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THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

MOUSTERPIECE

**“And I will give your rain in its time...”
(26:4)**

Once there was a tailor. He was known far and wide as an artist who could take mere thread and turn it into apparel fit for a king.

One day, a wealthy businessman came to him with a special job. While traveling in the East, he had given a king's ransom to buy a bolt of pure Cathay silk — the finest of its kind in the world. The tailor's eyes lit up. Never had he seen such fabric. He measured the businessman and a price was struck for the work.

The very next morning, the tailor set to work with relish. He worked with extra-special care, trying not waste a single thread.

A week of finger-breaking work followed. It was about two in the morning when the tailor stitched the last button onto the suit. He bit off the thread between his teeth and sat back to admire his work. Here was a suit the likes of which had never been seen!

He yawned, picked up his tired bones and made his way to bed. The businessman would be coming bright and early the following day to collect his suit. The tailor left the room and closed the door. Then, unable to resist, he turned and opened the door again for a final peek. There it was in all its glory, bathed in a shaft of moonlight.

He closed the door with a soft click. Silence. And then the sound of rustling. Two little dark eyes squinted out from a crack in the wall. A furry nose twitched from side to side expectantly, and a tiny mouse suddenly scuttled into the center of the room. She was followed by another, and another and another. Scores of mice came pouring out, all with a single objective

— the suit.

It was all over in ten minutes. All that was left were a few pieces of cloth with tell-tale teeth marks.

When the tailor came down the next morning and saw what had happened, he was distraught beyond words. He stood in the middle of his workroom with tears welling up in his eyes and sighed in resignation.

Looking up, he saw the business man standing over him, beaming with expectation and blissfully unaware of

“The wise person, on the other hand, uses the happiness and tranquillity that his wealth affords him to spend time on perfecting his character.”

what had happened to his priceless Cathay silk.

With measured tones, the tailor told him how he had worked so hard on his suit; how it was a creation unmatched in all his years of tailoring; of the long loving hours he had devoted to it; and finally, what had happened last night after he had left the workroom.

“But” continued the tailor “I would like you to pay me what we originally agreed, because even though you don't have the suit, I did put my heart and soul into making it.” The businessman's face turned green. “It's enough I don't sue you for the price of my Cathay silk! You bungling oaf!” And with that, he stormed out of the house.

There is no job in the world which

pays for effort alone. Even if you put your heart and soul into your work, if you produce nothing, that's what you get paid. Nothing.

With one exception — learning Torah. If a person really tries, and puts his heart and soul into his learning, he receives reward, even if he ends up understanding nothing.

Even if he comes away with just a few tattered pieces of material where others have stitched a suit.

WIN / WIN

“If you will walk in My statutes, and My commandments you will keep and perform them, then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce... you will eat your bread to satiation and you will dwell securely in your land.” (26:3-5)

Wealth is like the sun. It causes two opposite effects. It whitens the laundry and blackens the face of the launderer. It all depends on the receiver.

The same is true of wealth. It causes two opposite effects. It is a crown to one person and a fool's cap to another. It all depends on the mentality of the receiver.

The fool stumbles in his riches and he forfeits both materially and spiritually. He wastes his money on frippery, creating for himself a millstone of unnecessary conspicuous consumption.

The wise person, on the other hand, uses the happiness and tranquillity that his wealth affords him to spend time on perfecting his character.

It is for this reason that the Torah spells out at such great length the material benefits, the contentment and the success, that comes from keeping the *mitzvos*. These material blessings are not an end in themselves; rather the intelligent soul should employ

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah promises prosperity for the *Bnei Yisrael* if they will follow Hashem's commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments,

whose purpose is to bring *Yisrael* to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. *Sefer Vayikra*, The Book of Leviticus, concludes with a detailed description of *Erachin* – the process by which someone can make a vow to give to the *Beis Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

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them as a means to seek out and to arrive at a knowledge of God.

