RAIN ON MY PARADE

“You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge...” (19:18)

You wake up with a smile on your face. It’s good to be alive. Another day. Another gift. As you leave your house, you bump into your neighbor. “Good morning, Fred!” you beam. “What’s good about it?” comes the dour reply. He gets into his car and drives off. You try out your smile again, but you find that there’s a little dent in it that wasn’t there before.

The Torah prohibits a person from taking revenge: You ask your neighbor to lend you his lawn mower and he refuses. The next week he asks to borrow your drill. You’re not allowed to refuse him because he refused you. That’s called taking revenge. You’re not even allowed to say “Of course, you can borrow my drill — I’m not like you; I lend my things.” The Torah categorically calls this bearing a grudge.

The question arises however: If I’m not allowed to take revenge by refusing to lend my drill, shouldn’t the Torah also prohibit my “friend” from refusing to lend me his lawn mower? After all, it was he who started things. If it hadn’t been for him not lending me his lawn mower, none of this would have happened in the first place.

Someone who refuses to lend his possessions has already proven himself to be terminally mean. The Torah isn’t addressing him. What the Torah is concerned about is that his meanness will become infectious, that his bad character will sour that of his neighbor, turning his generosity into stinginess.

When your neighbor returns your friendly greeting with a look that could freeze a fire, don’t let him control your life. Go on and smile and smile. Don’t let other people’s behavior dictate who you are.

“Go on and smile and smile. Don’t let other people’s behavior dictate who you are.”

INSIDE OUT

“And he (Aharon) will place the incense on the fire in front of Hashem” (16:13)

The Mishneh Torah is undoubtedly Maimonides’ masterwork. It details in the greatest precision every aspect of Jewish Life. As it is a work of halacha, one would think that a story would be out of place. However, in the section that deals with the Yom Kippur service in the Beis Hamikdash, Maimonides seems to depart from the eternal exactness of halacha to describe a most moving scene:

Before the Kohen Gadol went out to perform the Yom Kippur service, the Elders of the Sanhedrin would make him swear to do the service exactly as instructed. Specifically, they would make him swear to burn the incense only inside the Holy of Holies as the Oral Torah mandates. The Sadducees, who denied the authority of the Oral Torah, claimed that the incense should first be placed on a burning fire-pan outside the Holy of Holies. The Elders made the Kohen Gadol swear not to perform the service in the manner of the Sadducees.

Then, both Kohen Gadol and the Elders would turn aside from each other and weep. The Kohen Gadol wept because they suspected him of being a Sadducee. The Elders wept because there was reason to suspect him.

But why did Maimonides choose to enshrine this tragically touching moment in a work designed to be a practical halacha manual?

Let us understand how this ceremony came into being. It happened that one year the Sadducees

continued on page three
ACHAREI MOS

Hashem instructs the kohanim to exercise extreme care when they enter the Mishkan. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol is to approach the holiest part of the Mishkan after special preparations and in special clothing. He brings offerings that are unique for Yom Kippur, including the two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is “for Hashem” and is offered in the part of the harvest for the poor; the other is “for Azazel” in the desert. The Torah states the individual’s obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must afflict oneself.

Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is forbidden. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is forbidden. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman’s monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; glutony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; and tattooing.

KEDOSHIM

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and commandments are taught:

Prohibitions:
- Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit;
- Theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths;
- Retention of someone’s property;
- Delaying payment to an employee;
- Hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one’s parents);
- Gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks;
- Vexation when others are in danger;
- Embarrassing; revenge;
- Bearing a grudge;
- Cross-breeding;
- Wearing a garment of wool and linen;
- Harvesting a tree during its first three years;
- Gluttony and intoxication;
- Witchcraft;
- Shaving the beard and sideburns;
- Tattooing.

Positive:
- Awe for parents and respect for the elderly;
- Leaving part of the harvest for the poor;
- Loving others (especially one’s convert);
- Eating fruits from a tree’s 4th year in Jerusalem;
- Awe for the Temple;
- Respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf.

Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe kashrut and thereby maintain our unique and separate status.

HAFTORAH: Amos 9, 7-15

THE WELSPRING OF TOMATOES

If you grow up in a city it’s easy to think that cucumbers grow in tin cans; that corn has no incarnation other than flakes, and that ketchup is bottled as it wells up from deep tomato springs.

When it comes to the way Hashem runs the world, we are sometimes like a city kid who knows nothing of farming.

Someone who had never been out of the city once found himself in the country watching a farmer plowing up the earth and sowing seed in the furrows. He thought to himself: “Here is someone in need of urgent psychiatric help. How could this guy bury perfectly good grain in the earth where it will rot?”

