

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

“Hashem heard your words and He was incensed and He swore, saying ‘If even a man of these people, this evil generation, shall see the good Land that I swore to give to your forefathers.’” (1:34)

Maimonides lists five things which happened on Tisha B’Av: It was decreed that the generation who came out of Egypt should not enter the Land of Israel; both Holy Temples were destroyed; the great city of Betar was captured and the tens of thousands of Jews living there were slaughtered. Its king, thought by the greatest of the sages to be the Mashiach, fell amongst them; “And on that day,” concludes Maimonides, “which is prepared for tragedy, Turnus Rufus of the kings of Edom/Rome plowed over the Sanctuary and its environs in fulfillment of the prophecy ‘Zion will be plowed over like a field.’”

Let me ask you a question. If the Sanctuary was already destroyed, what was so tragic about plowing it over? If Maimonides lists all five of these events together, the implication is that they all are of equal gravity. Moreover, if this is the last event in the list, it implies that this was the end of the process, the final destruction, the final solution.

How can plowing over what has already been destroyed be considered worse than the destruction of the Temples themselves? How can it be listed in the same league as the murder of tens of thousands at Betar; of the extinction of the Messianic hopes of an entire generation? It’s only a bunch of ruins, isn’t it?

The world is tuned into a vast broadcast. A broadcast which beams out its message relentlessly day and night: “Go for it! Grab it now!” It’s the modern,

less eloquent version of the old Epicurean call “Eat drink and be merry — for tomorrow we die!” It’s the message of denial. Denial that our actions have cosmic repercussions. Denial that there is a Law. Denial that there is a Lawgiver.

This voice is of immense overpowering strength. It is the voice of the spiritual heirs of Turnus Rufus from the kings of Edom. Edom is Esav, Yaakov’s twin brother. We are locked in an historical battle with Esav. It is a symbiotic relationship which allows the ascendancy of

“I recall, O G-d, and I am overcome by emotion, as I see every city solidly built on its foundation, while the City of G-d is reduced to the depth of the grave. Nevertheless, we are with G-d and our eyes are turned to G-d.”

one only at the downfall of the other. The world isn’t big enough for both of us. When he is up, we are down. And he is riding very high at present. The massive machinery of materialism grinds out its glib jingle to a deafened world. And the still small voice of Yaakov, of the way of the spirit, is drowned out.

Esav destroyed the Holy Temple. But that wasn’t enough. He wanted to remove all vestige of its ever being

there. That’s why Maimonides lists the plowing over of the Sanctuary last: *The ultimate destruction will be that you won’t be able to see that there ever was a Temple there in the first place.* They will want to uproot it to the extent that not only can they say it doesn’t exist — but it never existed. This is the way of denial. It’s not enough for them to say “G-d is dead” (*chas v’shalom*). They must say that He was never here in the first place. They want to remove all trace.

This is the greatest tragedy of Tisha B’Av. This is why it is listed at the end. It’s the ultimate destruction.

A ruin is a very sad thing. But it speaks of life that once was. It speaks of a reality that existed. When you remove a ruin, you remove its reality from the minds of men. You destroy not just its physical existence, but its spiritual existence as well. You disenfranchise its very existence.

That is what they have done to us. Should we not weep?

CONSOLATION

“Hashem heard your words and He was incensed and He swore, saying ‘If even a man of these people, this evil generation, shall see the good Land that I swore to give to your forefathers.’” (1:34)

Why do we still cry for the destruction of the Holy Temple? It happened so long ago.

Of all his sons, Yaakov loved Yosef the most. Yaakov’s favoritism provoked the brothers’ jealousy. This jealousy ultimately led to their selling Yosef into slavery. They dipped Yosef’s coat into blood and showed it to their father Yaakov. Yaakov supposed that Yosef had been torn to pieces by a wild animal.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, “the Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told the *Bnei Yisrael* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvos*, 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 way of life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in *Eretz Yisrael*.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The Parsha opens with Moshe hinting 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 all of the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates including the lands of Ammon, Moav, and Edom without a fight. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length the sin of the spies, 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.

HAFTORAH: YISHAYAHU 1:1-27

This is the final haftorah of “Three of Affliction.” It is always read on the Shabbos before Tisha B’Av.

The ninth of Av wasn’t always a day of tragedy. During the days of the Second Temple, it was turned into a day of great joy at the celebration of rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*. When the Second Temple was destroyed, Tisha B’Av reverted to its former sadness.

