

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### **The Rest of Your Life**

*“This is the thing that Hashem has commanded, ‘Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats...’ (16:16)*

My wife had an auntie Sarah who lived in Nes Tziona. She passed away a couple of years ago on the other side of a hundred years old. A couple of years before she died, she called my wife one day and said, “You know what happened to me? I just got back from the doctor, and he’s given me this pill, and I have to take one of these pills every day for the rest of my life!”

In a sense, every day is a lifetime.

There once was a young rabbi who was applying for a position in a certain village. A tour of the village included a walk around the graveyard. As he started to read the inscriptions on the tombstones, he realized that virtually every one of the inhabitants of these graves had died before they were thirty.

“This is terrible!” he said. “What tragedy happened here?” His guide answered, “No tragedy. In this village, the tradition is to list on the gravestones only the days and years that a person used for Torah, mitzvahs and good deeds.”

A day in life, a moment of connection with G-d is a lifetime. Every breath we take is a world of opportunity. Every moment. Time may look like a heartless, relentless march forever forward to our end. As poet William Carlos Williams said, “Time is a storm in which we are all lost.” But is time really a rapidly dwindling, limited resource that we must spend frivolously before it’s all gone?

The English word “moment” comes from the Latin word momentum, implying relentless movement – the march of time. The Hebrew word for time, *rega*, comes from *ragua*, which means a state of calm or rest. The rest of your life.

That doesn't mean that time stops. As Chaucer wrote, "Time and tide wait for no man." Rather, time itself is a series of stops, of discrete individual realities. In other words, it's not that you are on the conveyor belt of time. The conveyor belt is like a sushi restaurant with different dishes passing before you, a conveyor belt that is constantly presenting new moments each for you to enter and inhabit. The Biblical phrase for aging, *ba bayamim*, literally means "entering into one's days."

The Zohar interprets the verse, "Abraham was old, 'coming with days,' to mean that "Abraham brought all of his days with him." Days must be collected, harvested. Each moment's individual calling and potential needs to be utilized to the maximum.

Every moment contains the 'rest' of your life, even when you're ninety-seven years young.

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## TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

### **Sanhedrin 65-71**

#### **Adam's Apple**

*Rabbi Meir said, "The tree that Adam ate from was a grapevine, because nothing brings weeping to the world except for (drinking) wine."*

A *beraita* on our *daf* quotes three opinions for the identity of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Rabbi Meir says it was a grape, Rabbi Yehuda holds it was wheat, and Rabbi Nechemia contends that it was a fig.

All three of three fruits have the potential to ferment and become intoxicating drinks. Overdoing the consumption of wine or alcohol is known to cause a person to act foolishly and even dangerously. Although other opinions of the identity of "Adam's fruit" are also cited in the Talmud, there is no mention of "the apple" as being the identity of the forbidden fruit.

- *Sanhedrin 70a*

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 4)

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

“Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad” are the most famous words in the Jewish world. As well as being recited twice a day during Shacharit and Ma’ariv, these “magical” words are recited when we go to sleep at night, they are said next to the baby the night before his Brit Milah, they are recited during the Mussaf Kedusha of Shabbat and Yom Tov and they are said when the Sefer Torah is removed from the Holy Ark. Over and over again, they are said by Jews worldwide. It’s as if we cannot say them enough!

What is it about the Shema that makes it the bedrock of our relationship with Hashem? “*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*” portrays the unique relationship that exists between Hashem and His nation, and it also encapsulates the eternity of the Jewish People. Our Sages teach that “Kriat Shema” is the acceptance that Hashem is our King. This is what is referred to as “*Kabbalat Ohl Malchut Shamayim*, Acceptance of the Heavenly Yoke.”

The basest urge of human beings is to be completely free, without any restraints whatsoever. Not to be beholden to anyone or anything. Yet, in contradistinction, we recite Kriat Shema to declare our allegiance to Hashem by recognizing that Hashem is our King. We are acknowledging that Hashem gave us our souls and sustains us throughout life in this world. And that He grants us access to an eternal existence that is indescribably superior to anything that the physical world has to offer.

The first step to reaching that understanding is to declare that Hashem is One. The Maharal writes (*Netivot Olam, Netiv HaAvodah* 8) that the word *Echad* denotes something that is complete. It denotes that only Hashem can be described as *Echad* – Whole and Absolute.

