for the children. The deeds of the Patriarchs carved out a perpetual reality."

receipt of the first \$200,000 the Nazis would halt the transports for two months. After that, the next payment would be due.

Money isn't what it used to be. Two million dollars in 1943 is the equivalent of hundreds of millions of dollars today. In spite of almost superhuman efforts, Rabbi Weissmandel was unable to raise the

first \$200,000 dollars, and negotiations broke down in September 1943.

Would the Nazis have kept their word? No one can know for sure. However, there is evidence that they would have. Two Jews who escaped from Auschwitz reported that during the time of the negotiations, the trains with their relentless flow of human cargo had suddenly stopped. Even the gas chambers had lain idle. Also, a special transport of Jews from Thereisienstadt who had arrived at Auschwitz were treated with abnormal respect. Perhaps these Jews would have been the first released if the bribe had been paid. When the negotiations foundered, they were sent to their deaths.

Why couldn't Rabbi Weissmandel raise the money? The reasons are complex. One reason is that there was an underlying attitude that it was anathema to have any dealings with the Nazis, let alone give them vast sums of money. Legally, too, the Americans would not have taken kindly to pumping millions into the Nazi war machine. All these considerations pale into insignificance when faced with the overriding imperative of the Torah to ransom captives.

Before setting out to deal with the powers in Rome, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (the codifier of the Mishna) and the great Sages of the Talmud would always study the encounter between Yaakov and Esav in this week's Parsha. Once, the Sage Rabbi Yannai neglected to do so and his mission was a dismal failure.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Esav. That night, Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Esav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason that it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be "Yisrael," signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Esav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Esav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his

family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement — however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *bris mila*. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. Hashem commands Yaakov to go to Beis-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beis-El. Hashem appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beis Lechem Road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Esav's descendants.

HAFTORAH: OVADIAH 1:1-21

The entire book of Ovadiah, the shortest in all of the *Tanach*, is this week's Haftorah. Ovadiah was a convert to Judaism from the nation of Edom, a descendent of Esav. Esav lived among two *tzaddikim*, Yitzchak and Rivka, and failed to learn from them — Ovadiah lived among two of the wickedest people, Ahav and Jezebel, yet he remained a *tzaddik*. His prophecy follows Esav/Edom through various periods of history until its eventual downfall in the times of the *mashiach*.

"On the day you (Edom) stood aloof...while foreigners cast lots on Jerusalem, you too were like one of them."
(Ovadiah 1:11)

Although it was Babylon, not Edom, who destroyed the First Temple, nevertheless, Edom shares the blame. As Yaakov's brother, Esav/Edom should have come to Israel's aid.

• Metzudas David

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Published by
OHR SOMAYACH
TANENBAUM COLLEGE
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

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Produced and Designed by the Office of Communications
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PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529
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In Memory of

MR. BRIAN LUTCH ז"ל

לע"נ

ר' בנימין בן ר' ברל ז"ל

כ"ב כסלו תשנ"ז

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Why was it so important to study this chapter before dealing with the super power of the day?

The book of Bereishis is a road-map for the Jewish People for all time. The actions of the fathers are a sign to the children. The deeds of the Patriarchs carved out a perpetual reality. When Yaakov met his brother Esav, he was creating a reality, he was “writing the book” of how the Jewish People are to behave towards Esav and his spiritual heirs in every generation. Yaakov prepared for war. He prayed for mercy and help from G-d. And he sent a bribe to his brother Esav. Even though Esav had 400 soldiers and could have taken everything from him, the bribe worked. Even though Esav had a fanatical hatred of his brother, Yaakov bought him off.

The Torah is the road-map of the Jewish People throughout history. It teaches what to do when we are at

peace in our own land and it teaches us what to do in the blackest night of exile. When we ignore its directions, we do so not only at our own peril, but at the peril of millions.

TWO CAMPS

“I have been diminished by all the kindness and by all the truth that You have done; ...and now I have become two camps.”
(32:11)

There are two camps in our lives. A camp of darkness, and a camp of light.

