

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

*“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 has planted a vineyard and not redeemed it? Let him go...lest he die in the war and another man redeem it. Who is the man who had betrothed a woman and not taken her to be his wife? Let him go...lest he die in the war another man take her...’” (20:1-8)*

A dangerous mission behind enemy lines. Chance of coming back alive? Not more than 50/50. Who do you send? The single men, of course. If they die it will be a tragedy for their loved ones, but at least there will be no grief-stricken widows and orphans. So says conventional wisdom.

In this week’s Parsha the Torah writes *“Who is the man who betrothed a woman and not taken her to be his wife? Let him go...lest he die in the war and another man take her...”* This means that an engaged man is exempt from the war but married men with children are sent out to battle.

Let’s look at the other categories of military exemption:

*“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.”* Rashi says that the reason is that he will be distressed that someone else will inaugurate it. Let me ask you a question: Does a person really care if someone else inau-

gurates a house that he never lived in? Shouldn’t we be more concerned about someone who already has a house? Shouldn’t we be concerned about the anguish he’ll feel when he thinks that someone else will take it over?

Similarly regarding a spouse — isn’t a person more likely to suffer distress at losing the wife that he already knows and loves rather than losing his fiancée with whom he hasn’t yet bonded deeply?

The Torah is concerned here with

“There is no place which is devoid of Hashem’s radiance.”

the spiritual angst that we feel when we have started a mitzvah and we fear that we won’t be able to complete it. When our soul sees a spiritual project about to be cut off in its prime, we experience great loss and sadness.

The three scenarios in the above verse each represent a spiritual project in progress: When we build a

house, our soul knows that when we finish the building we will be able to do the mitzvah of making a parapet around the roof.

In the time of the Holy Temple, when we planted a vineyard, the soul longed for the fourth year when there would be the opportunity to bring up the produce to Jerusalem and eat it there in holiness and joy.

When we get engaged to someone, our soul yearns to fulfill the commandment to be fruitful, to multiply and bring children into the world.

The Torah is expressing here the longing of the soul. Not the longing of the body.

### NO STONE UNTURNED

*“Do not erect for yourself an altar of only one stone” (16:22)*

“Organized religion” is one of those phrases which is guaranteed to bring distaste to the Western liberal sensitivity.

Being part of a group smacks of regimentation. A person educated in the “liberal enlightened” tradition is taught to cherish the moment alone with one’s Creator in a field, on top of a hill, or under the stars.

To be sure, the individual communicating with his Creator not only finds a place in Judaism but is Judaism’s bequest to the world. But there is another side to Divine worship. One that is much maligned and misunderstood — that of the entire group, the *klal*,

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**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 someone who kills accidentally, in order to escape the blood-avenger from the family of the deceased. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger who may exact his revenge. 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 that 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. Amongst those who are 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.

## HAFTORAH: YISHAYAHU 51:12-52:12

### WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**"Where then is the fury of the oppressor?"** These three words belong to the most sublime that have ever been uttered about the history of the Jewish People.

What has become of them? What

has become of the Hamans and the Hitlers? What has become of the Romans and the Babylonians? What has become of them? For thousands of years, over and over again they have tried to smash the head of an Israel that they thought was lying defenseless on the ground. They didn't realize with Whom they were contending. They tried to smash us with the elephantine hoof of brutal violence but they themselves lie broken in ruins. And Israel stands as always, rescued by their G-d, maintained for their mission as a holy people and a light to the nations, at the forefront of every culture.

• Rabbi Mendel Hirsch

Our Sages teach that in the future when *Mashiach* comes, Hashem will turn to the nations of the world to comfort Israel. Israel will immediately come and complain that after such a long and hard exile full of trials and tribulations, couldn't Hashem find anybody else to comfort us besides those same nations that enslaved and oppressed us? Hashem will reply that if we will accept consolation only from Him — then He will console us.

In fact, this whole dialogue is played out in the opening lines of this and the three previous Haftorahs of consolation:

In *Parshas Vaeschanan*: "Comfort, be of comfort My people..." To which Israel replies in the Haftorah of *Parshas Eikev*: "Hashem has forsaken me, My Lord has forsaken me," by sending the nations to comfort us; to which Hashem replies in the Haftorah of *Parshas Re'eh*: "Oh afflicted, storm-tossed, unconsolated one" — if you are unconsolated by the nations and will accept consolation only from Me, then "It is I, I who comfort you."

• Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin

### COLD COMFORT

**T**his is the fourth of the "Haftorahs of Consolation" after Tisha B'Av.

The prophet combines descriptions of oppression, the Jewish People trampled by the nations, with the comfort that Hashem is never far from them and will save them.

**OHRNET**  
THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

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

General Editor:  
**Rabbi Moshe Newman**  
Editorial & Web Advisor:  
**Rabbi Reuven Lauffer**  
Associate Editors:  
**Rabbi Mordechai Becher,**  
**Rabbi Reuven Subar**  
Contributing Writers:  
*Weekly Daf, Love of the Land:*  
**Rav Mendel Weinbach**  
*Insights, Overview, Haftorah:*  
**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

Web Production: **Eli Ballon, Michael Treblow**  
Produced and Designed by the Office of Communications  
**Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro, Director**

© 1998 OHR SOMAYACH INSTITUTIONS - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529  
• THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS WORDS OF TORAH. PLEASE TREAT IT WITH DUE RESPECT.

OHRNET is available from several sources:  
• E-MAIL VIA INTERNET: Write to [info@ohr.org.il](mailto:info@ohr.org.il) for information.  
• WORLD WIDE WEB: Our address is: [www.ohr.org.il](http://www.ohr.org.il)  
• FAX AND REGULAR MAIL WITHIN ISRAEL:  
To subscribe, mail us a letter, or fax a request with your name & fax number to 02-581-2890.  
• US-MAIL WITHIN NORTH AMERICA:  
Call 1-800-431-2272 for subscription information.

• You can submit your questions to **ASK THE RABBI** with your web browser at <http://www.asktherabbi.org> Or to use standard E-Mail address it to "info@ohr.org.il" To insure correct handling set the subject to "ASK THE RABBI".

### BECOME AN INVESTOR IN OHRNET!

Dedicate an issue, become a sponsor.  
Help defray the financial cost of Ohrnet.  
Become a partner in our work.

**Call our office at 02-581-0315 for details.**

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

and its Maker.

There are two kinds of altars. An altar made from a single block of stone and an altar made from many distinct stones. There are two kinds of Divine service — that of the individual and that of the *klal*. The single block represents the service of the individual; that of many stones represents the service of the complete group.

In this week's Parsha, we learn that the Torah forbids an altar consisting of only one stone. Even though in the days of the Avos (the fathers of the Jewish People) the single-stone altar was beloved, subsequently however, it became the preferred method of idolatry

and thus was no longer fitting for the service of G-d.

The Prophet Eliyahu erected an altar of 12 stones. Twelve is the number of the Tribes of Israel. The altar of 12 symbolizes the unity of the Jewish People in the service of G-d; the *klal* becoming like one person. The stones are separate but they join together and become the instrument through which Man can serve his Creator. The individual's desire finds its appropriate expression when channeled through this mystical "one person" who is the Jewish People.

Thus it was that the forefathers were able to build altars of only one stone. For they were the

entire Jewish People in embryo. But once the Jewish People are "born" at Sinai, the service of the individual finds its proper fulfillment in making up the "one person" who is Israel.

The spiritual light that we receive in this world is radiated as a totality to all parts of Creation. There is no place which is devoid of Hashem's radiance. Thus, when we approach our Creator, it must be as a totality, joined like the stones of the altar. For with even one stone missing, there is no altar.

Sources:

**Women And Children First** - heard from Rabbi Yehuda Samet in the name of Rabbi Yisrael Rokowsky, based on the Abarbanel  
**No Stone Unturned** - Shem MiShmuel, heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### WHAT'S IN A NAME

"Malki-Tzedek, King of Shalem, brought out bread and wine" (Bereishis 14:18)

"Avraham called that place Hashem Yireh" (Bereishis 22:14)

Both of these saintly men — Malki-Tzedek, who was Shem, son of Noah, and his descendant Avraham — were referring to the site upon which stands Jerusalem (whose Biblical name is *Yirehshalem*).

When Hashem wished to name His holy city, He faced, as it were, a Divine dilemma.



