

# OHRNET

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PLEASE NOTE OUTSIDE ISRAEL THIS WEEK IS PARSHAT NASO

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### “Rabbi” Bob Dylan

“When you kindle the lamps...” (8:2)

**W**e’re a stiff-necked people. It says so in the Torah. When I think back over many of the non-observant Jews I have met in my life, I see how their youthful questioning was often met by a “Shut up and just do it” attitude that turned them into unwilling atheists. I’ve often thought that the highest paid teachers in the Jewish educational system should be the first grade rebbes. A child’s entire future spirituality may rest in their sometimes-incapable hands. Who cares if the Rosh Yeshiva novel idea gets shot down five minutes into his mind-twisting hermeneutical exegesis? But if a young child’s question, “How we know that there is Hashem?” is met by red-faced lathering and a scream of “Apikorus,” that response may lead the child to believe that there is no answer.

How many super-talented Jews are so over-represented in the arts and the sciences! And how many of them might have used those talents to sanctify the name of Heaven had they been given the right answer and the right encouragement at the right time.

Jerry Wexler (January 10, 1917 – August 15, 2008) was a major player in the music business from the fifties to the eighties. Think Ray Charles, the Allman Brothers, Chris Connor, Aretha Franklin, Led Zeppelin, Wilson Pickett, Dire Straits, Dusty Springfield and Bob Dylan. He coined the term “Rhythm and Blues,” changing the title from “Race Music.”

In 1979, Wexler agreed to produce an album by Bob Dylan. He was unaware of the nature of the material that awaited him. “Naturally, I wanted to do the album in Muscle Shoals, as Bob did, but we decided to ‘prep’ it in L.A. where Bob lived,” recalled Wexler. “That’s when I learned what the songs were about: born-again Christians in the old corral. ... I like the irony of Bob coming to me, the Wandering Jew, to get the Jesus feel ... But I had no idea he was on this born-again Christian trip until he started to evangelize me. I said, ‘Bob, you’re dealing with a sixty-two-year-old confirmed Jewish atheist. I’m hopeless. Let’s just make an album.’”

“When you kindle the lamps...” The word ‘to kindle’ here is ‘Behaalotecha,’ which comes from the root *l’a’lot*, which means to go up. The Menorah represents the spirituality of the Jewish soul. It’s not enough to just wave a match in the general direction of a child’s spirituality, you have to hold that match there long enough and carefully enough until the flame can ascend by itself.

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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**A**haron is taught the method for kindling the Menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the firstborn, who were disqualified after sinning through the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50. Afterwards, they are to engage in less strenuous work.

One year after the Exodus from Egypt, Hashem commands Moshe concerning the *korban Pesach*. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of *Pesach Sheini* – allowing them a "second chance" to offer the *korban Pesach*, one month later – is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified.

Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* – the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in the Exodus – some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. Hashem tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. Hashem sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained.

Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon, which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. Hashem explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at*, as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for Miriam to be healed, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Behaalotcha - Gittin 16-22

### A Get 'Divorced' from the Ground

*"A get may be written on anything: on an olive leaf; on the horn of a cow, and then he must give her the cow (for the divorce to be valid).*

This teaching in the *Mishna* does not mention that he must give his wife the entire olive tree, despite it teaching immediately afterwards that he must give her the entire cow, even though he wrote the *get* only on its horn. This seems to imply that he wrote the *get* on the leaf after it was detached from the tree, and not while it was still connected, which is consistent with the Rashi's commentary.

One reason offered by the commentaries is that the *get* must be written on an object that is fit to be given to her "from hand to hand." The basis for this is in understanding the wording of the verse in the Torah that mandates the procedure for divorce: "And he writes for her a bill of divorce and places it into her hand." (Devarim 24") This wording implies that the *get* be an object that can be transferred from his hand to her hand, excluding a tree that is connected to the ground. (See the notes of the Rashash, who suggests this explanation and then proceeds to question it on the basis of other teachings, leaving the topic open for further study.)

