

# OHR NET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### PLUS CA CHANGE...

*“May Hashem illuminate His countenance...”(6:26)*

It’s interesting the perspective that time grants. Nearly four years ago, I wrote the following:

“When tragedy comes to the Jewish People, we could think that Hashem has abandoned us to our enemies. When we are beset by those who wish to destroy us and they seem to be unstoppable and we are powerless, and they kill us from morning till evening, let us remember this verse: *“I will surely hide My face.”* (Devarim 2:18)

“Hashem will never abandon us; rather, we *feel* that He has forsaken us because He has hidden His face. When Hashem hides ‘His face’ it means that we cannot see Him controlling events. It seems to us that chaos rules.

“Nothing happens that He does not decree. The decree for every event that has happened this year was sealed last Yom Kippur: ‘Who will live and who will die...’ ”

“He is always with us. And if we look carefully at events, even though we cannot see Hashem’s ‘face,’ we can, at least, discern His ‘back’, we can see the telltale footprints in the snow of history....

“However, when we feel depressed because we have failed G-d so totally and we feel that there is no way we can find our way back to Him, we should remember that He is always there behind the mask of the world, waiting for us to return through prayer and *te’shuva* (repentance).”

Four years later, these words seem as apt as when I wrote them. As the French say, *“plus ca change... the more things change, the more they stay the same.”*

*“I will surely hide My face.”*

In the Hebrew language, the emphatic “to surely do” something is expressed by the repetition of the verb.

That is, the literal translation of the phrase *“I will surely hide My face”* is *“Hide — I will hide My face.”* The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this “hiding.” There are two kinds of concealment: A concealment where you know that someone is there but you just can’t see them, and a concealment where you don’t even know if they are there at all. In other words the very fact of their hiddenness is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding — where the very hiding is hidden.

When we are aware that G-d has hidden from us, He is not really concealed, because we realize that our hiding from Him has been reciprocated by His hiding from us. It’s like any relationship: When you act coldly towards your friend or spouse, they lose confidence in your friendship and they retreat. But if you honestly ask for forgiveness and promise that you really want to renew the relationship, they will take you back.

However, there’s a deeper hiding of the “Face.” In this hiding, the hiding is itself hidden. Then we don’t see that we have a relationship with G-d at all. We think that this is the way the world is supposed to be. Then we are in big trouble, because nothing awakens us to return to Him. We think to ourselves: “This is the way things are supposed to be. Isn’t it?”

One of the blessings that the *kohen* bestows on the Jewish People is that Hashem should *“illuminate His countenance for you...”* Obviously, G-d does not have a countenance, a face, in the physical sense. The meaning of this blessing is that we should see everything that happens in the world as directly coming from G-d, that there’s no such thing as “natural causes.” The blessing of the *kohen* is that we see “His face” in the world — that His presence be clear to all who choose to see it. Then we can shake ourselves from the bonds of our illusions, re-establish our relationship with Him and return to the Torah.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used

for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to Hashem for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nisan* in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

## HAFTARA

### JUDGES 13:2 - 25

Parshat Naso features the laws of a *nazir*, and its *haftara* deals with the birth of Samson the *nazir*.

In a prophetic vision, an angel tells Manoach's wife that she will bear a child who will free the Jewish people from their current oppression at the hands of the Philistines. The angel instructs her that this child shall be a lifelong *nazir*, and that she herself must observe the laws of *nazir* until the baby is born.

The woman relates this to her husband, who prays for the angel to return and instruct them about the child, and G-d answers his

prayer. Following his reappearance, the angel departs in flame.

## PROPER EDUCATION

The angel instructs Samson's future mother to observe the laws of the nazerite vow, as her child is to be a *nazir* "from the womb" (13:5). Why?

Education begins before a child is born. A baby is influenced from the earliest stages of his existence as a scion of his parent. Just as an embryo is poisoned by a mother who smokes, so his character is influenced by her lifestyle and the moral traits she favors. Parents can't live without restrictions if they wish their child to be a good Jew; they can't expect him to lead a life that differs from their own.

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## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"Whatsoever any man give to the *kohen*, it shall be **his**." (5:10)

Possessions that are given away for a sacred purpose remain forever with the owner who gave them.

• Binah Littim

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## A DIFFERENT KIND OF PULL

**M**eshichah (pulling an object) is the most common form of *kinyan* — the virtual expression of ownership which finalizes a transaction involving a movable possession. It is used in regard to both the sale of an animal and that of a Canaanite slave.

