

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

LOOSE ENDS

“And when a soul will offer...” (2:1)

The world is a very precise place. It seems that there are no loose ends in Creation. If you stand on the edge of a cliff, a couple of inches is all that separates you from instant death. The tiniest embolism in a vein can end the function of the entire body. This world is built to very fine tolerances.

Which is why the Torah too is built to very fine tolerances. When all the letters in your tefillin are written within the correct halachic norms, wearing them connects you to the Source. With one letter incorrectly formed, you’re wearing nothing more than funny-looking boxes. Turn on a light two minutes before Shabbos and you lit up the room. Turn it on two minutes and one second later and you plunged the world and yourself into spiritual darkness.

The Torah is as precise as a scientific formula. Which makes it difficult to understand why there should be a whole area where the Torah is seemingly vague: In the times of the Holy Temple, when a person brought a *korban nedava* — a voluntary gift-offering — the Torah makes no stipulation as to how large or small it should be. It was left entirely up to the person who brought the offering.

Go into a hospital and watch people working. The ones who are running around the most and working the hardest are probably the volunteers. When we give what we want to give, we give it with a full heart. When our gift is mandated, it detracts

from our enthusiasm. The essence of the voluntary offering was not the offering itself, but the love that was wrapped inside it. To the extent that we are able to express ourselves in the giving, to that extent will be our feeling of giving.

The *tzitzis* (fringes on a four-cornered garment) can be seen as symbols of this symbiotic relationship between the Torah and Man. Part of the *tzitzis* are tied. Part of the Torah is as immovable as any law of the

“G-d made us all, and He wants us to serve Him as ourselves, not as each other.”

physical world; gravity, thermodynamics, calculus. Part of the *tzitzis* are untied: The Torah mandates that we use every last ounce of our individuality to serve the Creator. I am not you. You are not me. G-d made us all, and He wants us to serve Him as ourselves, not as each other. Interestingly, if you look at the *tzitzis*,

you will see that the correct proportion of the tied part to the untied part is one third to two thirds. The majority of this world consists of the loose ends of Creation which each one of us is invited to tie in our own unique way.

A FORTIORI

“A satisfying aroma to Hashem” (1:9)

When a person brings an elevation offering to G-d, he may bring either cattle, sheep, birds or fine flour. After each of these categories, the Torah uses the phrase “a satisfying aroma to Hashem.”

Obviously, cattle are more expensive than sheep, which are more expensive than fowl, which are more expensive than fine flour. If the Torah wanted to tell us that G-d views all these offerings equally, wouldn’t it have been enough to say that fine flour is “a satisfying aroma to Hashem,” and we would have made the logical inference that fowl, sheep and cattle were certainly “a satisfying aroma to Hashem?”

The answer is that had the Torah left this lesson to a *fortiori* logic, we might have made the mistaken assumption that fine flour was “a satisfying aroma to Hashem,” and *all the more so* fowl; that sheep were yet *more* acceptable and cattle — most of all. For this reason, the Torah writes after each category “a satisfying aroma to Hashem” to teach us that whether an offering is large or small, G-d looks at them absolutely equally, provided our intentions are for the sake of our Father in Heaven.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus) which we start reading this week, is also known as *Toras Kohanim* — the Laws of the Priests. It deals largely with the *korbanos* (offerings) that are brought in the *Mishkan* (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called *korban olah*, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the entrance of the *Mishkan*. Regarding cattle, the one who brought the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remain-

ing part is eaten by the *kohanim*. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burnt on the altar and part is eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats. The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *kohen gadol*, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

HAFTORAH: YISHAYAHU 43:21-44:23

This prophecy chastises the Jewish People for their sins. The repeated motto being that it is better to adhere to the words of G-d than to sin and offer sacrifices. This is related to the weekly Parsha that deals with the laws of the sacrifices. We also find in this *haftarah* sarcastic ridicule towards the senseless practice of pagan worship: The prophet tells of a man who sawed a piece of timber in two, half of which he used to cook his meal, while from the other half he created an idol before which he prostrates himself, fervently begging for mercy and salvation.

AN HONOR, NOT A BURDEN

"Jacob did not proclaim Me, as you felt wearied by Me, O Israel." (43:22).

A true servant of G-d, one who acts for to sanctify the Name of the Almighty, finds enjoyment and satisfaction in the worship of G-d. He does not consider the strict and numerous prohibitions of the Torah encumbering,

nor the many obligations a burden. To him they are a privilege he is proud of, just like a king who isn't bothered by the weight of his heavily jeweled crown.

