

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHIOT DEVARIM-VA'ETCHANAN-EKEV-RE'EH-SHOFTIM · SUMMER ISSUE 5764 /2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 45

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### Devarim

## YOU'RE A STAR!

*"Hashem, your G-d has multiplied you and behold! you are like the stars of the heaven in abundance." (1:4)*

When the Jewish People fulfill G-d's will, they are like the stars. There is no competition or envy among the stars. No star was ever heard to complain that the light of another was brighter than his. Similarly a righteous person is happy with the light that G-d has bestowed on him, for he knows it is not his own light anyway.

Sometimes the light of a star is not immediately apparent. A cloud of cosmic gas or some other obstruction may mask that light. So too are there are untold numbers of holy people amongst our nation who deliberately hide their light "under a bushel."

And just as the stars will live forever, so is the Jewish People an eternal nation who will radiate the light of G-d forever.

• Source: based on the Sifri in Parshat Ekev

would ensure that they would be arise at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead.

G-d wanted Moshe to be the twenty-dollar bill amongst the small change to make sure that not a nickel would get lost.

• Source: based on Devarim Rabba 2:5

### EKEV

## WHAT, ME WORRY?

*"Now, O Yisrael, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to go in His ways and to love Him and to serve your G-d with all your heart and all your soul." (10:11)*

If television puts everyone in the same global meeting-house, then the Internet creates a myriad of private electronic booths. This is both its power and its danger.

A secular Jew will have no problem asking a question over the Internet to a virtual Rabbi. After all, his beard and peyot are merely virtual. Without the Internet, that person might never hear Torah Judaism in another way. Peer pressure or his own feelings of alienation may keep him from ever crossing the threshold of a yeshiva.

By the same token, the very anonymity of the Internet is why it is so dangerous in a religious home. Even with the best of net-filters, in just a couple of clicks, a youngster could find himself in a virtual bookshop worse than anything you could find near Times Square. Twenty years ago, he would have to be brazen enough to make a journey to such an insalubrious area with his cash in hand. He would have to have conquered his embarrassment and shame to enter such a shop and to ask for the stuff they keep in the brown envelopes in the back room. Nowadays, there is no one to make him feel ashamed. All that stands between him and his negative drive is his own *yirat Shamayim* (fear of Heaven).

And on that, one should never rely.

When Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai lay on his deathbed, his students asked him to bless them. He replied, "May your fear of G-d be as great as your fear of your fellow man!"

They answered him, "Rebbe. Shouldn't our fear of G-d be greater than our fear of our fellow man?"

### Va'etchanan

## NICKEL 'N' DIME

*"...for you shall not cross this Jordan" (3:27)*

A dark night. A passenger jumps down from a bus. As he jumps some small change falls from his pocket. Too embarrassed to ask the driver to wait so he can use the headlights of the bus to collect his nickels and dimes from the sidewalk, the passenger quickly reaches into his pocket and places a twenty-dollar bill on the ground in the vicinity of his small change. He shouts to the driver "Hold the bus! There's a twenty dollar bill of mine somewhere down here on the ground!"

In the bright headlamps the passenger sees not only the twenty-dollar bill but the scattered small change as well, and he quickly scoops them both up and is on his way.

G-d was adamant that Moshe should not enter the Land of Israel. One reason was that Moshe should be buried in the desert along with his generation so that his personal merit

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Devarim

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, “Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told *Bnei Yisrael* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvot*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: from the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe’s guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn’t sinned

by sending spies into *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results. The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin. He recounts how they wouldn’t listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of *Eretz Yisrael* in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

## ISRAEL Forever

### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE “FAITHFUL CITY”?

The “Nine Days” are upon us. Nine days, from Rosh Chodesh Av until the Ninth of Av. Days of mourning the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* and other tragedies which took place on Tisha B’Av.

The sins of our ancestors which were the catalyst of these tragedies are dramatically described in the Haftarah we will be reading in our synagogues this Shabbat. In fact it is called “Shabbat Chazon” because of the first word in the prophecy of Yeshayahu Hanavi, in which he laments the degeneration of Yerushalayim from a “faithful city” to the

status of an immoral woman.

When Yerushalayim is chosen as the site for a “gay parade” in our own days, we hear the echo of the Prophet’s indictment. But it is not only this unwelcome “celebration” that is to be lamented. Most of Israeli society falls short of the standards of decency in dress and behavior that are to be expected in the country of the People of the Torah.

As we mourn tragedies of the past we must reflect on how to avoid tragedies in the future by improving our society in order to secure Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and *Eretz Yisrael*

### SAFE FROM THE FLOOD

Where did the dove find a leaf in a deluge-shattered world to bring to Noach in the ark? From *Eretz Yisrael*, answers Rabbi Levi in the Midrash. While vegetation was destroyed along with everything else in the world by the fierce rains of the deluge, the Prophet Yechezkel says about *Eretz Yisrael* that “it was not rained upon in the day of fury” (*Yechezkel 22:23*).



