

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Turn It Up To ELEVEN!!

*“And I shall take out My legions – My Children of Yisrael – from the land of Egypt, with great judgments.” (7:4)*

The phrase “Turn it up to eleven!” was symptomatic of the overindulgent sixties culture. But it unwittingly recognized that this world is indeed bounded by the number ten.

Ten is a magical number. It represents the completion of a series.

Eleven is the beginning of the system of ten once again.

The number ten features prominently in the Torah. The universe was created with statements – “Let there be...” (By the way, if you count them, you’ll only find nine, but the deeper sources understand the very first word in the Torah, *Bereishis*, is in itself a creation: the creation of ‘beginning.’)

There are the Ten Plagues and there are Ten Commandments (or more accurately, Ten

Statements). It cannot be that this theme of ten is coincidental. What is the link between these

three sets of ten?

A fruit is covered by a shell. The shell prevents the fruit from being damaged before it is ripe, but it also prevents access to the fruit. On a deeper level, the Ten Statements were ‘the fruit’ of creation encased in its shell. It took the Ten Plagues to break the casing of this spiritual ‘fruit’ and this allowed the fruit to emerge on Mount Sinai with the giving of the Torah and the Ten Commandments.

The entire universe was created with letters and the words they form. But this reality is hidden from us – that is the idea of the Ten Statements encasing the secrets of existence. Each of the Ten Plagues was like a ‘nutcracker’ that revealed in each of the Ten Statements its essence – and what resulted was the Word of Hashem revealed at Sinai – the Ten Commandments.

*\*Sources: Based on Sfat Emet in Iturei Torah*

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
6. Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel"?
7. After which plague did G-d begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart"?
8. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
9. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
10. How long did the plague of blood last?
11. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
12. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation"?
13. What are "chamarim"?
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
16. What were the Egyptians likely to do if they saw the Jews slaughtering lambs?
17. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
18. The dever killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

## Answers

1. **6:9 - Yes.**
2. **6:9 -- Although G-d swore to give them the Land, they never actually had control over it.**
3. **6:13 - With the respect due a king.**
4. **6:16 - 137 years.**
5. **6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.**
6. **6:25 - Yitro fattened (pitem ) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (pitpet ) at his evil inclination.**
7. **7:3 - After the sixth plague – shechin.**
8. **7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.**
9. (a) **7:17 - Because the Nile was an Egyptian god.**  
(b) **8:17 - Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and G-d did the same.**
10. **7:25 - Seven days.**
11. **7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.**
12. **7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.**
13. **8:10 - Piles.**
14. **8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.**
15. **8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.**
16. **8:22 - Stone the Jews.**
17. **8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.**
18. **9:10 - In the plague of dever only the cattle in the fields died. The plague of shechin affected the surviving cattle.**
19. **9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.**
20. **9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.**

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### The Vertically-Challenged

Imagine the scene of Moses and Aaron pleading before the most powerful sovereign in the entire world — the Pharaoh of Egypt — saying those fateful words, “Let My people go.” Now, after imagining that scene in your head, reimagine the event bearing in mind the assertion found in the Talmud (*Moed Katan* 18a) that the Pharaoh in the time of Moses was but one *amah* (“cubit”) tall. It certainly gives a different spin on the dynamic. In this essay we explore four words in Hebrew that denote “shortness” of stature: *gamad*, *namuch*, *gutz* and *nanas*. Each of these terms can be used to describe a “short person” or “dwarf” (note that the English word midget is no longer socially-acceptable), and this essay explores whether or not they are truly synonyms.

When the *shofet* Ehud gained an audience before the Moabite king Eglon in order to surreptitiously stab him, the Bible reports that he used a sword that was a *gomed* long (Judges 3:16). This is one of only two instances of the Hebrew root GIMMEL-MEM-DALET in the Bible. Rashbam and Radak explain that a *gomed* is the same unit of measurement as an *amah*, but *Sefer HaAruch*, Rashi, and Mahari Kara explain that it refers to a truncated *amah*. In doing so, Rashi uses a cognate of the word *gidem* (“amputee,” “cut off”) to explain the notion that Ehud’s sword was *less* than an *amah* long. Rabbi Yehoshua Steinberg of the Veromemanu Foundation infers from this that Rashi understood the word *gomed* as a metathesized form of the word *gidem*, with the consonants DALET and MEM switching positions.

