

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

MAKE 'EM LAUGH, MAKE 'EM CRY

"...And the seventh day will be to you holy, a Shabbat of Shabbatot to G-d..." (35:2)

Anyone who has ever prayed really well — even once in his life — is never the same again. Even if we can never achieve again that sublime contact, a spiritual postcard will forever hang in our souls to remind us of that view.

The "Aggada" — the sections of the Talmud that conceal the deeper secrets of the Torah — relates that the students of Rabbi Akiva once found him crying on Shabbat. He said, "I am having pleasure."

Because of his intense connection to G-d, tears welled and fell from his eyes. The Zohar Chadash says that he wept greatly when saying the Song of Songs, for he perceived how high those words reached.

Our Sages talk of the time before the coming of Mashiach as the "Ikvata d'Mashicha" — the word *ikvata* is related to the word "eikev", meaning "heel." The Jewish People are compared to the body of a man. We are the generation of the heel, the lowest part of the body. The heel is the least sensitive part of the body, and our generation is perhaps notable for its lack of sensitivity. In a way, this is a blessing, for if we really understood how low we are, we would be totally broken.

The heel is the least sensitive part of the body; you can stick a pin in the heel and barely feel it, but it is extremely

sensitive to being tickled. Our generation is so insensitive, but virtually anything can send us off into paroxysms of laughter.

And if we don't laugh on cue, the studio FX man is standing by ready to dub in some "canned" laughter. Laughter is *de rigeur*.

Much, if not most, discourse, even of matters of state and finance and medicine and the like are carried on in the media amidst palpably forced laughter.

In Shir Hama'alot (Psalms 126:2) we say, "Then will our mouths be filled with laughter."

Only when Mashiach comes will we experience true laughter, the laughter that comes from the revelation of happiness beyond our wildest dreams. That is what it will be like.

There was once a Jewish girl, a stand-up comedienne in LA, who used to say in the middle of her act, "Comedy is dead. What you're laughing at is ridicule." She was wrong. Comedy isn't dead — but it's very fast asleep.

Only "then will our mouths be filled with laughter". But in the meantime, the true feeling of being connected to G-d can bring tears of joy to our eyes.

• Sources: based on the *Taz, Orach Chaim, 288b*, as seen in *Talalei Orot*

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land — may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."

GITTIN 85 - 90

“G-d acted with kindness to the Jewish People by hastening their exile at the time of King Tzidkiyahu while those who had previously been exiled at the time of King Yachoniya were still there (in Bavel).”

This “kindness” that G-d did for our nation by exiling a second part of the Jewish nation is taught by the Sage Mareimar on our *daf*, and is based on a verse in the Book of Daniel (9:14; a chapter that serves as inspiration and textual source for much of our “*tachanun*” prayer). The verse states, “And G-d hastened up the evil and brought it upon us, for G-d our L-rd is righteous with all His deeds that He has done, and we did not listen to His voice.”

But, really, what kind of “kindness” is it to be “hurried into exile”?

The Sage Mareimar answers this question with the above teaching regarding the exile at the time of King Tzidkiyahu being followed relatively quickly by the exile of King Yochaniya. The latter exile followed soon after the earlier one, eleven years later. G-d, in His great kindness, “hurried” the next exile to be only a short time after the first one in order that the latter group of exiles would be able to learn Torah in Bavel from the earlier-exiled Sages, who were still alive there. The *gemara* states, based on a verse in the Book of Kings (II 24:16), that there were 1,000 very great Torah scholars in Bavel in the earlier exile. These Torah scholars were still around to transmit the Torah to the massive exile of the Jewish People in the days of King Yochaniya, eleven years following the exile of these Torah Sages during the reign of King Tzidkiyahu. (Rashi)

