



SHABBAT PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI · FOR THE WEEK ENDING 22 IYAR 5760 · MAY 27, 2000 · VOL. 7 NO. 34

PARSHA INSIGHTS

IRVING'S QUESTION

"But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not be revolted by them nor will I reject them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them — for I am Hashem, their G-d." (26:44)

“If I were a Jew, the question that would interest me is not who pulled the trigger but why does it keep on happening again and again, and why does nobody investigate this phenomenon of where does anti-Semitism come from." (David Irving during the trial at which he was convicted of Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism)

It seems almost incredible that the mass murder of millions of our people could be called into doubt and that the full might of the English judicial process be needed to substantiate those horrible truths.

But for all of the ignominy of his defeat, how many of us can answer Irving's taunt totally comfortably? Why have the Jewish People been disliked and despised throughout history?

The hatred of Jews shows no historical consistency. The Jews have been vilified as both rootless cosmopolitans and merciless captains of capitalism. They are both filthy rich and filthy poor. They are communists and capitalists. They are both dangerous idealists and cynical opportunists. They are both stuck in the rigidity of an all encompassing legalistic way of life, and queue-jumping corner-cutters. In fact the only thing that unites all these prejudices is their total disparity. There is no common recognizable claim against the

Jewish People. What emerges from this is that Jew-hatred is not because of a reason. Jew-hatred seeks reasons to make its irrationality seem reasonable.

In this week's Torah portion, we read the *tochacha*. The *tochacha* is a chilling description of what will happen to the Jewish People if they forget that they are chosen by G-d to be the nation that testifies to His Existence.

A hundred years ago, there was a great rabbi named Rabbi Meir Simcha, the *Ohr Somayach*, who lived in Dvinsk. With chilling foresight, almost an echo of prophecy, he wrote the following words in his commentary on the Torah in the early years of the century: "He who thinks that Berlin is Jerusalem...there will come a thunderous and violent wind that will uproot him from his source." When Rabbi Meir Simcha wrote these words, nobody had even heard the name Hitler. Rabbi Meir Simcha was writing to a world of German Jews who believed themselves more German than the Germans. They avowed that Berlin was their Jerusalem. They "observed" the "Sabbath" on Sunday to the accompaniment of organ music. They disavowed any connection to the Land of Israel. They disliked being called Jews, preferring to be known as "Germans of the Mosaic persuasion." How ironic that, of all places, it should be Germany who turned around and reminded these "Germans of the Mosaic persuasion" that they were indeed Jews, and they would massacre them in their millions because of it.

But was is really ironic?

From the moment that G-d made an irreversible covenant with Abraham that his seed would be G-d's chosen people, the survival of the Jewish People becomes a natural imperative written into the physics and chemistry of the universe, no less than the rising of the sun or the flowing and ebbing of the tides.

The Jews have to be. All other nations rise and fall and vanish. But from the moment that G-d made Israel the instruments of His Will, their existence is as immutable as His existence.

So why should anti-Semitism exist?

Anti-Semitism is placed into the world solely to prevent the Jewish People from disappearing into the melting pot amongst the nations and "annulling" G-d's irreversible covenant with Abraham. Assimilation is like a nuclear chain reaction. When a certain critical mass is reached, then the atom bomb of anti-Semitism explodes.

No nation represented the summit of culture and refinement more than pre-war Germany, and yet within a few short years it turned into a savage beast.

In Hebrew, the word *kadosh*, which means "holy" also means separated. Holiness can only exist when it is separated from that which is not holy. If everything is holy, nothing is holy. When the Jewish People forget that their purpose is to be a holy nation, separated from the other nations, then the non-Jewish world turns around and remind us of our purpose.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow Hashem's commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments,

whose purpose is to bring the Jewish People to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. Sefer Vayikra, the Book of Leviticus, concludes with the details of *erachin* — the process by which someone vows to give the *Beit Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.

HAFTARAH

TRUST

There was a wealthy trader who lived in Spain. During the Inquisition he was forced to leave his native Cordoba and flee to Morocco with his wife and two daughters. They arrived penniless after a nightmare journey. Shortly after their arrival, his wife sickened and died. Then one of his daughters died. Then the other.

"Hashem!" He cried. "You have taken everything from me. You have taken my home. You have taken my liveli-

YIRMIYAHU 16:19 - 17:14

hood. You have taken my wife. You have taken my children. But there is one thing you can never take from me: My faith in You."

When a person puts his faith in Hashem, even when it is difficult, he receives help from Heaven. He will find that he comes to a complete trust in Hashem. The verse in this week's Haftarah states, "Blessed is the man who places his trust in Hashem, and Hashem will become his trust." If a person trusts Hashem — Hashem will become his trust.

• *Shir Maon in Mayana Shel Torah*

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

OLD CITY GATES

The wall around the Old City of Jerusalem is about two and a half miles long and is breached by eight gates.

