

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE SMILE YOU SEND OUT

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe face to face.” (33:11)

Many years ago I saw a cartoon whose name escapes me now. I think it might have been Bambi or some other landmark of Western civilization. Anyway, in this cartoon a lovable Disney fawn with eyes as big as saucers approaches a silent still lake in a deserted forest and, for the first time in its life, sees its reflection. Startled by seeing another creature in this totally quiet landscape, the fawn jumps back in alarm. However, its curiosity piqued, the fawn gingerly approaches the glassy surface of the lake once again. It stares at its reflection. It smiles. It frowns. Its *doppelganger* faithfully mimics every move. A whole cartoon ballet of emotions follows: Surprise. Indignation. Friendship. Love. Until finally the fawn plunges a paw into the lake and the apparition vanishes, much to its chagrin.

If the eyes are the window of the soul, the face must be the mirror of the heart. It’s amazing how people know exactly how we feel about them, even when we’re sure that it’s our secret.

But more than this, when we look at someone, we see in their face not just the way they feel about us, but also the way we feel about them. Just as water reflects, so too the heart of man is reflected in the face of his fellow. To the extent we feel love for our fellow man, so too will he reciprocate that love. As they used to say, “The smile you send out returns to you.”

The reverse is also true. When we feel antipathy towards someone, we will see our own negative feelings written across their features like a billboard.

The same is true in our relationship with G-d. If we want to know how G-d feels about us, the surest sign is to check the pulse of our own feelings about Him. If our heart yearns for G-d, to serve Him and to do His will, there is no surer sign that He loves us.

“If the eyes are the window of the soul, the face must be the mirror of the heart.”

HEADLIGHTS ON

(Moshe said to G-d) “Show me Your Glory”... (G-d said to him) “You will see My back, but My face cannot be seen.” (33:18;23)

Have you ever driven down a country road on a moonless night and turned your headlights off? I wouldn’t advise you do it

for more than a second because it’s like driving into nothingness. It’s amazing how those two small pencil-beams of light allow you to navigate a tortuous county road, even in the blackest night. “Why can’t they just make this road straight?” you might think to yourself.

This world is like night. The world-to-come is like day.

It’s possible to see at night, if you turn on your headlights. But there’s a difference: At night, your vision is restricted to what’s illuminated in the beams. It’s local. By day, you can see the whole picture.

In daylight it becomes clear why the road twists and turns so much, why sometimes you go up, and sometimes down: Over here, there’s a hill; there, a river; over there a chasm.

In this world, a person sees but through a glass, darkly. He catches a few brief excerpts of reality, mere flashes of the way the Creator runs His creation.

The rest is night.

With only the few chapters of world history at our disposal, we can’t visualize the whole of existence, from where it comes and to where it’s going. That’s why this world is like night. But in the world-to-come everything becomes as clear as day. Distance lends perspective and comprehension. We are able to understand the reasons why G-d does what He does: Why the road had to have this bend, why we had to go down there so far...

That’s what G-d was telling Moshe when he said “My face — you cannot see.” In this world we cannot see G-d’s

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men, age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the *Mishkan*. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and Hashem instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the *Mishkan*, its vessels, and Aharon and his sons. Hashem selects Betzalel and Oholiav to be the master craftsmen for the *Mishkan* and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that Hashem made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls and tries to delay them. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people immediately,

threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the spree of idol-worship, he smashes the tablets, and destroys the golden calf. The tribe of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and Hashem accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the *Mishkan*, and Hashem's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks Hashem to show him the rules by which He conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. Hashem tells Moshe to hew new tablets, and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke His mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage, and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbos, Shavuos and Succos are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

HAFTORAH: PARAH - YECHEZKEL 36:16-38

This week's haftarah is the haftarah of Parshas Parah, the third of the four special Parshios.

Just as Parshas Parah concerns the laws of spiritual purity, so its haftarah contains the words "and I will sprinkle upon you the waters of purity." Its prophecy consoles the exiled Jewish people, relating to the reasons of the exile and to the future restoration and establishment in the land of Israel. In

the future, spiritual purity, together with a "new heart and new spirit," will be bestowed from above upon those who repent (ibid. 26).