"If I call it *Yireh* like Avraham did, the righteous Shem will feel slighted, and if I call it *Shalem* like Shem did, the righteous Avraham will feel slighted. I will therefore call it *Yireh-Shalem* like both of them called it."

*Shaleim* means both peace and perfection, while *Yireh*, as *Targum Onkelos* translates, means human service of Hashem. Only when man serves Hashem can he hope to achieve the peace and perfection symbolized by *Yirehshalem*.

• Bereishis Rabbah 56:10

### I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The Jewish king was commanded not to marry too many wives, not to have too many horses, and not to hoard too much silver and gold. If he fulfills these three commandments, the Torah promises that he and his offspring will sit firmly on the "throne of his kingdom — *kiseh mamlachto*" (Deuteronomy 16-18, Rashi).

The three letters of the word *kiseh* (throne) hint to these three commandments. *Kiseh* is spelled *kaf samech alef*. *Kaf* stands for *kesef* (silver), *samech* stands for *soos* (horse) and *alef* stands for *isha* (wife).

• Kli Yakar

## WEEKLY DAF

PESACHIM 9 - 15

### WHO IS A PROPHET?

A charming play on words is used by the Sage Rava in his challenge to a point made by his colleague, the Sage Abaye.

The background for their dialogue is an apparent contradiction between two *mishnayos*. One *mishna* (9a) informs us that once you have inspected one corner of a room and head for another corner, you need not fear that a *chulda* (a rodent) has dragged *chametz* to the corner you checked, and therefore there is no need for a new inspection. The very next *mishna* (10b) states that whatever *chametz* one leaves after inspection should be carefully hidden so it does not get dragged away by a rodent; otherwise, there is a need for a new inspection. Do we suspect rodent intervention or not?

Abaye suggests that the inspection referred to in the first *mishna* takes place on the 13th of Nissan, two days before Pesach, when plenty of bread is still to be found in homes, and the *chulda* therefore has no motivation to snatch *chametz* and store it. The second *mishna*, however, discusses an inspection which takes place at the regular time, the evening of the 14th, when the *chulda* observes that there is a scarcity of bread; therefore, the *chulda* is likely to snatch any *chametz* it can find.

“Is a *chulda* a prophetess?” asks Rava. Does a simple rodent possess the prescience to know that no more bread will be baked that day, and that it therefore must take desperate measures to snatch whatever *chametz* is in sight? Rava therefore suggests his own solution, that the need to hide the *chametz* mentioned in the second *mishna* is that otherwise we may actually see the *chulda* snatch some of the *chametz*, and consequently we would be required to search the house again.

“Is a *chulda* a prophetess” is a take-off on the name of the Prophetess Chulda mentioned in *Melachim II* 22:14, in reference to a Torah scroll which the *Kohen Gadol* found concealed beneath the floor of the *Beis Hamikdash*. The scroll was brought before the righteous King Yoshiyahu, who asked his scribe to read aloud from the column to which the scroll opened. When he heard the words “Hashem will lead you into exile along with your king,” the Torah’s warning of the Divine punishment which will be visited upon a sinful nation, the king rent his garments out of fear that this was directed at him. Since the Prophet Yirmiyahu was away at the time, the king sent emissaries to the Prophetess Chulda to seek a clarification of the Heavenly message. She informed the emissaries in Hashem’s Name that this grim prophecy would indeed be fulfilled because of the Jewish People’s idolatrous ways. But because the king had reacted to the message with such repentance, it would not happen in his days.

In her message to the king, however, she indicated a slight amount of haughtiness. Her words were: “Say to the *man* who sent you to me.” She indicated a haughtiness for failing to refer to him as *king*. Our Sages (*Mesechta Megillah 14b*) say that it was this haughtiness which caused her name to be synonymous with that of a rodent.

• Pesachim 9b

### ABOVE SUSPICION

Yochanan of Chakukah came before the Sage Rebbi (Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi) with a problem. A Jew had left in Yochanan’s safekeeping a pouch of *chametz* which now faced a double danger of going to waste. First of all, the pouch had been punctured by rodents and its contents were oozing out. Secondly, it was the morning of the 14th of Nissan, the day before Pesach, and in a matter of hours this *chametz* would become forbidden to be eaten or enjoyed in any way. Should he take an initiative to sell this *chametz* to save its owner from a total loss?

