

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHIOT HA'AZINU 5770 - BEREISHET-NOACH · 5771 · 2010 · VOL. 18 NO. 2

S P E C I A L C H A G I M I S S U E

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

Ha'azinu 5770

### A COPPER PENNY

*“For G-d’s portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His heritage.” (32:9)*

Once there was a young boy standing in the courtyard of the *shul* in Vilna. He was bent over, his eyes scouring the pavement of the courtyard, searching intently for something. He looked here and there. Occasionally he would stoop lower and examine the ground to see if he had found what he was searching for. In frustration, tears began to well in his eyes. Then, as he continued his search, tears began to run down his cheeks.

The time came for *Mincha*, the afternoon prayer, and the courtyard began to fill with people. They all noticed the little boy crying and searching. “What are you looking for?” they asked him. “My mother gave me a copper penny and I lost it on my way to *cheder*” came the tearful reply.

Everyone started to help him look for the copper penny. They scoured the courtyard. Not a single square inch was left unexamined.

It was not to be found.

Someone said to the little boy, “Show me exactly where you were when you lost it.” In all innocence the little boy replied: “Actually I didn’t lose it here. I lost it in the street.” “So why are you looking for it here in the courtyard of the *shul*?” came the

startled reply. “Because the street is all muddy and dirty and I didn’t want to get my shoes all messed up.”

Our mystical sources teach us that there are many worlds “above” this one. Compared to those worlds, the world in which we live is a very dark dank place. A place of messy physicality. A place of darkness. A place of concealment. If “G-d’s portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His heritage”, then why did G-d put us in this lowly world? Why didn’t he put us in a higher more spiritual world?

The Torah is the essence of the whole creation. If it were not for the Torah, the physical world and all its myriad laws would never have come into being. The Torah does not exist for the benefit of the incorporeal spiritual beings of the upper worlds, but for the Jewish people to labor in its mysteries and intricacies down in this lowest world.

When a jewel is buried in the mud, there’s no alternative but to roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty. For if we search for riches where there are none, even if we can conduct the search in climate-controlled air-conditioned luxury, we won’t even end up with a copper penny.

• Source: *Chafetz Chaim*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Ha'azinu 5770

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

indulge in all kinds of depravity. G-d will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, G-d will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental — that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between G-d and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. G-d will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His own enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. G-d then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

- The problem of exposed wine
- Wine of non-Jews or exposed to them
- The vessels containing such wine
- Flesh offered as sacrifice for idol worship
- Using the vessels used by non-Jews
- Seeds and skins of grapes of non-Jews

- Fish oils and cheeses purchased from them
- The dialogue between Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Yehoshua
- Keeping the reason for a rabbinical decree a secret for a year
- Milk, bread and other food matters of non-Jews
- Rabbinical decrees to prevent intermarriage
- The source for the ban on intermarriage

## THE BAN ON INTERMARRIAGE

“**Y**ou shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughter to his son and you shall not take his daughter for your son; for he will cause your child to turn away from Me and they will worship the gods of others.” (Devarim 7:3-4)

Is this Torah ban on intermarriage limited to the seven nations who inhabited Eretz Yisrael or does it include all non-Jews?

While there is one position that the Torah prohibited intermarriage only with those seven nations and the rest are prohibited by rabbinic law, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai is quoted as contending that even though the context would indicate that the Torah ban is limited, the fact is that the term “he will cause your child to turn away from Me” must

be understood as a warning to avoid marriage with any non-Jew.

The only problem with this citing of Rabbi Shimon’s position is that it does not appear anywhere in Tannaic records. Tosefot mentions the solution of RaShbaM to this problem.

Since Rabbi Shimon is known to base halachic rulings on his understanding of the reason for a mitzvah, it seems superfluous for the Torah to state that intermarriage be avoided because of the danger of being turned away from G-d since this would have been assumed as the reason for this prohibition. The *gemara* therefore assumes that Rabbi Shimon would interpret this apparently superfluous explanation as a signal to include all non-Jews who also pose this threat.

