

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

A DIVINE TAPESTRY

“Then Moshe and the Children of Israel chose to sing this song to Hashem.” (15:1)

As a young boy, I remember my mother weaving a tapestry of Gainsborough’s “The Boy In Blue.” It took her forever. One day, shortly before she finished, I remember picking it up and thinking to myself: “Mommy, forgive me — you may be the best mother in the world, but when it comes to needlework...Well, this is a mess! There’s a piece of red sticking out here. Over here, there’s a turquoise thread that seems to go nowhere.” The whole thing looked like chaos.

Suddenly, my fingertips detected smooth regular stitching on the other side of the tapestry. I turned the tapestry over and saw the most beautiful sight: An exquisite and precise copy of Gainsborough’s “Boy in Blue.” The stitches were so regular and well formed. The colors all blended so beautifully. A divine tapestry! All the disjointed threads that I saw on the other side of the tapestry harmonized into a complete and beautiful whole.

Sometimes it’s difficult to see sense in world events. You hear about suffering and evil, and you wonder how this can be the handiwork of a Merciful G-d?

Don’t think you’re alone if you feel like that. You’re in good company. Because one of the greatest men who ever lived felt exactly like you. Moshe, our greatest teacher, himself had his questions about how G-d was running the show. In

Parshas Shmos, Moshe went to Pharaoh to ask him to let the Jewish People go. Pharaoh, as you may remember, was not the easiest of negotiating partners. In reply to Moshe’s request, Pharaoh told the taskmasters to stop giving the Jews straw. However the Jews were still required to produce the same quantity of bricks as before. Not surprisingly, the Jews complained bitterly to Moshe. So Moshe went back to Hashem and said “Why have You

“...the “hand of G-d” can most clearly be seen in the tree, the metaphor for the handiwork of G-d, the human being.”

done evil to this people... *From the time* I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he did evil to this People, but You did not rescue Your People.”

Moshe wasn’t just complaining about the problems he was having now with Pharaoh, rather he was saying that “*from the time*” — *from its very beginning* the whole plan to take the Jews out of Egypt was fatally flawed. Moshe didn’t see any

order in what was going on.

When you look at life’s rich tapestry from the wrong side, it looks like a complete mess. Moshe didn’t see the Divine needlework of the Creator, he was looking at events from the wrong perspective. However the same word that Moshe used to complain to G-d, he repeated in G-d’s praise when he saw the perfection of the Divine Plan. The Midrash says that just as Moshe erred with the expression *mei-az* — “from the time” — so with that same word *az*, Moshe rectified his mistake.

After the Jewish People emerged from the splitting of the sea, they saw the mighty Egyptian army strewn across the beach like so many broken toy soldiers. It was there that every Jew, from the greatest to the most humble, reached a level of insight into the workings of the world that has never been repeated.

This perception moved Moshe and the Children of Israel to song. Song in Jewish thought represents the ability to harmonize all the disparate events in our world and plug them back into the One — *Hashem Echad*.

“Then — *az* — Moshe and the children sang a song.”

That song is part of our daily prayers. Maybe one reason we say it every day is to remind ourselves that when life seems like a bad attempt at modern art, we must know that there is an Artist weaving the tapestry. And not a single thread is without design and beauty.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. Hashem leads them towards *Eretz Yisrael* with pillars of cloud and fire on a circuitous route avoiding the Pelishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians approach, but Hashem protects them. Moshe raises his staff and Hashem splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by Hashem, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song thanking Hashem. After traveling for three days only to find bitter water at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water for

them. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvos*. The people complain to Moshe and Aharon that they ate better food in Egypt. Hashem sends quails so they can have meat and provides them with manna. It is a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbos. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbos needs. Nobody is able to obtain more than a daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbos. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. After the Jews complain again about the lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Amalek then attacks the Jews. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

HAFTORAH: SHOFTIM 4:4 - 5:31

THE LAST SONG

"On that day, Devorah and Barak son of Avinoam sang, saying..." (5:1)

Just as the subject of this week's Parsha is the Song at the Sea, so the subject of the Haftorah is the Song of Devorah the Prophetess.

There are only 10 Songs in history. True, there have been thousands and millions of songs. But only ten Songs with a capital "S". Only ten *shiros*. The word *shira* in Scripture connotes much more than just a tune. Every *shira* marks a landmark event in history. *Shira* always

comes at the completion of a cycle. The first song in history was the song that Adam sang after the Creation was completed: *Mizmor shir l'yom hashabbos*. To this day, it is part of our Friday night prayers.