A NEW HEART

"And I will remove the heart of stone from within you and give you a heart of flesh." When a person sins he is actually harming himself; his suffering soul introverts within his conscience, his feelings become numb and his emotions phlegmatic. This state not only hinders spiritual elevation but lures

him to deepen his depression with additional sin. This is the meaning of the statement in *Pirke Avos* "a sin motivates a sin," (*Avos* 4:2) as the spiritual harm caused by the first decision to sin strengthens his desire for future sin. Our Sages compared this situation to a thirsty sailor drinking salt water; the more he drinks the more he thirsts, never to quench his thirst. Nevertheless, when a person is determined to repent, the Merciful One removes his heart of stone and furnishes him with a new, sensitive heart of supple flesh, enabling him to embark on a new beginning.

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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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PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529
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MAGAZINE

"Thanks for your help and answers to my questions. I am from Israel, but now live in Canada. There are few Jews in my city and it's nice to know that when you need guidance you can find it, especially when there's no synagogue in your city. Thanks."
K. Eden

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

“face” — G-d’s direct control of the world in the bright light of day. But His “back” — the tell-tale footprints in the snow of History — that’s clear for all to see...if we keep our head-lamps turned on.

HEART AND STONE

“And the tablets are the work of G-d, and the writing, the writing of G-d.” (32:16)

Next time you’re in *shul*, take a look at the Ten Commandments (*luchos*) above the holy ark. The tops of the Two Tablets are curved. Why are the Ten Commandments this shape? The Talmud describes the Tablets as being cubic. There is not a single classical Jewish source which describes the Tablets in the form with which we are familiar today.

Where did this shape come from?

Another question. If the Jewish People had already *heard* the Ten Commandments, why was it necessary to engrave them on tablets? Wasn’t the overwhelming experience of hearing G-d speaking sufficient?

When the Ten Commandments were engraved on the Tablets, they were also being engraved on the hearts of the Jewish People. Engraved on the Tablet of the heart. The writing was the writing of G-d indelibly engraved on the heart of the Jewish

People for all time.

Take another look at those Ten Commandments above the holy ark. Their rounded tops symbolize the shape of the heart, the heart of the Jewish People where they have been engraved for more than three thousand years.

THE REST IS EASY

“And on the seventh day, a Shabbos of Shabbosos” (31:15)

There are two kinds of rest. The first kind of rest is a rest from weariness, a chance to recharge our batteries, to enable us to continue to work. For no one can work indefinitely. Everyone needs a break.

The second kind of rest comes at the end of a project. The last brushstroke of a painting. The final sentence of a novel. The last brick in a new home. Then you take a step back and look at your work. You feel the satisfaction of completion. It’s finished. It’s done. A time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labors.

“You shall labor for six days and do all your work.”

How can you do all your work in six days? Can you build an entire house in six days?

The Torah teaches us that when Shabbos comes, even though we’re

half-way through a project, we should think of it as though it were finished completely. On Shabbos we should picture ourselves experiencing the rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done, not just taking a break. In a sense, this is what G-d did when the world was six days old. He looked at the Creation and saw that it was finished — the greatest building project ever — the heavens and the earth were completed. Our rest on Shabbos is a commemoration of that rest.

This is the essential difference between our Shabbos and the secular idea of a “day of rest.” The secular world understands the day of rest as a break so that you can return to the week revitalized and refreshed. It’s a only a break.

Shabbos, on the other hand, is not just pushing the pause button on life. It’s the creation of a feeling that everything in one’s life is complete. There’s nothing left to do except sit back and enjoy the fruits of one’s labor.

Sources:

- The Smile You Send Out* - Ohr HaChaim, Rabbi Dovid Kaplan, Rabbi Nachy Brickman
- Headlights On* - Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, “Moser Derech” - Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, Rabbi Yaakov Niman, Rabbi Meir Chadash
- Heart And Stone* - Sfias Emes in Mayana shel Torah, Rabbi Moshe Shapiro
- The Rest is Easy* - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in L'Torah Ul'Moadim

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

AFULA

AFula is an important development town which serves as the market center of the Jezreel Valley. It was founded in 1925 on what is presumed to be the site of the tower (“Ophel”) mentioned in the Biblical account of an Aramean



General’s visit to the Prophet Elisha (*Melachim II 5:24*).