G-d does not need our service; He is omnipotent and complete. The commandments are solely for our benefit. The prophet proclaims that if one feels encumbered by his duties as a Jew, then he does not understand the concept of the worship of G-d, and therefore is not serving the Almighty truthfully.



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A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

“And He called to Moshe...” (1:1)

Moshe had ten names. *Moshe, Yered, Chaver, Yekusiel, Avigdor, Avi Socho, Avi Zanuach, Tuvia, Shemaya, Halevi.*

Of all his names, the only one that G-d used was Moshe, the name that Basya, Pharaoh’s daughter, called him. If G-d Himself used the name “Moshe,” it must be that this name defines Moshe more than any of his other names. Why?

When G-d created Adam, the ministering angels asked, “This man, what is his nature?” G-d replied, “His wisdom is greater than yours.”

G-d then brought various animals before the angels and asked, “What are their names?” The angels didn’t know. G-d then showed the animals to Man. “What are their names?” He asked. Man replied “This one’s name is ox, and this one, donkey. This is a horse, and this a camel.”

“And you,” said G-d, “What is your

name?”

“I should be called *Adam* because I have been created from the earth (Hebrew — *adamah*).”

“And I,” said G-d “what should I be called?”

“You should be called *Adon-oy*; for you are the Lord (Hebrew — *Adon*) of all.”

The Holy One, blessed be He, said “I am *Adon-oy*. That is My Name. For that is what Adam has called me.”

A name is more than a way of attracting someone’s attention, more than a conventional method of reference. The wisdom of being able to name something is higher than that of the angels, *for a name defines and describes the very essence.*

For this reason one name was not sufficient for Moshe. In order to define him, to bound his greatness in words, *ten* names were required.

However, G-d said to Moshe that of all his names, He would only call him by the name Pharaoh’s daughter, Basya, named him. What was so special about this name?

The name Moshe comes from the word meaning “to be drawn,” for Moshe was drawn from the water by Basya.

When Basya took Moshe out of the river, she was flouting her father’s will. Pharaoh wanted to kill all the Jewish baby boys. By saving Moshe, she put her life on the line.

Because Basya risked her life to save Moshe, that quality was embedded in Moshe’s personality and in his soul. It was this quality of self-sacrifice that epitomized Moshe more than all his other qualities, and for this reason Moshe was the only name that G-d would call him.

This was the characteristic that made Moshe the quintessential leader of the Jewish People. For more than any other trait, a leader of the Jewish People needs self-sacrifice to care and worry over each one of his flock.

Sources:

Loose Ends - *The Steipler, Rabbi David Kaplan*

A Fortiori - *Ohr HaChaim,*

Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

A Rose By Any Other Name - *Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz*

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

BEERSHEBA

The name of this city, which played such an important role in the lives of Patriarchs, comes from the covenant which Avraham made with the Philistine ruler Avimelech. They sealed this pact with an oath near the site where Avraham discovered a spring of water (“Be’er” — spring, “*Sheva*” — oath) and then established there his “*eishel*” as the base for his legendary hospitality. The well built upon this spring was eventu-



ally stuffed up by the Philistines until Avraham’s son Yitzchak restored it to use. He called it by the same name to mark the covenant he made with the very same Philistines. It was from Beersheba that Yaakov set out on his journey from *Eretz Yisrael*.

Modern Beersheba is Israel’s largest development town and is known as the “Capital of the Negev.” During the War of Independence it was initially captured by the Egyptians but later conquered by Israeli forces in “Operation Ten Plagues.”

I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

“If the anointed kohen sins...he shall offer a bull as a sin offering...And take the bull outside the camp...and burn it...” (Leviticus 4:3,12)

The Torah commands that the *kohen gadol*’s sin offering be burned in public, outside the Sanctuary premises, so that no one will be embarrassed to admit his own sin. “Imagine!” a sinner will think, “Even the *kohen gadol* sinned; yet he admitted it and brought an atonement offering. Certainly, I too should admit my sin and bring an atonement.”

• *Ba’al Haturim*

WEEKLY DAF

YOMA 72 - 78

A TOUCH OF AWE

The Torah prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur is the principal subject of the final *perek* of *Mesechta Yoma*. Did our Sages also prohibit us to *touch* food on this day, as they did to touch *chametz* on Pesach (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 446:3*), for fear that we may come to eat this forbidden item?

Our *gemara*, which speaks of a mother handing food to her infant child, is a clear indication that no such ban was instituted. This is codified as law (*Orach Chaim 612:10*).

