

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME, LATELY?

“Say to Aharon, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land...’” (8:12)

Two men are walking toward each other in the street. As they draw alongside, a smile spreads across the face of one of them. Excitedly, he says to the other: “Izzy, Izzy, it’s me, Moishe. Don’t you recognize me?” Izzy furrows his brow, trying to bring to the surface some deep forgotten memory. “Moishe?” Unfazed, the other continues, “Don’t you remember me, Izzy! I’m Moishe. I once loaned you \$25,000 interest-free for five years.” “Oh yeah,” replies Izzy, “but Moishe, what have you done for me lately?”

G-d commanded only Aharon and not Moshe to initiate the plague of lice. When Moshe killed the Egyptian who was beating a Jew, Moshe hid the body of the Egyptian in the earth. Thus, he had a debt of gratitude to the earth and could not strike it. However, the Torah tells us that the killing became known, and Pharaoh tried to kill Moshe, forcing Moshe to flee the country. So what was Moshe’s debt to the earth? He had to flee for his life anyway. The earth hadn’t really done anything for him after all.

The Torah here is teaching us a powerful lesson: Gratitude is not to be quantified by results. When someone does something for us, even if it turns out to be unsuccessful or unnecessary, we owe them as much

gratitude as if they had just loaned us \$25,000 interest-free for five years.

SPINNING YOUR WHEELS

“Therefore say to the Children of Israel: ‘I am Hashem, and I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt...and you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt.’” (6:6-7)

In Russia, during the Stalinist era, there were people who were locked up in prison for decades. One such prisoner was kept in a tiny cell, most of the time in darkness. Protruding from one wall of his cell

“They were able to ‘see’ G-d in every blade of grass, every cloud, every pebble.”

was a handle. For 16 hours a day the prisoner had to turn the handle. 16 hours every day for more than 10 years. The guards had told him that the handle was connected to a mill, and that the mill crushed wheat for

the prison bread. When Stalin finally died, the man was released from his cell. He walked a few paces into the light. His legs were like rubber from years of under-use. He rubbed his eyes and turned to look at the machine he had been powering for all those long years. Protruding from the wall on the outside of his cell was a shaft that was connected to a heavy flywheel which was connected to absolutely nothing. The flywheel was only there to give the necessary impression of the resistance of a large machine, but in reality this man had spent the last ten years doing nothing. He was totally crushed. How vindictive that the punishment should be felt only *after* the prisoner had already served his time!

Anomalies in the Torah’s spelling of words speak volumes. In the above excerpt, the word *burdens* appears twice. In the first verse, the plural is lacking the letter *vav*. In the second, it is written complete. Why?

There are two aspects to slavery. One aspect is the constriction of physical freedom; the other is the enslavement of the mind. When someone is a slave, he is aware only of the physical enslavement he endures. He is so entombed in the day-to-day business of survival, his life is sunk in so relentless a treadmill, that he doesn’t perceive his spiritual bondage.

G-d told the Jewish People that after “*I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt,*” after I take you out from the physical captivity of Egypt, only then “*you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt.*”

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt; however, the Jewish People do not listen. Hashem then commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. Hashem punishes the Egyptians and sends plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy the miracles on a small-

er scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to refuse Moshe's request. After the plague of lice, even Pharaoh's magicians concede that only G-d could be performing these miracles. Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave Egypt, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses to let them go.

HAFTORAH: YECHEZKEL 28:25 - 29:21

ROTTEN TO THE CORE

"On that day, I will cause the strength of Israel to flourish. (29:21)

When you look around, it's easy to despair. The situation of the Jewish People becomes more and more precarious, beset from without and within. The ears of the world are beguiled by our enemies, while the People of the Book sound shrill and uncompromising. Jews are disappearing faster than an endangered species.

The Prophet Yishayahu may have been speaking some 2500 years ago, but he was speaking to us.