Few of us can grasp anything in absolute terms. Our whole frame of reference is relative. We only understand what light is because every night it gets dark. If the sun always shone, not only would we have no word for dark, but we would also have no word for light. Our perception of the world is based on this principle. Therefore

to the extent that we remember the darkness, so will be our rejoicing in the light.

There is a camp of darkness in our lives. A time when we dwell in the midst of difficulty, trial and tribulation. And there is a camp of light. Times when we dwell in security, physically and emotionally. When we are living in the camp of light, our happiness, our perception of the light, will be to the extent that we remember the camp of darkness. By remembering the camp of darkness, feelings of gratitude to G-d will well in our hearts and we will give thanks to Him for bringing us to a time of light and joy.

Sources:

Two Dollars A Jew - Midrash Rabba 78:15;
“To Save A World” David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevirtz;
Two Camps - Rabbeinu Bachya

LOVE OF THE LAND

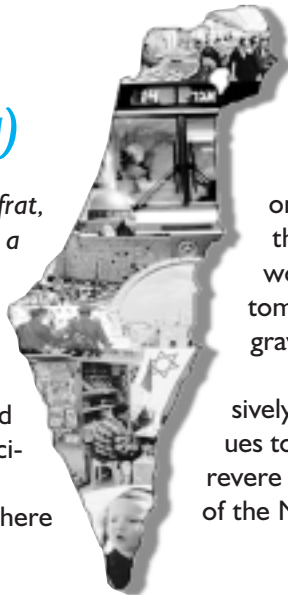
Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

BEIT LECHEM (BETHLEHEM)

“Rachel died and was buried on the way to Efrat, which is Bethlehem. And Yaakov placed a monument on her grave which is the monument of Rachel’s grave unto this day.”
(Bereishis 35:19)

Although Beit Lechem achieved fame in later years as the birthplace and early home of King David, it is principally associated with the Tomb of Rachel.

Our Sages tell us that Yaakov buried her there



on Divine orders so that when Nevuzradan, the Babylonian conqueror of Eretz Yisrael, would lead her children into exile past her tomb, Mother Rachel would rise from her grave to pray to Heaven for their return.

Bethlehem is today populated exclusively by Arabs, but the Tomb of Rachel continues to attract Jews from all over the world who revere it as a prayer site second only to the Cave of the Machpela in Hebron.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“Thus say to my master, to Esav...” (32:5)

Yaakov calls Esav “my master” eight times in this week’s Parsha. Because of this, Esav merits that eight kings emerge from his descendants before any king emerges from Yaakov’s descendants.

• Chizkuni

WEEKLY DAF

PESACHIM 107 - 113

FEMININE EQUALITY

Women are generally exempt from fulfilling *mitzvos asei* (positive commandments) which are time oriented, such as hearing the *shofar*, sitting in the *succah* and shaking the *lulav*. However, there are a few exceptions. One is the obligation to drink four cups of wine on the eve of Pesach.

The explanation offered by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi for obligating women in this mitzvah is the same given for obligating them to hear the Megilla on Purim and to light the *menorah* on Chanuka — “they too were involved in the miracle.”

What does it mean that “they too were involved in the miracle?”

The Rashbam’s approach is that the women were actually the *catalysts* of these miracles. Esther was the heroine of Purim, Yehudis of Chanuka and “in the merit of the righteous women of that generation,” say our Sages, “our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt.” (*Sota 11b*)

Tosefos challenges this approach because the phrase “they too” suggests that they were not the *main* players. The alternative explanation is that they too were threatened by the dangers preceding those miracles.

But why, asks Tosefos, are women not obligated to sit in the *succah*? This may not be a problem for the first approach, because we don’t find any heroine playing a role in bringing about the miracle of Divine protection of our ancestors from the harsh climate of the wilderness. It is, however, a problem for the approach of Tosefos, since women too were affected by the wilderness climate and benefited as much as the men.

In regard to a Torah command which is time oriented, Tosefos explains, women are exempt even if they benefited from the miracle associated with it. Only regarding Rabbinic *mitzvos* — such as Megilla, Chanuka and the four cups of wine — did the Sages obligate women because “they too” were saved by the miracle.