The Sage Shmuel, however, makes a distinction between the two. Whereas an animal can be acquired by the buyer either by calling to it and having it come after him or by hitting it with a stick and causing it to run before him, the only way one can acquire the slave is by physically pulling him towards himself. In explaining why it is not sufficient to call to the slave as it is to the animal, Shmuel points out that the animal comes instinctively because it is called and this is considered an expression of ownership by the buyer who initiated its motion. A slave, however, has human intelligence and makes an independent decision to respond to the call of the buyer; therefore, there is no expression of ownership to qualify as a *kinyan* to finalize the transaction.

A charming application of the two methods used in the *meshichah* of an animal has been suggested regarding a passage in Shir Hashirim (1:4): In his Song of Songs, King Solomon speaks on behalf of his people in asking their beloved Creator to “Pull me after You and we shall run.” It is our fervent wish for Hashem to acquire us as His beloved people. But finalization of such an acquisition requires the *kinyan* of *meshichah*. This can take place by our being struck by a Heavenly blow which causes us to run ahead or by being called to follow. We certainly prefer the call to the blow and therefore appeal, through the voice of Solomon, that Hashem call to us and we shall come running after Him. In contrast to the Canaanite slave, however, we will do so with a total subjugation of our will to that of our Heavenly Master so that our relationship becomes irrevocably finalized.

• Kiddushin 22b

## ELEPHANT WALK

**H**ow do you lift an elephant? This is not a theoretical question but rather a challenge posed by Rabbi Yosef to the position of Rabbi Shimon. While some sages say that a transaction concerning a large animal can be finalized through the seller handing over the animal to the buyer or by allowing him to grasp its reins or hair, and others contend that it is sufficient to cause the animal to move towards the buyer at his bequest, it is the view of Rabbi Shimon that

only by actually lifting the animal is the transaction finalized. How, asks Rabbi Yosef, is this viable when dealing with an animal as large as an elephant?

One of the solutions proposed by the *gemara* is to use bundles of vines. Rashi and Tosefot differ in their explanations as to how these vines are used to lift the elephant.

According to Rashi the bundles of vines are set before the elephant at a height of three *tefachim* (handbreadths, with approximately ten centimeters to a handbreadth) so that they are no longer considered as being on the ground. Once the elephant is made to walk upon these bundles of vines, it is considered as if the purchaser lifted him a degree sufficient to finalize the transaction.

Tosefot challenges this approach by asking why the *gemara* chose something as uncommon as bundles of vines rather than having the elephant walk upon stones or wood which are the height of three *tefachim*. Rabbi Meshulam’s approach is then cited by Tosefot as an alternative to that of Rashi:

Vines are elephant food, says the *gemara* (*Mesechta Shabbat 128*), and one may therefore move bundles of vines on Shabbat and they are not considered *muktzeh*. The way to lift an elephant then is to tempt him with bundles of vines raised above his head so that he will have to jump up to reach them. This is considered as having lifted the elephant from the ground and finalizes the transaction even according to Rabbi Shimon.

• Kiddushin 26a

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### Ramban

5:2, 5:6	Organization of this <i>Parsha</i>
5:20	Waters of the <i>Sota</i>
6:11	Sin of the <i>Nazir</i>
6:24	Blessings of the <i>Kohanim</i>

### Sforno

7:13	Gifts of the <i>Nesi'im</i>
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### Sefer Hachinuch

362	<i>Tumah</i> and <i>Kedusha</i>
364	Confession
365	Marital Peace
366	<i>Sotah</i> Offering
374	Appropriate Asceticism
378	The Blessing of the <i>Kohanim</i>

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's *Parsha*?
2. Besides transporting the *Mishkan*, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is referred to in this *Parsha*?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *teme'im* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnot kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnot kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the name of Hashem is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people "with a full heart." What word in the *Parsha* conveys this idea of "a full heart?"
18. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem bless you and guard you?"
19. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem lift up His countenance upon you?"
20. The tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
4. 5:2 - The camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the camp of Levi which was surrounded by the camp of *Yisrael*.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the camp of the *Shechina*.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of Hashem is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shelamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - "Amor."
18. 6:24 - "May Hashem bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissachar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

## KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

**Question:** Why was the honorable duty of taking care of the *Aron* given to Kehat son of Levi (*Bamidbar* 4:4-6) instead of to Levi's firstborn, Gershon (*Bamidbar* 4:24-26)?