The word Shema means far more than just “hear” or “listen.” Shema means to “intellectualize” as well. A person who does not internalize the essence of Kriat Shema has missed the most crucial reason for reciting it: to recognize that Hashem is our King. More than that, a person can be privy to the most obvious manifestations of Hashem’s total control over their life and they can choose to ignore them. Or, perhaps even worse, to be completely unaware of them.

Rabbi Yitzchak Yeruchem Bordianski, the Mashgiach of Yeshivat Kol Torah, related that he was once in a taxi and the non-religious taxi driver told him a story: “As a teenager, I camped out with friends in the desert, in the south of Israel. In the middle of the night, one of our friend’s terrifying cries woke us all up. A snake had wound itself around his body. His life – and essentially the lives of all of us – were in danger. Our guide had a gun and he wanted to shoot the snake in its head to save the boy’s life. However, to do so was extremely dangerous as the snake was wrapped around our friend. To miss by a millimeter meant the bullet would hit our friend. But he felt that he didn’t have a choice. One of the boys in the group was religious. He asked our guide to wait a moment. He rushed over to our friend and told him, ‘Repeat after me Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad.’ When they got to the words ‘Hashem Echad,’ the snake suddenly released its grip and slithered away.”

Rabbi Bordianski was intrigued by the taxi driver’s story, and he asked him, “What happened to that boy? Did he do Teshuvah (repent) after witnessing this miracle?”

“He did,” the taxi driver assured him. “Today he spends his day immersed in Torah studies in Yeshivat Ohr HaChaim in Yerushalayim.”

“And what about you?” asked Rabbi Bordianski. “Did you do Teshuvah?”

“No,” the taxi driver answered.

“Why not?” pressed Rabbi Bordianski. “You also witnessed the miracle.”

“True,” responded the taxi driver. “But the snake wasn’t wrapped around my body...”

How immeasurably sad that a person can clearly identify the Hand of G-d and then choose to ignore what they have seen.

Declaring that Hashem is *Echad* is our key to a healthy and enduring relationship with Him. The Rabbis point out that it is no coincidence that the Hebrew letters that spell out the word Shema – ‘shin’ ‘mem’ ‘ayin’ – backwards are an acronym for Ohl Malchut Shamayim!

*To be continued...*

## QUESTIONS

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (tafsu umnut avotam )?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead, and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did Bnei Yisrael run out of food?
16. What lesson in derech erez concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

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

## ANSWERS

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?  
**13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).**
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?  
**13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.**
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?  
**14:5 - To regain their wealth.**
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?  
**14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.**
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (tapsu umnut avotam )?  
**14:10 - They cried out to G-d.**
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?  
**14:25 - He melted them with fire.**
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?  
**14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.**
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael will sing"?  
**15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of mashiach .**
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead, and straw?  
**15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.**
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?  
**15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.**
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?  
**15:17 - "T'vi-aimo ..." -- "Bring them" (and not "bring us").**
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?  
**15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with tzara'at. (See Bamidbar 12:12 )**
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?  
**15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.**

14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?  
**15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.**
15. When did Bnei Yisrael run out of food?  
**16:1 - 15th of Iyar.**
16. What lesson in derech erez concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?  
**16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiety.**
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?  
**16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.**
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?  
**16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."**
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?  
**17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river...."**
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?  
**17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.**

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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Pharaoh finally sends the Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward Eretz Yisrael on a circuitous route, avoiding the Pelishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves, and chases after the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff, and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days' travel, only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain mitzvahs. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. Hashem sends quail for meat and provides manna, miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday, a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle, and Moshe prays for their welfare.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### Follow the Leader (Part 2/2)

Continuing our discussion of words for “leading” in Biblical Hebrew, another word we have yet to discuss is *nachah*. Variants of this term appear about forty times throughout the Bible, with four of those instances in the Book of Exodus: Firstly, the Bible relates that when Hashem led the Jews out of Egypt, He did not “lead” (*nacham*) them on the path that goes through Philistine territory (Ex. 13:17), but rather took a more roundabout route towards the Holy Land that brought the Jews to the Red Sea. Secondly, Hashem provided the Jews travelling the desert with a special pillar of cloud to “lead” the way for them (*lanchotham*), as reported in Ex. 13:21. Later on, at the Song of the Sea, the Jews praised Hashem’s role in the exodus for “leading” (*nachitah*) them out of Egypt with His everlasting kindness (Ex. 15:13). Finally, Moses is commanded by Hashem at Mount Sinai to “lead” (*nechei*) the nation, that is, instruct them, in the way that He told him (Ex. 32:34).