Shortly afterward he went back to town. Had he stuck around, he would have witnessed the rotting seeds burgeon into heavy sheaves of wheat; their grain gathered in sufficient for the whole year.

When we see the wicked prosper and the righteous in dire adversity, we are like that city kid who went back to town before the harvest arrived. We only see the beginning of the process, not its purpose and completion.

In the future when Hashem will reveal His providential guidance of the world we will understand the purpose of every single event, however seemingly illogical or unfair.

Then we will see the plowing from the perspective of the harvesting — “When the plower will encounter the reaper...”

* The Dubna Maggid
When the Prophet Chavakuk (3:6) spoke of Hashem “measuring the earth,” this measuring, says Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, encompassed many things. He measured all the nations and found only Israel worthy of receiving the Torah; all the generations and found only the generation which left Egypt worthy of receiving the Torah; all the mountains and found only Sinai worthy as the site for giving the Torah; all the cities and found only Jerusalem worthy of building the Beis Hamikdash in it.

Similarly, Hashem measured all the lands, and found only Eretz Yisrael worthy of being given to the People of Israel.

Sources: • Rain On My Parade - Chizkuni as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer • Inside Out - Rabbi Aharon Soleveichik, Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum • Cliffhanger - Rabbi Zev Leff in Outlooks and Insights

I Didn’t Know That!

“You shall be holy ... A man shall fear his mother and his father.” (19:2-3)

Whenever Jews preserve the sanctity of family life, the children honor and obey their parents. Whenever the sanctity of family life declines, the honor the children show their parents also declines.

Sources: • Mayana shel Torah
**When is thinking considered the equivalent of talking and when not?** One ramification of this question is what one may say on Shabbos. While it is forbidden by rabbinic law to hire workers on Shabbos to do work after Shabbos, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha rules that one may tell a fellow Jew that he would like him to come to see him when Shabbos is over. Although both people are completely aware of the purpose of that visit is hiring for work, it’s permitted to think about work on Shabbos so long as no explicit mention is made of it. The rationale, says Rabbi Yochanan, is that the passage which is the basis for this rabbinical ban (Yishayahu 58:13) directs us to honor Shabbos by refraining from doing our weekday activities and “saying things.” This implies that speaking of weekday matters is forbidden, but not thinking about them.

This raises the question of thinking as talking in other areas. It is forbidden to say or even think words of Torah or prayer in a bathroom or a bathhouse. But in the presence of undress, it is only forbidden to say such holy words while thinking them is permitted.

In regard to the cleanliness of a place where Torah may be studied, our source is the Torah command in Devarim (23:14-15). There it states that a Jewish soldier must have a shovel included in his military pack so that he will be able to cover his waste with earth. This is necessary because Hashem is present in the Jewish camp and it must therefore be holy. No indication is made here that this is limited to the actual vocalization of Torah, explains Rashi, and the need for maintaining a clean camp is created by the fact that Jews are always thinking Torah thoughts.

When it comes to undress, however, the command is to avoid Hashem seeing any unseemly davar, which means both “thing” and “statement.” The ban on Torah in the presence of undress is therefore limited to speech, while thinking Torah is permissible.

What about thinking the Shema or blessings instead of vocalizing them? In Mesechta Berachos (20b) there is a dispute between the Sages Ravina and Rabbi Chisda as to whether thinking is equivalent to talking. The ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 62:3) is that one does not fulfill any of these obligations by merely thinking the words. The Mishnah Berurah explains that this is the consensus of virtually all of the authorities except for Rambam, and one should therefore not rely on thinking his prayers without verbalizing them.

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**For the Birds**

On Shabbos Parshas Beshalach we read in the Torah about the song the Jews sang at the splitting of the sea and about the manna which fell from heaven. In many Jewish homes, there is a custom on that Shabbos to place wheat kernels or bread crumbs where the birds will be able to eat them.

This custom has many explanations, the most popular of which is credited by Toamei HaMinhagim to the great early leader of the Chassidic movement, the Chozeh of Lublin. It focuses on the plot of the wicked Dasan and Aviram to discredit Moshe, who had informed his people that no manna would fall on Shabbos. On Friday night, Dasan and Aviram placed some of their own Friday double portion of manna on the area where it usually fell and incited the people to go out and see that Moshe was wrong. But their plot was foiled by the birds, who devoured the manna before anyone arrived.

In appreciation of their action in upholding Moshe’s credibility, we supply them with food on the Shabbos in which we read about the manna.

