

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

A WORLD OF WORDS

"These are the words..." (1:1)

In Hebrew, the word for "word" and the word for "thing" come from the same root — *davar*. When G-d created the world, He used speech to call each thing into being. "And G-d said 'Let there be light!' And there was light."

It is not just that G-d called things into being and from then on they have an independent existence. Rather, everything in this world is no more than G-d "speaking." Things are no more than G-d's words. "Things" are "words" because something can only exist in this world while G-d is still "speaking" it. G-d is speaking you. He's speaking me. Right now.

Nothing has a reality outside of the Creator. When the Torah says "There is nothing else except Him," it doesn't mean that there are no other gods except Him. It means that there is nothing outside Him at all.

Idol worship isn't necessarily bowing down to over-sized dollies. For even if a person admits that G-d created an object but claims that now it has an independent existence — that's idol worship.

How did idol worship start? The first generations had no doubt that G-d created the world and everything in it. However, in the generation of Enosh, the third generation from Creation, people made a simple but fundamental error: Even though they understood that the sun, the moon and the stars were no more than G-d's vassals, yet

they thought that as G-d's "representatives," the heavenly bodies too were due respect. Not for themselves, of course, but merely as servants of the King. They imagined that the Will of G-d was that His representatives be honored. By doing so, they felt they were honoring the King Himself.

This was the root of idol worship, its essence; seeing the sun, the moon or the stars as independent agents, something separate from G-d. For nothing in this world is more than an ax in the hands of the Woodchopper. A mere tool. Powerless without the Hand that wields it. Nothing is more than the words which G-d is speaking. That's what things are.

THE MISSING LINK

"I am Hashem, your G-d..." (5:6)

Why did G-d give the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone? Why not on one big stone?

The commandments on the first tablet are between Man and G-d. "I am Hashem...You shall not recognize the gods of others in My Presence...You shall not make a carved image..." The second tablet, however, contains commandments between Man and his fellow: "You shall not murder; and you shall not commit adultery; and you shall not steal..."

But why do they need to be on a separate slab? What difference does it make that the second five commandments concern man and his fellow? They're all commandments, aren't

they?

Nothing we do affects G-d. If we fail to do one of the *mitzvot*, G-d doesn't get angry. G-d has no human traits whatsoever, be they physical, emotional or spiritual. All we can know about G-d is that He is. The commandments that G-d gives us between us and Him are for one reason only: To connect us to Him, to bring us closer to Him. From His perspective, however, they do nothing for Him.

Where our fellow beings are concerned, however, *mitzvah* failure (murder, theft, etc.) affects them greatly.

For this reason, the Ten Commandments are divided onto two tablets. Those commandments between Man and G-d affect Man, but not G-d. Those between Man and Man affect both sides.

This link, this mutuality between the active party and the recipient, is alluded to by the linking of the second five commandments together with the conjunction "and." "You shall not murder; and you shall not commit adultery; and you shall not steal..."

When we damage the relationship with our fellow, it doesn't just affect ourselves, it impacts him as well. We are linked together.

SON OF GODZILLA

"And it will be that if you hearken to My commandments." (11:13)

One of the ten commandments of Hollywood is "If it makes money, let there be born unto it a Son. A sequel. Or a prequel. Let

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DEVARIM

1. Why does the Torah say Moshe spoke *bamidbar* — “in the desert?”
2. Why did Moshe mention only the names of the places that the Jewish People sinned, while not mentioning the sins themselves?
3. How much time elapsed between departing from Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
4. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
5. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
6. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People “dwelling” at Mt. Sinai?
7. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
8. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: “You today are like the stars of the Heavens”?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?

10. Moshe told the judges, “The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me.” How was he punished for this statement?

VA'ETCHANAN

1. “And I prayed to Hashem at that time.” Why “at that time”?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by Hashem's “strong hand”?
3. What is *ha'Levanon*?
4. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the *mitzvot* properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word *v'noshantem*?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
9. “You'll serve man-made gods.” Is this literal?
10. Why is east called *mizrach*?