The rescue of the Jewish People is like the sprouting of

a flower. Just as a plant starts to sprout only when the seed begins to rot, just when there seems to be no hope, when everything seems rotten to the core, so will the redemption of the Jewish People come when they are at their lowest ebb and all seems lost. It is at that moment that G-d will make Israel's strength flourish.

• Avnei Ezel

In Memory of
CHANNAH BAS LEIBISH ע"ה
24 Teves 5753
ת.ג.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

Only then will you realize the depth of your mental and spiritual slavery.

It is only once a prisoner is physically free that he realizes he has been spinning his spiritual wheels like a rat on a treadmill.

NAMES

“G-d spoke to Moshe and said to him, ‘I am Hashem. I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov as El Shaddai, but with My Name Hashem I did not make Myself known to them.’” (6:2-3)

When Jews talk about G-d, they call Him “Hashem.” Hashem means The Name. Which name? The name which in Greek is called the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter ineffable name of G-d which represents His Essence.

Another name for G-d is *El Shaddai*. The name *Shaddai* is an acronym for the sentence: “I, Who spoke and told the Universe ‘Enough!’” When G-d created the world, he “set in motion” a process which seemed to be infinitely expanding. The name *Shaddai* connotes G-d’s power to stop that process, to say

“Enough!”

When we look at nature, what strikes us is that it is a system of limitations. “What goes up must come down.” The sun rules only by day. The moon only by night. Water flows down. Steam rises. Nature is limited and defined by “laws.” These laws are, in essence, G-d saying “Enough!”

The above verse tells us that when G-d spoke to Moshe, He spoke to Him as Hashem, but when He communicated with Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, He made Himself known only through the name *El Shaddai*. On the surface, this seems to be in praise of Moshe, that G-d related to Moshe through His essential name “Hashem” rather than through the name *Shaddai*.

However, Rashi tells us that this verse is actually criticizing Moshe for saying: “Why have You done evil to this people?” But where is the implied criticism?

The Talmud relates the story of a man whose wife passed away, leaving him with a baby son to feed. He had no money to pay for a wet-nurse. A miracle was performed for him: He

began to produce mother’s milk, and he nursed his baby. Rabbi Yosef praised the greatness of this man, since a miracle had been performed on his account. Abaye responded: “On the contrary. How lacking is this man, since the entire natural order had to be overturned on his account!”

The greatness of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov was that they related to G-d through the natural world. They were able to “see” G-d in every blade of grass, every cloud, every pebble. The “laws” of nature — the name *El Shaddai* — was sufficient for them to be able to relate to G-d. Moshe, however, needed something beyond the natural world. G-d spoke to him through his Essential Name, a revelation above and beyond the natural world.

Sources:

What Have You Done For Me, Lately? - Rabbi Reuven Subar
Spinning Your Wheels - Shlah Hakadosh as heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz
Names - Rabbi Mordechai Becher

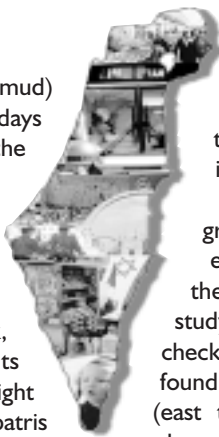
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

ANTIPATRIS

Antipatris (or Antiparis as it appears in the Talmud) is linked to a holiday of Second Temple days known as “Mount Gerizim Day” held on the 25th of the month of Teves.

The Jew-hating Kuttites (Samaritans) in *Eretz Yisrael* incited Alexander the Great to destroy the *Beis Hamikdash*, and he began marching at the head of his army towards Jerusalem to do their bidding. When the *kohen gadol*, Shimon Hatzadik, learned of this, he donned his high priestly garments and, together with Jerusalem notables, walked all night to meet this force. The two finally met at Antipatris where Alexander descended from his royal chariot and



prostrated himself before Shimon Hatzadik, explaining that it was this vision which led him to victory in all his battles. The tables were then turned on the Kuttites as the destruction which they planned for the *Beis Hamikdash* was visited instead upon their shrine on Mount Gerizim.

