

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

ALL-NITER

“Until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count...” (23:18)

Staying up all night doesn't sound very religious, but there are several times during the Jewish Year when the custom is to burn the midnight oil until the sun peeps through the blinds.

Many people stay up after the Seder on Pesach until the time of the morning prayer to recount and analyze the great miracles of the Exodus. As the Haggada itself says: Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria and Rabbi Akiva stayed up all night talking about the Exodus until their *talmidim* (students) came to tell them that it was time to recite the morning *Shema Yisrael*.

On Yom Kippur, those with sufficient strength stay up all night in prayer and supplication atoning for their sins. On Hoshana Rabba, the time when the decrees of Yom Kippur are given over to those agents who will carry them out, there is a tradition to learn all night.

On the night of Shavuot too, there is a widely observed custom to stay up all night. The Sages of the Kabbala formulated an order of study call a *tikkun* (lit. “fixing”) for the night of Shavuot. This includes passages from the written Torah, the oral Torah, the mystical Zohar, as well as a list of all 613 *mitzvot*.

The Zohar commends those who stay awake in anticipation of receiving the Torah. The giving of the Torah was, as it were, the wedding of the Jewish People and the Torah, and so it is fitting that we should be engaged in preparing the ornaments of the bride the previous night.

Another reason: On that first Shavuot morning, there were some who overslept and had to be awoken to receive the Torah. In order to rectify this, we stay up.

But there is a deeper reason that we don't sleep on the night of Shavuot.

Sleep is the taste of death.

If fact, the Talmud tells us that sleep is 1/60th part of death. One part in 60 is the threshold of perception. Similarly, Shabbat is a “taste” of the World-to-Come. It's precisely 1/60th of the World-to-Come.

Sleep is the taste of death in this world. King David died on

Shavuot. But before he died, he never even tasted the taste of death, because he never fell into a deep sleep. Thus on the occasion of his *yartzeit* — the anniversary of his death — we avoid the “taste of death” by staying up all night.

The angel of death came to King David to try and take his life. But it had no power over him for he was immersed in learning Torah and Torah is the essence of the life-force in this world. The only way that the angel of death could take David's life from him was through cunning: He managed to distract David from his learning, and in that split second, he was able to take his life from him. So on this night of Shavuot, which is both the anniversary of the giving of the Torah and the end of King David's life, we stay awake all night and immerse ourselves in Torah study.

Torah breathes life into Man. But it was not always this way. When G-d first created Man, he was animated by G-d's utterance: “Let Us make Man”. It was the power of these words spoken by the Creator that gave Man the ability to live and breath and think and act.

However, this was only until the Jewish People stood at the foot of Sinai. When Hashem said “I am Hashem, your G-d” — the first commandment — the life-force that animated Man parted from the body and the entire Jewish People died. Miraculously their souls were put back into their bodies, but what animated them now was a different utterance. No longer their life-force derived from “Let Us make Man.” Now they were like new creations. Their inner essence was powered by “I am Hashem, your G-d.” From this moment, the Torah became the animating dynamic of the Jewish Soul.

And when the Mashiach, the scion of King David, arrives to herald the era of the revival of the dead, it will be the Torah, the dew of life, which will be the mechanism to awaken the body from its long sleep.

Then we will finally understand the words we have sung for so long:

“David, Melech Yisrael, chai v'kayam!”

“David, king of Israel, lives and endures!”

Sources: *Tehillim* 73:5, *Yalkut Shimoni*; *Talmud Berachot* 3b; *Tehillim* 19:9; *Book of Our Heritage*, Rabbi Eliahu Kitov, translated by Rabbi Nachman Bulman; *Time Pieces*, Rabbi Aaron Lopianski

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The *kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The *kohen gadol* (High Priest) may not attend the funeral even of his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *kohanim*. The physical irregularities that invalidate a *kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *kohanim*, may be eaten only by *kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight

days old and is free from any physical defects. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of Hashem by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the *omer* of barley is offered in the Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the menorah and baking the *lechem hapanim* in the Temple. A man blasphemes Hashem and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

ISRAEL Forever

CAN A HOLIDAY BE ANY DAY?

When one reflects on the many holidays in the Jewish calendar mentioned in this week's Torah portion, it is impossible not to compare the dates given for them and the dates which apply to secular "holidays".

Most of the American holidays have already been moved from their original dates to Monday so that there will be a "long weekend". Even in Israel we saw last month how the 5th of Iyar Independence Day was moved to a day later.

Such adjustments can be made when the purpose of the

holiday is to commemorate an historical event which is celebrated with special football games or barbecues. The Torah holidays are for the purpose of *reliving* historical experiences, not merely remembering them. Reliving is possible only through the Divine formula of sacrifices, prayers and *mitzvot* which observant Jews have utilized throughout the centuries to connect with their past.