Gittin 19a

### A Blank Get or Invisible Writing?

*Shmuel said. "If a man gave his wife a blank paper for divorce, she is divorced – since he may have written the get on the paper with (an 'invisible ink') called mei millin."*

The *gemara* challenges this halachic statement of Shmuel from a *tosefta* that teaches that the *get* must have writing on it for it to be valid. The answer provided by the *gemara* on behalf of Shmuel is that the "blank" paper was in fact checked with a certain substance (called *maya d'nara*), and the text of the *get* appeared. (This substance is a type of dye that is put on the paper and causes the "invisible" letters that were written and absorbed into the paper to now come to the surface and appear to the eye – Rashi. Tosefot cites Rabbeinu Chananel and the Aruch as teaching that this substance is made from the peel of a pomegranate.)

Even if the text appears in this manner, asks the *gemara*, it was not apparent when the *get* was given to the wife – so why should Shmuel say she is indeed divorced? The *gemara* clarifies and concludes that Shmuel really meant that she is in a state called "doubtfully divorced," and may not marry a *kohen*. The doubt is regarding how well the letters written there were absorbed into the paper, and, depending on this factor, whether or not to consider it a kosher *get*. This halacha is codified in Shulchan Aruch Even Ha'ezer 135:4.

Tosefot adds a novel twist. According to this conclusion that the divorce is only doubtful, this doubt exists even if the paper was not checked with the "litmus test." We still have a concern that he wrote the *get* with an ink that was absorbed into the paper. However, Tosefot adds, if the paper is indeed checked and no text is found, it can clearly be concluded that the *get* is not valid, beyond any shadow of a doubt.

Gittin 19b

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the Menorah burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the Menorah made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*t'nufot*" (wavings) are in the parsha?
5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the Menorah and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Whom did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

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

## Answers

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the Menorah was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *para aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show G-d's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the avoda; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic - these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### Behaalotcha: All Tied Up

In this week's essay we discuss various Hebrew words for "tying," including *keshirah*, *asirah*, *ketirah*, *tzror*, *kafut*, and more. In doing so, we trace these words to their etymological forebears and investigate whether or not they are all truly synonymous.

Let's begin with the word *keshirah*: Words hewn from the trilateral root KUF-SHIN-REISH – from whence *keshirah* is derived – appear sixty times throughout the Bible. These include "tying" *tefillin* to one's hand (Deut. 6:8, 11:18), tying a red string to Judah's firstborn son (Gen. 38:28), tying a rope in the window (Josh. 2:18, 2:21), and the like. Inflections of *keshirah* are also used in the Bible in reference to a less tangible "tying," like when Judah said that his father's soul is "tied" to the soul of Benjamin (Gen. 44:30), or when Proverbs teaches that one should proverbially "tie" good virtues and wisdom to one's person (Prov. 3:3, 6:21, 7:3).

Nonetheless, the most common use of the root KUF-SHIN-REISH in the Bible refers to a "conspiracy," whereby a group of people "tie" together in the figurative sense in order to overthrow the government or otherwise achieve a political goal. For example, when the evil Queen of Judah Athaliah realized that there was a vast conspiracy determined to overthrow her, she called out "*keshet, keshet!*" (II Kings 11:14).

The term *asirah* derives from another trilateral root, ALEPH-SAMECH-REISH, which appears close to ninety times in the Bible. It usually appears in the context of "tying" a wagon to the animal that pulls it (e.g., Gen. 46:29, Ex. 14:6, II Kings 9:21), or "tying down" a person who was taken captive or otherwise detained (Ps. 146:7, II Kings 17:4, Judges 16:21). In fact, the word for "jail" or "place of incarceration" is *bet ha-assurim*, literally, "the house of those tied down" (Judges 16:21, 16:25, see also Gen. 39:20, 40:5).