When he asked during the first hour of the day, Rebbi told him to wait, since there was a chance that the owner might come to retrieve his *chametz*. The same counsel was given in each of the three subsequent hours when the question was raised. Only when the fifth hour arrived did Rebbi tell Yochanan to sell it in the marketplace in order to save the owner from a total loss.

There is a difference of opinion amongst the later Talmudic Sages as to whether he told him to sell it to a Jew or to a non-Jew. This depends on whether a Jew is still permitted to eat *chametz* during the fifth hour on *Erev Pesach*. According to Rabbi Yehuda, even though Torah law allows *chametz* to be eaten until the end of the sixth hour, the Sages banned eating it two hours earlier in order to prevent the possibility of mistakenly thinking that the hour of prohibition had not yet arrived. If a Jew cannot eat *chametz* during the fifth hour, then the sale had to have been to a non-Jew.

The opinion of Rabbi Meir, however, is that even by Rabbinic law only in the sixth hour is *chametz* forbidden. Rabbi Yosef points out that according to this view the *chametz* was sold to a Jew in that fifth hour.

His disciple, the Sage Abaye, challenged Rabbi Yosef’s interpretation of the incident with Rebbi. If Rebbi concurred with Rabbi Meir’s lenient view, he asked, why did he tell him to go to the trouble of selling it in the marketplace rather than advise him to buy it for himself?

Rabbi Yosef’s response was that it was improper to buy it for himself, because that would arouse suspicion that he had exploited the situation and fixed too low a value on the *chametz*. This standard of caution was set by our Sages in regard to charity trustees as well. If they have in their treasury many copper coins which are in danger of becoming rusty and must therefore be exchanged for their equivalent value in silver coins, they must conduct this exchange with others, and not use their own silver for this purpose. Similarly, if they are trustees of food collected for distribution to the poor and must sell leftover food before it spoils, they must sell it to others and not to themselves.

The guiding principle of avoiding suspicion for these trustees, and of the counsel given by Rebbi to Yochanan of Chakukah, is expressed in the Torah (*Bamidbar 32:20*): “You shall be clean before Hashem and before Israel.”

• Pesachim 13a

## PARSHA Q&A ?

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 *beis din*”?
5. Even though the *Avos* were permitted to use *matzevos*, the Torah later forbade them. Why?
6. “You will come to ... the judge *who will be in those days* (17:9).” Since it’s impossible to go to a judge who lives at a different time, why does the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What promise does Hashem give to a king who doesn’t amass too much gold, doesn’t raise too many horses and doesn’t marry too 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. When the *kohanim* served in the *Beis Hamikdash*, they served on a rotational basis according to families. 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 word *eid* (witness) is written in the Torah?
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 to the murderer if he is found after the calf has had its neck broken?

## BONUS QUESTION?

### SHERLOX HOLMES WORLD FAMOUS DETEXTIVE

“I’ve little doubt that Mr. Links was not telling the truth when he claimed to be left-handed; he keeps his pen in his left jacket pocket, something only a right-hander would do,” said world famous detextive Sherlock Holmes. “When something which should be on the right is on the left, something isn’t right.”

“Speaking of left and right,” said Watstein, “something seems wrong with this text: Regarding the Sanhedrin, the

verse states: *Do not turn aside from the thing which they tell you, right or left.*” (Deuteronomy 17:11)

“What’s wrong with listening to those wiser than we?” asked Sherlock.

“It’s Rashi’s comment that’s troublesome,” said Watstein. “On the words *right or left*, Rashi explains that we must listen to the ruling of the Sanhedrin: *Even if they tell you that right is left and that left is right.*”

“Perhaps the Sanhedrin, the wisest people ever to grace the earth, were wiser than even you and I, Watstein” said Sherlock wryly.

“I’ve no question about that,” said

Watstein. “If my understanding runs contrary to that of the Sanhedrin, it is surely I, not they, who err.”

“So what’s bothering you, dear Watstein?”

“The verse seems perfectly clear without any need for Rashi’s comment: We must follow the words of the Sages precisely, deviating neither *right nor left*; that is, not even a minute degree. Why does Rashi take the words *right or left* out of context? What’s bothering Rashi?”