EIKEYV

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a) wonders; b) strong hand; c) outstretched arm — that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a mitzvah, whose name is attached to the mitzvah?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down

from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?

8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the *aron* in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?

RE'EH

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from Hashem?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?

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**This issue of Ohrnet is our summer issue.
The next issue will be published for Parshat Shoftim.**

Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable summer.

continued from page one

it contain all the same stars, and let the plot be so close to its progenitor that you're not sure if you're actually watching a different film or the original one."

Jews recite the three paragraphs of "Shema" twice a day. The second paragraph of "Shema" looks like "Son of Shema." It has the same *mitzvot* — to love G-d and to serve Him with all your heart, etc.; to speak of the *mitzvot* when you're sitting in your home and walking along the way, to wear tefillin; to put up a mezuzah on your door. Haven't we heard all this before?

All over the world there are speed limits on roads. In the States it's a mind-numbing 55 MPH. In England it's 70 MPH. A speed limit is to prevent a person from killing himself. Seeing as that's the reason, why do we need a system of fines and penalties to stop people speeding? Isn't losing one's life a far more persuasive reason to slow down than losing \$75 dollars for a speeding ticket?

A smaller but more immediate danger can impact us more than a danger which is greater but more remote.

In reality, nothing exists but G-d. Thus, the only thing that really can be called "good" is being close to G-d. In the first paragraph of the Shema, no results are stated for doing the *mitzvot* because it's self-evident that doing them brings us close to G-d. That's the real good.

Human nature being what it is, however, the Torah repeats those same *mitzvot* in this week's Parsha, adding that if we do them we will have rain at its proper time; we'll gather our grain, our wine, our oil. G-d will provide grass for our cattle. We'll eat and be satisfied. And if we don't keep the *mitzvot*, then there will be no rain, the ground won't yield its produce, and eventually we will be exiled.

None of these blessings and curses can compete with the true good of closeness to G-d; it's just that sometimes the threat of \$75 speed ticket is more eloquent than the possibility of not making it home at all.

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

"You shall make the festival of Succot..."
(16:13)

The roof of a succah cannot be higher than 20 *amot* (about 35 feet). The Talmud gives three views as to why a height greater than this renders the succah invalid.

Rabba says that because the eye does not normally travel so high, a person sitting in such a succah doesn't have the feeling of being in a succah, and thus such a succah is invalid.

Rabbi Zeira says that the essence of the succah is that its roof should give shade, and in such a high succah the vast majority of the shade would come from the walls and not from the roof.

Yet a third opinion is that of Rava who says that a succah must be a temporary building, and such a large succah comes into the category of a permanent structure.

There is a deeper message beneath the surface of this seemingly technical dispute: These three views hint to the three pillars on which a righteous person must build himself.

The first pillar is the pillar of fearing G-d.

The essence of fearing G-d is to imagine that we are in His presence at all times, that there is never a moment, a deed or a thought which G-d doesn't perceive. The gematria (numerical equivalent) of the word "succah" is 91. The gematria of the Name of G-d which we say as "Adonai" is 65. That Name, which we do not pronounce the way it is written, consists of the letters "yud" and "heh" and "vav" and "heh," which add up to 26. Adding this Name the way it is spoken to the way it is written, comes to 91.

In other words, the succah is a combination of G-d's Names. It represents the Divine Presence. Thus, if

the succah is so high that the eye doesn't normally travel up that much, then it's as though G-d is not "in front of my eyes." If so, then I am lacking in the fear of G-d.

The second pillar is the pillar of trust in G-d.

If I say, "I need to do such and such to get out of the spot I'm in, and through that action G-d is going to save me," it's as if I'm narrowing G-d's ability to save me to the scope of my own actions. The correct mode of trust in G-d is to act, but not to assume that my action in any way limits G-d's options. I may do one thing, and my rescue may come from an entirely different source.