The waters that enveloped the rest of the world did eventually flood *Eretz Yisrael* as well but left the branches of the trees they covered intact. Noach was able to judge from the leaf brought to him from an olive branch that the floodwaters had receded throughout the universe and it was safe to exit the ark.

OHRNET magazine is published by **Ohr Somayach** Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did Hashem instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refa'im?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

## PARSHA Q&amp;A!

## Answers to Devarim's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 – Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 – So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 – They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

## TWO MEANINGS OF IMPURITY

If an animal dedicated as a sacrifice developed a flaw that disqualified it, the Torah enabled the owner or another to redeem the animal by donating money to the Sanctuary equivalent to its value. The fifth *perek* of *Mesechta Bechorot* we are now learning is focused on the type of flaw that makes such redemption possible, a procedure not permitted as long as the animal is flawless.

There is no explicit mention in the Torah of this ability to redeem a flawed sacrificial animal. Our Sages deduced this rule from an analysis of two passages that appear to be redundant. In one place the Torah speaks of redeeming “an impure animal which cannot be offered as a sacrifice” (*Vayikra* 27:11). In another it also speaks of an “impure animal that will be redeemed according to its value” (*ibid.* 27:27).

These two passages, concluded our Sages, refer to two different categories of animals belonging to the Sanctuary that can be redeemed. The second one deals with a non-kosher animal donated to the Sanctuary that has no use for it and is empowered to acquire its monetary value through offering it for redemption. The first passage, therefore, must be referring to another category of animal that cannot be sacrificed, and this can only mean a kosher animal that has been disqualified because of a flaw.

The wording of this first passage serves as a hint to the nature of the subject. It identifies the animal in question as one which is “impure which cannot be offered as a sacrifice”. Its impurity lies not in the species to which it belongs as in the second passage but rather in the fact that “it cannot be offered as a sacrifice”, a description fitting a kosher animal disqualified for sacrifice because of a flaw.

• *Bechorot* 37b

## THE LAME AND THE SPOILS

What a treasure of wisdom lies behind even a seemingly casual remark of a Talmudic Sage! When the Sage Shmuel was asked a question by his brother Pinchas to which he had no answer, he responded by quoting the words of the Prophet Yeshayahu “the lame shall take the spoils” (*Yeshayahu* 33:23).

Rashi explains this as a reference to the improbability of those who can hardly walk collecting spoils from the battlefield. Shmuel thus expressed his amazement at being

stumped by a question from one whose mediocre skills made it so improbable for him to do so.

The phrase he cited is the climax of a prophecy dealing with the danger to Jerusalem posed by an invading enemy of great might, followed by the Heavenly salvation of the city. This prophecy dealt with a situation of that time but also served as a promise for a future one.

The danger at hand in the time of the Prophet was posed by the Assyrian army of Sancherib who had conquered the entire known world, including most of Eretz Yisrael, and only Jerusalem resisted him. The Jews of Jerusalem, led by their righteous King Chizkiyahu, prayed to Heaven and Yeshayahu’s prophecy was an assurance that their prayers would be answered. The Heavenly destruction of Sancherib would be so complete and so near to Jerusalem, he concluded, that even the lame would be capable of reaching the spoils of the battlefield.

This prophecy was indeed fulfilled as a Heavenly angel slew the entire Assyrian army the very night before an assault on the besieged city was to take place.

But the prophecy also deals with the threat to Jerusalem that will be posed at the end of days by the armies of Gog U’Magog. Then too will G-d destroy Israel’s enemies so completely and so near to Jerusalem that even the improbable scenario of the lame collecting spoils will become a reality.

• *Bechorot* 39a

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Va'etchanan

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvot*. Hashem refuses. Moshe reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on *Bnei Yisrael* that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins *Bnei Yisrael* to “pass over” the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in *Eretz Yisrael* they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to Hashem.

Moshe designates three “refuge cities” to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

## PARSHA Q&A?

## VA'ETCHANAN

1. “And I prayed to Hashem at that time.” Why “at that time”?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by Hashem’s “strong hand”?
3. What is *ha'levanon*?
4. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the *mitzvot* properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word *v'noshantem*?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe’s prophecy?
9. “You’ll serve man-made gods.” Is this literal?
10. Why is east called *mizrach*?
11. “Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you.”

1. When had Hashem previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
2. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
3. What is meant by “Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is One”?
4. What are two meanings of loving Hashem “with all your might”?
5. How well-versed must one be in Torah?
6. Where does the word *totafot* come from?
7. Who is fit to swear in Hashem’s name?
8. What does it mean that the Jews are the “smallest nation”?
9. When someone serves Hashem with love, how many generations receive reward?
10. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Va'etchanan's Questions!