• Pesachim 108b

A WATCHED NIGHT

“*Lail shimurim* — a watched night” is the way the Torah (*Shmos 12:42*) describes the eve of Pesach.

In his commentary on Chumash, Rashi explains that it is called a “watched night for Hashem,” because He had long watched and waited for the time to come to fulfill His promise to Avraham to redeem his descendants from Egyptian bondage.

But Rabbi Nachman in our section of the *gemara* applies the term in a different way — it is a night when we are watched by Hashem and need not fear the mysterious forces which threaten us at other times.

Maharsha explains that the first part of the passage which speaks of a “watched night for Hashem” indeed refers to Hashem’s watching for the moment of redemption. But the passage concludes with the words “watched for all the Children of Israel throughout their generations.” This watching refers first of all to the watching that Hashem did over the Jewish homes when He slaughtered the Egyptian firstborn on the eve of the Exodus and ensured that “the plague will not strike you” (*Shmos 12:13*). The additional term “throughout their generations” extends this guarantee of Divine protection to every Pesach throughout history.

We have two familiar customs to remind us of the fact that it is a “watched night.” One is opening the door during the Pesach *seder* to indicate that we have nothing to fear. The other is the deletion of the special psalms we usually recite at the bedtime *shema*, whose purpose is to ward off the mysterious evil spirits which threaten one who sleeps.

It was a “watched night” for Hashem before the Exodus. It was a “watched night” for our ancestors at the time of the Exodus. And it remains a “watched night” for us every year that we remember and celebrate the Exodus.

• Pesachim 109b

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Esav?
2. Why was Yaakov both “afraid” and “distressed?”
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Esav?
4. Where did Dina hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?
6. What was the angel forced to do before Yaakov agreed to release him?
7. What was it that healed Yaakov’s leg?
8. Why did Esav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Esav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word “nisa” in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Esav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the “daughter of Leah” and not the “daughter of Yaakov?”
13. Whom should Shimon and Levi have consulted concerning their plan to kill the people of Shechem?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. What does the name *Binyamin* mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
16. In verse 35:22 the Torah states “The sons of Yaakov were twelve.” Why?
17. How old was Yaakov when Yosef was sold?
18. Esav changed the name of his wife, Ahalivamah, to Yehudis. Why?
19. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
20. What is the connection between the Egyptian oppression of the Jewish people and Esav’s decision to leave the land of Canaan?

SHERLOX

SHERLOX AND THE MIRACLE MYSTERY

“I don’t understand,” said Watstein. “The verse says: *I have been diminished by all the kindnesses and truth You have done for Your servant; for with my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.*” (Bereishis 32:11)

“Yaakov was thankful. He left Canaan penniless and returned wealthy,” said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes. “Is that hard to understand?”

“My question exactly!” said Watstein. “The phrase ‘with my staff’ means ‘penniless.’ Why, then, does Rashi need to bring a midrash? The midrash says that Yaakov put his staff into the Jordan and the waters of the Jordan split.”

“Dr. Watstein, if the Torah had only meant ‘penniless,’ don’t you suppose the Torah would have said so?” said Sherlox.

“No! The Torah is replete with idioms! Example: ‘With his shirt-tails’ (Shemos 21:3) means ‘all alone.’ Rashi doesn’t comment there. Why does he here?”

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. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so that Esav wouldn’t see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.
6. 32:27 - Admit that the blessings given by Yitzchak rightfully belong to Yaakov.
7. 32:32 - The shining of the sun.
8. 33:4 - His pity was aroused when he saw Yaakov bowing to him so many times.
9. 33:7 - To stop Esav from gazing at her.
10. 33:12 - It means “travel.” (It does not mean “we will travel.”) This is because the letter “nun” is part of the word and does not mean “we” as it sometimes does.
11. 33:16 - They slipped away one by one.
12. 34:1 - Because she was outgoing like her mother, Leah.
13. 34:25 - Their father, Yaakov.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 35:18 - *Ben-Yemin* means “Son of the South.” He was the only son born in the Land of Israel, which is south of Aram Naharaim.
16. 35:22 - To stress that all of them — including Reuven — were righteous.
17. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
18. 36:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
19. 36:3 - One who converts to Judaism, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
20. 36:6 - Esav knew that the privilege of living in the Land of Israel was accompanied by the prophecy that the Jews would be “foreigners in a land not their own.” Therefore Esav said, “I’m getting out of here — I don’t want the Land if it means I have to ‘pay the bill’ of subjugation in Egypt.”