In his essay on the differences between the apparent synonyms *noheg*, *molich*, *nachah*, and *nohel*, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim explains the word *nachah* as related to *menuchah* (“rest/relaxation”) because it refers to a style of leadership that sees itself as only responsible for protecting one’s charges from any malevolent or undesirable mishaps, and thus bring them to a state of *menuchah*. In doing so, Rabbi Pappenheim explains the word *menuchah* as deriving from either the biliteral NUN-CHET or the monoliteral CHET. (Following from the “leading” sense of this term, Modern Hebrew uses the expression *mancheh* for an “M.C.” or “master of ceremonies” because that person *leads* the proceedings.)

Examples abound of how *nachah* specifically connotes saving those under one’s leadership from bad, as Rabbi Pappenheim explains: The pillar of cloud that lead the Jews while they travelled the desert is described with the verb *nachah* (Ex. 13:21, Neh. 9:12). This is because the main job of the Clouds of Glory was to protect the Jewish People and remove any impediments that might trip them up as they went through the wilderness. In a similar vein, when the Jews said at the Song of the Sea, “You led [*nachitah*] with Your kindness this nation that You redeemed” (Ex. 15:13), this refers to Hashem saving the Jews by taking them out of Egypt and thereby removing them from a dangerous place.

Another terminology used in Biblical Hebrew for the act of “leading” is *nohel*. One of the most famous appearances of this term is in the Song of the Sea. After Hashem performed a great miraculous feat by splitting the Red Sea in a way that allowed the Jews to cross and the Egyptians to drown, the Jews gave thanks to Him in the Song of the Sea, saying, *inter alia*: “You led [us] with Your strength to Your holy abode” (Ex. 15:13), using a cognate of *nohel*



(*nehaltah*). Various other forms of this word in Hebrew include *menahel* (“principal/manager”), *hanhalah* (“administration”), and the Modern Hebrew term *mankal* (which is a contraction of the phrase *menahel klali*, “general manager”).

How do the terms *noheg*, *molich*, *nachah*, and *nohel* — which all relate to “leading” — differ from one another? The various commentators offer several ways of answering this question, and we will look at some of those approaches.

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer writes that *noheg* (discussed in the Part 1 of this essay) implies “leading” from a position of power and strength. This is illustrated from the fact that the Bible reports that the day before the onset of the Plague of Locust, Hashem “led” an easternly wind (Ex. 10:13) — using the verb *nihag* to denote the Master of Universe leading that gust. Similarly, the aforementioned Egyptian chariots *forcefully* led their riders through the muck and mud straight into the Red Sea bank, whereby they drowned (Ex. 14:25). In both of these cases, forms of the term *noheg* appear in the Biblical text.

By contrast, Rabbi Wertheimer explains that the term *nohel* implies a more caring form of leading that provides those under one's leadership with the sustenance and nourishment needed to thrive. In that way, when Jacob tells Esau that he will slowly continue “leading” (*etnahalah*) his entourage towards the Holy Land and Mount Seir (Gen. 33:14), he uses a cognate of *nohel* because Jacob's relationship to his family saw him as a fatherly leader and provider. When Joseph led Egypt as the viceroy under the Pharaoh, Joseph sustained that population during a famine, as the Bible explicitly says “and he led [*vayinahaleim*] them with bread” (Gen. 47:17). Again, Joseph played the role of the benevolent ruler leading his constituents and providing for their needs. Similarly, as mentioned above, after Hashem split the Red Sea, the Jews used a cognate of *nohel* (*nahaltah*) when singing His praises (Ex. 15:13).

As mentioned above, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the term *nachah* refers to a type of leadership wherein the leader's role is simply to protect those in his charge from adversity or hardship. By contrast, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the term *nohel* denotes the leader who not only saves those whom he leads from negative things, but actively helps them in a positive, nurturing way. This can be inferred from the Song of the Sea, wherein the verb *nachah* is used when referring to Hashem “leading” the Jews *out of* Egypt (protection from bad), while *nohel* is used when referring to Him “leading” the Jews *into* the Holy Land. [Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg in *HaKtav VeHaKabbalah* (to gen. 47:17) offers an abbreviated presentation of Rabbi Pappenheim's way of explaining the differences between these apparent synonyms.]