The Torah constantly assures us of the tremendous physical and material benefits that will accrue from observing its statutes and ordinances. However, this level of physical repose we have never achieved as a people or as individuals, not even during the time of the two *Batei Mikdash* (Holy Temples).

Nevertheless, that promise still exists, and when we adhere to the Holy Torah we will experience these blessings in their totality.

necessarily, would have led them to subconscious guilt feelings.

So, in order to prevent these guilt feelings, they wanted to be *publicly* licentious, to demonstrate that there was nothing wrong in what they were doing. However, this, in turn, would lead to them being reproved by their fellows. They would then think twice about what they were doing. This would bring them to repent, or at least to feel guilty subconsciously, which would take away all the 'fun' of being immoral.

So, in order to prevent this, they embraced idol worship, so that they could make a *philosophy* and a *culture* of immorality. A culture which said that it's not only acceptable to be immoral but people could even publish books and appear on the media as pundits of this 'New Morality.' "It's not being dominated by your baser instincts. It's liberating yourself." Thus they could immunize themselves from their feelings of guilt.

Interestingly, one can see from this both the greatness and the pettiness of Man. His pettiness, from the fact that in order to secure the fulfillment of his fleshly desires and to banish his subconscious guilt he is prepared to embrace idol worship even though he knows deep down that it's a joke.

His greatness is revealed, because even though he may be a bad person who is quite prepared to indulge in immorality; nevertheless, he is still sensitive to his own feelings of guilt when he sins in private. He knows that if he hears honest rebuke he may well forsake his ways and return.

Sources:

- *Mousterpiece* - Chafetz Chaim
- *Win/Win* - Rabeinu Bachya
- *Anything Goes* - Chidushei HaLev

ANYTHING GOES

"...so as not to perform My commandments, so that you annul My covenant."
(26:15)

The reason the Jewish People wanted to annul the covenant with God was so they could permit themselves to commit open immorality. As the Talmud says (*Sanhedrin* 63b) "Yisrael knew that idol worship is without substance, and they only worshipped idols in order to permit themselves public immorality."

It's implicit from this statement that if the Jewish People had only wanted to embrace *private* immorality, they would never have worshipped idols. So the question arises: Why didn't they just commit their immorality privately, and not worship idols?

Also what was the overpowering desire for *public* immorality? What was so strong about the attraction of public immorality that they worshipped idols knowing them to be no more than a child's doll?

The answer is that if they had been immoral only in private, the mere fact of their discretion would indicate that they knew they were doing something wrong, something shameful. And this,

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. To what do the words “*bechukosai telechu*” (walk in My statutes) refer?
2. When is “rain in its season?”
3. What is the blessing of “*v’achaltem lachm’chem l’sova*” (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
4. What is meant by the verse “and a sword will not pass through your land?”
5. Mathematically, if five Jewish soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Jewish soldiers be able to defeat?
6. How much is ‘*revava*’?
7. Which “progression” of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
8. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel’s state of ruin?
9. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
10. How many years after entering the Land were the northern tribes exiled?
11. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written with an extra “*vav*”. From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?
12. What positive element is implied by the words “and I will bring them into the land of their enemies?”
13. In verse 26:42, why is the word “remember” not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
14. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 “*Toros*” (plural) and not “*Torah*” (singular)?
15. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the *Beis Hamikdash* and doesn’t have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
16. If a person says “The leg of this animal shall be an *olah* offering” the animal is sold and sacrificed as an *olah* offering. What is the status of the money received for the animal?
17. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the *Beis Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *Yovel* what happens to the field?
18. Where must “*Ma’aser Sheini*” be eaten?
19. When a person redeems “*Ma’aser Sheini*” what happens to the food? What happens to the redemption money?
20. How does a person tithe his animals?

BONUS QUESTION?

“And five of you will pursue a hundred [enemy soldiers]” (26:8) This verse implies that when the Jewish people are righteous, one Jewish soldier will be able to defeat twenty enemies. But another verse states that if the Jewish people sin, ‘one enemy will pursue a thousand Jewish soldiers’ (*Devarim* 32:30). Doesn’t this contradict the principle that Hashem’s reward is always more than His punishment?