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

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of *Eretz Canaan*, Moshe thought perhaps Hashem had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - *Ha'levanon* means the *Beit Hamikdash*, which makes “white” (*lavan*), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren’t buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The *gematria* of *v'noshantem*, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy “that you shall utterly perish” would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you’ll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It’s the direction from which the sun shines

1. (*mizrach* means shining).
11. 5:13 - Before *Matan Torah*, at Marah. (*Shmot* 15:25)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (*Shmot* 15:25).
13. 6:4 - Hashem, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether Hashem treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - *Tot* means two in Caspi. *Fot* means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves Hashem and reveres His name.
18. 7:7 - *B'nei Yisrael* are the humblest nation.
19. 7:9 - 2,000.
20. 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

If *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those “minor” *mitzvot* that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer *Eretz Canaan* little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in *Eretz Yisrael* is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and suc-

cess. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael's* righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites, for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe. Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the 10 Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon's passing is recorded as is the elevation of the *levi'im* to Hashem's ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping *mitzvot* and the curse that results from non-observance.

## PARSHA Q&amp;A?

## EKEV

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a. wonders b. strong hand c. outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by Hashem?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's “hands” except one. What is this?
14. What is the “added benefit” of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is “serving Hashem with the heart”?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one “cleave to Hashem”?

## PARSHA Q&amp;A!

## Answers to Ekev's Questions!

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

1. 7:12 - Guard even the “light” commandments.
2. 7:19 - The: a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 - Since they served in the Temple, thus they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

## AN EXTRA FINGER

**A**mong the physical flaws that can disqualify a *kohen* from performing the sacred service in the *Beit Hamikdash* is an extra finger or toe.

What if there is a consistency in this abnormality and the *kohen* has six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot?

Rabbi Yehuda's opinion is that this does not constitute a disqualifying flaw, while the other Sages maintain that it does.

In his analysis of this debate Rabbi Yitzchak explains that both opinions are based on a passage describing a Philistine warrior who waged war against Israel. The victory over the Philistines, resulting from the slaying of the mighty Goliath by David, did not bring an end to the wars initiated by these enemies. A few of the brothers of Goliath waged war and were vanquished. Concerning one of them it is written:

"There was another war in Gat and there came a giant with six fingers and six toes" (*Shmuel II 21:20*).

Rabbi Yehuda saw this description of the giant as a praise of his superb physical condition expressed in his extra limbs, whereas the other Sages saw it as a criticism of his abnormality.

The approach of the Sages is readily understandable because it is a putdown on a wicked enemy of Israel. Rabbi Yehuda's approach is more difficult to understand, for why would a passage in Tanach praise the extra strength of such a villain?

The answer lies in the following passage that relates the victory of David's nephew over this giant. The magnitude of this victory is much more appreciated when we think of a giant so strong that he even has extra fingers and toes.

• *Bechorot 45b*

## THE FACE TELLS ALL

**W**itnesses testifying that they saw a dead man whom they recognized as the missing husband of a woman seeking to remarry must report that they saw his face, including his forehead and nose. An indication that facial features are the critical factor in recognition is found in the words of the Prophet Yeshayahu.

In speaking of the sins of his people that would eventually lead to the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* and exile, the Prophet notes that "the appearance of their faces testified against them" (*Yeshayahu 3:9*).

Although this passage serves as a hint to recognition

based on facial features, its literal meaning is the subject of different interpretations.

Rashi in our *gemara* writes that this is a reference to the sin of adultery, which Divine intervention makes impossible to conceal. The facial features of the child born from adultery have been programmed by G-d to simulate that of the adulterer and thus testify that he has sinned.

The commentaries on the Book of Yeshayahu take the much simpler approach that a person's character is reflected in his face. Here is how one of them, Malbim, expresses this concept:

"Their faces will testify as to what is deep in their hearts, for it will be recognizable on their faces who is truly G-d fearing and who is a fraud and hypocrite."

Our *gemara's* application to testimony for enabling a woman to remarry serves as the basis for an interesting *midrash* concerning the punishment visited by Heaven upon Aviah, the ruler of the Kingdom of Yehuda, who vanquished the army of Yeravam, ruler of the Kingdom of Yisrael, and slew half a million soldiers. The reason given by our Sages for G-d subsequently causing Aviah to die is that he disfigured the facial features of the slain soldiers so that no one would be able to testify that they recognized them and enable their widows to remarry. This is hinted at by the term "an exceedingly great blow," used in describing the rout (*Divrei Hayamim II 13:17*). Although the idol-worshipping Yeravam and his followers deserved defeat, this action of Aviah exceeded the limit and led to his own death.