This custom is challenged by one of the leading halachic authorities, Magen Avraham (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 324:7), on the basis of our gemara. Our gemara rules that one may not go to the bother of supplying food or water on Shabbos to birds whose support is not his responsibility. His objection is based on the approach of Rambam and Beis Yosef (ibid. 324:11) who understand the conclusion of our gemara as establishing the sole criterion as whether one has responsibility for supporting the birds. According to this criterion there is no difference between supplying the birds with water or with grain.

Other commentators (Rabbeinu Nissim and Olas Shabbos) understand the gemara’s conclusion as establishing a different criterion — whether the birds have an alternative source for their sustenance. This would distinguish between water — which they can easily find in the river — and food, which is not always available. This approach would justify offering crumbs to birds on a winter Shabbos when the fields are bare.

Even though we abide by the stricter approach, that it is forbidden to supply birds with our food even when no other food is available to them, there is room for justifying the aforementioned custom. Aruch Hashulchan (324:3) writes that the custom stems from the tradition that the birds joined our ancestors in singing their song of praise to Hashem for splitting the sea, an act for which we show our appreciation by putting out food for them on the Shabbos that we read about this singing. If so, he argues, we are not supplying them food only for their sake, but for our sake as well, in order to better relive the experience of our ancestors, and it is therefore permitted and proper to follow this custom.

Chasam Sofer offers yet another approach for appreciating the birds. Moshe instructed his people (Shmos 16:32) to put a vial of manna away as a safekeeping for future generations. When the Prophet Yirmiyahu reproved his generation for not spending enough time in Torah study, the response was that the need to earn a livelihood made it impossible to do so. He entered the Beis Hamidkash, took out the vial of manna which was stored in the Holy of Holies, and told them that this was the food which miraculously sustained their ancestors and should remind them that Hashem has many ways to provide a livelihood to those who fear Him. Now that we no longer have the manna to teach us this lesson, we learn it from the birds who are sustained by Hashem with little effort on their part.
ACHAREI MOS
1. Why does the Torah emphasize that Parshas Acharei Mos was taught after the death of Aharon’s sons?
2. How long did the first Beis Hamikdash stand?
3. What did the Kohen Gadol wear when he entered the Holy of Holies?
4. How many times did the Kohen Gadol change his clothing and immerse in the mikveh on Yom Kippur?
5. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to Azazel. What is Azazel?
6. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the Kohen Gadol?
7. What is the penalty of kares?
8. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
9. What is the difference between “mishpat” and “chok”?
10. May a man marry his wife’s sister?

KEDOSHIM
1. Why was Parshas Kedoshim said in front of all the Jewish People?
2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one’s father before it mentions the duty to honor one’s mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one’s parents followed by the command to keep Shabbos?
4. The Torah obligates one to leave the "leket" for the poor. What is "leket"?
5. In Shemos 20:13, the Torah commands, “Do not steal.” What does the Torah add when it commands in Vayikra 19:11, “Do not steal!”
6. In verse 19:13, the Torah commands, “Do not do wrong to your neighbor.” To what “wrong” is the Torah referring?
7. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
8. How does one fulfill the command “v’hadarta p’nei zakein”?
9. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
10. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn’t define it precisely, to which type of death penalty is it referring?

BONUS QUESTION?
Rashi never just comments; something in the text always impels him to do so. Rashi’s comments are answers to unspoken questions and difficulties arising from a thoughtful reading of the Torah. Therefore, anyone who wants a true understanding of Rashi’s classic Torah commentary must always ask: “What’s Bothering Rashi?”

“With this (b’zos) shall Aharon enter the Holy place: With a bull of the herd as a chitas offering and a ram as an olah offering.” (Vayikrah 16:3)
Rashi: “With this (b’zos)”: This word b’zos has the numerical value of 410, hinting to the first Temple (which stood for 410 years).

With this insight, Rashi gives us a glimpse into the Torah’s fathomless depth and infinite layers of hidden and prophetic meaning. But why does Rashi suddenly choose to do so here? What’s wrong with the simple meaning of the verse that forces Rashi to offer a Midrashic insight? What’s bothering Rashi?

Answers to this Week’s Questions!
All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

ACHAREI MOS
1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the Holy of Holies except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:3 - 410 years.
3. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary kohen.
4. 16:4 - Five times.
5. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
6. 16:23 - They must be put into geniza and not be used again.
7. 17:9 - The person’s offspring die and the person’s own life is shortened.
8. 17:13 - Non-domesticated species of kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
9. 18:4 - A “mishpat” conforms to the human sense of justice. A “chok” is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as Hashem’s decree.
10. 18:18 - Not during the lifetime of his wife.