The second song is in this week's Parsha: "Then Moshe and the Children of Israel chose to sing this song to Hashem." The *shira shel yam* comes at the completion of the enslavement of Egypt. *Shira* signifies the great joy of completion.

The third song comes in the book of Bamidbar 21:17, the *shiras habe'er* "Come up, O well..." The fourth song is in *Parshas Ha'azinu*. The fifth is *shiras hagivon* in the Book of Yehoshua. The sixth is the song of Devorah — the subject of our Haftorah; the seventh is the song of Chana; the eighth is the song of David; the ninth is the Song of Songs of Shlomo Hamelech. And the tenth song is the song which has yet to be sung; the song that will be sung in the times of *mashiach*, as it says in the Book of Yishayahu: "On that day there will be sung this song in the land of Yehuda... (26:1)"

There's a curious anomaly in this tenth song. All the other songs are called *shira* — the feminine form. The last song, the song of *mashiach*, is in the masculine — *shir*. Why?

Imagine a Martian with an incredibly powerful telescope looking down at the earth. He zooms in to a tragic scene: A woman in a hospital room surrounded by a doctor and nurses. The woman seems

to be on the point of expiring from pain. "What can this terrible scene be?" he thinks to himself. A more knowledgeable Martian — an expert in Earthology — leans across, looks at the monitor and says, "Ah, you're witnessing how Earthlings bring forth their young. It's always amazed me that the Human Race exists at all. One would think that after the first generation, no-one would have been prepared to go through such torture."

Even the easiest of deliveries aren't that easy. "In pain shall you bear children" (*Bereishis 3;16*). However, once a new life emerges into the world, it is the time of the greatest joy. A time of completion. Reason to sing.

Shira represents that moment of the greatest joy and exaltation. However, just as a birth is often followed by the pain of another pregnancy, so after the joy of every *shira* there follows a form of exile — the moment of transcendence wanes, descending into spiritual decline and distance from G-d.

With one exception. There will be one song which will be complete in its joy because it will not be followed by a descent into another exile. When *mashiach* comes we will sing a new song. A song which has no melancholic aftermath. This will be the one song which is called *shir* in the masculine form. For like a final birth, it will end the cycle of pain and exile.

• Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

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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לענ
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גלב"ע י"א שבט תשנ"ה
ת.ג.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

A TREE GROWS IN ISRAEL

"I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only G-d can make a tree."
• Joyce Kilmer, "Trees"

The poet sees the hand of Hashem in a tree. But why specifically a tree? Why not a stone, or a river, or a zebra for that matter?

"When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to seize it, don't destroy its trees ... for from it you will eat ... is the tree of the field a man that it should enter the siege before you?" (Deuteronomy 20:19)

The verse states openly that it is forbidden to cut down a fruit tree, and

so rule Maimonides as well as all other halachic authorities. What is curious in the verse is the comparison of a tree to man; what does man have to do with the prohibition against cutting down a fruit tree?

Man is like a tree in that his good deeds are his produce, his "fruits," and his arms and legs the branches which bear these fruits. He is, however, an "upside-down tree," for his head is rooted in the heavens, nestled in the spiritual soils of the Eternal, and nourished by his connection to his Creator (Midrash Shmuel on Pirkei Avos 3:24).

The first *mishna* in "Rosh Hashana" teaches that *Tu B'Shvat*, the 15th day of the month of Shvat, is the Rosh Hashana, or New Year, for trees (according to the school of Hillel). Why do trees need a New Year? Our

Sages teach us that although it still looks like the dead of winter, it is not. Deep inside the tree the sap is beginning to rise (the Hebrew word for sap is "saraph" or "fire," striving to rise ever higher and reach its Creator).

Spring approaches, rebirth has begun. And they teach us that just as it is with a tree so too it is for man; since "man is a tree of the field," the "renaissance," the process of rejuvenation in man has begun. The poet appears to subconsciously draw on the metaphor of tree rather than stone, river, or zebra, as the "hand of G-d" can most clearly be seen in the tree, the metaphor for the handiwork of G-d, the human being.

Sources:
A Divine Tapestry - Rabbi Moshe Zauderer
A Tree Grows in Israel - Rabbi Pinchas Kantrowitz

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

TSIPORI

The modern settlement of Tsipori serves as a reminder of the ancient city of the same name that was the largest and most important city in Galilee during the first



four centuries of the Common Era. "Why was it called Tsipori?" ask our Sages in the Talmud as they reflect on the relationship between this name and the Hebrew word for bird. "Because," comes the explanation, "It was perched like a bird on the top of a mountain."

