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PARSHA INSIGHTS

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Devarim

A PUBLIC NEED

“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel...” (1:1)

Why does the Torah stress here that Moshe spoke to “all” Israel. It could equally have written, “...to the Children of Israel” or “...to Israel.” These are alternatives that the Torah itself uses elsewhere.

The Talmud (Mo’ed Katan 21b) explains that Moshe communicated the words of Sefer Devarim, the Mishneh Torah (Repetition of the Torah), three days after the passing of his

brother Aharon. The *gemara* there raises the question how was Moshe — a mourner in the week of *shiva* — able to learn Torah? The *gemara*’s answer is that if there is public need a mourner may learn and teach Torah.

This is why the Torah stresses that Moshe spoke to “all” of Israel — for without being needed by the entire Jewish People he would not have been allowed to learn or teach Torah.

Va’etchanan

A LITTLE SHABBAT SONG

“Guard the Shabbat to sanctify it...” (5:12)

Everything we do in Judaism has deeper levels of meaning — even a little Shabbat song. Imagine the Shabbat table of the holy Chafetz Chaim — as close an approximation to the next world as this world gets! Rabbi Elya Lopian writes of such an experience:

The Chafetz Chaim started to sing the well-known *zemer* (Shabbat song) *Kol Mekadesh* (The English translation, unfortunately, is as pedestrian as a bobby on the beat):

“Whoever sanctifies the seventh day as befits it, whoever safeguards the Shabbat properly from desecrating it — his reward is exceedingly great in accordance with his deed.”

The Chafetz Chaim stopped singing and said: There are two kinds of *Shomer Shabbat* (people who keep Shabbat). There’s the person who “*sanctifies Shabbat as befits it*”, meaning someone who sanctifies his Shabbat with purity and holiness, with a higher, more sanctified level of prayer, with Torah learning of greater insight and depth, a person who sets aside more time for introspection and self-examination. On the other hand, there’s the kind of person who “*safeguards the Shabbat properly from desecrating it*.” He makes sure not to profane Shabbat by breaking its laws, but does no more than that. His Shabbat is still lacking something. It lacks

the experience of the holiness of Shabbat, and the delight of Torah and serving the Almighty. Rather, he sleeps his Shabbat away, resting from his weekday toil. However, when the song says that “...*his reward is exceedingly great in accordance with his deed*” — it is referring to *both* types of people. For even the person who merely “keeps” Shabbat will receive a huge reward for not profaning it. The song continues, however, “*Every man in his own camp, every man under his own banner...*” In the world of truth these two will dwell in very different “camps.” They will sit under very different banners. And certainly the “*shomer Shabbat*” will not be able to enter the portal of the one who is “*mekadesh Shabbat*”, one who makes the Shabbat holy.

Shabbat is a most precious gift from G-d. A day when we can be close to Him. That’s what holiness means. A day that is a precise reflection of the “world that is entirely Shabbat”. To the extent that we make our Shabbat a reflection of that world, so too will our eventual experience of that world mirror that reflection.

And all that in a little Shabbat song.

• Source: based on Lev Eliahu

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Deavarim

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of the Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, “Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told *Bnei Yisrael* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvot*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: From the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe’s guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn’t sinned by sending spies into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results: The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to G-d’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin. He recounts how they wouldn’t listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of *Eretz Yisrael* in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

Va’etchanan

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvot*. G-d refuses. Moshe reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on *Bnei Yisrael* that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that G-d spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins *Bnei Yisrael* to “pass over” the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in *Eretz Yisrael* they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to G-d.

Moshe designates three “refuge cities” to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the Ten

Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

Ekev

If *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those “minor” *mitzvot* that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations on earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer *Eretz Canaan* little by little, so that the Land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in *Eretz Yisrael* is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was G-d who gave them wealth and success. Nor did G-d drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael*’s righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites; for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against G-d and Moshe. Moshe details the events after G-d spoke the Ten Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon’s passing is recorded as is the elevation of the *levi’im* to G-d’s ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the Heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping *mitzvot* and the curses that result from non-observance.

Re’eh

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually-oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from G-d. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. G-d will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there, not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be slaughtered anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may be eaten only in Jerusalem. He

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

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warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added to or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — G-d will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee Year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

Shoftim

Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near G-d's altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the

fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *sifrei Torah*, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty. Neither the *kohanim* nor the *levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel; rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. G-d promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to “frame” a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in G-d. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. Enemies must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

BATEI RAND — A SAFE AND SECURE NEIGHBORHOOD

During the War of Independence the residents of Jerusalem were subjected to heavy bombardment from the Jordanians, which took its toll in lives, limbs and property. One neighborhood was spared this terror. Not one shell fell on the Batei Rand neighborhood in Jerusalem.

In an effort to discover what special merit this neighborhood had to deserve such Divine protec-



tion, it was recalled that a philanthropist by the name of Mendel Rand had established this neighborhood, and made its homes available rent-free to Torah scholars. Many distinguished Torah greats, including Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, *rosh hayeshiva* of Yeshivat Eitz Chaim and father-in-law of Rabbi Aaron Kotler, lived in Batei Rand and provided it with a shield of safety.

BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

SANHEDRIN 9 - 43

Rabbi Elazar said, “No one achieves greatness unless all of his sins are forgiven.”

Rabbi Zeira originally kept a low-profile in order to avoid *smicha* (rabbinical ordination). This was due to a teaching of Rabbi Elazar that “One who resides in ‘obscurity’ will live long.” However, after he heard Rabbi Elazar also teach, “A person does not rise to a position of greatness unless all of his sins are forgiven” — he then sought to be awarded *smicha*.

