

OHRNET

PARSHAT VAERA 25 TEVET 25 JANUARY 2025
• VOL 32 NO. 11

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Big and Great

“This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom Hashem had said...” (6:26)

Imagine you’re walking along the street with an attaché case containing ten million dollars. Being a charitable soul, you’ve decided that you want to build a yeshiva, and you’re on your way to donate the money. Suddenly a masked man with a stocking over his face jumps up in front of you. He grabs the suitcase from you and shouts at you: “Speak one word of *lashon hara* (malicious gossip) right now or say goodbye to the money!”

So, what can you do? The Torah says that you have to give up all your money rather than willingly violate one Torah prohibition. You stand there and watch the masked man douse the suitcase with lighter fuel and toss a match on to it. The whole thing goes up in a short-lived but rather expensive bonfire.

A different scenario. Same attaché case, same ten million dollars. However, this time no masked bandit appears. You successfully donate the money and in due course there arises a beautiful yeshiva through your efforts.

Imagine walking into the Beit Midrash of that Yeshiva late one night! 400 students are learning there. Imagine how you feel when you go to bed that night!

So let me ask you a question. Why should you feel any less when you go to bed at night having not spoken one word of *lashon hara* that day?

“This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom Hashem had said...”

Rashi explains that in some places, the Torah mentions Moshe before Aharon, and in others, Aharon before Moshe. The reason is to teach us that Moshe and Aharon were considered equal.

How can that be? The Torah itself says that there will never be a prophet of the stature of Moshe. “*Never again has there arisen in Yisrael a prophet like Moshe...*” (Devarim 34:10)

Aharon must not have been on Moshe’s level of prophecy but the Torah equates him with Moshe because Aharon utilized every gift that Hashem had given him to the maximum. Aharon actualized all his potential, all his unique gifts, and thus he was considered Moshe’s equal.

We tend to think that we can only be great by doing big, recognizable things. Like building yeshivas or being famous. The truth is that even if Hashem never blesses us with the wherewithal to do big things, we can all be truly great.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Sanhedrin 51-57

Commandments Before and After Sinai

Ten mitzvahs were commanded to the Jewish People at Marah: Seven of these they had accepted on themselves as Bnei Noach, and added to them were (three new mitzvahs): Laws, Shabbat and honoring one’s father and one’s mother. As it is written: "There, He gave them a statute and an ordinance, and there He tested them." (Shmot 15:25)

The Maharitz Chiyut points out that we see from this teaching that the mitzvah of honoring one’s father and the mitzvah of honoring one’s mother is all one mitzvah. Otherwise, there would have been four additional mitzvahs added at Marah, besides the original seven *mitzvot* Bnei Noach. He points out that this understanding of the mitzvah to honor one’s parents is not in accordance with the teachings of the Sefer Mitzvot Gedolot and the Ramban, who both hold that the mitzvah of honoring one’s father and one’s mother constitutes two separate mitzvahs.

He also explains why the seven *mitzvot* Bnei Noach were repeated at Marah, as implied in our *gemara*, and cites a fundamental teaching of the Rambam: “All mitzvahs that we have and keep today are due to them having being given to us at Mount Sinai, and are not due to any command that preceded the Sinai experience, when we received the Torah with all its mitzvahs.”

▪ *Sanhedrin 56b*

Midwifery

In the name of Rabbi Yishmael the Rabbi said, “A Ben Noach is obligated the death penalty also for killing a fetus.”

This statement on our *daf* is one of many teachings regarding the mitzvahs, laws and sources applicable to a Ben Noach. The Maharsha addresses this statement of Rabbi Yishmael, and with it offers a fascinating explanation that gives a special insight into a well-known part of the Jewish history in Egypt.

When Pharaoh decreed to kill the Jewish male babies, the verse states, “The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah. And he said, ‘When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live.’” (Ex. 1:15-16)

An oft-asked question asked by learners of these verses is why Pharaoh spoke to the Hebrew midwives to act in this way, and not to the Egyptian midwives. Were there no Egyptian midwives in Egypt? And wouldn't one think that they would have even more motivation and obedience to Pharaoh to obey his command to kill the Jewish babies?