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"Macho Emche ... I will obliterate the remembrance of Amalek" (Shemos 17:14).

The phrase "I will obliterate" (*macho emche*) has the same numeric value as the phrase "this refers to Haman" (*ze haman*), Amalek's most infamous descendant.

• Ba'al HaTurim

OHRNET

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WEEKLY DAF

YOMA 23 - 29

RUNNING FOR OR AGAINST

The original system for determining which *kohen* would be privileged to perform any of the sacred services in the *Beis Hamikdash* went like this:

A call was issued asking for volunteers. If there were more than one, they were told to race up the 32-cubit ramp leading to the altar. The first to reach the top four cubits of the ramp won. In case of a tie, all the *kohanim* of the family unit on duty gathered and a lottery was conducted.

This system was eventually abandoned due to the following incidents: First there was the case of the *kohen* who became so incensed seeing his competitor reach the finish line first that he drew a knife and stabbed him to death. As terrible a tragedy as it was, this did not yet lead to an abandonment of the system since it was viewed as a one-time aberration of an individual, and not indicative of any general risk. In a later race, one of the *kohanim* accidentally pushed a competitor off the ramp, causing him to break a leg. Once the Sages saw that there was a general danger involved they abandoned the race system in favor of a lottery.

This *gemara* leaves us with an obvious difficulty in understanding how the Sages were not aware at the outset of the danger involved in a race such as this. One of the great Chassidic leaders, the Rebbe of Kotzk, is reported to have offered this explanation:

The idea of the race was that the *kohen* most enthusiastic about performing the sacred service would muster the drive to run faster than those less consumed with this holy passion. In the earlier generations this system worked perfectly because when the call came forth "who wishes to perform the service?" the *kohanim* said to themselves "Hashem wants someone to perform His service!" and they went forward with zeal. When this is the motivation, no *kohen* will be so vicious as to stab a competitor, or so careless as to push him, because his motive is that the service be performed, not that *he* be the one to perform it. As the generations degenerated, the response to the call was "I must have the honor of performing the service!" Where ego is involved and personal honor is the motivation, a race can indeed become dangerous.

• Yoma 23a

THE OLDEST INSTITUTION

From the days of our ancestors, says Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina, the institution of a *yeshiva* has never departed from the Jewish People. As evidence, he cites passages from the Torah which use the term "zaken" (literally "old") in regard to the Patriarchs and in regard to the Jewish experiences in Egypt and the Wilderness.

Maharsha explains that this proof is based on our Sage's interpretation of the term "zaken" as sometimes being a contraction of the words "zeh kanah," meaning "one who has acquired Torah wisdom" (*Mesechta Kidushin 32a*). When the Torah (*Vayikra 19:32*) commands us to "honor the zaken," it is not referring to age, but rather to one who has studied Torah and is capable of teaching it to others.

When the Torah relates (*Bereishis 24:1*) that Avraham was a "zaken," it is obviously not referring to his age, because he was already characterized as old (*Bereishis 18:11-12*) when he was forty years younger. It must therefore be referring to his role as scholar and teacher, a "zaken" leading a *yeshiva*.

Regarding both Yitzchak and Yaakov, becoming a "zaken" is linked to loss of sight (*Bereishis 27:1, 48:10*). It is improbable that the Torah simply means to convey the unpleasant fact that they became sightless in their old age. Once we interpret the title "zaken" as a reference to their roles as scholars and teachers in a *yeshiva*, we can appreciate their loss of sight as a badge of honor, attesting to their great efforts expended in their educational activity.

In support of this approach, Maharsha calls to our attention Rabbi Chama's anachronistic order when listing the *yeshivos* of our national existence: He first mentions the *yeshivos* of the "zikei (plural of 'zaken') Yisrael," the elders of Israel in Egypt and in the Wilderness (*Shmos 3:16, Bamidbar 11:16*), and only afterwards mentions the Patriarchs who preceded them by so many centuries. Thus, he eliminates any doubt as to what the term "zaken" means when referring to these great men. While one might assume regarding the Patriarchs that it was only a description of their advanced age, this is certainly not the meaning of the term regarding those people whom Moshe formed into the first Sanhedrin, whose qualification was Torah scholarship, not age. Once we thus establish "zaken" as a term for *yeshiva* erudition, we apply it to the Patriarchs to form an unbroken golden chain of *Yeshiva* history.