• *Bechorot 46b*

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**M**oshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there, not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be shechted anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to

death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee Year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

**M**oshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem’s altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *sifrei Torah*, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn’t become haughty. Neither the *kohanim* nor the *levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel; rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains

how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided for an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased’s family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

לע"נ  
 ר' דוד בן ר' אהרון ז"ל  
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from Hashem?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of Hashem and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “to Him (Hashem) you shall cleave.” How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the “source” of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under Hashem’s “special protection”?

## Answers to Re'eh's Questions!

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

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it. His descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate Hashem's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept “seek out a good *beit din*”?
5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of “*chazeh, shok, and keiva*.” Which ones?
11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to “prepare the way” to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
15. “Through the mouth of two witnesses....” What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four “scare-tactics” the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

## PARSHA Q&amp;A!

## Answers to Shoftim’s Questions!

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

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof....*”
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don’t understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - a. Clanging their shields b. Making their horses stomp and whinny c. Shouting d. Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 21:9- He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

## COUNTING SHEEP

“There shall yet be sheep passed along through one who counts them” (*Yirmiyahu 33:13*). This passage from the prophecy concerning the restoration of Eretz Yisrael at the end of the exile is cited by our *gemara* as a guideline for determining the distance between the animals owned by a Jew which makes it impossible to combine them for the purpose of animal tithing.

The literal meaning of this passage is explained by the commentaries as an expression of how Eretz Yisrael, so desolate in the time of the Prophet, will bloom again with great prosperity for its returning exiles. One understanding is that there will be such a multitude of sheep that their owner will not be capable of counting them by himself and will be compelled to appoint someone to help him.

But even this literal reading of the passage has a figurative dimension. The Jewish people are compared to sheep, and their king to a shepherd. Just as the shepherd counts his sheep to ascertain that none are missing, so too will Jews have a leader who will concern himself with every one of them.

This, of course, is a reference to the golden days ahead. The *targum* of Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel explicitly states that the sheep and the counting shepherd refer to the leadership which Moshiach will provide for the nation.

• *Bechorot 54b*

## THE DROPPED EGG

There is a tale in our *gemara* of a wondrous giant bird called *bar yachni* which once dropped its egg while in flight and caused massive destruction where it fell.

This account is challenged on the basis of a passage (*Iyov 39:13*), which describes this bird as one that goes to great lengths to place its egg in its nest and does not let it fall to earth. In that passage this bird is called by another name – *kenaf renanim* – and its relationship to its offspring is encapsulated in the word *ne'elesa*. This word is actually an acronym for three words that convey a picture of a bird with such power that it is capable of carrying high a giant egg and gently placing it in its nest.

The context of this passage is the reproof that G-d gave to *Iyov*, who, in his great suffering, began to have doubts about Divine Providence being involved in every aspect of nature. This bird's ability to so care for its egg is but one of a myriad of examples provided to show how the Creator cares for every detail in His creation.

As regards our own *gemara* the response to the above challenge is that in the bombing incident the *bar yachni* was aware that no bird would be hatched from that egg and therefore abandoned it.

• *Bechorot 57b*

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

### REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

## A “DATE” WITH EGGED

**Question:** I am a law student in the U.S. visiting Israel this summer to work on a law project. Since I will be doing a lot of traveling by public transportation, I purchased a monthly pass for the Jerusalem Egged buses. It states on top that it is valid for the month of July, from 12 Tammuz till 13 Av. When I boarded a bus on the night of June 30th the driver informed me that my July pass was not yet valid. With my legal training I argued that since the Hebrew date of 12 Tammuz had already been reached, I was within my rights to use the pass already. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Isn't it beautiful how Egged realizes the importance of the Jewish identity of a Jewish State and has instituted the inclusion of Hebrew dates on its tickets and cards in addition to the secular calendar dates?

If the bus drivers are instructed by the company not to honor passes before the arrival of the civil date, it is indicative that company policy is that the use of such passes is limited to that date. A legal case, however, can be made against misleading labeling and this is perhaps why some drivers will not press the issue when confronted by law students. We suggest contacting Egged and asking them to include in the many regulations on the back of the pass a clarification of this issue. But I have one question for our law student. What will happen on Motzei Shabbat Nachamu (the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av) when the pass is still valid since it is July 31st but has expired as far as the Hebrew date is concerned? Will you be consistent and forfeit your right to use the pass that evening?

## GETTING THEM OUT

“Any tithe of cattle or of the flock, any that passes under the staff, the tenth one shall be holy” (Vayikra 27:32).

This is how the Torah commands the tithing of animals. Our Sages supply the details in this fashion:

The animals are placed in a corral that has a narrow exit passage to prevent more than one going out at a time. As they exit the owner counts them. When he reaches ten he takes his staff and marks that animal with a red dye to indicate that it is holy and will be offered as a sacrifice.