The obvious question arises: Why did our Sages find it necessary to forbid touching *chametz* on Pesach to avoid inadvertently eating it, but did not deem it necessary to institute the same precaution regarding food on Yom Kippur?

Two different approaches are put forward by the commentaries. Magen Avraham (*612:16*) suggests that on Pesach we eat foods which are not *chametz*, and we are therefore in an 'eating' mindset. Touching *chametz* may therefore lead to eating it. On Yom Kippur, on the other hand, our consciousness is focused on not eating *anything*. It is therefore unlikely that we will forget and eat something simply because we touched it.

Turei Zahav (*612:8*) proposes a very original solution based on a *mishna* in *Mesechta Demai (4:1)* regarding the purchase of suspect produce. If one purchases produce from someone who has no credibility regarding whether that produce was tithed, he must tithe the produce himself before eating it. However, if he forgot to do so before Shabbos, and on that holy day he asks the seller whether he tithed it and the seller says yes, then he may eat it. But if Shabbos is over and he asks him, he may not rely on his response. Why? Because even a Jew who is careless regarding tithing and truth-telling is not suspect of lying on Shabbos. This is due to the fear of Heaven which he senses on that holy day.

If this is true on Shabbos, concludes the Turei Zahav, how much more so on Yom Kippur, when a Jew is involved all day long in prayer, will the awesome mood of the day prevent him from inadvertently eating food, even if he touches it.

• Yoma 77b

HIDDEN CURSE AND HIDDEN BLESSING

“Come and see,” said Rabbi Yossi, “How different is the way of Hashem from that of man. If one man is hurt by another, he will seek to reciprocate by hurting him in every way he can. How different is the way of Hashem. He cursed the serpent (who

induced Adam and Chava to eat from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, and was condemned to eat dust as his food throughout his life – *Bereishis 3:14*) and what is the result? It goes up on a roof and finds such food there; it comes down and finds such food there as well.”

If subsisting on dust provides such security, it may be asked, why is this considered a curse?

Perhaps we may gain a perspective from a *gemara* on the next *daf*. There we learn of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's answer to the question: “Why didn't Hashem supply the Jews with a year's supply of manna, rather than compel them to collect it each day?” He compared the situation to a king who supplied his son with a year's supply of provisions. The son came to visit his father only once a year. The king therefore instituted day by day support, and thereafter enjoyed his son's presence every single day. So it was with Israel, concluded the Sage. A father with four or five children to feed was daily concerned that perhaps the manna would not fall from heaven, and that they would all die from hunger. As a result they would all direct their thoughts to their Father in Heaven.

Regular dependence on Hashem is a blessing in disguise, because it creates an intimate relationship between Giver and taker. Hashem required the Jews in the wilderness to face the daily challenge of insecurity and dependence so that their hearts would regularly “visit” their Father in Heaven. In regard to the serpent, however, we may compare it to the son who has fallen from favor; and for whom the father provides his lifetime needs all at once, so that he will not be privileged to contact his father. “The young lions cry out for food and beg G-d for their nourishment,” says King David (*Tehillim 104:21*), and so it is with almost all living things. Only the serpent, the original inciter to sin, is denied this dependence which leads to intimacy.

This indeed is a curse which serves as poetic justice for one who tried to persuade man that if he ate from the forbidden tree, he would gain Divine powers and no longer be dependent on his Creator.

• Yoma 75a/76a

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Who does the word “*eilav*” in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week’s Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an *olah* atone for?
4. Where was the *olah* slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-*kohen* perform?
6. Besides the fire the *kohanim* bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are *torim* (turtledoves) and *bnei yona* (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is *melika*?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a “satisfying aroma”?
11. Why is the term “*nefesh*” used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will *minchah* offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the *minchah*. What is meant by “honey”?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning *shlamim*, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the *kohen* may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the *mizbe’ach*. For which *korban* may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a *chatas*?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burnt while in the wilderness? Where were they burnt during the *Beis Hamikdash* times?
19. What two things does a voluntary *minchah* have that a *minchas chatas* lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a *korban asham*?

SHERLOX

SHERLOX HOLMES AND THE MYSTERIOUS FIRE

World famous detextive Sherlock Holmes gave three short puffs on his meerschaum pipe. “You haven’t got a match, have you Dr. Watstein?” he said.

“I’m afraid I do,” said Watstein, peering into the large volume that lay before him. “This text is my match. But I’m no match for it.”

“Read it to me,” said Sherlock.