• Yoma 28b

derech
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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What percentage of the Jewish people died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. When, besides the week of *Parshas Beshalach*, do we read from *Parshas Beshalach*?
4. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
5. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
6. What does it mean that the Jewish people "took hold of their fathers' profession" (*tafsu umnus avosam*)?
7. How did Hashem cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
8. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
9. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
10. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
11. Why did "fear seize the inhabitants of *Pelashes*?"
12. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling?"
13. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
14. The Jewish women trusted that Hashem would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do know this?
15. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
16. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
17. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's *Parsha*?
18. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the *manna*?
19. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

SHERLOX

SHERLOX AND THE MYSTERIOUS CRY

"The words tell a lot about the speaker," said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes. "Yet, a close look at the speaker tells you a lot about his words."

"Well then, perhaps you can explain this text about the Children of Israel and their words," said Watstein. "The text says: *The Children of Israel lifted their eyes and*

saw the Egyptians pursuing, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (*Shmos 14:20*)

"Whenever an army pursues you to the sea ... pray, I always say," said Sherlock.

"I agree. The text is self-explanatory. Why, then, does Rashi comment? Rashi says that by praying, 'they latched on to their ancestors' craft.'" (*Rashi*)

"Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov all

cried to G-d in times of distress. Now their offspring were doing the same. Is that hard to understand?"

"No, but why the need for this comment? Rashi's comments are designed to answer textual difficulties, yet this verse couldn't be simpler: *The Jews prayed*. So, Mr. Holmes, what textual difficulty is Rashi trying to answer?"

"A close look at the speaker tells you a lot about his words."

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. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - On the seventh day of Pesach (and also on Purim).
4. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
5. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of Hashem and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
6. 14:10 - They cried out to Hashem.
7. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
8. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
9. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
10. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
11. 15:14 - Because they slew the members of the Tribe of Ephraim who had escaped from Egypt at an earlier time. They feared vengeance for this act.
12. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
13. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'as*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
14. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
15. 15:25 - Shabbos, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
16. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
17. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
18. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever *manna* remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted *manna*.
19. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

WHO'S ON FIRST?

Deborah Ambrose
from Toronto, Canada
<ambrosed@smh.toronto.on.ca>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
How can the principle of believing in the Resurrection of the Dead be reconciled with the concept of transmigration of souls. Both are Jewish beliefs but I have a hard time understanding how, when a soul has so many bodies, we are all resurrected. Whose body gets the soul?

Dear Deborah Ambrose,

Kabbalistic sources teach us that the main reason for reincarnation is for the soul to fulfill its role in the creation and achieve the spiritual level for which it is destined. If a soul does not manage to do this in its first life, it is given another chance, and another. If the soul did not succeed in three times, it will have to settle for whatever it has gained in the everlasting afterlife. Another reason for reincarnation is to repay a soul for its deeds in a way parallel to its sins; for example, a rich miser might be reincarnated as a poor beggar and be disregarded by a rich man, who was himself one of the paupers disregarded by the rich miser in his previous life.

The question arises, if a soul can be reincarnated into several different bodies, which body 'gets' the soul in the time of the resurrection? The answer is that the soul will be in the body in which the soul achieved its nearest completion, the last body.

THE FIRST STEPS

Andrew Spencer from UK
<white.star@lineone.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Although I was born a Jew, the circumstances of my childhood and

schooling have left me all but ignorant of my religion. I have tried to study on my own but to little avail. Can you suggest any study materials or correspondence course which will help? If this is not the kind of help you can give me here I will understand. With all my thanks, and G-d bless you.

Dear Andrew Spencer,

First, let me say how impressed I am with your dedication and determination to become a more informed Jew. I suggest that you look at the Ohr Somayach Interactive Web site at <http://www.ohr.org.il> — if you use the web. Also, if you get in touch with Rabbi Danny Kirsch of Ohr Somayach / JLE London at <jlexchange@compuserve.com>, I'm sure he will be of great assistance.

PRINCE OF ISRAEL

Martin Kleiner from Tampa, FL
<martin@insytec.com>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Shalom. The Tampa Tribune gave a very good review of the film "Prince of Egypt" and said that it was very biblically correct. After seeing the movie, I went back and reread the story in Exodus. The text is very short covering the time Moses was born until the Hebrews left Egypt. As far as I can tell, most of the story is not taken from the Scriptures. Question: Is this story referenced elsewhere; either in Scriptures or on the walls of the ancient ruins of Egypt?