The Maharsha explains this portion of the Torah, based on the teaching of Rabbi Yishmael. Certainly, he explains, Pharaoh didn't ask or command the Egyptian midwives to actively kill the babies, because a Ben Noach is prohibited from killing another person — even a fetus, as Rabbi Yishmael teaches here. But he did tell the Jewish midwives to kill the fetus while it was still inside the mother, since it was permitted for them as Jews to do so. The Jewish midwives were prohibited to kill the baby only once its head or majority of its body emerged from the mother into “the air of the world.” And, since the Jewish midwives needed to do the deed before the fetus emerged, signs that indicated that the fetus was a male even before it emerged were provided to the Jewish midwives so they could act as commanded — in a permitted way — and kill the fetus before it was born. (See the 1st chapter of Tractate Sotah for early signs that revealed in advance the gender of the child.)

And let us not forget the righteous Jewish midwives, of course, who disobeyed the command of Pharaoh to kill the Jewish babies, as the verse states, “The midwives, however, feared Hashem; and, so, they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but, rather, they enabled the boys to live.” (Shemot 1:17)

▪ *Sanhedrin 57b*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. Hashem commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. Hashem punishes the Egyptians, sending plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only Hashem could be performing these miracles.

Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. info@ohr.edu

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COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 2)

“The amount of sleep required by the average person is five minutes more.”
Wilson Mizener – American Playwright

Kriat Shema al Hamitah begins with the following declaration: “I hereby forgive anyone who has angered me, or sinned against me, either physically or financially, against my honor or anything that is mine, whether accidentally or intentionally, inadvertently or deliberately, by speech or by deed, by thought or by speculation, in this incarnation or in any other. Every Jew [is forgiven], may no one be punished on my account. May it be Your will, Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my fathers, that I shall sin no more nor repeat my sins. Neither shall I again anger You nor do what is wrong in Your eyes. The sins I have committed, erase in Your abounding mercy, but not through suffering or severe illnesses. May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable before You Hashem, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

As mentioned in the previous article, the *Mishnah Berurah* (239) recommends that one make a *cheshbon hanefesh* before going to sleep. However, the *Mishnah Berurah* writes that it is not enough to make an accounting for one’s own actions throughout the day. It is also important to identify any hurtful things that were done to you during the day so that, whenever possible, you can forgive the person who did them to you. This concept is revolutionary. It is not enough that someone did something to me that hurt me, but I have to make place in my heart to forgive them for what they did! And, in order to motivate us to do so, the *Mishnah Berurah* says that a person who manages to forgive those who hurt them will merit to live a long life.

Therefore, we begin Kriat Shema al Hamitah with a declaration of forgiveness. Doing so allows us to go to sleep knowing that we have cleansed ourselves of any ill feelings we might be harboring. It means that we can sleep with the knowledge that we have ended our day in the way that Hashem wants us to.

But, more often than not, sincerely forgiving those who have hurt us is a difficult monumental undertaking. It was Alexander Pope, an eighteenth-century English poet, who coined the phrase, “To err is human, to forgive Divine.” True words, indeed. But that does not preclude our obligation to try and rise above ourselves in order to reflect the Divinity inside of each of us. It is certainly far from easy to achieve but it is an attainable goal.

To reach this goal often requires extraordinary inner strength and conviction. An elderly woman who felt that her end was near, revealed to her son a painful memory she had kept suppressed for close to seven decades.

“When I was in the concentration camp,” she related, “the rations we got were so small that we were always starving. Yet, one of the girls in the barracks, each day would put away a part of our bread ration and save it to eat it on Shabbat. I knew where she hid the bread, and one day, could not resist, and ate it up. When Shabbat arrived, this girl discovered that her incredible self-restraint was for nothing. “I know that this girl survived the war, but I don't know where she is today.” This mother begged her son, “Please find her and ask her to forgive me so I can die in peace.”