“The verse says ‘the sons of Aharon the *kohen* shall put fire (*v’nasnu aish*) on the altar...’ (*Vayikra 1:7*). Rashi points out that even though miraculous fire from Heaven kindled the altar, the *kohanim* were nevertheless commanded to do their part and bring some ‘man-made’ fire too.”

“G-d helps those who help themselves,” said Sherlock.

“True, but why does Rashi need to go into this whole explanation? The verse is as simple as can be: ‘The *kohanim* should put fire on the altar.’ What ‘sparks’ Rashi to mention fire from Heaven?”

“Dr. Watstein,” said Sherlock, “you haven’t got a match.”

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. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2, 14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (*torim*), and doves (*bnei yona*).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the *Mishkan* Courtyard (*azarah*).
5. 1:5 - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bnei yona* are too old and *torim* are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one’s fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal’s food is provided by its owner, so its innards are “kosher.” Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with “theft.”
10. 1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, Hashem regards it as if he had offered his *nefesh* (soul).
12. 2:1 - The *kometz* (fistful).
13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
14. 2:12 - On Shavuos.
15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the *alya* (fat tail). The lamb’s *alya* is burned on the altar but the goat’s is not.
16. 3:8 - The *chatas*.
17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the *kares* (excision) penalty.
18. 4:12 - a) Outside the three camps. b) Outside Jerusalem.
19. 5:11 - *Levona* and oil.
20. 5:15 - Two *shekalim*.

A SLAVE NATION

**Professor William Small,
U. of Maine, Orono, ME
<wsmall@maine.maine.edu>
wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,
A student came to me the other day with the following question in reference to Genesis 15:13: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years." The young man is a Russian Jew who has become very interested in Judaism and is trying very hard to understand things from a Jewish perspective. Perhaps you would be willing to send me an opinion on this passage? He was very disturbed by it, commenting that he could not understand how G-d would willingly allow his people to be enslaved for 400 years. I would very much appreciate an answer from one of your rabbis on this. Many thanks.

Dear Professor William Small,

The purpose of this enslavement was for the establishment of the Jewish nation. Age-old Jewish philosophy states that there can't be an existence without a previous nihilo, like a plant that cannot grow before the seed decays.

First of all, the communal suffering caused solidarity and love between people sharing the same fate.

Second, the enslavement was the catalyst for the salvation and the great miracles of the Exodus that brought about the belief in one omnipotent G-d and based the Jewish faith.

Third, the generations of physical work caused a national hunger for spirituality which enabled them to receive with vigor the entire Jewish law at the Sinai revelation.

Fourth, dwelling in Egypt, the cradle of ancient culture, the Jewish nation learned and excelled in the sciences and the professions of the era, which helped them build up the Promised Land.

SEPHARDI SOURCES

**Jo Anne Crowson from California
<jamc1907@succeed.net> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,
Shalom! Can you please give me some information on the origins and history of Sephardic Jews? Though I am not Jewish, I enjoy your posts, and think you have a delightful sense of humor! Blessings and thanks.

Dear Jo Anne Crowson,

After the Destruction of the First Temple, around 450 BCE, the Jews were exiled to Babylon (modern day Iraq). After the 70-year exile many returned.

However, the majority of the Jews did not return, preferring Babylon instead. The Jews in Israel were again exiled in 70 CE, this time by the Romans. The Roman exile created communities in Europe and North Africa. The European communities were mainly in France, Spain and Rome, some in Germany as well. The Jews in France and Germany became known as *Ashkenazim* (Hebrew for "Germans") and the Jews in Spain became known as *Sephardim* (Hebrew for "Spaniards"). The Jews in Spain, which for hundreds of years was under Arab rule, had connection and communication with the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East, and hence all the Jews of these lands became known as *Sephardim*. Differences in custom developed over many years; some had their origin in halachic disputes among the Rabbis of the various communities, and some in outside cultural influences.

ASSISTED SUICIDE LAW

**Jonathan from Grand Rapids, MI
<Modelcov@aol.com> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,
We vote here Tuesday. There is an "assisted suicide" proposal on Michigan's ballot this year. I know

it's not right, but it's hard to say it's wrong. People really do suffer so terribly much at the end of certain terrible diseases. A guy was telling me the other day how much his mother suffered, although medication provided some relief. Your comments, dear Rabbi, are welcome; before Tuesday would be nice.

Dear Jonathan,

It is forbidden to commit suicide. G-d told this to Noach by saying, "Even your own blood, that of your own lives, will I demand (accountability for)" (*Bereishet* 9:5). Our unbroken tradition explains that this was a prohibition against suicide and that it is part of the "Seven Noachide Laws."