LETTING GO

Eric Steinberg from New York
<esteinb173@aol.com>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I am having a lot of trouble within myself dealing with a question. If you and I are fathers and we see our children in danger we scoop them up and carry them to safety. We would even give up our lives for them. If this is so then why does G-d not do the same for His children; after all, He is "our Father..." I have asked a few rabbis about this, but the response was not helpful. I am not trying to turn away from G-d but I do need this answered so that I may be closer to Him...

Dear Eric Steinberg,

Have you ever taught a child to ride a bike? If you have you will realize that at some point you have to let go of the seat or the handlebars and let him ride himself, and fall himself. If you do not let go at some point, he will never learn to ride the bike.

The ultimate purpose of this world is for the human to develop the capacity to be G-dlike, similar and compatible with G-d. However, G-d is not controlled, influenced or "scooped up" by some outside force. He is completely independent — in order for us to really be good (or evil for that matter) it requires that our actions be from within ourselves as a result of free will. Free will requires that we are not unduly influenced in our decisions. If every time I make the right choice morally, I succeed in this world, and every time I make the wrong choice morally, I fail in this world, then I no longer have free will, I am merely a rat in a Skinner maze being conditioned to press the correct lever. This means that even if I am righteous I may suffer, and I may suffer at the hands of the evildoers. It is only in this system that humanity can become great — a system with minimum Divine intervention, with no apparent connection between moral and physical success. G-d wants us to be able to "ride the bike," and that is why He lets go.

HOLES IN ONE

Alan Mangurten from Morton Grove, Illinois
<manguala@concentric.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
My 13 year old daughter, Eve (Chaya Dorit bat Gitel v'Avraham haKohen) is in the hospital with a blood clot in her leg. This made me think about the prayer "asher yatzar et ha'adam b'chochma... rofeh kol basar umafla la'asot — G-d created Man with wisdom...Healer of all flesh and Doer of wonders." Can you tell me any details about the prayer; who wrote it, when was it written, are there commentaries on it? Todah rabbah!

Dear Alan Mangurten,

First let me wish your daughter a complete recovery.

We say the "asher yatzar" blessing every time after using the bathroom. This blessing praises G-d for administering our body functions and maintaining our health. It relates to the Divine intelligence we see in the wonders of the human body, stressing the function of the "innumerable apertures, the innumerable orifices" which open and close in turn with precision, like the valves of the heart, the respiratory system and the digestive system. "If but one were ruptured, or but one were blocked, it would be impossible to remain alive and stand before You, Hashem."

This blessing is mentioned in the Talmud as one of the blessings compiled by the sages of the Great Assembly (circa 300-500 BCE).

Sources:

- Berachot 60b
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 6:1

WHAT'S MY SIGN?

Sharon from NY
<Sharon_Schonberg@ccmail.prusec.com>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
A while ago I met with a mekubal (kabbalist) who had a reputation for helping many people. After giving him information about myself and talking with him for a while he told me that

my nature/personality is "water water water." Can you please tell me what that means, what water represents in Kabbala?

Dear Sharon,

There are four origins of neshamot, souls, parallel to the four origins of matter: Fire, wind, water, and earth. Most people fall within one category while some are a mixture of two or more. Water as the origin of your soul means fruitfulness, purity and health. It means you don't get angry quickly, or at least you calm down quickly. You probably enjoy swimming! Any negative issues related to water can be mended by observance of the Torah, which is compared to water.

This is a highly complicated subject, which can't be conveyed properly via this media.

KISS OF HONOR

Louis Orzech
<lumiray@sympatico.ca> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
What is the best way to honor the Torah as it is carried in the synagogue? This question applies to both when we are "touching-distance" from the Torah as well as when we are too far away.