The tower persisted as a symbol of the city for visitors, who can see among the ruins of the ancient settlement the remains of an Arab tower which serves as an historical landmark, at this important crossroads of the Jezreel Valley.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“Half of the shekel...to atone for your souls.” (Shemos 30:9)

Each man was to give a half-shekel to atone for the sin of the golden calf. Why only a half-shekel? Because the women took no part in the sin of the golden calf. The half shekel was an atonement for the man, and without his wife he’s only half a person.

WEEKLY DAF

YOMA 58 - 64

SEPARATED BUT TOGETHER

The sprinkling of the blood of the bullock and the goat in the Sanctuary on Yom Kippur, the Torah tells us (*Vayikra 16:16*), atones for voluntary and involuntary entry of a Jew in a spiritually impure state into the sacred areas of the *Beis Hamikdash*. This passage concludes “Who dwells among them within their impurity.” Our Sages interpret this as an expression of the intimate relationship between Hashem and Israel; that even when Jews are impure, the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) is still with them.

A skeptical heathen once challenged Rabbi Chanina with the classic taunt that Hashem rejected the Chosen People by enabling their enemies to destroy the *Beis Hamikdash* and exile them. “Her impurity is evident in the hem of her dress” (*Eicha 1:9*) says the Prophet Yirmiyahu about the spiritual state of Israel following destruction and exile. “This is certain proof that you are now impure,” he challenged Rabbi Chanina. The Sage responded by simply pointing to the above-mentioned passage that declares that the *Shechina* is with us even in our impurity.

This cryptic dialogue is thus explained by Maharsha:

The heathen saw in the words of the prophet a separation between Hashem and His people, symbolized by the separation of a husband from his wife during the period of spiritual impurity in her menstrual cycle. Rabbi Chanina did not challenge the comparison but rather expanded on it. The husband separates from his wife during her period of impurity only regarding physical contact. He continues to reside with her, however, in the same home. In like fashion, concluded the sage, we do not enjoy the same intimacy with Hashem while we are in exile, but this does not mean that He has stopped dwelling within our midst.

This is what was communicated for all generations and situations — that even in our lowest spiritual state, we enjoy the comforting closeness of Hashem “Who dwells among them within their impurity.”

• Yoma 57a

TWIN GOATS, TWIN PARENTS

Two goats played a central role in the Yom Kippur service. One of them served as a sacrifice whose blood was sprinkled in the *kodshei kodashim* (Holy of Holies) and in the *heichal*. The other was the scapegoat that carried on it the sins of Israel as it was led to its death off a cliff in the wilderness.

Both goats, the *mishna* tells us, were preferably to be of the same appearance, size and value, and be purchased at the same time.

An interesting question is raised by Tosefos Yeshanim, based on a *gemara* in *mesechta Sanhedrin (71a)*. There we find Rabbi Yehuda’s ruling that the preemptive punishment of the young rebellious son applies only if both his parents are of similar voice, appearance and height. He derives this from the parents’ statement before the court that “this son is rebellious and does not hearken to our voice” (*Devarim*

21:20). The singular form “voice” when referring to *both* parents indicates that their voices are so similar that what they say sounds like it is coming from one voice. If similarity is a prerequisite regarding voice, concludes Rabbi Yehuda, it follows that similarity of appearance and height also be required.

Due to this requirement of similarity, say some of the Sages, the law of the rebellious son was never actually implemented. It was written in the Torah only for the purpose of learning it to gain reward for Torah study, and to absorb its message about child-rearing. The simple understanding of this is that the law could never be applied because of the virtual impossibility of a father and mother being of the same appearance. If so, asks Tosefos Yeshanim, how could there be a mitzvah to seek animals with identical appearance, if the chances are so remote?

His solution is to differentiate between man and animal. While it is unlikely for human parents to be similar in appearance, there is the possibility of finding an almost perfect similarity in two goats.

Another solution may be suggested based on what Rabbi Yoel Sirkis (*Bach*) writes in his footnotes in *mesechta Sanhedrin*. It is not the impossibility of identical appearance that rules out the implementation of the law of the rebellious son, but the impossibility of them having identical voices. For a man and woman to have identical voices, either the man must lack masculinity or the woman femininity. In either case this would mean that one of the parents was not capable in being a partner in procreation and they could never have a son. This relationship between voice and reproductive capacity is limited to humans. Regarding appearance, this is possible even in humans, and certainly in regard to the two goats.

