

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM · 10 IYAR 5764 · MAY 1, 2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 28

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### G-D'S WAITING ROOM

*“When you shall come to the Land and you shall plant any food tree, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years it will be forbidden to you.” (19:23)*

With macabre humor, Miami Beach is called “G-d’s waiting room” because it abounds with retirement homes and hotels for the elderly.

Retirement is a western concept, and one that has come under criticism from doctors in recent years. Studies have found that people who don’t retire but stay involved in their work (albeit at a level that befits their age) have longer life expectancies than those who retire and relax into their “golden years”.

My father, *olov hashalom*, who passed away a little over a year ago well into his ninety-third year, was a person who worked hard throughout his life and never retired. Every morning he would still go into the office and do his work. He went in later and came back earlier, but he still kept his life’s routine.

Our Sages teach that G-d conceals our time of death from us so that we should remain active to the last.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian was once passing through the city of Tiberias in Eretz Yisrael. He noticed an elderly man exerting himself, tilling the soil around his fig trees.

“Saba! (Grandfather) Saba!” called out Hadrian, “Why are you working so hard? When you were young you had to toil to make a living, but now it’s time to relax. Anyway, you will never live to enjoy the fruits of your labors.”

The old man replied, “My task is to try and accomplish whatever my age allows. The Almighty will do as

He sees fit.”

“Tell me, please, Saba, how old are you?”

“I am a hundred years old.”

“A hundred years old! And you actually expect to reap what you sow?”

“I if merit to eat the fruit of my labors, well and good; and if not, my efforts will benefit my children just as I have benefited from the toil of my forbears.”

Said Hadrian, “Hear me Saba! If you ever eat these figs that you are planting you must surely come and let me know.”

In due course, the figs ripened and abounded with fruits. The old man thought to himself, “I must go and tell the emperor.”

He filled a basket with figs and traveled to the palace.

“The Emperor wishes to see me,” he announced to the guards and they led him before the Hadrian’s throne.

“Who are you?” asked Hadrian.

Does the emperor remember years ago in Tiberias passing by an old man tending his figs? G-d has granted me to eat of those figs that I planted. I have brought the emperor a basketful as a gift.”

Hadrian turned to his servants. “Take the figs from this elderly man and refill his basket with gold coins.”

His courtiers questioned the emperor’s generosity, “Why such a lavish gift for an old Jew?” Hadrian replied to them, “His Creator honored him with longevity; is it not proper that I too should accord him honor?”

The Creator does not want us to sit and read the newspapers in G-d’s waiting room.

• Source: *Vayikra Rabba* 25:5

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### ACHAREI MOT

**G**-d 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 wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is “for G-d” and is offered in the Temple, while 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. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations. 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 defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman’s monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

### KEDOSHIM

**T**he nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive 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; perversion of justice; 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; 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 a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree’s fourth year; 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*, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

## ISRAEL Forever

### IS “IN G-D WE TRUST” NEXT?

**S**o now the Supreme Court has to decide whether to leave G-d in the classrooms of American public schools! Ever since 1954 American schoolchildren have directed their daily morning pledge of allegiance to the U.S. as “one nation, under G-d”. My generation made the original pledge written in 1892 without reference to the Deity, but the Cold War with Russia sparked a lobby by religious leaders to insert a mention of G-d in order to underscore the difference between religion-based democracy and atheistic communism.

But now a California atheist is arguing a case before the Supreme Court that this pledge is pushing religion on his 9-year old daughter and other children in violation of the division between church and state.

One can only wonder whether the next move of ultraliberals in the USA will be to challenge the motto of “In G-d We Trust” which appears on American currency.

By the way, did you ever stop to think that such problems don’t exist in Israel? The determined secular effort to keep any mention of G-d out of Israel’s Declaration of Independence, which left it with only an ambiguous reference to the “Rock of Israel”, is echoed in the absence of any mention of G-d in the classrooms or on the currency.

Perhaps the time has come for the enemies of religion in our midst to realize that only by returning to the ancient Jewish motto of “In G-d We Trust” can we guarantee Israel forever.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### FARMER FOOD FOR THE NEEDY

**T**his Pesach saw a record amount of money and food distributed to needy families in Israel by charitable organizations. Even the Israeli government took part in this outpouring of help. The Agriculture Ministry this Pesach distributed

surplus food products valued in the millions of shekels.

This farmer food for the needy included five million eggs, 550 tons of potatoes, 370 tons of oranges, 350 tons of carrots and 237 tons of onions.

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## PARSHA Q&A?

### ACHAREI MOT

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshat Acharei Mot* was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?
2. How long did the first *Beit 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 *karet*?
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 *Parshat 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 Shabbat?
4. The Torah obligates one to leave the "*leket*" for the poor. What is "*leket*"?
5. In *Shemot* 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 wrong 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?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

### ACHAREI MOT

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 life is shortened and his offspring die.
8. 17:13 - Non-domestic 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 his wife's lifetime.