In the north are the Damascus, New and Herod's Gates; at the south are the



Zion and Dung (Sha'ar Ha'ashpot, where the city buses enter) Gates; at the west is Jaffa Gate; and at the east are the Lions' Gate (through which Israeli soldiers entered the Old City in the Six-Day War) and the sealed Golden Gate.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"And I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember..."

Hashem will eventually redeem us in the merit of Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. This is indicated by the three words "with" in the above verse — the women who were "with" Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov as life partners.

• *Yalkut Shimoni*

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

Web Production: **Michael Treblow**

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

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Ohrnet wishes a hearty Mazel to
RABBI AND MRS. MOSHE NEWMAN

on the engagement of
their daughter Rivka to Yehuda Simcha Storch

THAT EXTRA OBLIGATION

Even though a man marrying a virgin must obligate himself in the *ketuba* to pay his wife 200 zuz in the case of divorce or death (and 100 for one who married a widow) he may obligate himself with “*tosefet ketuba*” in any amount he wishes.

This ruling of the *mishna* is challenged by the *gemara* as being so obvious as to be superfluous, since a person may certainly assume any obligations that he wishes to. The *gemara*'s answer to this challenge is that if not for this ruling, we might have assumed that it is illegal for a man to commit himself to a sum higher than the standard because it might cause embarrassment for those who cannot afford to take on such an obligation.

Rabbeinu Nissim (*Ran*) infers from this that when one does commit himself to an additional sum he need not separate it in the text of the *ketuba* from the standard amount but may write that he is committing himself to the composite amount as “the dowry of her virginity.” If this additional amount had to be written as a separate phrase, he argues, there would be no reason to even consider the possibility of embarrassment since every *ketuba* states the standard amount for her “dowry.”

Tosefot Yom Tov on the *mishna* lends support to this view by citing an earlier *mishna* (12a) which states that the rabbinical courts of the *kohanim* used to insist on a *ketuba* of 400 zuz for the brides of *kohanim* families, and the Sages offered no objection to their practice. What was special about their practice, he notes, was that the entire amount was recorded in the *ketuba* as the virginal dowry and not separated into two clauses of standard and additional.

Rema in *Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer* (66:7) cites this ruling of *Ran* but also cites a differing view of the Mordechai that the two amounts must be mentioned separately. Rema concludes that the prevailing custom follows the second opinion. The reasoning of this opinion is that if the earlier *mishna* already mentioned the right to add more money to the *ketuba*, it seems redundant for our *mishna* to repeat this right. The conclusion must therefore be that *kohanim* (and the noble families, as the *gemara* adds) wrote the entire amount in one clause as the virginal dowry, because this was the standard custom in those circles, while everyone else must separate the additional from the standard.

• Ketubot 54b

WHEN A MONTH DOESN'T COUNT

A virgin who has already been betrothed through *kidushin* (first stage of marriage) must be given twelve months to prepare for her wedding from the time that her groom has asked her to join him in *nissuin* (second

stage of marriage).

This was the arrangement in Talmudic times when *kidushin* and *nissuin* did not take place so close together as today. This time period applied to a *na'arah* — a young woman from age 12 to 12 ½ — and for the first twelve months following her reaching the stage of *bagrut* at 12 ½. Since the purpose of this waiting period is to give her time to prepare her personal needs, the assumption is that once she reaches the stage of *bagrut*, even though she is not yet betrothed, she has already begun preparing herself for marriage.

Does the extra month in a leap year count as one of these 12 months?

Although there is no mention of this in our *gemara*, the Rashash suggests that we look at the Torah source cited by our Sages as a guideline for determining the length of the waiting period. Rabbi Chisda refers us to the negotiations between Avraham's servant Eliezer and the family of Rivka whom he was anxious to bring back as a bride for Yitzchak. “Let the girl stay with us for days or ten months,” suggested Rivka's brother and mother (*Bereishet* 24:55). It is illogical to first ask for only days and then propose a delay of months; so the term *days*, concludes Rabbi Chisda, must be understood as a year — a hint that it takes that long for a young girl to prepare for marriage. As proof that the term *days* can mean a year, he cites the passage (*Vayikra* 25:29) which sets the time limit for redemption of a house sold in a walled city as *days*, while it is clear from the context that the seller has a full year to buy back his home.

Regarding that law of redemption, the *mishna* (*Mesechta Erachin* 31a) states clearly that in a leap year the owner's option expires only after 13 months. Since we compare the waiting period for the bride to the law of house redemption, we should assume that in a leap year she will be given 13 months.

If this conclusion is correct, that when our Sages dictated 12 month period their intention was for 13 months in a leap year, this would provide support for the view of the Rema in *Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer* 13:11. The Rema there states that the “24 month” period from the birth of the child which a divorced or widowed nursing woman must wait before remarrying is a full two years and does not include the extra month in a leap year. It also constitutes a challenge to the opinion of the author of the *Shulchan Aruch* himself that it does include that month.