The phrasing of the Torah passage is “any that passes,” which indicates that the animal must pass through the exit on its own and not be driven by its owner. How is this accomplished?

The method that our Sages insisted on is to place the mothers of these recently born animals outside the corral so that they will provide a maternal magnet for their offspring. An alternative method of placing some food for them outside the passage is rejected because this would also attract animals that are not supposed to be tithed – those whose mothers died before they were born or those who were purchased. By using only the “mother method” the owner will remember not to include in his tithing those who never had a mother and those that he purchased since most young animals are purchased without their mothers.

• Bechorot 58b

## OLD ENOUGH BUT NOT QUITE

A Jew who becomes contaminated with spiritual impurity through contact with the dead is forbidden to enter the Sanctuary until he purifies himself in the manner prescribed by the Torah. Should he willingly enter in his impure state his penalty is *karet* (extirpation).

In introducing this rule the Torah uses the term “the *man* who shall be contaminated and fail to purify himself” (Bamidbar 19:20). The stress on *man* cannot mean that a *katan* – a child who has not yet reached manhood – does not become contaminated through contact with the dead, because we find two passages earlier that the Torah requires purification for “all the souls who were there (in

the tent where the corpse was)”, a phrase which includes Jews of any age. The stress on *man* is therefore understood as exempting from the penalty of *karet* a minor who became contaminated and entered the Sanctuary.

This raises a question as to why it was necessary for the Torah to state this exemption from punishment for a *katan* when we already know that a minor is exempt from any punishment!

The answer offered by Tosefot is that since the Torah placed the *katan* in the same category as an adult as regards becoming contaminated and subsequently contaminating others with whom he comes into contact, there was a basis for assuming that he should be regarded as an adult as well in regard to the penalty for entering the Sanctuary in an impure state.

A very original approach to this question is presented by Rabbi Shmuel Strashoon (RaShaSh) of Vilna. Had the Torah not stressed the term *man* we might have assumed that if an adult pushed an impure *katan* into the Sanctuary he would be liable for *karet*. The stress on *man* therefore teaches us that no *karet* is possible when it is not an adult who enters.

• Erachin 3a

## A LETTER TO ASSAF

“A letter to Assaf, the guardian of the king’s forests” (Nechemiah 2:8) is cited by Rabbi Yosef as a challenge to a distinction made by Rabbi Yochanan regarding when contributions from heathens were accepted for the maintenance of the *Beit Hamikdash*. What was that letter all about and who was the author of that statement?

Nechemiah was the highly respected servant of the Persian king who was then the occupier of Eretz Yisrael. He received a very distressing report from some Jews who came from Yerushalayim to the Persian capital about the sorry condition of the Jewish community which had earlier been established there with the license of the Persian King Koresh. The heathen enemies had breached the walls of the city and burned its gates.

After weeping, mourning, fasting and praying for Heavenly help, Nechemiah took the initiative of appealing to the king for permission to travel to Yerushalayim to restore

## WEEKLY DAFootnotes

## BECHOROT 58 - ERACHIN 11

the city's walls. When the king consented to give him leave from his duties for a stipulated period, Nechemiah realized that his prayers had been answered and that he could go even further in gaining the king's aid. He then asked for letters of introduction to the officials along the way to assure him safe passage, and for a letter to the guardian of the king's forests. The latter letter was for the purpose of receiving the lumber he needed to restore the city walls and gates. The "house" he mentioned in that request as one of the beneficiaries of that lumber is understood by Rabbi Yosef as a reference to the *Beit Hamikdash*, and serves as a proof that even if the Jews building the *Beit Hamikdash* refused to accept aid from their heathen neighbors they did accept such aid from the king.

• *Erachin 6a*

### SONG AND THE SEA

“They shall raise their voices in song regarding the might of G-d; they shall exult from the sea.”  
(*Yeshayahu 24:14*)

This prophecy about the joy of Israel when G-d will destroy all the enemies who threaten Yerushalayim serves as a source for the singing of praise to G-d which the Levites

did in the *Beit Hamikdash* during the offering of communal sacrifices and their accompanying libations.

Rashi explains the prophet's words as a promise that when the *Beit Hamikdash* will be rebuilt the Levites will once again sing the praises of G-d in it and their song will surpass that which their ancestors sang when they were saved from the Egyptians at the sea (*Yam Suf*).

Maharsha, however, points out that two occasions of song sung by the Levites in the *Beit Hamikdash* are mentioned in this passage. Throughout the year they did their singing with musical accompaniment as the wine libations were poured on the altar. During the Festival of Succot there was special music and singing connected with the water libation poured on the altar – the *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva*. According to this approach the entire passage is a prophecy regarding the restoration of Levite song. “They shall raise their voices in song” is a reference to the song accompanying wine libations, while “they shall exult from the sea” relates to the water used in the Succot libation of water.