• Avoda Zara 36b

*שמחה*

*The Ohr Somayach Family wishes you and yours and all of Israel a year filled with happiness, health and peace.*

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*This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.*

- The three rulings of Rabbi Yossi that earned him the reputation for lenience
- Foods cooked by a non-Jew
- Signs of a kosher fish
- Reliability of the wife of a scholar
- Jewish supervision of milking by a non-Jew
- Buying fish parts from a non-Jew
- The Sages and the apple wine cure
- Statues that may have been worshipped as idols
- Remnants of statues that have been found
- Idols that fell apart or were abandoned
- Finding vessels with sun or moon engraved on them
- Forms that are forbidden to make

## THE ELUSIVE KOSHER LOCUST

The Torah permitted the consumption of certain types of locust – the *arbeh*, the *sal'am*, the *chargol* and the *chagav*. (*Vayikra* 11:22)

Do such locusts require *shechitah* in order to be fit for consumption?

Our *gemara* is cited as a source for not requiring *shechitah*.

It is forbidden by rabbinic law to eat food cooked by a non-Jew. If a non-Jew, however, sets fire to a locust-infested field it is permitted to consume the kosher locusts which have thus been roasted. This is so because the gen-

tile had no intention of roasting the locusts and was interested only in clearing the area of them.

On a practical level, however, Rashi mentions the difficulty we have in identifying the kosher species of locusts and only solid tradition could be relied upon. Aside from some Yemenite and Moroccan Jews who claim to have such a tradition, the practice of eating such insects has become extinct.

Even among Moroccans there was a withdrawal as a result of a warning issued by the Ohr HaChaim against consumption of any locusts because of the difficulty of identifying the few kosher species from the large number of non-kosher ones.

• *Avoda Zara* 38a

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- How to destroy an idol as commanded by the Torah
- King David and his crown
- The dialogue between Sage and idolater in the bathhouse
- Mountains and trees worshipped as idols
- Uprooting idols in Eretz Yisrael
- Bowing in worship to a brick or an egg
- Using stones of a mountain worshipped as an idol for the building of the Altar
- Using a worshipped object for sacrificial purpose after it has undergone a change
- Varieties of buildings, stones and trees that have been affected by idol worship
- What is the *asheira* mentioned in the Torah
- Sitting in the shade of an *asheira*, planting below it or using its wood
- The idol called Markulies and the saintliness of a Sage

## SON OF SAINTS

The worship of the idol Markulies consisted of heaping stones upon it. Once such stones were removed by other idol worshippers from their place and used for paving streets. There were Sages who avoided walking upon these streets because they held that something offered as worship to an idol remains forever forbidden for Jewish use. The “Son of Saints” is mentioned as one who did use those streets because he held that since some idol worshippers had shown such disrespect for the sanctity of those stones, they were no longer

forbidden for use by a Jew.

Who was this “Son of Saints” and why was he thus called?

Rabbi Menachem ben Semai earned this title not because of his ancestry but because of his own saintliness expressed in his extreme aversion to idols, which led him to avoid even looking upon the graven image on a coin.

It was said about him that when he passed away the faces on all the statues and coins in his area were flattened into formlessness. (*Mo’ed Katan* 25b)

• Avoda Zara 50a

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- What must be done with an idol worshipped by Jews
- How does an idol worshipper show his rejection of the idol
- Idols abandoned by their worshippers
- Animal worshipped as idol
- Dialogue between Sages and heathen philosophers regarding idols
- Harvesting and pressing grapes together with non-Jews
- The forbidden wine of non-Jews

## IDOLS AND DEAD DOGS

“It is written in your Torah,” a heathen philosopher challenged Rabban Gamliel, “that your G-d is a jealous G-d (*Devarim* 4:24). Why does He direct the anger aroused by this jealousy to the idol worshippers and not to the idols themselves?”

The Sage replied with a parable:

A human king had an only son who raised a pet dog which he called by the name of his father. When he took an oath he would swear in the name of his father dog. Upon hearing this would the king be angry with his son or with the dog?

The heathen refused to accept this rejoinder because he claimed that idols must have power since a fire once destroyed his entire town sparing only the local temple of idolatry. To this the Sage replied with another parable:

When a human king wages war against a rebellious

province does he battle against the living or the dead?

Upon hearing this comparison of idols to dogs and dead the heathen asked why then does G-d not eliminate them from this world?