Dear Louis Orzech,

One should stand. If the Torah is carried past you, it is a mitzvah to follow behind it until it is brought to rest. It is also customary to kiss the Torah, or to touch the Torah and kiss your hand. If you are too far away, you should stand and face the Torah as it is taken to and placed on the bima (table upon which the Torah is placed and read). Likewise, when the Torah is being carried back to the holy ark.

Rabbi Yehuda Segal, zatzal, the late Rosh Yeshiva in Manchester, used to point out that although it is a beautiful custom to kiss the Torah, very often people surge forward and push or elbow others out of the way! Rabbi Segal cautioned his students that it's better not to kiss the Torah than to push others in order to kiss the Torah.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 149
- Mishna Berurah ibid. 7

DATE BASE

Sharon Cohen from Edmonton, Alberta
<sharoncohen@compusmart.ab.ca> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I have been asked by a colleague at work what event marks the beginning of the Jewish calendar? I have always understood that we date our years from the Creation. Am I correct? Can you quote any sources I can use to back up my theory?

Dear Sharon Cohen,

You're right. We are now in the year 5759 from the creation of Adam. We have an unbroken tradition that this is so; we've been writing this in our marriage documents for thousands of years.

For textual sources, look at the chronologies from Adam down through Avraham (*Genesis, Chapters 5,11*). This shows that Avraham was born in the year 1948 (!) from Creation. The Exodus from Egypt was 500 years later (*Genesis 21:5, 15:13*), bringing us to the year 2448. Add 480 years from the Exodus until the First Temple (*Kings I, 6:1*) and you have 2928. Add 410 years that the First Temple stood, 70 years of Babylonian exile, 420 years that the Second Temple stood, and 1931 years since its destruction. This gives you exactly 5759.

WHY ESAV LOST HIS HEAD

Sharon Stakofsky-Davis <Yenta71@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
In our Torah study group we were discussing the midrash where Yaakov's deaf grandson takes a club and lops off Esav's head and his head goes rolling into Jacob's burial place. Is there any commentary that talks about why specifically a deaf person is the one who kills Esav and what this means? We have seven people waiting for this answer.

Dear Sharon Stakofsky-Davis and the Study-Group Seven,

At first, people are shocked by bad news, but then they get used to it little by little. When Esav first came to stop Yaakov's burial, no one knew exactly what he was up to and how far he would actually take his argument. Finally, when Esav demanded that Yaakov's sons produce the deed of sale of the burial site, they had already begun to "accept" the bad situation little by little. But Chushim, Yaakov's deaf grandson, didn't figure out what was happening until the argument was at its peak, and was therefore "shocked" into action.

Sources:

- Maharal, *Chidushei Aggadot II 53*

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

Re: Hooray for Ohrnet:

I would just like to let you know that Ohrnet is a big hit in *Midreshet Moriah* and many girls are interested in it. Thank you, Ohrnet staff, for bringing more inspirational words of Torah into our lives each week.

- Miriam Weiss, Jerusalem <yeshiva5@netvision.net.il>

Re: Hurricane Mitch:

Due to the natural disaster caused by "Hurricane Mitch" in all Honduras, our synagogue bought last year by our community, the Tegucigalpa Kehilla, was destroyed by the river. We are very sad due to it. One *Sefer Torah* was saved but all the rest, prayer and holy books were lost. There was no chance to save them. Today we have a meeting and will talk about the rebuild. And, *im yirtze Hashem*, it will be ready to celebrate our next Rosh Hashana.

- Berl Bernardo Gorgun, Honduras <gorgun@david.intertel.hn>

Re: The Missing Years (Ohrnet Lech Lecha):

Rabbi Shimon Schwab, *zatzal*, discusses our calendar count at length in his sefer "Selected Speeches." He writes that Daniel stopped the Jewish Calendar for 168 years and that the Greek dating system is actually correct. This was Hashem's instruction to Daniel to "hide the date of *Mashiach*."