Another explanation for the “kindness of being hurried into exile” is offered by the Sage Ulla. He taught that G-d hurried the Jewish People out of the Land of Israel after being there for 850 years, since they were transgressing in the Land, and if they would have continued doing so for two more years they would have been completely destroyed (G-d forbid). This is based on a fascinating hint that Ulla finds in the following verses: “When you have children and children’s children, and you will be *long established in the Land*, and you become corrupt and make a graven image, the likeness of anything, and do evil in the eyes of the L-rd your G-d... you will speedily and utterly perish from the Land to which you cross the Jordan, to possess. You will not prolong your days upon it, but will be *utterly destroyed*.” (Deut. 4:25-26) The word for “long established” in the verse is “*v’noshantem*”, which has the numerical value of 852, i.e. 852 years. If they had remained in the Land of Israel for a total of 852 years — two more years — they would be punished as the verse says: “utterly destroyed”. G-d showed them great kindness by exiling them two years before this tragedy could occur. (Rashi)

• *Gittin 88a*

Rabbi Elazar said, “Whoever divorces his first wife, even the Altar sheds tears for him.”

After the *mishna on amud alef* teaches the rulings of Beit Shammai, Beit Hillel and Rabbi Akiva regarding what constitutes “grounds for divorce”, based on how to interpret the verse in the Chumash regarding an acceptable reason to permit divorce (Duet. 24:1), Rabbi Elazer cites an additional source that discourages divorce if at all possible. He quotes a prophecy of Malachi, “And this second thing you do, to cover the Altar of the G-d with tears, weeping, and sighing, such that He will no longer turn to the offering, nor will He take anything willingly from your hand. And you will say, ‘Why?’ Because the G-d testified between you and the wife of your youth, that you dealt treacherously with her, and she is your companion and the wife of your covenant.” (Malachi 2:13-14)

Based on these verses Rabbi Elazar teaches, “Whoever divorces his first wife, even the Altar sheds tears for him.” This may sound like merely a poignant idea but not a legal issue, especially since nowadays we are without merit of having a Beit Hamikdash with an actual Altar. However, his teaching is in fact cited as halacha in the Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha’Ezer 119:3. The Rema cites Rabbi Elazar’s teaching as reason to forbid divorce even in a situation where it is permitted, providing the wife was not unfaithful (in which case it would be a mitzvah to divorce), or unless the woman also wants to divorce. The Mechaber states that one should “not hurry” to divorce (unless required by halacha), based on this same teaching of Rabbi Elazar.

• *Gittin 90b*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
2. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
3. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
4. What function did the “*yitdot hamishkan*” serve?
5. What function did the “*bigdei hasrad*” serve?
6. What was unusual about the way the women spun the goat’s hair?
7. Why were the *Nesi'im* last to contribute to the building of the Mishkan? How does the Torah show dissatisfaction with their actions?
8. Who does the Torah identify as the primary builders of the Mishkan? From which tribes were they?
9. What time of day did the people bring their daily contributions for the construction of the Mishkan?
10. For what was the woven goat’s hair used?
11. What image was woven into the *parochet*?
12. Why does the Torah attribute the building of the *aron* to Betzalel?
13. Where were the sculptured *keruvim* located?
14. How many lamps did the *Menorah* have?
15. Of what materials was the *mizbe'ach haketoret* composed?
16. Of what material was the *mizbe'ach ha'olah* composed?
17. The *kiyor* was made from copper mirrors. What function did these mirrors serve in Egypt?
18. How did the *kiyor* promote peace?
19. The *kiyor* was made from the mirrors of the women who were crowding at the entrance to the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Why were the women crowding there?
20. Of what material were the “*yitdot hamishkan*” constructed?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week’s Questions!

