

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

Ha'azinu

### I MAY BE MESHUGA, BUT I'M NO IDIOT

*"You ignored the Rock Who gave birth to you, and forgot G-d Who brought you forth." (32:18)*

It's amazing how you see a whole different side to people when you lend them money. Some people surprise you at how punctilious they are. Others you would have thought to be beyond reproach prove to be less than trustworthy.

There once was a man who had borrowed a large sum of money. When the time came to repay it he had no way of returning the sum. He was beside himself with anxiety and approached an old friend with his problem. Said the friend, "You know what you do? When the creditor comes for your money, look at him as though you never saw him before. Let your mouth loll open and your tongue droop out. Roll your eyes around a bit and twitch from time to time. Look straight through him as though he wasn't there. In other words, pretend to be *meshuga!*"

"That's a great idea!"

Several weeks later the two friends met again. "How did it go with your creditor?" "I did just like you said. When the creditor came for his money, I looked at him as though I never saw him before. I let my mouth loll open and my tongue droop out. I rolled my eyes around a bit and twitched from time to time. I looked straight through him as though he wasn't there. He thought I'd gone *meshuga!* It worked like a dream! That was such a great idea! I can't thank you enough. By the way, do you think you could lend me a thousand dollars for six months?"

"Sure. No problem."

Six months later the friend arrived at the door for his money. He knocked on the door. There was a dull animal scratching-sound coming from inside. The door creaked open a little and inside he could see his friend, the debtor. His mouth was lolling open and his tongue had drooped out. His eyes were rolling and he twitched now and then. His eyes were vacant, looking beyond him as though he wasn't there.

"You really are *meshuga*. It's me, you idiot!"

Most of us think of forgetfulness as a curse. As the years roll by, our memories tend to become less and less efficient. In old

age it's common to remember what happened in our youth as though it were yesterday, but what happened yesterday — that's another matter.

But forgetfulness is not a curse. If it were not for forgetfulness we would never be able to survive life's disappointments, much less a tragedy. G-d gave us forgetfulness as a gift. Through the blessing of forgetfulness we are able to pick ourselves up and carry on with the business of living.

Of all his sons, Yaakov Avinu loved Yosef the most. Yaakov's favoritism provoked the brothers' jealousy. Eventually this jealousy led to them selling Yosef into slavery. The brothers took Yosef's coat and dipped it in blood and brought it back to their father Yaakov. Yaakov supposed that Yosef had been devoured by a wild animal and torn to pieces. He rent his clothes and mourned for his son, and despite all that his other sons and daughters could do, Yaakov was literally inconsolable. He said that he would go down to the grave mourning his son.

G-d decreed that there is consolation only over those who have passed from this world. No such decree exists for those who are still alive. This is why Yaakov was inconsolable. Consolation is only for the bereft, and Yosef was still alive and well and living in Egypt.

In this week's Torah portion it says, "You ignored the Rock Who gave birth to you, and forgot G-d Who brought you forth."

Forgetfulness is a blessing that G-d gives us so that we can pick up our lives and go on living even after a tragedy. If we could never forget, we could not go on living. If time didn't soften our pain, life would be unbearable.

G-d gave us forgetfulness as a gift. When we take that gift and pretend not to recognize Him, then we are really *meshuga*.

• Sources: *The Dubner Maggid* as heard from Rabbi Mordechai Pitom

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## 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.

## Bereishet

**I**n the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing “sin,” Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain bearing and raising children. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava,

bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noach. After the death of Sheith, mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noach, finds favor with G-d.

## Noach

**I**t is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to repopulate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days Noach sends the dove once more; the dove does not return. G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Cham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

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## 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 Eliyahu "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.

לעילוי נשמות  
מרת אסתר בששה בת ר' משה יחזקאל ע"ה  
אשה יראת ה' ובעלת חסד  
גלב"ע ד' מנחם אב תשע"ג  
ת.ג.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Bereishet

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. G-d 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 G-d?
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 Bereishet'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 G-d, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - G-d 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. G-d 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. G-d 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 G-d took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

## Remembering Rav Weinbach

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CHUNA MENACHEM MENDEL BEN YECHEZKEL SHRAGA ל"צ

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Noach

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did G-d tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did G-d postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did G-d do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to Noach's Questions!

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

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, “G-d is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - G-d told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we'll smash it!” G-d surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven amot.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it's better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from G-d, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach's disgrace to Cham. And because Cham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Cham's fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against G-d.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yiscah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

*שמחה טובה*

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

## PESACHIM 79 - 113

*“One who breaks the bone of a Korban Pesach that is tahor (ritually pure) is obligated lashes.”*

This halacha is taught in our *mishna* and is applicable when the Beit Hamikdash exists. Although this negative commandment against breaking the bone of a Korban Pesach is taught explicitly in the written Torah (Shmot 12:46), the author “Pnei Yehoshua” explains that it is taught in our *mishna* as well so that we should not apply the principle of “*aseh doche lo ta’ase*” – a positive command supersedes and “pushes off” a negative command, and allow the breaking of a Pesach bone that contains marrow in order to fulfill the command of eating the Pesach sacrifice. The reason that the rule is not applied here is derived later in this *Masechta* (85a).

• Pesachim 84a

*“Even a partition of steel (possibly the source of the expression “iron curtain”) does not separate between the Jewish People and their Father in Heaven.”*

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi states this on our *daf* to explain how a person standing outside a door of a synagogue with nine people inside can join to complete a minyan for prayer, according to Rashi. Tosefot, however, disagrees, and holds that this combination to comprise a minyan is not allowed since the tenth person is outside. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s opinion, explains Tosefot, is that when there is already a minyan inside, a person outside the door answers “Amen, Yehei Shmei Rabba u’Mevorach” and “Kedusha” although he is outside the door, since there is “no separation between the Jewish People and G-d”. (See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 55:13.)

• Pesachim 85b

*“All that the master of the house tells you to do – you should do – unless he tells you to leave.”*

Rav Huna told this rule of etiquette to the household members of Rav Nachman while he was a guest in their home. The Meiri omits and deletes the final words of this rule, since why should a guest not obey a host’s request to leave his home? Other commentaries, however, offer explanations that retain the entire text that we find on our *daf*, including not to listen to the host who says to “go out”. One explanation is provided by the Bach. He explains that a guest is instructed in our *gemara* to do all that the host requests him to do within the confines of his host’s home. But if the guest is asked to do something for host outside of the home — such as going to the market to pick up an item for the host – the guest is not required to do so.