Rashi explains the idea behind the first teaching of Rabbi Elazar as the same idea taught in Tractate Pesachim 87b: “Woe to rulership (*rabbanut*), for it buries its possessor.” (See the commentary of Maharitz Chiyos who explains why these two statements of Rabbi Elazar are not contradictory, and also see “The Path of the Just”, chapter 22, regarding the trait of humility and how it relates to a position of authority.)

• Sanhedrin 14a

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeni said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, “Anyone who teaches Torah to another is considered as if he gave birth to him.”

• Sanhedrin 19b

The Sage Chizkiah said, “How do we know that whoever adds to the words of G-d only detracts from them? Although G-d’s command was to refrain from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Chava added that He also prohibited touching the tree, and this led to the serpent tricking her.”

• Sanhedrin 29a

The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yismael taught, “Like a hammer splitting a rock” is the Prophet Yirmiyahu’s poetic description of the Torah. Just as a rock is split (by a hammer) into many parts, so too can one Torah verse be correctly explained in a number of ways.”

• Sanhedrin 34a

Rabbi Yochanan said, “One who makes the blessing for the New Moon in its proper time is considered as if he has welcomed the Divine Presence.”

• Sanhedrin 42a

PARSHA INSIGHTS

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THINGS

Ekev

“...Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones...” (10:1)

Even though the G-d told Moshe to make the second two Tablets like the first ones, there were fundamental differences between the two sets. In the first set, not only did G-d write upon the Tablets, He fashioned the Safire stone himself. Both the medium and the message were “G-dly”. The second Tablets were hewn by the hand

of Man; only the inscription was Divine.

However, there was a deeper difference between the two sets of Tablets. When we think of the Tablets we think of words engraved on stone, words like any other words. However, in the case of the first Tablets this was not so. The first Tablets did not contain words; they contained

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speech. This doesn't mean the Tablets were like some kind of Biblical tape recorder. It means that when you saw the words, you saw in them as G-d speaking them at Sinai. Usually, when someone speaks, their words are present only as long as they are still speaking them. When they stop speaking, the words vanish. The first Tablets perpetuated G-d's giving the Torah at Sinai, His speech at Sinai. That is what the Torah means when it says "all the people saw the voices..." (Shemot 20:15)

The word *davar* in Hebrew has the same root as the word for "speech" — *dibbur*. What is the connection between a thing and speech? Nothing in this physical world can have an existence without its having a spiritual underpinning. What sustains every object in this physical world is G-d's speaking through that object. That object is no more than G-d's speaking — it is a *dvar*, an expression of something that G-d wishes to reveal in His world. In the future we will clearly see the intention behind every thing in Creation, the *dibbur*

behind every *davar*. This is what the prophet Isaiah means when he writes, "...the Glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh together will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken" (40:5). Just as at Sinai G-d's speech assumed a concrete form, so too at that time in the future, every concrete form will reveal its purpose, its *dibbur*.

Only the first Tablets contained the level of revelation where it was possible to see the *dibbur* as though it were an object. Usually a physical object does not reveal the intent of its maker. The first Tablets, however, revealed G-d's intent — they were a *davar* that revealed *dibbur*. However, after the sin of the golden calf the world was a different place. It could no longer contain the level of revelation epitomized by the first set of Tablets. That is why the Tablets suddenly grew heavy in Moshe's hands, and they fell to the ground. From that time until Mashiach things will not reveal their true identity as being no more than the Word of G-d.

Re'eh

IN G-D WE TRUST

"...You shall open your hand to your brother, to your poor, and to your destitute in your Land." (15:11)

Sign seen hanging in a store: "In G-d we trust, everyone else pays cash." A philosopher once asked Rabban Gamliel, "Your Torah commands you over and over again to give charity, and to not be afraid of its affecting your financial security. Isn't such a fear natural? How can a person give away his money without worrying that perhaps he should have saved it for a rainy day?"

Rabban Gamliel asked him, "If someone asked you for a loan, would you agree?"

"Depends on who that someone is," replied the philosopher. "If it's someone I didn't know, yes, I would be afraid of losing my money."

"What if he had guarantors?" asked Rabban Gamliel.

"Well, if I knew I could rely on them, I would agree."

"How about if the guarantor was the President, how would you feel about that?"

"Well, of course, in those circumstances I would have total confidence that I'd get my money back."

"When someone gives charity," said Rabban Gamliel, "he's actually extending a loan to the 'President of the Universe'. It says in the Book of Mishlei (Proverbs): *One who gives graciously to the poor, extends, as it were, a loan to G-d, Who will pay back all that is due.*"

G-d pays us back in this world by making sure we get back what we "loaned" Him. And, in the next world we get the full reward for our "loan".

No one is as trustworthy as G-d. If He guarantees to return our money, why should anyone have the slightest hesitation in giving charity?"

• Source: based on the Midrash

Shoftim

JUST ONE MOMENT

"Who is the man who has built a new house and has not yet inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it." (20:5)

Rashi: "And this thing will pain him."

Rashi's comment on the above verse cannot mean that the thought of someone else inaugurating his new home will be extremely painful to him. For in the "painful thoughts department" nothing is more painful than

the thought of death itself!

The Midrash teaches that when the Romans executed Rabbi Chananya for teaching Torah in public, they wrapped him in his Sefer Torah and set it alight. To prolong his agony

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they packed water-soaked wool around his chest. Rabbi Chananya said, “The parchment is consumed, but the letters fly up in the air.” The Roman executioner was deeply moved by Rabbi Chananya’s holiness and asked, “If I remove the wool from around your heart, will I have a share in the World-to-Come?” Rabbi Chananya promised him that he would. The Roman then removed the wool, added wood to the fire to curtail Rabbi Chananya’s agony, and jumped into the flames and died. A Heavenly voice proclaimed, “Rabbi Chananya and the executioner are about to enter the World-to-Come.” One thought of *teshuva* (repentance) can

undo a life of sin.

