

O H R N E T

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

PARSHA INSIGHTS

**Nitzavim-Vayelech**

**AFTER THE FALL**

*"...and you will return to the L-rd, your G-d, and listen to His voice..." (30:2)*

Sometimes something happens that makes you proud to be a Jew. A couple of months ago my daughter lost a wallet containing a large sum of money in Jerusalem. She realized that the wallet was gone when she tried to pay the taxi that brought her home. My wife went back with her and retraced her steps, but to no avail. The wallet was gone. We called around to all the shops she had gone to. Nothing. After a couple of days we thought we'd seen the last of the wallet

About a month later a man telephoned our house and spoke to my wife. He said he had seen the wallet in the street and picked it up. He was a poor person, struggling to keep his head above an ever-rising tide of bills and debts. The sight of such a large sum of money overwhelmed him. His son's school had told him that unless he paid the previous term's tuition, his son would not be able to return at the end of the summer. He looked down at that full wallet and the temptation was too much for him; he took half of the money and paid for his son's tuition.

Two days before Tisha b'Av, he called our home: "How can I fast on Tisha B'Av with this on my mind?" he asked. He promised to pay us back as soon as possible. In any event, he wanted to return the rest of the money together with the wallet. My wife said to him, "Don't worry! Pay us back when you can! Thank you so much for calling!" She suggested he leave the wallet in a nearby store to avoid embarrassment.

Apart from my wife's response (which didn't surprise me – she's a big *tzadeket*-righteous woman), what warmed my heart was the following: Many people might have overcome the temptation to steal and might have

returned the wallet intact together with a nice self-applied pat-on-the-back. However, once the desire to steal overcomes a person it's much more difficult to do the right thing. At that point a person can lapse into despair and think, "Well, that's it. I took it. Finished. I stole it." What impressed me was his ability to climb back out of the pit after the fall.

When my wife told me the story, I felt like I had been given a gift (and I don't mean the return of the money.)

Where do you find a people like the Jewish People in the entire world?

And for those of us who have serious doubts if we can climb out of the pit, there is a gift called the month of Elul.

*"...and you will return to the L-rd, your G-d, and listen to His voice..."*

This verse is both a command and a prediction: The command to return, to mend what we have marred, is written not in the command form, but in the plain future tense. This means that it's also a prediction. G-d tells us that, whether we want to or not, eventually we must return to Him. Even if we fail to do the job ourselves, there exists in the creation a historical imperative that eventually an era will dawn when the light of spirituality will infuse the entire world and every soul.

**Ha'azinu**

**LIVING FOR KICKS**

*"And Yeshurun became fat and kicked."*

There once was a farmer who fed his calf so that it would have strength to pull the plow. As he was entering the stable one day the calf turned round and gave him a strong kick. "From where did you get the strength to give me such a kick?" asked the farmer. "From the food I gave you!"

*continued on page eleven*

### Nitzavim

**O**n 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 G-d'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 G-d 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

**O**n 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, G-d 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 G-d, the covenant and reward and punishment. G-d tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the *Mishkan*,

where G-d will teach Yehoshua. G-d tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods. G-d will then completely "hide His face," so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, hunted by all. G-d 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

**A**lmost 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 G-d "pulls the strings" of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. G-d'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. G-d 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, G-d 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 G-d and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. G-d 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. G-d then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

- *Schach* that causes one to leave the succah
- What's in a name and what qualifies as *eizov*
- The status of vegetable stems re ritual impurity and *schach*
- How wide a board can be to qualify as *schach*
- Roof planks and bed parts converted into a kosher succah
- A succah in a heap
- Hanging walls in regard to succah and Shabbat
- When kosher *schach* fails to reach the walls
- How much non-kosher *schach* or air disqualifies a succah
- The concepts of a "slanted wall" and of *lavud*
- Combinations in regard to *schach* and ritual impurity
- When a roof edge can serve as a virtual wall
- *Schach* that extends beyond succah walls
- Problem of the roofless succah
- Using mats for *schach*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**M**ararita d'agma – bitter herb of the lake. Does it qualify for use on Pesach as the bitter herb required by the Torah despite the fact that it has a different name?

Yes, ruled Rabbi Chisda in the name of the Sage Ravina bar Shela.