• Yoma 62a

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many “geira” are there in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after *Yom Kippur* and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19 year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called “*malachim*?”
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'as* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbos is a “sign.” What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, Hashem says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did Hashem show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

SHERLOX

SHERLOX AND THE GOLDEN MYSTERY

“Farthington isn't the baron-heir he purports to be,” said world famous detextive Sherlock Holmes.

“How do you know?” asked Watstein.

“He wears too much gold,” said Sherlock. “A true heir to the kind of fortune he brags of doesn't flaunt it so. Too much gold, too much gold....”

“Speaking of gold,” said Watstein, “I'm having trouble understanding this text regarding the golden calf. It says that the people gave their gold earrings to Aharon; Aharon then ‘formed them with a stylus and made a metal calf.’ (Shemos 32:3:4)

“It does seem odd,” said Sherlock, “that G-d's chosen one, Aharon, should have had any part in this bovine business.”

“The commentaries deal with that issue,” said Watstein. “My question is on Rashi's comment. Rashi explains that the word ‘metal’ in the above verse — ‘*masecha*’ — has the numerical value of 125, indicating that this calf weighed 125 *kantar*-units of gold.”

“A hefty heifer indeed!” said Sherlock.

“But why this comment? Why can't ‘metal’ simply mean metal? It's not Rashi's way to chase after numerical explanations. So why does he do so here?”

“Too much gold,” said Sherlock. “Too much gold...”

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. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *Adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'as* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between Hashem and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (*Pesach* sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation who has estranged itself from Hashem!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say “Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people.”
16. 32:34 - Whenever Hashem punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the *Girgashites*, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. Hashem commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

TO TELL THE TRUTH

Michael Cavette
<mcavette@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Why should we tell the truth? I realize this sounds like a ridiculous question; we have all accepted that we should not lie. I can find instructions to tell the truth, but I cannot find an explanation of why. Thank you for your time. I look forward to your answer.

Dear Michael Cavette,

Obviously you are talking about a lie that does not hurt anyone, where the only immorality is that it is not true. Before we answer why you should tell the truth, let me ask another question. Why are we here? Why is there a world?

This question is asked by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in *The Way of G-d*, and is also addressed by Rabbi Yosef Karo in *Maggid Mesharim*. The gist of what they say is the following: The purpose of Creation is kindness. G-d wants to bestow the greatest possible good upon us. The ultimate and greatest good is G-d Himself, and therefore, the ultimate good is closeness to G-d. Closeness to G-d requires compatibility and similarity to G-d. Therefore beings must have free will and not be created already similar, as this would be dissimilar to G-d (i.e., G-d acts because He chooses to do so, not because He is coerced).

Therefore, we must be in a world in which there is choice so that we can try to be as “G-dlike” as possible. The good has to be internal, not external, just as G-d is intrinsically good. The only way to internalize and be intrinsically good is to do it through challenge and free will, and therefore this world was created.

Now, G-d is perfect, which means He is the ultimate reality, i.e., True. Lies, on the other hand, do not parallel reality; therefore, they distance us from the reality of G-d, make us incompatible and negate our relationship with Him.

Michael Cavette replies:

Thank you so much for your answer.

I have asked this same question of Jesuit priests, theologians, Buddhist teachers, and ethicists, and you are the only one who was able or willing to answer it. Kind regards.

A LOT OF SALT

Joseph from Athens, Greece
<jori@athens.mbn.gr> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
What is the symbolism of Edith, Lot's wife, becoming a pillar of salt?

Dear Joseph,

The previous night Lot's wife revealed to the inhabitants of Sodom that they had guests by asking one of the neighbors for salt to flavor the food that she prepared them. In Sodom it was forbidden to invite guests into one's house, and Lot's wife was perfectly aware that by asking for salt she was placing the lives of the guests in extreme danger. After she looked back, even though she had been instructed not to, she received the punishment of being turned into a pillar of salt.