And one thought of sin can undo a lifetime of *teshuva*.

The most important moment in a person’s life may be his last moment. At that moment he has the potential to fix a lifetime of wrongdoing. What a waste to spend that last moment immersed in the cares of this world rather than setting one’s gaze on eternity.

That’s what Rashi means when he says “*and this thing will pain him.*” How great will be this man’s pain should he spend his last moments thinking about his real estate, rather than preparing himself to enter the world of truth!

MEZUZAH Maven



BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

INTRODUCTION

Parchment panic button? Cleverly concealed spycam? Star Trek communicators? What’s the real meaning of that funny looking capsule stuck on the doorposts of Jewish homes?

Answer: A mezuzah — which is all of the above. Well, almost. Read on!

The Torah states: “You shall write them on the doorposts (*mezuzot*) of your house and upon your gates.” The word *mezuzah* means literally “a doorpost”. But in common speech when we speak of a *mezuzah* we are referring to that which we put *on* the doorpost: the parchment scroll containing the first two paragraphs of the “Shema”. We are told to affix these verses on our doorways, which declare our belief in G-d and our commitment to performing His commandments

Although the Torah’s short instruction does not spell out the who, what, when, where, how, and why of *mezuzah*, all of those vital details are part of the Oral Torah, recorded in the Talmud and defined in the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law).

As we will explore week-by-week in this column, there are many factors that must be taken into account in order to perform this mitzvah correctly. When I started my career doing outreach with Ohr Somayach’s Jewish Learning Exchange (JLE) way back in the last century, since I was a Rabbi people assumed that I was a thorough expert in the

laws of *mezuzah*. I soon found myself doing “house calls” to help them put up their *mezuzot* correctly. However, though I had learned through the laws of *mezuzah*, I very quickly discovered that I was totally unprepared to handle the practical application of these principles arising from the weird and wonderful world of modern architecture.

From that time onwards I have been perplexed by open-plan living areas, staircases without walls, sliding-glass patio doors and many more “ponderous portals” and “doorway dilemmas.” Thankfully, through research and consultation I have been able to find solutions to quite a few of these conundrums and I am excited to have the opportunity to share the most interesting cases in this column.

Moreover, I also have “data-mined” the Torah literature for insights into the philosophical and spiritual symbolism of *mezuzah* and will weave some fascinating ideas into the column as we go along.

This brings us back to how the *mezuzah* can be imagined as a parchment panic button (security feature), a concealed spycam (watching every move we make and every breath we take), and a Star Trek communication device (syncing with the “Cloud”).

Got any *mezuzah* questions? Please email them to rabbi@ohrsandton.com

PARSHA Q&A ?

Devarim

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did G-d instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refa'im?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Devarim's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 – Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 – So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the Land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 – They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Va'etchanan

1. "And I prayed to G-d at that time." Why "at that time"?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by G-d's "strong hand"?
3. What is ha'levanon?
4. What did G-d tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the mitzvot properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word v'noshantem?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
9. "You'll serve man-made gods." Is this literal?
10. Why is east called mizrach?
11. "Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you." When had G-d previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
13. What is meant by "G-d, our G-d, G-d is One"?
14. What are two meanings of loving G-d "with all your might"?
15. How well-versed must one be in Torah?
16. Where does the word totafot come from?
17. Who is fit to swear in G-d's name?
18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
19. When someone serves G-d with love, how many generations receive reward?
20. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Va'etchanan's Questions!

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

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of Eretz Canaan, Moshe thought perhaps G-d had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - Ha'levanon means the Beit Hamikdash, which makes "white" (lavan), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The gematria of v'noshantem, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines (mizrach means shining).
11. 5:13 - Before Matan Torah, at Marah. (Shmot 15:25)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (Shmot 15:25).
13. 6:4 - G-d, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether G-d treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - Tot means two in Caspi. Fot means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves G-d and reveres His name.
18. 7:7 - B'nei Yisrael are the humblest nation.
19. 7:9 - 2,000.
20. 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

To our Ohrnet Readers
A Happy and Safe Summer!
www.ohr.edu

PARSHA Q&A ?

Ekev

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that G-d will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a. wonders b. strong hand c. outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by G-d?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the Land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in G-d's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving G-d with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to G-d"?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ekev's Questions!

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

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 - a. Plagues; b. Pestilence; c. Slaying of the first-born.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed, causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 - Since they served in the Temple, they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Re'eh

1. What were the sites designated for the “blessings and the curses” to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from G-d?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that G-d commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of G-d and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, “To Him (G-d) you shall cleave.” How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the “source” of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under G-d’s “special protection”?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Re'eh's Questions!

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

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to G-d's commands.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it; his descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate G-d's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

Shoftim

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept “seek out a good *beit din*”?
5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does G-d promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of “*chazeh, shok and keiva*.” Which ones?
11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to “prepare the way” to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
15. “Through the mouth of two witnesses....” What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four “scare-tactics” the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

Answers to Shoftim’s Questions!

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

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - “*Tzedek tzedek tirdof...*”
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn’t hear, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don’t understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - a. Clanging their shields b. Making their horses stomp and whinny c. Shouting d. Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 21:9- He is tried and, if guilty, executed.



