

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHIOT NETZAVIM-VAYELECH-HA'AZINU · 5765-5766 · 2005 · VOL. 12 NO. 52

S P E C I A L C H A G I M I S S U E

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### Nitzavim

## THE TWILIGHT ZONE

*"...Rather, the matter is very near to you – in your mouth, and your heart – to perform it." (30:14)*

A true story. Few things are as fascinating to the modern mind as the occult. In spite of modern society's most treasured conviction that ultimately all phenomena are reducible to scientific equations, there lurks the lingering feeling that there is indeed a twilight zone ultimately beyond human knowledge and comprehension.

Not long ago in Southern California a group of people were invited to witness the powers of a certain witch. We're not talking here about a fairground charlatan; it seems that this woman had genuine access to the powers of impurity that are the basis of witchcraft.

She started off her presentation by inviting someone from the audience to ask her a question whose answer could have been known to none save the person himself. All hands shot up in the hall and she chose one at random. "Tell me what happened to me five years ago!" The woman closed her eyes for a moment, paused and replied confidently, "Five years ago, you were in a serious car crash in which you lost a kidney. Is that correct?" The man gasped and said, "That's amazing!" Without batting an eyelid, she selected another volunteer, "How much do I have in the bank?" Again she closed her eyes, "About 2½ million, give or take a few thousand." Again, the volunteer's face registered total astonishment. Slowly she worked her way around the room, revealing people's hiddenmost secrets, astounding her audience.

In the middle of the crowd sat an Orthodox Jew. What he was doing at this particular gathering is not clear to me but there he was. He too had his hand raised. The witch invited questions from the person to his right and to his

left, above him and below him, but she seemed almost deliberately to be missing him out. People in the audience began pointing in the direction of the Jew, indicating that she should take his question. Eventually, there was no one else in the audience left for her to question save the Jew. There was nothing she could do. With great reluctance she turned to face the Jew. As she opened her mouth to address him the color seemed to leave her face; she steadied herself against the podium and then collapsed. People sitting in the front rows of the audience, including the Orthodox Jew, hurried to revive her. Slowly she returned to consciousness. As she opened her eyes she saw a bearded face looking down into hers. "Get him away from me! Get him away from me!" she screamed. She started to heave and then promptly vomited all over the floor.

We have no idea of the power of spirituality that we create when we do a mitzvah.

We don't feel it. We don't recognize it. We make a blessing over an apple and eat the apple. Nothing seems to have changed. In fact, however, we have drawn down around us an invisible aura of holiness. We have become elevated and closer to G-d. We are more spiritual and the world is a more spiritual place. We don't recognize it, but someone whose essence is locked into the dark side recognizes it immediately and is repelled by it.

If this aura surrounds us when we do any mitzvah, think of how much holiness we can bring down when we do the mitzvah of *Teshuva*, of returning to G-d and seeking to bring Him back into our lives! This mitzvah of *Teshuva* predates the Creation itself. When we refocus those parts of our lives away from feeding the "other side" and plug them back into the true Source, the "faces of powers of darkness" must turn to a bilious green!

• *Based on the Sfat Emet, and a story heard in the name of Rabbi Leib Kelemen*

*continued on page twelve*

**Nitzavim**

On the last day of his life, Moshe gathers all the people, young and old, lowly and exalted, men and women, in a final initiation. The covenant includes not only those who are present, but even those generations yet unborn. Moshe admonishes the people again to be extremely vigilant against idol worship because, in spite of having witnessed the abominations of Egypt, there will always be the temptation to experiment with foreign philosophies as a pretext for immorality. Moshe describes the desolation of the Land of Israel which will result from failure to heed Hashem's *mitzvot*. Descendants of that generation and foreigners alike will remark on the singular desolation of the Land and its apparent inability to be sown or to produce crops. The conclusion will be apparent to all — the Jewish People have forsaken the One who protects them in favor of powerless idols. Moshe promises, however, that the people will eventually repent after both the blessings and the curses have been fulfilled. However assimilated they will have become among the nations, eventually Hashem will bring them back to *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe tells the people to remember that fulfilling the Torah is not an impossibility; rather it's within the grasp of every Jew. The *parsha* dramatically concludes with Moshe comparing the Jewish People's choice to follow the Torah to a choice between life and death. Moshe exhorts the people to choose life.

**Vayelech**

On the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent bidding farewell to his people, encouraging them to "keep the faith." Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, Hashem is with them. He summons Yehoshua, and, in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as leader of the Jewish People. Thus, he strengthens Yehoshua's status. Moshe teaches the mitzvah of *hakhel*: Every seven years on the first of the intermediate days of Succot, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather at the Temple to hear the king read from the Book of Devarim. The sections read deal with faithfulness to Hashem, the covenant and reward and punishment. Hashem tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should summon Yehoshua to stand with him

in the *Mishkan*, where Hashem will teach Yehoshua. Hashem tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods. Hashem will then completely "hide His face," so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, hunted by all. Hashem instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song — *Ha'azinu* — which will serve as "witness" against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to *Bnei Yisrael*. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah and instructs the *levi'im* to place it to the side of the Holy Ark, so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll different from the original, for there will always be a reference copy.