If the idolaters worshipped only things which are not vital to the universe, replied the Sage, He would eliminate them. But they also worship the sun, moon and heavenly bodies, and G-d is not going to destroy His world because of such fools.

Maharsha asks that this explanation fails to deal with why G-d does not just eliminate the expendable idols while leaving the indispensable ones. The answer to that, he points out, has already been mentioned in the *mishnah*. If all the other idols would be destroyed and the heavenly bodies spared, this would strengthen the belief of their worshippers that they are deities.

• *Avoda Zara* 54b

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“No decree is made by the Sages unless most of the public is capable of obeying it.”

• *Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel and Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok - Avoda Zara* 36a

“Blessed is the Omnipresent Who put His world into the hands of guardians.”

• *Rebbie (upon finding apple wine guarded for seventy years which cured his illness) - Avoda Zara* 40b

“The crown which was placed on the head of David’s descendant Yoash at his coronation is referred to as ‘testimony’ (*Divrei Hayamim* II 22:11) because it served as testimony to who is fit to be king for it fit only one who was truly fit.”

• *Rabbi Yehuda in the name of the Sage Rav - Avoda Zara* 44a

“One who appoints a judge who is unfit is considered as if he planted an idolatrous *asheira* tree in Israel.”

• *Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - Avoda Zara* 52a

“Go, go” we say to the nazir, “go far around and do not come anywhere near a vineyard.”

• *Rabbi Yochanan - Avoda Zara* 58b

- An unintentional contact with wine by an idol worshipper
- Food cooked by a non-Jew
- Receiving compensation from idol worshipper who caused wine to be forbidden
- What is considered contact with wine
- When there is a suspicion of such contact
- Placing a seal on wine to assure its kashrut
- Wages paid for working with forbidden wine or other forbidden items
- Burning and burying of wheat received as payment for transporting forbidden wine
- A gift that is disqualified as a sacrifice
- Exchanging items forbidden because of idol worship
- Definition of a *ger toshav*

## BURNING AND BURYING WHEAT

“What must I do with this wheat?” This was the question put to Rabbi Chisda by a Jew who had received the wheat as payment for renting out his ship for the transportation of wine that idol worshippers had handled. He realized that he could not derive any benefit from this wheat but wished to know how to properly dispose of it.

“Burn it and bury the ashes” was the reply.

Why, asks the *gemara*, is burying the wheat without burning not sufficient? We find that the instrument used for the execution of a sinner is buried together with him with no need for prior burning. The answer given is that since these

items are buried in a special cemetery of the court, there is no danger that anyone will mistakenly unearth them for forbidden use, while in regard to the wheat there might be an assumption that it was stored in the grave by a thief.

Tosefot raises another challenge. In *Mesechta Temura* (33b) we learn that the carcass of an executed murderous ox and the hair of a nazir are among the items which must be buried because they are forbidden for use – and there is not need for prior burning!

The resolution of this problem is that since it is not customary to bury flesh or hair, there is no danger of anyone mistakenly unearthing them for use while one might assume that the buried wheat was brought there by a thief.

• *Avoda Zara 62b*

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The message learned from the account of creation is that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the Jewish people because the Creator who brought the world into existence awarded this land to them. The banishment of the first

man from the Garden of Eden for eating from the forbidden tree and the Great Deluge which virtually destroyed all of sinful mankind are crucial lessons in regard to responsibility.

As we hear these Torah portions read in our synagogues we must internalize the message that emanates from both of them. Eretz Yisrael is ours but we must live up to our responsibilities as Torah Jews in order to ensure that we can enjoy Israel forever.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Ha'azinu

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

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Ha'azinu's Questions!

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

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



## ROSH HASHANA RESOLUTIONS

**From: Amanda**

*Dear Rabbi,  
Is there a concept of New Year's resolutions in Judaism for Rosh Hashana? Thanks for your time!*

Dear Amanda,

The answer is yes, and presumably even more so than in what's generally associated with the non-Jewish New Year.

For most who attribute significance to December 31/January 1, the celebrations of the general New Year are hardly expressions of ideal behavior. Drunkenness, gluttony and lasciviousness quickly eradicate any resolutions one may have made.

In Judaism, however, Rosh Hashana, which occurs on the same date mankind was created, namely the first day of the Hebrew month Tishrei, is truly a day of rectification and repair in the context of a most solemn and spiritually uplifting holiday.

