

# OHR NET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE SUN AND THE MOON

*“And G-d made two great luminaries...” (1:16)*

Nothing is more dissimilar than the sun and the moon. The sun is immense. The interior of the sun could hold over 1.3 million earths. It is incredibly hot. In its core, the temperature is 15,000,000°C. The pressure there is 340 billion times earth’s air pressure at sea level. Every second, 700 million tons of hydrogen are converted into helium ashes. In the process 5 million tons of pure energy is released.

The moon is an inert body, a mere 3,476 kilometers in diameter. It has a maximum surface temperature of 123°C, and a minimum surface temperature of -233°C.

You could hardly find two objects more different than the sun and the moon, and yet they share a puzzling similarity.

When viewed from the earth, they both seem to be the identical size.

Isn’t that strange? That of all the places our planet could be located in space, we just happen to be exactly where the sun and the moon look the same?

In the Talmud (*Chullin 60b*) Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi points out what seems to be a contradiction in this week’s Torah portion. One verse says *“And G-d made two great luminaries.”* The verse then continues, *“the greater luminary to dominate the day, and the lesser luminary to dominate the night.”* The verse starts with two great luminaries and then only one is great.

Behind the scenes of this seeming contradiction, there is a fascinating story.<sup>1</sup>

At the dawn of Creation, G-d created the sun and moon of equal size and brightness. The moon said before the Holy One Blessed be He: “Master of the World, is it possible for two kings to use one crown?”

G-d said “Go and diminish yourself.”

The Jewish People are compared to the moon. Every month the moon gets smaller and smaller until it disappears completely. And then, seemingly miraculously, it is renewed.

The Jewish People have seen times in their history when they seem to have vanished completely and then, miraculously,

ly, we are renewed.

This power of renewal is intrinsic to the Jewish People. For that reason, we count our calendar by the moon. The first mitzvah that the Jewish People received was the sanctification of the moon when G-d gave Moshe the precise measurement of the time of the moon’s orbit so the Jewish People could calculate for all time the exact beginning of the new month.

The Jewish year is measured by the lunar month. The word for month in Hebrew is *chodesh*<sup>2</sup> which comes from the same root as *chadash* which means new, since every month the moon is new. It is renewed. The nations of the world mark the passage of time by the cycles of the sun, by the year.

In Hebrew, the word for year is *shana* which comes from the same root as the word *yashan*, “old.” The sun is without renewal. It is always the same unchanging yellow orb.

We are not the largest of all the nations. In fact, the Torah calls us the smallest. We are the People of the moon. The moon has no light of its own. It is a reflector. And like the moon, the job of the Jewish People is to be a reflector. The reflector in this world of its Creator.

G-d’s light is concealed in this world. We don’t see it clearly and brightly. Similarly the Jewish People are not recognized as His emissaries. Thus, it is fitting that the moon is small and diminished.

When we look up to the sky, the moon and the sun look the same size to us. We know that one is millions of times the size of the other. But they look same.

Maybe this is a hint. A hint to a time that was. A hint to a time to come. When *mashiach* comes, the primeval light of Creation will shine again. There will be total clarity. One end of the universe will be visible from the other end.

And then the moon will resume its original radiance and it will shine again as it did at the beginning of time.

1. A word of warning. This story is not allegorical. However, when we talk of the sun and the moon “speaking”, it means their essence was expressing itself to the Creator. In human terms this would be called speaking.

2. In English too, the word “month” is related to “moon.”

## DAVID — THE GATES OF JERUSALEM

**D**avid was not only the author of *Tehillim* through Divine inspiration and the king of the Jewish nation. He was also a mighty warrior, from his youth when he slew the Philistine giant Goliath, to his role as general and commander-in-chief who won every war he waged.

In a Psalm (122:2) of his *Tehillim* David revealed the secret of the success of his military career. "Our feet stood in the gates of



Jerusalem," sings David, and our Talmudic Sages (*Mesechta Makkot 10a*) explain his words in the following way: "Who enabled our feet to stand triumphant in battle? The Gates of Jerusalem where Torah was studied!"

This should serve as a timely reminder of the important role which Yeshivot in *Eretz Yisrael* and throughout the world are playing in guaranteeing the security of our people.

# ISRAEL Forever

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

## The Expulsion Principle –Then and Now

**W**hen Israel decided to expel to Gaza relatives of terrorists suspected of some degree of complicity with the murderous acts of their kin, there was an outcry from the lily-livered liberals in both the local and international community.