**Ha'azinu**

Almost all of *Ha'azinu* is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the Heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that Hashem "pulls the strings" of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. Hashem's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance and for defeating their enemies. But this physical bounty leads the people to become over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods and indulge in all kinds of depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental — that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His own enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

OHR SOMAYACH INTERNATIONAL  
joins Ohr Somayach South Africa in mourning the passing of

**RABBI CYRIL HARRIS** ז"ל

*Former Chief Rabbi of South Africa*

A great Jewish leader and devoted supporter of Ohr Somayach in South Africa  
and extend condolences to his family and to the South African Jewish Community

- When speaking is considered doing
- Activities permitted for mitzvah purposes
- Taking a head start on a new week
- Preparing the dead for burial
- The perpetual cycle of poverty and charity
- What comes – and goes – with age
- Post-mortem experiences
- Stuck on the road with a purse as Shabbat enters
- The problem with an animal carrying for you
- Unloading an animal and touching it
- Feeding animals you own and those you don't own
- *Mazal*, predestination and horoscopes
- The lifesaving power of *tzedaka*
- The animal that died on Shabbat and its usability to feed dogs
- Annulling vows and shuttering windows

## THE POWER OF TZEDAKA

Two stories are told in our *gemara* about the lifesaving power of *tzedaka* which upset the predictions of fatal horoscopes.

A heathen astrologer pointed out to the Sage Shmuel a man who was on his way with others to do some reed chopping, and predicted that he would not return alive because a snake would kill him. Shmuel countered that if the man was a Jew he had a chance to survive. When the man indeed returned the astonished astrologer checked his bag of reeds and found in it a snake which the fellow had unknowingly chopped in half. Shmuel inquired of him what he did to merit this Heavenly rescue. 'It is the custom of the group in which I work,' he explained, "that each day every member con-

tributes some bread to a general collection which all then share. Today one fellow had no bread to contribute and I decided to save him from embarrassment. I assumed responsibility for making the collection and when I reached him I pretended that I was receiving his contribution while I was actually putting in some more of my own."

After pointing out that it was this mitzvah that saved his life, Shmuel publicly proclaimed that when King Shlomo promised that "Tzedaka saves from death" (*Mishlei* 10:2) he was referring not only to a protection against a horrible death but against death itself.

A similar incident concerned Rabbi Akiva who was told by astrologers that his daughter would be killed by a snake on her wedding day. When it turned out that her life was saved by her inadvertently sticking a golden decorative pin into the eye of a snake, her father asked her what her merit was. "The evening of the wedding," she explained, "a poor man came knocking on the door in search of food. Since no one heard him because they were busy celebrating, I gave him my own portion of the wedding feast."

The public proclamation of Rabbi Akiva was exactly the same as the one made by Shmuel. Both of them were building on an observation made by Rabbi Yochanan (*Bava Batra* 10a) regarding the fact that the phrase "Tzedaka saves from death" appears twice (*Mishlei* 10:2 and 11:4). His explanation is that *tzedaka* saves both from a horrible death and from the suffering of *gehinnom*. What both Shmuel and Rabbi Akiva learned from their own experiences is that not only does *tzedaka* save one from unnatural death at the time designated for his demise, but even serves to postpone the date of death itself.

• *Shabbat* 156b

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Repent the day before you die and since a man does not know on which day he will die, he will repent today lest he die tomorrow and thus all of his days will be filled with repentance."

*מזל טוב*

The Ohr Somayach Family wishes you and yours and all of Israel a year filled with happiness, health and peace.

- How high the *koreh* can be to permit carrying in a *movuy*
- How high the *schach* can be for a kosher *succa*
- How many *tefachim* (handbreaths) in an *amah* (cubit)
- The source for all halachic amounts and measurements
- How much of the *movuy* surface must be adjusted if too high or too low
- The *lechi* used for permitting carrying in a *movuy*
- When the *movuy* is open on both ends to a public thoroughfare
- How a winding *movuy* can be made permissible for carrying
- Ruling like Beit Hillel or Beit Shamai or both
- A *movuy* bordered by the sea and a garbage dump
- Does the *koreh* serve as a virtual wall or as a warning?

## HOW HIGH THE KOREH

A *movuy* is a street into which open a number of courtyards and it is bounded by a broad public thoroughfare with heavy pedestrian traffic which constitutes a *reshut harabim*. While it is forbidden by Torah law to carry in the *reshut harabim*, it is permitted to carry in the *movuy*. By rabbinical law, however, it is forbidden to carry in the *movuy* as a safeguard against one's continuing that carrying out into the *reshut harabim*. If one places a *koreh* (beam) on top of the entrance from the *reshut harabim* to the *movuy* or a *lechi* (pole) by one of the walls of that entrance, this serves as a

reminder to those in the *movuy* of its limitation and makes it permissible to carry in that *movuy* on Shabbat.

How high that *koreh* can be to serve this purpose is a matter of dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and the other Sages. While these Sages contend that the *koreh* must not be higher than 20 *amot* (cubits), Rabbi Yehuda's position is that it can be much higher.

The same dispute is found in regard to how high the *schach* covering of a *succa* may be above the floor of the *succa*. In both cases the reason for the limitation of 20 *amot*, says the Sage Rabbah, is that a person's eye does not readily look up to something beyond that height, and it is crucial in both cases to assure that attention will be captured.

Why was it necessary, however, for both a *mishna* in our *mesechta* and one in *Mesechta Succa* to mention this dispute if it is based on the same principle in both cases? The answer given by the *gemara* is that if the position of the Sages would have been mentioned only here we might have assumed that one would not notice a very high beam when he is only passing by but would become aware of the *schach* on the roof of the *succa* he is sitting in for a length of time. The *mishna* in *Mesechta Succa* (2a) therefore stresses the need for the *schach* to be within the range of ready view in accordance with G-d's command for us to dwell in *succot* "so that your generations will know (be aware of through seeing) that I caused you to dwell in *succot* when I took you out of the land of Egypt" (*Vayikra* 23:43).