The prophet Yechezkel tells of the international acclaim of the Tyrian kingdom, by noting, *inter alia*, that their watchtowers were manned by *gamadim* (Yechezkel 27:11). This is the other instance of the root GIMMEL-MEM-DALET in the Bible. At first, Rashi and Mahari Kara explain that *gamadim* refers to seamen who were adept at measuring the depths of the sea using ropes. However, subsequently, Rashi and the Radak explain that *gamadim* refers to short people, who are naught but an *amah* tall. Interestingly, although Targum Jonathan translates *gamadim* as Cappadocians, Rabbi Eliyahu Bachur (1469-1549) in *Sefer Tishbi* merges Targum with Rashi’s second explanation to posit that the Cappadocians were a nation of dwarves.

The Hebrew word *namuch* (“short in height”) appears several times in the Mishna (*Kilayim* 4:7, *Eruvin* 9:1, and *Zevachim* 1:2), although it never appears in the Bible. Like *gamad*, it does not refer exclusively to “short” *people*, but can be used to refer to anything that is short, such as a short fence.

Another word used in rabbinic literature to denote one who is “small of stature” is *gutz*. This term does not appear in the Bible or the Mishnah, but is used several times in the Talmud. Several examples: The Talmud (*Yevamot* 106b) discusses Halachic differences concerning the *Chalitzah* ceremony when either the man or the woman is of especially short stature (*gutz* in masculine form, *gutza* in feminine form). The Talmud cites a popular adage that says, “if your wife is short (*gutza*), crouch down to listen to her.” Similarly, the Talmud rules that a corpse being merely tall or short (*gutz*) is not enough of a clue to positively confirm the deceased person’s identity. Rav Huna is described as a “short (*gutza*) man.” Finally, when Elkanah’s wife Hannah prayed for Hashem to grant her a son (i.e., Samuel), she asked that her son not be “too tall or too short (*gutz*), too skinny or too fat, too white or too reddish, too intelligent or too senseless” (*Brachot* 31b).

Our final word used in reference to “short” people is *nanas*. When Rashi and Radak wrote that *gamadim* refers to short people, they actually used the word *nanas*. Similarly, the Talmud (*Bechorot* 45b) humorously suggests that an especially tall man should not marry an especially tall woman, lest their offspring be as tall as a ship’s mast; and an especially short man (*nanas*) should not marry an especially short woman (*nanaset*), lest their offspring be as short as a finger! Like some of the other terms we encountered above, *nanas* does not exclusively apply to people, as even short boards/walls are called *nanasin*.

\*For a more complete version of this essay that goes into the etymologies and nuances of these four words, visit us online:

[http://ohr.edu/this\\_week/whats\\_in\\_a\\_word/](http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/)

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Bava Kama 72-78

### Lunch and Learn

*Rav Nachman said to the Sage Rava: "Because I did not eat the meat of an ox."*

The Torah states that if a person steals an ox or a sheep, and then slaughters it or sells it, he must pay the original owner five oxen (for the one ox), and four sheep in the case of a sheep. Rava posed the following question to Rav Nachman: If a person steals an ox that belongs to two partners, and slaughters it, and then admits what he had done to one of the two partners, is he indeed required to pay "five half oxen to the other partner? (He is exempt from paying the penalty of "five for one" to the partner to whom he admitted his misdeed, in accordance with the rule that "One who admits to a matter which involves a penalty (*kenas*) is exempt from the additional penalty payment" — Rashi). Rava's question requires a clear and precise understanding of the phrase "five oxen" in the verse. Does it mean "five oxen but not five half oxen", or does it mean even "five half oxen"? Rav Nachman initially answered: "The Torah says 'five oxen' but not 'five half oxen'." Rava challenged this ruling from a *Mishna* (70a), and there is a back-and-forth discussion about this ruling, resulting in neither refutation nor proof.