This day actually culminates an entire month of introspection, meditation, reflection and review of one's deeds, character traits, intellectual and theological orientation and quantity and quality of mitzvah observance. During this month, a person not only makes resolutions regarding what needs to be corrected and improved, but more importantly, he actually starts effecting and implementing those changes.

By the time Rosh Hashana arrives, the last thing a person would do would be to squander away all the progress he's made by "celebrating" the day in an immoral, inebriated stupor of inappropriateness, G-d forbid. Rather, well

on his way to having gradually and healthfully integrated beneficial changes in his life over the month before Rosh Hashana, the Jew stands before G-d asking for Divine favor, not based on tenuous, fleeting resolutions, but rather on implemented ones.

This intense, but natural and gradual repentance is then extended through what's called the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, where the focus is on fine-tuning and perfecting one's physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual service of G-d in order to achieve the greatest degree of personal perfection possible. It is in this milieu that G-d atones for and purifies the individual and Nation on Yom Kippur.

Having gone through this elevating and purifying process of penitence, the re-Jew-venated Jew then emerges from Yom Kippur to celebrate the joyous holiday of Succot where the theme is thanking and rejoicing in the bounty of G-d while simultaneously departing from an overemphasis on the mundane in order to literally celebrate with G-d in godliness. We thus leave our earth-bound houses laden with produce in order to dwell with G-d in the heavenly oriented succah.

Once we have made our resolutions and implemented them (Elul), asked for Divine favor (Rosh Hashana) and received atonement and purification (Yom Kippur), thereby deserving bounty whose purpose is to enable us to truly cleave to G-d (Succot), we are then fully able to renew our love for, and commitment to, the Torah (Simchat Torah), after which time our penitential resolutions crescendo by restarting the yearly Torah reading cycle, "In the beginning G-d created..."

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**Question:** Now that there begins a new year of weekly Shabbat Torah reading in our synagogue, I find myself faced with the dilemma of how to deal with those of my fellow congregants who disturb my ability to hear the reading with their conversing with one another. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** In almost all cases the talking during the reading

of the Torah is the result of ignorance that it is strictly forbidden and an insult to the Torah. If your own efforts to impress the seriousness of this behavior upon the offenders proves unsuccessful, you should solicit the aid of your congregational rabbi to dedicate part of a sermon to this issue from time to time. The message will hopefully get through to the satisfaction of all concerned.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THE REWARD OF RETURN

**T**he wife of a young Torah scholar in the northern Israel town of Rachasim decided to open a nursery in order to help support her growing family. Since the nursery would be located in their ground-level apartment and adjacent yard, they needed the approval of all the other residents of their apartment building.

Sympathetic to the couple's financial struggles, all the neighbors gave their written consent. Just before the nursery was to open one of the neighbors withdrew his consent. The noise from the nursery, he claimed, might be detrimental to his wife who suffered from high blood pressure. To aggravate the situation he had three sons who had strayed from being observant and he was afraid that his efforts to bring them back would be harmed by

their seeing their mother suffer because of observant Jews.

The shocked young husband went to a local rabbi who informed him that since the reluctant neighbor had given his consent it constituted a vow on which he could not renege. Upon hearing this ruling the neighbor insisted on personally speaking to the rabbi who repeated to him that he must stick to his consent. "But," added the rabbi as he held out a bottle of wine, "if you allow the nursery to function you will merit to pour wine from this bottle at the weddings of your three sons who will have returned to the fold!"

The consent was renewed, the nursery opened, and there were soon three weddings of three returned sons.

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Bereishet 5771

## LIFE'S REAR VIEW MIRROR

*"And G-d saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." (1:31)*

Wouldn't life be so much easier if we had eyes in the back of our heads? No need for rear-view mirrors in our cars! No need to worry when walking down dark alleys at night that someone is going to jump you from behind! For teachers, the highly dangerous practice of writing on the blackboard would lose its trepidation!

Come to think of it, wouldn't life be much easier if we had three feet? Think how much more comfortable standing in shul on Yom Kippur would be! People would be able to shift from one foot to the other – and to the other. Shoe and sock manufactures would be able to make a better living!