His ruling was challenged from a *mishna* which states that the *eizov* (hyssop) mentioned by the Torah as an ingredient in achieving ritual purity only qualifies for this purpose if it has no other name (such as Greek", Roman", "Desert" or "Bluish") attached to it. One of the resolutions offered is that of the Sage Rava who points out that whereas in the case of the *eizov* the surname indicates that it is a different species than the hyssop designated by the Torah, the *d'agma* surname is merely a geographical description of a place where the Torah designated bitter herb can be found.

Rashi defines *mararita* as the *chazeret* which is commonly used on Pesach and which is known to us as *chassa* or Romaine lettuce. Tosefot rejects this definition on the basis of what the Sage Ravina said to another Sage when he saw him searching for *mararita* to fulfill the mitzvah of *maror* (*Pesachim* 39a). Why search for *mararita*, he asked, when we know that *chazeret* is the preferable species for this mitzvah?

The conclusion of Tosefot is that *mararita* is a particular species of bitter herb that grows in lakes but is not *chazeret*.

• *Succah* 13a

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Why are the prayers of the righteous compared to a pitchfork? To teach us that just as a pitchfork turns the grain from place to place, so do the prayers of the righteous turn the attitude of G-d from justice to mercy."

• *Rabbi Eliezer - Succah* 14a



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

- Big mats, little ones and those of various materials
- Under a bed in the succah
- Status of an *ohel* not made intentionally by man
- Children raised and transported for a special mission
- The incidental statement of a Torah Sage
- When *schach* is supported by material unfit for *schach*
- Thick *schach* covering and *schach* in layers
- Virtual closing of horizontal and vertical gaps
- Succah on a wagon, a ship, a camel or a tree
- How serious to consider the probability of sudden death or breakage
- Writing a *get* divorce document on a live animal
- Trees as walls of a succah
- Exemptions from succah and other *mitzvot*
- Eating or sleeping outside the succah
- Removing *tefillin* when going to sleep
- How some Sages related to eating outside succah

## MYSTERY OF THOSE LEFT OUT

One of the most intriguing mysteries dealt with in the Talmud centers around the identify of the Jews who complained that they were left out from participating in the offering of a *Korban Pesach* in the wilderness.

“They (the Israelites) offered the Pesach in the Wilderness of Sinai... And there were some men who were ritually impure from contact with the dead who could not offer the Pesach.” (*Bamidbar* 9:56)

Who were these men and how did they become ritually impure?

Three different opinions are put forth.

Rabbi Yossi Hagalili said that these were the men who carried the casket of Yosef out of Egypt for burial in Eretz Yisrael.

Rabbi Akiva identifies them as Mishael and Eltzafan, the cousins of Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon who died when they offered a “strange fire” on the altar the day the *Mishkan* Sanctuary was established. They were instructed by Moshe to “come near and carry your relatives out of the Sanctuary” (*Vayikra* 10:4).

Rabbi Yitzchak rejects both of these explanations. If they were carriers of Yosef’s casket, they had paused for ten months in their travels, from the time they camped at Mount Sinai, so that they certainly had sufficient time to purify themselves. Mishael and Eltzafan, too, became ritually impure on the first day of the Month of Nissan so that they could easily have availed themselves of the purifying ashes of the Red Heifer that were produced the very next day.

Rabbi Yitzchak’s own conclusion was that the mysterious men in question were simply Jews that had conducted a funeral less than a week before the day the *Korban Pesach* was to be offered and could not complete their seven-day-long purification process in time.

The question remains, however, as to why they were permitted to perform this mitzvah of burying the dead at a time when this would preclude their performing the much more important mitzvah of *Korban Pesach* a week later. The fact that they did so is offered as a proof that once a person must be involved in one mitzvah, he is exempt from the responsibility of another mitzvah even if it is a more important one.

• *Succah* 25 a-b

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### GENERATION GAP WIDE AS A LAKE

Do you recall how you were taught in elementary school to remember the names of the five Great Lakes of North America?

If you are from the generation that had no Jewish Day Schools and received your geography education in public school, you probably would answer HOMES (for the non-American reader this acronym stands for Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior). But when 14-year old Binyomin Albin, a student of Yeshivat Telshe of Chicago, was asked how he remembers the Great Lakes, he had a surprising answer.

Binyomin was visiting Eretz Yisrael this past summer together with his father, Rabbi Yehuda Albin, Director of Ohr Somayach operations in Chicago, and the question was put to him by the rabbi who hosted them for a Shabbat meal. His answer was MOSHE!