Why we
WEEP
TISHA B'AV 5777
AT OHR SOMAYACH

22 Shimon Hatzadik St. Jerusalem

MONDAY NIGHT-JULY 31

8:10 pm Maariv & Eicha
followed by a shiur by
Rabbi Yitzchak Dalah

TISHA B'AV DAY-AUGUST 1

7:50 am Shacharit
8:50 am - 12:15 pm Special Kinot Reading &
Explanation with Rav Yitzchak Breitowitz,
Rav, Kehillat Ohr Somayach
12:15 pm - Eicha

ALL-DAY SEMINAR FEATURING TALKS BY:

12:45 pm Rav Nota Schiller, *Rosh Hayeshiva*
1:45 pm Rav Yitzchak Breitowitz
2:45 pm Rav Nachshon Schiller,
Rosh Yeshiva, Ohr Shmuel
3:30 pm Rabbi Dovid Kaplan
4:15 pm Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb
5:00 pm Rabbi Avraham Rockmill
5:45 pm Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
6:15 pm Rabbi Yaacov Asher Sinclair
7:30 pm Rabbi Yehuda Samet

6:50 pm Mincha - 7:59 pm Maariv - End of Fast 8:05 pm

Ezrat Nashim will be open throughout the day.

**Livestream will be available on www.ohr.edu
Bus 25, 45, 34 & Light Rail to Shimon Hatzadik**

SUMMER CAMP

From: Aviva

*Dear Rabbi,
I have been appointed "activities director" of my shul's summer camp. I'm supposed to come up with a theme for the camp which will fuse exciting activities with Jewish content. So, I was wondering if perhaps you had some ideas for a camp, or maybe just some approach one could use at home which might be adapted to the larger context of a camp. Thanks.*

Dear Aviva,

I actually recently heard of a great idea and theme for a summer camp which is sponsored by a home for kids at risk here in Israel. The theme could easily be adapted for your needs, and the truth is, the approach could be adapted creatively even by parents for entertaining their own children during the summer vacation.

This year's theme is called "*Shemura zeh b'teva sheli*". Loosely translated as "being safe-guarded is in my nature", the theme is based on the Jewish National Fund-Keren Kayemet slogan promoting the protection of nature.

But the camp has ingeniously extended this theme beyond just guarding nature, to include safe-guarding oneself from harmful influences, while realizing one's potential for good. Through a variety of recreational and educational activities the concept of the camp is intended to inspire the children to explore the role of safe-guards in the Torah and other Jewish teachings, as well as the role of natural influences, such as family, rabbis and community, in facilitating self-improvement and personal growth.

Thus, all of the truly exciting activities of the camp simultaneously emphasize the difference between enjoyment and fulfillment, and between merely having fun and taking responsibility. The idea is to teach the children that seeking fleeting joy and fun will not make for a better, truly happy person. Rather, responsibly tending to one's personal growth, character development and talents is what brings one to long-term fulfillment.

These themes, which are so vital to helping young people attain and maintain wholesome Jewish values, and enable them to become healthy and productive members of society, are creatively interwoven within each activity. And they gain even more cohesive and emphatic expression through the venue of the traditional "Color War", where "Red" and "Green" compete over the value of "safe-guards" (Torah teachings) vs. "nature" (family, rabbis, community) in making us better people.

Of course, in the end, both sides win, and every participant will learn the benefits and value of remaining both true to the Torah and loyal to parents and rabbis. What a fun, challenging and exciting way to learn! And since the children play a major role in planning events and taking responsibility for their execution, they actually experience first-hand the advantage and satisfaction of fulfillment over fun and accountability over being care-free.

This is the basic idea as I understand it. You can incorporate it into various activities, such as arts and crafts projects where the idea would be not just to entertain the children, but also to introduce them to hobbies and skills which they could then use as productive tools in their lives. Or you might plan swimming activities where, of course, the swimming is fun, but would also include basic life-saving or first aid, in the context of the mitzvah of "guarding your health". Similarly, you could have courses in cooking, baking and other home-economics, with an emphasis on keeping kosher or other *mitzvot* associated with food preparation, like separating *challah*. And outdoor activities like hiking or other forays into nature could be directed toward raising the children's appreciation of G-d's Creation and the Torah mandate to guard and protect nature.

These are just a few examples, and I'm sure that with some thought and creativity you can come up with plenty of exciting and Jewishly meaningful events and activities which will make your camp one of the best there's been!

S U B S C R I B E !

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RABBI DANNY KIRSCH

**Age 58 Born: Letchworth, England - Now living in London, England
Hasmonean High School for Boys - London College of Fashion – Diploma
Yeshivat Ohr Somayach – Jerusalem - Yeshivat Ohr Somayach – Zichron Yaakov
Smicha from Rav Osher Reich and Rav Yitzchok Kulitz
Founder and Chairman JLE London — 1984 to date**

Ask any fundraiser about *siyata d'shmaya* (help from Above) and he will tell you that it's the first thing you learn on the job. In a schmooze many years ago Rav Mendel Weinbach, *zatzal*, told a story that he heard from Rav Moshe Sternbach, *shlita*. Reb Moshe was a 13 year-old *bochur* (young student) learning in Schneider's yeshiva in London at the start of the Second World War. As can be imagined, with England's tragic evacuation of Dunkirk, the bombing of London and food rationing, there was precious little interest or money in the Jewish community to fund a yeshiva. One afternoon, the Rosh Yeshiva called on all the *bochurim* to help raise money necessary to keep operating. He gave each boy three addresses and told them to visit the homes on his list that afternoon and ask the householder for a donation. Little Moshe approached the first house on his list and knocked at the door with great trepidation. The door opened and the man of the house asked him what he wanted. He was quite shy, and as he squeaked out his request the man slammed the door in his face. Chagrined, but soldiering on, he hesitantly knocked at the door of the second house, and heard the angry bark of a large dog behind it. Moshe was deathly afraid of dogs and ran away.

