

OHRNET

PARSHAT HA'AZINU - YOM KIPPUR - SUCCOT · PARSHAT V'ZOT HABRACHA · 5761 · VOL. 7 NO. 52

A Pound for Weighing REFLECTIONS ON YOM KIPPUR

by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Pounding one's chest conjures up memories of jungle king Tarzan demonstrating his primitive sense of macho.

But if chest-beating is viewed as a sign of masculine strength in the secular world, it is appreciated as a sign of human weakness in the Jewish world.

Throughout Yom Kippur a Jew pounds his chest as he confesses his sins before his Creator on the day when his judgment is sealed. Once right before the Fast Day begins, and five times throughout the night and day of Yom Kippur, the Jew recites his long list of sins, each of which is accompanied by a fist striking at the heart.

Teshuva — repentance and return — is comprised of regret for past sin, resolution for the future and a verbal admission of the sin. All of these ingredients are readily understandable as being indispensable elements for genuine return to G-d. But why is it necessary to pound the chest while making that admission of guilt?

The answer can perhaps be found in the dialogue between Iyov (Job) and the friends who came to console him for the loss of his children, his health and his fortune which Heaven had inflicted on him as a trial of his faith in

G-d. On the verge of total despair, Iyov presented an argument that attempted, says the Talmud (*Bava Batra 16*), to free all of mankind from responsibility for their sins. The evil inclination which G-d created to challenge man in his use of his free will is so powerful, argued Iyov, that man is as helpless in being a sinner as an animal with uncloven hooves is in being not kosher for consumption. To this, his consolars responded that G-d had indeed created a powerful poison to persuade man to sin, but He also created an equally powerful antidote called Torah. Man could therefore not blame his Creator for his own failures to meet the challenges to his free will.

Iyov's futile effort at self justification echoes throughout the generations. It is heard in the international courtrooms from defendants on trial for crimes against mankind who plead they were helpless because they were only obeying orders in perpetrating their atrocities. It is heard in local courtrooms where a glib lawyer pleads for his criminal client on the grounds that his crime was not the product of any evil in him, but rather the result of a problematic childhood, corrupting environment or economic despair.

It is also heard in the privacy of our hearts whenever we feel too weak to overcome temptation or to admit our sin in failing to do so. How many times have we heard ourselves and others say "That's the way I am!" "I'm only human!" when backed against the wall with criticism of our behavior?

This is why a Jew pounds upon his heart, home of the evil inclination and the good one, as if to say "You caused me to sin!" The Jew who is courageous enough to confess his sin is actually admitting that he cannot "pass the buck" of responsibility to the Creator, but rather declares that "the buck stops here!" At this moment of truth he avoids putting all the blame for his shortcomings on his parents, his teachers, his neighbors and friends and admits he is ultimately the guilty party. In the same heart and mind where lurks the poison of the evil inclination there is available the good one which obedience to Torah can activate as an antidote.

The repentant Jew pounds on his heart as he imagines the Heavenly Court weighing his virtues against his faults on this Day of Judgment. He knows that each pound will help to tip the scale in behalf of a favorable judgment for a good year to come.

HA'AZINU

Most of Parshat Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons heaven and earth to stand as eternal witness to what will happen if the Jewish People sin. He reminds the people to examine world history and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that Hashem “pulls the strings” of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as Hashem’s messengers. Hashem’s kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become self-satisfied and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt their morals.

They worship empty idols and indulge in depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, the purpose of these nations is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The Jewish People’s purpose is to make mankind aware of the Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

V'ZOT HABRACHA

The Torah draws to its close with *V'zot Habracha*, which is the only Parsha in the Torah not read specifically on a Shabbat. Rather, *V'zot Habracha* is read on *Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah*, when everyone in the synagogue gets called up to the Torah for an *aliyah* — even young children. The Parsha is repeated until everyone has received an *aliyah*.