• Pesachim 86b

*“I am a wall” – refers to Torah – “and my breasts are watchtowers” – refers to Torah scholars. “I am a wall” – refers to the Jewish People – “and my breasts are watchtowers” – refers to synagogues and yeshivot.*

These two explanations are offered by Rabbi Yochanan and by Rava — respectively — on our *daf* to interpret a verse in Shir Hashirim (8:10). Both Sages view this verse as teaching the sources of strength, security and eternal nature of the Jewish People.

• Pesachim 87a

*Our Sages taught, “Silence is good for the wise and even more so for the fools, as the verse states (Mishlei 17:28) ‘And even the fool who stays silent is considered a wise person’.”*

This teaching on our *gemara* is made in reference to a group which lost their Korban Pesach and designate another animal as well. One person from the group goes out to look for it and tells the others that if he is late they should offer their animal also for him as his agent. Likewise, they tell him that if he finds the original animal he should offer it for them as their agent. The halacha in such a case is that they all eat from the first animal that is offered, and the second animal is burned. What a waste! However, had they all been “silent” and had not appointed each other as agents, they would not be responsible for the animal of the other and each would eat from his own sacrifice without any waste of a *korban* (Rashi).

• Pesachim 98b-99a

*continued on page seventeen*

## REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

**From: Mordechai**

*Dear Rabbi,  
The whole period of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and even Succot through Hashana Rabba, is a period of judgment. The righteous are judged for life, the wicked for death, and the rest are in balance depending on how they, or G-d, decides to tip the scales.*

*This judgment is for life in this world, including all its material facets like health, wealth, tranquility, etc. And, in fact, the Torah itself repeatedly states that those who do G-d's bidding will receive blessing in this worldly-terms; while those who don't will suffer.*

*My question is: the Talmud and classical commentators explain that the righteous are rewarded in the next world, while it's the wicked that are rewarded for their few good deeds in this world. The result of this is that in this world, the righteous tend to suffer while the wicked tend to prosper. How can these seemingly contradictory ideas be reconciled?*

Dear Mordechai,

This is a very good question, and one which the Torah commentators raise in several places.

It is true that regarding observing the Torah in general, and throughout this period of judgment of the High Holidays in particular, we are promised that the righteous will be rewarded. And as you point out, this reward is described in this-worldly terms.

Yet, we are taught by the Sages that "the reward for *mitzvot* is not in this world". Rather, it will be in the World-to-Come. This is one of the reasons behind the idea you mention that the righteous will be rewarded for their good deeds in the World-to-Come, whereas their few misdeeds will be "rewarded" in this world in the form of suffering, in order that they reap the full benefit of their righteousness in the next world.

However, if this is true, although we can understand why the wicked will be punished in the next world for their misdeeds, why are they rewarded for their few good deeds in this world?

According to the teaching of the Sages quoted above, there's no reward for *mitzvot* in this world!

The answer to this question also answers yours.

In addition to teaching us that the reward for *mitzvot* is not in this world, the Sages also teach us that while the "principal" accrued by the *mitzvot* is rewarded in the next world, the "interest" on that principal is paid out in this world.

Therefore, the fact that the principal will be retained for the righteous in the next world doesn't mean they'll necessarily suffer in this world. It's the "interest" on their investment that the Torah promises as blessing for doing G-d's Will, or as life and its bounties conferred upon the righteous during the period of judgment of the High Holidays.

On the other hand, the reward given to the wicked in this world for their few good deeds is actually the principal itself. Even though the reward for *mitzvot* is not in this world, that's specifically in the normal state of affairs. However, the wicked, by investing their efforts in the physical world, make it the place where their principal is paid. This results in their reaping the full "reward" for their misdeeds in the World-to-Come.

So to summarize, the "this-worldly" blessing promised to the righteous is paid from the interest on their holdings in the World-to-Come. And even though their few misdeeds are simultaneously reckoned here as suffering, that's only to preserve the integrity of their investments there. Whereas the wicked receive the full reward for their good deeds here, and suffer the full repercussions of their wickedness in the World-to-Come.

In what way, then, is the Torah's "this-worldly curse" against wicked realized?

For one, even though they may have bounty, they don't have blessing in that bounty. They are never satisfied with what they have, they're constantly driven by jealousy and competition to have more, and therefore don't really enjoy what they have. The righteous, however, in spirit with the teaching of our Sages, "Who is wealthy? He who is content with his portion", are grateful for and happy with G-d's gift - which is blessing. And this is a further curse for the wicked, who — seeing the righteous content with less — seethe with dissatisfaction and dismay.

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## REMEMBER US FOR LIFE

**“Remember us for life, O King who desires life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life, For Your sake, O Living G-d.”**

Why do we ask G-d to write us in the Book of Life after we've already asked to be remembered for life? Are both of these petitions not a request for the same thing? Furthermore, what is meant by the phrase “King who desires life”?

G-d's decision to create Man was, in effect, a decision to give him life. Each year, on the day of Man's creation, G-d re-decides, so to speak, whether or not to continue giving life to Man.

Let us look at how this process works:

G-d's original desire to create was not influenced by Man or by his merits, since he did not exist yet. It was rather a decision that was initiated and motivated entirely by G-d, in order to bestow of His goodness upon His creations, foremost of them Man. Accordingly, it is taught, based on the *Kabbalah*, that during the first six days of creation G-d caused to emanate a Divine life-giving light from Himself. This initial radiance is the primordial light that brought the world into being. It is further explained that even today, there still remains a glimmer of this light which represents a continuation of G-d's original desire to create, and it therefore abounds whether or not we are deserving of His goodness.

Once Man was created, however, it is mainly through his efforts that G-d's Divine, life-giving light emanates down to the world from above. Man was handed down the mission of arousing within G-d, so to speak, a continued desire to create and rule over His world. This is the deeper meaning of the saying that there can be no king without a nation. In fact, the essential role of the Jewish people on Rosh Hashana is to accept and crown G-d as King, thereby arousing within Him, as it were, a desire to lower Himself, and remain involved in the world and its people.

**“Remember us for life ... [and] inscribe us in the Book of Life.”**

And so, we beseech G-d, “Remember, O L-rd, the moment when You first decided to give us life. It was the moment that preceded all of creation, the moment when it surfaced in Your thoughts to make Man. As our beloved King, Your one and only desire at that moment was to bestow Your goodness upon us, And just as then (when we surfaced in Your thoughts), Your decision to give us life stemmed, not from any of our merits, but from Your Divine desire to do so. Today, “*O King Who desires life*”, we recall that desire, and beseech You to “*Inscribe us in the Book of Life*,” even if we lack the necessary merit.