In a slight variation on this theme, Rabbi Shimon Goldblit in *Leshon Chachamim* argues that *noheg* implies “leading” by saving those in one's charge from damage or otherwise being hurt (similar to Rabbi Pappenheim's explanation of *nachah*), while *nohel* implies a form of leadership that not only saves one's constituents from all things negative, but even helps them

in a positive sense (per Rabbi Pappenheim). Thus, when describing Hashem as leading the Jewish people through the wilderness, the Psalmist uses the verb *vayinahageim* (Ps. 78:52), a cognate of *noheg*, in order to stress that although the Jews wandered through a dangerous and desolate place, Hashem led them in a way that protected them from all the dangers of the desert. Based on this, Rabbi Goldblit notes that the custom among the Yeshivas is to call the administrator a *menahel* because not only does the administration oversee the educational institution and neutralize all hurdles in the educational process, they are also the ones in charge of seeing to the overall successes of every individual student (whether in terms of their learning or their personal growth).

Rabbi Moshe Tedeschi Ashkenazi in his work *Otzar Nirdafim* on Hebrew synonyms offers another way to differentiate between these terms. He insists that *noheg* implies the acting of leading passively, i.e., when a leader either stands in front of or behind those in his charge and watches over them as they travel forward of their own accord. On the other hand, he sees *nohel* as referring to when the leader actively has a hand in helping those in his charge go farther than they would have otherwise had the ability to do. Within this framework, he explains *nocheh* as “leading” a person to their final destination (and not just leading them on a temporary excursion to help them along towards their goal, without yet reaching it).

Malbim (to Ps. 31:4) writes that the terms *nachah* and *nohel* imply leading with *nachat*, while *noheg* implies a more heavy-handed brand of leadership. *Nachat* is a difficult term to translate into English, but perhaps might be best expressed as “pleasantry” and “calmness.” Malbim further writes that *nohel* specifically implies leading those who are already tired or otherwise have depleted their energy, as they need extra encouragement and inspiration to achieve their potential. A similar explanation is offered by Rabbi Yosef Shapotshnick of London in his work *Revid HaZahav* to the Siddur (when explaining *Az Yashir*).

Moreover, Malbim (to Ex 10:13) also adds that *noheg* implies a form of leadership that entails engaging in deliberate intervention, while *nachah* and *nohel* imply more “hands off” *laissez faire* styles of leadership that allow things to progress more naturally. Interestingly, Malbim sees this meaning of *noheg* in the Biblical passage that tells of Hashem “leading” (*nihag*) an easternly wind before the onset of the Plague of Locust (Ex. 10:13), as that verse implies Him actively intervening in nature and bringing about something that would not have otherwise happened.

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Shapira-Frankfurter writes in *HaRechasim LeVikah* that *nachah* and *nohel* always have a positive connotation, as they imply an element of greatness on the part of the leader who is doing the “leading.” In other words, these terms invoke the image of a strong person who leads weaker people, or an older person who leads younger people, whereby the leader uses his greatness as a way of helping those under him. Rabbi Shapira-Frankfurter explains that in contrast to this, the term *noheg* can sometimes connote the negative position of “leading” somebody or something to its downfall. This is seen in Ex. 14:25 at the Red Sea,

when the Egyptians' chariots "led" their riders to their own watery demise. This explanation is also cited by Rabbi Ezra Reuven Dangoor (the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad) in his *Adei Zahav*. [Recall that in Part 1 we discussed the negative side of *noheg/minhag*.]

Rabbi Shapira-Frankfurter's great-nephew Rabbi Shmshon Raphael Hirsch (to Ex. 13:17) explains that *noheg* refers to a sort of blind leadership, whereby people simply follow the leader without giving it much thought, while *nachah* connotes a shared mindset whereby those being led see the leader as bringing them towards their desired, common goal.

Once we are talking about the term *nohel*, I thought it would be interesting to share a fascinating discussion from Rabbi Yosef Grayever of Ostrow in his work *Gelilei Chesef*. In that book, he presents a long exposition on the biliteral string HEY-LAMMED, which he sees as the ultimate root of many different words in Hebrew. He sees the core meaning of that string as relating to the concept of "separating," and traces the term *nohel* to that meaning. The way he explains it, *nohel* denotes the concept of actively supervising those in one's charge by thinking about how one can aid them and by doing everything in one's ability to save them and "separate" them from anything bad that might come upon them.