Rabbi Zeira hints that the first attitude is invalid. The shade of the succah roof represents the Heavenly "shade" of G-d's protection. The four walls symbolize the physical world extending to the four directions of the compass. By making a succah so high that all its shade comes from the walls, it is as though I'm saying that G-d's "shade" and protection (the succah roof) needs to be supported by my actions in this world (the four walls).

The third pillar is the pillar of humility.

Wealth and success in this world can inflate a person's ego. But when a person realizes how temporary his stay is here, it's hard for him to get a big head. The succah hints to us that this world is but a brief stay in a temporary dwelling, that life is but a passing shadow. This is the third reason that such a high succah should be invalid, for the essence of humility is to make this world into one's temporary dwelling, and concentrate on fitting out our permanent residence in the future world.

Sources:

A World Of Words - Maharal, *Drash L'Shabbat HaGadol*; Rambam *Hilchot Avodat Kochavim I*

The Missing Link - Maharal, *Drash al HaTorah*;

Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky

Son of Godzilla - Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky

The Roof Of The World - Aruch L'Ner

LET FREEDOM RING

“**P**roclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof.” To any patriotic student of American history this is familiar as the inscription on the Liberty Bell enshrined in Philadelphia’s Independence Hall. But to anyone familiar with Chumash it is a passage (Vayikra 25:10) in which Jews are commanded to announce (with a shofar, not a bell) “*dror*” — freedom — for their Hebrew slaves when the “*Yovel*” (Jubilee) year arrives.

The etymological discussion of how *dror* connotes freedom offers a fascinating insight into the Torah’s definition of the essence of freedom. The verb *dor* literally means to dwell. Freedom is therefore defined as a person’s unrestrained ability to dwell wherever he wishes and to sell his wares in any land he chooses. A slave is bound to the area where his master requires his services, and the profits of his labor accrue to his master. In *Yovel*, these geographic and economic restrictions are lifted and he achieves true freedom.

Throughout the centuries we have seen totalitarian states enslaving their citizens not with the physical chains of bondage but with restrictions on their right to travel. The Jewish “refuseniks” in Communist Russia and the Jews today in Moslem states like Iran, Iraq and Syria are modern examples of people denied the right to emigrate to the land of their choice and are therefore virtual prisoners.

It may certainly be said to the credit of the democratic tradition of the United States that it has lived up to the message of freedom inscribed on its Liberty Bell by never restricting the freedom of travel of any of its law-abiding citizens. Israel, the only true democracy in the Middle East and the country where that message originated thousands of years ago, can proudly claim that same record of freedom.

• Rosh Hashana 9b

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WORLD

“**T**oday is the birthday of the world” say Jews in their synagogues on Rosh Hashana after hearing the shofar. What exactly do we mean by “birthday of the world?”

There are four different times of Heavenly judgment during the year, says the *mishna*. On Pesach judgment is passed on the fate of grain, on Shavuot wheat and fruit, on Succot rainfall and on Rosh Hashana mankind.

The timing for the first three judgments is readily understandable. Pesach, Shavuot and Succot are all critical times agriculturally, and Heavenly judgment therefore relates to that crop, or nutrients associated with that part of the year. But what does the first day of Tishrei, Rosh Hashana, have to do with judgment of man more than any other date?

Rabbeinu Nissim (Ran) cites a *midrash* which supplies the answer. The world was created, says Rabbi Eliezer (*Rosh Hashana 10b*), in Tishrei. The first day of creation, says the

midrash, was really on the 25th day of Elul, so that the first of Tishrei — the sixth day of creation — was when man was created. Since the purpose of creation was man, we equate his birthday with the birthday of the world.

The *midrash* goes on to describe the hour by hour creation of man and his first day of life. The first seven hours of that day were spent on planning and implementing man’s creation. In the eighth hour he was brought into the Garden of Eden and in the ninth he was commanded to refrain from eating from the Tree of Knowledge. In the tenth hour he sinned and in the eleventh he stood in judgment. In the twelfth hour he was reprieved. Hashem then said to him:

“This will be a sign to your descendants. Just as you stood in judgment before Me on this day and gained a reprieve, so will your descendants stand before Me on this day and be reprieved.”