The Beit Shmuel (*ibid*:22), however, points out that the 12-month period of mourning for a parent does include the extra month of a leap year and that the ruling of Rema was limited to a decree based on the danger to the life of the child dependent on his mother's milk.

• Ketubot 57b

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. To what do the words “*bechukotai telechu*” (walk in My statutes) refer?
2. When is rain “in its season?”
3. What is the blessing of “*v’achaltem lachmechem l’sova*” (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
4. What is meant by the verse “and a sword will not pass through your land?”
5. Mathematically, if five Jewish soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Jewish soldiers be able to defeat?
6. How much is “*revava*”?
7. Which “progression” of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
8. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel’s state of ruin?
9. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
10. How many years after entering the Land were the northern tribes exiled?
11. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written with an extra

“vav.” From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?

12. What positive element is implied by the words “and I will bring them into the land of their enemies?”
13. In verse 26:42, why is the word “remember” not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
14. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 “*Torot*” (plural) and not “*Torah*” (singular)?
15. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the *Beit Hamikdash* and doesn’t have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
16. If a person says “The leg of this animal shall be an *olah* offering” the animal is sold and sacrificed as an *olah* offering. What is the status of the money received for the animal?
17. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the *Beit Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *yovel* what happens to the field?
18. Where must “*ma’aser sheini*” be eaten?
19. When a person redeems “*ma’aser sheini*” what happens to the food? What happens to the redemption money?
20. How does a person tithe his animals?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 26:3 - Laboring in Torah learning.
2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g., Shabbat nights).
3. 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
4. 26:6 - No foreign army will travel through your land on their way to a different country.
5. 26:4 - Two thousand.
6. 26:4 - Ten thousand.
7. 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvot*, rejecting those who observe *mitzvot*, hating Sages, preventing others from observing *mitzvot*, denying that Hashem gave the *mitzvot*, denying the existence of Hashem. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
8. 26:32 - No enemy nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
9. 26:35 - 70 years. Because the Jewish People violated 70 *shemitta* and *yovel* years.
10. 26:35 - 390 years.
11. 26:42 - In five places in the Torah, Yaakov’s name is written with an extra “vav” and in five places the name Eliyahu is missing a “vav.” Yaakov “took” these vavs as a pledge that Eliyahu will one day come and announce the redemption of Yaakov’s children.

12. 26:41 - Hashem Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies’ land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, Hashem will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jews from assimilating into the host culture.
13. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak’s ashes (who was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before Hashem.
14. 26:46 - To teach that both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah were given to Moshe on Har Sinai.
15. 27:8 - The person whose value was donated goes before the *kohen*, who sets the obligation according to the poor person’s ability to pay.
16. 27:9 - The money is “*chullin*,” meaning it does not have “holy” status, except for the value of the animal’s leg which does have “holy” status.
17. 27:16 - It becomes the property of the *kohanim* who are on rotation at the beginning of *yovel*.
18. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.
19. 27:31 - The food becomes permissible to him outside of Jerusalem. The redemption money must be brought to Jerusalem and used to purchase food to be eaten there.
20. 27:32 - He passes them through a door individually and every tenth animal he marks with a rod smeared with red dye.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS “QUESTION”)

QUESTION: This week’s Torah portion promises physical reward for observing *mitzvot* — for instance, plentiful food and peace. How can we understand this in light of the principle that “reward for *mitzvot* is in the World to Come?”

ANSWER: The promised blessings in this week’s portion are not the reward for keeping the *mitzvot*. Rather, the Torah promises that if we commit ourselves to observe the Torah, Hashem will provide us with the means to do so. The reward is in the World to Come.

• *Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah*

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

NASDAQ AND THE ZODIAC

From: Saul Behr in Johannesburg, SA
<saulb@unihold.co.za>

Dear Rabbi,
Somebody recently came up to me, and gave me unsolicited information about astrology. From a reliable source, with a good history of accuracy, he gave me some tips on the stock market. Am I allowed to act on that information?

Dear Saul,
There's no problem with acting on this unsolicited advice. However, one should not actively seek out such advice. Rather, a Jew should go about life trusting that G-d will "be there" for him, and not feel the need to know the future.

Note that ultimately, astrology has no bearing on the life of a Jew because "ain mazel b'yisrael" — the people of Israel transcend astrological influences."

Sources:
• Yoreh Deah 179:1

THE WALL AT THE WALL

From: Bruce Hammer in Manti, Utah
<bhammer@tlcmanti.org>

Dear Rabbi,
I noticed the divider at the Western Wall camera (www.kotelkam.com). What is the purpose of this division? Why is the wall divided into two sections? Thanks.