According to the above, we can answer that we are asking G-d for life only one time. In order to arouse G-d's desire to bestow life out of pure kindness, we first ask that He recall the initial moment of Creation. Only after we present our petition and say, “*Inscribe us in the Book of Life*,” do we actually ask Him to grant us life for another year.

**“For Your sake, O Living G-d”**

It was mentioned above that after Man was created, it is through him that G-d's desire to sustain the world is drawn down from above. Therefore, in order to further increase our chances of being granted life, we proclaim our resolve to mend our ways. In view of the fact that we committed many sins in the past, we now resolve to commit to living a life “*for Your sake*” so that we may fulfill G-d's original desire to have a nation devoted exclusively to doing His will.

**“O Living G-d”**

Why do we mention that G-d is a “*Living G-d*”? G-d is the source of all life, and therefore, the only way to truly be alive is by attaching ourselves to Him through Torah and *mitzvot*, which stem from His Will and His Wisdom. Accordingly, saying the words “*Living G-d*” confirms our acknowledgment that He is the true Source of our lives.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## TIFERET YISRAEL

**D**o not say “*When I have free time I will learn, for you may never have that free time*” — Hillel (*Avot* 2:4).

This is a warning to busy leaders and to anyone preoccupied with his activities. When he finds a little free time let him not say; “What can I learn in such



a short time? When I have a big break, then I will sit down to learn”.

That break may never come. In the meantime, those fifteen minutes, a small fraction of your life that is only a long chain of such moments, has been lost to you forever.

• *Tiferet Yisrael*

# YOM KIPPUR

## *Taking Responsibility for Our Lives*

by Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

*People sometimes view Yom Kippur as a day of somber doom and gloom, full of long unintelligible praying, physical deprivations, and fears and anxieties about the future. Yet our Sages view Yom Kippur in quite a different light.*

**T**he Mishna in Masechet Ta'anit (26b) tells us that Yom Kippur was one of the two most joyous days of the Jewish year (the other being the 15th of Av, as explained there). Yom Kippur is a day of forgiveness, reconciliation and opportunity for a new beginning, unencumbered by the crushing deadweight of past failure. Yom Kippur is a wondrous gift of love from the Creator, the gift of a second chance. As such, despite the lengthy prayers and the physical discomfort of no food or drink, and our backs, knees and feet being sore from long hours of standing, one should cherish every moment "like the sweetness of honey" (an expression I heard from my revered *Mashgiach* Rav Dovid Kronglass, *zatzal*). For an all too brief 25-hour period we are with G-d, in Whose presence there is "strength and joy" (Chronicles I 16:27).

If a blind person were given one day in which to see, what would he do? How he would rush to savor the memory of color, of pattern, to notice the green of the grass, the colors of flowers, the smiles of his children. How he would hold on to everything he could see so he could imprint it on his mind and soul and consciousness, even as the physical image fades away. This last hour of Yom Kippur, as we say the *Ne'ilah* prayer, is very much the same. We spend most of our lives only half-seeing. If not blind, then we are at least color-blind, missing so much of the essence. On Yom Kippur, when we really focus, we can begin to see. On this day the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) is particularly close and the gates of Heaven are open to our prayers. But toward the end of the day that time is ending, and we will go back to our regular life, our life of half-seeing. The prayer of *Ne'ilah* is shorter than the rest of the Yom Kippur prayers. There are no long

"*al chets*". We are pressed for time and we are pushing to get those last few requests in. We are trying and striving to hold on to the special moments when G-d is closer to us than at any other time of the year, to remember them so we can continue to keep some of the holiness within us.

And *teshuva* can be earned in a moment if we do it right. The *gemara* in Avoda Zara (17a) relates the story of Elazar ben Dordaya who was a notoriously degenerate person. He was so degenerate that he traveled the world looking for prostitutes. Finally he heard of one he hadn't been with, far away. He made the trip, but she was so disgusted that he had spent so much effort to find her that she refused to be with him. This woke him up. In an instant he realized what he had become. In despair, he turned to the mountains and hills and asked them to pray for him. They answered him that they couldn't — they had to pray for themselves. Next he turned to the heaven and earth and asked them the same. Again he got the same answer. Next he turned to the sun and moon, and again was turned down. Finally he turned to the stars, and they, too, refused him. At last he cried out that the only one who could save him was himself. All of it was on his shoulders. With this realization he cried such a pitiful cry to G-d that his soul left his body. At that instant a voice from Heaven sounded, "Rabbi Elazar ben Dordaya has earned a share in the World-to-Come." He had been given rabbinic ordination posthumously. When the rabbis of the Talmud told this story they would cry with the realization that in an instant someone could ascend so high and acquire his share in the World-to-Come in one minute — and yet so many of us waste so much time. And so many years.

The great Reisher Rav, *zatzal* ( Rabbi Aaron Levine who

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YOM KIPPUR *Taking Responsibility for Our Lives continued from page nine*

died in the Holocaust) explains this story further. What is the meaning of Elazer ben Dordaya's dialogue with the elements? What earned him his passage into the next world? He explains that the hills and mountains are often a reference to parents. When Elazar realized what he had become, his first impulse was to look for someone to blame. He called to his parents, as if to say, "It's not my fault. You raised me poorly and that's why I became what I became." But in his heart of hearts he knew the truth. Hearing the echo of his parents' response in his own heightened consciousness, he understood that whatever his parents may have to answer for is between them and G-d, but that he and all of us remain free actors responsible for the life we choose. Next, in his restless, frenetic efforts to find a scapegoat and an excuse, he turned to the heaven and earth, which are symbols of the environment. Perhaps his environment could be blamed — his friends, his society, the predominant culture to which he was exposed. He got the same answer. Next he turned to the sun and moon, which control the crops, and are symbols of economic circumstance. A person might be led to sin because of poverty, or conversely the pressures of success might be a crushing insurmountable burden. Again he received the same answer. Finally, he turned to the stars, his DNA, as it were, his predetermined characteristics. All these things he looked to blame, and each one refused. Finally, he realized it all lay in his own power. Though parents and environment

and economics and inborn traits all weigh on a person, ultimately we have free choice. We are not a product of rigid determinism. This is what Elazer ben Dordaya realized, and in realizing it, he took responsibility for himself. This is what earned him his life in the World-to-Come. He approached G-d with honesty, simplicity and directness. We certainly cannot fool G-d, but we must be careful not to fool ourselves either!