Built on the ruins of the Biblical city Aphek, site of a great battle between Israel and the Philistines recorded in the Book of Samuel, Antipatris is mentioned in the Talmudic description of the proliferation of Torah study during the reign of King Chizkiyahu: “They checked from Dan to Beersheba (north to south) and found not one unlearned Jew; from Geves to Antipatris (east to west) and found not a single child or adult unlearned in the laws of purity.”

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“G-d will distinguish between the livestock of the Children of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, and nothing belonging to the Children of Israel will die.” (9:4)

In order to avoid the plague of cattle disease, some Egyptians sold their cattle to Jews. But since their sale was not sincere but was intended solely to avoid the ill effects of the plague, their cattle died anyway.

• Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh

WEEKLY DAF

YOMA 9 - 15

THREE IN ONE

Why, ask our Sages, was the first *Beis Hamikdash* destroyed? The answer given is that our ancestors were guilty of the three grave sins of idol worship, promiscuity and murder.

It was because of these three sins that Hashem brought upon them three different sorts of destruction described by the Prophet Micha (3:12): “Because of you, therefore, shall Zion be plowed as a field, Jerusalem shall be in ruins and the Temple Mount will be like the mounds of a forest.”

Since Hashem’s retribution is measure for measure, the commentaries offer parallels between each of the three sins and the punishment of destruction which it wrought. Abandonment of allegiance to Hashem in favor of man-made religions, disregard for the discipline of self-control in regard to animalistic passions and disrespect for the sanctity of life all contribute to the disintegration of the individual and of human society. The Divine message is that the physical destruction of city and sanctuary, and the concomitant loss of homeland and independence, are reflections of the self-destruction of the individual and community which preceded them.

But what about the second *Beis Hamikdash*? ask our Sages. We know that the people of the era were dedicated to studying Torah, fulfilling *mitzvos* and performing acts of kindness. Why did they deserve to have the *Beis Hamikdash* destroyed?

Because, comes the reply, they were guilty of unwarranted hatred towards each other. This teaches us, concludes the *gemara*, that the sin of unwarranted hatred is equal in its gravity to the three sins of idol worship, promiscuity and murder.

In line with the aforementioned poetic justice, visiting physical destruction upon the perpetrators of human and social destruction, we may see in unwarranted hatred the most deadly seeds of such destruction. Neither the individual nor society can effectively function, or even survive, without tolerance of the differences distinguishing one individual from another and forgiving those who wrong us. The catalyst for the destruction of the second *Beis Hamikdash* was the unremitting hatred shown towards Bar Kamtza (*Mesechta Gittin 56a*). This hatred led to Bar Kamtza being publicly embarrassed with ejection from a feast, and to his wreaking vengeance upon his people by libeling them to the Roman emperor. This was a Divine lesson that the hatred which destroys man and society literally led to the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

• Yoma 9b

THE PRICE OF PARSIMONY

Although certain *mitzvos* do not apply to women, the *gemara* points out that regarding the *mitzva* of placing a *mezuzah* on the door of her home, a woman’s obligation is the same as a man’s. Another home-based *mitzvah* which applies equally to both genders is the procedure required when a house is struck with a spiritual leprosy called “*tzara’as batim*.”

Why does the *gemara* find it necessary to point out that these two *mitzvos* apply to women, when there is no reason to assume that they are exempt?

The answer is that regarding both of these *mitzvos*, the Torah uses a masculine term in its command: “You shall write them upon the door posts of your (masculine) home” (*Devarim 11:20*). This gives the impression that only males are obligated in the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah*. Regarding the owner of the afflicted home, the Torah says “he whose house it is shall come and relate it to the *kohen*,” (*Vayikra 14:35*) giving the impression that a female homeowner would be exempt from initiating this procedure.