Every generation in which the Holy Temple is not rebuilt, it is as though we ourselves destroyed it. The Prophet

Yirmyahy laments not for the Temple’s destruction, but rather for those evils that caused its destruction. For it is not enough for us to bemoan what was. We must realize that it is within our power to bring the Redemption and the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*. We must use this time of national mourning to analyze our mistakes and correct them.

This year Tisha B’Av falls on Shabbos and the fast is “pushed off” until Sunday. We could “push off” Tisha B’Av for good, if we want to. We could be dancing in the streets this year, and the ninth of Av could again become a day synonymous with joy and exultation.

It’s up to us.

went and converted. And that’s how Rabbi Yochanan got his name “ben Taursa” — *son of an ox (Taurus)*.

Similarly, our Sages relate the incident of the ox which Eliyahu *HaNavi* gave to the false prophets of the *baal*. The ox refused to be slaughtered in the name of the idol *baal* until Eliyahu told it that by letting itself be offered as part of the contest which would ultimately discredit the *baal*, it too would be sanctifying G-d’s Name. Only then, the ox gave in and allowed itself to be slaughtered.

Our Sages also tell of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair’s donkey which refused to eat food from which *maaser* (tithes) had not been taken.

All of this is hinted in this verse: “*The ox knows its owner*” — there is an ox that knows its master — the ox of Eliyahu *HaNavi* who submitted to being sacrificed to idolatry, and the ox of Rabbi Yochanan ben Taursa who wouldn’t work on Shabbos; “*And the donkey, the feeding trough of its master*” — the donkey of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair who wouldn’t eat un-tithed food. However, you, My people, says Hashem, you have sunk lower than the ox and the donkey, for “*Israel does not know, My people do not perceive.*”

• *Horse Sense* - Tzoare Shalal in *Mayana shel Torah*

HORSE SENSE

“*The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s trough. Israel does not know, My people do not perceive.*” (1:3)

Rabbi Yochanan ben Taursa once sold an ox to a non-Jew. When Shabbos came, the non-Jew tried to plough his field, but the ox refused to budge.

He beat the animal vigorously until Rabbi Yochanan came and whispered in the animal’s ear “*You are no longer under my jurisdiction. You are now under the domain of the non-Jew. You must work now as he desires.*”

Immediately, the ox started pulling the plough. Seeing this, the non-Jew

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Have a happy and healthy summer.

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THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Published by
OHR SOMAYACH
TANENBAUM COLLEGE
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

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Produced and Designed by the Office of Communications
Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro, Director

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PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529
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He rent his clothes and mourned, and despite all his children's efforts to comfort him, Yaakov was inconsolable for 22 years, until he received the news that his son Yosef was alive and well in the land of Egypt.

G-d has only decreed that there be consolation over those who have passed from this world. No such decree exists for those who are still alive. This is why Yaakov was inconsolable. Consolation is only for the bereft, and Yosef was still alive.

It once happened on the night of Tisha B'Av that Napoleon was walking through the streets of Paris. He came

upon a synagogue. From inside came the sounds of lamenting. Napoleon told his servant to go inside and bring him the president of the synagogue. After some moments the servant returned with the president. Napoleon said "What is the reason for this terrible lamentation? Have the Jewish People experienced a tragedy that I am not aware of?" "Your majesty," replied the president, "We have experienced a tragedy beyond words. Our Holy Temple has been destroyed." "I was not aware that a tragedy had befallen my Jewish subjects" said Napoleon. "When did this happen?" "Eighteen

hundred years ago, Your Majesty." "Eighteen hundred years! — and you're still mourning?" said Napoleon. "If you can mourn for your temple for eighteen hundred years, you will surely get it back!"

Consolation is only for the bereft.

There is no consolation for Tisha B'Av because the potential to have everything that we lost is still very much alive. The Holy Temple will be rebuilt. Its Builder lives and endures and His People survive as everlasting witnesses to this fact.

Sources:

• *Consolation* - Rashi

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

WHY CRY? — A TALE OF TWO CITIES

How can a Jew weep on Tisha B'Av for the destruction of Jerusalem and the *Beis Hamikdash* which took place thousands of years ago, when he sees how beautifully Jerusalem has been rebuilt in our days?