The host proudly concluded that this was an expression of the gap between generations. (But he thought to himself that it was perhaps also an expression of local patriotism to use an acronym that placed Chicago-boarded Lake Michigan first!)

- How many holiday meals in the succah
- Making up for the missed meal
- A borrowed succah and one built on *chol hamoed*
- Rabbi Eliezer's position on leaving home for the holiday
- The greatness of the Sages
- The succah without a table
- Obligation of women and children regarding succah
- Making the succah your home and when you can leave it
- The message of occurrences in heavenly bodies
- Why some people suffer financial setbacks
- A stolen or borrowed *lulav*
- Buying *hadassim* from gentile land robbers
- A stolen succah and a dried-up *lulav*
- No adding to or subtracting from the four species
- The *lulav* of a tree worshipped as an idol
- Physical flaws that disqualify a *lulav*
- Where we find *lulav* and *hadass* mentioned in the Torah
- Different kinds of *lulavim* and *hadassim*
- Required length of *lulav*, *hadass* and *aravah*
- The *hadass* that shed its leaves or lost its head
- Restoring a *hadass* to qualification

## DID HE FULFILL THE MITZVAH?

The elder Sages of the Torah academia of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai once visited Rabbi Yochanan ben Hacharanit on Succot and found him sitting in a succah with his table in the house. According to the Beit Shammai Sages of a later generation, he was told by his visitors that if

this was how he always conducted himself he had never fulfilled the mitzvah of succah throughout his life.

This incident is cited by Beit Shammai as support for their position that although the Torah does not require having the table inside the succah, there is a rabbinical decree to that effect in order to avoid the danger of leaving the succah to eat at the table in the house.

How literally are we to understand this statement, which seems to indicate that failure to abide by a rabbinical decree nullifies fulfillment of the Torah law?

Rabbeinu Nissim takes the position that Rabbi Yochanan did fulfill the Torah law and what his critics meant was that he failed to do the mitzvah in accordance with the will of the Sages who decreed that the table must be inside the succah. He cites a parallel in *Mesechta Pesachim* (116b), where it is stated that one who did not, on Pesach eve, explain the meaning of Pesach, Matzah and Maror failed to fulfill the mitzvah of *haggada*. There, too, he insists the meaning is that although he fulfilled the Torah command he failed to do a complete job by not complying with the rabbinical requirement.

There may, however, be another approach. Rabbeinu Yonah (*Berachot* 2a) posits that if one delays reciting the evening Shma till after the midnight deadline set by rabbinical decree (to ensure that he will not fall asleep before reciting the Shma), he is no longer able to fulfill that mitzvah despite the fact that according to Torah law he has all night to do so. It has been suggested that the same concept applies to succah.

• *Succah* 28a

## READY ROAD TO RETURN

With only a week to go before the world stands in judgment before G-d, it is actually appropriate to reflect on the message contained in the Torah portion that will be read this Shabbat.

Many well-intentioned people are frightened by the challenge of return to G-d that the ten days from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur are all about. To them the Torah declares that: "This matter (*teshuva*) is most accessible to you. It is in your mouth and heart to achieve it."

As simple as that!

Your mouth can offer the confession of your mistakes and your heart can make the commitment not to repeat the errors you regret having made.

Both individuals and nations stand before the Heavenly Court in the Days of Judgment. It is our fervent hope that each one of us, and our nation as a whole, will be stirred by recent events into taking the ready road to return and thus secure Israel forever.

- What disqualifies an *aravah* for use on Succot
- The *aravah* of the *lulav* and of the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Kosher and non-kosher varieties of *aravah*
- The names that changed
- How many *hadassim* are needed and must they be beautiful
- What can disqualify an *etrog* as one of the four species
- Where does it mention *etrog* in the Torah
- The requirements of edibility and monetary value for a kosher *etrog*
- The blemished or disfigured *etrog* and the problems of color and size
- Binding the *lulav*, taking it and shaking it
- Buying an *etrog* in the *shmitah* year
- The tithing of the *etrog*
- The transfer of *shmitah* status from one item to another

## A JEW MUST PRAY!

**A** Jew must pray! While no one has any doubt about this obligation, there is difference of opinion as to whether this is a Torah command or a rabbinic requirement. Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) in

*Sefer Hamitzvot*, Positive Command #5, writes that prayer is a Torah command. His position is challenged by Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman) from a number of Talmudic sources.