Shocked by the story, her anxious son immediately started to make inquiries, hoping that the other survivor was still alive and could be located. With much Divine assistance, he tracked down the name and contact information of one of her children.

“My mother is still alive,” the man on the other end of the phone said when he called him, “though she is very weak and is bedridden.”

Hours later, he was at his mother's bedside, and slowly reminded her of that incident of so many years ago. The elderly woman became very agitated.

“How do you know this story?” she demanded to know from her son. “I knew then already who stole it, but never breathed a word about it all these years. I forgave her back then already!”

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1789-1866), the third Rebbe of Lubavitch, points out how incongruous it is that, as a rule, children forgive each other easily, whereas, often, adults seem to have such a difficult time being able to forgive. Rabbi Schneerson explains that the reason for this is because, generally, children would rather be happy than right. Adults, on the other hand, prefer to be right – even if it means that they will not be happy.

The very first lesson that Kriat Shema al Hamitah is conveying to us is that forgiving those who have hurt us benefits us even more than it benefits them. A nourishing night's sleep begins with letting go of the hurt and distress that others have inflicted upon us.

To be continued...

**[Please note: sometimes a person may find it impossible to immediately forgive someone for what they have done to them. In such situations, it is Halachically permitted to omit the opening paragraph and recite the rest of Kriat Shema al Hamitah.]*

Q & A

Questions

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
6. Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel"?
7. After which plague did G-d begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart"?
8. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
9. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
10. How long did the plague of blood last?
11. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
12. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation"?
13. What are "chamarim"?
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
16. What were the Egyptians likely to do if they saw the Jews slaughtering lambs?
17. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
18. The dever killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

Answers

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:9 -- Although G-d swore to give them the Land, they never actually had control over it.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
6. 6:25 - Yitro fattened (pitem) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (pitpet) at his evil inclination.
7. 7:3 - After the sixth plague – shechin.
8. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
9. (a) 7:17 - Because the Nile was an Egyptian god. (b) 8:17 - Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and G-d did the same.
- 10.7:25 - Seven days.
- 11.7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
- 12.7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
- 13.8:10 - Piles.
- 14.8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
- 15.8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
- 16.8:22 - Stone the Jews.
- 17.8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
- 18.9:10 - In the plague of dever only the cattle in the fields died. The plague of shechin affected the surviving cattle.
- 19.9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
- 20.9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Not Nice Lice

The third of the Ten Plagues with which Hashem afflicted the Egyptians is known as the Plague of Lice. The Hebrew word for “lice” is *kinnim*, a term that appears at least six times in the Bible. This essay surveys the various instances and possible instances of that term in the Bible, and traces its etymology as much as possible. After we ruminate on the word *kinnim*, we will turn to two Aramaic words which seem to be synonymous with *kinnim*. As I will explain below, I believe that these three terms are not actually synonyms, but rather simply three different forms of the same word.

In the context of the Plague of Lice, the Biblical Hebrew *kinnim* is used five times in Exodus (Ex. 8:12–14) and once in Psalms (Ps. 105:31). Two of the five times that the word appears in Exodus, it is vocalized *kinam* (Ex. 8:13–14). Although the singular form of this term, *kinah* (“louse”), does not appear in the Bible, it does appear once in the Mishnah (*Parah* 9:2) and multiple times in the Talmud (*Shabbat* 12b, 107b, *Chullin* 105b, *Eruvin* 65a, *Chagigah* 5a, *Bava Metzia* 107b, *Zevachim* 19a). In fact, the Bible is so consistent about using the word *kinnim/kinam* in a way that it includes the letter MEM that Ibn Janach (*Sefer HaShorashim*), Rashbam, Ibn Ezra (to Ex. 8:12), and Ibn Parchon (*Machberet HeAruch*) all felt the need to point out that the MEM is not part of the word’s root (but see below). They explain that *kinnim* is the plural form (“lice” as in many louses), while *kinam* is a singular form that denotes the “species of lice” as a whole.