Moshe continues the tradition of Yaakov by blessing the Tribes of Israel before his death. Similar to the blessings bestowed by Yaakov, these blessings are also a combination of the description of each Tribe’s essence, together with a definition of its role within the nation of Israel. The only Tribe that does not receive a blessing is Shimon, because they were central to the mass

immorality of worshipping the idol *ba'al pe'or*. Another explanation is that this Tribe’s population was small and scattered throughout the south of the Land of Israel, and would therefore receive blessings together with the host Tribe, Yehuda, amongst whom they would live. Moshe’s last words to his beloved people are of reassurance that Hashem will more than recompense His people for all of the suffering they will endure. Moshe ascends the mountain and Hashem shows him prophetically all that will happen to *Eretz Yisrael* in the future, both in tranquillity and in times of oppression. Hashem also shows him all that will happen to the Jewish People until the time of the Resurrection. Moshe dies there by means of the “Divine Kiss.” To this day, no one knows the place of his burial, in order that his grave should not become a shrine for those who wish to make a prophet into a god. Of all the prophets, Moshe was unique in his being able to speak to Hashem whenever he wanted. His centrality and stature are not a product of the Jewish People’s “blind faith,” but are based on events that were witnessed by an entire nation — at the Red Sea, at Mount Sinai and constantly during 40 years of journeying through the desert.

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Published by
OHR SOMAYACH
 TANENBAUM COLLEGE
 POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

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to the mass immorality of worshipping the idol *ba'al pe'or*. Another explanation is that this Tribe’s population was

HAFTARA

HA'AZINU

HOSHEA 14:2-10, YOEL 2:11-27, MICHA 7:18-20

A BURNING SENSATION

An unbelievable sight. A young fellow with all the visible signs of an Orthodox Jew walks into MacTreife’s Burger Bar and orders a cheeseburger! He then proceeds to eat it in full view of everyone.

Later he suffers tremendous heartburn from the indigestible fast-food. Much later, however, he suffers an even greater “burn” in the spiritual department.

The Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called *Shabbat Shuva*, the Shabbat of Return. The name is taken from the first verse of the Haftara: “Return

O Israel to Hashem for you have stumbled in your iniquity.”

The Meshech Chochma asks the question: What does it mean to “stumble” in iniquity? If a person is already doing something wrong, how can he make it worse by *stumbling* in it?

There are two aspects to wrongdoing. The offense itself and the desecration of Hashem’s name that may result from it.

It’s one thing for a Jew to slink into MacTreife’s in “plain-clothes.” It’s quite another to waltz in wearing full uniform, *yarmulke* and all. It’s one thing to commit *iniquity*, to give in to one’s desires, but it’s quite another to *stumble* and desecrate Hashem’s name in public.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

HA'AZINU

THIS IS YOUR LIFE

"Be careful to perform all the words of this Torah, for it is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life." (32-44)

Life is about sorting out what's essential from what's merely "nice."

It's essential to have a roof over your head. It's nice to have a view from your bay windows. When you buy a car, it's essential to have four wheels. It's nice to have air-conditioning front and back.

One of the challenges of living in our world is sorting out life's essentials from its optional extras. This is made even more difficult by the fact that there is an entire industry dedicated to convincing us that life's optional extras are really essentials. "Can you afford to

be without X?!" "Y will change your life!" "Buy Z and you will never be alone again!" The essence of advertising is to convince us that life's optional extras are its essentials.

In this week's Torah portion there is a verse that contains a strange counterpoint: "Be careful to perform all the words of this Torah, for it is not an empty thing for you — for it is your life."

There's a long way between being an "empty thing" and life itself. The natural corollary of an "empty thing" isn't life, it's something which is something less than empty, something partially full, containing some meaning — but life itself? There are a million levels of importance between emptiness and life. Why did the Torah choose such a dramatic juxtaposition?

Most people would agree that the

Torah is far from "empty." The Torah is the foundation of the moral and judicial systems of the vast majority of the civilized world. Its emphasis on the rights of the poor, of the underprivileged, of animals, of the duties of children to parents, husbands to wives, of society to its members, is unparalleled in the history of Mankind. But the Torah is more than just meaningful. It is the source of life itself. When G-d created the world, He looked into the Torah. The matrix of human life are its letters and words.

"It is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life." The Torah is not merely "not an empty thing," it is not merely an admirable and advisable code of behavior. It is Life itself.

