**Rolls-Royce**

“Hashem said to Moshe ‘Calculate the total of the captured spoils...’” (31:25)

Given the choice between renting a Rolls Royce for a day and owning one, I think most people would go for the latter.

If you think about it though, on the day when you actually rent the Rolls Royce, what’s the difference? You experience the same silky ride as someone who owns a Rolls-Royce. You enjoy the same people gazing through the window to make sure you’re not someone they ought to recognize. The smell of the leather, the quiet air of refined luxury...everything is the same. With one small difference...

In life, things make us happy to the degree that we feel we own them. Renting a “Roller” is never going to feel the same as owning one.

In Parshat Matot, the Torah goes to unstinting length to itemize all the spoils of the war against Midian. It describes exactly how they were divided among the kohanim, levi'im, the warriors and the general population. What is the significance of such exactitude?

Everything in this world has a limit. The spoils captured by Bnei Yisrael may have been very large — but as they were physical objects, there was an end to them. This is the lesson the Torah teaches us here: The physical world is finite, limited. It’s this much — and no more.

Even when we have that elegant automobile sitting in the drive, it will never bring us the sort of happiness that a spiritual achievement can bring. Because in the back of our mind, we know that tomorrow someone else could quite easily be driving it. We may have paid a “Rolls-Royce” price for it, but it’s not really ours, because it can be taken away from us in a second. It can be stolen. A tree can fall on it. Its owner can die.

Everything in this world is finite; thus the pleasure we can get from this world is finite. It can be taken away from us in a second. However, our spiritual acquisitions can never be taken away from us. They become part of who we are. It is for that reason that we get more joy out of spiritual accomplishments than out of material possessions, because no one can take them away from us. We truly possess them. And thus we are truly happy with them.

**Sources:**
- Rolls-Royce - Sfat Emet, Alter from Kelm, Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

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**I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!**

The phrases “Bnei Gad” and “Bnei Reuven” appear eight times in connection with taking their inheritance before the other tribes. Thus, the tribe of Gad and Reuven were exiled from that inheritance eight years before the other tribes.

* Ba’al Haturim

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לעיל
כ”מ תמוז תשל”ו
ת.ע.ז.”ו
Rosh Hashana of the Special Tree

Four varieties of Rosh Hashana are listed in the opening mishna of this mesechta. One, the Rosh Hashana related to the tree, is on the 15th of Shevat according to the opinion of Beit Hillel; it is familiar to us as “Tu (15th) B‘Shevat — the New Year of the trees.”

There are several halachic implications of this date, such as determining the year’s beginning in regard to tithes. Fruits reaching a certain state of development before Tu B‘Shevat are not tithed with fruits that reach that stage later. Similarly, this date determines the type of tithe that applies: Ma‘aser sheni, the “second tithe” applies to fruits of the second year in the seven-year agricultural cycle; whereas, ma‘aser ani, the tithe for the poor, applies to fruits of the third year. There is also the ramification of how to determine when the fruits of a tree have passed the three year stage during which they are forbidden as orlah. (Whether Tu B‘Shevat determines the beginning of the shemita year for fruits is the subject of a lively debate of halachic authorities cited by Rabbi Shlomo Strashun (Rashash) in the back of the gemara.)

One of the great Chassidic leaders, Rabbi Zvi Elimelech of Dinov, in his classic work “Bnei Yissachar” makes an interesting observation: All the items mentioned in the mishna affected by the various Rosh Hashana dates—kings, documents, festivals, animals and vegetables—appear in the plural form. The only exception is the tree which is referred to in the singular.

This, he suggests, may be a hint that on Tu B‘Shevat, the New Year of the trees, we focus on one particular tree, the one which provides the etrog for the mitzvah of taking the four species on Succot. There is, a tradition, he notes, to pray on that day to have the privilege of acquiring not only a kosher etrog, but a beautiful one as well. It is on that day that the sap rises in fruit trees, and the etrog each Jew will acquire depends on his individual merit. Prayer on this day, concludes the author, will “bear fruit,” and it is to this prayer which the mishna alludes in switching to the singular form in regard to trees.

The Hidden King

Standing before the Persian king whom he served, Nechemia realized that the fate of Jerusalem’s beleaguered Jewish community, desperately trying to rebuild the city following the Babylonian Exile, depended on his gaining royal permission to take temporary leave from his post and assuming leadership of that effort. The presentation of his plea is thus described:

“You, King of Kings, Lord of the heavens, a mighty and powerful kingdom has been granted to you.” (Daniel 2:36)

Wherever the word “king” is used in the Book of Daniel, say our Sages (mesechta Shavuot 35b), it refers to an earthly ruler except in this passage. Daniel was explaining to the vain-glorious world conqueror that it was the Divine king of Kings, Lord of the Heavens, Who had granted him his mighty and powerful kingdom and Who had sent him a message in his dream that this kingdom, the first of Jewry’s four exiles, would eventually give way to others until the Kingdom of Heaven was finally established on earth.
### PARSHA Q&A!