Dear Martin Kleiner,

I've never seen the film "Prince of Egypt," so I can't vouch for its accuracy. However, the account of the Exodus is greatly expanded upon in the Talmud, in many Midrashic texts, and in the Haggada which we read on Passover Night. These texts sup-

ply tremendous amounts of description and detail which were left out of the Torah text.

For example, the Midrashim tell us that Pharaoh actually apprehended Moses and tried to kill him, but that Moses' neck miraculously became hard as rock upon which the executioner's sword could have no effect.

But even if some of the film's details are accurate, it's hard for me to imagine that a Hollywood cartoon would accurately portray the personality of G-d's holiest prophet.

Source:

• Devarim Rabba 2

DO CHICKENS HAVE LUNGS?

Daniele Kurzweil, NYC
<danigirl6969@yahoo.com>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Why don't you have to check a chicken's lungs as you would a cow's to ensure that it's kosher?

Dear Daniele Kurzweil,

We check only for frequently existing problems. A lesion on the lungs of a cow is quite common, while in a chicken it is uncommon.

It's interesting to note that there is a Rabbi in Jerusalem who maintains that the percentage of problems in chicken lungs has grown lately, and he therefore supervises a special line of kosher chickens in which the lungs are checked.

NOONS

Mimi Katz from Chicago, IL
<GeveretK@dls.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
If, in Hebrew, "good morning" is "boker tov," "good evening" is

“erev tov,” and good night is “lailah tov,” then why is “good afternoon” said in the plural “tzohorayim tovim?”

Dear Mimi Katz,

The word for noon in Hebrew, *tzohorayim*, is plural. Why?

Nachmanides in his commentary on the Chumash addresses this question. He explains that the singular, *tzohar*, means “light” (compare the word *zohar* which means “shining”). Noon is called *tzohorayim*, “lights,” in

the plural for the following reason: In the morning when the sun is in the east, there is a shadow on the west side of objects. In the afternoon when the sun is in the west, there is a shadow on the east side of objects. Only at noon, when the sun is directly overhead, is there no shadow, neither to the east nor to the west of objects. Both sides are light, hence, noon is called “*tzohorayim*” in the plural to indicate a time of total light.

Sources:

• Ramban’s commentary to Chumash Shmot 12:5

PUBLIC DOMAIN
Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous “Ohrnet” features

Re: Many Thanks!:

Your publications are so useful for me! They really help me a great deal to widen my Jewish knowledge and to answer more accurately to very interesting questions. I also help to write a weekly *choveret* newsletter for our *kehila* congregation Sucat David and I find that your material gives me a better understanding of the weekly *Parsha*, as well as of all the different Jewish matters that are so clearly explained in your “Ask the Rabbi” column. Thank you and *tizku lemitzvot* for your precious material that I receive every week via e-mail (I do not have internet).

• Malka Armoza, Buenos Aires
<shseider@criba.edu.ar>

Re: Kashrut for Sefardim (Ohrnet Vayeshev):

In a recent Ask the Rabbi column you said: “*Pareve* food — i.e., food that is neither dairy nor meat — cooked in dairy equipment may not be eaten together with meat, but it may be eaten immediately after eating meat.” Please note that the source is *Yoreh Deah 95:2 Rema* which dictates the Halacha only for non-Sefardim. The Sefardim follow the halacha that it is indeed permitted.

• Samuel Cohen
<SamuelC@ackerstein.co.il>

Re: Circumcision with Anesthesia (Public Domain Vayechi):

As a physician who has done circumcisions and witnessed many a *bris*, two points: First, an average circumcision done on a baby in the hospital from the time the doctor begins to end is only a couple of minutes. Second, some Rabbis maintain that you must use local anesthetic, such as one of the anesthetic creams on the market today, because it is a violation of Torah law to cause pain when there is an alternative; in fact, some will not allow a *bris* in their *shul* if the *mohel* doesn’t use anesthetic.

• Steven Luger, M.D. <Swluger@aol.com>

Re: Ohrnet Insights:

I publish **Ohrnet’s** “Parsha Insights” along with community notices, along with “Yossi & Co.” Parsha cartoon that you post on the Web (for the *kinderlach*), for two synagogues in Cape Town. The pages are so well accepted that there are various members who pay for the photocopying. *B’virchas haTorah*.