• *Eruvin* 2a

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### TAP ON THE SHOULDER

Another baby was on the way to the Bnei Brak family already blessed with more children than their modest apartment could accommodate. When the expectant mother pointed out that there was absolutely no space for another bed, her Kollel (Torah study group) husband declared that he would ask his father for help in acquiring a larger home.

"What can you father possibly do more for us than he has already done?" challenged his wife. "You know he has no money left for such a purpose."

"I didn't mean my human father," explained the righteous husband, "but rather my Father in Heaven."

He traveled to Jerusalem and poured out his heart in prayer at the Kotel (some call it "The Weeping Wall"). Someone standing nearby saw the tears pouring from his eyes, tapped him on the shoulder and asked him what the cause of his prayerful outburst was. At first our hero simply responded that this was a private matter between him and

his Heavenly Father and continued his tearful prayers. The curious bystander once again asked why he was praying with such fervor. Upon hearing the plight of the worshiper he immediately took him to a real estate office and wrote a check for a larger apartment.

When this overjoyed *talmid chacham* scholar told his fellow scholars in the Kollel how his prayers were so miraculously answered, they decided to go as a group to the Kotel and pray for their own needs of larger living spaces. But when the anxiously awaited tap on the shoulder came to each of them, it was merely a beggar asking for a donation!

Brokenhearted they returned to their Kollel and asked their leader why they were not favored with the miracle of their colleague.

"You went to the Kotel looking for that mysterious human benefactor," he explained, "while your colleague went there looking for his Father!"

- When the rule of *lavud* (less than a certain distance considered nonexistent) is applicable
- Carrying in the area parallel to the *lechi*
- When the *lechi* is apparent to those inside the *movuy* but not to those outside and vice versa
- How wide the entrance to the *movuy* can be and how this width can be reduced
- The leather toilet seat and the issue of the ratio between the covered and open areas at entrance to *movuy*
- Function of the *tzurat hapetach* (virtual doorway)
- The different opinions on whether more than a *lechi* or *koreh* are necessary
- How much of a courtyard wall must remain for it to still be considered private domain
- The hanging *mechitzah* (virtual wall)
- When neither *lechi* or *koreh* are necessary
- The greatness of Rabbi Meir as scholar and scribe
- Why we rule like Beit Hillel versus Beit Shammai
- The required size and solidity of the *koreh*
- The pool of King Shlomo and the regular *mikveh*
- The required height and thickness of the *lechi*
- The material from which a *lechi* can be made
- The self-made *lechi*

## SITTING IN BUT BEING OUT

In order to fulfill the mitzvah of dwelling in a *succa* during the Succot Holiday week, it is not sufficient to have a *succa* of the proper size, height and covering mandated by the Torah. It is the position of the Sages of Beit Shammai that

there is a requirement by Rabbinic Law to also have a table for dining in the *succa* for if one sits in the *succa* while his table is in his house, there is the danger that he will inadvertently be drawn out of the *succa* and into the house. The Sages of Beit Hillel are of the opinion that no such requirement exists.

A story is told in our *gemara* about a visit made on Succot by an earlier generation of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai Sages to Rabbi Yochanan ben Hochohanet whom they found sitting in his *succa* with his table in the house in accordance with the position of Beit Hillel. The Beit Shammai Sages reprimanded him and informed him that if this was his constant practice, he never in his life fulfilled the mitzvah of dwelling in a *succa*.

The simple reading of their statement is that even though he only failed to adhere to a requirement of Rabbinic Law, he forfeited his fulfillment of the Torah Law as well. A parallel to this is found in the words of Rabbi Yonah of Gerundi in *Mesechta Brachot* (2a). Even though the Torah command to recite the Shema at night can be fulfilled throughout the entire night, the Sages decreed that it must be done before midnight so that one would not put it off and fall asleep without reciting it. It is the position of this commentary that the dispute between the Sages and Rabbi Gamliel in the first  *Mishna in Berachot* is whether reciting the Shema after midnight is a fulfillment of the Torah mitzvah at all. Although the *halacha* is like Rabbi Gamliel that one can still recite the Shema after midnight, we see here a position of the Sages who oppose him that failure to comply with a Rabbinic Law requirement can invalidate fulfillment of the Torah mitzvah.

## ISRAEL Forever

## WHAT A WAY TO START THE YEAR!

Tens of thousands of people crowded into New York's Times Square breathlessly waiting for the magic moment of twelve o'clock midnight so that they can jubilantly hail the new year.

Liquor flowing freely in a smoke-filled ballroom with the band playing "Auld Lang Syne".

This is the way to start the year!?

Tens of thousands of Jews in synagogues throughout the world breathlessly waiting to hear the sound of the shofar which will arouse them to make new year's resolutions to become better Jews in the year to come.

This is the way to start the year!

A new year means a new chance. "Ring out the old, ring in the new" means for us the repentance of mistakes made

in the year gone by, and a commitment to not repeat them in the one that just began. Rosh Hashana, when we express in shofar, prayer and custom, our total allegiance to the Master of the Universe is followed by Yom Kippur, when He enables us to cleanse ourselves of all our sins. Then comes Succot, when He asks us to live in temporary homes which remind us of the temporary nature of life in this world and the need to make the most of it.