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

1. 35:1 - The day after *Yom Kippur*.
2. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the Mishkan doesn’t supersede the laws of Shabbat.
3. 35:3 - There are two opinions: One opinion is to teach that igniting a fire on Shabbat is punishable by lashes as opposed to other “*melachot*” which are punishable by death. The other opinion is to teach that violation of numerous “*melachot*” at one time requires a separate atonement for each violation.
4. 35:18 - The edges of the curtains were fastened to them. These were inserted in the ground so the curtains would not move in the wind.
5. 35:19 - They covered the *aron*, the *shulchan*, the *menorah*, and the *mizbachot* when they were packed for transport.
6. 35:26 - It was spun directly from off the backs of the goats.
7. 35:27 - The *Nesi'im* reasoned that they would first let the people contribute materials needed for the Mishkan and then they would contribute what was lacking. The Torah shows its dissatisfaction by deleting a letter from their title.
8. 35:30, 35:34 - Betzalel ben Uri from the tribe of Yehuda; Oholiav ben Achisamach from the tribe of Dan.
9. 36:3 - Morning.
10. 36:14 - It was made into curtains to be draped over the Mishkan
11. 36:35 - *Cherubim*. (See Rashi 26:31)
12. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone else.
13. 37:7 - On the two extremities of the *kaporet* (cover of the *aron*).
14. 37:23 - Seven.
15. 37:25,26 - Wood overlaid with gold.
16. 38:1-2 - Wood overlaid with copper.
17. 38:8 - These mirrors aided in the proliferation of the Jewish People. The Jewish women in Egypt would look in the mirrors so as to awaken the affections of their husbands who were exhausted by their slave labor.
18. 38:8 - Its waters helped a woman accused of adultery to prove her innocence.
19. 38:8 - To donate to the Mishkan.
20. 38:20 - Copper.

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Abarbanel

ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

Vayakhel

Symbolic Meanings of the Divisions and Utensils of the Tabernacle

Since this week's Torah portion deals to a large extent with the structure of the Tabernacle and its utensils, which was detailed previously in Parshat Terumah, it is important to relate Abarbanel's outline of the symbolic meanings that he described in Parshat Terumah.

The symbolism of the portable Tabernacle (Mishkan) and its utensils is not based on understandings that can be derived by human rational intellect, for G-d clearly has no need to physically symbolize concepts that Man can derive on his own. Additionally, Man's intellect often leads him astray, especially when he connects the symbolism of the Mishkan to astronomical and other more spiritual matters. Therefore it is much more fitting to understand the Mishkan as a means to assist us in our faith in the Divinely-ordained Torah and *mitzvot*, in a way that each symbol and construct will guide us to behave properly according to the dictates of the Torah.

The Holy of Holies, within which were the Ark and Tablets, the special covering, and the cherubim, symbolizes that our purpose is to be involved in G-d's Torah and *mitzvot*. This is directly symbolized by the Tablets and the adjacent Torah scroll within the Ark. The gold cover of the Ark indicates that the true crown is the crown of Torah. The cherubim, one a male and the other a female child, represent the need to be involved in Torah from our youth. Their wings point upward to tell us that everything emanates from G-d above and they face each other to show the importance of love for our fellow Jews. The Holy of Holies symbolizes the concept of Torah *l'shma* — learning Torah and performing *mitzvot* for their own sake, without any expectation of reward.

The next section, the Inner Courtyard is separated from the Holy of Holies by a curtain, as it represents a different idea — the rewards that G-d grants to those who serve Him. The Menorah, the Table of show-bread and the golden incense Altar indicate that even though the ultimate goal is to keep Torah and *mitzvot* without any expectation of reward, G-d still rewards those who are faithful to Him. The Table with its twelve loaves of bread represents the material rewards of wealth and honor which result from G-d's providence. This is also indicated by its construction out of pure gold. The number twelve could point to the months of the year, in that our sustenance is constant, and also to the twelve tribes to indicate that all Jews are included, and also the twelve constellations to indicate that the entire physical universe is under G-d's direction.

Besides the body, the soul is also rewarded with wisdom and knowledge as symbolized by the Menorah. The seven flames represent the seven types of wisdom. The center flame points toward the Holy of Holies and the other six flames point toward the center flame to indicate that all true wisdom emanates from the contents of the Ark. The Menorah is made from solid gold to indicate that this true wisdom is enduring, eternal and unadulterated by false ideas. The cups, knobs, and flowers rep-

resent the different branches of knowledge, their distinctions and their interdependence, as one leads to the next. Yet because the Menorah was fashioned from one solid piece of gold indicates that all knowledge is unified through Torah.

The third object in the Inner Courtyard, the golden incense Altar represents the soul's reward of an eternal existence after the death of the body. This is symbolized by the smoke which rises upward. This Altar is situated against the Holy of Holies and is not connected to the Table or the Menorah. This is an indication that the eternity of the soul is not acquired through an accumulation of wealth and honor as symbolized by the Table, or by the intellect as symbolized by the Menorah, but rather through adherence to Torah and *mitzvot*. The Altar is covered with gold to indicate the importance and eternity of the World-to-Come. Yet underneath the gold is wood to teach us that it is through our physical actions, which are as ephemeral as wood, that we can merit the eternal life symbolized by the gold.