Perhaps we can learn a lesson from Rabbi Gershon Kitover, brother-in-law of the Ba'al Shem Tov, who arrived in Jerusalem two and a half centuries ago with the first group of Chassidim to settle in the Holy Land. He looked around at a city which sported foreign legations and all the signs of a serene community restored, in sharp contrast to the desolation described by Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) in his famous letter reporting on his visit to the city some five centuries earlier.

Rabbi Gershon broke into tears. Now, he said, I fully understand the words of the prayer that Jews say at the end of the final *ne'ilah* service on Yom Kippur, when the gates of Heaven are about to close. As they stand at this dramatic moment, weakened in body from a long day of fasting and strengthened in spirit from prayer and repentance, they strive to send one more prayer heavenward, invoking the 13 attributes of Divine mercy. The opening lines, sounding more like a Tisha B'Av lamentation than a Yom Kippur prayer, cry out: "I recall, O G-d, and I am overcome by emotion, as I see every city solidly built on its foundation, while the City of G-d is reduced to the depth of the grave. Nevertheless, we are with G-d and our eyes are turned to G-d."

Until Rabbi Gershon saw the rebuilt Jerusalem of his day, he assumed — as we all do — that the above lament contrasts a desolate Holy City with the mighty capitals of the world, Rome, Paris, London and Berlin. But when he saw the beginnings of a rebuilt Jerusalem and contrasted it with the ruins of the *Beis Hamikdash* he sensed a deeper meaning in those words:

'Every city' — said Rabbi Gershon — refers to the *Jerusalem of Below*, the city of brick and mortar; while the 'City of G-d' refers to the *Jerusalem of Above*, the heavenly city characterized by the

Beis Hamikdash.

It is certainly painful to contrast these ruins with the prosperity of foreign cities. But the pain is indescribably greater when one sees the contrast between material prosperity and spiritual ruin before his very eyes. Small wonder that this great man of spirit, who finally realized his lifelong dream of reaching Jerusalem, was moved to tears when he sensed the awful contrast.



The above account of Rabbi Gershon Kitover's experience and observation is recorded by one of the great halachic authorities, Rabbi Yosef Tumim, who served as rabbi of Frankfurt, Germany two centuries ago. In his classic commentary on *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim*, "*Pri Megadim*" (661a *Eshel Avraham*), he quotes his

father as the source for this moving story about Rabbi Gershon Kitover.

A footnote to this is the sentiment expressed in the last line of the above mentioned prayer — "Nevertheless, we are with G-d and our eyes are turned to G-d." This sense of hope amidst mourning reminds us of the story of a father who took his young son to the Western Wall for the first time. It was Tisha B'Av, and the youngster asked his father why grown men were weeping.

"Here," said the father, "our *Beis Hamikdash* once stood. The *Har Habayis* (Temple Mount) on which it stood was surrounded by four large walls. Now the *Beis Hamikdash* is destroyed, as well as the walls around the *Har Habayis*. All we have left of all our sacred glory is this one wall where you see people praying. Is it any wonder that they cry when they remember what once stood here?"

"But Father," responded the son, "isn't it true that Mashiach will soon come to redeem us, rebuild the *Beis Hamikdash* and the four walls around *Har Habayis*? We should take comfort in the fact that one of those walls is already standing, and there are only three more to go!"

WEEKLY DAF

ERUVIN 84 - 90

THE HANGING WALLS OF TIBERIAS

For something to qualify as a *mechitza* (wall or barrier) in regard to the laws of Shabbos or of Sukkah (which requires a minimum of three walls) it must be ten handbreadths high. If this height begins from a point less than three handbreadths from the ground, it is a valid *mechitza* for all purposes. But if one hangs such a *mechitza* from above and it ends at a point three handbreadths or more above the ground so that there is enough space for a kid goat to enter underneath it, there is a difference of opinion regarding its validity.

Regarding a Sukkah wall, Rabbi Yossi contends that such a wall is valid while the other sages rule that it is invalid. Rabbi Yossi's position led the *gemara* to assume that it was he, as the rabbinical authority of Tiberias, who had sanctioned the carrying of a Sefer Torah from a house to the synagogue in a courtyard on Shabbos, as follows:

In a courtyard in Tiberias, one of the houses served as a synagogue. No *eruv* was made, so they would always bring to it before Shabbos a Sefer Torah from one of the houses in the courtyard where the Sefer Torah was stored. One time, they forgot to bring the Sefer Torah before Shabbos. It seemed that they faced a serious problem. Fortunately, they discovered that someone had hung sheets from poles along the route from the house with the Sefer Torah to the synagogue. This virtually cut off the rest of the courtyard and made carrying the Torah permissible.