• Dovid Jubiler, Cape Town, S. A. <d-jubiler@usa.net>

Re: I’m My Own Grandpa (Parshat Miketz):

Another response to Dovid Solomon’s Riddle, “who in *Tanach* has a name which makes him sound as though he’s his own uncle?” David (as in *David Hamelech*), spelled *daled-vav-daled*, can also be pronounced *dod* which means “uncle.”

Along the same lines, there is also a person named *Savta*, which means grandmother. (*Bereishet 10:7*).

In a different approach, *Dishon* (*Bereishet 36:21*) is the uncle of *Dishon* (*Ibid. 36:25*). Regarding your question “whose name makes him sound like his own grandpa,” Nachor’s grandfather is Nachor (*Bereishet 11:24-26*).

• JJ and Livia Levine <jjlr@erols.com>

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Learning to judge favorably sometimes require serious change. So, next time your head tells you that someone is telling you a tale, remember this story...

HEADS OR TALES?

A few months ago a very embarrassing incident showed me how we must suspend conclusions! I was standing in the middle of a shop in

Jerusalem trying to extract a five-shekel coin from my purse. My hands were full of bags and the coin slipped from my fingers and disappeared, and a second later a five-shekel coin fell before me onto the floor. To my surprise, the woman standing next to me asked her son to retrieve the coin and give it to her! The unpleasant smirk on her face told me she was taking advantage of the situation. After some verbal wrangling,

she gave up on the coin and walked out in a huff. I gave the storekeeper the coin to put into a *tzedaka* (charity) box and that was the end of that.

The next day, my five-shekel coin turned up at the bottom of one of the large plastic bags I'd been carrying! I had thought she was lying. It was worse. She also thought I was lying!

• GA, Jerusalem, Israel

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

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

One Friday evening recently, I said the first paragraph of *shema* five times, and each time it was for a different reason. How did this occur?

• Riddle submitted by Benjie Gerstman <gerstbpg@netvision.net.il>

Answer:

We accepted Shabbos early, praying the evening service before three stars appeared in the sky. We read all three paragraphs of *shema* as a preface to the silent prayer. Even though one does not fulfill the obligation of saying the evening *shema* before the stars appear, it is customary to read *shema* with its blessings in order to say the "redemption" blessing immediately before the silent prayer (*somech geula l'tefilla*) and to pray amidst words of Torah study.

When the three stars came out, we repeated all three paragraphs of *shema*, this time in order to fulfill the mitzvah to recite the evening *shema* in its proper time, night time.

When I put my son to sleep, I said the first paragraph of *shema* with him. This time I was fulfilling the obligation of teaching Torah to my son, as it says in the *shema* itself, "you shall teach them to your children."

That week's Parsha was *Parshat Vaetchanan*. As part of the custom of completing the Parsha before reading it in *shul*, I read the entire Parsha, which includes the first paragraph of *shema*.

Before going to sleep, I said the first paragraph of *shema* a fifth time during the bedtime — *kriat shema al ha'mita* — as protection for my soul during sleep.

• Benjie Gerstman, Jerusalem

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SHERLOX ANSWER!

"Who cried out?" asked Sherlock.

"The Children of Israel, of course. It says so explicitly."

"And if it wouldn't say so?"

"Hmm, I suppose we would know it anyway because the preceding phrase says that the 'Children of Israel' saw the Egyptians pursuing...."

"Aha!"

"I see your point. The second 'Children of Israel' seems redundant."

"You can say that again."

"Therefore, Rashi explains that the phrase 'Children of Israel' doesn't tell us *who* cried out, it tells us *how* they cried out. Their prayer wasn't an ordinary response to a scary situation; rather, it reflected their lofty calling as the Children of Israel, the offspring of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov (also known as Israel), latching on to their ancestral art of prayer."

"Artfully said, Dr. Watstein."

• Based on *Maskil L'David*, *Sherlox* is by Reuven Subar
Inspired by "What's Bothering Rashi" by Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN
14:4 The Miracle of Egyptian Pursuit
14:13 Promise or Command?
14:15 No Need to Cry
14:21 Nature or Miracle?

15:19 When the *Shira* was Sung
16:4 The Purpose of Trial (part 2)
17:9 The War Against Amalek

IBN EZRA
14:13 Slave Mentality

14:29-30 Drowning and Dry Land

MALBIM
14:11-12 Red or Dead
14:16 The Ten Miracles of the Crossing of the Sea