The truth is that in both cases the *mitzva* applies to women. The passage following the command about *mezuzah* states “in order to increase your days and the days of your children.” Hashem certainly wants women to enjoy the life-giving power of *mezuzah*, so it must apply to them as well. The meaning of the word “*beischa*” which was understood to mean only a man’s home is therefore interpreted as conveying a different message. You must place the *mezuzah* on the door post which is at the right of your entrance (*beischa*) and not that of your exit.

The laws of afflicted houses apply to women because the Torah introduces those laws with the phrase “in a house in the land of your inheritance,” (*Vayikra 14:54*) which indicates universal application. So why does the Torah use the masculine expression “he whose house it is?”

A house is afflicted to punish one who habitually refuses to lend his neighbors any of his furniture or vessels, using the excuse that he does not own what they request. Before the *kohen* inspects the afflicted house to determine its spiritual impurity, all the contents of the house are removed so that they will not be contaminated. At that time the homeowner is exposed to his neighbors as a stingy liar. This is communicated in the words “he whose house it is.” Only when one acts in a selfish fashion, refusing to share the contents of his home because “it is his house,” will he be condemned to having his parsimony exposed.

• Yoma 11b

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Did Hashem ever appear to Avraham and say "I am Hashem?"
2. What does "orlah" mean?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Hashem told Avraham that his descendants would live as strangers for 400 years (*Bereishis 15:13*). When did this period begin?
6. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
7. Why are Yisro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel?"
8. After which plague did Hashem begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart?"
9. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
10. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
11. How long did the plague of blood last?
12. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
13. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation?"
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring about lice?
16. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
17. What two miracles took place when Moshe hurled the soot upward to begin the plague of boils?
18. The *dever* killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

SHERLOX

SHERLOX HOLMES AND THE BLOODY MYSTERY

“Whenever someone does something out of the ordinary,” said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, “it arouses suspicion.”

“Speaking of the out-of-the-ordinary,” said Watstein, “I’m perplexed. Regarding the first of the ten plagues, Moshe warns Pharaoh that the Nile waters will ‘turn to blood (*Exodus 7:17*).’ ”

“What’s so perplexing?” asked Sherlock. “G-d can do anything.”

“It’s Rashi that’s perplexing. Rashi explains that before G-d punishes a nation, He first punishes their gods. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile; thus, as the first of the ten plagues, G-d smote the Nile waters by turning them to blood.”

“At last the Nile gets its just dessert!”

“But what’s wrong with the simple meaning of the text; that G-d was punishing the *Egyptians* by ruining their water supply? What forces Rashi to say that G-d was ‘punishing’ the Nile?”

“Whenever someone does something out of the ordinary,” said Sherlock, “it arouses suspicion.”

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. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:12 - Sealed.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:18 - With the birth of Yitzchak.
6. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
7. 6:25 - Yisro fattened (*pittem*) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (*pitpet*) at his evil inclination.
8. 7:3 - After the sixth plague — *shechin*.
9. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
10. 7:17 - a) Because the Nile was an Egyptian god. 8:17 - b) Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and Hashem did the same.
11. 7:25 - Seven days.
12. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
13. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
14. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
15. 8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
16. 8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
17. 9:8 - 1) Moshe was able to hold four handfuls of soot (two of his own and two of Aharon's) in one hand. 2) This small amount of soot spread over the entire land of Egypt.
18. 9:10 - In the plague of *dever* only the cattle *in the fields* died. The plague of *shechin* affected the surviving cattle.
19. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

GRAVE GRAVEL

Eytan M. Rodin from St. Louis, MO
<ytan@iqtech.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
What is the significance behind the fact that we put stones on graves that we visit? I've always done it, but never understood what this represents. I know that rather than flowers, we are supposed to give money to tzedaka (charity), which makes sense. It's the stones that puzzle me.