KEDOSHIM
1. 19:2 - Because the fundamental teachings of the Torah are contained in this Parsha.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one’s mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one’s father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one’s parents.
4. 19:9 - “Leket” is one or two stalks of grain that are accidentally dropped while harvesting.
5. 19:11 - The Torah in Vayikra prohibits monetary theft. In Shemos it prohibits kidnapping.
7. 19:17 - Causing embarrassment.
8. 19:32 - By not sitting in their seat nor contradicting their statements.
9. 20:3 - “Kares” — the entire Jewish People will never be “cut off.”
10. 20:10 - Death by “chenek” (strangulation).
PHILOSOPHER’S STONE

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I am a firm believer in Judaism, the Torah and of course in G-d. But the other day someone asked me a question that I had trouble answering. Can G-d make a rock so heavy that He Himself cannot lift?

Badbones <lordevil@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Can G-d create a rock he cannot lift? I know this is an “apikoris” [heretical] question but please answer!

Dear Name@Withheld & Badbones,

My 5 year old son asked me a similar question: “Daddy,” he said with a devilish grin, “can G-d make this fork to be that it never was?”

The answer to his question, and to yours, is: No. G-d can’t do something that is a contradiction.

G-d can’t divide 5 evenly by 2, can’t win at chess if He starts with only a king, and can’t spell “table” correctly using only 4 letters.

The reason G-d “can’t” do these things, is because we have not specified a thing to do; we have contradicted ourselves in the description. “A rock too heavy for the Almighty” is a self-contradiction. G-d’s “inability” to do such a thing does not indicate a lack in Himself. Rather, it indicates our failure to define what it is we are asking.

Sources:
• Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 263:2

TATTOO YOU

Joshua from Passaic, NJ
<josh6086@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I know it is forbidden for a Jew to get a tattoo. My question to you is this: Is getting the name of Hashem as a tattoo even worse: will I be “hexing” myself by getting it? The 4 letters won’t be together; the “yud” and “heye” would be on one side of a heart with a crack down the middle and the “vav” and “heye” would be on the other side.

Dear Joshua,

You’ve answered your own question. Getting a tattoo is explicitly prohibited in the Torah. Getting a tattoo with the four letters that spell G-d’s Name is a double disgrace, because you’re doing the prohibition with the letters of the Name of G-d who commanded you not to get a tattoo. Whether the letters are in pairs or all together, it is nonetheless the Name of G-d.

Sources:
• Leviticus 19:29

FORE ARE THE MOTHERS

Cheryl Steinberg
New York Presbyterian Hospital
<steinbc@cpmail-nz.cis.columbia.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

A co-worker asked me the following question and I didn’t have an answer: What is the significance of the name Rivka (Rebecca)? I pointed out that in the Bible only names that are given or changed are explained. Such that the names Moshe (Moses) and Israel (Jacob) are explained, but Abram and others are not.

Sources:
• Genesis 17:15, 38:3-5
• Exodus 18:4
• Numbers 13:16.
• Tractate Eiruvin 17b
• Sefer Halikutim 17:4

EULOGY OF A FARMER

<TheBergs@delanet.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My uncle was a farmer. He dedicated his whole life to making things grow. I need to say something about this in his eulogy. Is there something you can recommend from the Torah, Talmud, or a nice Midrash? I need this soon. Todah.
Continuing the Tradition

I was just reading about the yeshivot of Pumbedisa and Sura. Seems like your responsa are the continuation of a long tradition, albeit in a somewhat different medium.

• Haiim <chevy1@idt.net> Brooklyn, NY

Re: Source for saying: “May you live to be 120” (Ohrnet Terumah):

A lawyer, Lawrence Glick, told me that the source for the blessing “may you live to be 120” is a verse in Bereishis. He’s referring to where, according to Rashi, the Torah says the flood will be in 120 more years, i.e., that mankind will exist for only 120 more years until the flood. But according to other commentaries, the verse means that that human lifespans will begin to decrease until they will be limited to approximately 120.

• Rabbi Yehuda Albin <orsomayach@aol.com>
  Director of Ohr Somayach Chicago

Re: Moshe’s Punishment for Not Admitting his “Hebrew” Origins (Love of the Land: Ohrnet Vayakhel/Pekudei):

You quoted the midrash to the effect that Moshe was punished for the following reason: “When the daughters of Yisro told their father that “an Egyptian man rescued us” (Shemos 2:19), Moshe made no effort to correct the false impression of his being Egyptian and to stress his Hebrew origins.” Therefore, Moshe was unable to enter the land of Israel.