The Maggid of Kelem used to tell a story, a famous parable, in which for one half hour the inhabitants of the city's graveyard were brought back to life for the purpose of fixing what they had not done right in life. He described the frenzy of the dead, rushing from their graves to learn a page of *gemara*, or to give charity, or to try to make something right with their loved ones. And all the time they had their eyes on the clock. Twenty five minutes left, then only fifteen, finally five, and then the clock strikes, and with a wail the dead are again gone. The Maggid of Kelem would finish by asking his audience, "And my friends, what's so bad if we have more than a half hour? And my friends, who says we *have* a half hour?"

Life is precious. Opportunities are legion. Let us use the gifts that G-d in His infinite kindness has given us and may we and all of Israel merit a good and sweet year of health, holiness and growth.

## @ OHR *Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students*

### **Wife Uses Her Money to Send Her Husband to Yeshiva**

**"W" Age: 37**  
**Ma'aleh Adumim, Israel**  
**HVA College – Physical Therapist**  
**Mechina Program Alumnus**

"W" recently bought his wife a ring in the form of Jerusalem. "Rabbi Akiva bought his wife a crown of Jerusalem" after she sent him to yeshiva for 24 years, he explains. "I wanted to do the same," says W, after his wife used her inheritance money to support their family so he could learn in Ohr Somayach full-time for a year.

W was born in Amsterdam and went to a traditional Orthodox school, but was left without a background in Torah learning. He worked as a physical therapist in a major

Israeli hospital for a number of years when the hospital started encouraging their therapists to pursue Master's degrees. W unexcitedly see-sawed on the idea of going back to school, but his wife said, "If you're already thinking of taking time off to learn, at least learn something *useful*." She pushed him to learn in yeshiva for a year using her unexpectedly-received inheritance money to support the family while he kept a minimal position at the hospital.

That year in Mechina was fulfilling and inspiring for W, and for his wife. With the ArtScroll Talmud he can now learn Talmud, and has been doing "Mishna Yomi" (a worldwide daily Mishna program) for over a year. On Wednesdays he has three study partners from 1:00 pm straight into the evening. The rest of the week he works in physical therapy doing clinic and home visits. W and his wife live in Ma'aleh Adumim with their six children. "I feel very blessed," he concludes.

*By Daniel Keebler*

# Abarbanel

## ON THE PARSHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

### PARSHAT HA'AZINU

**A**barbanel relates that this Parsha consists of 6 separate sections:

1. General introduction
2. The benefits that G-d has granted to the Jewish People
3. The transgressions of the Jewish People
4. The punishments that will follow these transgressions
5. G-d's initial intention to annihilate the Jewish People
6. Consolation and G-d's revenge against the enemies of the Jewish People

In reference to G-d's benefits, Chapter 32 verse 6 alludes to four specific types of kindness: "Is He not your *Father*, your *Master*? Has he not *created* you and set you up as a firm *foundation*? The verses that follow proceed to explain this verse:

1. 'Your Father' is a reference to the fact that G-d is the ultimate father. Just as he created the universe, he also created Mankind. This is what is meant in verse 7, "Remember the days of yore, and understand the years of generation after generation." G-d tells us to trace back through human history all the way to its very beginning and to recognize Him as Mankind's ultimate creator.

2. 'Your Master' is a reference to the Exodus from Egypt, when G-d 'acquired' us as His people. Even though succeeding generations did not experience the Exodus, verse 7 continues, "Ask your father and he will relate it to you, and your elders and they will tell you."

3. 'Has he not created you' is a reference to the Torah as a possession of the Jewish People. Verse 8 relates that G-d granted each of the nations of the world its particular portion. But the Jewish People received 'G-d's portion'. This refers to the giving of the Torah at Sinai, as it says in verse 10, "He discovered him in a desert land...He granted him discernment." By giving us the Torah, G-d has 'created' the Jewish People, a new creation, unique and distinct from the other nations.

4. The final kindness is giving the Land of Israel to the Jewish People. This is the meaning of verse 13, "He will make him ride on the heights of the Land." This refers to the conquest and settlement of the Land of Israel.

In Chapter 32, verse 13 G-d's concern for the Jewish people is compared to an eagle's concern for her young. A mother eagle shows concern for her young in four specific ways: As the verse says, "He was like an eagle arousing its nest, hovering over its young, spreading its wings and taking them; carrying them on its limbs."

1. When the eagle approaches the nest, it signals with a dis-

tinctive whistling sound, so as not to startle the young.

2. The eagle does not descend suddenly on the young, lest she injure them with her talons. Rather, she hovers and descends slowly.

3. When she wants to move the young, she takes the entire nest at once in order to minimize the disturbance.

4. When she carries them, she doesn't carry them on any protruding feathers. Rather, she carries them on her body to minimize the risk of falling.

This is exactly how G-d dealt with the Jewish People during the Exodus. As the verse states, "You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians and I carried you on the wings of eagles."

1. When G-d decided to take us out of Egypt, He first sent Moshe and Aaron who functioned as an initial signal.

2. G-d did not immediately demonstrate his strength and power, as He did at Sinai. Rather, like the eagle, he 'hovered' over Egypt.

3. Just like the eagle, who takes the entire nest at once, G-d took out the entire nation, with all of its possessions, at one time.

4. G-d prevented the Egyptians from harming us by placing the Clouds of Glory between us and the Egyptian army.

Finally, verse 12 states, "G-d alone guided them, and no other power was with them." Just as the eagle can carry its young on its back since there is no other bird that flies higher and could threaten them from above, so too there were no other powers or intermediaries other than G-d Himself who could provide these benefits to the Jewish People.

### PARSHAT V'ZOT HABERACHA

Abarbanel asks: Why is Moshe's exact gravesite unknown? He gives three reasons:

1. The whereabouts of Moshe's gravesite, the Ark of the Covenant and the Menorah are all unknown in order to prevent anyone from making use of them inappropriately. (Abarbanel points out that in his time, the Cave of the Patriarchs, containing the tombs of Avraham, Yizchak and Yaakov, was under the control of the Moslems who conducted their religious services there).

2. G-d wanted to protect the honor of Moshe. When an individual dies, his soul, which represents the essence of all that he has accomplished in his lifetime, is separated from his body, a purely physical entity which decomposes and putrefies in the ground. Anyone can walk on the grave of a righteous person and think to himself, "Now, where is your wisdom, your prophecy, your godliness? Where is your honor and where are

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*Abarbanel* **ON THE PARSHA** *continued from page eleven*

your superior qualities? G-d wanted to protect Moshe from such humiliation. He was buried with the crown of his glory intact, never to be denigrated by anyone.