This is a season of holidays for Jews everywhere. But for Jews in Israel who are faced by so many problems of security and economy, it is certainly a season for waking up to our true destiny as a chosen people who will inherit Israel forever.

May we all be inscribed for a good year.

- A caravan camp's fence for carrying on Shabbat
- When the unfenced area is equal to the fenced one
- A fence made of vertical ropes or horizontal poles
- Dispensations for soldiers in war
- Why hands are washed after a meal
- The *pasei bira'ot* (virtual fence) around a water hole in a *reshut harabim*
- Creation of Adam and his mate
- Ladies first?
- Praise for the righteous and punishment for the sinners
- The components of the *pasei bira'ot* and distance between them
- Standing in a private domain and drinking in a public one, and vice versa
- Eretz Yisrael, Babylon and everywhere else – the differences between them
- The mysterious passages and their message about the scope of Torah
- The importance of the Oral Law and the greatness of the Jewish People
- The *reshut harabim* passing through the *pasei bira'ot* and other private domains

safeguard which King Shlomo created in order to ensure that Jews would not carry from a public domain to a private one, or vice versa, in violation of the Torah prohibition against doing so.

This initiative of Shlomo is hinted at in the terms used by a passage in *Kohelet* (12:9) which has the same spelling as the Hebrew word for an ear or a handle. The Sage Ulla quoted Rabbi Elazar's explanation of this comparison of the decree of Shlomo to a handle in this manner:

"The Torah was like a basket without a handle until Shlomo came along and affixed handles to it."

Rashi explains that by establishing the need for an *eiruv* to carry from one private domain to another, and through other rabbinical decrees which he made, Shlomo enabled Jews to hold on to the *mitzvot* of the Torah. Just as it is extremely difficult to take hold of a basket without a handle, so too would observance of the Torah mitzvah be difficult to adhere to without the support of the rabbinical decree.

The other decrees of Shlomo – washing hands before eating bread and a prohibition on marrying certain relatives which were not included in the Torah's ban – are examples of all rabbinical decrees whose purpose, Rashi explains, was to enable Jews to hold on to the *mitzvot* of Torah by distancing them from the probability of sin.

These decrees are a fulfillment of the responsibility of Torah leaders which was so graphically described by the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah* (Members of the Great Assembly) as "putting a fence around the Torah" (*Mesechta Avot* 1:1).

• *Eruvin* 21b

## HANDLES AND FENCES

The laws of *eirubin* regarding carrying from one private domain to another on Shabbat, discussed in such detail in our *gemara*, are not of Torah origin. They are the

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Any house in which the sound of Torah study is heard at night will never be destroyed."

• Rabbi Yirmiah ben Elazar - *Eirubin* 18b

"He who pursues honor will find that honor eludes him; he who flees from honor will find honor pursuing him."

• Sages of Beit Shammai - *Eirubin* 13b

"The pot of partners is neither hot nor cold."

• A folk-saying quoted by the Sage Rava of Parzakia - *Eruvin* 3a

## AN INTRODUCTION TO A NEW YEAR AND A NEW FEATURE

With the beginning of a New Year – 5766 – we begin a new feature of Love of the Land. After presenting the praises of Eretz Yisrael found in Torah and Talmud and the places, people, names and legends connected with the Jewish Homeland, we now present the *mitzvot* which are exclusive to the Holy Land.

The importance of focusing on these *mitzvot* is expressed in what our Talmudic Sages stated about the motive of our revered teacher Moshe for praying so intensely for the privilege of entering Eretz Yisrael. It was not out of a desire to enjoy the fruits of the Land or any of the physical pleasures it offered. “There are *mitzvot*,” he said in his prayers, “which one can only perform in Eretz Yisrael. Please give me the opportunity to enter the Land and perform them.”

### TERUMAH

**Torah Source** - “You shall give him (the *kohen*) the first (portion) of your grain, your wine and your oil.” (Devarim 18:4)

**Fulfillment** – No set amount is specified by the Torah but our Sages did set a standard of one fiftieth of the produce which must be given to the *kohen*. Rabbinic Law extends the obligations of *Terumah* to all agricultural products.

**Reason**- It is proper for a man to remember his



Creator for the blessing He has bestowed upon him and to therefore set some part of it aside for His sake which he gives to His servants who are constantly involved in sacred service even before humans have any benefit from it. Even though this could be achieved by giving the *kohen* even one kernel of grain from the entire stockpile, our Sages insisted on giving a more substantial percentage in order to greater stimulate the owner who might not pay attention to parting with a trifling amount. (*Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 507*)

## WHAT 'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

### REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

## CHOOSING A SYNAGOGUE

**Question:** There are two synagogues in my neighborhood, both of them equally Orthodox and both having services with the same Ashkenazi text. For personal reasons I prefer to pray in the one a little farther from my home. A neighbor of mine recently told me that there is resentment among the members of the nearer synagogue to my avoiding their place of worship as if it is not good enough for me. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Rabbi Yochanan (*Mesechta Sotah 22a*) states that he learned the importance of striving to gain greater Heavenly reward from a widow who came from a distant neighborhood to pray in his synagogue. When he asked her why she did not pray in one of her local synagogues, she replied that she wished to gain a reward for the extra steps she had to take to get to his place.

While you may be getting a reward for those extra steps, and this is a factor in choosing your synagogue (*Orach Chaim 90:11, Magen Avraham 22*), it is not the only

consideration in choosing a synagogue in which to regularly pray. Preference should be given to one in which there are more worshipers, unless there is so much noise there which interferes with hearing the repetition of the service and the reading of the Torah (*Mishneh Berurah 90:29*). There may be other factors which are responsible for your “personal reasons” in skipping the nearer synagogue, but you should make an effort to dispel any suspicion of snubbing it, perhaps by making an occasional appearance.