Cosette Sullivan from San Angelo, Texas
<zehava3@airmail.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Shalom. I've been asked why Jews place rocks on graves...I don't know! Will you please give me the answer?

Dear Eytan M. Rodin and Cosette Sullivan,

A very early reference to this custom is found in a commentary to the Shulchan Aruch, written by Rav Yehuda Ashkenazi (early 1700s) called the B'er Heitev. He quotes the Maharash, who explains that the custom of placing stones or tufts of grass on the grave is for the honor of the deceased person by marking the fact that his grave has been visited.

Once, when I was touring the Mount of Olives cemetery, my Yerushalmi tour guide told me the following story, a story that purports to explain this custom:

Sometime during the Turkish occupation of Israel, on a Shabbat, an Arab was murdered in Jerusalem. Quickly, the rumor spread that he was killed by a Jew, and an immediate expulsion order was declared. The Jews of Jerusalem had to pick themselves up and leave or be killed. A noted *kabbalist* (mystic) came upon the scene of the crime, which was crowded with Arab onlookers. Even though it was Shabbat, the *kabbalist* wrote one of G-d's names on a piece of paper and placed it upon the body of the dead man. The dead man rose and pointed to one of the Arabs standing in the crowd who became violently afraid and admitted that he had done the killing. The expulsion order was rescinded.

Shortly afterwards the *kabbalist*, who was an elderly man, approached the *chevra kadisha* (burial society) and asked

that his tombstone be pelted with stones after his death because he had written during Shabbat. He understood that due to the danger to life he had been permitted to desecrate the Shabbat, but he felt that some form of repentance was in order nevertheless. Stoning his grave would symbolize the stoning penalty meted out to Shabbat desecraters. At first the *chevra kadisha* refused because of the implied dishonor the stoning would represent to so righteous a Jew, but the *kabbalist* persisted. Finally, they agreed to place stones on his grave, but only if they would institute the custom that all graves would have stones placed on them in the future. If stones were placed on everyone's grave, it would not be a dishonor to the *kabbalist*. From then on, stones were placed on the graves of all Jews buried in Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem the custom spread, and today Jews all over the world place stones on tombstones when visiting a grave.

This may not be the actual source of the custom, but it's an interesting story.

Sources:

- Rabbi Yehuda Ashkenazi, *The B'er Heitev*
- Shulchan Aruch, *Orach Chaim* 224:8

SHAKY SALUTE

Z. G. <Email@Withheld> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I am female. When I go to a job interview in a non-Jewish firm and the potential employer knows I am Jewish (or even if he doesn't know) am I allowed to shake his hand?

Dear Z. G.,

The major contemporary halachic authorities forbid men and women to shake hands. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *zatzal*, among others, spoke strongly about this issue.

I've been in situations where a woman offers me her hand; I explain that I am not permitted to shake hands with women because of religious constraints and I apologize for any embarrassment or discomfort this may cause her — it is nothing personal. My experience has been that usually nobody, neither the woman herself nor the onlookers, feels offended. They may think it's strange — but when you adhere to halacha, there is no *chillul Hashem* (desecration of G-d's

honor).

Z. G. replies:

Dear Rabbi,
Thank you for your prompt response. Not shaking hands will very likely cost me the position, and I will incur a great loss of livelihood. I am not asking you to be lenient with me, I would just like you to suggest some possible way that I can prevent a handshake, without having to go into a whole lengthy explanation. In my line of work, employers are looking for professional people who are outgoing and have good presentation skills. Once I am on the job, I have no problem with explaining to clients that I cannot close a deal with a handshake. However, I find it very difficult to do so with a boss (because it may have a negative effect on my overall appearance at the interview). My interview is tomorrow morning, and it would be most helpful if you could reply before then. If not, I may just have to wear a sling on my arm!

Dear Z. G.,

Going to the interview with your arm in a sling is not being quite honest. If the job you are interviewing for requires good presentation skills, what better way to prove it than by explaining in a perfectly lucid way that you cannot shake hands with men?