It is such spiritual contact with the past which guarantees the future of Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE INSEPARABLE CONNECTION

The head of the Inquisition court of Spanish priests was about to sign another execution order against a Jew who had been caught by Torquemada's agents practicing his religion by praying in *tallit* and *tefillin*.

This time, however, his hand was unable to move. He tried again and again to pen the death sentence but to no avail. The shock of this paralysis sent his mind racing back to his childhood and he recalled being kidnapped by agents of the church from his Jewish home and being raised in a monastery to become a priest. His superior intelligence was quickly recognized and he was promoted from post to post until he became the chief judge of an ecclesiastical court trying Jews who refused to accept the

dictates of the church. He had been separated so long from his family that he hardly remembered them. But now it occurred to him that the Jew whose death sentence he found so difficult to sign might be his own father.

He quickly summoned the condemned prisoner to his chambers and asked him if he had a son who was kidnapped by church agents as a child. When the answer was affirmative, he broke into tears and embraced the man in chains, crying "Father, Father!"

Not only did he acquit the man he discovered as his father, but he soon found a way to abandon the church and return to his Jewish roots.

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PARSHA Q&A?

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *kohen gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. If the daughter of a *kohen* marries a “zar” she may no longer eat *terumah*. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a *nedavah*?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of Hashem?
12. Apart from Shabbat, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *etrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week’s Questions!

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

1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its mother on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of Nissan.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be complete, because according to the Torah a day starts at nightfall.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidat* (binding of) Yitzchak.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemot* 2:12).
20. 24:21 - Death.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

KIRYAT SEFER — THE CITY OF THE BOOK

Although the Israeli government insists on calling it “Modi’in Elit” everyone refers to this relatively new community as Kiryat Sefer.

The name has its source in the Tanachic description of the fierce battle waged by Kalev, at the head of



the Tribe of Yehuda, to conquer the Canaanite city which was to bear the name Kiryat Sefer.

The modern city of Kiryat Sefer is located about a half-hour’s distance from Jerusalem and is fast becoming the third largest observant community in Eretz Yisrael.

THE BLOOD LINK

Eating the flesh taken from an animal while it is still alive is forbidden by the Torah passage that links it to the forbidden consumption of blood: “Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you may not eat the life with the meat.” (*Devarim 12:23*)

The significance of this link in determining which forms of living things are covered by this ban is a matter of debate. Rabbi Elazar extended the ban to all cattle, beasts and fowl, both those considered pure and permitted for consumption after *shechita* and those considered impure and forbidden for consumption. His understanding is that since the Torah linked this ban to the ban on blood, it applies to every form of life whose blood is forbidden for consumption.

The other Sages, however, limited the ban on eating the flesh of an animal before its death to those species whose flesh is permitted after *shechita*. “You shall not eat the flesh along with the lifeblood”, they understand, is the Torah’s way of restricting this ban to flesh which may be consumed when the lifeblood has already been shed, thus eliminating those impure species whose flesh is forbidden even after *shechita*.

Should one eat the flesh taken from a non-kosher animal or fowl before *shechita*, he will be guilty of violating only one Torah prohibition according to these Sages, and two according to Rabbi Elazar. Rabbi Meir is even more restrictive, limiting the prohibition of eating flesh from a living creature to cattle alone. This position is based on the fact that the passage introducing this law (*ibid. 12:2*) speaks of slaughtering “of your herd and your flock.”

This debate on how far the ban on eating the flesh from a living creature goes applies only to Jews for whom there is a distinction between kosher and non-kosher species. For the non-Jew obligated by the Noachide commandment “But flesh with its life, which is its blood, you shall not eat.” (*Bereishet 9:4*) there is no such distinction, and he is prohibited to consume the flesh taken from any animal life while it is still alive.

• *Chullin 102a*

THE SIX-HOUR WAIT

In order to safeguard Jews against violating the Torah prohibition against eating meat cooked in milk our Sages instituted a ban against eating dairy products right after meat ones. The separation between the consumption of the two is defined by the Sage Mar Ukva as the time elapsing between one meal and another which the Shulchan Aruch

(*Yoreh Deah 89:1*) rules is six hours.

Two different reasons are given by the commentaries for the length of time and for why it applies only to milk after meat and not vice versa. One is that the juices and flavor from meat linger for a long time after it is eaten. According to this reason, if one did not actually eat the meat but only chewed it to soften it for a baby, there is no need to wait before eating dairy. There is no need for concern that meat has lingered between the teeth, but if it is found there it must be removed even after six hours.