The idea is basically this: A person's life isn't "his" — rather, it belongs to the One who created it, G-d. Therefore, only its true Owner may reclaim it. Despite one's noble intentions, "mercy-killing" is an intervention into a forbidden domain. This does not mean that one should be lax about relieving the person's pain.

Now, among the laws that G-d gave Noach was a command to set up courts to enforce these "Seven Noachide Laws." Therefore, the "assisted-suicide law" can't be considered merely a "privacy-of-your-own-home" issue, because society as a whole is responsible to enforce the Noachide laws. Therefore, the right thing to do is to vote against assisted suicides. Voting for them, or staying home on Election Day, would be helping people to transgress.

There are other considerations that are beyond the scope of this column, such as passive/active intervention, and the exact definition of death. For these and related topics, see the list of sources below.

Sources:

- "Practical Medical Halacha - Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists," Feldheim Publishing
- "Medical Halacha for Everyone," Abraham S. Abraham, Feldheim Publishing
- "Jewish Ethics and Halacha for Our Time," Basil F. Herring, Ktav Publishing
- "Judaism and Healing," J. David Bleich, Ktav Publishing

WHO'S BLESSING WHOM?

Daniel Haruni of Toronto & Herzelia <dharuni@netvision.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the meaning of "baruch" in the prayers? If it is to bless, then what does it mean when we mere mortals say "Baruch ata Hashem? — Blessed are You Hashem." How can we bestow blessings on Him who is the source of all blessings?

Dear Daniel Haruni,

The *Rashba*, Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham Aderet (Barcelona, Spain, 1235-1310), was asked this question. He explained that "baruch" means "He is the Source of all blessing."

Sources:

- Responsa of the *Rashba* 5:51

ANGELIC NAMES

David Levy <dlevy@ee.usyd.edu.au> wrote:

Dear Rabbi

Our group were chatting about angels, their names and

their functions or duties. Where can I find out the names of angels and what they do? Could you tell me some of their names? Thank you.

Dear David Levy,

The Hebrew word for angel is *malach*, which means messenger, angelos in Greek. According to traditional Jewish sources, angels are the powers which fulfill the will of G-d.

Our Sages say there are four angels who allegorically accompany man and protect him. Michael on his right, Gabriel on his left, Oriel in front of him, and Rafael behind. The idea is that there are four "fields" in which one needs continuous help, and man receives this help via certain channels by which G-d conducts the occurrences in this world.

Michael, "*Mi Cael* — who is like the merciful G-d?" is the representative of the attribute of mercy. Gabriel — "my strength is G-d" — represents the attribute of power and judgment; they are therefore on the right and left respectively. Oriel — "my light is G-d," represents the attribute of knowledge by which man wishes to know what lies ahead and how to act accordingly; thus, Oriel "stands before" a man to show him the way. Rafael — "my healer is G-d" — is the attribute by which G-d heals any ill which befalls a man; that is why he "stands behind" man.

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

Re: Root Riddle (Ohrnet Teruma):

My name is Shira Grossman from Jerusalem. In the Yiddle Riddle for Parshas Teruma, Catriel Blum from Toronto asked: "What verse in the Torah contains the same root four times in a row?" In addition to your answer (*Bamidbar*, 4:47), I found another verse: "*Shofech dam ha'adam, ba'adam damo yishafech* — Whoever spills the blood (*dam*) of man (*adam*), by man (*adam*) his blood (*dam*) shall be spilled" (*Bereshis* 9:6). (This assumes that the word *adam* is from the root word '*dam*.) Thanks for your riddle.

- Shira Grossman, Jerusalem <davidg@mofet.macam98.ac.il>

Re: Top Ten:

I just read the Ohr Somayach top ten lists, and am practically in tears from laughing — especially from the top ten reasons to become an orthodox Jew.

- J.M. <email@withheld>

Re: Ask Archives:

I find the commentary in your archived "Ask the Rabbi" material fascinating. Such as the existence of certain *pareve* "milk" sources. I hadn't known there was such a thing as

almond milk, although, of course, I am familiar with coconut milk that I assume has the same status.

Speaking of which, there is the story, true, of the fabulous kosher dinner served in a Chicago hotel under the supervision of a famed glatt kosher caterer. The caterer was congratulated by an attendee after the affair was complete, who said, "Your dessert was fabulous; how did you do it? It tasted so much like ice cream!" The caterer responded, "The dessert was ice cream. But don't worry. The chicken...it wasn't chicken." Thank you again for your work. Shalom.