Both approaches agree that this source for the Levite singing in the *Beit Hamikdash* in the past is unique among the other sources mentioned by the fact that it is based on the singing which will be done in the future.

• *Erachin 11a*

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### A CABBIE'S TALE

Eli is certainly one of my favorite Jerusalem cab drivers. Not only because he wears a *kipah* and provides efficient service, but also because of the tales he tells during the ride.

One such tale concerns a close relative of his who traveled to Iraq around the time of the first Gulf War in an attempt to find a younger sister left behind when the family fled. One of Saddam Hussein's policemen had taken a fancy to her from her early youth and there was a fear that with her protective family gone he had abducted her.

Her older brother was so troubled by this that he ignored the warnings of family and friends that he was risking his life by traveling to a land where Jews were not welcome, and somehow made it to Iraq. Upon arriving in the village near Baghdad where his family had resided, he was told by a former Moslem neighbor that his sister was dead. Suspicious that his informant was lying in order to hasten

the departure of a foreigner whose presence jeopardized the safety of the village should Saddam's agents learn that it was harboring him, he desperately continued his search. He had not yet succeeded in gaining any more information on his sister's whereabouts when the nervous *mukhtar* (leader) of the village insisted that he leave for his sake and that of the village. He even supplied him with a couple of village residents to provide escort.

On the way out one of the escorts turned to him and said:

“While you Jews were in our country we enjoyed great prosperity. Since you have gone everything has gone wrong and we are impoverished. We now see that you are Allah's chosen people.”

Hearing these words from a devout Moslem in an enemy land made the otherwise fruitless and dangerous trip worthwhile.

## THE LOST JEWS – THE TEN TRIBES

**From: Christopher in Minneapolis**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*Thank you for your very interesting and informative answers on a variety of Jewish subjects. Perhaps you could give me your opinion on the following: I recently saw a documentary that explained that the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel were exiled to the Far East and settled along the Silk Road as far as China. What do Jewish sources say about this? Are they or their customs really Jewish? What does Judaism say about whether these "lost" tribes will ever be reunited with the Jewish people? Thanks in advance for taking time to answer.*

Dear Christopher,

Thank you for your kind words, and thanks for asking such fascinating questions. Since there is a lot to be said about all that you asked, I'll have to answer in a few installments: Where are the Lost Tribes? Are they or their customs Jewish? Will they reunite with the Jewish people?

As you know, Jacob had 12 sons: Reuben, Shimon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph and Benjamin. Jacob blessed Joseph's sons that they should be like Reuben and Shimon, meaning Ephraim and Menashe were elevated to the status of Tribes. Thus, there were a total of 13 tribes but only 12 inherited the Land, since the tribe of Levi was given special Levite cities scattered throughout the rest of the tribes. Around 1000 BCE, Saul, David, and Solomon reigned. Two hundred years later around 800 BCE, the Kingdom split in two. The Northern Kingdom was ruled by Yerovam of Ephraim, and contained 9 tribes. The Southern Kingdom was ruled by Rehavam of Judah, and contained the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Shimon.

The Tribes of the Northern Kingdom were exiled in three stages. In approximately 600 BCE, Pekach who ruled the northern kingdom invited Rezin, the non-Jewish King of Aram, to wage war against Achaz, who ruled the Southern Kingdom. Achaz then aligned with Tiglat-pileser of Assyria who defeated Rezin and invaded the northernmost part of Israel, exiling Dan, Naphtali, Asher and Zebulon (II Kings 16:1-9). At that time, Hoshea killed Pekach and ruled the remaining tribes of the north for ten years until a new king of Assyria, Shalmanesser, invaded the tribes east of the Jordan River, exiling half of Menashe, Gad and Reuben (ibid 17:1-3). After another ten years, Hoshea rebelled against Assyria and Shalmanesser invaded a second time, exiling the

rest of Menashe, Issachar and Ephraim (ibid 17:4-6). [Some of Levi was exiled with the northern Kingdom; while Judah, Benjamin, Shimon and some of Levi were exiled to Babylon some 130 years later.]

Where were the Tribes exiled? "The King of Ashshur (Assyria) carried Israel away into Ashshur, and placed them in Chalach [Iraq] and in Chavor by the river of Gozan [Syria] and in the cities of the Maday [Iran]" (II Kings 17:6). In addition to Assyria, they were also exiled through Egypt to Patros on the southern Nile, and Cush [Ethiopia] (Isaiah 11:11). The Talmud also says the tribes were exiled to both Africa and to the mountains of *selug* (snow), quite possibly referring to Ethiopia and to the mountains of western Iran (Sanhedrin 94b). Similarly, the famous Jewish historian of Roman times, Josephus Flavius wrote, "The Ten Tribes are beyond the Euphrates until this day, and are an immense multitude whose numbers cannot be estimated" (Antiquities 11:33).