Since all this took place on the first day of Tishrei, this day is the day when all of mankind stands in judgment, praying for a repetition of the original reprieve.

There is even a sign in the stars, adds Ran, to confirm that Tishrei is the month of judgment. The *mazal* for this month — the Zodiac sign — is *moznayim* (Libra), a constellation of stars which seem to form a scale. The scale symbolizes justice, and communicates that in this month man’s merits and shortcomings are weighed on the Heavenly scales.

• Rosh Hashana 16a

AN EXTRA DAY OF REST

In Biblical and Talmudic times one could not consult a calendar to know when Rosh Chodesh was. It was the Sanhedrin in *Eretz Yisrael* which determined the beginning of a new month based on the testimony of two reliable witnesses who saw the new moon.

Getting the word to the Jewish community in Babylon presented a challenge. At first the message was communicated through fire signals from mountain top to mountain top until it was acknowledged in the city of Pumpedisa, which then spread the word to the rest of Babylon. This practice ran into trouble when the Kutim, hostile to rabbinical control over the calendar, misled the people by sending erroneous signals. It was therefore replaced by a system of human messengers.

The fire signal system was used only when Rosh Chodesh was declared on the 30th day of the previous month. In such case, the signals were sent on the night following that 30th day. If, however, the Sanhedrin allowed the previous month to become a “full month” of 30 days by declaring Rosh Chodesh on the thirty-first day, then no signals were sent; everyone understood from the absence of the signal that Rosh Chodesh had been set for that day.

The gemara explains why no signals were sent when Rosh Chodesh followed a “full month.” This was because of the confusion which would arise when Rosh Chodesh was declared on Friday and no fire signal could be sent at night because of Shabbat. If a signal were sent the next night, Saturday night, it

would be unclear whether it was a postponed signal that Friday was Rosh Chodesh, or an on-time signal that Shabbat was Rosh Chodesh. By avoiding signals for “full months,” they could be sure that the signals sent on Saturday night would be understood as communicating that Friday was Rosh Chodesh.

But why not do it the other way, asks the gemara, and limit signals to a Rosh Chodesh following a “full month?” Should the Rosh Chodesh following a 29-day month be set on Friday, no signals would be sent and people would understand that Rosh Chodesh had followed an incomplete month. The gemara’s explanation is that the people waiting for the signal due on the night following the 31st day would have to keep two days Rosh Chodesh, because perhaps the 30th had been declared Rosh Chodesh and no signals would be forthcoming at all. By making the signals on the night following Rosh Chodesh set on the thirtieth day, they let people know that tomorrow was no longer Rosh Chodesh.

Rashi explains the ramifications of such knowledge in terms of Rosh Hashana, when an unnecessary extra day of holiday would mean a serious loss of time for productive labor. Tosefot, however, suggests that the same consideration applies to any Rosh Chodesh because it was the custom not to work on Rosh Chodesh. Even though Rosh Chodesh was given to the women as a holiday from regular labors as reward for not contributing their jewelry to the creation of the golden calf, this abstention from work somehow affected the menfolk as well.

• Rosh Hashana 23a

ALONG FOR THE RIDE

“Cast upon Hashem your *yihov*,” says King David (Tehillim 55:23), “and He will sustain you.” An unusual word, “*yihov*,” one which eluded the Rabbis until one day when the Sage Rabba bar Bar Chanah was traveling together with a merchant leading a camel carrying wares. The merchant saw the sage struggling with his own luggage and said, “Take your *yihov* and put it on my camel.” It then became clear that King David was counseling us to place the baggage of our needs on Hashem’s “wagon.”

The story is told of a fellow struggling with his heavy baggage on a county road when a wagon driver offered him a lift. He gladly accepted the ride but he held on to the baggage. The stunned driver asked him why he didn’t put his baggage down on the wagon floor. He replied that he was grateful enough for being spared the trouble of walking, and he did not wish to impose any further on his generous host by adding the baggage to the wagon’s load.