- Barry D Bayer <bbayern@counsel.com>

Re: Pyramids:

I learned something the other day and I am anxious to share it "with the world." Contrary to illustrations in innumerable *Haggadot*, the Jews in Egypt *did not* participate in building the pyramids. Pyramids were built during the Old Kingdom about 2600 B.C.E. the departure from Egypt occurred during the New Kingdom about 1300 B.C.E. The Torah says the Hebrews built storehouse cities.

- Edward Simon <esimon@bilbo.bio.purdue.edu>

Re: "Concerning the Jews" (Ohr Somayach Website):

The cartoon "Concerning the Jews" on your website was the cutest, and truest expression of Judaism I have ever seen. It was brilliant! The final quotation pretty much sums it all up: "Sometimes it doesn't matter if you're leading or being chased. Either way, the one in front chooses the direction." Congratulations once again, on bringing obscure Jewish concepts to earth.

- Yosef Ashenberg <YosefAshenberg@torahworld.net>

Daniel moved into a new neighborhood and didn't know anyone. He asked Rabbi Steinberg to help set him up with different families for Shabbos meals, which Rabbi Steinberg did faithfully every week. Every Friday, Rabbi Steinberg would call Daniel and tell him which family he would be eating with.

One Friday, Rabbi Steinberg called as usual. Daniel didn't answer, so he left a message on Daniel's voice mail telling Daniel which families were expecting him.

After Shabbos, Rabbi Steinberg was told that Daniel never showed up at the families for any of the meals. Perhaps he

had taken sick and couldn't notify his host? Perhaps it was a wrong number and someone else received the message?

The next time he met Daniel, the Rabbi apologized and said that he had left a message with Daniel's answering service. Daniel said, "I don't have an answering service!" They checked and discovered that the phone company gives three months' free voice mail to anyone who orders a new phone line. Daniel didn't know about this and therefore never picked up his messages!

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

YIDDLE RIDDLE

D. Kurtz <dkurtz@internet-zahav.net> wrote:

In *Bereishet* 24:28, Rivka is asked if she is prepared to go with Avraham's servant, and she responds in the affirmative. Rashi says that she is saying that she will go even if her mother and brother are opposed. Commentators on Rashi say that this is derived from the fact that she answers: "I will go!" instead of a simple "Yes." Of course, this only makes sense if there is somewhere in Scripture that we actually do find the usage of "Yes" in response to a question. The question is, do we find in the Torah a word meaning "Yes?" (The word "ken" appears many times in the Torah, as in "ken b'not tzeldovrot" and "Lo ta'asun ken," but not with its modern meaning of "Yes.")

Answer:

In *Bereishet* 30:34 Lavan says to Ya'akov: "Hen." Rashi explain this as "lashon kabalat devarim," "Yes" in English. This is an Aramaic word which we would have expected Lavan's sister, Rivka to use in answer to the question of whether or not she was prepared to go.

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SHERLOX ANSWER!

"Dr. Watstein, what does one generally do with fire?" asked Sherlock.

"You kindle it, what else?" said Watstein.

"And what does this verse say, literally?"

"It says *v'nasnu aish*, they put fire! Aha! I see! The word *v'nasnu* — they put — doesn't really match the word *aish* — fire. You don't *put* fire, you *kindle* fire."

"Exactly," said Sherlock. "The Torah almost always uses the phrase to *kindle* a fire, not to *put* a fire. Like in the verse: The *kohen* will *kindle* wood upon it." (*Vayikra* 6:5)

"Yes," said Watstein, "and like the verse: Do not *kindle* a fire on the Shabbos day. (*Shemos* 35:3) Therefore, Rashi wants to explain why here it says to *put* fire. Rashi answers with the midrashic explanation that the *kohen* did not initiate the kindling of the fire, for it was already alight from Heaven. Rather, he merely *put* fire, adding his share to the existing blaze."

"Dr. Watstein, you haven't got a match!"

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

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN	2:11	The Problem of Leaven	117	Symbolism of Leaven and Honey	
1:9	Reason for <i>Korbanos</i>	2:14	Why "If"	119	Salt
1:10	Bulls and Goats	SEFER HACHINUCH			
1:14	Birds	95	Concept of <i>Korbanos</i>	123	<i>Korban Oleh V'yored</i>
2:2	Role of the <i>Kohen</i>			125	A Sinner's Offering
				127	The Sin of Carelessness