**Fish Out Of Water**

“And may they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land.” (48:16)

Fish don’t do too well on land. Take a fish out of water and you won’t have to wait too long for it to become an ex-fish. Deceased. No more.

Why, then, did Yosef bless Efraim and Menashe that they would proliferate “like fish within the land.”

The Jewish People take to Eretz Yisrael like a fish to water. In exile, the natural result should be that we flounder around and become asphyxiated by the hostile atmosphere. Yosef was giving Efraim and Menashe a blessing that even when they were breathing the spiritual poison gas of exile — “within the land” — they would still flourish like a fish in water.

**The End**

“And Yaakov lived...” (47:28)

As every child knows, the school terms go on forever. Or at least it seems to. The amount of time left till vacation seems like a life term in Alcatraz. Or almost. Almost any affliction, school included, is bearable if we know when it will finish. What really makes it bearable, however, is not so much that we know when it will end, rather that it will end. Similarly, when we’re sitting in the dentist’s chair with what feels like a pneumatic drill in our mouth and the dentist says “Just another couple of seconds...” our solace comes, not so much from knowing when the drilling will end, but rather the fact that it will end.

This week’s Parsha is unique. It’s the only Parsha in the Torah that is “sealed.” Rashi tells us that Yaakov wanted to reveal “The End,” the time when mashiach would come, when history would draw to a close. G-d prevented him. The secret remains as sealed as this week’s Parsha.

Why wasn’t Yaakov allowed to reveal when the final redemption would come? Why wasn’t he permitted to sweeten the bitterness of thousands of years of exile? If the Jewish People would have known the date, the time when G-d would finally redeem them, wouldn’t all the years of waiting be so much more bearable?

Maybe G-d didn’t want Yaakov to reveal the End, not so much because we would then know when the End would be, but rather that there would be an End.

Not a leaf falls in the forest unless its descent is decreed on High. Not a blade of grass grows without the compulsion of G-d’s spiritual messengers. The only thing which is truly ours is the decision to fear G-d. We can look at this world as happenstance with no Beginning and no End. Or we can lift our eyes to Heaven and realize Who created all this.

**Mirror, Mirror**

“Yosef took the two of them — Efraim with his right hand, to Israel’s left, and Menashe with his left hand, to Israel’s right... But Israel extended his right hand and laid it on Efraim’s head though he was the younger, and his left hand on Menashe’s head.” (48:13-14)

Strange things happen to people when they look in a mirror. Their normal expression becomes contorted. An eyebrow is raised. Lips are pursed. The head is turned ever so slightly to the right and then to the left.

When we look in the mirror, we see ourselves not so much as we really are, but as we’d like to be: Head held a little higher, the posture more erect and holding in our breath so that clothes don’t betray the evidence of one too many slices of chocolate cake.

When we look at other people, however, our perspective changes radically. Rather than emphasize the positive, we tend to scrutinize their defects and lay the stress on what’s wrong with them. What we see in ourselves as prudent, in others becomes stingy. Where we are vivacious, others are loud.

When Yaakov blesses Yosef’s chil-

continued on page three
After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He makes Yosef swear to bury him in the cave of Machpela, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov becomes ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Efraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Efraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion which removes the status of the first-born from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef’s children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef’s children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Efraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Efraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov’s blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving Hashem. Yaakov passes from this world at the age of 147. A tremendous funeral procession accompanies his funeral cortège up from Egypt to his resting place in the cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov’s passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Efraim’s great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that Hashem will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishis, the first of the five Books of the Torah.
BNEI BRAK

Mentioned as one of the cities in the portion of the Tribe of Dan (Yehoshua 19:45), Bnei Brak is famous in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 32b) as the seat of Rabbi Akiva’s court, and in the Pesach Haggada as the site of the all-night Pesach Seder of Rabbi Akiva and his distinguished colleagues.

The city had an agricultural dimension as well, as appears from the account (Kesuvos 111b) of the Sage Rami bar Yechezkel who declared that he understood the meaning of the Torah’s description of Eretz Yisrael as a “land flowing with milk and honey” after witnessing a scene during a visit to Bnei Brak. He observed goats grazing beneath fig trees. The honey oozing from the very ripe figs merged with the milk dripping from the goats and formed a stream of milk and honey.

The Bnei Brak of today was established in 1924 by charedi Jews from Poland, and is famed for its many yeshivos and Chassidic communities.