Rambam (*Laws of Forbidden Foods 9:28*), however, offers another reason based on a dialogue in our *gemara*. Rabbi Acha bar Yosef asked Rabbi Chisda about the status of meat lodged between one’s teeth. His response was to refer him to a passage in the Torah (*Bamidbar 11:33*) that describes the Heavenly punishment that already befell the Jews for sinfully complaining about their lack of meat “while the meat was still between their teeth.” This is interpreted as an indication that meat retains its status after being chewed and the six-hour waiting period is required because of our concern that meat may be lingering between the teeth, and time is needed for it to lose its status as meat.

According to this second approach one must wait six hours even if he only chewed food for a child. But if he found meat between his teeth after six hours, there would be no need to remove it because it has lost its status of meat. This leniency is ruled out by the first approach that interprets the response of Rabbi Chisda as extending the status of meat indefinitely to any particles between the teeth and limiting the impact of the six-hour wait to meat that has been swallowed with only the taste remaining.

The halachic ruling is to follow the stricter dimensions of both opinions – to wait six hours (or the length of time according to varying customs) even after only chewing meat, and to remove meat from between the teeth even after six hours.

• *Chullin 105a*

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LAG B'OMER

From: Wendy in Westcliff, UK

Dear Rabbi,

When counting Sefirat HaOmer, some people say La'Omer and some say B'Omer. Which is right? Doesn't the fact that everybody says "Lag B'Omer" prove that "B'Omer" is correct and not "La'Omer?"

Dear Wendy,

Rabbi Nachman Bulman, of blessed memory, explained that the custom to call the day "Lag B'Omer" is based on the opinion of the main proponents of saying "B'Omer" — the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria) and the Sephardi Kabbalists. Celebrating Lag B'Omer with bonfires, music and dancing is largely rooted in their kabbalistic teachings and traditions.

However, many halachic authorities say that "La'Omer" is correct. Since both ways are valid, there is no reason to

change one's custom. In fact, even saying "today is day such and such" — omitting any reference to the "Omer" — fulfills the mitzva.

By the way, not everyone calls it "Lag B'Omer." The Shulchan Aruch refers to it as "Lag La'Omer."

This reminds me of a story:

Two Jews argued during their entire plane ride to Hawaii regarding the correct pronunciation of their destination.

Upon landing in Honolulu, they asked the first native they met, "Is it pronounced Hawaii or Havaii?"

"Havaii," he replied.

"Thank you," they said.

"You're welcome," answered the native.

Sources:

- Shulchan Oruch, Orach Chaim 489:1, 493:2
- Mishna Berura 489:8

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

VISITING A SICK ENEMY

Question: Should one pay a sick visit to someone whom he hates as a mitzva of *bikur cholim* and as an exercise of overcoming his negative feelings, or can such a visit be counterproductive?

Answer: This question has already been dealt with in *Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 335)* where Rama rules that one should neither visit a sick enemy nor pay a condolence visit when he is in mourning lest his visit be interpreted as an expression of joy at seeing the sorrow of the one being visited and thus causing him pain rather than comfort.

Of course this depends on the degree of the enmity

between the two parties. But another consideration has been raised by some of the halachic authorities. There is the possibility that the sick person may misconstrue the surprise appearance of his enemy as a sign that he must be mortally ill, thus causing his condition to deteriorate because of the psychological impact.

Perhaps the best idea is the one suggested by the *Aruch Hashulchan*. A message should be sent to the patient (or the mourner) asking him if he would welcome a visit from his enemy. If consent is granted the above-mentioned fears are no longer relevant and a visit is very much in order.

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Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Re: Moshe in the Haggada (Pesach Ohrnet)

I must point out an important omission from your response to “Marsha in NYC,” who asked why the name of Moshe is not included in the Haggada. Your response referred to the much greater role of G-d. However, the “absence” of Moshe’s name is a common misstatement: His name is indeed mentioned, though only once. It comes after the listing of the Ten Plagues, in the paragraph introduced by Rabbi Yossi HaGlili. Once is not much, but it’s more than zero. Chag Kasher v’Sameach to all.

• David S. in PA

and it is the only time Moshe’s name is mentioned (interestingly, it is only mentioned with the appendage “avdo”), the narrative of the hagadda can still be described as not containing Moshe’s name.

Ohr.edu on the “Go” – Avant, that is...

I just wanted to let you know how valuable I find your AvantGo Ohr.edu channel. It’s convenient and easy, and this way I carry your words of Torah with me nearly wherever I go, with my Win CE portable device.

• D. K. in Boston, MA

Ohrnet replies:

You are right! It is interesting to note that in many haggadot the words “Vayiru ha’am...Moshe Avdo” do not appear at all, and in others they appear in parentheses.

Even so, seeing that it is a direct quotation from the Torah,

Prayer for a Speedy and Complete Recovery

Please daven for Moshe Chaim ben Balyla Sheina Shifra, a three year old boy having heart surgery. He will need tefillas for the next 3-4 months. Many thanks,

• C. S.

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

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