We often relate to Hashem in the same silly way. We are entirely dependent upon His kindness in sustaining us with life, health and all the basic necessities of existence. But when it comes to the baggage such as earning a livelihood, we suddenly feel that this is something which is completely dependent upon us.

Hashem offers you a free ride every minute of the day, King David reminds us, so don’t be a fool and keep struggling with

your baggage of *parnasa* (livelihood). Put that on Hashem’s wagon as well, and He will be sure to sustain you.

• Rosh Hashana 26b

A CONFUSED SATAN

On Rosh Hashana we sound the shofar both before we stand for the mussaf service and again when the mussaf is repeated by the chazan. (In some communities it is also sounded during the silent mussaf prayer).

The pattern for sounding the shofar during mussaf calls for ten shofar sounds at the conclusion of each one of the three intermediate blessings — *malchuyot* (kingship), *zichronot* (remembrance) and *shofarot*. Each of these blessings, says the mishna, must contain at least ten passages from the Torah, Prophets and Writings which deal with that concept.

The Sage Rabbah condenses an earlier gemara (16a) which provides an explanation both for this pattern of blessings in mussaf, and for the need to sound the shofar both before and during mussaf even though the Torah requires it only once.

Rabbi Akiva points out that Hashem commanded us to bring an omer offering from barley flour on Pesach in order that Hashem may bless the grain in our fields; an offering of two loaves from wheat flour on Shavuot in order that He may bless our wheat and fruits; and a libation of water on the altar on Succot in order that He should bless the year’s rainfall. And on Rosh Hashana, Hashem invites us to say before Him the passages and blessing relating to kingship in order to declare our allegiance to Him as our ruler, and the passages and blessing relating to Hashem’s remembering His creatures in order that we may be remembered for good. And how do we achieve this? Through the shofar — its sound, its passages and its blessing.

If the shofar is the channel for our merits to soar upward to the throne of Heavenly judgment, it also serves another purpose. Rabbi Yitzchak states that the reason for blowing the shofar both before and during mussaf is to confuse Satan. Rashi’s explanation of this is that Satan’s attempts to agitate against Israel are thwarted when he sees how much Jews love *mitzvot* such that they even sound the shofar twice. Tosefot draws on a section of the Jerusalem Talmud to explain that Satan becomes somewhat alarmed by the first sound of the shofar. When he hears it a second time, he so panics at the thought that this may be the sound of the “great shofar” (*Yishayahu 27:17*) of the hereafter which will signal the end of his deadly career (*ibid. 25:8*) that he abandons any effort to agitate.

A much simpler explanation is offered by Rabbeinu Nissim (Ran). Our Sages tell us that the “evil inclination,” Satan and the Angel of Death are one and the same. Incitement breeds agitation and results in execution. Satan, in the context of Rabbi Yitzchak’s statement, is the evil inclination. “If a shofar is sounded in a city,” says the Prophet Amos (3:6) “shall not its inhabitants tremble with fear?” The sound of the shofar confuses Satan by instilling in the Jew who hears it a fear of Heaven which subdues the sinful passions the evil inclination tries to arouse, and thus gains for Jewry a good year.

• Rosh Hashana 34b

"The Rabbi" takes a summer break!
The next issue of ASK THE RABBI
will be posted the week of Parshat Shoftim,
read on 14 August 1999, 2 Elul 5759

SABBATH POLICE

John Padavic, Memphis TN
<padavic7@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Last weekend after the shootings in Chicago, it was reported that the Jewish victims would not talk to the police until after the Sabbath. Since the shooter was still at large, and other people were in danger, does Jewish law forbid Jews from talking to the police on the Sabbath?

Dear John Padavic,

Let me tell you a story: A man walks up to a newsstand and asks for a newspaper. "Two dollars, please," says the storekeeper.

"Two dollars! It's only a dollar and a half. It says so right here," he says, pointing to the words "Price: \$1.50" on top of the front page in bold print.