I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

“His smaller brother will be greater than him....” (Bereishis 48:19)

Efraim was chosen above his older brother Menashe because of his greater humility. Thus, the verse emphasizes that he was the “smaller,” i.e., the more humble, brother.

Based on Kli Yakar
Two tables were placed outside the entrance to the Sanctuary in the Beis Hamikdash, in which stood the sacred Golden Table on which was displayed the lechem hapanim showbread. One table was made of marble, the other of gold. On the marble table, the twelve freshly baked showbreads were placed until the time came on Shabbos for the kohanim to place them on the sacred table inside the Sanctuary in place of the ones which had been there the entire week before. The loaves which were removed were placed on the golden table outside until they were consumed by the kohanim.

Why was this second table made of gold? The reason is spelled out in the mishna: Since they had been on the sacred golden table inside the Sanctuary, we do not demote their sanctity by placing them on a less dignified table. This is in accordance with the rule that “we ascend in matters of holiness; we do not descend.” But why should we not place the freshly baked loaves on a silver table outside the Sanctuary and then elevate them to the status of the golden table inside?

A very pragmatic reason is supplied by the Sages. Silver may cause the loaves to heat up and become stale, whereas the coolness of marble retards that process.

This explanation is challenged by citing the ongoing miracle which took place in the Beis Hamikdash in regard to the lechem hapanim. Even though the loaves lay on the Sanctuary table for an entire week, they remained as fresh and warm as on the day they were placed there, a miracle which finds expression in the words of a passage in Shmuel I 21:7. If they miraculously retained their freshness, why was it necessary to take the precaution of placing them on a marble table to retard staleness?

The response to this challenge is the reiteration of the classic principle that “we must not rely on miracles.” Man is obligated to serve Hashem with consideration for the laws of nature which He created. We must therefore be wary of the natural process of bread becoming stale, while appreciating the special love Hashem shows by repealing His own laws of nature so that the loaves miraculously remain fresh and warm for a full week.

Shekalim 16 - 22

W hen Yehoash ascended the throne after the popular overthrow of his grandmother Asalyahu, he found the Beis Hamikdash in a state of disrepair. That wicked woman and her sons had caused serious damage to the sacred building which was only 125 years old and in perfect condition until then.

In order to carry out a massive renovation project, the king needed funds. He therefore made an arrangement with the kohanim whereby all money contributed by the people for maintenance of the Beis Hamikdash would go to the kohanim, and they in turn would assume responsibility for funding the renovations. When he discovered in the twenty-third year of his reign that the kohanim had become lax in fulfilling their responsibility, he ordered the head of the kohanim, Yehoyada, to institute a new system. Contributions would no longer go to the kohanim, but directly to the Beis Hamikdash treasury, from which funds would be drawn for renovations and maintenance.

To enable the public to make such direct contributions, a collection box had to be set up in an area of the Beis Hamikdash to which all would have access. Two apparently contradictory passages relate what was done. One (Melachim II 12:10) records that Yehoyada took a box, made a slit in it to receive the contributions and placed it near the altar. Another (Divrei Hayamim II 24:8) reports that at the king’s command a collection box was placed outside the gate to the House of Hashem.

Rabbi Yonasan’s resolution of this conflict is that there were two boxes. In the Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael, however, a different approach was offered. Both passages refer to the same single collection box. Yehoyada had initially placed it in the Beis Hamikdash proper, next to the altar. When the king realized that this would create a problem for those who were ritually impure and forbidden to enter that area, he ordered that it be placed outside so that even they would be capable of making their direct contribution.

Shekalim 17b

Shekalim 19a
1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “chesed shel emes” — kindness of truth?

2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn’t want to be buried in Egypt.

3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?

4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat...” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?

5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?

6. What does pillalti mean?

7. What does “Shechem” mean as used in this week’s Parsha? (two answers)

8. What individual is called “the Emori?” Why? Give two reasons.

9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?

10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?

11. What congregation from Yaakov’s offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?

12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?

13. What does milk do to teeth?

14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey?”

15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?

16. To whom was Yaakov referring in Yosef’s blessing when he said “They embittered him...”?

17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?

18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?

19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?

20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?
**Gabriella from Tampa, FL wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,

For the first time in my life, I went to Synagogue on Friday night! It was such an interesting experience. I found the people there to be so open, honest and nice. What I liked the most was the singing and the chanting of the man (I forget what you call him.) Anyway, I met this really nice girl there who is the Rabbi’s daughter. Her name is Shira Chana and she showed me around and explained some things to me. I must say I felt very much at home there.