Sources:

- Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 51:5

HOW TO HELP

Jeff Nelson from Lenexa, KS
<Mandella97@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Recently a close friend of mine died in a car accident. He was married only six months ago. My friend was only 20 and his wife 19. Neither is Jewish, and my friend was cremated. This is the first time someone has died that not only did I know, but felt very close to. Though neither he nor his family is Jewish, what is my duty as a Jew to do for them, and myself?

Dear Jeff Nelson,

The death of a loved one is always very traumatic. One is often confronted with a sense of helplessness and uselessness in the face of tragedy. Our Torah requires us to offer kindness to any person, and comforting friends at a

time of loss is a great mitzvah. The best comfort you can offer to people at such a time is to be there for them. If they want to talk, be there to listen. If they want to be silent, be silent with them so that they are not alone.

Don't just ask “what can I do to help?” See what needs to be done and do it. Perhaps they need food; perhaps there are errands that need to be run or other ways in which you can be useful.

Often, after a few weeks have passed people forget about the mourners and go on with their lives. The mourners still need to know that someone cares. Be there for your friends when all the fuss is over and everyone has gone home. May you and your friends know no more sorrow.

HAND WAVE

Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I have noticed the custom that when ladies light candles Friday afternoon they wave their hands in front of their eyes (3 times I think) before they cover their eyes. What is the reason and source of this custom to wave before making the blessing? Thanking the Rabbi....

Dear Email@Withheld,

The basic idea is that one shouldn't benefit from the Shabbat candles until after saying the proper blessing. Thus, those who say the blessing after lighting should hold their hands up to block the light until after saying the blessing. If you light many candles and can't block all the flames by simply holding up your hands, you should cover your eyes.

The “Noheg Katzon Yosef” (first printed in 1718) mentions the custom to make a circle around the candles with the hands before reciting the blessing; however, the reasons for this circling are unclear.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 263:5 — Rema
- Aruch Hashulchan (ibid.)

FALLING LEAVES

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I would appreciate any help which the Rabbi can give as regards to the following point: When a specific leaf falls off a tree or a specific animal is killed by another animal, is there a specific reason or decree why that specific leaf fell? Or is there such a thing as natural occurrences which are random and uncontrolled? I would appreciate any information and sources that discuss and explain this philosophical point which touches on "bechira" (free choice), etc., and thank you in advance. Best regards.

Dear Name@Withheld,

The view that certain events are not individually guided is a view that is accepted by Maimonides in the Guide for the Perplexed, and also by Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno in his commentary on Chumash. They maintain that the degree of individual Divine Providence is directly proportional to

the spirituality and G-dliness of the being. Hence, animals and plants have Providence only on a species level.

The exception would be when the animal or plant interacts with a human being, then there is guidance. For example, the apple falling near Sir Isaac Newton is Divine Providence, whereas an apple falling off a tree in Cortland NY with no human around is a result of the laws of nature that G-d created.

Others, principally the Kabbalists and the Chassidic thinkers, maintain that absolutely everything is a matter of individual Divine Providence.

This argument may not be as extreme as it sounds: Perhaps the Kabbalists agree in principle with Maimonides' concept, however they disagree in that they maintain that everything interacts with humanity on some level, and that even a very subtle and low level interaction with humans requires Divine Providence.

Regarding how there could be an argument in this area: Just as in any area of Torah, different minds see things differently, and as long as they use Torah sources and methodology they are both "the words of the living G-d."

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

Re: **Five Shema Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Bo):**

In a recent Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Bo), 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?" Here are some readers' responses that differed from our answer:

You can read the first verse of *shema* again in another case: On the night of *Simchat Torah*, before we take out the *sefer Torah* we say the first verse of *shema*.

• Zvi Shavit <zvi@hadassah.org.il>

Someone came knocking at the door that the *sefer Torah* needed to be checked, so he read through the *Parsha* again.

• Y. Benyowitz <Yahud@juno.com>

Your Yiddle Riddle regarding the recitation of *shema* five times for five different reasons had a whole corner of our shul in a debate after *shacharis* on a recent Shabbos. The conversation went something like this: "No, it says a

'recent' Friday eve;" "No, no, it says 'eve', not afternoon;" "This isn't a Rashba, you can't be *m'dayik* (be so exacting in every word!)" Anyway, we came up with another reason one might say *shema* at night. If there was a *bris* the next day, the custom is to say *shema* the night before, for extra *shmira* and protection.