You certainly do not wish to be seen by your neighbors as the personification of the legendary Jew who was stranded for years on a desert island following a shipwreck. When a ship finally arrived to take him from the island he gave his rescuers a tour of all that he had built by himself, including a home and two synagogues. When asked why he needed the second synagogue when there was certainly enough room in the first to accommodate a lone worshiper, “That one,” he replied, “is the synagogue I don’t go to!”

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Nitzavim

1. Why did Moshe gather the Jewish People together on the day of his death?
2. Who are the wood-cutters and water-drawers mentioned in verse 29:10?
3. How do two parties “pass” into a covenant?
4. What is the connection between the verse “*Atem nitzavim*” and the curses in the previous parsha?
5. Why can't Hashem disassociate himself from the Jewish People?
6. How many curses were listed in *Parshat Ki Tavo*?
7. Which two leaders followed Moshe's example and assembled the people at the end of their rule?
8. With whom did Moshe make the covenant and oath?
9. Why did the Jewish People see only idols of wood and stone in Egypt?
10. What is meant by the punishment of “adding drunkenness to thirst (29:18)”?

### Vayelech

11. How old was Moshe when he died?
12. Why was Moshe unable “to go out and come in” (31:2)?
13. What happened to Moshe's Torah knowledge on the day of his death?
14. How did Moshe foresee the relationship between Yehoshua and the Elders?
15. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua concerning his relationship with the Elders?
16. How often does the *hakhel* (assembly of the Jewish People) take place?
17. Why does the Torah call the year of the *hakhel* the “*shemita* year”?
18. What sections of the Torah does the king read at the *hakhel*?
19. In what physical location does the king read at the *hakhel*?
20. Why were the men commanded to come to the gathering?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Nitzavim-Vayelech's Questions!

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

1. 29:9 - To initiate them into the covenant with Hashem.
2. 29:10 - Canaanites who came to join the Jewish People.
3. 29:11 - The two parties place objects in two parallel lines and pass between them.
4. 29:12 - The Jewish People asked, “Who can survive such curses?” Moshe comforted them, saying, “You've done a lot to anger Hashem, and yet — ‘*Atem nitzavim*’ — Hashem didn't destroy you ...you're still standing before Him.”
5. 29:12 - Because He told them He wouldn't and because He swore to the *Avot* (Patriarchs) that the Jewish People would always remain His nation.
6. 29:12 - Ninety-eight.
7. 29:12 - Yehoshua and Shmuel.
8. 29:14 - With the people standing before him and all future generations.
9. 29:16 - Because these were exposed openly. The idols of gold and silver, however, were locked away by their owners for fear of theft.
10. 29:18 - Even unintentional sins will be considered by Hashem as if they were committed intentionally. “Drunkenness” refers to sins committed unintentionally. “Thirst” refers to sins committed intentionally.
11. 31:2 - Exactly 120.
12. 31:2 - Hashem did not let him because the power of leadership was being transferred to Yehoshua.
13. 31:2 - The well-springs of knowledge were closed up for him.
14. 31:7 - He foresaw that they would work in partnership.
15. 31:7 - That he alone would be the leader — for there can only be one leader in each generation.
16. 31:10 - Once every seven years, in the first year of the new *shemita* period.
17. 31:10 - Because the laws of *shemita* still applied to the harvest.
18. 31:11 - From Devarim: 1:1-6:9; 11:13-21; and 14:22-28:69.
19. 31:11 - On a wooden platform erected in the *azara*.
20. 31:12 - In order to learn.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Ha'azinu

1. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses?
2. How is the Torah like rain?
3. How is Hashem "faithful without injustice"?
4. Why is Hashem called "tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did Hashem bring upon the world?
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did Hashem separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"?
9. How is Hashem's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, Hashem says "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
11. How does the idea of "chillul Hashem" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When Hashem overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When Hashem punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will Hashem's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People?
16. On what day was *Ha'azinu* taught to the Jewish People?
17. Verse 32:44 calls Yehoshua "Hoshea." Why?
18. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
19. Why did Hashem tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon?
20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Ha'azinu's Questions!

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

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Elyahu "My Father." (*Melachim II 2:12*)
7. 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avot*.
9. 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings."
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. Hashem would not let His name be desecrated like this.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to Hashem.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys Hashem's commands, all the more so should we.

## WHY NO HALLEL ON ROSH HASHANA?

**From: Arthur in Chicago**

*Dear Rabbi,  
Since in addition to being the beginning of the New Year, Rosh Hashana is also the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei, why don't we say Hallel on Rosh Hashana as on other days of Rosh Chodesh?*

Dear Arthur,

Good question.

Since Rosh Hashana is the Day of Judgment, each person should feel anxiety and awe. He should guard against levity and anything that distracts him from the awe of judgment.

So great is awe of judgment among Israel on Rosh Hashana that despite it's being a festival, they do not recite the *Hallel* song of praise recited on the New Moon or festivals. For *Hallel* is said only with a joy-filled heart, whereas during the days of judgment there should be more fear and trembling in Jewish hearts than rejoicing.

Thus our sages taught, "Said the angels before G-d, Lord of the Universe, why does Israel fail to utter song before you during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? He replied, When the King sits on the throne of judgment and the books of life and death are before him, can Israel utter song?" (Rosh Hashana 32).