In terms of the etymology of *kinnim*, all the classical lexicographers trace the word to the biliteral root KAF-NUN (including Ibn Janach, Ibn Saruk, Ibn Parchon, and Radak). Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (in *Cheshek Shlomo*) defines the core meaning of the biliteral root KAF-NUN as “base/basis” in both a physical or abstract sense. From the abstract meaning come a whole slew of words including: *kein* (“yes,” “so/such/likewise,” “affirmative”) and *nachon* (“correct/true”), both of which serve to acknowledging something’s valid basis; *tochnit* (“plan”) and *hachanah* (“preparation”), which are the fundamental bases for any serious undertaking; *kohen* (“priest”), who is the person in charge of making sure that all “preparations” for ritual worship at a temple are in order; and *kavvanah* (“intention”), which is the mental preparations a person undergoes when planning for a certain task. The word *kan* (“base/stand/post/position”) derives from the physical meaning of this root, as it denotes a thing or place upon which the main object in question physically rests. As a corollary of this last meaning, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that *kinui* (“nickname,” “moniker,” “epithet” or “nomenclature”) is a linguistic base used to refer to something without actually uttering the

proper name of the referent. He then writes that *kinnim* derives from the word *kinui* because lice are considered so despicable and disgusting that people refrain from attaching an actual word to those bugs and instead use *kinnim* as a cognate of *kinui* to refer to them indirectly.

Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch (to Ex. 8:12) offers a simpler explanation, connecting the word *kinnim* directly to the word *kan* by explaining that just as a *kan* refers to a “base” upon which the object in question is placed and is secondary to the object itself, so do lice act as parasites that are placed on a human host’s body or hair and are secondary to their host.

As mentioned above, *kinnim* appears at least six times in the Bible. The first six occurrences — all in the context of the Plague of Lice — are undisputed. But there may be another two instances of this word in the Bible, if we follow certain commentators. In a poignant passage that speaks of Hashem's everlastingness, Isaiah stresses how other elements of creation are set to eventually expire and disappear, while Hashem lasts forever: "...for the heavens will dissipate like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die like *kein*, but My salvation always is..." (Isa. 51:6). Targum Jonathan in this context explains the word *kein* as “so,” with the verse meaning that the earth will eventually wear out and its inhabitants will *likewise* perish. However, the 17th century Dutch Protestant scholar Ludovicus de Dieu first proposed that *kein* in this verse possibly means “louse,” with Isaiah’s point being that the earth’s inhabitants will die like lice. This explanation is also cited by Shadal (who notes that other scholars like Rosenmüller and Gesenius also followed this approach) and Malbim in their respective commentaries to Isaiah. It is also the understanding favored by Avraham Even Shoshan in his concordance of Biblical Hebrew and by Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffmann (in his comments to Ex. 8:12).

Another possible instance of this word in the Bible is when the Ten Spies related their experience scouting out the Holy Land and told of the giants that inhabited that place. In that context, the spies said, "And we were in our eyes like grasshoppers, and we were *kein* in their eyes" (Num. 13:33). The classical way of interpreting the word *kein* in this verse is "likewise," as the spies felt small when compared to the giants and felt that the giants likewise viewed them as small when compared to themselves. However, in light of the above, Malbim (there) suggests reading the word *kein* here as "louse," with the spies saying that they felt as small as grasshoppers in their own eyes, and felt that in the eyes of the giants, they were as insignificant as lice.

Targum Onkelos and Targum pseudo-Jonathan (to Ex. 8:12–14) use the word *kalmta* for “lice” when translating the Hebrew words *kinnim/kinam* (as does Targum to Ps. 105:31). In our editions of Targum, that Aramaic word is spelled KUF-LAMMED-MEM.