The only problem was that these hanging *mechitzos* did not reach within three handbreadths of the ground. If the people of Tiberias nevertheless relied upon such walls, says Rabbi Yochanan, it must be that their leader Rabbi Yossi extends the validity which he grants such walls for Sukkah purposes to the laws of carrying on Shabbos as well.

The *gemara*, however, rejects this as inconclusive. It may well be that Rabbi Yossi took a lenient view regarding hanging walls only regarding Sukkah, because it only involves the issue of whether a mitzvah has been properly fulfilled. In regard to Shabbos laws, whose violation can even carry a death penalty, it is possible that Rabbi Yossi too would disqualify such walls.

How then was it possible for the people in Rabbi Yossi's community to rely on such walls for carrying the Sefer Torah? That incident, explains the *gemara*, took place after Rabbi Yossi's death, and it was his son, Rabbi Yishmael, who sanctioned their action, because he went even further than his father by validating hanging walls even in regard to Shabbos.

• Eruvin 86b

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RESPECT FOR THE RICH

Both Rabbi Akiva and the Sage Rebbi showed respect to wealthy people and gave them seats of honor when they came before them. Rebbi even sent a message to the very wealthy father of one of his visitors, whom he had not accorded as much honor as he did to others whom he assumed were wealthier, so that the father should instruct his son to dress in accordance with his wealth, and thus gain the honor due him.

These Sages are certainly not suspect of honoring wealthy people for the ulterior motives. Why then did they see fit to honor people because of their wealth?

A passage in *Tehillim* (61:8) is cited by the Sage Rabba bar Meri as a basis for this approach. It speaks of an orderly world in the presence of Hashem, a world of kindness and truth, of preservation and of prosperity. Various interpretations are provided by the commentaries as to how this applies to respect for the rich:

- When there are wealthy people who do kindness and charity, the world is in order before Hashem. They are therefore accorded honor by the Creator and this is a reason for us to honor them as well.
- If not for the fact that they show kindness and truth in their relationships with the less fortunate, they would not merit the preservation of their prosperity and they therefore deserve honor.
- The Midrash says that King David asked Hashem to create an order in His world in which all people would be equal with no rich and poor. Hashem explained that such an order would eliminate the opportunity for kindness.

The above three approaches were proposed by one of the early commentaries, Rabbi Nossen of Rome, in his classic *Sefer Ha'aruch*. There is another interesting angle presented by some of the later commentaries: Rabbi Akiva and Rebbi were both outstanding sages who were also outstandingly wealthy. They were very reluctant to have people honor them for their Torah knowledge, because of their refusal to benefit in any way from Torah. They therefore openly showed respect for wealthy people so that if others honored them it could be attributed to their wealth rather than their Torah knowledge.

• Eruvin 86a

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Bnei Yisrael..." (1:1)

Rashi: These words were harsh words of rebuke.

Moshe only spoke harshly when speaking to *Bnei Yisrael*. When speaking to Hashem, however, he only spoke good about *Bnei Yisrael*. Because he was the leader, he always came to his people's defense even under the most trying circumstances.

• Kedushas Levi

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the Torah say Moshe spoke *bamidbar* — “in the desert?”
2. Why did Moshe mention only the names of the places that the Jewish People sinned, while not mentioning the sins themselves?
3. How much time elapsed between departing from Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
4. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
5. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
6. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People “dwelling” at Mt. Sinai?
7. Why does the Torah single out the names of the Avos in connection with the giving of the Land?
8. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: “You today are like the stars of the Heavens”?
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?

BONUS QUESTION?

“The key to a successful investigation,” said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, “lies in the questions asked. As the saying goes, *the question of a wise man is half the answer.*”

“If I were a wise man,” said Watstein, “perhaps I could understand Rashi’s comment on the following verse. The verse says: *We traveled all that big and frightening desert (Devarim 1:19).* Rashi explains that it was a ‘*frightening dessert*’ because: *It had snakes like beams and scorpions like archer’s bows (Rashi ibid.).*”

“Horrid!” said Sherlock.