Sources:

Based on an idea heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter in the name of Rav Sherkin in the name of the Chafetz Chaim

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

KIRYAT SHEMONA

Ever wonder at the meaning of the name of this northernmost city, which was always in the news because of katyusha attacks from terrorists in Lebanon?

Back in 1920, Josef Trumpaldor, founder of the *Hechalutz* pioneer movement in Russia, died along



with seven other Jews defending the Tel Hai encampment against Arab hordes. The base for this attack was the small Arab village of Halsa. On its site now stands Kiryat Shemona ("The City of Eight") as a memorial to the eight heroes of Tel Hai.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

HA'AZINU

"Ha Lashem Tigmalu Zot?" (32:6)

The above verse starts with an unusual letter "hey." It is unusual in two ways: It is larger than normal, and it is written far away from the word that it goes with. The Midrash sees this as a hint to Moshe's name, as follows: Start from the beginning of the parsha and take the first letter of each verse. Do this up to and including the above verse. Now take the numerical value of those letters and you get 345, which equals the numerical value of "Moshe." Thus, Moshe "signed" his name in this song at the end of the Torah. (Taking after Moshe's example, Jewish poets through the ages have encoded their names into their works.)

• Based on Midrash Tanchuma

V'ZOT HABRACHA

The Torah's last verses describe Moshe's death. According to Rabbi Meir, Moshe wrote these verses "B'dima — in tears." But this word can also be read "B'dema — jumbled." This implies that Moshe wrote these verses in a disorderly fashion so their meaning could not be immediately discerned.

• Based on The Vilna Gaon

THE MYSTERIOUS ARCHER

The Sage Chiya bar Rav shot an arrow while examining a case of annulling a vow. This seemingly bizarre behavior of a sage in the process of dealing with someone's vow is explained by the commentaries in two entirely different ways. They diverge on the issue of Chiya's position regarding the length of time the Torah allots a husband to cancel his wife's vow.

In our *mishna* we are told that on the day that a man hears of his wife's vow he has only until the nightfall to cancel her vow, regardless of what time during the night or day he became aware of it. Other sages quoted in the *gemara* contend that he has a full 24-hour period from the time he heard the vow.

Ran's version of the text is that Chiya went along with the majority view that he has only till the end of the day. The account of his shooting an arrow was, therefore, not related to the issue of husband cancellation. It was rather intended to teach us about his position regarding a sage's annulment of vows. While other opinions limited that power to a situation in which the sage could find an "opening" for the vow-maker to express his regret (i.e., that had he been aware of a certain consideration he would not have made such a vow), it was Chiya's opinion that the sage need not bother to find such an opening and could annul the vow based only on the regret expressed at having made the vow. Since this required no real effort on his part he was able to handle this annulment even while being preoccupied with his archery.

Rosh, however, has a different text that indicates that Chiya's position was that a husband had a full 24 hours in which to cancel his wife's vows. When Chiya heard his wife make a vow he did not immediately cancel it because he wished to discourage such future behavior by keeping her in suspense that her vow might indeed be binding. He therefore placed an arrow in the wall to mark the exact spot of sun and shade when the vow was made. He could then cancel his wife's vow the next day just before the 24-hour period was up.

• *Nedarim 76b*

A BLESSING ON THE TORAH

"Who is the wise man that may understand this," asks the Prophet Yirmiyahu (9:11-12), "and who is the one to whom Hashem has spoken that he may declare it — why has the land been lost?"

The answer is supplied by Hashem: "Because they have forsaken My Torah which I gave them and have not obeyed My voice."

Rabbi Yehuda quoted the Sage Rav as calling attention to the fact that no one could find the reason for Jews being exiled from their land, until Hashem revealed the reason. This question, he notes, was asked of the sages, the prophets and the angels, and no one could offer an explanation. This indicates that there was some subtle sin not discernible to anyone but Hashem.

And what is the meaning of Hashem's explanation? asks Rav.

What is the difference between "they have forsaken My Torah" and "have not obeyed My voice?"