When the President of the United States declares that the Iraqi dictator who threatens the world with weapons of mass destruction must be expelled from his position of power he becomes the target of criticism from his own Congress and from those nations he invites to join his anti-terror coalition.

There is a valuable historical lesson which all those bleeding hearts should learn from the portion of the Torah which Jews throughout the world will read in their synagogues this week.

"Why," asks Rabbi Yitzchak in the Midrash quoted by Rashi at the very beginning of his commentary on the Torah," does the Torah begin with an account of Creation rather than with the first commandment given to the Jewish People as befits a Divine Book of Instruction?"

The answer he gives is that the Creator thus took preemptive action against the nations of the world who will challenge the right of the Jewish People to Eretz Israel and accuse them of aggressively removing from it the nations who occupied it. "He created it," concludes the Midrash, "and gave it to whom He wished. It was His will to give it to them and it was His will to take it from them and to give it to us."

Ramban extends this central idea of this Midrash into a lesson regarding expulsion. The first two chapters of Chumash Bereishet recount three cases of expulsion because of sin – the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden for eating the forbidden fruit, the destruction of all of mankind except Noach's family from the world via the Deluge because of moral corruption, and the dispersal of the nations from their center because of their rebellion against Heaven in the building of the Tower of Babel.

The common denominator is that when a nation or a universe proves unworthy of possessing its land it is expelled. The corruption of the Palestinian Authority in misruling its own people and its suicidal terrorism against Israel disqualify any claim this fictitious nation may have to a land of its own here in the land the Creator granted to His chosen people. For the very same reason Israel stands solidly behind the American determination to expel Saddam Hussein from the position in which he threatens us and the world.

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## THIS THING CALLED KING

“When you enter the land which Hashem, your G-d, has given you and you inherit it and settle in it and you will say I wish to appoint for me a king like all the nations around me.” (*Devarim 17:14*)

Thus does the Torah introduce the institution of monarchy in Israel. It is followed by a command to appoint a king who Hashem will choose “from amongst your brothers” and not a foreigner.

Is this to be understood as a Torah command for Jews to appoint a king or is it merely a restriction on who is eligible for this position?

This depends, says Iyun Yaakov, on how we understand the chapter (*Shmuel I 8*) in the Prophets which describes the request made by Jews to their aging leader, the Prophet Shmuel, for a king to lead them. Shmuel was displeased with the request and prayed for Heavenly guidance in responding. He was told to go along with the popular demand but to first warn the people about the virtually unlimited powers that kings enjoy. The prophet thereupon painted an awesome portrait of unfettered royal usurpation which would eventually result in “You shall cry out on that day because of the king you have chosen (*ibid. 8:13*)”, but this failed to dissuade them.

Rabbi Yossi’s view is that all the oppressive powers listed by Shmuel are truly the prerogatives of a king in Israel. It therefore follows that such tyranny would not be imposed on the Jewish nation in the form of a command since the Torah never orders something which is unpleasant. Rabbi Yehuda, however, posits that Shmuel’s description of royal powers was intended only as a strategy for awing the people with the potential power of the king. This view makes it possible for Rabbi Yehuda to declare that the Torah actually commanded us to appoint a king.

• *Sanhedrin 20b*

## MAY THE KOHEN DRINK?

**K**ohanim were forbidden to enter the Sanctuary and perform their service after having imbibed wine. (*Vayikra 10:9*)

Since different families of *kohanim* were on duty each day of the week there was a ban on each *kohen* of the family on duty to drink wine that day.

What about today when there is no *Beit Hamikdash*, must the *kohen* refrain from drinking wine because the *Beit Hamikdash* may suddenly be reestablished and he will be

summoned to duty?

One view of the Sages is that if a *kohen* is aware of which day his family would have been scheduled for duty in Temple times, he must refrain from drinking wine only on that day. Should he be aware only of the week in which his *mishmar* (one of 24 larger family units which rotated in weekly duty) was on duty but not the day of his particular family, he must refrain from wine that entire week. Should he be aware neither of the week of his *mishmar* or the day of his family he must forever refrain from wine because the sudden reestablishment of Temple service may come on the very day he is to be on duty.

Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi (Rebbie) disagreed with this approach. He contended that should we be concerned with the sudden reestablishment of Temple service every *kohen* would be obligated to refrain from wine forever even if he was aware of the day and week his family was on duty. This is so, he argued, because such a sudden reestablishment would call upon every *kohen* immediately available to report for duty and he may be one of them.