“But what compels Rashi to give this explanation?” asked Watstein. “Why must Rashi resort to a midrash about extraordinarily giant snakes and scorpions in order to explain why the desert was *frightening*? Isn’t a desert frightening enough by itself? The desert provides neither food nor water, nor protection from the burning sun. That alone would frighten any

sane man.”

“Yes, but those needs were provided for the Jews in the desert: Food fell from the sky, and water emerged from a rock. Special clouds provided protection from the sun. So they had nothing to fear in that regard,” said Sherlock.

“But the same is true of the giant snakes and scorpions!” said Watstein. “According to the midrash, the Jews were provided with miraculous protection from these snakes and scorpions as well; these exceptionally large monsters died before the Jews ever even saw them. Therefore, the description ‘*frightening*’ must mean that for other people the desert was *essentially* a frightening place, even though for the Jews there was no true reason to fear. So my question remains, isn’t a desert frightening enough by itself without resorting to a midrash about creatures scary beyond the ordinary?”

“The question of a wise man is half the answer,” said Sherlock.

answer on page eight

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - Here the word *bamidbar* does not mean “in the desert” — rather, it means “on account of the desert.” The Book of *Devarim* contains a rebuke of the Jewish People for the sins committed while in the desert.
2. 1:1 - In order to guard the honor of the Jewish People by not mentioning their sins explicitly.
3. 1:2 - 40 days.
4. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
5. 1:4 - Now it was easier to admonish the Jewish People, since no one could now say, “What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?”
6. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *Mishkan* and all of its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
7. 1:8 - Each one of the Avos possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
8. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and the stars are eternal.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzafchad approached him with 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.

A WAIL OF A WALL - WHICH OF THE WEST?

Tammy from Waterloo, Canada
<tjfannin@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Can you tell me the historical and emotional significance of the Western wall of the Temple Mount to the people of today? Why do they go, what do they get from visiting? Can anyone go? Thank you for your time.

Hillel Gershuni from Jerusalem, Israel
<gershun@internet-zahav.net>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
When I pray at the Kotel (Western Wall), to what direction should I pray? Straight towards the Kotel? That is not the direction of the Kodesh Hakadoshim (Holy of Holies), but all the people I've seen there do it. Or should I not face straight towards the wall, but rather towards the Dome of the Rock, which is the place of the Kodesh Hakadoshim, but maybe it's forbidden to pray in this direction?

Dear Hillel Gershuni and Tammy,
The Holy Temple was the place where G-d's Presence was manifest among the Jewish People in ancient Israel. In the Holy Temple itself, the Divine Presence was most manifest in the western part. The ark containing the "two tablets" was in the west, and the western lamp of the menorah candelabra burned miraculously for centuries.

Even though the Temple was destroyed, the Western Wall remains until this day. This was foretold by the midrash which states "the Western Wall will never be destroyed, because the Divine Presence is manifest in the west."

But the history of this site goes back much further than the Temple. Our sources state that this was the place where Avraham offered his son Yitzchak, and it was here that Yaakov

envisioned the ladder. It was from this place that G-d took the earth from which He fashioned Adam, and it is the center of the universe, the point from which the universe was created and from which it expanded.

Therefore, the Western Wall has a powerful spiritual and emotional pull on all humanity. People from all over the world are drawn there to interface with their souls' deepest yearnings.

Besides its spiritual significance, the Temple Mount is also of historical and archeological interest. Most of the western and southern walls of the Temple Mount date back to Herod's renovation of the Temple. There is a possibility that the lowest levels of these walls are from King Solomon's Temple. The northern wall dates back to Herod and the eastern wall is from the Second Temple of Nechemia, with some additions by the Hasmonean dynasty and some renovations by Herod.

Some of the stones are incredibly heavy, the transporting of which would have been extremely difficult. One of the stones is said to weigh approximately 628 tons! Archeological evidence indicates that the enormous stones were transported by rolling them on logs that were placed under the stones.

It is actually possible to see the Western Wall on the Internet! Just go to: <http://www.virtual.co.il> and click on "KotelKam".

Regarding which way to face when praying at the Western Wall, the Talmud states that one who is in Jerusalem should face the Sanctuary, and one who is in the Sanctuary should face the Kodesh Hakadoshim, the Holy of Holies. When you are standing at the Western Wall, even though you are close, you are not actually in the place of the Sanctuary. Therefore you need not face the Kodesh Hakadoshim. You should face towards the wall, envisioning yourself standing in front of the Kodesh Hakadoshim.