3. Moshe's entire essence and nature was different from anyone else's. Even his appearance inspired awe, for when he descended from Mt. Sinai, "Aaron and the children of Israel saw and behold! The skin of Moshe's face had become radiant; and they feared to approach him." Just as his level of prophecy, wisdom and understanding was qualitatively different from and inaccessible to everyone else, so too his gravesite had to remain inaccessible as well.

All of these reasons are alluded to in the verses that describe Moshe's death:

1. He was buried "opposite Ba'al Peor." (Ba'al Peor was a pagan idol). Moshe's burial site, being unknown, is the exact 'opposite' of Ba'al Peor, a well-known place of idolatrous worship.

2. He buried him in "Gai". Even though the word connotes a depression in the ground, it also refers to glory and honor.

3. He was buried in "the land of Moav." Since the place-name Moav contains the word 'Av' or 'father', this is an allusion to Moshe's status as a father to a multitude of nations, a father of Torah and a father of prophecy

**PARSHAT BEREISHET**

The last section of Parshat Bereishet is extremely difficult to understand. However, Abarbanel offers an insightful explanation. The Torah states, "G-d saw that the wickedness of Man was great upon the earth...and G-d reconsidered (regretted) having made Man on earth...And G-d said, I will blot out Man...from the face of the ground."

Two questions stand out. First of all, what did Mankind do wrong that necessitated its destruction? Secondly, how could G-d 'regret' having created Man? All-knowing and existing outside of time, He certainly 'knew' what Mankind's future behavior would be.

The relationship between Man's behavior and the earth itself is the key to answering the first question. All of Man's evil behavior was the result of the gross materialism of the earth. This caused the demands and opportunities available to his physical nature to overwhelm his pure rational soul. What resulted was complete moral and ethical degeneration. By destroying all of Mankind, save for Noah and his family, G-d was actually acting mercifully to rebuild Mankind in an environment where the rational soul was no longer bound irretrievably to materialism. Mankind's life-span was drastically reduced, and as a result of drastic changes in the environment the earth no longer yielded its bounty effortlessly. What looked like punishment was ultimately an act of mercy.

As far as the second question is concerned: How can G-d regret anything, since He has foreknowledge? We can under-

stand this by way of a parable. A farmer will plant a tree, nurture it and then cut off its branches in order to graft to other trees. An ignorant onlooker might think that he changed his mind and destroyed the original tree, but clearly the farmer had this 'destruction' in mind the whole time. Similarly, G-d knew that in order for Mankind to progress to its ultimate destiny, it was necessary for a small group to resist the moral degeneracy that surrounded them and go on to repopulate the earth. In our perception it appears that G-d is destroying what he built. But in G-d's frame of reference, there is no regret, no reconsidering and no new knowledge. Rather G-d was aware of everything that was going to happen and it was specifically because of this knowledge that He acted in order to elevate Mankind to a higher spiritual level.

**PARSHAT NOACH**

The end of the Parsha deals with the episode of the building of the Tower of Babel and the subsequent emergence of a variety of languages and the dispersal of the population. The Talmud relates that it was the generation's intention to ascend into the sky and fight against the Heavenly domain. How could they have agreed to something so ridiculous and clearly impossible? G-d's reaction should have been derisive laughter, not dispersal and multiple languages. If, however, they were demonstrating fundamental heresy and denial of G-d's omnipotence, then the punishment is actually inadequate. Their fate should have been destruction, like the generation of the Flood.

Abarbanel answers that this generation was similar to the generation of the Flood in that they were also dedicated to material and physical pursuits, but since they did not sink to the level of depravity of that generation, their destruction was not warranted. But, because they demonstrated unity of purpose in their pursuit of material accomplishment, that very unity would inevitably lead to moral depravity as well. The result was G-d's sundering of that unity through dispersal.

The creation of multiple languages can be explained as follows. As long as society was satisfied with the products, activities and simplicity of the natural world, language was uniform and uncomplicated. Once people began to manipulate the material world and create new things, new words and concepts were required to describe these innovations. In effect, this generation started the process of complicating language themselves. G-d then magnified the process. Terminology which had previously been agreed upon was now fragmented into many different languages, a process exacerbated by dispersal to radically different environments and geographical settings.

# The Succa on Shmini Atzeret?

BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

Different *minhagim* come to the forefront this time of year, and growing up spending many a Yom Tov among Jews of all stripes, in various kosher hotels, makes this author uniquely suited to address this annual Succot “battle”. Not the proper order of *na’anuim* shaking with the Lulav and Etrog, nor the correct order of the Ushpizin. Rather, I’m referring to sitting in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret. Is it an obligation or recommendation? Prohibited or permitted?

## Sukka Source

Not a recent question, the *gemara* in Succa (46b-47a) deals with this very subject — how Shmini Atzeret is viewed in halacha. The Torah states that the day following the weeklong holiday of Succot (which we know colloquially as Shmini Atzeret) is a holiday as well, and technically not part of Succot. This means that on this day there is no obligation to do any of the *mitzvot* exclusive to Succot, whether shaking the Lulav or eating in the Succa. As long as the Sanhedrin in Eretz Yisrael established the New Month (Rosh Chodesh) based on eyewitnesses, Jews in far away places who did not receive messengers in time would keep two days of Yom Tov instead of one. This was due to the uncertainty of which day Rosh Chodesh truly was, and consequently when the *Yamim Tovim* actually fell out, all to ensure that they did not unwittingly transgress any Biblical prohibitions. Later, in the times of Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas, when much calendar confusion reigned (due to the subversive efforts of the Kutim), Chazal decreed that in *Chutz La’aretz* (the Diaspora), “*Yom Tov Sheini*” is always observed.

The outcome of this is that in Eretz Yisrael where there never was a *safek yom* or “day in doubt”, only one day of Yom Tov is celebrated, exactly as it is written in the Torah, while in *Chutz La’aretz* each day of Yom Tov has become a “two-day Yom Tov”. Which brings us back to our dilemma: What should we do on Shmini Atzeret in *Chutz La’aretz*? Do we treat it as part of the preceding holiday of Succot, or does it maintain its exclusive status as a separate holiday?

As previously mentioned, this issue is debated in the *gemara*, which famously concludes that on Shmini Atzeres “*Meitiv yatvinan, bruchi lo mevorchinan*”. In other words, we eat in the Succa, but we don’t make the regularly mandated *beracha* of “*leisheiv ba’Succa*”. The Rosh explains that since Succot and Shmini Atzeret are separate and different holidays and have different sets of *mitzvot*, we can’t do all of them since it would be ‘*tarti desatri*’, an outright contradiction. Rather, we do what we can *lechumra*, meaning eating in the Succa, but not making the blessing. We also do not wave the Arba Minim on Shmini

Atzeret. This dual ruling is duly codified in halacha by the Rambam, Tur and Shulchan Aruch.