### KEDOSHIM

1. 19:2 - Because it contains the fundamental teachings of the Torah.
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 *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
6. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
7. 19:17 - Causing embarrassment.
8. 19:32 - By not sitting in their seat nor contradicting them.
9. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — the entire Jewish People will never be "cut off."
10. 20:10 - "*Chenek*" (strangulation).

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

## MEDINAT YISRAEL — THE STATE OF ISRAEL

This is the name chosen by the leaders of the Zionist movement for the modern state they created in the ancient Land of Israel 56 years ago.



A modern state, they felt, deserved a modern name that would ease its way into full membership in the community of nations.

## THE MOTHER'S TORAH

“It is permissible to eat this part of the animal,” Rabbi Yochanan in Eretz Yisrael told Rabbi Shaman bar Abba, “but since you are from Babylon you should refrain from eating it because that is the custom of your community.”

As the source for such strict adherence to Jewish custom Rabbi Yochanan quoted the passage “Hear, my son, the instruction of your father and do not forsake the Torah of your mother.” (*Mishlei 1:8*) While the first part of this passage, explains Rashi in *Mishlei*, refers to the Written and Oral Torah given by G-d to Moshe, the second part refers to the rabbinical laws that the Sages of the Jewish People established as a protective “fence around the Torah”.

Since there were sometimes different opinions amongst the Sages as to such laws, there arose a variation in regard to adherence. What was considered permissible in Eretz Yisrael was abstained from in Babylon where the Sages prohibited it.

This concept of the Jewish community being a “mother” whose Torah must be respected has been extended to Jewish *minhagim* (customs) which developed even after Talmudic times. No *minhag* instituted by Torah leaders should be ignored, for all of them have important value for the spiritual security of the community for which they were initiated. The different circumstances of time and place are responsible for the variation of *minhagim* from community to community and from era to era. But each community should be sure to honor its “mother’s” Torah alongside that of its “Father”.

• *Chullin 93b*

## SUPERSTITION OR PROPHECY?

“What passage in Tanach did you learn today?” This is what Rabbi Yochanan, the leading Sage in Eretz Yisrael, asked a child before deciding whether to embark on a trip to Babylon. After discovering that there was much he could learn from the Sage Shmuel in Bablyon, he was anxious to visit him, but wanted to make sure that such a trip would be worthwhile.

“Now Shmuel is dead,” answered the child, quoting a passage (*Shmuel I 28:3*) recording the passing of the Prophet Shmuel. Rabbi Yochanan interpreted this as a sign from Heaven that the Sage Shmuel was no longer alive and therefore cancelled his trip.

Although the Torah prohibited (*Vayikra 19:26*) acting upon superstitious interpretations of omens (*nichush*), such as a black cat crossing one’s path as a sign of bad luck, we do find that an exception was made in regard to relying on the passage randomly quoted by a child. In addition to Rabbi Yochanan who regularly followed this practice, we find that Rabbi Sheishet (*Mesechta Bava Batra 68a*) refrained from doing something because of a passage he heard from a child.

There is much discussion in the commentaries (see Rambam - Laws of Idolatry I 1:4) regarding this issue. The simplest explanation is that the passage randomly quoted by a child was viewed by our Sages as a mini-prophecy and not a superstitious omen.

In the case of Rabbi Yochanan, however, it was not a message from Heaven that Shmuel was indeed dead – for in truth he was still alive – but rather that it was not deemed necessary for him to bother making such an arduous trip.

• *Chullin 95b*

## The Weekly Daf

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## MEZUZA

### From: Shua in Baltimore:

Dear Rabbi,

I was looking on the back of a mezuzah and saw some words written at the bottom. I was told that these words are written on the bottom of all mezuzahs, but when I asked what the words mean no one could tell me. Can you help me?

Dear Shua,

The mitzvah of mezuzah is to write two paragraphs from the Torah: “*Shema*” (Deut. 6:4-8) and “*V’haya*” (ibid. 11:13-21), and affix them to the doorpost of all gates, houses and rooms. Among other things, these two paragraphs proclaim G-d’s oneness, and command us to take the Torah’s words to heart and teach them to our children. The mezuzah must be rolled with the writing facing inward. A mezuzah rolled the other way, with the writing exposed, is halachically unacceptable.

The three words at the bottom of the mezuzah on the outer side of the parchment are “*Cuzu Bmucsz Cuzu*” — an altered form of the phrase “*Hashem Elokeynu Hashem*”, which means “G-d, our Lord, G-d”. It is actually a form of Gematria (numerology) where each letter is “raised” to the next letter. Thus, an Alef becomes a Bet, and a Bet becomes Gimel, and so on. Here, the letters for G-d’s name — yud, hey and vav, hey become caf, vav, zayin, vav (*cuzu*); and the letters for *Elokeynu* (alef, lamed, heh, yud, nun, vav) become bet, mem, vav, caf, samach, zayin (*bmucsz*). Rabbi Moshe Isserlis quotes the *Hagahot Maimoni* as the source for this custom. It is only a custom and a mezuzah without these words is still valid.