I’m very interested in the 12 tribes. Someone told me that you can determine which tribe you are from by your last name. My real mom’s last name was Levin. What tribe would I be from? I would also like to know the ranks and orders of the tribes. Like who was the best tribe and which tribe wasn’t so good.

These past few weeks have been so interesting for me. I have had an opportunity to really learn a lot about who I am and I’m really proud and happy to call myself a Jew. Thank you so much for your friendship and your kindness. I know one Hebrew word besides “shalom” which is “mitzvah,” and that is what you do for me. Shalom, Gabriella.

**Stanley Turtletaub**

<doctorl@gte.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Someone asked me if Rachel and Leah were prophetesses like Sara and Rivka. I answered yes. For Leah, I responded that she foresaw that she was to marry Esav and cried and pleaded with Hashem until her lot was changed. But how do we see that Rachel was a prophetess?

Dear Stanley Turtletaub and Phil,

The Talmud states: “48 prophets and 7 prophetesses prophesied to the People of Israel.” The prophetesses are identified as Sara, Miriam, Devora, Chana, Avigail, Chulda and Esther.

The Talmud goes on to explain that, although there were actually thousands of other prophets, these were the ones whose prophecy was written down to teach repentance and give direction to future generations.

Both Rachel and Leah were prophetesses. For example, Leah foretold that Reuven would lose his birthright to Yosef, and that Reuven would try to save Yosef’s life. Rachel knew prophetically that Yaakov would only have twelve sons; thus when she bore Yosef, Yaakov’s 11th son, she prayed only for “another son” and not for “more sons.”

**Eliezer Shifrin from Capetown SA**

<shifrin@mweb.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the difference between spirit, soul, and neshama, according to the kabbala, and how long does the spirit or soul linger after death? Thank you for your help.

Dear Eliezer Shifrin,

A soul is like a chain with one end linked into the brain and the other to a certain spiritual source. There are...
five levels of the soul like the five links in a chain, each one parallel to the spiritual sphere where it exists. However, we only relate to the three bottom links as we have no understanding about the two top ones. The three are 1) Nefesh 2) Ruach 3) Neshama. The nefesh is the spiritual existence which resides in the body and keeps the physical metabolism working and the person alive. The ruach is a connection between the neshama and the nefesh. It is the cause of feelings and personal qualities. The neshama is the spiritual existence which pulls the man towards G-d, to the performance of good deeds, to be pious and humble and to seek knowledge and achievement in spiritual fields. It resides around the head.

When a person dies, it takes seven days before the parts of the soul understand that it’s all over and leave the body. Until then they hover around the grave and travel to and fro between the grave and the house of the deceased, waiting for the body to start functioning again. The nefesh does not completely leave until the body is decomposed.

---

**Pan Handling**

Bob Kaplan <bailymaker@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We were told that in order to open a kosher bakery all of our pans would have to go to the mikveh. Do the new disposable pans that can be used for baking and selling require that treatment also? Thank you.

Dear Bob Kaplan,

Although some stringent opinions say one should immerse them, in general we rely on the other opinions which hold there is no need to do so, and some of the best kashrut supervisions do not require this to be done. What does your kashrut supervisory board say? Good luck in all your endeavors.

---

**Public Domain**

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous “Ohrnet” features

While Ohrnet welcomes feedback by post or fax, we can respond personally to email only.

**RE: Ohrnet:**

Since the day I started reading your publication, my family and I always, always, have a nice chat about the Parashat Hashava at our Shabbat table, and my kids wait days for the questions. Yashar Koach.

* Tzvi Szajnbrum and Family <rina@inter.net.il>

**Re: The Luz Bone (Ohrnet Vayeitzei):**

In Parshas Vayeitzei, we read that Beis El (Jerusalem) was originally called Luz. Just like we will be reconstituted from the luz bone, so too the world will be reconstituted from the city Luz at the time of mashiach (heard from Rabbi Moshe Schecter). Also: Death was brought into the world when Adam ate from the eitz hada’as. This potential for death entered every part of his body except the luz bone, since it receives its sustenance only at melave malke (the post-Shabbat meal). This is why it is indestructible (heard from Rabbi Shmuel Shmeltzer).

* Philip Rosen <feivel@mindspring.com>

Re: Top 10 Lists (Top Ten Jewish Books Not Yet Published) (www.ohr.org.il/judaism/humor/top10/books.htm):

Thank G-d it’s OK to be Jewish and also laugh.