Other words that Rabbi Grayever connects with HEY-LAMMED include: *ohel* ("tent," which *separates* out a private space within a more public area), *hilula* ("wedding" in Talmudic Aramaic, because matrimony *separates* a married woman from all other men besides her husband, although in later Kabbalistic discourse this term refers to the "celebration" of a *yarzheit*), *hallel/tehillah* ("praising," a way of verbalizing how the object of one's praises is outstanding and *separate* from the rest), *holelut* ("foolishness," a way of marking an unworthy pursuit from which people ought to abstain and *separate* themselves), *hilulim* (used in Lev. 19:24 to describe the "holy" fruits of a tree's fourth year that ought to be *separated* from other fruits in that they must be brought to the Holy Temple), *ahal* ("aloe," a fragrance whose natural ability to spread its smell farther than other fragrances leads to it being categorized *separately* from other fragrances), *halah* ("henceforth/forward," a way of specifying a stretch of time or space as a *separate* entity), *halom* ("here," a specific place that is *separate* from other places on account of its importance), *yahal/halo* ("illumination," as the spread of light allows a person to differentiate and thus *separate* between different objects that cannot be discerned in the dark), and *halmah* ("breaking," the act of smashing or splitting one thing into multiple *separate* parts).

Two more etymology-based insights are in order: Rabbi David Chaim Chelouche (*Ohr Chadash* to Gen. 33:14) traces the verb *nohel* to the biliteral HEY-LAMMED, whose core meaning he sees as related to "light." The way he explains it, it is the role of the leader to "enlighten" those in his charge as to the correct path and help them follow that vision.

Finally, Rabbi Shmuel Yehudah Steiger (in *Avnei Shayish*) and Mr. Yehoshua Yaron of Haifa (in *Mevo L'Midrash HaLashon*) see both *nohel* and *noheg* as derived from the biliteral NUN-HEY (with an added LAMMED or GIMMEL), which they explain as denoting the concept of “drawing/pulling.” In both cases, the leader is “pulling” his constituents along a certain path by taking the initiative. One particular verse uses the verb *vayinahu* (I Sam. 7:2), which derives from NUN-HEY to denote the Jewish People “following” the path set out by Hashem and allowing themselves to be “pulled along” by His dictates. Rabbi Steiger and Mr. Yaron also see *nachah* as relating to this root, with the letter CHET simply being placed in between the NUN and HEY. Similarly, they also connect a rare verb form of the word *nahar* (“river”) in the sense of “leading” to this biliteral root. That term only appears four times in Biblical Hebrew (Isa. 2:2, Jer. 31:12, Mic. 4:1, Jer. 51:44), but relates to *nahar* because the river’s current pulls water along a certain path, just as a leader drags those under his leadership through a certain current.

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## TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

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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)*

### TEN LESSONS FROM THE MANNA (*MON*)

Although we do not experience a daily gift of *mon* (manna) as did our ancestors in the Wilderness, and most of the Mitzvos that Hashem commanded our ancestors concerning the *mon* do not apply to us, many lessons may be learned from the *mon* that applies to us equally. One of the reasons Hashem provided our ancestors their livelihood in this miraculous manner was to teach these lessons to all generations. That is why Moshe instructed Aharon to store some of the *mon* (manna) in a jar for all future generations to see. The final generation before the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* neglected Torah study because they were too busy pursuing a livelihood. The prophet Yirmiyah showed them the jar of *mon* and reminded them that if they engaged in Torah study, Hashem would provide for them, just as He provided for our ancestors in the Wilderness.

The Rishonim record a tradition that whoever recites the passage of the *mon* every day can be assured that he will not lack sustenance. The *Mishnah Berurah* adds: “It is not enough to simply recite the passage; one must also think about what he is saying and recognize Hashem’s

wonders” (1:5 §13). By contemplating upon this passage's lessons about Hashem's wondrous provision of livelihood, we learn to trust in Him and to merit thereby unfailing sustenance that is like a daily gift of *mon*. We will explore ten of the many lessons that may be learned from this passage. Though most of these ideas are well-known, it is worthwhile to contemplate and internalize them more.