Although almost thoroughly disheartened, he nevertheless heeded his rebbe's command and approached the third address. It was a large and very prosperous looking house surrounded by a high fence. At the entrance was a sign that read "BEWARE OF DOG". That was just too much for Reb Moshe, and he ran back to the yeshiva. In the morning, after davening, the Rosh Yeshiva came over to him with a wide smile. "Yasher koach, Reb Moshe, you saved the yeshiva" he said, shaking his hand vigorously. Bewildered, Reb Moshe answered, "I'm sorry, but the

Rosh Yeshiva must be mistaken". He then proceeded to explain his very unsuccessful mission, not omitting a single detail. "Are you a *kofir*?" roared the Rosh Yeshiva. "Do you really think that I trusted in you to raise all the money we needed? We had to do our *hishtadlus* (effort), and HaKodesh Baruch Hu brings us the money. This morning a man came into the yeshiva and gave me a check for all the money we need to keep operating for the foreseeable future. By doing your *hishtadlus* you saved the yeshiva, Reb Moshe."



Danny Kirsch can tell you all about *siyata d'shmaya* — not just from his success in founding the bustling kiruv center known as the Jewish Learning Exchange in London, and from his fundraising experience, which is substantial, but also from his life experience well before he founded the JLE in London.

Danny's paternal grandfather came from Kemnitz, a small town in Germany near Leipzig. The Kirsches were not part of an Orthodox community. Educated with a degree in business, his grandfather was involved in the management of a large glove manufacturing concern located there. In 1937, seeing the writing on the wall for the Jews in Nazi Germany, his grandfather asked the owner of the factory to consider him for the position of manager of their factory in England. The owner agreed, and in that year his grandfather left Germany and moved to Letchworth, close to the English location of the glove factory. While he obtained their necessary visas, his family moved in with relatives in Switzerland. They joined him in 1938. At that time Letchworth had a Jewish population of one family — the Kirsches. Shortly after the Kirsches moved to Letchworth, Mr. Aba Bornstein, a prominent Jewish property developer in England, built a large housing project of worker's estates in the area, anticipating a boom after the Depression. The

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“boom” came, not from prosperity, but from the mouth of a cannon. World War Two began, and all the able-bodied men were drafted into the army, while the housing project lay empty. In what can only be seen as *siyata d’shmaya* and *hashgacha pratis* (Divine assistance, Divine personal supervision), the Jewish religious community of London, suffering from the bombing, decided to move to a safer, more remote area that was still an easy railroad commute from their work in London. Many chose Mr. Bornstein’s housing estates in Letchworth, an hour’s train ride north of the capital. As one of the few Jews in town, Danny’s grandfather attracted the attention of the leaders of the community, most notably Rabbi Solomon Sassoon, scion of the great Sephardi family (with whom the legendary Rabbi Dessler had a weekly chavrusah). They were intent on being mekarev the Kirsch family, and spent much time with them. (Because the community was then made up of the most prominent Rabbis and Roshei Yeshiva in England, including Dayan Yechezkiel Abramsky, HaRav Eliyahu Lopian, the Rosh Yeshiva of Etz Chaim), and HaRav Leib Gurwicz, the Rosh Yeshiva of Gateshead Yeshiva, when Danny mentions that he’s from Letchworth, English people assume he’s from one of those prominent Torah families. He thinks it might have helped him in many ways when he embarked on his own career in *harbatzas HaTorah*, (teaching Torah to the public).

Danny’s grandfather eventually bought the glove factory and turned it into a thriving fashion business. Danny’s father took over the business from his father, and Danny was expected to continue in the business when he came of age. At the age of 12 the family moved to London. By this time the family was traditional, and members of the local United Synagogue — the official Orthodox Synagogue of the United Kingdom. At age 14 Danny was sent to Hasmonean High School in London — a modern Orthodox school. After graduating, he attended the London College of Fashion to learn how to run an apparel business. And upon receiving his diploma in Fashion Merchandising, he started working in the family business. At the same time he was involved in leading youth groups in the United Synagogue. This led to a dilemma. He actually preferred working with youth groups to business. After a year of work he was offered a prestigious scholarship to be one of 10 young Jews from Europe to study for a year in Israel at Hebrew University, to prepare them for future leadership positions in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.

At the time he arrived in Israel in 1979, his older sister was studying at Neve Yerushalayim. The head of the school, Rabbi Dovid Refson, invited her and her brother Danny to spend a Shabbos with him and his family. Danny was greatly impressed with the Refsons, and apparently the feeling was mutual. Rabbi Refson asked Danny if he had any classes the next morning. He didn’t. The rabbi suggested to Danny that he pick him up at his dorm at Hebrew U. the next morning, and then he would bring him to Ohr Somayach for some classes. Danny accepted. Rabbi Refson introduced him to the registrar, then as now Rabbi Dovid Weinberger, who thereupon brought Danny to the beginning program run by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Abramov. The classes and rebbeim that he heard were nothing like any he had previously experienced. He decided to skip some classes at Hebrew U. and come back the next day. The depth of Torah and the philosophy of Yiddishkeit that he now discovered pulled at the mettle in his soul like a giant electromagnet. After a few days of classes he wanted to quit the university program he was on and come to Ohr Somayach as a full-time student. At the insistence of Rabbi Abramov he continued his university program for a couple of months, but his overwhelming desire for Torah led him to abandon the program he was on and become a full-time student at the Yeshiva.

Danny’s father was not as elated about the prospect of his son’s interest in learning as Danny was. He wanted him to return to the office after his year in Israel. “Yeshiva has an entrance but no exit” he told Danny. But Danny was undeterred. He felt that his life depended on an in-depth exploration of Judaism. Our Rosh Yeshiva Rav Nota Schiller, and Rabbi Solomon Sassoon, who had moved from England to Jerusalem, spoke to Danny’s father and convinced him that Ohr Somayach was a truly unique institution that would prepare him for a career in Jewish communal work, and he let him stay in Yeshiva.