I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

“And I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember...” Hashem will redeem us in the merit of Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. This is indicated by the three words ‘with’ in this verse — the women who were ‘with’ Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov as life partners.

• *Yalkut Shimoni*

HAFTORAH: YIRMIYAHU 16:19-17:4

To be ‘a Jeremiah’ is to be a prophet of doom. For Yirmiyahu was the archetypal harbinger of destruction.

In this week’s *Parsha* the Torah enumerates the blessings for keeping Hashem’s *mitzvos*, and the dire warnings of what will transpire if they are neglected. Similarly, in the Haftorah, Yirmiyahu warns of what will happen if the Jewish People continue in their idolatrous ways, lacking faith in Hashem and blindly placing total faith in man.

Yirmiyahu’s words echo down the corridors of history.

‘He who thinks that Berlin is Jerusalem... there will come a thunderous and violent wind which will uproot him from his source.’ These words, written by Rabbi Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk, the ‘*Ohr Somayach*,’ at the end of the last century, are an uncanny prediction of the storm which was to engulf Europe not many years later.

From the moment of Hashem’s irreversible covenant with Avraham, the survival of the Jewish People becomes a natural imperative, no less than the rising of the sun or the flowing and ebbing of the tides.

Anti-Semitism is a force placed into nature. Its sole purpose is to prevent the Jewish People from disappearing into the melting pot of the nations, and ‘annulling’ the irreversible covenant with Avraham.

Assimilation is like a nuclear chain reaction. When a certain *critical mass* is reached, then the atom bomb of anti-Semitism explodes.

The word in Hebrew for ‘holy’ is *kadosh*, which means ‘separate.’ The essence of holiness is the separation of that which is holy from that which is not.

When the Jewish People forget that their purpose is to be a holy nation, separated from the other nations, then the non-Jewish world turns around and reminds them of their purpose.

WEEKLY DAF

KRISOS 11 - 17

THE SOBER BLESSING

A *kohen* who drinks a *reviis* (86 cc according to one opinion and 150 according to another) of wine is forbidden to serve in the *Beis Hamikdash*. If he performs any of the sacred services in this condition the service is invalid and he is punished with a premature death.

This law is relevant even today in regard to a *kohen* who blesses the congregation. The Gemara in *Mesechta Taanis* (26b) sees a relationship between service in the *Beis Hamikdash* and blessing the congregation, as suggested by the Torah's description (*Devarim* 10:8) of the *kohen's* responsibilities "to serve Him and bless in His Name." The *kohen* is therefore disqualified from blessing the congregation if he has drunk wine.

But how much wine disqualifies him? In regard to Temple service he is forbidden to perform the service even if he drinks less than the aforementioned *reviis*, even though there is no disqualification of the service or liability for premature death for such an amount. Does this same restriction apply to blessing the congregation?

There is no clear indication in the Gemara itself, but there is a consensus among the commentaries that there is no ban on a *kohen* blessing the congregation if he imbibed less than a *reviis*. Some authorities are even more lenient and rule that he is disqualified only if he actually becomes intoxicated. The Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 128:38), however, favors the approach of Rambam who rules that there is no problem at all with less than a *reviis*, but that a *reviis* is sufficient for disqualifica-

tion even though he has not become intoxicated.

The approach of the other authorities is based on the idea that the ban on a *kohen* blessing after drinking wine is not of Torah origin but rather a rabbinical decree, which places this in the same category as prayer for which one is disqualified only upon intoxication. Rambam, however, views this rabbinical decree in another light. The Sages wanted the act of blessing the congregation to be given virtually the same respect as Temple service. To achieve this they held that it was sufficient to forbid the *kohen* to bless when he drank so much wine that it would have invalidated the service he performed and make him liable for premature death. To extend this ban even to a lesser amount would have given it exactly the same status as Temple service, and this they wished to avoid.