Z. G. replies:

Dear Rabbi,
My problem was automatically solved! The interviewer was a woman! Just thought that you should know what happened. Thanks a lot for all the help!

ONLY SIXTEEN

Yakov <Email@Withheld> wrote:

Dear Rabbi
I'm sixteen years old in public high school in New York. After a summer in Israel on a kibbutz, I started to become observant. I am trying to pick up "the basics" of Torah learning but I find in my current setting without teachers to guide me I'm not getting very far. There are a few people who are trying to help, but they are

so busy that they can not give me serious blocks of time. I can't transfer to a Jewish high school because I don't know enough even to get into the lowest class. I don't feel I fit in my present surroundings and I can't fit into the Jewish day school system. Does any alternative program exist for someone who is in-between like me? I would be very grateful if you could point me in their direction and let me know if there are others in my predicament? Thank you.

Dear Yakov,

I don't know of any such program. We are publishing your message in "Ask the Rabbi." If anyone knows of such a program, we ask them to please contact us.

APPRAISING PRAISE

Lee Kong Giap from Johor Bahru, Malaysia
<kong_giap@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is the word "hallelujah" constructed by four words or one word? Because it is constructed by four words in Chinese,

and I hear my teacher said "halle" means praise, "lu" means "your," "Jah" means "G-d," and the word "Hallelujah" sounds a bit commanding. Is that true? Does the word come from Hebrew or Greek? I look forward to your reply.

Dear Lee Kong Giap,

The word *hallelujah* mentioned in Psalms is the Hebrew word for requesting a congregation to join in praise. "Hallel" means to recite praise, "hallelu" is the plural form. The grammatical extension "yah" is a way of expressing magnanimity. For example "merchav" means space, "merchavyah" means a vast space (*Psalms 118:5*); "shalhevet" means flame, "shalhevetyah" means a colossal flame (*Song of Songs 8:10*). Hence, *halleluyah* means "a great praise."

There are other ways of interpreting this word, as the Hebrew language does include the possibility for many meanings in the same word; thus it can also be understood to mean "praise G-d."

Sources:

- Midrash Talpiyot
- Pesachim 117a

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

Re: Hamakom (Ohrnet Vayigash):

As an interesting sidelight to your excellent explanation as to why *Hamakom* is a reference to Hashem's Name, I heard the following idea: Take each letter of the *Shem Havayah* (the Tetragrammaton) and square it, thus:

Yud $10^2 = 100$; Heh $5^2 = 25$; Vav $6^2 = 36$; Heh $5^2 = 25$

TOTAL 186 = the gematria (numerical value) of *Makom*.

- Raphael N. Levi <rnlevi@earthlink.net>

Re: Two Names (Ohrnet Miketz):

Regarding Mr. Rosenthal's riddle: "Name four people in the Book of Genesis who have two names," you responded by pointing out two cases he had omitted. I might mention that the names you cited, *Ben-oni* and *Malki-Tzedek*, are fundamentally different from those he mentioned, in that the two you mention are always hyphenated in the *Chumash*, and can thus be considered as one word each, so that they do not fulfill the conditions set forth. Whereas each name that Mr. Rosenthal mentioned is found at least once as two distinct words.

Of course, another question arises: Why was *Baal Chanan* (*Genesis 36:38*) omitted?

- Michael (Menashe) Hamm, NY <msh210@nyu.edu>

[Ohrnet notes that there are no hyphens in the actual Torah scroll.]

Re: Page Two, Take Two (Ohrnet Miketz):

I heard a different reason why there is no "page 1" in the Talmud: So that nobody can ever claim that they have mastered the entire *masechet*, from the first page to the last. That is, there's always more to learn!