The rabbis at Ohr Somayach were very inspirational. “I never met someone as motivated and with as great a love for Klal Yisrael and a desire to make a difference,” he says of Rav Mendel Weinbach, *zatzal*. “The staff of the Yeshiva, men like Rav Dov Schwartzman, Rav Aharon Feldman, Rav Mordechai Shakovitsky – the posek — and Rav Nachman Bulman, they were all gedolei Torah, ba’alei midos, intellectuals, honest. I never met people like these!”

Danny stayed in Yeshiva and grew very close to the rebbeim. After a year and a half he married his wife Jackie, and the couple moved to the Ohr Somayach branch in

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Devarim

THE INCIDENT OF THE SPIES REVISITED

Two of the main difficulties encountered in Parshat Devarim are the changes that Moshe makes in his recounting of the incident of the spies that had occurred 40 years previously as reported in Parshat Shlach, and his attributing his inability to enter the Land of Israel to his behavior in the incident of the spies rather than his error of hitting the rock to get water rather than speaking to it, which was the reason given earlier in Parshat Chukat.

In his recounting of the incident of the spies Moshe makes three specific changes: 1) In Parshat Shlach it is clearly stated that G-d instructed Moshe to send spies into the Land of Israel, while here Moshe states that the people came to him requesting the mission. 2) In Parshat Shlach Moshe gave the spies numerous instructions about the nature of the Land, its produce and its inhabitants. Here he only asks them to find the best way to enter the Land. 3) In Parshat Shlach the spies return with a comprehensive report, starting with the positive and ending up with the negative assessment that they would not be able to conquer the Land. Here, however, Moshe only mentions that they said, "Good is the Land that the L-rd our G-d gives us", which is hardly a negative report!

Moshe made these drastic changes in order to avoid the possibility of a repeat of what had happened 40 years before. If he would mention that G-d and Moshe were the original impetus for the mission of the spies, which ended in disaster, then the people would blame Moshe and G-d for

the incident and would therefore lose faith in their ability to conquer the Land. He also ignores specific details about the Land and the spies' doubts and concerns so as not to plant negative ideas in the peoples' minds. Instead, he pins the blame squarely on the people of that generation, not this new generation poised to enter the Land. This re-telling of the story is an example of what our Sages teach us in the Talmud (Bava Metzia 87) that it is permitted to change the facts in the interest of peace. In regard to Moshe's punishment of not being permitted to enter the Land of Israel, it is clear that this punishment is the result of Moshe's miscalculations with the spies. The additional instructions that he gave them backfired and gave them more ammunition for a negative report. However, since Moshe's transgression was unintentional, unlike the brazenly false report of the spies, G-d did not want Moshe's punishment to be mentioned in the same context as the spies'. Additionally, G-d wanted to protect Moshe's honor and status by not mentioning his punishment in the context of the serious transgression of the spies and the people. In essence He put the decree "on hold" until the incident of the water from the rock, through which the decree was sealed. This is the reason that the incident of the rock is not mentioned in Parshat Devarim at all. That incident alone would never have resulted in such a drastic punishment. The real reason for the decree was Moshe's role in the incident of the spies.

Va'etchanan

MOSHE'S PRAYER

In the beginning of the Parsha we are faced immediately with a perplexing situation. Moshe has already been told explicitly that he would not be allowed to enter the Land of Israel. Moshe however beseeches G-d to allow him to enter the land, "My Lord, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand... Let me now go over and see the good Land that is on the other side of the Jordan, this good mountain and the Lebanon." This is a reference to the conquest of the mighty rulers Sichon and Og, which Moshe interprets as the beginning of G-d's demonstration of His might which would eventually result in the conquest of the Land of Israel as well.

Moshe had referred to this idea previously in Parshat Devarim when G-d told him, "This day I shall begin to place dread and fear of you on the peoples under the entire heavens." Moshe understands this to mean that his involvement in the final conquest of the land is not finished with the con-

quest of Sichon and Og. Yet, since he has already appointed Yehoshua to be the leader in his place when they traverse the Jordan, he beseeches G-d only to allow him to "...go over and see the good Land that is on the other side of the Jordan..." Moshe's only request is to be allowed to enter the Land as simply one of the people, not as their leader. G-d rejects his plea, however, and tells him, "This is enough for you; don't speak to Me further about this matter." Since Moshe's punishment of not being allowed to enter the Land is the result of his culpability for the peoples' rebellion at the incident of the spies, G-d has allowed him to conquer Sichon and Og and will give him the opportunity to miraculously see the Land as if he were actually there — but no more.

Moshe had four specific reasons to enter the land. First of all he wanted to enjoy the merit of keeping those numerous *mitzvot* which could only be observed in Israel. Secondly, he wanted to see his efforts of the last forty years come to

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ABARBANEL...continued from page fifteen

fruition. His entire purpose has been to bring about the fulfillment of the promise that G-d had made to the forefathers to give their descendants that Land of Israel as an inheritance. By entering the Land with them he would complete his mission. Thirdly, he wanted to prove to the people that the Land was good, as he says in his request, "Let me now go over and see the good Land." In so doing he could personally refute the spies' slander. Finally, Moshe wanted to reveal to the people the exact location of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. Again, this is hinted at in his request where he asks to see, "...this good mountain and the Lebanon." The mountain is a reference to the Temple Mount and the

Lebanon is a reference to the Temple itself, since the word 'levanon' in Hebrew refers to 'whiteness' — and the purpose of the Temple is to 'whiten' (cleanse us) from sin.