However, there is another spelling of this word in the Talmud. In one place, the Talmud (*Brachot* 51b) states that “from rags [are generated] *kalmei*.” Rashi (there), following the notion of spontaneous generation, explains that *kalmei* refers to *kinnim* (“lice”) and the Talmud means that scraps of worn-out fabrics cause lice. Rashi explicitly adduces this understanding of the Talmud by noting that Targum translates the word *kinnim* as *kalmta*, which he sees as a cognate of *kalmei*. The word *kalmei* used in the Talmud and the Targumic word *kalmta* as cited by Rashi is not spelled with an initial KUF, but rather a KAF.

Likewise, the Talmud (*Niddah* 20b) that Ifra-Hormizd, the mother of the Sassanian king Shapur II, used to send Rava questions about menstrual blood. One time, Rava sent her a special comb that is used to kill lice as a hint to her that the blood that she asked about was actually the blood of dead lice. In that context again, the Talmud uses the Aramaic word *kalmei* and spells it with an initial KAF. So far, we have two Aramaic words for “lice” — KUF-LAMMED-MEM and KAF-LAMMED-MEM. This Aramaic word also has a counterpart in the Akkadian *kalmatu*, which also means “lice.” [Rabbi Nosson of Rome’s *Sefer HeAruch* is inconsistent regarding whether the Talmudic Aramaic word *kalmei* should be spelled with a KUF or a KAF (see his entries on the roots SAMECH-REISH-KUF and KAF-LAMMED-MEM).]

Interestingly, an international group of archeologists led by Dr. Daniel Vainstub from Ben-Gurion University reported in 2022 that they had discovered an ivory comb with a Canaanite inscription on it that read: “May this tooth root out the lice [*kamal*] of the hair and the beard.” As my readers hopefully know by now, the ancient Canaanite language is very closely related to Biblical Hebrew and both are part of the Semitic family of languages (along with Aramaic, Arabic, Akkadian, and other languages). In light of this, it comes as no surprise that a cognate of *kalmta* and *kalmei* would occur on this Canaanite comb, but the surprise is that the final two consonants in the word have been transposed from LAMMED-MEM to MEM-LAMMED. Being Canaanite, this text is almost certainly older than the Targumic texts mentioned above (which were written in Aramaic), so it seems that KUF-MEM-LAMMED is the original spelling of the Semitic word for “lice,” and KUF-LAMMED-MEM represents a later metathesizing of the final consonants. The Canaanite form of this word is also preserved in the Arabic word قمل (*quml*), which still means “lice.”

Similarly, the Sefire treaty texts (discovered in northern Syria and dating to the end of the First Temple period), are an important corpus of Aramaic inscriptions that record a treaty between two Syrian kings, outlining mutual obligations, divine oaths, and curses upon treaty violations. One of those curses calls for lice to do something to the one who fails to uphold the agreement, but the text breaks just before it says what the lice were supposed to do. Either way, the Aramaic word for “louse/lice” in that context is spelled KUF-MEM-LAMMED, just like the word in the Canaanite ivory comb. It should be noted that Professor Chaim Tawil questions translating the word in question as “lice,” because in context it refers to a crop-consuming pest, not lice which stay on a people’s body. Instead, he sees this word as referring to “vermin of the field,” which actually parallels the use of the word *kinah* the one time it appears in the Mishnah (*Parah* 9:2) in the sense of a “a *kinah* of the grain.” [There is also a triliteral root KUF-MEM-LAMMED in Biblical Hebrew (Isa. 19:6, 33:9), which refers to “rotting/molding/withering.” It is quite possible that the word used in the Sefire text might actually be a declension of that root.]