The next morning, Rav Nachman told Rava the *opposite* legal ruling: "The Torah says 'five oxen' and it means 'even five half oxen,' and I didn't say this answer yesterday evening because *I had not yet eaten the meat of an ox.*"

Rashi explains that Rav Nachman's words are not literal. Rather, he is explaining that his previous answer was incorrect because he had not been precise enough in understanding the reason (*ta'am*) of the matter. His excuse of not having eaten the "meat of an ox" seems to be a somewhat humorous way of expressing why he ruled as he did yesterday. I have heard it explained that Rashi uses the word *ta'am* — i.e., taste or reason — with great precision. Rav Nachman was saying that he ruled incorrectly at first because he had not delved into the matter deeply enough to fully understand and taste the underlying reason for this penalty. After additional and sufficient toil in his Torah study, he "dug his teeth into the meat of the matter" and arrived at a better understanding, which led to his reversing his ruling.

Tosefot makes an interesting comment regarding Rav Nachman's explanation for the incorrect ruling he issued on the previous day. When Rav Nachman claimed that he had not eaten the meat of an ox, he meant it literally, since he was *fasting* the previous day and refrained from eating all food. This statement of Tosefot seems, at first glance, to be something akin to prophecy. How could Tosefot know this, and why does Tosefot say this? Perhaps Rav Nachman was not fasting, and he attributed his earlier ruling to not having eaten a steak?

Although the *ba'alei* Tosefot certainly had "*ruach hakodesh*" (a spiritual path to knowledge similar to prophecy), I believe that the Tosefists made a very "down to earth" observation, so to speak. Rav Nachman attributed his lack of greater understanding on the previous day to his not having eaten the meat of an ox, and the next day changed his ruling due to greater understanding. What changed in the meantime? Last night, he had eaten the meat of an ox. So, if he realized that eating this meat would help him learn Torah better and understand it more profoundly, why *didn't* he eat meat on the previous day? Didn't he certainly have an obligation to eat whatever was necessary in order to think properly and toil in the depths of his Torah study in order to arrive at the correct conclusion? The only explanation for his not having eaten meat yesterday must be that he was fasting, as Tosefot deduces.

▪ *Bava Kama 72a*

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON (PART 8)**

### **BLUEPRINT OF JEWISH DESTINY**

*“Anyone who recites Birkat HaMazon is blessed through it.”*  
(Zohar HaKadosh to Parshat Terumah)

Our blessing continues with a phrase taken from a verse in Sefer Devarim (8:10), “And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied and you shall bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good land that He gave you.”

The Midrash, Torat Kohanim (Vayikra 26:5), questions what the phrase, “And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied” actually means. Rather than suggest the obvious explanation that there will be such an abundance of food that everyone will be able to eat to their heart’s content, the Midrash offers an intriguing alternative. We will be satisfied with a small amount of food because the food itself will be blessed. It is the quality of the food we eat that will satisfy us, not the quantity.

Why is being satisfied with a small amount of food considered a blessing? Because it frees up time to be able to serve Hashem. The Chidushei HaRim was renowned, among many other things, for hardly sleeping and hardly eating. His entire day revolved around learning Torah and helping others. His righteous wife once asked her husband why he didn’t look after himself more carefully. She said to him, “You barely eat or sleep. How can you survive like that?” The Chidushei HaRim replied, “Your father chose me to marry you because I’m quicker than most people. I can learn in two hours what others spend an entire day learning. But it isn’t only in Torah that I’m so quick. My eating and sleeping are also quick. I can sleep for a short time and I’m as rested as someone who slept a full night! And I can eat a drop and be as satisfied as someone who ate a three-course meal!”

Perhaps the Midrash can help clarify a passage in the Talmud (Berachot 20b). Rabbi Avira taught that the angels came in front of Hashem and asked Him why He shows favoritism to the Jewish nation. Hashem answered, “How can I not show them favoritism? I commanded them to recite Birkat HaMazon only if they have eaten to satiation, but they have chosen to bless Me even if they ate only a piece of bread as small as the volume of an egg (k’beitzah) or even as small as an olive (k’zayit)!”