1. Just as the *mon* clearly fell from heaven, our livelihood comes from heaven. Even if we need to work hard for that livelihood, it is only because of the curse that followed Adam's sin. The *mon* teaches us to acknowledge this truth and show appreciation for all we have by serving our Benefactor.
2. Just as the *mon* fell close for the righteous and far for the less deserving, if we better our ways and increase our trust in Hashem, we will have to spend less time pursuing a livelihood.
3. Just as the *mon* fell in a precise measure for every family, and efforts to gather more made no difference, Hashem provides us exactly what we need, and we should avoid overworking. We should also be impeccably honest even if this means earning less, knowing we will ultimately receive whatever is due.
4. Hashem specifically took them to the wilderness, where there was no means of sustenance in sight, to see if they would nevertheless trust Him (*Ramban* 16:4). We may learn from this that even if bills accumulate and a person does not see a glimmer of salvation on the horizon, he should know that he is being tested to see if he will trust that his Father in Heaven will somehow continue to provide for him as He has to this day.
5. The Jewish people requested sustenance, and only then did Hashem grant them the *mon*. Although they were criticized for the complaintive manner in which they did, we may learn from this that Hashem wants us to pray to Him for our sustenance. For this reason, many recite a short prayer for sustenance in *Shema Koleinu*.
6. The *mon* fell daily, and in its absence, there was nothing else to eat in the Wilderness. Why did Hashem not grant them a year's supply of *mon* annually? The Sages explain that this may be compared to a father who would provide his son with sustenance once a day so that the son would visit him daily, knowing that if he did so once a year, his son would visit annually. So too, Hashem provided the *mon* daily so that someone with several children would worry, "Perhaps the *mon* will not fall tomorrow, and they will all die!" This compelled them to direct their hearts toward their Father in Heaven (*Yoma* 76a). In other words, it compelled them to maintain a relationship with Hashem, to obey and serve Him, and to connect with Him daily, thanking Him for what He has given and asking Him for more. This applies to us as well, for Hashem provides us with sustenance anew (*Avodah Zarah* 3b), and this compels us to maintain a constant relationship with Him.
7. When Moshe announced that Hashem would provide sustenance for His people in a wasteland, he added, "You will know that Hashem, your G-d, took you out of Egypt," meaning that from the wondrous way in which your sustenance will come, you will realize that it could only be from the omnipotent Hashem Who performed all the wonders in Egypt. The responsibility to provide for a family can sometimes be difficult and stressful. Even so, not only does this allow us to develop our trust in Hashem, but

it also provides us with the opportunity to behold the wondrous ways in which He provides us and our families with all of our countless needs, every single day of our lives.

Hashem told Moshe that He intended to provide the Jewish people with *mon* to see if they would observe the Mitzvos that pertain to it. These include not leaving it over until the next day and not going out to gather it on Shabbos (*Rashi* to 16:4). They were instructed to leave over one of the two portions of *mon* that fell on Erev Shabbos for Shabbos. [The commandment not to gather *mon* on Shabbos also included the Mitzvah not to go beyond the Shabbos boundary (*techum*), which applies to this day. This Mitzvah was discussed in a previous article.] We may glean three additional lessons from these commandments:

8. Just as the Jewish people were told to enjoy their entire portion of *mon* each day and not to worry about the next day, we should avoid excessive worries about how Hashem will provide for us in the future. The extent of our trust in Hashem will influence our decisions regarding how to divide our extra money between the poor who need it now and our savings that we may or may not need in the distant future.

9. Just as they were commanded to take a double portion on the morning of Erev Shabbos and to prepare one portion for Shabbos, we are commanded to honor this holy day by preparing for it on the morning of Erev Shabbos, before engaging in other matters (see *Mishnah Berurah* 250:1). A person is even required to reduce his Torah study on Erev Shabbos a little in order to prepare for Shabbos (*Rama* *ibid.*).

10. Just as they were commanded not to gather the *mon* on Shabbos, we are commanded to observe Shabbos as a day of rest and refrain from any involvement with work, including worrisome thoughts. A person should consider it as if all his work is complete. This means that he should realize that he is not working for personal accomplishment, but rather only to perform the will of Hashem. Hence, when Hashem says to work, he works, and when Hashem says to rest, he rests, and all his work is truly complete. A person should also trust that the perfect Creator created a perfect world, even though some matters in his life seem decidedly imperfect, and that even if he *could* work, there is nothing more that needs to be done for now. Having nothing to worry about, he can spend the day in celebration of Hashem's perfect world.

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. [info@ohr.edu](mailto:info@ohr.edu)

Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Nota Schiller - Rosh HaYeshiva, Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Avi Kaufman, Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Yaakov Meyers, Mrs. Rosalie Moriah, Rabbi Moshe Newman, Rabbi Shlomo Simon, Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, Mrs. Helena Stern.

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