One of these is the *gemara* which distinguishes between the *mitzvot* of *lulav* and prayer. The *mishna* states that one who did not have a *lulav* available while traveling must fulfill his obligation upon arrival at home, and if he forgot to do so before eating, he must interrupt his meal to do so. In regard to the *mincha* service, however, the *mishna* (*Mesechta Shabbat* 9b) rules that one is not required to interrupt his meal in order to pray. The Sage Rava reconciles the two rulings by distinguishing between *lulav* which is a Torah obligation (on the first day of Succot), and prayer which is of rabbinic origin.

While this would seem to be a powerful challenge to the Rambam's position, it is the Ramban himself who provides a resolution. He cites the Rambam's words in his Laws of Prayer (1:1) that although prayer is commanded by the Torah, the time, frequency and text of the prayers are only of rabbinic origin. Rava's statement regarding the rabbinic nature of prayer referred to the need to pray three times a day, which is of rabbinic origin.

• *Succah* 38a

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"The unguarded opening to a field beckons to the thief."

• *The Sage Rava quoting a folk-saying to explain why those guarding an orchard on Succot are not required to leave it unguarded in order to sleep in the succah. Succah* 26a

"Because of four things the possessions of substantial people are lost – for delaying payment of wages, for withholding such payment, for shifting responsibility to others, and for haughtiness."

• *The Sage Rav Succah* 29b

"The *lulav* and the other species must also be shaken in all four directions towards the One to whom all four directions belong and up and down to the One to whom heaven and earth belong."

• *The Sage Rava in extension of Rabbi Yochanan Succah* 38a

"One should never promise a child a gift and fail to keep his promise, for he thus teaches him to be dishonest."

• *Rabbi Zeira Succah* 46b

- *Lulav*- taking in time of *Beit Hamikdash* and afterwards
- When the new grain – *chadash* – may be consumed
- *Lulav*-taking and *aravah* on Shabbat
- The Jerusalem Jews who held on to the *lulav*
- Training the child in *lulav*-taking and other *mitzvot*
- Time frame for *lulav*, *aravah* and other *mitzvot* of Succot
- The Torah source for *aravah* in *Beit Hamikdash* and the rabbinical source for outside of it and for today
- The requirements for the *aravah* of the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Procedure of *aravah*-taking in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- The concept of *issur chag* and the source for 36 *tzadikim*
- The blessings said upon making and using *lulav* and succah
- The blessing on Chanukah lights and on a group of *mitzvot*
- The *etrogim* of the children
- Status of the *etrog* and the succah when they are no longer needed
- Blessing of *shecheyanu* on Shmini Atzeret everywhere
- Staying in Yerushalayim overnight after offering sacrifice
- Waving of the *bikkurim*

## THE MAGIC CURE

Once upon a time there was a Jew who was so generous in his charitable giving that he even sold his home and possessions in order to give *tzedaka*. One Hoshana Rabba – the seventh day of Succot and the last one when the *lulav* and *etrog* are taken – his wife gave him ten coins to purchase something for the family. On his way to the market he met some *tzedaka* trustees who implored him to take part in the fund they had estab-

lished to purchase some wedding needs for an orphan bride. He gave them all his money but was afraid to face his wife after giving away their last resource.

What did he do? He went to the synagogue where the children had discarded the *etrogim* they had used throughout the Festival and collected these exotic fruits into a sack. He then set out with these *etrogim* on a sea journey to the capital where the king's palace was located. Just at that time the king was suffering from severe abdominal pains and he had a dream that his only cure would be the eating of *etrogim* which Jews had used for the fulfillment of their mitzvah. A thorough search for such *etrogim* yielded no results until the king's agents came upon our hero and his sack. When they examined its contents they found what they were looking for so intently.

The *etrogim* did indeed heal the king, and the Jew who had no idea what he could do for funds to please his wife suddenly found himself generously rewarded.

This incident in *Midrash Rabbah (Vayikra 37:2)* is cited by Rashi to explain what is meant in the *mishna* (45a) about the *etrogim* of children on Hoshana Rabba being eaten. One approach is that as soon as they finished their use of the four species they put away their *lulavim* and ate their *etrogim*. Rashi rejects this approach on the basis of the above-mentioned *midrash* and explains that it was the adults who took the *etrogim* from the children, a custom which was practiced as a form of celebration.