The Midrash (Breishet Rabba 73:6) says the tribes were exiled beyond the River Sambatyon. Sambatyon in Greek means the River of Shabbat, since all week it flows with tremendous turbulence, and on the Sabbath it rests. Turnus Rufus once asked Rabbi Akiva, "How do you know your reckoning of the Sabbath is correct? Rabbi Akiva answered, "The River Sambatyon proves it (Sanhedrin 65b). A Jewish explorer of the 900's, Eldad of the tribe of Dan, claimed to have seen the Sambatyon: It "still rolls boulders and sand without water, with a great tremor and roar, such that if it collided with a mountain of iron it would pulverize it. The river flows this way all six days of the week, rolling boulders and sand without any water, and on the Sabbath it rests. When the sun sets Friday evening, a cloud descends upon the river, and no man is able to come near it until the end of the Sabbath." Eldad identified the river in Africa between Sudan and Ethiopia, while Rabbi Samuel of Tzangoli said it's in Egypt. Others claimed it's in the East. Rabbi Menashe ben Israel (Mikve Israel) said it's near the Caspian Sea in Iran, while Rabbi Avraham Pritzel (Orchot Olam) said it's the Ganges River in India.

Another Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudelo (Spain c. 1165) related, "There are men of Israel in the land of Persia who say that in the mountains dwell four of the tribes of Israel, namely, the tribe of Dan, the tribe of Zebulon, the tribe of Asher, and the tribe of Naphtali. They are governed by their own prince, Joseph the Levite. Among them are learned scholars. They sow and reap and go forth to war as far as the land of Cush, by way of the desert. They are in league with the Kofar-al-Turak, pagan tribesmen who worship the wind and live in the wilderness." During his visit to Arabia he wrote, "These tribesmen are of the tribes Reuben

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and Gad, and the half-tribe of Menashe. Their seat of government is a great city surrounded by the mountains of the North. The Jews of Kheibar have built many large fortified cities. The yoke of the gentiles is not upon them. They go forth to pillage and to capture booty in conjunction with the Arabs their neighbors.”

From all of these sources, we find that the Tribes of Israel

were exiled south to Ethiopia, and East through Syria, Iraq, Iran and as far as India [This should not be confused with those Jews who settled these lands much later, after the exile in Roman times]. Next time we'll see evidence in our sources to include Afghanistan, China and perhaps even Japan, and we'll discuss whether they or their customs are Jewish.

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

### Ohrnet in Denver

Hi! This is a message on behalf of Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab from the Denver Community Kollel. We had, in the past, received permission from Ohr Somayach to reprint your Ask! section in our weekly newsletter. We never took advantage of it though, We are now updating our newsletter, and we'd like to know if we still have permission. Thank you very much.

• A. E.

### Ohrnet in Minneapolis

I am writing this on behalf of the Minneapolis Community Kollel. We are in the process of starting a weekly newsletter, beginning in Elul. We would like permission to include Ohrnet's feature "The Human Side of the Story" in our newsletter. The newsletter is a free e-mail. Thanks!

• A.S. (an alumnus of an Ohr Somayach branch)

### Re: "Messianic Jews" (Ohrnet Pinchas)

I think it is important to write a follow up letter to your questioner. He should not get into a debate with the other person. Since he is just returning to observant Judaism, we do not know what level his knowledge is. With this in mind, I suggest he visit <http://jewsforjudaism.org/> or [\[reachjudaism.org\]\(http://reachjudaism.org\) so he will not fall pray to a missionary.](http://out-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

• G. S.

Thank you for your answers to the young man who wrote to you on the topic of "Messianic Jews". What a wonderful forum you provide to enhance our religion.

• G. R.

### A "Regular" Jew

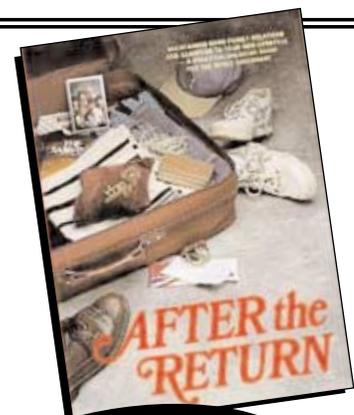
While reading your article I was reminded of the following true story about a "regular" Jew who I think can nevertheless give us a glimpse of real Jewish "Messianic" feelings. While my son-in-law was in the Israeli Air Force, he decided to learn in his spare time at a Belzer yeshiva, and then he and my daughter became more observant. He continued to do reserve duty, and wore his Belzer chassidic outfit to work whenever he was allowed to wear "civilian clothes". One Shabbat he had reserve duty and when he asked if he could wear civilian clothes he was given the go-ahead, thus appearing in his streimel and kapote chassidic garb. As he was the highest-ranking officer on the base that day, he had to make a tour of the entire base — complete with his Belzer attire. Only in Israel!