#### MATOT
1. Who may annul a vow?
   - 30:2 - Preferably, an expert in the laws of *nedarim*. Otherwise, three ordinary people.
2. When may a father annul his widowed daughter’s vows?
   - 30:10 - If she is under 12 and 1/2 years old and widowed before she was fully married.
3. Why were the Jewish People not commanded to attack Moav, as they were to attack Midian?
4. Those selected to fight Midian went unwillingly. Why?
5. What holy vessels accompanied the Jewish People into battle?
   - 31:6 - The *aron* and the *tzitz*.
6. Those who killed in the war against Midian were required to remain outside the “machenah” (camp). Which _machenah_?
7. Besides removing traces of forbidden food, what else is needed to make metal vessels obtained from a non-Jew fit for a Jewish owner?
   - 31:23 - Immersion in a _mikveh_.
8. “We will build sheep-pens here for our livestock and cities for our little ones.” What was improper about this statement?
9. During the conquest of the Land, where did Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven position themselves?
10. What promise did Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven make beyond that which Moshe required?

#### MASEI
1. Why does the Torah list the places where the Jewish People camped?
2. Why did the King of Arad feel at liberty to attack the Jewish People?
3. Why does the Torah need to specify the boundaries that are to be inherited by the Jewish People?
4. What was the _nesi'im_’s role in dividing the Land?
5. When did the three cities east of the Jordan begin to function as refuge cities?
6. There were six refuge cities, three on each side of the Jordan. Yet, on the east side of the Jordan there were only two and a half tribes. Why did they need three cities?
7. To be judged as an intentional murderer, what type of weapon must the murderer use?
8. What was the _kohen gadol_’s role in dividing the Land?
9. When an ancestral field moves by inheritance from one tribe to another, what happens to it in _yovel_?

### KASHA! (KASHA MEANS “QUESTION”)

**F. V. from Holland asked:**

Here’s a question that has baffled me for years: Why in Parshat Matot is the casualty report given after the counting of the spoils? The verse says Moshe counted and apportioned all the spoils captured in the war against Midian (Bamidbar 31:25-46); only then did the captains report to Moshe saying “We have taken a head-count of the warriors under our charge, and not one man is missing.” (Bamidbar 31:48-9) Shouldn’t they have counted the soldiers first to see if any died? Aren’t people more important than things?

**ANSWER:**

Dear F.V.,

The captains’ report was not a casualty report. Rather, they were saying that they monitored every soldier during the entire battle, and not one was ever missing from surveillance; and hence, no one sinned with any of the Midianite women.

* Ramban

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!
**KotelKam**

Jennine Wessell from Jefferson, Ohio  
<jmrwsl@looksmart.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

From the KotelKam, you see over to the left on top of some buildings six large stars on pedestals. I would love to know what they are, and what they are for?

Dear Jennine Wessell,

What you’re seeing is a large monument to the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust. There are six large tubes with flames inside each tube, and six Stars of David, one star on top of each tube. The five Hebrew letters of the word “yizkor” — “G-d will remember” — are written there, one letter between each tube.

The kotelkam is a 24-hour camera at Jerusalem’s Western Wall. It’s at http://www.kotelkam.com

**THANKS!**

Name@Witheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Last year, on the 6th of Adar, our then almost three year-old son was miraculously saved from being run over by a car (which in order to turn, drove backwards on the pavement, didn’t see my son, knocked him down and stopped just as the back-wheels of the car were touching him). The driver, a young man with his mini-van full of friends, admitted that he just stopped his car without knowing why. He didn’t hear my screams or the screams of a bystander who pulled my scared-to-death child from beneath the car. You won’t believe that my son, who was taken in ambulance to the hospital, didn’t have a scratch. A true miracle. We hosted a “mesibat hodaya” (thanks-giving celebration). I did some soul searching asking myself, “why did this happened; what did G-d want to get through to me?”

My question is: What would be the proper way to thank Hashem this coming year on the anniversary of this date for the great kindness He bestowed — and always bestows — upon me and my family, especially this time for letting us keep our three year-old. How should we celebrate this special day?

Dear Name@Withheld,

You should celebrate every year by hosting a fancy, festive meal. Invite a lot of people and tell about the miracle. As King David said in Psalms, “In a large group of people I am going to praise You.” You should light candles and recite Tehillim (Psalms) of thanks at the meal. Give extra charity on this day; perhaps give the numerical value of your son’s Hebrew name. (Each Hebrew letter has a different numerical value.)

Which reminds me of a story. Many years ago in Williamsburg, NY, a wealthy man was called upon to say the blessings over the Torah. After this honor, he publicly pledged 47 dollars to charity. “Why 47 dollars?” they asked him. “In honor of our Grand Rabbi, Rabbi Yoel T deletbaum. The numerical value of his name, ‘Yoel,’ is 47. Hearing this, the Grand Rabbi called out: “Back in Europe they used to call me ‘Yoelish.’ ” (YOelish=357)

Re: Torah and Nature:
I’d like to subscribe to Ohr Somayach’s “Torah and Nature” publication. As a frum (Torah observant) molecular biology grad student, I am occasionally asked “Does your research conflict with your belief in G-d?” My response is that my research only strengthens my belief. For me, understanding the intricacies of natural phenomena is one way of developing an appreciation of niflaos haboray (wonders of the Creator). I’d also like to thank you for the incredible work you do, especially for Ask the Rabbi. Kol hakavod and yasher kochachem.

• Aliza S Ricklis <aricklis@juno.com>

Re: Ask the Rabbi:
Love the little humor you inject into your “Ask the Rabbi” answers. That is what makes it so special.

• A Bubbe <Abubbe@aol.com>