**Answer:** If the duty of taking care of the *Aron* — the prime

representation of Torah — were given to Levi's firstborn, people might think that Torah is received as an "inheritance," as is the Crown of Royalty and the Crown of *Kehuna*. The Crown of Torah, however, is available to anyone who toils in the study of Torah.

• *Kli Yakar*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to [kasha@ohr.org.il](mailto:kasha@ohr.org.il) with your questions on any Parsha!

## CONVERTS

**From: RB**  
<Withheld@rational.com>

Dear Rabbi,  
Moses took a non-Jew as a wife. She said, "Your people are my people" — today we ask much more of our converts.

Dear Withheld@rational.com,

Thanks for writing. You seem to be mixing up Tziphora and Ruth. Moses married Tziphora the Midianite (*Exodus 2*). It was Ruth, the Moabite, who said to Naomi, "your people are my people" (*Book of Ruth 1*). But I think I understand the point you are trying to make.

The Torah forbids intermarriage, and the Torah sets certain guidelines for what is required in order to convert to Judaism.

Such guidelines shouldn't strike us as irrational or excessive: To become a US citizen, you need to go through a certain process, the end of which is to "pledge allegiance to the flag" and to agree to abide by all the laws of the US. If a person were to say, "I accept all the laws except the one requiring that I pay income tax," or, "except for the law that I not discriminate against minorities," he is likely to be rejected for citizenship — and rightly so — no matter how otherwise

loyal he has been or will be. This should be true for most countries.

So it is when becoming a member of the Jewish People: One needs to go through the process of circumcision (for a male), ritual immersion, and acceptance of the Torah's 613 commandments. This process must be supervised by knowledgeable rabbis. But if someone were to say, "I'll accept all of Judaism, except for the law to abstain from eating milk and meat together," or "except for the law to observe Shabbat," then he cannot be accepted as a member of our people.

[This is not true for someone born Jewish. Like US citizenship, a born Jew doesn't lose his Jewishness for breaking the law.]

Note that Ruth said "your people are my people" only after Naomi tried three times to send her back and discourage her. From Naomi's example, the halacha is derived that we try somewhat to dissuade potential converts in order to test their sincerity.

Note, too, that Moses married Tziphora *before* the Torah was given at Mount Sinai. The rules for conversion had not as yet been set down and commanded. Then it was enough to swear off idol worship, accept belief in G-d and basic morality. At Mount Sinai, G-d gave us the Torah and its 613 laws. Among the 613 laws are those dealing with conversions.

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

**Re: New Partner (Ohrnet Behar-Bechukotai):**

I enjoyed Rabbi Wein's article about Israel needing a "new partner."

I have to tell you, it reminds me of an old Jewish joke involving a poor *schneider* (tailor) whose business is always on the ropes. He asks his rabbi what to do, and the rabbi says, "You should take Hashem into your business as a partner." So, the *schneider* hangs up a sign in front of his shop saying, "Schneider and Hashem." But business gets no better. "Of course," says the rabbi, "you put yourself before Hashem." So the guy changes the sign to read "Hashem and Schneider." Sure enough, business gets better and better, he

becomes a multimillionaire and eventually Anglicizes the name. And today, Lord and Taylor's is.... [no longer what it was but survives as part of Macy's, owned by Federated].

• Jeff Sokolow <sokoloj@towers.com>

**Re: Cartoon History:**

<http://ohr.edu/judaism/concern/concer00.htm>

I absolutely love your cartoon-history. This wonderful characterization is just so easy to look at and understand. I hope I find more sites like Ohr.edu. May you be blessed in your fine work.

• Lillian <clockco@swbell.net>

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

If ten animals are born to a person's flock in one year, that person is required to separate one of the animals as *ma'aser beheima*, an animal tithe, and bring it to Jerusalem. If less than ten are born to his flock in a single year, he is exempt.

There was once a man who owned only one female animal, a sheep. One year this sheep gave birth to five lambs and to no more; yet, the owner was obligated to separate *ma'aser beheima* from these lambs. How can this be? (This man would never in his life buy, find, inherit, receive as a gift, or steal another animal, nor would he ever have joint ownership in any animal. A year in this context is from one Rosh Hashana to the next.)

**Answer next week...**