Maimonides mentions another custom that some people practiced. They wrote the names of angels or other holy names on the same side of the parchment as the two paragraphs of the *Shema*. He writes that these people “invalidate the mezuzah and make a mockery of

the mitzva”. The *Hagahot Maimoni* quotes other Sages who permitted such additions. However, we generally follow the ruling of Rabbi Moshe Isserlis who rules in agreement with Maimonides and forbids these other additions.

An erroneous custom that evolved regarding the mezuzah was to wear it as an amulet. One negative outcome of this practice is the desecration that occurs when, for instance, someone wears a mezuzah in an unclean or impure place. Fortunately, nowadays what is often worn around the neck and called a mezuzah isn’t really one, but simply a decorative case like those used to cover real *mezuzot*.

However, placing a valid mezuzah on the doorpost in fulfillment of the mitzva earns G-d’s special protection over one’s household. This idea is related by the Talmud in the following episode:

Onkelos, the brilliant nephew of the Roman Emperor Titus, converted to Judaism and became a disciple of the Sages. Hearing this, Titus sent a brigade of soldiers to bring him back to Rome. But when Onkelos engaged the soldiers in discussion and showed them the beauty of Torah, they converted to Judaism.

Titus then sent another brigade, instructing them not to speak to Onkelos. But after listening without even speaking, they too converted to Judaism. Finally Titus sent a third brigade and instructed them not even to listen to Onkelos. When they were leading him away, Onkelos placed his hand on the mezuzah and inquisitively inquired, “What is that?”

“You tell us,” the soldiers said. He replied, “Normally, a human king sits inside and his servants stand outside and guard him. But, with the Holy One Blessed be He, His servants are inside and He guards them from outside.” They too converted. Titus sent no more soldiers.

#### Sources:

- Rabbi Moshe Isserlis, *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 288:15*
- Maimonides, *Mishne Torah, “The Laws of Mezuzah” 5:4*
- *Hagahot Maimoni, ibid*
- *Avodah Zara 11*

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## WHERE TO SIT ON A SICK VISIT

**Question:** I recently visited a friend in the hospital. Noticing my difficulty in prolonged standing by his bed my friend suggested that I sit down. I hesitated to do so because I recalled once being told that this was improper. Can you tell me what is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** In his *Tehillim*, King David describes the attention that G-d pays to the sick person as "He supports him on his sick bed" (42:4).

From this our Talmudic Sages (*Mesechta Shabbat 12b*) concluded that the Divine Presence hovers over the bed of the sick person. We are also familiar with the way our Patriarch Yaakov showed his respect for his son Yosef after requesting that, as a powerful Egyptian potentate, he ensure that the burial of his father be in Eretz Yisrael. He bowed to him, reports the Torah (*Bereishet 47:31*), but he directed that bowing towards the head of his bed. Rashi explains that he did so because he wished to

simultaneously express his respect for the Divine Presence that hovers over the head of a sick person's bed.

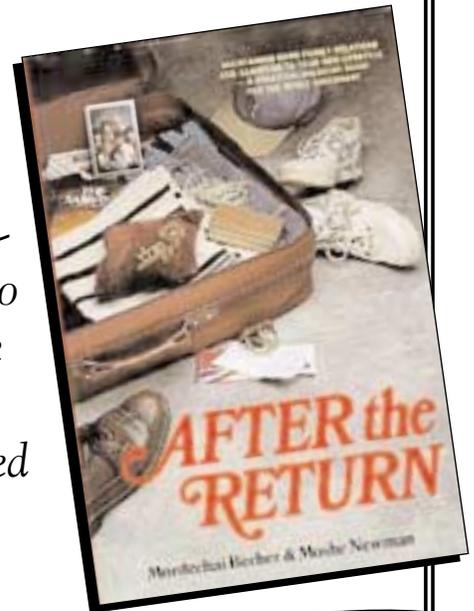
The halachic application of this is that if one visits a sick person he should not sit on a chair or bench in respect to the Divine Presence. The Rama (*Yoreh Deah 335:3*) rules that this applies only to a situation in which the sick person is lying on the floor so that if one sits on a chair he is assuming a position higher than the Divine Presence. In modern situations the sick person is lying on a bed so there is no problem with sitting on a chair near his bed.

One word of caution. Sometimes no chair is available in the hospital room and the sick person graciously invites his visitor to sit down on his bed. This invitation should be politely turned down because, even if accepting may not be technically considered sitting higher than the Divine Presence, sitting on a sick person's bed inevitably causes discomfort to him despite his good intentions.

*An old friend's wedding, an uncle's funeral, Passover at the family homestead — these are but a few of the challenging real-life events that are fraught with conflict and anxiety for the newly observant. After returning to the faith of their ancestors, many re-enter the secular world without the tools to respond to the inevitable challenges to their newly adopted set of beliefs.*

## *After the Return*

BY RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER AND RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN  
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