Sources:
• Bamidbar Rabbah 11
• Berachot 30a
• Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 94:1

ORIGAMI

Avrom from Ilford, UK
<toyenbankes@kosher.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Is it permitted to use origami on Shabbos? (Origami is the ancient art of paper folding.)

Dear Avrom,

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, zatzal, prohibits making toys — like a boat, or hat — by folding paper, since it is like making a utensil. However, if the paper was folded into a toy before Shabbat, it is permitted to use it on Shabbat.

Sources:
• Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata Ch.16:19

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AHARON

Ronald Schnur from Princeton, NJ
<RSchnur@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
What is the meaning in English of the name Aaron ("Aharon")?

Dear Ronald Schnur,

According to the Otzar Midrashim, during Yocheved's pregnancy with Aharon, Pharaoh decreed that all male Jewish babies should be thrown in the Nile. G-d performed a miracle and did not let even one of them die.

In recognition of this miracle that happened during her pregnancy she called her son Aharon, from the root, *harah*, which means "pregnant."

Perhaps the A, or *aleph* at the beginning of the word is indicative of the fact that not even one, (*aleph* = one) died.

Source:
• Otzar Hamidrashim, "Moshe" Paragraph 4

ARUBA R&R

Doron Spierer from Bala Cynwyd, PA
<dspieler@pol.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Please direct me to the appropriate

web site. I am going on vacation and need to figure out candle lighting time for Aruba, 70 degrees West Longitude, 12 degrees, 30 minutes North Latitude, for Friday night, July 3, 1998. Thank you.

Debra Berke <berked@libertytravel.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have a couple that wishes to travel to the Caribbean next week. They will only stay in a hotel that will service kosher meals. Please help if you know any hotels that will help them. All of the hotels that I know of only serve kosher during the holidays.

Dear Debra Berke and Doron Spierer,

Regarding the kashrut "scene" in the Caribbean and the candle lighting time in Aruba, I recommend you contact Rabbi Levi Ishak, the rabbi of the Jewish community in Barranquilla, Venezuela on the Caribbean coast. Rabbi Ishak can be reached at 57-56-340-050 or 57-56-344-514.

A site that lists candle lighting times is Virtual Jerusalem's website:

<http://www.virtual.co.il/depts/torah/candles.htm>

A nice vacation to all!

Doron Spierer <dspierer@pol.net> responds:

Thank you so much for answering my e-mail. I did some searching of my own on the web and found the following site:

<http://www.kashrut.com/zemanim>

They will calculate all appropriate times based on location or latitude/longitude (although getting the latitude/longitude feature to work is a little tricky). Thank you so much for your

help. I just wanted you to know about the above site.

MITZVAH DELAY

Miriam Rozin from Portland, Oregon

<rozinm@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My firstborn, a son, was my first pregnancy and delivered naturally in Israel. He had his brit milah as required. However, we never had a "pidyon haben." I know we were supposed to do it at 30 days but my question is: Can we still do it now — he is 2 1/2 years old? Are there any other factors to consider?

Dear Miriam Rozin,

The *mitzvah* of *pidyon haben*, redemption of the first-born son, should ideally be performed on the 31st day from the baby's birth. If it wasn't done then, the obligation remains, and it should be performed as soon as possible. If the father doesn't perform *pidyon haben*, then the boy must do so himself when he grows up.

There are other factors to consider. For example, if either the father or the mother is a *kohen* or a *levi*, then the child is exempt from *pidyon haben*. To perform the *mitzvah*, the father gives a specific amount of silver or item of value to a *kohen* and says two blessings. To make sure that everything is done properly, the entire procedure should be supervised by an Orthodox rabbi.

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 305:1, 11, 15, 18*

PUBLIC DOMAIN
Comments, quibbles and reactions
concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Cantillation (Ohrnet Korach):

Hello, I read with interest your response to Peter Frohlich concerning the melodies used to chant Torah. When I was in cantorial school, I was taught that there are in fact six divisions or groupings to the cantillation symbols or "trope" as we call them:

1) Torah 2) Haftarah 3) The Megillot read on the Shalosh Regalim: Shir Hashirim, Ruth & Kohelet 4) Megillat Esther 5) Megillat Eichah — also used for the haftarah on Shabbat Hazon and the for the haftarah on Tisha B'Av 6) High Holiday — used for chanting the Torah on Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

The trope for the books of Job, Proverbs and Psalms are grouped together by the acronym "EMET." Aleph for *Iyov*

(Job), *mem* for *Mishlei* (Proverbs) and *tav* for *Tehillim* (Psalms). The trope for these three books is distinctly different from the others. There are several additional trope symbols that are not found anywhere else. Also the "grammar" of the trope is different, meaning the order in which symbols can appear has a logic not shared by the other books. The melodies for these books fell into disuse: A classic case of "Use it or Lose it," because they are not read publicly.