Another word ultimately derived from this root is *issur* ("prohibition"), which already appears several times in the Pentateuch in the context of taking vows that prohibit certain actions or items (see Num. 30:3-15). This connects to the idea of "tying" because when something is forbidden, it is as though it has been "tied down" and rendered inaccessible to whomever it is forbidden. We find a sort of parallel to this in the English expression "my hands are tied," which means that I am blocked from taking a certain course of action (for whatever reason). Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) ties this to the biliteral root SAMECH-REISH ("removal"), explaining that when one is tied down, one's freedom of movement is "removed." In fact, the notion that the ALEPH of *assur* is superfluous to the actual root has already been noted by the early grammarian Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Chayyuj (945-1000), who adduces that the phrase *bet ha-surim* (Ecc. 4:14) is the semantic equivalent to the phrase *bet ha-assurim*.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) similarly explains that *mussar* ("moral reproach") likewise relates to "tying" because it gives a person the ability to "tie down" his Evil Inclination and keep his illicit desires in check. In my earlier essay, "[Holy Matrimony](#)" (Oct. 2020), I discussed the notion that the Hebrew term *erusin* ("betrothal/engagement") may be a metathesized form of *asirah*. For more on the connection between *issur* and the idea of "tying," see my essay "[Brilliant Prohibitions](#)." (May 2021)

Malbim (1809-1879) explains that the main difference between *keshirah* and *asirah* is that *asirah* is done without the consent of whatever is being tied. For example, when a captive (*assir*) is taken, he might be detained against his will, and would be forcibly "tied down" to curb his movement. In this way, Malbim relates *asirah* to the term *yissurin* ("suffering"), which likewise denotes something non-consensual that comes upon a person against his

will. Similarly, Malbim notes that *issur* in the sense of “prohibition” refers to the idea that one's actions may be precluded (by law or by nature) against his will (as noted above).

On the other hand, Malbim explains that *keshirah* denotes "tying" something in a way that whatever is being tied "consents" to that action. For example, in the case of a *keshet* ("conspiracy"), the co-conspirators willfully enter in communion with each other to join one another in their plot (see also Radak to II Kings 9:14), they are not forced into.

*To learn about the other words for “tying” in Hebrew, the continuation of this essay is at:  
[https://ohr.edu/this\\_week/whats\\_in\\_a\\_word/](https://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/)*

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## COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

### KIDDUSH (Part 4) – Unity through Separation

“Although you may enjoy the rest and the tranquility of Shabbat, have in mind that you are not observing the day for your own pleasure; rather to honor the One who commanded you to do so.”

Sefat Emet (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter)

**K**iddush continues: “Blessed are you, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, took pleasure in us, and with love and favor gave us His holy Shabbat as a heritage, as a remembrance of creation.”

In reference to the Festivals, Hashem commands us to designate the “holy convocations.” (Vayikra 23:2) As Nachmanides writes, we are instructed to assemble together to praise Hashem and to eat special meals in honor of the holiness of the day. In addition, the Midrash explains that the Festivals are designated by the actions of the Jewish nation. In Temple times, witnesses would travel to Yerushalayim to testify having seen the new moon. If their testimony was accepted by the Sanhedrin, a new month would be declared. Designating the new month automatically designated the time of the Festivals as well because each Festival belongs to a specific month. In effect, the Jewish People were intrinsically involved in establishing both the months and the Festivals. Once the month was verified, the Festival belonging to it was determined as well.

However, in the very next verse, which refers to Shabbat, the Torah simply states that Shabbat is a “holy convocation.” There is no command to designate and appoint it as such. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains that Shabbat is different from the Festivals. Shabbat was designated by Hashem during the Creation, and, as such, there is no necessity for a declaration to be made by human beings. Rather, from the very first Shabbat in history, every seventh day is filled with innate Kedusha that was implanted in it by Hashem. As such, Shabbat serves as a remembrance that Hashem did not just create our world, but that He continues to sustain it physically and spiritually. Our task, therefore, is not to designate the Kedusha of Shabbat, but, rather, to

recognize its Kedusha and bring it into our lives. Therefore, every week when we observe Shabbat, we affirm our belief that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.

Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky said that many years ago he met a lonely old Jew with a long white beard in a nursing home in Mountain Brook, Alabama. The lonely man told Rabbi Kotlarsky that his children had left him there and didn't care about him. Rabbi Kotlarsky said that he remembers the old man's words: "My Zeidie (grandfather) used to call Shabbat the Heilige Shabbos Kodesh. My father called it Shabbos Kodesh. I call it Shabbos. My children call it Saturday and their children call it the weekend. I shudder to think what their children will call it."