At this point, we now have three forms of the Aramaic word for “lice”: KUF-LAMMED-MEM, KAF-LAMMED-MEM, and KUF-MEM-LAMMED. It should be noted that cognates of this word have not been found to occur in other Semitic languages like Hebrew, Ugaritic, or Phoenician. Yet, the three Aramaic terms and the Biblical Hebrew *kinnim*, while not

attested in the respective other language, all mean "lice." This observation suggests the possibility of a shared etymological origin, positioning these terms as cognates. Notably, just as the KUF in Imperial Aramaic shifts to a KAF in Talmudic Aramaic, the LAMMED in the Aramaic terms might correspond to the NUN of the Biblical Hebrew *kinam*, aligning with the phonetic interchange patterns of the letters LAMMED, MEM, NUN, and REISH. By this reasoning, KAF-LAMMED-MEM could be equated with KAF-NUN-MEM, indicating that the MEM in *kinam* forms part of the root, contrary to the traditional lexicographical interpretations cited above. Furthermore, this hypothesis supports the idea that Biblical Hebrew contains two distinct terms for lice: *kinnim* (the plural form of *kinah*) and *kinam*, a singular form that is cognate with aforementioned Aramaic terms.

After coming up with this suggestion, I consulted with Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak (Jared) Greenblatt and Rabbi Shaul Goldman who agreed that this supposition is indeed tenable. I later saw that Dr. Alexander Kohut (1842–1894) in *He'Aruch HaShaleim* cites the Maskilic scholar Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885) as explaining that the Talmudic Aramaic KAF-LAMMED-MEM is cognate with the Biblical Hebrew KAF-NUN-MEM. If this supposition is correct, then KAF-NUN-MEM (Biblical Hebrew), KUF-MEM-LAMMED (Canaanite, Imperial Aramaic, and Arabic), KUF-LAMMED-MEM (Targumic Aramaic, and Akkadian), and KAF-LAMMED-MEM (Talmudic Aramaic) are not actually synonyms, but are simply different forms of the very same word!

When David tried to explain to King Saul that it was beneath the king's honor to chase after David as a legitimate threat, David compared himself to a *parosh* (I Sam.24:14, 26:20). *Metzudat Zion* (to I Sam. 24:14) defines the word *parosh* as a type of "black *kinah* that jumps." In popular parlance, this refers to a "flea." The classical lexicographers (i.e., Ibn Saruk, Ibn Janach, and Radak) see the word *parosh* as derived from the quadrilateral root PEH-REISH-AYIN-SHIN, although Rabbi Hirsch (to Gen. 25:6) includes the word *parosh* in his discussion of quadrilateral roots that are really comprised of trilateral roots with an added final SHIN. Interestingly, name Parosh also appears in the Bible as a given masculine name in lists of people who lived in the beginning of the Second Temple period (Ezra 2:3, 8:3, 10:25, Neh. 3:25, 7:8, 10:15). Public service announcement from my wife Shira Yael Klein: Tea Tree oil kills lice dead, but remember never to use any essential oils without diluting them first.

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

THE SHABBOS MUSSAF OFFERING

Mitzvah #402; *Bamidbar* 28:9-10

The Mussaf offering of Shabbos consists of two lambs burned on the Altar. This is double the regular Tamid offering, which consists of one lamb. In contrast, on all other special days of the year, we are commanded to bring abundant and varied offerings. Even on Rosh Chodesh, which is surely less special than Shabbos, we bring more than ten offerings, some of which are burned and some of which are partly eaten. What is the symbolism behind the few and simple offerings of Shabbos? We will attempt to gain a basic understanding of this esoteric concept.

Midrash Tehillim (§92) expounds: *See, Hashem has given you the Shabbos (Shemos 27:29)*. What does this verse tell us to “see” about the gift of Shabbos? It means to see (i.e., consider) that all its matters are double. We eat a *lechem mishneh* (a double portion of bread), we bring a double offering, the punishment for its violation is double (“*mos yumas*”), its reward is double, its commandments are double (*Zachor* and *Shamor*, to remember and to safeguard the Shabbos), and its psalm is double, “*Mizmor shir*” (“A psalm, a song”).