Rabbeinu Yona, quoted by Ran, explains that Rav deduced that the cause for exile could not possibly be that Jews literally abandoned the study of Torah, for had this been so it would not have eluded the sages, prophets and angels. His conclusion is, therefore, that Jews did in fact study Torah, and as long as they had this merit of Torah study Hashem did not yet punish them for their other sins. This is why no one was able to find a reason for the removal of Divine protection that brought about destruction and exile. Only Hashem knew the answer:

"Because they did not make a blessing upon the Torah!"

Only Hashem, who knows the innermost thoughts of man, was aware that Jews had approached the study of Torah as if it were just another form of wisdom, and had not considered it important enough to offer a blessing to Hashem for this opportunity. Since they did not approach their Torah study with the proper reverence and dedication, it was not capable of providing them with protection from punishment for their other grave sins which caused them to lose their land.

• *Nedarim 81a*

THE INVESTMENT OF SHARED GRIEF

The power which the Torah delegates to a husband in canceling his wife's vows is limited to such vows that are a source of considerable suffering for her, or for matters affecting his relationship with her. When a woman makes a vow of *nezirut* which obligates her to abstain from wine and from contact with the dead, it is obvious that her husband can cancel her vow as regards wine and grapes because this constitutes suffering. But what about that part of the vow prohibiting contact with the dead — is such denial also considered suffering so that it qualifies for husbandly cancellation?

Yes, says the *gemara*, rejecting an earlier position that staying away from funerals is hardly considered self-denial. The reason that such denial is considered suffering is because it presents a danger to the woman that she will not benefit from reciprocity when it is her time to leave this world.

In explanation of this point the *gemara* cites the statement of Rabbi Meir (quoted in our piece on *Ketubot* 72) that King Solomon's counsel (*Kohelet* 7:1) "the living take it to heart" is a message: "One who eulogizes others will himself be eulogized, one who weeps for others will be wept over, and one who buries others will himself be buried."

Although this is obviously wise counsel regarding reciprocity in human relations, the commentaries saw in it a powerful incentive for a person to reflect on his eventual passing, and mold his life with that awareness of his mortality. Just hearing about people dying does not seem to have that impact because it is human nature for a man to relegate death to members of some mysterious "dier's club" to which he does not belong. It is only when he is involved in a funeral — the eulogies, the weeping and the burial — that he begins to seriously reflect that he expects these final tributes to someday be accorded to him.

This suddenly makes him consider himself also a member of that “dier’s club” and only then does he take death — and life — to heart.

• *Nedarim 83b*

FREE FOR ALL

What is the legal monetary status of one’s food that he has forbidden to himself through a vow? Do we view his relinquishing any benefit from this item as an act of *hefker* — the relinquishing of ownership that makes it available to the first claimant?

The commentaries conclude that the food does indeed become *hefker* and can be appropriated. Their source is our *mishna* which states that if one makes a vow forbidding *all kohanim* from benefiting from him, the *kohanim* may forcibly take the *teruma* tithe from his produce. But if he limits this vow to specific *kohanim* then his *teruma* must be given to *kohanim* not included in his vow. The explanation of this *mishna* offered by the Sage Rava is that the *tovat hana’ah* — the right which a Jew has to give his *teruma* to the *kohen* of his choice — has a monetary value. If he has vowed not to provide any benefit for specific *kohanim* he cannot give his *teruma* to them because he is giving away this monetary value. But if his vow extends to *all kohanim* then there is nothing left for him to do with his *teruma*. He cannot retain it for himself because he is not a *kohen* and he cannot give it to any *kohen* because of his vow. We therefore consider it as if he had made the *teruma hefker* and it is accessible to the claim of any *kohen*. The obvious extension of this is the above-mentioned case of a man forbidding himself to have any benefit from his food.

But what happens if the man making such a vow subsequently goes to a sage, expresses regret and has his vow annulled? Does the person who took possession of that abandoned food now have the responsibility to compensate the owner, since the vow is retroactively considered as never having taken place, and therefore the food was always the original owner’s?

Rashba contends that he will have to pay because of the retroactive nature of vow annulment by a sage. But Ran disagrees. He distinguishes between the prohibitory and monetary aspects of the food affected by the vow. Although the prohibition against his benefiting from the food is annulled by the sages, this does not affect the acquisition which another person made while that food was *hefker*, just as there is no annulment of an explicit declaration of *hefker*. The one who took it while it was *hefker* may therefore retain ownership of it.