What remains to be understood is why G-d doesn't respond favorably to Moshe's request. There is a basic principle that G-d forgives transgressions that are between Man and G-d, but transgressions between Man and Man are not forgiven by G-d, not even on Yom Kippur. It is up to the individuals who were wronged to grant forgiveness. Since it was Moshe who initiated the mission of the spies, and since he was ultimately responsible for leading the nation astray, G-d would not grant his request.

Re'eh

INSIGHTS INTO KASHRUT

One of the topics of this Parsha is the Laws of *Kashrut*. Although this was already discussed in Parshat Shemini in Sefer Vayikra, Abarbanel explains some of the dimensions of these laws which he did not discuss previously.

The Torah introduces this section by saying, "You shall not eat anything abominable" (Devarim 14:3). The Torah does not mean that forbidden foods are inherently disgusting and repulsive to human nature. The Sifra on Vayikra makes it clear that a person should not say, "I don't want to eat pork; rather, it is something I desire, but My Father in Heaven has decreed against it" (Vayikra 20:26).

Abarbanel explains that the prevailing opinion that the main reason for the *Kashrut* laws is that the various animals, combinations of foods and methods of slaughter are inherently unhealthy — is incorrect. If this were true the *Kashrut* section of the Torah would be reduced to a medical text and would take away from the lofty messages of the Divine Torah. If the Torah's concern was only in regard to health, then cures and countermeasures could be found to obviate the necessity for these laws in the first place. Furthermore it is obvious that the world's non-Jews, who are free to eat these forbidden foods, are no less healthy than their Jewish counterparts, and in many cases are physically stronger.

Rather, these prohibitions are designed to protect the individual's pure spiritual and intellectual dimension — his *neshama* soul. Man's physical nature and desires have a ten-

dency to overcome his pure spirituality. Eating these foods contributes to this spiritual blockage. This is expressed clearly at the end of the *Kashrut* discussion in Parshat Shemini, "Do not contaminate your souls with creeping things of the ground and do not become ritually impure through them, because I am the L-rd your G-d who sanctified you and made you holy, and you should be holy because I am holy" (Vayikra 11:43-44). The prohibited foods are never referred to as 'harmful' or 'unhealthy'. Rather, they are always referred to as 'ritually impure' or 'spiritually abominable'.

The concept of refraining from giving in to one's physical desires and eating whatever one wishes is also alluded to in the phrase, "You are children to the L-rd your G-d" (Devarim 14:1). This indicates that we are members of an important royal family and must conduct ourselves accordingly. The commandment to refrain from eating any abomination immediately follows the prohibitions against the barbaric practice of the Amorite mourners who mutilated their bodies by cutting their flesh or tearing out the hair between their eyes: "For you are a holy people to the L-rd your G-d, and G-d has chosen you for Himself to be a treasured people from among all the peoples on the face of the earth" (Devarim 14:1-2). Refraining from eating certain foods, even when they are not injurious and may even be beneficial to our physical health, keeps us constantly aware of our lofty status and unique responsibility to serve G-d.

Shoftim

WITNESSES AND TESTIMONY

In this section the Torah deals with the laws of witnesses and testimony. Guilt in criminal cases or monetary obligation in civil cases must be established by the corroborated testimony of two witnesses. Normally in a case where one pair of witnesses is contradicted by a second pair, the case remains unresolved. However, there is one particular circumstance where different principles apply.

For example, if two witnesses testify that Reuven killed Shimon, and then two other witnesses come and testify that they know nothing about the alleged crime but that the first pair of witnesses was with them in a place where they could not have possibly seen the murder — we then believe the second pair. We not only believe that the first pair was lying but we also punish them with the exact same

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punishment to which they were attempting to subject Reuven. Stranger still, if the court executes Reuven based on their testimony and it is only later that the second pair of witnesses comes and reveals that the first set lied in the above manner, that first pair is not punished at all. They can only be punished if this revelation occurs after the court has declared Reuven guilty but before he is actually executed.

Abarbanel, as well as many other commentators, is puzzled as to why the second pair is believed over the first pair, and why the first pair is not punished at all when the individual that they attempted to frame actually loses his life as a result of their treachery.

Abarbanel first mentions Rambam who does not attempt to explain the reasoning behind the law but rather considers it a Divine decree. Ramban and Ralbag, however, give a logical explanation as to why the second pair is believed. When the testimony of contradictory witnesses is canceled out it is because they are both testifying on exactly the same thing. In this case, however, the two pairs are testifying on two very different things. The first pair is testifying on an act; the time and place are secondary facts that help to establish the veracity of their description of the act. The second pair is testifying on the first witnesses themselves, not the act. Both pairs are testifying about where the first pair of witnesses was located at the time of the alleged act. In essence, the first pair is testifying about themselves — i.e. where they were located. The Torah is clear that witnesses cannot testify about themselves or about people or situations in which they have a personal stake. Thus the testimony of the first pair regarding themselves is disqualified and all that remains is the testimony of

the second pair.

In order to explain the counterintuitive law that the first pair is punished only for their treacherous intent, but not if they actually succeed, Abarbanel offers two possible explanations. First of all, courts and judges are considered G-d's agents, as the Divine Presence rests upon them. The Torah tells us that cases should be brought "before G d". When the disputants appear in court, they are considered to be standing before G-d. Therefore, if the lying witnesses are executed after their victim was already executed, the court is sending a message that it was mistaken in its judgment. If the judges are G-d's agents, how can they make a mistake? Rather, it must be that the executed individual really was indeed guilty and the witnesses who 'framed' him were actually correct. However, if the plot is uncovered before he is executed, it must be that he was innocent, and the witnesses can certainly be executed for their treachery.