Even though theoretically all *kohanim* should therefore be banned from drinking wine today, it is Rebbie’s position that “the destruction (of the *Beit Hamikdash*) is their resurrection” and they may drink wine as long as there is no Temple. Rashi explains that since the destruction of the Temple interrupted the pattern of *kohanim* being forbidden to drink when they were actually on duty, it is not reasonable to impose any ban on them today when no Temple service exists and the sudden reestablishment of the Temple service catching a *kohen* unprepared, because of drinking is only a remote possibility.

• *Sanhedrin 22b*

## The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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## PARSHA Q&A?

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. Hashem blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from Hashem?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked?"
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that Hashem, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - Hashem saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. Hashem created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god; The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. Hashem commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore Hashem took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

## WHAT IS OLAM HABABA?

**From: A. T. at Johns Hopkins University**

Dear Rabbi,

What is the World-to-Come, Olam Haba?

Dear A. T.,

Western society understands the after-life as two different places: Heaven and Hell. Heaven is where people are rewarded after life, and Hell is where they are punished.

However, Judaism does not accept this idea of two different places. Rather, there is one World-to-Come. Its nature, however, depends on one's manner of conduct in this world.

A powerful, yet cryptic description of Olam Haba is found in the writings of Rabbi Chaim Volozhin:

"The actions themselves of the person constitute the reward in Olam Haba. After the soul departs from the body it rises to take pleasure and satisfaction with the light, energy, and worlds of *Kedusha* (Holiness) that have been added and multiplied by his good actions. This is what the Sages meant when they said that "All of Israel have a portion to the World-to-Come [We translate it as *in* the World-to-Come, but the literal translation is *to* the World-to-Come] and not *in* the World-to-Come. "In" implies that Olam Haba is ready and waiting from the time of Creation, as if it were something with a *separate existence*, and if man warrants he will receive a portion of it for his reward [like a piece of candy waiting in G-d's pocket to be given to whoever deserves it]. In truth, Olam Haba is [made up of] the actions of the person, which he expanded and added and perfected into a place for himself [to dwell]...and so it is with the punishment of *Gehenam*, the sin itself is his punishment [it becomes the "space" that he will occupy during the time of his "reward"].

As you can see, this is a very complex subject; too complex to deal with in such a short column. I advise you to study the following source texts for a better understanding of this fundamental topic.

Sources:

- Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan - *The Handbook of Jewish Thought*, Moznaim Publishing Corporation, edited by Abraham Sutton, 23:11-19.
- Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin - *Nefesh HaChaim* 1:12.
- Rabbi Y.M. Tucuzinsky - *Gesher HaChaim* (The Bridge of Life).

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## IS MANKIND INTRINSICALLY EVIL?

**From: B. at Columbia University**

Dear Rabbi,

Does the fact that we have a Yetzer Hara mean that Mankind is intrinsically evil?

Dear B.,

The *Yetzer Hara* is commonly translated as the "Evil inclination." Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (the Ramchal) in "The Way of G-d" describes the role of the *Yetzer Hara* in man's quest for perfection.

"Man is the creature created for the purpose of being drawn close to G-d. He is placed between perfection and deficiency, with the power to earn perfection. Man must earn this perfection, however, through his own free will..."

Man's inclinations are therefore balanced between good [*Yetzer Hatov*] and evil [*Yetzer Hara*], and he is not compelled toward either of them. He has the power of choice and is able to choose either side knowingly and willingly..."

The Ramchal explains that this balance existed prior to the sin of Adam. After his sin, however, he became more inclined to listen to the wiles of his *Yetzer Hara*. His job is now two-fold: First, he must even the balance between the spiritual and the physical. Then, he can work to perfect his soul until his spiritual so overwhelms the physical that the physical becomes elevated to its level of perfection.

The *Yetzer Hara* is an inclination to "stray," but Mankind has the wherewithal to overcome it. The pull of the *Yetzer Hara* is the more powerful of the two inclinations, but is by no means impossible to conquer.

The Torah states:

"G-d said to Cain, 'Why are you so furious? Why are you depressed? If you do good, will there not be special privilege? And if you do not do good, sin is crouching at the door. It lusts after you but you can dominate it.'"

And the Talmud tells us how:

"So said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel: 'My son, I created the *Yetzer Hara* and I created for it the Torah as an antidote. If you toil in Torah you will not be handed over into his hands...'"

Sources:

- Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto - *The Way of G-d*, translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Feldheim Publishers.
- The Book of Genesis, 4:6-7, [translation by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan in "The Living Torah", Moznaim Publishing Company].
- The Talmud - Tractate Kiddushin, p.30b.