• *Nedarim 85a*

THE SNAKE AND THE STOLEN WATER

A man suspected of an adulterous relationship with a married woman went into hiding in her home when her husband unexpectedly entered. From his place of conceal-

ment he saw the husband about to eat from some food which had been poisoned by the venom of a snake that had bitten into it. He called out a warning to him to save him from being fatally poisoned. His revelation of his presence, however, aroused suspicion that he had been illicitly involved with the woman of the house, and thus rendered her forbidden to her husband.

When the case came before the Sage Rava he ruled that the woman could remain married to her husband because it could be assumed that her suspected paramour was not guilty of adultery. His reasoning was that if this fellow was indeed involved in such a relationship he would have preferred to let the husband die from eating the poisoned food so that he could then marry the widow. He even cited a passage (*Yechezkel 23:45*) to the effect that adulterers are suspect of even murdering the man who stands in their way.

To the *gemara*’s challenge that this is an obvious deduction not worthy of mention the answer is given that if not for Rava’s ruling there would be grounds for assuming that the suspect had indeed committed adultery. But why then would he be interested in keeping the husband alive? Because, as King Solomon says (*Mishlei 9:17*), “Stolen waters are sweet and secret bread is pleasant.” This consideration might have provided a motive for an adulterer to keep the husband alive so that he would continue to indulge in the illicit pleasure of “stolen waters.”

Despite this possibility Rava definitively concluded that this had not been the motive of the suspect. Tosefot writes that an adulterer is not aware of Solomon’s insight into human nature regarding the sweetness of stolen waters. This is explained by Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler in the following manner:

Man deludes himself into thinking that finding a legal and simple way to enjoy a forbidden pleasure will bring him the gratification he seeks. In truth, however, the goal of uncontrolled desire is to be free of restraints. Should a sinner fully realize that this is so, he would cease his search for them. If the suspect was really an adulterer he would be unaware of the “stolen water” motive at the root of his behavior and would opt to see the husband die. Since he intervened, Rava concluded that nothing illicit had been perpetrated.

• *Nedarim 91b*

REMEMBERING WITH WINE

“Remember the Shabbat,” says the Torah, “to keep it holy.” How do we remember the Shabbat? The *gemara* (*Mesechta Pesachim 106a*) informs us that this is done by making *kiddush* over wine. The obligation to say a blessing declaring the sanctity of the Shabbat is unquestionably of Torah origin, but is the need for doing this over wine also a Torah requirement, or is it of rabbinical origin?

This is the subject of a debate between the commentary presumed to be Rashi and the commentary of Tosefot in our *gemara*. Their debate focuses on the *gemara*’s discussion of whether a *nazir* who is forbidden to drink wine may drink the wine of *kiddush*. Rashi’s understanding of the *gemara* is that the

continued on page seven

PARSHA Q&A ?

Ha'azinu

1. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses?
2. How is the Torah like rain?
3. How is Hashem "faithful without injustice"?
4. Why is Hashem called "tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did Hashem bring upon the world?
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did Hashem separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"?
9. How is Hashem's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, Hashem says "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
11. How does the idea of "chillul Hashem" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When Hashem overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When Hashem punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will Hashem's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People?
16. On what day was *Ha'azinu* taught to the Jewish People?
17. Verse 32:44 calls Yehoshua "Hoshea." Why?
18. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
19. Why did Hashem tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon?
20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ha'azinu's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Eliyahu "My Father." (*Melachim II 2:12*).
7. 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avot*.
9. 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings."
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. Hashem would not let His name be desecrated like this.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to Hashem.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys Hashem's commands, all the more so should they.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

Brent Worth from Waukeegan wrote: milk together?

I was surprised to read the verse that talks about the Jewish people consuming "milk from sheep with the fat of rams..." (*Devarim 32: 14*). How could they do that? Isn't it forbidden to eat meat and

Dear Brent Worth,
Nice question. The verse you quote is part of what the Torah calls "*shira*" — poetic song, and thus can be explained figuratively. But even if taken literally,

remember that the Torah only forbade milk and meat that are cooked together; whereas cold milk and meat are forbidden only by Rabbinic decree. Thus, the Torah could describe the consumption of cold milk and meat occurring *before* the Sages decreed against it.