What is the nature of this theme of “double”? On the most basic level, we may suggest that the idea is not “double,” but multiplicity, for the number two symbolizes “greater than one” (see also *Rav Hirsch* to *Bamidbar* 28:9). Of all the days of the week, Hashem blessed Shabbos (*Bereishis* 2:3). This means that it is blessed in every respect, and blessing means multiplicity and abundance (see *Nefesh HaChaim* 2:10). Not only do we find an abundance of feasting and joy on Shabbos, but even Torah we study on Shabbos is “blessed” with greater significance (see *Ben Ish Chai*, introduction to *Shemos*, *Shanah Sheniyah*).

On a deeper level of understanding, *Gur Aryeh* (*Devarim* 5:12) writes that the double nature of Shabbos symbolizes that it is comprised of both this world and the World to Come (see also *Shabbos Malkesa* 4:5). We will elaborate on his brief words. While Shabbos exists in this world, it is a taste of the World to Come. The connection between Shabbos and the World to Come lies in the fact that Shabbos is the seventh day of the week, and thus corresponds to the seventh millennium, which is the time of the World to Come, the ultimate Shabbos day of rest. We channel the World to Come into our Shabbos day in this world by means of the two mitzvos, safeguarding it and remembering it. By safeguarding it from labor, we disconnect from our involvement with this world (see *Gur Aryeh*, *ibid.*). By remembering the Shabbos, primarily through Kiddush, we become involved with the World to Come, for we recall in the Kiddush that the world has a Creator, and therefore a purpose: service in this World and

reward in the World to Come. Another way we remember the Shabbos is by enjoying and delighting in it (*Rambam, Shabbos 30:1*), for this reminds us of the ultimate enjoyment of the reward in the World to Come. Just as the reward for keeping the Shabbos is double, in this world and the next, the punishment for violating it is double.

With regard to the psalm of Shabbos, "A psalm, a song for the day of Shabbos," one of the Sages interprets it as referring to the Shabbos day and another Sage interprets it as referring to the Shabbos of the World to Come (*Rosh Hashanah 31a*). According to what we have explained, we may suggest that this psalm alludes to both, and that is why it is entitled doubly: A psalm, a song.

The double portion of bread reminds us of the double portion of manna that fell on Erev Shabbos in the Wilderness. On the symbolic plane, this hints to us to prepare ourselves with Torah and good deeds in this world, which is compared to Erev Shabbos, to be worthy of the reward in the World to Come, which is compared to Shabbos (see *Mesilas Yesharim* ch. 1). Thus, the double portion of bread, too, symbolizes this world and the World to come.

We come to the double offering of Mussaf. Hashem said: "Just as My children eat a double portion of bread on Shabbos, I shall partake of a double offering" (Midrash cited in *Daas Zekeinim*). In other words, Hashem observes the Shabbos together with us, so to speak. Just as we eat a double portion of bread in celebration of how the perfection of Hashem's handiwork will be revealed in the World to Come, so too, we offer Him a double offering to show our gratitude to Him for this and to express our loving subjugation to Him that this belief obligates. We bring specifically lambs, called "*kevasim*" in Hebrew because these weak and timid animals are entirely subjugated (*kavush*) to their owner, to demonstrate that the entire world is subjugated to its Creator (*Abarbanel*; see there further). Just as Shabbos is entirely holy to Hashem, for then we dedicate even our bodies to Hashem by refraining from work and engaging in enjoyment for His sake, so too, the Shabbos Mussaf offering is entirely burned upon the Altar.

In the Mussaf prayer, after reading the Torah passage of the Mussaf offering, we add a prayer: *Yismchu b'malchuscha shomrei Shabbos v'korei oneg* (May those who safeguard and delight upon the Shabbos rejoice upon Your kingship). As explained, delighting upon the Shabbos is part of the mitzvah to remember it. Thus, although we cannot bring the Mussaf offering these days, we pray that we merit to connect with Hashem and rejoice upon His kingship through the two mitzvos, safeguarding and remembering the Shabbos, which parallel the double Mussaf offering.