“When something which should be on the right is on the left,” said Sherlock, “something isn’t right.”

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. 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 the judge of a particular generation may not be as eminent as those of previous generations, the Jewish People are still obligated to obey him.
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 - *Chayos* (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, prophesies something that was told to another prophet, or prophesies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post signs saying “refuge” at the road-crossings, in order to point the way.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony sent to the court, and testimony that is 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 judgment in a just fashion, then they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - 1) Clanging their shields; 2) Making their horses stomp and whinny; 3) Shouting; 4) Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The *Sanhedrin*.
20. 21:9 - He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

## USING STEP-FATHER'S NAME

Name&Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
May a Bar Mitzvah be called to the Torah as the son of his step-father's Hebrew name or must he be called as the son of his real father's name? The boy considers his step-father his father and has no contact with his real father.

Dear Name&Email@Withheld,

The commandment "honor your father and your mother" refers to the person's biological parents. A person must certainly show the utmost honor to his step-parent, but this in no way exempts him from the Divine decree to honor his biological father.

I spoke with Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, regarding your question. He cited a responsa of the Yaavitz that if there is absolutely no contact between the child and his father, then it is permissible to call the child to the Torah using his step-father's name. However, said Rabbi Sternbuch, if there is even the most minimal amount of contact between the father and his son, then the son should use his biological father's name.

## A LILY BY ANY OTHER NAME

Seth <Sethyn69@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I have always thought that the Hebrew word "shoshana" means rose but recently a teacher of mine told me it means lily. Which is the correct meaning?

Dear Seth,

Most commentaries define the *shoshana* as the lily. However some associate it with the rose (*vered*). Still others say that *shoshana* is a general name for flowers. In the Midrash, we find that the word *shoshana* comes from the word "shesh" meaning six, as a *shoshana* is said to have six petals.

Some say the six petals are the outer ones, but that in reality a *shoshana* has 13 petals. It is said to be red or white and have a pleasant fragrance.

Sources:

- Rashi Shir Hashirim 2:3, Ibn Ezra ibid 1:17, Metzudot ibid. 2:3, Vayikra Rabbah 23:3,6
- Bereshet Rabbah 221:1
- Zohar Pinchas 233b
- Pesiktah Rabbati 10
- Zohar, Preface 1:1

## THREE CHEERS FOR EARS

Aryeh Levy from Mount Laurel, NJ  
<lslevy@erols.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
After reading the autobiography of Helen Keller and appreciating even more Hashem's gift of sight and hearing, I know there is a blessing for sight ("po-ke'ach ivrim"), but is there one for hearing? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

Dear Aryeh Levy,

There is a blessing for hearing: "Asher natan lasechvi vina — Who gave the rooster the ability to discern between day and night." According to the Talmud, this is to be recited upon hearing a rooster crow. Although it does not refer to hearing in itself, however, since it is a blessing on hearing a rooster crow, there is no need to institute another blessing on hearing alone.

Source:

- Talmud Tractate Brachot 60b
- See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 46:8

## WHO IS G-D?

Corinna  
<corinna@research.att.com>  
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Who is G-d?

Dear Corinna,

G-d is the Creator of all that there is, and its ruler. In the same way that a king rules a nation, so too G-d rules the creation.

There is very little that we know about G-d Himself. We know that He is complete in every sense, not lacking

anything, including being all powerful. We know that He is pure good. And we know that He is a simple unity; in other words, not only is He One and not two, so too He is One and not made up of parts. This is something that is impossible for us to understand.

What we do know more about is the way which G-d interacts with the creation — the character traits, so-to-speak, with which He makes His presence felt here in the world.

## WHO WROTE THE ZOHAR?

Joe McKay from Coatesville, PA  
<cgmckay@navdiv.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I am trying to find who is the author of the Zohar. I am studying the Kaballah and the teacher says that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai is the author, but the Zohar was lost, and later found in the 13th century by Moses de Leon. Another school of thought is that it was written by Rabbi Moses de Leon. What is your opinion?

Dear Joe McKay,

Universal Jewish tradition maintains that the Zohar was in fact authored by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his students around 170-200 CE. Rabbi Moses de Leon merely published the already existent work.