Nevertheless, a person should not be saddened by fear of judgment. One should have a haircut, wash, and wear special clothes in honor of the festival. A husband should also give his wife a gift in honor of the day, and buy treats for the children. This demonstrates our faith that G-d will show us favor.

So we find that when Ezra the Scribe read the Torah before the assembly gathered on Rosh Hashana, and all the people wept on hearing the admonitions of the Torah, Ezra and Nehemiah said to them, "Do not mourn and do not weep. Go eat delicacies and drink sweet drinks and send gifts to whoever has no food, for the day is sacred to our Lord..." (Nehemiah 6:10).

Similarly, our sages taught: "Usually, a person who has a judgment pending against him dresses in black and neglects his appearance in worry of the outcome. Israel however is different. They dress in white, they eat, drink and rejoice in the knowledge that G-d will perform miracles in their behalf [and forgive them]" (Yerushalmi, Rosh Hashana, ch. 1).

## PURE PRAYER ON YOM KIPPUR

**From: Anat in Israel**

*Dear Rabbi,  
In connection with Yom Kippur, I have seen the term "tefillah zakah". It seems to mean "pure prayer". Is this a general way in which we are to pray, or does it refer to a specific prayer in the service. If so, what is it, when do we say it, and how is it related to Yom Kippur? Thank you in advance.*

Dear Anat,

*Tefillah Zakah* is a special prayer that we say after completing the final meal before the fast upon arriving in the *shul* before *Kol Nidrei*.

It is called the "pure prayer" because of its purifying effect on the hearts of its readers as a preparation for the Day of Atonement.

The subject of the *tefillah zakah* is the acceptance of the fast's five "afflictions": refraining from 1] eating 2] drinking 3] washing and anointing 4] wearing shoes of leather and 5] marital relations.

Another essential aspect of the prayer is repentance and forgiveness for sins committed by people against each other. These transgressions are not forgiven by G-d on Yom Kippur unless one asks forgiveness from the offended first. But this can't always be done. How can one find all those he's hurt to conciliate them? And how can others find him to conciliate him over having wronged him?

*Tefillah zakah* places in the mouths of all those who repent, wherever they may be, words of whole-hearted mutual forgiveness which remove the barriers of atonement and open the gates of Divine Mercy. Here is an excerpt from the prayer:

"I hereby extend total forgiveness to all who have wronged me, whether personally or financially, or by slandering or defacing me; to all who have committed against me any of the wrongs that are between man and man, let no one be punished because of me. And just as I forgive all men, grant me favor in the eyes of all, that they might also extend total forgiveness to me."

As we complete this most beautiful and moving prayer, the sun sets, the Holy Ark is opened, and we unite in penitence as one people before G-d, our forgiving Father and King...

continued from page ten

## SIGNIFICANCE OF SUCCOT SACRIFICES

**From: Sam in LA**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*What is the significance of the different sacrificial offerings that were offered during Succot? Why are they different each day, and does the fact that there were seventy mean anything? Thanks.*

Dear Sam,

The Torah prescribes special sacrifices for each of the days of Succot. On the first day, 13 oxen were offered. The number was reduced by one each day of the festival such that on the seventh day, 7 oxen were offered. The total number of these sacrifices was thus 70 ( $13+12+11+10+9+8+7=70$ ).

These seventy oxen correspond to the original seventy nations of the world enumerated in the Torah who descended from the sons of Noah, and are the ancestors of all of the nations till this day. Israel brought these sacrifices as atonement for the nations of the world, and in prayer for their well-being, as well as for universal peace and harmony between them.

Thus our Sages taught, "You find that during the Festival [Succot], Israel offers seventy oxen for the seventy nations. Israel says: Master of the Universe, behold we offer You seventy oxen in their behalf, and they should have loved us. Instead, 'in the place of my love, they hate me (Psalms 109).'" Further, they remarked: "If the nations of the world would have known the value of the Temple for them, they would have surrounded it with a fortress in order to protect it. For it was of greater value to them than for Israel [instead, they

destroyed it]" (Bamidbar Rabba 1).

The power that was given to Noah's sons to become the founders of the seventy original nations was later vested in the descendants of Abraham, of whom it is written, "For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." From then on, all the seventy nations were to draw their sustenance through Abraham's descendents. First, Ishmael was made head of the seventy nations, but after the birth of Esau to Isaac, the flow of Divine sustenance for the nations was divided between Ishmael and Esau. Each of whom became the head of thirty-five of the nations.

G-d appointed Israel a kingdom of priests to atone for all these nations, and appointed Jerusalem a house of prayer for all the peoples. Therefore, when Israel came to sacrifice seventy oxen during the seven days of Succot as an atonement for the seventy nations of the world, they sacrificed thirty-five oxen in behalf of the nations under Ishmael's dominion, and thirty-five in behalf of those under Esau's dominion.

The Vilna Gaon discovered this secret hidden in the Torah itself. In the verses describing the number of oxen each day, he noticed that the accompanying sin offering is sometimes referred to as a 'kid of goats' and sometimes as just a 'kid'. Based on the tradition that 'kid of goats' refers to Ishmael, he determined that some of the oxen and their respective sin offering correspond to Ishmael, and the others correspond to Esau. Amazingly, the oxen offered on the days whose sin offering is slated as 'kid of goats' [days 1,2,4] equals 35 [ $13+12+10$ ]. Similarly, those offered on the days noted only by 'kid' [days 3,5,6,7] also equal 35 [ $11+9+8+7$ ].