As Rabbi Shlomo (1738-1792), the Chassidic leader of the Karlin dynasty in the Ukraine, was wont to say, “A person who learns to thank Hashem for everything, can be satisfied with whatever he has to eat. Someone who does not thank Hashem, will never feel satiated – even when their stomach is full!”

I read a beautifully inspiring quote from someone who grew up in the transit camps in Israel at the beginning of the 1950s. He was talking about how little they had, and he said, “Just because we were satisfied with less, does not mean that we were less satisfied.”

In effect, our blessing is teaching us that we should gain more satiety from praising Hashem than from eating. Because we are so incredibly blessed.

There is a poignant story told about a mother who was walking along the beach with her young child when a giant wave swept the child away. The mother didn’t know what to do and in desperation she began screaming

to Hashem, “Please send me my baby back! Send me my baby back!” Moments later, her baby was washed up unharmed on to the beach by another wave. The mother looked at her child, and, then scooping the child up into her arms, began to cry tears of pure joy and whisper again and again, “Thank You Hashem. Thank You Hashem. Thank You! I can never repay Your kindness! I am eternally in Your debt!” Suddenly she looked at her child again, and in a demanding tone called out, “But Hashem, where is his hat?!”

For many, one of the saddest aspects of their lives is that they are the beneficiaries of such profound goodness, and they may even express some degree of thanks, yet they still remain dissatisfied because things are not *exactly* the way that they want them to be.

*To be continued...*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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Hashem tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. Hashem commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. Hashem punishes the Egyptians, sending plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only Hashem could be performing these miracles.

Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

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# TAAMEI HAMITZVOS

## Reasons behind the Mitzvos

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By Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

*“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)*

### THE PROHIBITION AGAINST EATING BLOOD

*(Mitzvah #148 in Sefer HaChinuch)*

*“Do not consume any blood of birds or animals in all of your dwellings (Vayikra 7:26). ...I shall turn My face to the soul that consumes blood and cut it off from amongst its people. For the soul of the flesh is [dependent] on the blood, and I have designated it for you upon the Mizbei’ach to atone for your souls, for the blood shall atone for the soul (17:10-11). Only, be strong and refrain from consuming blood, for the blood is the soul, and do not consume the blood along with the meat.” (Devarim 12:23)*

#### REASON ONE: IMPURITY

The Torah describes the blood as the animal’s “soul” in the sense that it is something hidden within the body that provides life (*Rav Hirsch*). An animal’s blood is coarse and impure like its nature, and if a person would consume it, it would join his own blood and he would adopt some of the animal’s nature. This would ruin his compassionate human nature and elevated intellect that are necessary in order to grasp and fulfill the Torah (*Ramban to Vayikra 7:11*).

#### REASON TWO: HASHEM’S PORTION

We may not eat the blood of animals because it is designated to be offered to Hashem, as it is written, *and I have designated it for you upon the Mizbei’ach to atone for your souls (Ramban)*. [Since the blood is considered the animal’s soul, it is offered in place a penitent’s soul. In addition, since the animalistic side of man is responsible for his sins, it is only fitting that he offer an animal’s blood for atonement (see also *Rav Menachem HaBavli* and *Rav Hirsch*).]

#### REASON THREE: NO RIGHT OVER THE ANIMAL’S SOUL

Hashem initially allowed mankind to eat only grains, vegetables, and fruits. When the animals were spared from the Flood in Noach’s merit, Hashem subjugated them to mankind entirely and allowed their consumption. However, He prohibited us from consuming their blood, since it is considered their “soul,” and a soul has no right to consume another soul (*Ramban*).

#### REASON FOUR: CRUELTY

Since the blood keeps the animal alive, and its soul depends on it, its consumption would breed within us insensitivity and cruelty (*Sefer HaChinuch* §148).

#### REASON FIVE: DEMONIC PRACTICE

At the time of giving of the Torah, there was a common practice amongst demonists to contact demons (*sheidim*) by drinking blood, in order to hear from them future events. The Torah prohibits all drinking of blood for this reason (*Moreh Nevuchim* and *Seforno*; see also *Sifri, Re’eh* §76).