• see *Ibn Ezra*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

PARSHA Q&A ?

V'ZOT HABRACHA

1. Before giving the Torah, Hashem went to Seir and Mount Paran. Why?
2. Why is Yehuda blessed immediately after Reuven?
3. What covenant (*brit*) did Levi keep?
4. Why was Binyamin blessed before Yosef?
5. Which Tribe received the “best” portion of *Eretz Yisrael*?
6. Besides the sun, which celestial body helps fruit to ripen?
7. If there were only 7 Canaanite nations, why did Yehoshua need to conquer 31 kings?
8. What three things did the land of Zevulun possess?
9. What did visiting merchants see that inspired them to convert to Judaism?
10. The tribe of Gad saw “the beginning — *reishit*.” The beginning of what?
11. The source of the Jordan River was in the territory of which tribe?
12. Which tribe possessed the *Kinneret*?
13. The daughters of which tribe married High Priests and Kings?
14. Who wrote the last eight verses in the Torah, starting with the verse “and Moshe died”?
15. Who buried Moshe?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to V'zot Habracha's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 33:2 - In order to offer the Torah to the people of Seir (Eisav's descendants) and the people of Paran (Yishmael's descendants).
2. 33:7 - Because both of them admitted their sin.
3. 33:9 - *Brit Mila* (circumcision).
4. 33:12 - Because the *Beit Hamikdash*, built in Binyamin's portion, was “more beloved” than the *Mishkan* built in Yosef's portion.
5. 33:13 - Yosef.
6. 33:14 - The moon.
7. 33:17 - Since the Land was so desirable, all foreign kings and governments acquired palaces and property there.
8. 33:19 - *Tarit*, a type of fish; *Chilazon*, a mollusk whose blood was needed for the *techelet* (a dye needed for *tzitzit*); and a type of sand needed for white glass.
9. 33:19 - They saw that the Jews serve one G-d and follow a unified kashrut code.
10. 33:21 - They saw the beginning of the conquest of the land, and chose that as its portion.
11. 33:22 - Dan.
12. 33:23 - Naftali.
13. 33:24 - Asher.
14. 34:5 - According to one opinion, Yehoshua wrote it. Rabbi Meir says Moshe himself wrote it with tears.
15. 34:6 - According to one opinion, Hashem buried Moshe. According to Rabbi Yishmael, Moshe buried himself.

Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

WEEKLY DAF

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need to make *kiddush* over wine is of Torah origin and therefore the vow to abstain from that wine cannot take effect. Tosefot, on the other hand, contends that the wine part of the *kiddush* is only of rabbinical origin, so that the vow takes effect and makes that wine forbidden to him.

In explaining why there is a need for making *kiddush* over wine, the Sefer Hachinuch points out that it is human nature to be stimulated by wine which causes both satiety and joy (*Mesechta Berachot 35b*). Where wine is not available, *kiddush* can be said over bread because the satisfaction of his hunger can also be a source of stimulation.

Since most authorities agree with Tosefot's opinion that the Torah obligation is fulfilled with words alone, it would seem that one who says the *ma'ariv* service on Shabbat Eve has already

discharged his Torah obligation and his need to make *kiddush* at home on wine is only of rabbinical origin. This is indeed the position of Magen Avraham (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 271:1*) who discusses an interesting ramification regarding making *kiddush* for women who have not prayed *ma'ariv*. Mishnah Berurah (*ibid.*) takes sharp issue with his approach and concludes that one does not fulfill the Torah mitzvah of *kiddush* until he says it over wine before his Shabbat Eve meal.

There is one occasion, however, for relying on the *ma'ariv* service for *kiddush*. This is when Yom Kippur is on Shabbat and *kiddush* is not made on wine. Some authorities therefore advise having in mind in the *ma'ariv* of Shabbat Yom Kippur to fulfill with that service the mitzvah of *kiddush*.