* Barbara <barbarag17@aol.com>

**Re: Medical Circumcision (Ohrnet Vayeshev):**

Regarding circumcision by a doctor versus a mohel: Some mohels are doctors. All mohels are trained carefully and use aseptic (sterile) technique and are highly experienced. I am a doctor who gets the New England Journal of Medicine, one of the most prestigious medical journals. It recently had an article which should give anyone pause before subjecting a son to a standard “medical” circumcision. The article states that the average time for a medical circumcision is in the range of one hour! The point of the article was whether to inject local anesthetic first to spare the infant pain. Of course, the anesthetic shot takes a few seconds and causes pain. As anyone knows who has witnessed a bris, the mohel performs it in, at most, a few seconds. In the typical cases I have seen, the baby doesn’t even cry. So, even if a Jew does not understand the need for the mitzvah of a kosher (valid) bris, which would a loving parent prefer for his baby — an instant or an hour of pain?

* Rochelle Pudlowski Eissenstat, M.D. <eissenstat@aol.com>
If his friends had judged favorably, the fellow in the following incident wouldn’t be saying....

CALL ME MR. CATS

R ecently we have had serious cat problems in my neighborhood. So much so that people have joked about actually going out and killing them. Anyway, one night about a month ago I was bringing the trash cans up to the front of my house when I noticed that there was a cat inside. I yelled “Go away cat,” and chased it out of the can. The cat jumped up, screamed, and in the process of running away it squeezed an open ketchup bottle at me, staining me from head to toe with red gook! Some neighbors, hearing the commotion, ran to check if everything was all right; embarrassed, I nodded politely.

The next day, my co-worker, who also lives in the neighborhood, commented how he was grateful that someone had finally taken some serious initiative in destroying the cats. Turns out one of the neighbors had spread a nasty rumor that I had violently bashed a cat’s head in. Even though I have repeatedly denied this and explained the situation several times, some people in my neighborhood still insist on calling me “Cat-the-Ripper,” which not only does not make sense but has made this awkward incident all the more uncomfortable. If only they would have assumed correctly that the red gook on me was ketchup. Please inform your readers of how to properly judge people.

• Isaac Goldfine, Brooklyn, NY <holyjew@usa.net>

* Concept based on “The Other Side of the Story” by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

If you know negative information about someone, you are not allowed to “let the cat out of the bag” except under the strict conditions set forth in the sefer Chafetz Chaim. All the more so when your information is based on mere hearsay or circumstantial evidence.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked: “The long, the short, the black, the white, the his, the hers, and the theirs. What seven similar days — i.e., days which are observed with similar types of observances — in the Jewish calendar do these describe? Answer: The long — 17 Tammuz (longest daytime fast); the short — 10 Tevet (shortest fast); the black — 9 Av (day of mourning, when we sit in the dark); the white — Yom Kippur (we wear white kittle frocks and cover the Torah with white); the his — 3 Tishrei (Fast of Gedalia); the hers — 13 Adar (Fast of Esther); the theirs — 14 Nissan (Fast of the Firstborn).

• Dons Hool, Kollel Ponevez, as heard from his mother

continued from page five

SHERLOX ANSWER!

“What kind of vision did Yaakov have?” asked Sherlox.

“What do you mean?”

“Read two more verses: ‘Israel’s eyes had become heavy from age; he was unable to see...’ (Genesis 48:10) The text says that Yaakov saw Yosel’s sons, and then goes on to say Yaakov was unable to see.”

“Of course! The answer is right before my eyes: Yaakov was unable to see! So how could he ‘see’ Yosel’s sons? Therefore, Rashi explains that Yaakov ‘saw’ their future offspring through the lens of Divine intuition.”

• Based on Sifsei Chachamim

Sherlox is by Reuven Subar

Inspired by “What’s Bothering Rashi” by Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RAMBAN</th>
<th>SFORNO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47:28 Egypt and Rome</td>
<td>49:31 Burial in the Ma'aras HaMachpela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47:31 Necessity for the Oath</td>
<td>49:33 The Death of Yaakov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48:1 The Division of Eretz Yisrael</td>
<td>48:31 Yosel’s Oath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48:7 Rachel’s Tomb</td>
<td>48:18 The Laying of Hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48:15 (first part) Yosel’s other children</td>
<td>49:7 The Humility of Hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49:10 (first part) Kings of Israel</td>
<td>49:11 Signs of Mashiach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49:17 Shimshon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>