*To be continued...*

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## LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman*

### Complaints and Quail

**M**oshe is understandably exasperated with the people – the people whom he led out of Egypt and so devotedly sought to educate to an elevated mission of spirituality. To this end, Hashem miraculously provided water and spiritual manna bread. But now they complain – cry and wail – over the garlic and onions they had consumed so freely in Egypt. To Moshe, this attested to the failure of his mission. He was to have won the people's hearts to the supreme ideal of moral and spiritual perfection, and here the people were wailing about the lack of onions!

Lamenting his failure, Moshe says, "Have I conceived this nation or given birth to it, so that You should say to me: Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries the suckling infant?" If a father or mother fails in some regard as a parent, this is somewhat mitigated by the natural love and respect a child has for a parent. But Moshe was not their parent, and without the natural bonds of love and respect, he was not their natural educator.

Moreover, Moshe did not see a way out. Sure, he knew that Hashem could perform miracles. But he also knew that the demands of the people here were trivial and inappropriate – they were "bad" in the eyes of Hashem and in the eyes of Moshe. (Bamidbar 11:1, 10) This was hardly the kind of crisis that Hashem would resolve with a miracle. *And*, the people didn't want "miraculous" food – they wanted real meat, not manna. Therefore, Moshe asks, "Where will I get meat for six hundred thousand people?" He correctly recognized that here they could not expect a miracle from Hashem's strong Hand, and asked for an explanation. Hashem's reply to him was that He has the power to carry out His word even within the framework of natural possibilities: "My word will come towards you." The event (His word) is beyond all human reckoning, yet it will come towards "you," meaning that it will occur by natural causes. *And*, indeed, it was so. No one could have envisioned the fortuitous winds which would divert the migratory path to deposit mountains of quail in the camp of Israel!

In response to Moshe's complaint, Hashem instructs him to appoint seventy elders to assist in leading the nation, a group that constitutes the basis for the future Sanhedrin. But they do not appear to play any role in resolving the meat complaints. Why are they appointed in the middle of this story? In years to come, whenever circumstances do not seem to favor the realization of Hashem's word, and the battle of Israel's future elders for the fulfillment of Hashem's Word does not seem – by human reckoning – to stand a chance, they will be able

to look back for moral support upon those initial moments and the events that surrounded the very first elders of the Jewish People.

These events will always reassure Jewish leaders that as long as the message they represent and convey is the true Word of Hashem, they can trust in His hidden Providence. Even without the splitting the sea or ordering the sun to stand still, His Word will come to the people within the natural order. The quail event would give our elders a firm foundation of confidence for all future activity.

*\*Sources: Commentary, Bamidbar 11:10-11, 23*

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## PEREK SHIRA: THE SONG OF EXISTENCE

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

### THE SONG OF THE BEAR

The Bear says:

“Let them raise [their voices], the wilderness and its cities, the fenced areas of Kedar. The dwellers of stone will exult; they will call from the mountaintops. They will attribute glory to Hashem, and His praise will be related in the islands!” (Yeshayah 42:11-12)

The winter is symbolic of the exile of the Jewish People, which will conclude with the resurrection of the dead that will take place in spring. The bear survives the winter in a state of death-like hibernation, after which it rises and conducts itself in the opposite manner, with liveliness and constant activity. It thus sings of the time that “the dwellers of stone will exult,” that is, when those buried in the ground will rise and praise Hashem. The restored Land of Israel will then raise its voice in jubilant song, and the celebration will resound throughout the wilderness, the fenced areas, the mountains, and even in distant islands.

Although the bear sings about a time in the future, it indicates a lesson that pertains even now. In the same way that the bear is constantly hungry and searching for food and drink, a Jewish soul ought to search for spiritual sustenance. The Sages teach that Torah scholars have no rest neither in this world nor the next, for they continually rise from level to level, becoming greater and greater to no limit. Until the world has reached its rectified state and Hashem’s Presence has returned to its holy resting place, a Jew cannot be fully at rest. We should never feel bored, for every moment of life is call for action, and every action is a song to our Creator.

*\*Sources: Shir HaShirim 2:11; Tur, OC 490; Shocher Tov 104:23; Mechon Shivtecha; Perek B’Shir, citing the Vilna Gaon; Berachos 64a*

*\*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*



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