"You believe everything you read in the paper?" says the storekeeper.

The media reports are simply false. I know some of the Jewish people involved in Chicago, and they did cooperate with the police fully on Shabbat (Sabbath). This is in accordance with the principle that human life overrides the Shabbat.

I personally spoke to Dr. Benzion Allswang, an orthodox Jew from Chicago, who was there at the shootings. Dr. Allswang was walking to synagogue when the killer pulled up in his car. A loud noise came from the car. Since it was the 4th of July weekend, Dr. Allswang thought it was some sort of prankster throwing a firecracker. The car pulled closer and fired another three shots. Allswang felt some wind, but that was all. The shooter drove off and Allswang flagged down a policeman.

Not until 11:30 that night, Friday night, did Allswang notice the hole in his shirt in the vicinity of the abdomen. Two minutes later the police arrived to further investigate the incident and he told them the whole story again. The police asked to see his jacket. Lo and behold! There were three bullet holes in his jacket! Only then

did he realized the extent of the miracle. "I recited the special *hagomel* (thanks-giving) blessing the next day with more thankfulness and concentration than I'd ever prayed before!" Allswang said.

HELPING IN KOSOVO

Damien Urban
<Damien.Urban@med.monash.edu.au>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I am very interested in the following topic and was hoping you could help me understand and direct me to sources. It has basically been a thought I have had since the Kosovo crisis. The question is, how much *tzedaka* (charity) or help should we as Jews give to this crisis? Should Israel as a country send help? Thank you very much.

Dear Damien Urban,

Jews are obligated to help others in need, even if they are not Jews, and even if they are pagans. As Maimonides writes "Our Sages commanded us, even regarding the pagans, to visit their sick, to bury their dead as we bury the Jewish dead, and to sustain their poor amongst the Jewish poor."

Additionally, we are obligated to sanctify G-d's name in the world. So, we clearly have an obligation to help. It's hard to measure exactly how much is enough.

The State of Israel has indeed offered refuge to hundreds of Kosovans, most of them Moslems, who live on *kibbutzim* and are extremely well treated. The Israeli army sent over mobile hospitals, physicians and combat medics to care for refugees.

Sources:

- Maimonides, *Hilchot Melachim* 10:12
- Maimonides, *Sefer Hamitzvot* 9

PREYING PLANTS

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Are there any grounds to suggest that a carnivorous plant (e.g., *Venus Flytrap*, etc.) would be *treif* (not kosher), assuming it was edible? Please give sources.

Many thanks.

Dear Name@Withheld,

Being "carnivorous" wouldn't make a plant not kosher. The Torah tell us that *all* plant life is given to man to eat (Genesis 1:29), and we don't find any source which restricts any particular plant species.

Your question is based on the idea that kosher species are those which are not carnivorous and do not prey on other animals. However, this is not always true. Although there are no kosher carnivorous animals, and preying on other living things is an indication that a bird is non-kosher, this is not the case with fish, for example. Many kosher fish eat other fish or insects. So, too, it is not a restriction on plants.

STANDING UP FOR DOWNS

Chana B. Keil
<andrea_keil@juno.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I have heard that it was the habit of a great rabbi to stand in the presence of a person with Down syndrome. Can you please tell me who that was and why?

Dear Chana B. Keil,

I've heard that the famous "Chazon Ish," Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, stood up for people with Down syndrome and the like. If this is true, I understand it as follows:

Each person is given faculties. These faculties allow him to reach his potential. The greater gifts and faculties a person is given, the more he is obligated to achieve. A person is created far away from a goal but given the tools to get there.

A person born with very limited faculties obviously has a much smaller goal to achieve. So, in essence, the person of limited capabilities is created closer to his state of personal perfection.

Such a person may even be a reincarnation of a great *tzaddik* or *tzaddeket* (righteous person) who achieved near perfection the first time around, but needs to come back to this world just to "tie up some loose ends." Such a person is worthy of respect.