- Joel Smith <jsmith@sentryl.com>

Re: Breaking the Glass Under the Chuppah:

Before my own wedding nearly 12 years ago, a neighbor, who is the granddaughter of Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky, advised me that at the moment the glass is broken, both the bride and groom should say to themselves "*zecher l'churban*" ("remember the destruction"). Her husband said (apparently something he learned when studying with her grandfather) that many divorces ultimately occur because the bride and groom forget that the breaking of the glass is to remind us that the *Beis Hamikdash* is no longer standing, and that it *doesn't* mean "*mazal tov*." Thank you for providing this wonderful service.

- A Friend <wwide@erols.com>

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Here is a true story that happened recently. I knew that my neighbor had a wedding to attend that day. His Rosh Yeshivah's daughter was getting married, and he had told me he wanted to be in time for the *chuppah*. When I passed by his house late that afternoon, I saw him *davening mincha*

(praying the afternoon service) in his dining room. I thought to myself, "What a nerve! Getting to a wedding on time certainly doesn't justify missing *davening mincha* in *shul* with a *minyan* of ten people! And besides, the *chuppah* is usually later than the advertised time anyway." The following day I met my neighbor and asked

him: "Well, how was the wedding last night?" "Oh, I didn't go in the end," he replied, "I was feeling so sick, I couldn't even leave the house, not even for *davening!*"

• Submitted by Ravi Shahar
<ravis@writemail.com>

Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story"
by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Name@Withheld wrote us with the following:

This might not even qualify as a Yiddle Riddle, but those from New York will appreciate it: What prominent day in the Jewish calendar can be found on the standard map of the New York City subway system? (Hint: *Tachanun* is not recited on this day.)

Answer:

Near the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the map identifies Ninth Avenue as "9 Av" (and the next street over is "10 Av," appropriate for this year since the fast is held on the 10th of Av.) Another answer is 1 Av, which is *Rosh Chodesh*. (15 Av, *Tu B'Av*, is not a good answer, because the Manhattan part of the map goes from 1 Av to 12 Av, and parts of Brooklyn and Queens have 14, 18, 20, 23 and 30 Av. But no 15.)

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BONUS ANSWER!

"You've answered your own question, Watstein," said Sherlock.

"How so?" asked Watstein.

"Indeed, as you explained, a desert is frightening by very definition: It lacks food, water, and protection from the elements. No one who enters a desert is sure to emerge alive."

"Hence my question," said Watstein. "Why does Rashi need to resort to the midrash about unusually giant snakes and scorpions?"

"For exactly that reason!" said Sherlock. "Since a desert

is frightening by definition, therefore the word 'frightening' in the verse seems totally superfluous. Why does the verse need to say 'a frightening desert?'"

"Yes!" cried Watstein. "How could I have overlooked something so obvious? Every desert is 'frightening.' Therefore, the word 'frightening' must refer to something unusually frightening, some terror that the average desert doesn't have. Hence, Rashi explains with a midrash describing creatures scary beyond the ordinary."

"Frightfully clever," said Sherlock.

• "Sherlock" is created by Reuven Subar

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

1:1 Overview of *Devarim*
1:12 Judging the Jewish People
1:25 The *Meraglim*
1:37 Moshe's Punishment
2:4 Brother Esav
2:7 Blessings
2:25 Fear of the Jewish People

SEFER HACHINUCH

414 Appointing Judges
415 Responsibility of Judges

BA'AL HATURIM

3:25 The 51st *Amah*
3:25 The Missing Letter "Vav"
3:25 Order of Prayer

SFORNO

Introduction To *Devarim*
1:5 The Reason for Moshe's Rebuke
1:22 The Choice of the *Meraglim*
1:23 Moshe's Reason for Sending *Meraglim*
1:27 The Sin of the *Meraglim*
1:37 The Limits of Repentance
3:11 The *Refa'im*