Another thing. Why is it that only the chosen few of us can walk on our hands, and that only with some difficulty? If we could walk on our hands we would be able to see the world from an entirely different perspective! We could revitalize the cerebral cortex with all the blood flowing to the brain! We could do Yoga and aerobics at the same time!

And what about if we had four kidneys, we could donate two of them to people in need with much less problem! And why not two hearts?

While we're on the subject, I really don't understand

why aren't our faces coated with plastic so we don't need to use soap? Just a damp cloth would do the trick!

*"And G-d saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good."*

When G-d created the world He consulted with His Heavenly court. G-d premeditated the creation of every organ. The evidence of G-d's wisdom shines from every creature. If you assembled all the greatest Nobel Prize winners throughout history and gave them unlimited funds and time, they still wouldn't be able to put life into the tiniest insect.

And even if we can admit that G-d knew exactly what He was doing with the physical creation, sometimes we question His wisdom in other areas. For example, "Why does this guy have so much money? If G-d had given it to me, I'd use it much better." Or, "Why did G-d give this person such talent, such a mind? It's wasted on him. I'd have put that talent to much better usage."

Just as G-d created the physical world with perfection, and we need neither eyes in the back of our heads, nor hands on which we can walk, nor a third leg, so similarly, each one of us is uniquely and perfectly equipped to fulfill our mission in creation.

• Sources: Midrash Hagadol 1:26, Bereishet Rabba 39:21

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Bereishet 5771

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing "sin," Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain bearing and raising

children. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noach. After the death of Sheith, mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noach, finds favor with G-d.

## Noach 5771

## FOR THE BIRDS

*“From each bird according to its kind, and from each animal according to its kind.” (6:2)*

World events have shown that anti-Semitism is alive and well and living in all those centers of civilization in which it was considered extinct half a century ago.

The existence of a Jewish state, the 19th century Jewish intelligentsias' ultimate panacea against anti-Semitism, has failed to prevent the emergence of an anti-Semitism as potentially virulent as any strain to date with the ultimate irony that we are now dubbed the new “Nazis”!

What is all this supposed to teach us?

The existence of the Jewish People is an other-worldly phenomenon. The “unhistory” of the Jewish People has perplexed historians and left them either wanting to change their professions or fudging the facts. Logically, they say, we shouldn't be here at all. And in a sense, they're right. We don't belong here. We occupy this world as a piece of rented real estate. This is not our place. We are an other-worldly people.

The Jewish People is likened to a bird. In its natural element, the bird can soar to the heights, leaving its earth-bound cousins far below. However, when you enclose a bird in a cage, not only does it no longer soar, but its very advantages become its weaknesses. Its feet are not suited

to walking around. Its wings atrophy. Its plumage wilts.

In this week's Torah portion, when the animals entered the ark, the Torah lists the birds before the land animals: *“From each bird according to its kind, and from each animal according to its kind.”* However, after the entry to the ark it mentions the land animals before the birds: *“And the animal that is not kosher, or the birds.”* And when about to leave the ark, the order reverts to the birds being mentioned before the land animals: *“Every living thing that is with you of all flesh, of birds, of animals.”*

Why did the Torah change the order?

The ark was a microcosm of the world. Just as the world has three levels of holiness, so too the ark had three levels. Just as the world has a sun that radiates light to it, so too the ark had a precious jewel fixed in the ceiling that radiated light to it.

Outside the ark the birds can fly. They are pre-eminent. However, when they are cooped up in an ark, they become the least of the animals.

We are a nation that has been designed to soar to the skies, but if we choose to lock ourselves into an ark of physicality we will find ourselves as sprightly as a Dodo.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Noach 5771

It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days Noach sends the dove once more; the dove does not return. G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates

the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Cham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

## PARSHA Q&A?

### BEREISHET 5771

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. G-d blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from G-d?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked"?
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Bereshet's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that G-d, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - G-d saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. G-d created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. G-d commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced. Therefore G-d took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### NOACH 5771

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did G-d tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did G-d postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did G-d do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Noach’s Questions!

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

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, “G-d is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - G-d told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” G-d surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven amot.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it’s better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from G-d, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach’s disgrace to Cham. And because Cham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Cham’s fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against G-d.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yiscah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.