- Rachel Fyman, Ottawa, Canada
<fyman@magma.ca>

Other answers I have heard are as to why the Talmud starts on page "bet" and not on page "aleph": Just as the Torah begins with the letter "bet" (*Bereishet*), so the Talmud begins on page "bet." A reason for both is that "alef" stands for the "Aluf" — The Commander, Hashem, and Hashem comes before the Torah and before the Talmud. Also it teaches us that while we may (indeed ought to) study and question, we should know that we aren't starting from scratch, rather we are building on what has come before.

- Nancy Wells, Baltimore, MD <nwells@objs.com>

One does not know everything, and even when one has finished studying, one must review — but if it were from the beginning, it would make a person feel despondent!

- Andrew <toytenbankes@kosher.com>

Re: Cowboy Riddle:

Let me thank you for an incredible resource. Although I wouldn't think of myself as ignorant, not a week has gone by since I signed up for this weekly email that I haven't learned something.

And here's a quick Yiddle Riddle: Many years ago, I was asked at *cheder* why *Adon Olam* was known as the Cowboy's Prayer. When I admitted my ignorance, I was told that it includes three Cowboys' names: *Billy Raishis*, *Billy Sachlis* and *Kid Roochee*....(You may now groan).

- Lee "Budgie" Barnett <budgie@compuserve.com>

If you judge others unfavorably, you are likely to speak ill of them as well. If so, why don't you...

SELL U PHONE

I was speaking on the phone when someone called me from his cellular phone. I asked him to please to wait a minute so that I could say good-bye to the person I had been speaking to on the other line. He said, "Call me

back. I'm hanging up." And he did.

I thought, "How miserly can he be, asking me to call him back instead of waiting for one minute?" But when I called him back, I understood why he had been in such a hurry. "I have to speak very fast," he said. "My phone battery is about to go dead." And it did.

• Submitted by SG from Jerusalem
Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story"
by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

Which verse in the Torah has all the letters of the *Aleph-Beis*?

Answer: Exodus 16:16. This verse, which contains all the letters of in Hebrew alphabet, describes the gathering of the miraculous manna which fell in the desert: "This is the thing that G-d commanded: Each person should gather of it as much as he needs to eat, an *omer*-measure per person, according to the number of people each man has in his tent." This teaches that whoever fulfills the Torah in its entirety — "from *aleph* to *taf*" (the first and last letters in the *Aleph-Beis*) — will be assured of his sustenance by G-d.

• Source: *Ba'al Haturim*

continued from page five

SHERLOX ANSWER!

"What's the first thing an invading army usually does to the enemy's water supply?" asked Sherlock.

"They cut it off," said Watstein, "but what's your point?"

"So why didn't G-d do the same to the Egyptians? Why didn't He simply cut off their water supply?"

"Hmm...you mean, if G-d merely wanted to punish the Egyptians, He could have simply dried up the Nile?"

"Exactly," said Sherlock. "A dry Nile would punish the Egyptians just as a bloody Nile would, without departing

so far from nature."

"I see," said Watstein. "Rashi is bothered by the *added* miracle of the Nile turning to blood. What purpose did it serve? Rashi answers that G-d wasn't punishing the Egyptians only. The extra-ordinary measure of turning the water to blood was also 'punishing' their god, the Nile."

"Extraordinary, Dr. Watstein."

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

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

- 6:2 Subtle and Sensational Miracles
- 6:6 Four Dimensions of Redemption
- 6:9 Why Moshe was Ignored
- 6:10 The Meaning of "*Leimor*"
- 7:3 The Free Will of Pharaoh
(also see *Sifsei Chachamim* on Rashi)
- 8:6 Why Pharaoh said "Tomorrow"
- 8:18,25 Uniqueness of Fourth Plague
- 9:3 The Cattle in the Field

SFORNO

- 7:3 Pharaoh's Hard Heart
- 8:12 Structure of the Plagues.
- 9:14 Effects of the Plagues

KLI YAKAR

- 6:26-27 Aharon and Moshe
- 7:17 Three Sets of Plagues
- 8:27 "*Mesiras Nefesh*" of the Frogs