• *Krisos 13b*

THE SECRET OF A SAGE'S SUCCESS

A series of several *mishnayos* features halachic questions put to Rabbi Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua by Rabbi Akiva and the responses they offered. The series is introduced with the information that their Torah dialogue took place in the marketplace of Eimum where they had gone to purchase an animal to serve at the wedding feast of Rabbi Gamliel's son.

Tosefos points out that the purpose of providing this information is to call attention to the extraordinary attachment these sages had to Torah study. We see this from their profound dialogue even at

a time when they were so preoccupied with wedding feast preparations.

Rabbi Yehoshua features in another account of attachment to Torah study. The Jerusalem Talmud (quoted by Tosefos in *Mesechta Chagiga* 15a) relates what took place at the feast celebrating the *bris* of Elisha ben Avuya. The host, Avuya, was one of the foremost people of Jerusalem and he invited all of the city's most distinguished residents. He placed all of his guests in one house and he put Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer in another place. While the other guests were engaged in eating, drinking, singing and dancing, these two sages devoted themselves to Torah study and were surrounded by Heavenly fire. They explained to their shocked host that he need not fear a conflagration in his home, because these flames were only a return of the Heavenly fire which attended the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and generated by the intensity of their Torah study.

A key to Rabbi Yehoshua's central role in these two tales of intense attachment to Torah study may perhaps be found in the tribute paid to him by his teacher Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (*Pirkei Avos* 2:8). "Fortunate is the woman who gave birth to him," is what he said of him. Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura explains the tribute thus: "She was responsible for his becoming a sage. When she was pregnant with him she visited all the houses of Torah study in her city and asked the scholars to pray for her yet unborn child to become a sage. From the day he was born she did not remove his cradle from the *Beis Midrash* so that no sound but Torah should enter his ears."

• *Krisos 15a*

FATHERLY ADVICE

Tidbits from the 'Ethics of the Fathers' Traditionally Studied on Summer Sabbaths

"WHOEVER FINDS FAVOR WITH PEOPLE SURELY FINDS FAVOR WITH HASHEM."

• *Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa*

This concept of "Vox Populi Vox Dei," says Tosefos Yom Tov, has a source in the words of Hashem to the Prophet Yechezkel: "I shall place my spirit amongst you." (*Yechezkel* 36:27) The spirit of the people is a reflection of the spirit of their Creator.

But, he points out, you don't have to please everyone. Rabbi Chanina did not insist on finding favor with *all* of the people. This is why *Megillas Esther* concludes by informing us that Mordechai found favor with "most of his brothers," but not with *all* of them.

OY! AHoy! CRUISIN' ON A SHABBOS AFTERNOON

Gershon Minkow, Jerusalem wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
My family is planning its second family reunion for 1998, and they are considering having it on a small cruise ship (probably 100-200 people) over a weekend. If the ship were to take off on Thursday or Friday, would it be permissible to stay on it over Shabbat? Thank you for your response.

Dear Gershon Minkow,

The Talmud states it's forbidden to set sail within three days of Shabbat. The commentaries offer many explanations for this rabbinic prohibition. The Shulchan Aruch cites the reason offered by Maimonides, that there is a concern that one might become seasick and this will interfere with the celebration of Shabbat. It generally takes three days to 'get your sea legs.'

The Talmud, however, permits one to leave on a ship even within three days, if one is traveling for the purpose of a mitzva. Some authorities rule that in this regard, traveling for business or to visit a friend is considered a mitzvah, because it's a mitzva to provide for your family and to strengthen your bonds of love and friendship. Visiting your family is certainly no less of a mitzva than visiting a friend.

Furthermore, ships today are more stable than they used to be and motion sickness is less likely. Based on this, Rabbi Moshe Sternbach, *shlita*, permits traveling on such a ship within three

days of Shabbat.

So if your family plans a weekend cruise, you're on 'solid ground' if you participate. Just don't rock the boat.