• Nazir 4a

KIPPER AND KIPPUR

From: Gina Kipper in Athens, OH
<gc439197@oak.cats.ohiou.edu>

Dear Rabbi,
What exactly is Yom Kippur and is "it" a person?

Dear Gina Kipper,

No, Yom Kippur is not a person! Yom Kippur means "the Day of Atonement." It is a Jewish Holiday of complete fasting (even from water) and introspection. It is actually a happy day, with festive meals before and after. We are happy because G-d promises to forgive our sins on this day, if we truly resolve to be better. (See Leviticus 23:26-32)

LIFE IN THE FAST VEIN

From: Ivy Epstein via email

Dear Rabbi,
If someone is sick and needs to eat on Yom Kippur, why not do so through intravenous? I understand that "eating" intravenously would not technically violate the fast. So why don't sick people check in to a hospital before Yom Kippur and "drink" intravenously, instead of actually breaking the fast?

Dear Ivy Epstein,

The obligation to fast starts on Yom Kippur itself, not before. Once Yom Kippur arrives, it's forbidden to hook up to intravenous, since blood will spill.

And before Yom Kippur, there's no obligation, *per se*, to prepare for the fast. Therefore, there's no obligation to hook up to intravenous.

And since there's no obligation to "eat" intravenously, it might actually be forbidden to do so if you don't need to. For one, inserting a needle is a transgression of the prohibition against unnecessarily wounding oneself. And who knows, intravenous may involve certain health risks, all of which may not be known at present.

Sources
• Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 3:90

FALLING IN THE FALL

From: D. Rubinstein <DebraDZR@aol.com>

Dear Rabbi:
Why does Succot fall on the calendar after Yom Kippur, and not after Passover? Succot deals with the fact that we sat in huts in the wilderness after we left Egypt, and the clouds that protected us. We were sitting in those huts and had those clouds right when we left Egypt, so historically, Succot should come right after, or during, Pesach.

Dear D. Rubinstein

Passover is in the spring when the weather starts getting warmer; if we were to make huts in the spring, it might seem like we were just building vacation bungalows to escape from the heat. Therefore, the Torah commanded us to build our *succah*-booths in the fall when it starts getting cool, making it clear that the *succah* is a commandment and not a cabana.

The Vilna Gaon offers another explanation: The *succah* represents the clouds of glory with which G-d protected us in the desert. Hashem took away these clouds when we made the Golden Calf, and when He forgave us that year on Yom Kippur, the clouds came back. So, Succot celebrates the *return* of those clouds after the first Yom Kippur in the desert.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

In a recent "Yiddle Riddle" you asked: My older brother is my twin. Although he is perfectly healthy in every way, he will not fast this year on Yom Kippur, although I will. Why? Your answer was that the speaker is a girl, and as such becomes *bas mitzvah* a year earlier than a boy. My oldest daughters, Esti and Bracha Tova, ages 13 and 12, came up with a different answer to this particular Yiddle Riddle: The older twin is not Jewish, and therefore not required to fast, and his twin is a convert to Judaism.

• Mrs. Hana-Bashe Himelstein, Baltimore, MD <wwide@erols.com>

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

HA'AZINU

Ramban

32:1 Biblical Witnesses
32:16 The Rebuke of Ha'azinu
32:40 The Testimony of Ha'azinu

Sforno

32:2 Waters of the Torah
32:13 Purpose of Eretz Yisrael
32:19 Purpose of Galut
32:27 Salvation of Dispersion

V'ZOT HABRACHA

Ramban

33:6 Why not Shimon?
33:12 The Shelter of Binyamin

Sforno

33:6 Reuven's Blessing
33:7 Shimon's Blessing
33:17 The Kingship of Yosef
33:25-6 The Collective Blessing

OUT OF ORDER

I was expecting an important business phone call one morning when I discovered that the phone lines in our house were dead. New in the area and not really knowing any of our neighbors, I drove a mile up the road to a pay phone, called the phone company repair service and reported the phone to be out of order. The technician told me to hold for a minute while he checked the line signal he got. He came back and said, "You have a phone off the hook."

Much relieved, I hurried home, checked all the phones in the house and didn't find anything wrong. So back up the road I went to the pay phone, talked to the same technician, told him there was no phone off the hook, and was again told in stronger terms "You *do* have a phone off the hook."