These three types of reward are also contained in the three verses of the Priestly Blessing. The first line speaks of blessing and guarding, a reference to our material blessings, represented by the Table and show-bread. The second line speaks of G-d shining His 'face' on us, a reference to the shining light of wisdom represented by the Menorah. The third line speaks of peace or complete fulfillment, a reference to the fulfillment of our purpose in life through the eternity of the soul as represented by the Altar of gold.

The third division of the Mishkan, the Outer Courtyard, contains the sacrificial copper Altar and its ramp, as well as the washing basin. The Altar symbolizes the inevitable physical death of our body. Without the awareness of death we cannot attain fear of G-d or the ability to keep His Torah. Nor will we merit the rewards that follow. For this reason the incense Altar comes after the sacrificial Altar to indicate that only after death do we merit our ultimate reward. It is made of copper, not gold, to indicate the fragility of the physical world. Its netting symbolizes the fact that the awareness of death is like a net spread over all of life, and its base is hollow to symbolize the hollowness of physical existence. It looks solid and permanent from the outside, but inside is only emptiness. The root of the word for "ramp" is the same as the word for "destruction", indicating that death is the ultimate destroyer. Finally, the prohibition against ascending to the Altar by way of steps is another play on words, as the root of the word "steps" is the same as the expression "positive advantages" — indicating that there are no positive advantages to be gained by death.

Finally, the washing basin is an indication that all the rewards previously described can only be attained when an individual is able to purify himself from his negative traits. The water of the washing basin represents the Torah, which is ultimately the only way to purify oneself and develop the sterling character that will result in G-d's rewards.

LION'S TALE

From: Tomer

*Dear Rabbi,
I am intrigued by the role of the lion in Judaism. On the one hand, it's not kosher. But on the other, it seems to represent holy concepts. One, for example, is the Tribe of Judah. Can you please explain?*

Dear Tomer,

It is correct that the lion is not kosher, as is the case with many animals whose ferocious or predatory nature opposes Jewish values which we must refrain from ingesting within our personalities.

That being said, the lion does have characteristics which may be harnessed and emulated for good.

We see this principle in an interesting discussion of the Talmud (Sanhedrin 64a) which describes how, in preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple, the Sages and prophets gathered with the intention of nullifying the evil inclination for idolatry. The result was that a lion of fire was seen leaping out of the Holy of Holies. This lion was initially associated with the obviously negative drive for foreign worship.

However, it becomes clear from the continuation of the *gemara* that there is no specific drive for idolatry (or for other transgressions either), but rather a drive to worship that can be channeled for good to worship G-d, or for bad and idolatry. Thus, the fiery lion's release from the Holy of Holies indicates that the powerful drive for spirituality, which naturally resides in the spiritual focal point of the world, was dissipated. The result was that if idolatry was greatly nullified, so too was the drive to serve G-d.

This establishes the aforementioned idea that even though the lion is not kosher, it symbolizes qualities which, when channeled properly, may be harnessed for spiritual good.

Examples of this include the teaching of the Sages in Pirkei Avot (5:20) that one should be strong as a lion to do the will of G-d, as well as the one you mention that the symbol for the tribe of Judah, from which the King of Israel issued and from

which Mashiach will emerge, is the king of the animals — the lion.

The Talmud (Berachot 3a) teaches that there are three spiritual divisions or dimensions to the night, referred to as "watches". During each watch G-d roars like a lion, bemoaning the destruction of the Temple, saying: "Woe is to the children whom on account of their sins I destroyed My house, burned My sanctuary and exiled them among the nations of the world".

Each watch of the night is described by a specific sign. The first watch is symbolized by a donkey braying, the second by dogs screaming and the third by a baby suckling and by intimacy between husband and wife. Since G-d roars on account of the Temple during these three watches, it appears that there is a connection between the three Temples and the signs given for the three periods of the night.