## Minhag Mysteries

Yet, something seems to be lacking in the application of this halacha. For if this is the proper conclusion, why are there divergent customs? And there most definitely are divergent customs here! There are those who sleep in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret; those who don’t even step foot in the Succa; those who only make Kiddush in the Succa but eat the majority of their meals inside, and those who only eat in the Succa but don’t sleep there. Which is correct?

## To Sleep or Not to Sleep?

It is known that the Vilna Gaon was very conscientious not only to eat in the Succa but also to sleep in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret. The Chayei Adam relates that the Gr”a once made the whole yeshiva sleep in the Succa on a freezing Shmini Atzeret night, just to show the rest of the city the importance of following this halacha. Several authorities rule like the Gr”a, saying that one must sleep in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret, as they maintain that the last day of Succot is the most important. However, many authorities do not agree with this reasoning and maintain that although one must eat in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret, nevertheless, one does not (and some say nor should not) sleep in the Succah. The Chatam Sofer famously did not sleep in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret. This is also the conclusion of the Mishna Berura, who states that the “*Minhag Ha’Olam*” is not to sleep in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret.

## Not to Eat

However, there were many great authorities who ardently defended the *minhag* of not eating in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret, including the Sfas Emes, the Aruch Hashulchan, the Kozeglover Gaon, and the Minchas Elazar. Many of them are based on the Korban Nesanel who writes that since eating in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret is only based on doubt, therefore in places where it is cold and windy one does not have to do so. Others understand that the *gemara* meant that one *may* eat in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret without the *beracha* of “*leisheiv ba’Succa*”, but not that one is obligated to. Either way, different *minhagim* of not exclusively eating in the Succa on Shmini Atzeret have earned staunch support.

## Israel Issues

I know, readers in Israel are saying that’s all very nice, but this doesn’t affect them since they only keep one day. But actually it

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# A Fleeting Look at the Year

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

It does not seem like such a long time ago that we were at the end of last year and anticipating this year. And now we are at the end of this year and anticipating next year. I don't know about you but I find this all somewhat troubling. Each year begins with such a rush of enthusiasm and eagerness but by the time we get to the end of the year it is all a little jaded. The enthusiasm for this year is lost and the best that we can seem to muster up is to eagerly await the New Year, imagining that something new must be better than how things are right now.

If you ask the scientists they will explain that the world and everything in it are always in a constant state of movement, with some things easier to recognize as always being in a state of change than others. The moon, for example, does not stay still for a minute! It is always in a state of change – waxing and waning but never remaining the same. If you live a place where the night sky is clear you can even see the pattern of the moon's growth during the space of one night. Inanimate objects, on the other hand, seem to be, well...inanimate. However, that is not really accurate because within them their molecular composition is in a constant state of agitation. Without this constant motion the "inanimate" object will not be able to exist. Fire, like the moon, is something that is always renewing itself. When we look at a flame we are not seeing something constant. We are seeing a flame that is in a constant state of renewal. That is one of the reasons why the King Solomon likens the soul to a flame. In the same way that a flame is constantly striving to move upwards and is never still for even a moment, so too the soul needs to be in a constant of state of spiritual movement, continuously straining to reach upwards beyond whatever has already been achieved and to find new spiritual vistas to be conquered. Interestingly enough, the moon is analogous to the Jewish Nation. Our Sages see many parallels between ourselves and the moon. Perhaps the most obvious one is that the moon waxes and wanes as do the fortunes of the Jewish People. There is much that one can

learn from the moon, but its constant movement and change is the most important lesson of all. When we compare ourselves to the moon the most significant comparison needs to be that we too must always be moving – always growing, always stretching into something beyond what we were the moment before.

One of the greatest personalities in Jewish history, the Ba'al Shem Tov, once met a friend of his in the street and asked how he was faring. The friend began to complain of his bitter lot. He worked all day as a water carrier despite his old age and the difficulties of his job. Yet he still could not make ends meet with his meager earnings. He had older daughters at home whom he could not afford to marry off. Each day seemed bleaker than the day before it with no ray of hope in sight. The Ba'al Shem Tov commiserated with his suffering and wished him the best. The man thanked him for his interest and carried on with his load.

A few days later the Ba'al Shem Tov again met the same friend and again asked how he was faring. This time the man answered with a bright smile. "Thank G-d!" he said, "Everything is going fine. Thank G-d, I have a job and can afford the bare necessities. Imagine how difficult it is for the people who do not have the health to work. I have a wife and children and my daughters are G-d-fearing, healthy, clever, and have everything a father could wish for his children. So what if I can't afford to offer a large dowry for them? Does that mean that they'll never get married? Other people are poorer than me and still married off their children. With the help of G-d, so will I. We must not let our little troubles overcome us", he told the Ba'al Shem Tov. "When you take everything in perspective life does not seem so hard at all!" With that he thanked the Ba'al Shem Tov again for his interest, and hurried along, humming a happy tune beneath his breath. The Ba'al Shem Tov then began to think. A person is judged on Rosh Hashana for all that will occur to him over the course of the year: his health, his prosperity, his family, his everything. But will he be able to appre-

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Bereishet

## IMAGINE

*“Let Us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness...” (1:26)*

How can Man be “in Our image”. What possible comparison can there be between G-d and Man? G-d is the painter and man is the painting. How can the painting resemble the artist in any way?

All the animals of creation view the world through their senses. They know only what they see, smell, hear, touch and taste. Their world is bounded by immediate perception. But Man is different. The word for Man in Hebrew is *Adam*, which comes from *dimion*, meaning ‘imagination’.

The very essence of man, for that is his *name*, his defining quality, is his *imagination*. Man can fly above mere physical perception and travel to the ends of space and time in his mind. Only Man can take what he perceives and compare, analyze and extrapolate.

This is the comparison between Man and his Creator. G-d said *“Let Us make Man...”* so that he will have the power of imagination to extend himself by thought into places where nothing previously existed.

## PARTNERS

*“Let Us make Man...” (1:26)*

One of the reasons that the Torah speaks here in the plural, saying *“Let Us make Man,”* is to teach us that every human being is obliged to be a partner in the ongoing work of creation — that he should make himself worthy to be the goal and purpose of Creation.

It is for this reason the Creation concludes specifically with Man, to indicate to him that he is the end of Creation and its purpose.