Dear Bruce Hammer,
It's there as a division between the men and the women during prayer. It's basically to help us focus on prayer, and not on other things.

The law requiring a separation, a "mechitzah," is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Succah 51b, 52a. There are a number of reasons given for this:

- So as not to cause those who are unmarried to feel left out.
- We come to synagogue to relate to G-d as Jews, not as spouses, husbands, wives, fathers or mothers. With a mechitzah, spouses do not sit together. That way, we are more of a congregation than groups of individuals.
- To prevent there being an atmosphere of socializing, and conversation during prayer.
- The atmosphere during prayer should be serious. One way to help achieve the proper atmosphere is by creating a division between men and women.
- To promote modesty, and to prevent the distraction from prayer to both men and women from the presence of members of the opposite gender, to whom there is a natural attraction.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

From: Richard Pedowitz in Seattle, WA
<Richard.Pedowitz@ci.seattle.wa.us>

Dear Rabbi,
I was approached by a woman with the following story:
At age 52 I learned that my maternal grandmother was an orphan and was Jewish. As a baby she was placed in a Catholic household and reared as a Catholic. She reared my mother as a Catholic and my mother reared me as a Catholic.

The story generated the following questions: "What is my status according to Jewish law? What is the status of my children according to Jewish law?" She is genuinely curious. I look forward to your response. Thank you very much.

Dear Richard Pedowitz,

She is Jewish. If the facts are true as she has stated them, then she is 100 percent Jewish, and so are her children. This is so because a person's Jewishness is determined by the mother.

Sources:
• Tractate Kiddushin 66b & 68b
• Code of Jewish Law, Even Haezer 8:5

TATTOO AND JEWISH BURIAL

From: Claudette Maxim <claudett@willapabay.org>

Dear Rabbi,
I came across an article that stated that a Jewish person may not be buried in consecrated grounds if he or she has a decorative tattoo. Is this true?

Dear Claudette Maxim,
No, it's not true. This seems to be a widespread misconception, and many people have asked us this question.

The Torah explicitly forbids a Jew from getting a tattoo: The verse says "Don't put hypodermic writing in your flesh, I am the Lord." (Leviticus 19)

So, we see that getting a "decorative" tattoo is considered a sin for a Jew. But it doesn't disqualify him from being buried in a Jewish cemetery.

Rabbi Chanoch Teller relates the story of a young man from a non-religious upbringing who returned to traditional observance of Judaism. Remaining from his former lifestyle was a tattoo which he carefully kept hidden under his shirt-sleeves.

Before Yom Kippur, this young man went to the *mikveh*, the ritual bath, as is the custom. Try as he might, he couldn't hide his tattoo from the others at the *mikveh*. His embarrassment was noticeable. Then, an elderly Jew approached him: "Don't be embarrassed," said the old man as he held up his arm to show the numbers tattooed there by Nazis. "I also have a tattoo."

Sources:
• Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 180:1

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous “Ohrnet” features

MicroWisdom:

I read and enjoy the Ohr Somayach Interactive web site. It contains so much wisdom compressed into a small space, laced with humor.

Jehoshua (Phillip) Danzig, New York City <PIDanzig@aol.com>

A Banana for Your Monkey

“Apparently orangutans share 99% of our genes—therefore they should have 99% of human rights.” This was reported on the BBC in October.

A scientist dismissed the idea because “bananas share 50% of our genes, so should we also give them 50% of human rights?”

Ian Warrents <ian.warrents@ic24.net>

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

BRATS LOVE

My story is about how I misjudged a friend. Last year a new girl came to my school. I immediately thought she would be kind of a brat. I decided that

she would not be my friend and that I would have nothing to do with her. I realized that I had totally misjudged this girl when I first met her. It turns out that as the days went by, we became really good friends and then we became best friends.

•Submitted by an Ohrnet Reader

YIDDLE RIDDLE

WHO KNOWS 16?

In the song at the end of the Pesach Seder we describe the significance of the numbers from one to thirteen as they relate to Jewish life and thought. “Three are the fathers, Four are the Mothers...12 are the Tribes of Israel...” What about the next 13 numbers? And after those? What significance do they have in Jewish tradition?

This week we challenge you to answer: “**WHO KNOWS 16?**” Write to info@ohr.org.il

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

- 26:6 Taming of Wild Animals
- 26:11 Theology of Medicine
- 26:12 Promise for the Future
- 26:16 Analysis of Jewish History

SEFER HACHINUCH

- 350 Dedicating One's Value
- 352 Switching Korbanot
- 360 Animal Tithes

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andinformationonthousandsofJewishandcontemporarytopicsvisitourwebsite.org](http://www.ifyouarelookingforinterestinginformativeanddownrightgoodliteratureandinformationonthousandsofJewishandcontemporarytopicsvisitourwebsite.org)

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