• *Succah 46b*

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with health, happiness & peace

## 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 G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d.
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 G-d, and yet — ‘*Atem nitzavim*’ — G-d 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 G-d 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 - G-d 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 G-d "faithful without injustice"?
4. Why is G-d called "tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did G-d bring upon the world?
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did G-d 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 G-d's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, G-d says, "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
11. How does the idea of "chillul G-d" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When G-d overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When G-d punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will G-d'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 G-d 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. G-d 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 G-d.
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 G-d's commands, all the more so should we.

## ROSH HASHANA REBIRTH

**From: Naftali in Denver**

*Dear Rabbi,  
Is Rosh Hashanah important only because of its being the Day of Judgment, or is there some other significance to the day as well, such as we find regarding other holidays where several important things happened or are associated with that day?*

Dear Naftali,

Rosh Hashana is on the first day of Tishrei, which according to one opinion in the Talmud was the day on which G-d created Adam and Eve, thereby completing the creation of the world.

Similarly, the Patriarchs, who re-instated the merit for the world to continue after previous sinful generations, were also born in Tishrei.

On Rosh Hashana, Sarah, Rachel and Chana were granted Divine-remembrance and were given children after having been childless. This was a blessing that ensured the perpetuation, and fulfillment of the purpose, of the world.

On Rosh Hashana Joseph was freed from the prison in which he had been enslaved for twelve years – a liberation which resulted in his ascendancy and blessing of continued life and sustenance for the nascent Jewish people.

On this day the bondage of our forefathers in Egypt ceased, initiating a period of respite that eventually culminated in their redemption.

The very first Rosh Hashanah of the world, the day on which Adam was created, sinned, repented and was forgiven, infused this day with qualities of judgment and forgiveness. Thus our Sages taught, G-d said to Adam: Just as you were judged before me on this day and emerged forgiven, so will your children be judged before me this day and be forgiven.

## YOM KIPPUR YIZKOR

**From: Andrea in St. Louis**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I know there are certain times and holidays when it is appropriate to recall the memory of the departed. I was wondering if Yom Kippur is one of those times since we ask of G-d's forgiveness, or if Yom Kippur applies only to the liv-*

*ing. If appropriate, I would like to remember my mother of blessed memory. Thank you.*

Dear Andrea,

I offer you my condolences on the passing of your mother. May her soul rest in Gan Eden.

The Sages prescribed that children recall the souls of their departed parents during prayer every Yom Tov, at which time the child pledges charity and resolves to improve his or her deeds in order to increase the merit of the departed. This occurs after the Torah reading and before the scrolls are returned to the Ark. This “*hazkarot neshamot*” is recited on the last day of Pesach, on Shavuot and on Shemini Atzeret concluding Succot. Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are considered as one in this regard, and the service is recited on Yom Kippur for both days.

As you intuited, “*hazkarot neshamot*” is of greater significance on Yom Kippur than it is at other times since the very essence of the day is the quest for forgiveness and atonement which are as necessary for the deceased as for the living. Even though the departed can no longer effect their own atonement, the charity and good deeds pledged by their children stands in their merit. Particularly if these were the ways of the deceased himself that he imparted to his children, their acts are considered a perpetuation of the parent's deeds, and it is as if the parent is fulfilling them himself.

If one's parent's are still alive, the child leaves the synagogue for several reasons: in deference for the feelings of the bereaved, or because he may mistakenly recite the service himself which is considered unpropitious for his parents, or because even if he remains silent, it would not appear appropriate to be silent while others are praying. In Sefardi communities, however, the entire congregation remains in the synagogue while the leader of the services recites the memorial and each individual gives him the names of his own deceased for mention in the collective prayer.

## SUCCOT SEVENS

**From: Mark in TX**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I remember something about the occurrence of the number seven in connection with the Succot Holiday. Would you please refresh my childhood memory?*

Dear Mark,

Succot occurs in the month of Tishrei, which is the seventh month of the year. Like other sevens in Judaism, this

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indicates the elevated spiritual status of the holiday. It comes after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, once we have repented, have been forgiven and have been granted continued life and prosperity. It similarly commemorates the Jewish People's liberation from physical and spiritual bondage in Egypt and elevation to being G-d's chosen people.