Yasher cochacha. My family gets great enjoyment from Ohrnet every week.

• Gershon Minkow <minkow@alpha.netvision.net.il>

The Talmud (*Megillah 3a*) says: "If one is frightened, but does not know why, then his "*mazal*" saw something [frightening]. What should he do? He should read the *shema*." And if someone's "*yetzer hara*" (evil inclination) is overpowering him, then he should say the *shema*. Also, if he thought that he was about to die, he would read the *shema*.

• A Jew in Richmond <richseed@juno.com>

Wow for Ohrnet:

Thank you Ohrnet for your prompt reply to my question. Wow. I thoroughly enjoy your teachings and lessons. Often the "typed" word loses something; however, you have a way that explains things in such a nice way. Thank you again.

• Veronica <norske@webtv.net>

Tu B'Shvat Special:

Thank you for your Tu B'shvat special. You're right, as usual. It was special.

• Pesia Bernstein <sidney@netvision.net.il>

Failing to judge favorably can ruin friendships. The following incident, sad but true, shows the outcome of...

THINKING ILL

Dear Ohrnet,

Here is a true story told to me by my son. My son heard it from the "boy" in the story, who is today my son's Rosh Yeshiva:

Rabbi Zelig (name changed) had an elderly friend who became ill and was hospitalized in Jerusalem's Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital. The sick man wondered why Rabbi Zelig had not come to visit him, and he was upset about that.

Finally, one Shabbos, Rabbi Zelig (who had 18 children of his own and struggled to make ends meet) decided to visit his ill friend, and started walking to the hospital.

Shortly thereafter, unbeknownst to Rabbi Zelig, his son fell down the stairs and was bleeding profusely. Rabbi Zelig's wife grabbed the boy and hurried to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Zelig arrived at the hospital and found his way to his sick friend's room and greeted him. But the sick man said to Rabbi Zelig, "I know you wouldn't have come here to visit only me. It must be that you came here for something else and while you were here you dropped in for a visit."

Rabbi Zelig answered, "No no no! I came to visit only you."

A minute later, to Rabbi Zelig's great surprise, his wife suddenly appeared in the room with their bandaged child. "See!" said the sick man. "I told you! You came here because of your son! Why did you lie to me?" The sick man refused to listen to Rabbi Zelig or his wife's explanations.

And from that day on, the sick man refused to talk to Rabbi Zelig.

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

continued from page five

SHERLOX ANSWER!

"What was this *metal calf* made of?" asked Sherlock.

"Gold, of course," said Watstein. "The verse says 'they removed their gold earrings' and gave them to Aharon."

"And gold is metal, isn't it?" said Sherlock.

"Are you trying to suggest the verse should have said a 'gold calf' and not a 'metal calf'?" asked Watstein.

"No, I'm suggesting that the verse should have said just 'calf' and nothing more," said Sherlock.

"Ah! You're right!" said Watstein. "The word 'metal' seems superfluous. The people gave gold, so obviously any calf formed from this gold would be *metal*. Therefore, Rashi needs to seek an additional explanation for this word, which he does by introducing its numerical value.

"A precious explanation, dear Watstein."

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

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Rabbi R.Y. Eisenman from Passaic NJ <RYE613@aol.com> wrote:

I would like to submit a Yiddle Riddle: What letter from the *Aleph Beis* is missing from the *Bircas Hamazon* and why? Thank you for your wonderful work for the *klal* (community).

Answer next week...

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

30:13 Lashon HaKodesh
30:19 Washing Hands
31:2 Betzalel
32:1-4 The Golden Calf
32:18 Sounds
33:11 Yehoshua's Age
34:27 A Renewed Covenant
34:28 The Second Tablets

SEFER HACHINUCH

105 Equality in Sacrifices

107-8 Anointing

MALBIM

28:5 Trustworthy Treasurers
28:30 The *Urim V'Tumim*
29:9 Donning of the Kohen's Garments
30:1 The Incense-Altar
30:12 The Concept of Counting People
31:2 The Name Betzalel
31:13 A Taste of the World-to-Come