- REB <reb95@juno.com>

In Chapter 21 of "Selected Speeches" Rav Shimon Schwab, *zatzal*, cites a great deal of evidence for both sides of this question. I'd like to offer one quote: "It is because of all these gnawing doubts that I have decided to put a big question mark after the words 'Jewish Chronology.' Let somebody with greater knowledge come and pick up the threads where I left off. Our traditional, universally accepted Jewish way of counting the years to the Creation of the World is sacred territory which only fools do not fear to tread upon....On the other hand I muster the courage to belong to those who would rather wish to be honest to themselves than to be 'right.' I would rather leave a good question open than risk giving a wrong answer. (pp. 284-285)"

- Akiva Miller <kennethgmiller@juno.com>

Re: Where is Hashem (Ohrnet Vayera):

You wrote: *The word Hashem appears in the Torah, as in "Fear the great and awesome Hashem (Name) — the L-rd your G-d. (Deutoronomy 22:28)." Your source, Deutoronomy 22:28, must be a mistake could you tell me where it is instead?*

- PFS from Holland <sant@tref.nl>

Ohrnet Responds:

The correct source should be Deutoronomy 28:58. Sorry for the mistake.

A SINGULAR SONG

"I" stands alone,
Self-important and tall;
"I" must be first
Because "I" knows it all.

"I" can't have fault.
Or admit "I" is wrong;
"I" can't change opinions,
"I" wouldn't be strong!

But after a time
"I" achieves victorious defeat;
Being right can be lonely,
With one's friends in retreat.

And if "I" is inspired,
To help change "I's" decree;
"I" can climb up from "I's" rut,
And choose to be wee.

• An Ohrnet Reader

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

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

The Year 2000 will, G-d willing, be very special; so much so that we will not observe the fast of *Asara b'Tevet* (the Tenth of Tevet) that year. Why not?

Answer:

Because the Jewish date "10 Tevet" will not occur in the civil calendar year 2000.

The Tenth of Tevet this year, 1999, will occur on December 19. The next Tenth of Tevet will be 13 months later, on January 5, 2001. This long interval is due to 5760 being a Jewish leap year, in which a month is added to the year. Thus, there will be no Tenth of Tevet in the year 2000.

• Riddle submitted by Zvi Freund, Kew Garden, NY
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SHERLOX ANSWER!

“Yaakov said his merits were ‘diminished by all the kindness.’ What specifically diminished his merits?” asked Sherlock.

“The Divine kindness, as Yaakov himself says,” said Watstein.

“But what specific type of kindness?” asked Sherlock.

“I don’t see what you’re getting at” said Watstein.

“Let me ask you a different question. Where else do we see an instance of someone fearing that his merits had been diminished?”

“Hmm...” said Watstein. “How about Avraham? (*Bereishis 15:1 & Rashi*) He feared that he had used up his merit in the battle against the four kings.”

“And how did Avraham defeat them?” asked Sherlock.

“How? By virtue of ... a miracle! (*Rashi Ibid.*) Aha! I see what you’re getting at. You’re suggesting that the diminishing of a person’s merit occurs when he receives Divine kindness *above* the ordinary, such as a miracle.”

“Yes, I am suggesting that. My theory is that *diminishing* merit is tied specifically to the occurrence of a miracle. (see *Shabbos 32a*) Yet, Yaakov mentions no explicit miracle. Rashi, therefore, cites a midrash which explains that Yaakov was indeed referring to a miracle: The miraculous splitting of the Jordan.”

• *Sherlox* by Reuven Subar
Inspired by “What’s Bothering Rashi” by Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN	35:16	Rachel’s Tomb	32:25	The Wrestling Match
32:4	Yaakov’s Error		32:26	Yaakov’s Injury
32:9	Sign for the Future		32:33	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>
32:26	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>	3	33:4	Surviving Esav
33:14	The Journey to Seir		34:27	The Guilt of Shechem
34:12	Dina		35:10	The Meaning of Yaakov’s Name
35:8	Rivka’s Death	32:19	35:23	The Power of Repentance
		SEFER HACHINUCH		
		The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>		
		SFORNO		
		Strategy of the Gifts		