## LOVING THAT SHABBAT

Robert Fairhurst from Fruitvale, BC,  
Canada <drillsqt@kootenay.net>  
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Do you have any ideas on how to get the children to love the Sabbath? Such as activities that are in accordance with proper Sabbath observance.

Dear Robert Fairhurst,

Love of Shabbat can be instilled in children (and adults) through a gradual process of experiencing and appreciating

the physical and the spiritual beauty of Shabbat. I think the most important point is that the children must have a role model who really enjoys Shabbat. Seeing you enjoying Shabbat will serve as a magnet for their own enjoyment of Shabbat.

You can do many things to enhance the special quality of the day and foster a feeling of togetherness: Leisurely meals, singing Shabbat songs, and discussing the weekly Torah portion are excellent, as are going on family walks or playing games. Telling stories with Jewish content is a proven method of sparking children's interest and instilling love and appreciation of Shabbat.

Robert Fairhurst <drillsgt@kootenay.net> responds:

*Thank you for your reply to my question. I thought your answer was a good one. I would like to know where I could get a copy of the Torah readings. I would also like to know what kind of traditions you follow with your family in keeping the Shabbat? Thank you so much for taking the time to answer my questions. PS Do you know of any Shabbat-keeping groups in my part of the world that I could visit?*

Dear Robert Fairhurst,

The Stone Chumash published by Artscroll is probably the best copy of the Torah readings for you. It has a modern trans-

lation and wonderful commentaries. It's available in Jewish bookstores.

Regarding customs, one custom I practice is blessing our children Friday night before the meal. I place both hands on each child's head and say "May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe" for the boys and "May Hashem make you like Sara, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah" for the girls. We bless our sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe because they were the first two children to be born in exile; nevertheless, they retained their Jewish identity, grew to great spiritual heights, and even reached the stature of the previous generation; thus forging an unbreakable link in the chain of Jewish continuity.

The customs for Shabbat are many and diverse, so I'm sending you a list of some books about Shabbat.

- The Sabbath, Dayan Grunfeld (Feldheim)
- Sabbath: Day of Eternity, Aryeh Kaplan (NCSY),
- Menuchah VeSimchah, Mordechai Katz (Feldheim, JEP)
- Book of Our Heritage, Eliyahu Kitov, (Feldheim)
- Shemirath Shabbath, Yehoshua Neuwirth, (Feldheim)
- Zemiroth: Sabbath Songs, (Artscroll)

For Shabbat groups in your part of the world, I suggest contacting Rabbi Avraham Feigelstock (604) - 275-0007 or Rabbi Mordechai Feurstien (604) - 731-7184. Shabbat Shalom to you and your family.

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

*Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features*

### Re: The Meaning of the Name "Aharon" (Ohrnet Devarim):

*Todah rabah* for your answer to my question about the literal meaning of the name Aharon. It was very helpful, and I certainly would not have been able to find out the information myself. I will pass it on to a friend who named her child Aaron without knowing the meaning. She just liked the sound, but now she will be more aware of the Jewish meaning of her child's name.

• Ronald Schnur <Rschnur@aol.com>

### Re: Naming after Living Relatives (Ohrnet Bamidbar):

Regarding whether the custom is to name children after living relatives, I would like to add two comments: I heard from Rabbi Rokowsky, Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Somayach, Monsey NY, a strong indication that people were named after living relatives. On page 18b of Gemara Berachos, the story is told how Shmuel, the Amora, wanted to speak to his already deceased father. Shmuel asked the angels in charge to speak to his father whose name was Abba, and was informed that there were many people named Abba and he would have to be more specific. He then told them his father's name was Abba the son of Abba. Again he was told that there were also many people named Abba the son

of Abba, and he would have to be more specific. In the end he was able to contact through giving additional information. Rabbi Rokowsky commented that if sons were named only after departed relatives, it is highly unlikely to assume that many fathers named Abba died and that the son born to them posthumously was named Abba. It is obviously more likely to assume that they were named after living relatives.

Second, I heard from Rabbi Shimon Hirsch of Monsey concerning an interesting German Jewish custom about naming. The famous Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch (Rabbi Shimon Hirsch's great grandfather) according to any title page of his works was really Rabbi Shimshon son of Rafael Hirsch. The custom in his time was that after the death of the father, the son would add and use the departed father's name to his own as a sign of respect.