We pray for the day when Israel will be fully restored to its land, rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and bring peace between G-d and man, and between all peoples. Amen.

*Shana Tova, Chatima Tova and Chag Sameach to all!*

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wishes all of Israel a year filled with  
health, happiness and peace

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

Vayelech

## THE LAST DAY

*“Moses went and spoke these words to all of Yisrael.” (31:1)*

**A** thought for Shabbat Shuva (the Shabbat between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur). What would you do if you knew that you had just one more day to live?

How would you spend that last day?

Would you drive to the ocean with the top down for a last glimpse of the sun rising over the waves? Would you book lunch at the best restaurant in town? Or maybe you would indulge in the thrill of a dangerous sport like skydiving or bungee jumping, safe in the knowledge that there is no such thing as a dangerous sport on the last day of your life.

Or maybe, if you were a more contemplative sort, you'd spend those last few hours writing down your thoughts and feelings as you were about to depart this world.

How many of us would spend those precious last moments calling on our friends to say goodbye, to give them comfort and consolation?

That's what Moshe did when G-d told him that he had awoken to his last day on Earth. Moshe, the humblest person to walk this planet understood that his duty on his last day was to take leave of the Jewish people and comfort them over his impending death.

And how did Moshe comfort the people? He said, *“I am an old man of a hundred and twenty years. I am no longer permitted to teach you Torah; G-d has closed the wellsprings of Torah from me. G-d will not let me cross the Yarden, but do not be discouraged! The Divine Presence will precede you and Yehoshua will be your leader.”*

What did Moshe mean when he said *“G-d has closed the wellsprings of Torah from me.”*? Moshe was telling the people that he had lost the power to communicate Torah to them. Moshe was *Moshe Rabbeinu*, Moshe “our teacher.” An essential quality of a teacher is that he can adapt his knowledge to the level and understanding of his pupils. When Moshe passed from this world, however, his understanding of Torah was so elevated that he could no longer present the Torah on the level of the Jewish People — hence the metaphor of the wellspring. A wellspring flows outward. Moshe's ability to flow his wisdom to the people was sealed up.

In fact, Moshe never found it easy to teach the People. When G-d told Moshe to return to Egypt and take out the Jewish People from their slavery, Moshe replied, *“I am not a man of words... for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of*

*speech.” (Shemot 4:10)* In other words, Moshe's connection to spirituality was so elevated that it was extremely difficult for him to clothe his perception within the sinews of speech.

Moshe comforted the people with the knowledge that, although he would not be there to teach them Torah, the Torah would still be with them. They would still have The Guide To Life and teachers who could bring its supernal wisdom into each and every life throughout the generations.

Ha'azinu

## NOTHING LIKE THE TORAH

*“And Yeshurun became fat and kicked” (32:15)*

**S**ir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) was one of the greatest and best-loved statesmen and communal leaders in the history of the Jewish People.

He was born in Leghorn, Italy and grew up in London. In 1827, he made his first visit to Eretz Yisrael. His stay in the Land had a profound effect on him; he became religiously observant and from then until the end of his life, Sir Moses was scrupulous in all areas of mitzvah observance.

It happened that one Shabbat, the great sage, the Chatam Sofer stayed with Sir Moses. Sir Moses was overjoyed to have the honor of hosting such a great Torah scholar and he did not stint to honor his guest in every way. And not just physically. As was his way, Sir Moses was more concerned with the spirituality of Shabbat than its physical side.

Sir Moses was a humble man. He did not want to pass up the opportunity of correcting even the smallest infraction of halacha, and so after Shabbat Sir Moses took the Chatam Sofer aside and said to him, “May I please ask your honor if there was anything you saw about our Shabbat that was not in accordance with that which is written in the Torah?”

The Chatam Sofer replied immediately, “I saw nothing here this Shabbat that was in accordance with what is written in the Torah!”

Sir Moses' jaw dropped. Could he really believe his ears?

Continued the Chatam Sofer, “It says in the Torah, *‘And Yeshurun became fat and kicked.’* Rashi explains this means the Jewish People became rich and prospered because of G-d's kindness but neglected the service of their Creator.

“I have spent a Shabbat with someone whom the Creator has blessed with great wealth and yet everything is done in the service of the Most High. So you see, nothing I have seen here this Shabbat is accordance with what is written in the Torah!”

• Heard from Rabbi Yehuda Samet

# Fish of the Sea

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BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

**H**owever estranged we may feel from our Jewishness, if there's one day in the year that brings out our latent feelings of connection to the Jewish People, it's Yom Kippur. Be it a synagogue appearance, or fasting, on Yom Kippur the link to our roots emerges more strongly than any other day of the year.

Whatever kind of life we may be living the rest of the year, on Yom Kippur we try to elevate ourselves a little bit. By fasting and denying our bodies their accustomed pleasures, we downplay the body's role in the soul/body relationship; we allow ourselves to be more spiritual than physical. On Yom Kippur we emulate the angels. Just as the angels are closer to the Source, so too the Jewish People on Yom Kippur reconnect to their Source.

The Rambam writes that the day of Yom Kippur itself atones of us. The Rambam is not referring to anything that we might do on that day. He is not talking about fasting or the other abstaining required of us on Yom Kippur. He is not talking about a contrite heart pouring itself out in prayer. He tells us that, quite simply, the day of Yom Kippur, those twenty-four hours, contain within them the power to achieve atonement. On Yom Kippur, the day itself brings us closer to our Source.