The First Temple was destroyed on account of three cardinal sins: idolatry, immorality and murder. This corresponds to the first part of the night where "donkey" is "*chamor*" in Hebrew, which also means materialism and refers to the low and earthy state of the Jews that resulted in the destruction of the First Temple.

The Second Temple was destroyed on account of baseless hatred. This corresponds to the second part of the night where dogs screaming refers to the brazen, dog-eat-dog attitude Jews had for each other that resulted in the destruction of the Second Temple.

The Third and everlasting Temple will be built in the merit of rectifying the sins for which the previous Temples were destroyed. This corresponds to the last part of the night, representing the end of the long, dark exile blossoming into the brilliant dawn of Redemption. The baby suckling from its mother refers to the pure and innocent state that the Jews will attain as they regain their unique and direct sustenance from G-d, while the intimacy between husband and wife refers to the endearing, loving and intimate relationship between G-d and the Jewish People, which will last eternally.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts *Bnei Yisrael* to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan. He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the *menorah* and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate and *ephod*. G-d appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. *Bnei Yisrael* contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two

different covers were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Betzalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood covered with gold. On the Ark's cover were two figures facing each other. The menorah and the table with the showbreads were also of gold. Two altars were made: A small incense altar of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger altar for sacrifices made of wood covered with copper.

“SILENT” PRAYER

**“When praying, one should not pray only in his heart.”
(Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 101:2)**

The Kaf Hachaim writes that according to many *poskim*, if one were to pray only in his heart without saying the words, he does not fulfill his obligation of prayer since *thought* is not considered as *speech* regarding prayer. (Magen Avraham; Elijah Rabbah; Shulchan Aruch Harav and Rabbi Chaim Vital)

This ruling finds support in the Zohar in Parshat Ha’azinu 294. It is written there, “All prayers and requests that one makes before G-d must be said by moving one’s lips, and if one does not do so it is considered as though he did not pray or make a request.” The Zohar goes on to explain the great effect one’s prayers have when said, rising above into the spiritual worlds and becoming a holy crown for G-d.

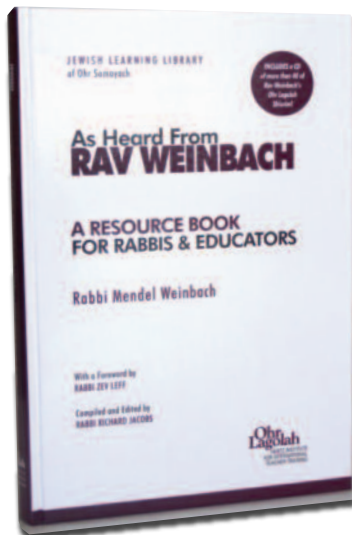
It would seem that this ruling applies to the rabbinical obligation to pray, which was instituted in place of the sacrifices offered in the Beit Hamikdash. However, regarding optional prayers and requests, it is possible that one’s thoughts can count, since G-d is certainly aware of one’s thoughts, as it is written, “He fashions their hearts all together, He comprehends their deeds”. (Tehillim 13:15)

This is in fact the law regarding someone sick and unable

to say the words of prayer. The Rema writes (Orach Chaim 94:6) that one who is sick and unable to actually pray should pray in his heart. This ruling is supported by the verse, “They said in their hearts while lying in their beds”. (Orchot Chaim in the name of Pesikta, brought in the Beit Yosef 101)

We also find explained by the B’nei Yissachar that when a person is unable to pray, yet he cries out to G-d in his heart without making a sound, he can still be rewarded as if he prayed, since G-d is aware of what is in his heart. This idea is based on the episode when the Jewish slaves in Egypt cried out to G-d. He explains that the cries of the Jewish People were made in their hearts, without actually praying aloud. Here are the verses together with the comments of the B’nei Yissachar:

“The Children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out in their hearts... G-d heard their moaning i.e., their broken hearts, and G-d remembered His covenant... — G-d saw the Children of Israel, and G-d knew that they wanted to actually pray and request His help, but as a result of the extremely harsh exile their spirits were broken and they were not able to do so. G-d therefore considered the suffering and cries of their hearts as if they had prayed.” (Chodesh Nissan, discourse 5, section 15)



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Part Two: Meeting His First Jews

Sydney was quite foreign to Yoel. He felt alone. He had never lived in a country populated with white people, many of whom seemed quite racist. Even the large Pentecostal Church that he joined on his arrival in Sydney was not very friendly to him. There was only one other African in the large congregation, and he mostly avoided Yoel.