Thus, our Sages taught that our taking the four species is compared to one who was on trial and emerged victorious from the case. He leaves the court overjoyed, ecstatically raising his staff and other belongings in the air. So too, our confidence in G-d's merciful acceptance of our penitence ensures us a beneficial result from the judgment of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. We thus emerge from these days overjoyed with G-d's favor and ecstati-

cally wave the four species in the air. These are also comprised of seven parts: one lulav, one etrog, three myrtle branches and two willows.

Also, the holiday itself has seven days. Our Sages encourage us to hospitably receive guests in the Succah during the entire seven days of the festival. In this regard, the mystical teachings state that among the earthy guests invited into the succah there are seven spiritual guests who permeate the air of the succah as well: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David. In fact, many recite a special service "inviting" these honorary guests each night before the meal. Although all of these spiritual guests are present every day of Succot, each day features one above the others. The seven days and seven guests are called *ushpizin*.

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

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Prosperity is a dangerous thing. When a person gets to live off the fat of the land, he can easily forget Who it is that fed him. The Torah calls the Jewish people here by the name *Yeshurun*. This name is connected to the word *yashar*, meaning "straight". It's not by coincidence that the Torah chooses this name here, for nothing can bend the straightness of the heart more than luxury and physical indulgence.

*Yeshurun* is also linked to the word *shur*, meaning "to see". When *Yeshurun* became fat, it kicked: The clarity of sight that the Jewish People had at Sinai becomes blurred when it focuses on the pleasure of this world.

Material comfort is dangerous in two ways: It can make us believe that we are legends in our own lunchtimes, brilliant wheeler-dealers, talented and foresighted. It's all too easy to forget that everything in life is a present. A poor person has no illusions from where his bread comes; he sees that without G-d he could not survive.

The pursuit and the maintenance of an affluent life style has another pitfall. It's very time consuming. It fills our waking hours, leaving us little time for spirituality. How often during our daily silent prayers do we find minds wandering; we review our day, our lives, our wants and our problems! The more we have, the more we want. The more we want, the more time we need to think about how to get what we want and how to keep hold of what we have amassed.

This Shabbat is called Shabbat Shuva, "The Shabbat of Return". Shabbat contains within it the power of the events of the following week. Thus it contains within it the power of the twenty-four fast of Yom Kippur. Since Shabbat is a day of pleasure, of eating, how can it contain its opposite?

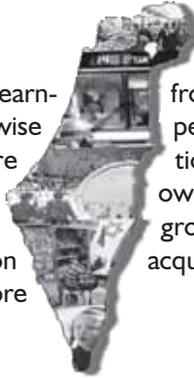
On Shabbat, we have the opportunity to take this physical world and, rather than use it for own aggrandizement, we can elevate it to the service of our Creator.

לע"נ  
ר' דוד בן ר' אהרון ז"ל  
ומרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

“THE TORAH IS ACQUIRED THROUGH FORTY-EIGHT REQUIREMENTS ...  
(46) MAKING HIS RABBI WISE” — (AVOT 6:5-6)

In order for a *talmid* to have a real interest in learning from a rabbi he must respect him as a wise and knowledgeable teacher. He therefore acquires Torah only by “making his rabbi wise” – considering him wise and worth learning from.

Another perspective is based on the confession made by one of the Sages that he learned more



from his *talmidim* than he did from his teachers and peers. The *talmid* who challenges his rabbi with questions stimulates him and actually makes him wiser. His own stimulation in providing the challenge and the growth he sparks in his rabbi enables the *talmid* to acquire the Torah he seeks.

• Midrash Shmuel

WHAT 'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

START THE NEW YEAR RIGHT

**Question:** In my family we only did the *simanim* – the eating of special fruits and vegetables that symbolize well for the new year – on the first night of Rosh Hashana. The custom in my wife’s family, however, was to eat these foods on the second night as well. As a newly married man I am inclined to assert my authority in religious matters by insisting that there is no basis for her custom. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** First of all, don’t be so quick to dismiss your wife’s custom as being without a basis. If you will take a look at the sources in the *Mishna Berura* 583, you will see the reference made by the *Sha’arei Teshuva* to the com-

mentaries that urge eating these special foods on the second night as well.

While you have your *Mishna Berurah* open, take a look at what it says (letter 5) about the importance of the avoiding of anger as a good omen for a “good and sweet new year”. Cheerfully going along with your wife on this matter will not only be a symbolic omen for a good year to come but will also provide a concrete foundation to a successful marriage.

And what’s so bad about another pomegranate and slice of apple with honey?

Have a good and sweet new year.

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