The Midrash tells of a tailor who bought fish for his meal on the day before Yom Kippur. From this Midrash comes the custom to eat fish on Erev Yom Kippur. No Jewish custom is devoid of deeper meaning. What are the symbolism and the message behind this custom?

The creatures of the sea start their life in water and they live all their days out in water. Their place of origin and their end remain the same. In water they began and in water they die. They never diverge from their source.

A vegetable, on the other hand, starts its life under the ground as a seed, but it does not continue its existence

there. At a certain point it emerges into the air. It has left its source and now exists in a different sphere.

On Yom Kippur, the Jewish People are at one with our Source. We return to the place from which we came. Just like fish that never leave their source we express our desire to return our source. The eating of fish on Erev Yom Kippur symbolizes the innate connection that we have to G-d.

For this reason the sages of the Mishna, the Tanaim, are called in the Zohar *nunay yama*, "fish of the sea", because they are at one with the spirituality of the Torah. No separation exists between them and the Torah just as there is no separation between fish and the sea.

Probably the greatest cause of our straying from the Torah is our desire for pleasure. If the Torah mandated that every Jew should travel around the world eating in the most exclusive non-kosher restaurants, I think a lot more Jews would be religious. We live in a society that places the fulfillment of our material desires and pleasure on the highest plane. Very often societal pressure to achieve and to consume, and to be conspicuous in our consumption leads us to fall foul of the Torah's expectations of us.

The four elements — Earth, Air, Fire and Water — correspond to the Four Exiles of the Jewish People: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. The exile of Persia is compared to water. Persia is like a bear that is restless and loves his pleasure. The mystical sources reveal that the source of all pleasure is water. On Erev Yom Kippur, by consuming fish, the creature whose habitat is water, we mend the root of all our eating and desire for pleasure, and by fixing the root we can mend the branches as well.

• Source - *Shem Mishmuel – Moadim*, p. 103

**Ohrnet in Bethlehem – NH**

I request permission to use your poetic statement titled “Standing in Silence” on our flyer for Tisha B’Av. Flyer will be sent to all members of Bethlehem Hebrew Congregation, Bethlehem, NH. I will send you a copy of the flyer as requested on the requirements listed on your website. I wish you a peaceful week. Thank you.

• Eileen R.

**Ohrnet replies:** *Permission granted in accordance with the restrictions posted on our Ohr.edu website.*

**If I May... (Re: Ohrnet Beha’alotcha)**

In the “Love of the Land” column of Ohrnet for *parshat Beha’alotcha* you mention that there are 800,000 Jews in South Africa. I think that you meant 80,000. [Yes we did, thank you – Ed.]

Also, regarding the “Barkmitzvah” mentioned in the “Going to the Dogs” column, the appropriate response in Yiddish is to say “CANINE HORROR”.

It’s a sad occasion when a GODly ceremony has been transformed into something DOGly.

• Asher Kassel, Rehovot

**Don’t Even Pretend — Make-Believe Anger (Ohrnet Matot)**

The *Orech Apayim* (often called *Erech Apayim*) by Rabbi Avraham Yellin says that people with a strong tendency towards anger cannot even pretend safely.

• Haim Roman

**Re: Revisiting Angels (Ohrnet Shlach)**

Regarding “Ask the Rabbi (Revisiting Angels)”: Since you quoted no sources, I don’t know where your answer was from, but it would seem to be only partial. After all, most of the angels discussed in Tanach were not carrying out things for G-d in the world, but rather praising G-d, singing to Him and of Him, and serving Him. Also, without getting into too many examples, our Sages seem to imply that angels may possibly have some type of free-will! (Although usually not so applicable).

Rav Avigdor Miller Zt”l had a different answer as to

why Hashem “needs” angels, more based on the mentioned points. Briefly: Angels are here for us! G-d created angels as an example to human beings how to sing to Hashem and how to serve him. Our Prophets were given the chance several times in history (in fact, so was the entire nation at *K’rias Yam-Suf* and *Matan Torah*) to view the angels at work and relay that important and inspiring experience to us to learn from! The total devotion, alacrity, unity etc. of the angels in their service of G-d are lessons for us how to serve Him. So is the fact that “Always (tamid) they relate the glory of G-d and His Holiness” (Morning Prayers). There are numerous other examples of lessons we should learn from the *malachim* which we can study. Suffice it to say that one very important source of this study is the beracha of Yotzer Ohr which we say every morning before Shema. I hope you will find an opportunity to share these important principles with your esteemed readers.

• Avrohom Bleich, Modi’in Ilit, Israel

**Re: Far Away Fudge — A fAR Correction and a Far Anecdote**

Postal abbreviations are simpler than the shamanic mumbo-jumbo expected by Earnest Allen online, and yet they have their own subtlety because we have a few states beginning with “A”, Arkansas only one of them. In particular, Alabama is AL, and this is why Alaska is AK.

Arkansas, as one can expect, is AR, and this is why Arizona is AZ.

Once, when I was paying for *yohrtzeit* candles at a local WalMart in Fayetteville, AR, the cashier asked me whether I knew what I was buying and how that thing was used. I answered in the affirmative. She called for a few other workers and they asked me how to use this product. They explained there was a run for everything over which the rabbis made their magical ritual dances and voodoo because everyone knew that these products cured cancer and many other diseases. Just the other day a lady buyer asked them how to cook these small cylindrical cans, and they didn’t know. Was I supposed to boil them or fry them before eating?

• Boris Schein

**Ohrnet replies:** *Thank you for the correction and for the story.*