Sources:

- Tractate Shabbat 19a
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 248

WHEN YOU BLESS UPON A STAR

Steven W. Luger
<Swluger@aol.com> wrote:

With all the excitement about the Hale-Bopp comet, our family went out to see it and recited the Blessing "Oseh Maaseh Bereshit" ["Blessed are You, Hashem ... Who makes the works of creation"]. However, in the Mishna it says that the proper blessing is "Shekocho u'gvurato maleh olam" ["...Whose power and might fill the world"]. When did this change occur? And how, if the Mishna has a very specific blessing, can somebody change it? Thanks for your help.

Dear Steven W. Luger,

The Mishna states: "On comets, earth tremors, thunder, storm winds and lightning, say: 'Blessed is He whose strength and might fill the world.' On mountains, hills, rivers, oceans and desserts, say: 'Blessed is He who makes the works of creation.'"

The Talmud explains the Mishna as follows: On mountains, hills, etc., there is only one possible blessing which can be said — namely, "Who makes the works of creation." But on comets, earth tremors, etc., you can say either blessing you want. You can say either

"Whose strength and might fill the world" or you can say "Who makes the works of creation." The custom is to say "Who makes the works of creation," but the other one is also acceptable.

Some commentaries understand the Mishna as referring to meteors ('shooting stars'), not comets. In practice, you say a blessing on both comets and meteors.

Speaking of star-gazing:

Gretta: You know, Betty, I have this horrible problem. I fell down and bumped my head last week, and ever since then I've been seeing stars!

Betty: Well, have you seen a doctor?

Gretta: No, just stars.

Sources:

- Tractate Berachot 54a, 59a
- Mishna Berurah 227:1

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week, jerry@abcworks.co.uk wrote:

Hi, This may interest you as a Yiddle Riddle: When can a person be called to the Torah for 3 successive aliyot on the same day?

Answer: *(It happened to me) A kohen is called to the Torah for maftir, which is the last aliya on Shabbat morning. He then goes to the afternoon service where he is called up first for the kohen aliya. There is no levi, so he receives the next aliya in place of a levi.*

Thanks, Jerry, for the question and answer.

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 26:3 - Laboring in Torah learning.
2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g., Shabbos nights).
3. 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
4. 26:6 - No foreign army will travel through your land on their way to a different country.
5. 26:8 - Two Thousand.
6. 26:8 - Ten Thousand.
7. 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvos*, rejecting those who observe *mitzvos*, hating Sages, preventing others from observing *mitzvos*, denying that Hashem gave the *mitzvos*, denying the existence of Hashem. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
8. 26:32 - No enemy nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
9. 26:35 - 70 years. Because the Jewish People violated 70 *Shemita* and *Yovel* years.
10. 26:35 - 390 years.
11. 26:42 - In five places in the Torah Yaakov's name is written with an extra "vav" and in five places the name Eliyahu is missing a "vav". Yaakov took these vavs as a pledge that Eliyahu will one day come and announce the redemption of Yaakov's children.
12. 26:41 - Hashem Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, Hashem will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jewish from assimilating into the host culture.
13. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak's ashes (who was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before Hashem.
14. 26:46 - To teach that both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah were given to Moshe on *Har Sinai*.
15. 27:8 - The person whose value was donated goes before the *kohen*, who sets the obligation according to the poor person's ability to pay.
16. 27:9 - The money is '*chullin*', meaning it does not have 'holy' status, except for the value of the animal's leg which does have 'holy' status.
17. 27:16 - It becomes the property of the *kohanim* who are on rotation at the beginning of *Yovel*.
18. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.
19. 27:31 - The food becomes permissible to him outside of Jerusalem. The redemption money must be brought to Jerusalem and used to purchase food to be eaten there.
20. 27:32 - He passes them through a door individually and every tenth animal he marks with a rod smeared with red dye.

BONUS ANSWER!

No. The verse in this week's *Parsha* is referring to the weakest of our soldiers. Even our weakest soldier will be able to defeat twenty enemies. Our strongest soldier will be able to defeat a thousand or more.

• *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, based on Toras Kohanim*

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

26:6	Taming of Wild Animals
26:11	Theology of Medicine
26:12	Promise for the Future
26:16	Analysis of Jewish History

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