• Dovid Charlop <charlop@netvision.net.il>

### Re: Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Balak):

Regarding your recent Yiddle Riddle "which verse in the Torah begins and ends with the same word," you answered *Bamidbar 32:1*. My son Yosef Chaim, age 12, found another answer: "V'yihyu to'amim milmata... li'shnei hamiktzaot yihyu — They shall be next to each other below ... for the two corners they shall be. (*Shmot 26:24*)."

• Rabbi Dovid Speyer, Neve Yaakov, Jerusalem

Regarding Rabbi Bonchek's riddle: Which verse begins and ends with the same word? His answer was *Bamidbar 32:1*. Someone pointed out to me that a few verses earlier there is a similar example. The verse *Bamidbar 31:39* begins with the word *v'nefesh* and ends with the word *nofesh*. Surely that qualifies as an alternative answer!

• Ravi Shahar <ravis@writemail.com>

This past Rosh Hashana I davened in a large well-known yeshiva in Jerusalem. When I came to daven the first night I immediately noticed a sign in Hebrew and English in large bold letters firmly requesting that no children be brought to *shul* unless they are old enough to daven. Imagine my surprise the next day when someone sitting one row in front of me brought five children with him, ranging in age from 4-10, equipped with bags of *nosh*! They were not especially noisy but nor were they davening or just sitting quietly. After going through half of *shacharis* with a bit of annoyance, I realized that on Rosh Hashana of all days, when we ask Hashem to judge us favorably, I should do the same. So I thought for a few minutes before coming to the conclusion that probably their mother wasn't feeling well — maybe she even had a high fever — and so this man had no choice

but to bring the kids to *shul* with him. But the real solution didn't take long in coming, when at the end of *mus-saf*, after *aleinu*, the children all stood up to say *kaddish* for their mother who had passed away a few months before.

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

Do you have a story to share?

Were you ever in a situation with potential to judge negatively, but there really was a valid explanation? Has a friend or a relative ever told you how they were in such a situation? Share your stories with us for inclusion in future columns of *The Other Side of the Story*. To submit your story, send it to <info@ohr.org.il> or write to Ohrnet POB 18103 Jerusalem or Fax 02-581-2890.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Which weekly Torah portion don't we read this year? **Answer next week...**

continued from page five

BONUS ANSWER!

“A word should generally be next to the word which it describes,” said Sherlock. If the verse had meant simply that we must not deviate even a minute degree from the directive of the Sanhedrin, it should have said: *Do not turn aside right or left from the thing which they tell you.* That is, the words *right or left* should have been next to the words *turn aside.*”

“I see,” said Watstein. “If *right or left* describe the direction in which we should not *turn aside*, those words should all be written together.”

“Exactly. But they are not: *Right or left* are written at the end of the verse — *Do not turn aside from the thing which they tell you right or left.*” In this position, the words *right or left* describe the thing which they tell you: Don't

turn aside from the 'right-left' thing which they tell you.”

“What do you mean by a 'right-left' thing?” asked Watstein.

“A matter regarding right or left. Even if they tell you regarding your right hand that it is your left hand, don't turn aside. To summarize, the words *right or left* don't describe the *turning away*, but rather they describe the subject matter at hand.”

“So, it all boils down to the words *right or left* being at the end of the verse, on the left, instead of more towards the right!” said Watstein. “Ha, ha!”

“You're couldn't be more right, dear Watstein.”

• Maskil L'David / Sherlock is created by Reuven Subar

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

	<b>RAMBAN</b>	20:8	The Torah Army	496	Antidote to Anarchy
16:21	Trees			498	Qualities of Leadership
17:11	Obedience		<b>SFORNO</b>	503	Safeguarding the King
17:15	Kingship	16:21	Beautiful but Bad	510	The Occult
17:20	Conceit	17:3	The Sun and the Moon	516	True Prophecy
18:15-16	Prophecy	18:14	Above the Stars	517	False Prophecy
19:8	Our Borders		<b>SEFER HACHINUCH</b>	526	Strengthening the Army
19:13	Self Defense	491	Securing Justice	527	Humane War