Yoel applied himself to his studies, and in due course received a degree in accounting, and afterwards a diploma in financial planning. He still attended the church and studied the Bible assiduously, but he had many questions about the inconsistencies that he saw between the practice of Christians and the verses he read. He couldn't reconcile the differences between the Old and New Testaments. He directed these questions to the pastor of his church, but the answers given were unconvincing, and when he persisted he was told to stop asking questions. Salvation was through faith, not questions, he was told. An intellectual approach to religion was frowned upon. When Yoel kept asking questions anyway, he was seen as a troublemaker, and eventually was made to feel that he had no place at the church. In fact, he couldn't find any spirituality in the church. He wanted a relationship with G-d — but it wasn't there. Yoel decided to leave the church and find his own path through prayer and study — his "quiet time" with the Creator.



At about this time he had opened a small business in the city, and was renting space from brothers who owned the building. Every afternoon, Yoel would set aside time to pray and read his Bible. One day, one of the brothers came into his office, saw him studying, and asked what he was reading. Yoel told him. In the course of conversation the landlord mentioned to him he and his family were Jews.

Yoel was amazed. Until he met the brothers, Yoel had never met a Jew (at least to his knowledge). He had imagined them as a mythical people who lived thousands of years ago. As a boy he had been taught in his catechism classes that because the Jews had killed the messiah and rejected the savior, they were cursed throughout history and brought strife and misery wherever they went, and for that reason there would never be peace in the Middle East. As a result of this rejection, the Jews were actually replaced by the Christians who had now become the "new Jews". He had no idea that Jews actually practiced their religion in this day and age or that there were communities of them anywhere in the world except for a country named Israel, which was causing problems for the Middle East and the world. But that country also seemed rather mysterious and mythical to him. And yet now, here in Sydney, there were living, breathing Jews in his very office.

To be continued...

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

GILGAL — A MEMORY AND A HOPE

When the Festival of Pesach arrives there comes along with it the practice of recalling the special sacrifice — the *Korban Pesach* — that every Jew offered in connection with this holiday during the time of the Beit Hamikdash.

The first time this sacrifice was offered in Eretz Yisrael was when our ancestors settled in Gilgal and "offered the *Korban Pesach* on the Plains of Yericho" (*Yehoshua 5:10*).



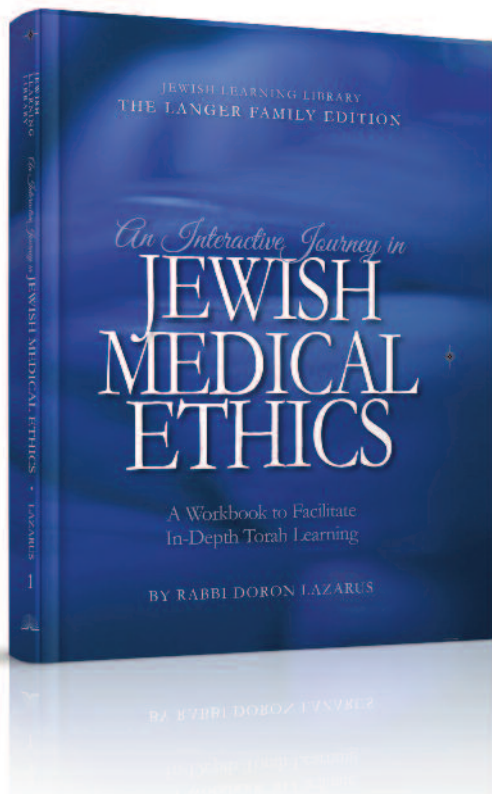
The name "Gilgal" is derived from the Hebrew word for "removing", a reference to the removal of the "shame of Egypt" through a national process of circumcision.

It is our identification with the memory of that *Korban Pesach* and those that followed for so many centuries that we hope and pray will give us the merit of soon seeing the renewal of *Korban Pesach* in the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash.

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