Thus, it is only fitting that Man should not only perfect his actions, but also his body. The mitzvah of *brit mila* (circumcision) indicates that Man, by making himself a partner in his own physical and spiritual self-perfection, shares in the concomitant perfection of the world.

## GOOD VS. VERY GOOD

*“G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good.” (1:31)*

With each new creation the Torah says, *“and G-d saw it was good”*. With one exception. The creation of Man. After Man’s creation it doesn’t say that *“G-d saw it was good”*.

Why not?

The idea of G-d *seeing* something implies that the nature of that entity is transfixed and immutable for eternity. However Man is not fixed. He has free-will either to choose good or evil. Thus, concerning Man the Torah does not write *“and G-d saw it was good”*.

However, after the creation of Man, G-d took a *second look* at the Creation and deemed it *very good*. Because with Man’s creation there came into existence a creature with the ability to *choose* to do G-d’s Will, rather than to do it involuntarily like a flower or an animal or a star.

Therefore, when Man fulfills G-d’s Will he elevates the entire Creation from *good* to *very good*.

Noach

## WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY

*“They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them in fire.’ And the brick served them as stone, and the lime served them as mortar.” (11:3)*

Technology is the conceit of the modern world. The GNS system in our car allows us to receive satellite signals locating our position to within six feet anywhere on the planet. Behind the helm of our trusty gleaming V-8, we are the kings of the road. Previous generations pale into technological primitives.

We have the technology.

With a cellular phone we can call from the desert, from the top of a mountain, from the middle of nowhere, and communicate to anywhere in the world. And what are those deathless words that we wish to communicate across the tens of thousands of miles?

“Hi! Guess where I am!”

Now that’s what I call progress.

We may know where our car is better than ever before, but when it comes to knowing where we ourselves are, that’s a different story.

If we had developed in any real sense over the last couple of thousand years, would we still find anything of value in Shakespeare? If the human spirit had undergone a comparable degree of progress to technology, the poetry and art of those who died hundreds of years ago should seem impossibly quaint to the modern eye. If we were really more advanced, no one should be in the slightest bit interested in John Donne, Cervantes, Sophocles, Pascal, Mozart or Boticelli — except for historians. And yet, we recognize that our generation is hard put to come anywhere close to these artists.

Technology is an apology for our feelings of inferiority when we compare ourselves to our forebears. Our axiom is, “We may have less to say, but we can say it from the middle of nowhere.” Cold comfort is better than none.

At the end of this week’s Torah portion there is a description of the attempt of the Generation of Dispersion (*Dor Hapalaga*) to build a tower that reached into the sky.

*“They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them in fire.’ And the brick served them as stone, and the lime served them as mortar.”*

Rashi comments: *“In Babylon there were no stones...”*

Because there were no stones in Babylon, they were forced to apply technology and invent the brick. Immediately following this verse they say, *“Come, let’s build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens.”* They wanted to make a tower to challenge G-d.

This is a seeming non-sequitur. What does the lack of stones in Babylon have to do with building a city and a tower to challenge G-d? Why is making bricks a harbinger of incipient rebellion?

The *Dor Hapalaga* was intoxicated with technology. Bricks were the Babylonian equivalent of a Saturn V rocket. Take some mud, bake it and voila! Genius. If Man can take mud and turn it into towers and spires and palaces, what can he not do? Is there a limit to his powers?

From this kind of thinking there is a very small step for Mankind to think that they can dispense with G-d completely.

*“Let us build and make for us a name.”*

We have the technology.

• Sources: Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Rabbi Yissochar Frand

### The Succa on Shemini Atzeret *continued from page thirteen*

just might concern them. For what is a “*Chutznik*” or two-day *Yom Tov* keeper who happens to be in Israel for Succot (quite commonly yeshiva students) to do? Since they are only temporarily in Eretz Yisrael they must (according to the majority halachic consensus) keep the second day of *Yom Tov* in Israel as well. Must they still sit in a Succa on Shmini Atzeret or should they do as the Romans...err, Israelis do?

Contemporary halachic decisors are divided as to the proper halacha, with no clear-cut ruling. The Tukachinsky Luach, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, the Minchas Yitzchak, and the Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa rule that a “*Chutznik*” should not eat in a Succah in Israel on Shmini Atzeret, as one should not be stringent on a “*safek yom*” that does not apply where they currently are, especially as the whole rule of keeping two days in Eretz Yisrael is a matter of dispute. Additionally, sitting in a Succah publicly when the locals do not might be of halachic concern.

Others, including Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi Vosner and the Debreciner Rav, rule that someone who always keeps *Yom Tov*

Sheini must continue to keep it to its full extent — even in Eretz Yisrael.

A third opinion, that of Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, and the Betzeil HaChochma is that the *Chutznik* should eat in a Succa unless he is dependent on locals for his meals. This means that a yeshiva student eating at relatives who are eating their *Yom Tov* meal inside may eat with them, as he is not obligated to cause them hardship. As with any other halachic question, one should ask his own Rabbinic authority which opinion he should personally follow.

Whatever your *minhag* on Shmini Atzeret, enjoy the protection of the “*zecher l'ananei hakavod*”, and feel the embrace of Hakodosh Baruch Hu all *Yom Tov* long!

**Disclaimer:** This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent halachic authority.

**Editor's note:** The article with extensive footnotes is available at: <http://new.ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/5269/html/rss/>

### A Fleeting Look at the Year *continued from page fourteen*

ciate what G-d grants him? That changes from day to day. Sometimes we can easily appreciate and recognize the gifts that G-d gives us. At other times it is not so easy and we feel disappointed over our sorry lot. Then we see only the black parts of our life, and cannot see the kindness of G-d that surrounds us.

It is quite astonishing that here we are at the brink of another New Year – Rosh Hashana. We will go to Synagogue again and we will listen to the Shofar blasts as we did last year, and eat apples and honey once more. We will greet everyone we meet with a big smile and a heartfelt salutation that they be blessed with a good sweet year. But will we stop to wonder why Rosh Hashana is such an enormous deal in the Jewish year? In truth, the world is in a constant state of renewal every moment of our existence. Each minute is like the flame of the candle that is replaced by another flame immediately, so fleeting that we can't even see it happening. Everything is moving, even the table that seems so incredibly stable. That should really be a cause to stop and think. What about me? Am I in a state of constant agitation just like that flame? Am I in a state of continual movement and

change like the moon? It's hard to keep that in mind the whole time. It is quite an undertaking to accept that each moment of the day is non-returnable moment of pure potential that must be realized. That is what Rosh Hashana comes to teach us. If we utilize Rosh Hashana properly we are realigning our thoughts and the way that we interrelate with the world.