I heard the following from my father z”l, an Ostrovtser Chasid: The Ostrovtser Rov asked in relation to this midrash: “Surely Moshe did no more than tell the truth, for he was indeed born in Egypt?” He answered that we see from the midrash that where a Jew is born is an “accident” of birth — it doesn’t make him an Englishman or American or whatever. Every Jew belongs to Eretz Yisrael.

• Perets Mett from London, England <p.mett@open.ac.uk>

Re: What’s Bothering Rashi?:

I enjoy your feature “What’s Bothering Rashi?” A large portion of the commentary of the Sifsei Chachamim is dedicated to just this question. I find it unfortunate that this is not a focal point when teaching Chumash and Rashi in the cheder/Beis Yaakov school systems. It adds a new dimension to both Chumash and Rashi, and it teaches children analytic reasoning (i.e., how to think). Keep up the good work.

• Yehuda Zimmerman, Ashdod <zimmery@mail.biu.ac.il>

What I do with Ohrnet

I live in Chile and I have been resending the Spanish version of Ohrnet to more than 40 people by fax for the past year and a half. I even installed a second phone line so as not to tie up the phone — it takes a couple of hours for my computer to send so many faxes! Plus, I know that some of the recipients reread the Divrei Torah out loud every week in their shuls. Keep up the good work — everyone here loves it!

• Uri Portal <uri@iactiva.cl>
Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

Comparing is unfair. Every person has his own way of doing things. Families have their own way of doing things, too. One family deems it proper to arrive at an event punctually; in another family, it’s accepted to walk in “fashionably late.” Your family remembers every birthday and anniversary; your spouse’s family lets them slip by. It’s only fair to compare people who are exactly alike, with the exact same abilities and circumstances. Of course, no such people exist. For instance, consider the case of the...

Visitation Rites

We live in Eretz Yisrael, and both my parents and my husband’s parents live outside of Israel. My husband’s parents visit at least once a year. When they come, they stay for at least a week, and they try to spend every possible minute with us and the kids. They rent an apartment nearby, and my mother-in-law comes over every morning to take the little kids to the park. They’re back in the early afternoon so they can be there when the bigger kids come home from school. Or else they call and have the kids come to their apartment for the afternoon, or take them all out shopping, or to the zoo or whatever. And they love it when the kids sleep over at their place, which they do as often as we will allow. And of course, the entire Shabbos we spend together.

My parents visit, but less frequently; and never for more than four or five days. They insist on staying in a hotel downtown, 20 minutes away (if there’s no traffic). They like their leisurely mornings, so they show up around noon and they want to take us all out for lunch. It seems that the whole time at the restaurant is spent in the Sisyphusian task of getting the little ones to sit still and be quiet, as is proper restaurant etiquette. Afterwards, my parents just want to go back to their hotel alone and relax. They might stop over later, after the kids are asleep. Instead of a restaurant, they may suggest we all go on some tour or take a drive to another city. Again, it’s usually something difficult for the kids, especially the little ones. As for Shabbos, my parents stay in their hotel Friday night. We only see them when they walk over for the daytime meal, if it doesn’t rain.

One day, my husband said to me, “Don’t your parents like their grandchildren? They never really seem to want just to spend time together with them.”

Perhaps the less doting parents are older or have weaker health, which causes them to tire more easily, or to have less stamina for spending time with company. Maybe they are by nature nervous people and don’t have the patience to sit around the house and play with the children. Or perhaps there is a hidden issue weighing on their hearts which makes it hard for them to enjoy the simple things in life. Instead of comparing, looking askance at unfamiliar ways and mannerisms, try to understand that people are different.

Last week we asked: What is the explanation of the following? “Shmini B’Shmini Shmini Shmini.”

Answer: Outside of the Land of Israel, when Parshat Shmini is read B’Shmini, i.e., on the eighth day of Passover at mincha time (due to the eighth day of Passover occurring on Shabbat), then Parshat Shmini is read Shmini, i.e., eight times altogether.

The eight times are: 1) Mincha time on Shabbat before Passover 2) Monday before Passover 3) Thursday before Passover 4) First day of Passover (which is also Shabbat) at mincha time 5) Eighth day of Passover (which is also Shabbat) at mincha time 6) Monday after Passover 7) Thursday after Passover 8) Morning of Shabbat Parshat Shmini.

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* Concept based on Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s new book “What’s Bothering Rashi?” Feldheim Publishers