PURE CONFUSION

Zahava <zehava3@airmail.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Did G-d ever reveal why a person was declared "unclean" if he touched a dead body?

Dear Zahava,

In Hebrew, the word impurity (*tumah*) is related to the word confusion (*timtum*). Any time a human experiences

spiritual confusion whose origin is in the physical world there is *tumah*. For example, contact with the dead gives the maximum degree of *tumah* because it is the ultimate illusion. One sees a dead corpse, no soul, no immortality, no spiritual essence, just flesh. A person's soul feels wounded and confused, because it knows that the essence of the human is eternal, infinite and spiritual. Sleep also imparts a very minimum degree of *tumah* because during sleep the physical instinct takes over from the spiritual free will.

Sources:

• Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary on Leviticus 12 and Numbers 19

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Favorite Jewish Wine (Ohrnet Pinchas):

Regarding the meaning of wine and its use in most Jewish occasions, the Maharal offers a fascinating answer: While all physical objects lose vitality as time passes, spiritual concepts gain vitality. This is due to their origin in an *Olam B'li Sof* — a world without end. Wine, points out the Maharal, is the only *physical* object that shares this property of improving with time, making wine a bridge between the physical and spiritual.

• Saf Stern, Great Neck, New York
<saf.stern@us.socgen.com>

The French Connection:

Starting a few weeks ago, we, a large congregation of Paris (Ohaley Ya'akov, we have about 400 people, four services for Shabbat morning, Beit Midrash, Kollel, College for

Women, etc.) have begun publishing a weekly Torah newsletter. We use past Ohr Somayach's "YIDDLE RIDDLES" and PARSHA Q&A's, giving credit to Ohr Somayach International. We translate it in French. It's a great success, a real "Marbitz Torah" — Torah dissemination. *Chazak Ve'ematz!*

• Shlomo Ouaknine, Paris
<salomon.ouaknine@etam.fr>

Ohrnet for All:

Thank you for sending me the weekly OHRNET. I am currently printing about 30 copies a week to hand out in my Yeshiva and everyone really enjoys it. It's great!

• Mendel Scherer,
Yeshiva Shaare Chaim, Jerusalem
<ysc2@inter.net.il>

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Since the next ASK THE RABBI will not be published until Parshat Shoftim, this week's YIDDLE RIDDLE includes the answer. Have a great summer!

Two baby boys were born within a week of each other. 13 years later the older boy isn't considered an adult to be counted in a *minyan* (quorum of ten) until a few weeks after the younger one. How can this be?

Answer: In a Jewish leap year, there are two months of Adar. The 1st baby was born on 27th of Adar I (in a leap year), and the second baby was born on the 2nd of Adar II. The year of their *bar mitzvah*, however, is not a leap year, so the younger boy is considered a *bar mitzvah* (adult) on the 2nd of Adar while the older boy must wait 3 weeks or so until the 27th of Adar.

Riddle and answer thanks to:
Dani Wassner <dani@moit.gov.il>
State of Israel
Ministry of Industry and Trade, Jerusalem

DEVARIM

1. 1:1 - Here the word *bamidbar* doesn't mean "in the desert" — rather, it means "on account of the desert." The Book of *Devarim* contains a rebuke of the Jewish People for the sins committed while in the desert.
2. 1:1 - To guard the honor of the Jewish People by not mentioning their sins explicitly.
3. 1:2 - 40 days.
4. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
5. 1:4 - So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?"
6. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
7. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
8. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a halachic question, the law was concealed from him.

VAETCHANAN

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of *Eretz Canaan*, Moshe thought perhaps Hashem had annulled the vow

- against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - *Ha'Levanon* means the *Beit Hamikdash*, which "whitens" (*lavan*), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The *gematria* of *v'noshantem*, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve *others* who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines (*mizrach* means shining).

EIKEV

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 - The: a) Plagues; b) Pestilence; c) Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of *Tishrei*, *Yom Kippur*.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.

9. 10:1 - Moshe. This *aron* would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.

RE'EH

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it; his descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - 1) Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. 2) Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.

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