Why is so much emphasis placed on Rosh Hashana? Because it is hard to keep our spiritual “molecules” in focus all the time. But if we move into Rosh Hashana with the knowledge that it affords us the most incredible opportunity to hit the “restart” button, then we can truly spend the whole year aflame, because by using each moment as a stepping stone to the next we are really experiencing a miniature Rosh Hashana every day!

May we all be blessed with a sweet year of continued growth in our spiritual lives and may we all merit to appreciate each and every fleeting moment before it is replaced by the next — because each fleeting moment is an eternity in and of itself.

continued from page six

*“One makes Havdala after Shabbat, after Yom Tov, after Yom Kippur, after Shabbat that is followed by a Yom Tov, and after Yom Tov that is followed by Chol Ha’Moed; but one does not make Havdala after Yom Tov that is followed by Shabbat.”*

This *tosefta* is taught in our *gemara* to list when Havdala is said and when it is not. Why isn’t Havdala said when Yom Tov is followed by Shabbat? The Rashbam explains by means of a parable. It is not appropriate to escort from one’s place a person of high noble status – such as Duke (Yom Tov) – when at the same time the King is arriving at the city (Shabbat).

• Pesachim 104a

*“The sons of Rabbi Chiya said, ‘One who didn’t make Havdala on Motzei Shabbat may do so throughout the week... Until when? Rabbi Zeira said, ‘Until the fourth day of the week’ (Rashi explains this to mean up to but not including the fourth day, which begins on Tuesday at sunset).”*

These statements taught on our *daf* teach that although Havdala should ideally be made right after Shabbat, it may be still made for the next three days if one forgot to do so or if it was not possible to do so earlier. After those three days, the next three days are already associated with the coming Shabbat and not to the previous one, and Havdala for the previous Shabbat is no longer appropriate by then (Rashi). This teaching of Rabbi Zeira is cited as the halacha in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 299:6. In any event, the *ner* and *besamim* apply only on Motzei Shabbat but not later.

• Pesachim 106a

*“They said about Rabbi Akiva: ‘He never said that it was time to take leave from the Beit Midrash except on the afternoon before Pesach and the afternoon before Yom Kippur. Before Pesach he would say to leave early in order that the children would not sleep (at the Seder for the Hagadda at night, since they had slept already earlier before Pesach night – Rashi), and before Yom Kippur he would say to leave early so that should feed their children.”*

• Pesachim 109a

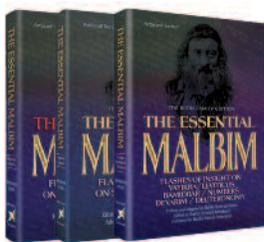
*“G-d loves three types of people: a person who doesn’t get angry, a person who doesn’t get drunk and one who doesn’t look to get back at others who upset him.”*

• Pesachim 113b

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## ROSH HASHANAH Q&A ?

1. Why do we blow the shofar during the month of Elul?
2. Where in the written Torah text does it tell us explicitly that the first day of Tisrei is Rosh Hashanah?
3. We eat apples dipped in honey to symbolize a sweet year. Why do we choose apples above other sweet fruits?
4. What two blessings do we say before sounding the shofar?
5. Which Book of *Tanach* does the beginning of the *Tashlich* prayer come from?
6. What three barren women were 'remembered' by Hashem on Rosh Hashanah?
7. A person's yearly allowance is fixed on Rosh Hashanah, except for three types of expenses. What are they?
8. We refer to the binding of Isaac in our prayers when we say: "Answer us as You answered Abraham our father on Mount Moriah..." What was Abraham's prayer on Mount Moriah?
9. Why, even in Israel, are there two days of Rosh Hashanah, whereas other festivals in Israel are celebrated for only one day?
10. What halacha applies to the *shehechyanu* blessing on the second night of Rosh Hashanah which does not apply on the second night of any other holiday?

## ROSH HASHANAH Q&A!

### Answers to Rosh Hashanah's Questions!

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

1. After the sin of the golden calf, Moshe went up to Mount Sinai to receive the second set of Tablets on Rosh Chodesh Elul. On that day, the Jewish People sounded the shofar to remind themselves to stray no more after idol worship. Also, the sound of the shofar strikes awe into our hearts and inspires us to return to the ways of Torah.
  - *Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 581*
2. Nowhere. The Torah calls it "a day of shofar blowing." (This is one of many examples showing how our observance depends on the continuous oral tradition dating back to Mount Sinai).
  - *Bamidbar 29:1*
3. Isaac blessed Jacob with the words: "The fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field which Hashem has blessed..." (*Bereishis 27:27*). The Talmud identifies this "field" as an apple orchard.
  - *Ta'anis 29b, Biyur Hagra*
4. "Blessed are You... who has commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar," and the *shehechyanu* blessing.
  - *Orach Chaim 581:2*
5. The Book of Micha (7:18-20).
6. Sara, Rachel and Chana. On Rosh Hashanah it was decreed that these barren women would bear children.
  - *Tractate Rosh Hashanah 10b*
7. Expenses for Shabbat, Yom Tov, and the cost of one's children's Torah education.
  - *Ba'er Hetaiv Orach Chaim 242:1*
8. He prayed that Mount Moriah should remain a place of prayer for all future generations (*Onkelos 22:14*). Also, he prayed that his sacrifice of the ram should be considered as though he had actually sacrificed Isaac.
  - *Rashi 22:13*
9. Before our current exile, we did not have a fixed calendar as we do today. Rather, the Supreme Torah court in Jerusalem determined our calendar on a month to month basis. They did this on the first day of every month, based on witnesses testifying that they had seen the new moon. Therefore, the people outside Israel had insufficient time to find out the exact date in time for the festivals. The "two-day festival" arose to correct this situation. In Israel, however, the people lived close enough to Jerusalem to find out the exact date of all the festivals except Rosh Hashanah. Since Rosh Hashanah occurs on the first day of the month, even those living in Jerusalem sometimes needed to observe it for two days, if the witnesses failed to arrive.
10. On the second night of Rosh Hashanah it is customary to wear a new garment or to have a new fruit on the table when saying the *shehechyanu* blessing. Thus, the *shehechyanu* blessing applies not only to the holiday, but to the new garment or new fruit as well. (This is done in order to accommodate the minority of halachic authorities who rule that no *shehechyanu* blessing be said on the second night of Rosh Hashanah.)
  - *Taz 600:2*