Another trip home, another check of all the phones, once again up the road and this time I fairly screamed at the technician that all the phones were O.K. and I was expecting an important call and needed my phone in

working condition immediately. He told me that he would put in a repair order but I should know two things. One, that nobody could get there until Monday. And secondly, the only thing wrong was a phone off the hook! I was livid but what could I do?

On arriving home I asked my wife if she had used the phone at all that day, and she replied that her only use had been to talk to my son who said he just wouldn't be able to come to the house as planned the following week for holiday dinner. When I asked what happened then, my wife rather sheepishly replied that she was so disappointed she said goodbye and slammed the phone down. I thought about this for a moment, picked up the phone she used, listened to the dead line, hit the side of the phone hard with my fist and — Lo and behold — I got a dial tone. Proudly, I hung up the receiver and immediately the phone rang. I picked it up and when he spoke I recognized the voice. It was the repair technician. All he said was, "I told you there was a phone off the hook." And he hung up.

• Clyde S. Brenner, Walnut Creek, CA
 <Roseclyde@home.com>

HAFTARAH

SIMCHAT TORAH: YEHOSHUA 1:1

Immediately upon finishing the Torah, we start again "In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth..." In this way we remind ourselves that immersing ourselves in the truths of the Torah is an eternal task, without beginning or end. The *haftara* states, "And Hashem spoke to Yehoshua bin Nun, Moshe's lieutenant, saying 'Moshe my servant is dead. You arise and cross over the Jordan...'" to

remind us that the work of the Torah is not that of a human being, not even the highest, but it is Hashem's work that began with the revelation at Sinai, and its accomplishment is not dependent on the personality and life of any man, however great and sublime he may be.

*Adapted from Dr. Mendel Hirsch,
 based on the words of his father,
 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*

גַּמַּר חַסִּימָה טוֹבָה חַג שׁוֹמַיָּאךְ

wishing you a gmar chasima tova & a chag somayach

T H E O H R S O M A Y A C H F A M I L Y

THE CIRCLE IS UNBROKEN

“He became King over Yeshurun when the numbers of the nation gathered — the tribes of Israel in unity.”

The mystics teach us that G-d’s Unity is revealed in this world to the extent that there is unity amongst His ambassadors in this world, the Jewish People. When His ambassadors are united, G-d’s presence is detected unmistakably.

One of Judaism’s great gifts to mankind is the verse in the Torah — “And you will love your neighbor as yourself.” (*Leviticus 19:18*) When we love each other and we are genuinely happy for our friends’ successes, this causes a greater perception of G-d in the world. When we do the reverse — when we see ourselves in a dog-eat-dog world — we take a step down towards the canine world. We lose that G-dly radiance which shows that He made us in His image.

This week we complete the annual reading of the Torah. As soon as we finish the last verse, we start again at the beginning. Without a break. We read the Torah in a continuous cycle because the circle is a symbol of eternity. It goes on forever. It is eternal, just as the One who gave us the Torah is Eternal.

The circle symbolizes eternity. It starts nowhere and it finishes nowhere. The circle is also a symbol of

equality. Every point in the circle is equidistant from its center.

There is an ancient Jewish custom to dance for hours around the *bima* (lectern) on *Simchat Torah* — the festival on which we celebrate the completion of the yearly Torah cycle. This circle of dancing symbolizes the eternity of the Torah and its Author.

The mystics tell us that in the next world the righteous will make a circle around G-d. And they will dance around and around Him just like we do around the *bima* on *Simchat Torah*. There will be many different kinds of Jews represented there: Jews from Iran and Jews from Indianapolis. There will be Jews of all colors and from all walks of life. There will be those who, while keeping faith with unbroken tradition, strongly differ in the emphasis in their service of the Creator. There will be *Chassidim* and *Litvaks*, *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim*. As they dance in that circle they will all realize that you can be 180° away from your neighbor and yet you can still be equidistant from the center, from G-d.

Sources:

• Rabbi Zev Leff and others

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andinformationonthousandsofJewishandcontemporarytopicsvisitourwebsite.edu

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