• F.

*An old friend's wedding, an uncle's funeral, Passover at the family homestead — these are but a few of the challenging real-life events that are fraught with conflict and anxiety for the newly observant. After returning to the faith of their ancestors, many re-enter the secular world without the tools to respond to the inevitable challenges to their newly adopted set of beliefs.*

# After the Return

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PUBLISHED BY FELDHEIM PUBLISHERS



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He replied “*Halevai!* (If only that!) *Would it were that your fear of Him should equal your fear of flesh and blood! When a person commits a sin he is worried that someone may see him. But the fact that G-d is watching him, that doesn't bother him.*”

• Source: Babylonian Talmud

Re'eh

## HYPERKOSHER

“*You shall not eat any carcass...*” (14:21)

I can remember a slightly more innocent world where the actors and actresses in Hollywood were referred to as “stars.” Of course to call a human being a star in itself is a tremendous piece of fantasy and exaggeration.

However, hyperbole, as everyone knows, is subject to the law of diminishing returns. If everyone is somebody and nobody is nobody, then to get noticed being a “star” isn't good enough, and in the 70's a new epithet emerged — the “superstar.” Of course, these mere mortals were as tarnished and faded as their predecessors, the “stars,” but the march of exaggeration and the debasement of language is not to be halted by squeamish concerns of accuracy or truth.

The “superstars” short reign came to an end with the advent of the “megastar.”

Where to from here?

A kosher *shechita* (ritual slaughtering for kosher food) involves the fulfilling on numerous Halachic requirements. The *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) must be a G-d fearing person. He must be allowed to work without the pressure of fulfilling a quota. He must be allotted sufficient time to check the smoothness of his knife and the health of the animal. He must be calm enough to be able to apply the correct amount of pressure to the blade during the *shechita* itself.

The *shochet* must check carefully the animal's lungs. An adhesion on the lung is something not easily detected and often a decision must be made about this that will affect whether the animal is kosher or not.

If the lungs are completely free of adhesions, the animal is “glatt kosher.”

On the average, between two and four percent of all cows that are *shechted* are “glatt kosher.”

How is it, then, that nowadays nearly every restaurant / butcher / deli proclaims that they are “glatt kosher?” It's just not possible.

The answer is that the world of kashrut is not immune from the dreaded disease that affects so much of modern discourse — hyperbole.

Glatt ain't what it used to be.

Shoftim

## THE LAST SCENE

“*When you go out to the battle to meet your enemy... the officers shall speak to the people, saying: 'Who is the man who has built a new house and not inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it... Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted, let him go and return to his house, and let him not melt the heart of his fellows like his heart?'*” (20:1-8)

The Yiddish Theater was not known for its championing of Torah values and so it was not surprising when two students came running to the Brisker Rav, breathless with indignation: “Does the Rav know about the new play the Yiddish theater has put on? The people associated with it should all be put in *cherem* (excommunication)! They've made a satire on the Torah!

First, one of the actors says “*Who is the man who has built a new house and not inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it.*” So, ten people get up and walk off the stage. Then he says “*And who is the man who has planted a vineyard and not redeemed it? Let him go home lest he die and another man redeem it.*” So, another ten people get up and leave the stage. Then he says “*And who is the man who has betrothed a woman and not married her? Let him go home lest he die in the war and another man marry her.*” So, another twenty people get up and walk off the stage. And then he says “*Whoever is afraid, let him go home so he won't scare everyone else.*” So now everyone leaves the stage except two actors who play the Vilna Gaon and the Sha'agas Ariyeh. The Vilna Gaon says to the Sha'agas Ariyeh “*K'vod HaRav, you take the first shot,*” and the Sha'agas Ariyeh replies “*No, no, I insist. After you.*” As they argue about who's going to start the war, the curtain falls and the audience laughs and claps. It's terrible!”

The Brisker Rav paused and then said:

“Well - what's wrong with that?”

The jaws of the students dropped. They gazed at their Rav dumb-struck.

The Brisker Rav continued, “The only thing they forgot is the last scene.”

“What last scene?”

“The last scene is where the Vilna Gaon and the Sha'agas Ariyeh win the war.”

The strength of the Jewish people is not in the vastness of its numbers nor its military might. The Torah calls us the “*smallest of the nations.*”

Our strength is a function of our righteousness and our faithfulness to G-d — the “Master of Wars.”