Another possible explanation is that G-d wants to protect the honor and prestige of the courts. By killing the treacherous witnesses after their victim has already been executed, we would be sending a clear message to the public that the court made a mistake, and the court would lose its credibility to judge correctly in the future. The ensuing damage would be enormous. People would spread the word that these treacherous witnesses were killed because they were able to fool the judges into killing an innocent individual. However, if they are executed for their attempted treachery, people will realize that they attempted to mislead the judges but were not successful due to the diligence and efforts of the court to judge correctly. Thus the prestige of the court remains intact.

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:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

"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."

WORDS OF DESTRUCTION

When we speak about the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) in Jerusalem, we generally use the term *Churban HaBayit* (literally, “the destruction of the House”). However, the word *churban* is not the only Hebrew word that means “destruction”. In fact, the Torah itself, when warning that sin can ultimately cause the destruction of the Temple, uses a different word. In that context G-d warns: “I will give your cities over to destruction (*charbah*) and I will destroy (*vehashimoty*, derived from the noun *shemamah*) your Temples” (Leviticus 26:31). In this very passage we encounter two seemingly synonymous words for destruction: *churban* and *shemamah*. We will first seek to differentiate between the exact meanings of these two words, and then show how both of these terms aptly describe the destruction of the Holy Temples.

Malbim explains that the word *churban* is commonly applied to the destruction of an urban zone, while the word *shemamah* is a general term which refers to the utter desolation of the land. He also argues that *shemamah* denotes a more severe state of destruction than the word *churban* does.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) takes a different approach. He explains that the word *churban* denotes that which is not inherently damaged, but can be termed “destroyed” simply as the result of a disconnection between itself and an outside element that it requires in order to flourish. For example, a “ghost town” which remains completely intact, but is nonetheless abandoned, can be considered a *churban*. This is because the town itself is not damaged in any way, yet its lack of population precludes it from being considered a thriving settlement. It is effectively destroyed, while displaying no outward signs of destruction. By the same token, an especially dry and arid land is called a *charbah* because its infertility is not due to a problem in the land itself, but results from its inability to receive outside water (e.g., if rainfall is a rarity).

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that the word *shemamah* specifically refers to a plainly visible form of destruction. When a land or edifice is physically destroyed it is described as *shamem*, because one who sees it will note its obvious state of destruction. Radak (in *Sefer haShorashim*) writes that the root word of *shemamah* sometimes refers to “destruction” and sometimes refers to “astonishment” (e.g., a person who is taken aback by something is described as *mishtomem*). However, Rabbi Mecklenberg links these shared meanings of the same root by explaining that when one encounters something that is utterly destroyed he stands dumbfounded and stupefied at the very sight of that which he has beheld. In short, *she-*

mamah is destruction in the eye of the beholder.

Just as the *neshamah* (soul) of a person serves as his life-line to the Upper Realms, so did the Holy Temple on Earth connect to a corresponding Holy Temple in the Heavens, which served as its life-line. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821) asserts (*Nefesh HaChaim* 1:4) that the Jewish sinners whose misdeeds brought about the destruction of the Holy Temple were far worse villains than the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and the Roman emperor Titus who, respectively, destroyed the First and Second Temples. He expounds on this assertion by explaining that the grievous sinners of the Temples’ times defiled the Heavenly Temple, thereby disconnecting the physical buildings of the Earthly Temples from their Heavenly counterparts. The direct result of this disconnection was that the foreign armies of Nebuchadnezzar and Titus were able to successfully come and destroy the Earthly Temples.

Following this approach, we may posit that the term *Churban HaBayit* does not refer to the physical destruction of the Holy Temple, but refers to its spiritual disconnection that resulted from sin. On the other hand, when the Torah refers to the *shemamah* of the Temples, this *does* refer to the physical destruction of the buildings — the sight of which should serve as a deterrent from future sin. When we mourn the *Churban HaBayit* we do not simply mourn the demolition of the building which housed the Temple; we mourn the spiritual decline which allowed for that destruction to occur.

Interestingly, Ibn Ezra writes that sometimes the Hebrew word *shahm* does not always mean “there” as it usually does, but could be related to the word *shemamah* to refer to destruction/desolation. Rabbi Mecklenberg cites a poignant example of such usage: Psalms 137:1 is a prophetic lamentation of how the Jews were destined to react to the destruction of the First Holy Temple in Jerusalem and their subsequent exile to Babylonia. That famous verse reads: “On the rivers of Babylon, there (*shahm*) we sat, and we also cried”. In this context the word *shahm* seems entirely superfluous. They could have simply said, “On the rivers of Babylon, we sat.” Why did they add the word *shahm*? Rabbi Mecklenberg explains that the word *shahm* in this context is not meant as a geographical pronoun of their location (“there”), since such a location marker would be unnecessary. Rather, it refers to the exiled Jews’ state of existence. They were outwardly living in a desperate state of desolation and despondency as they disheartenedly sat and cried on the rivers of Babylon.

Author’s note: Le’Zechut Refuah Shleimah for Bracha bat Chaya Rachel

BLESSINGS OF THE SHEMA

There are three general types of blessings: 1) Blessings said for mitzvot, like blowing shofar and putting on tefillin; 2) Blessings recited on things that one derives pleasure from, like food and drinks; 3) Blessings of praise and gratitude, like 'Baruch she'amar' and shehechyanu.

What type of blessings are the "Blessings of the Shema"? From the name of these blessings and the fact that we say them together with both the evening and morning Shema it would seem that they are like the first type of blessings, blessings on a mitzvah. Yet, if they are blessings instituted for the mitzvah of Shema, why don't we say the usual phrasing: "Who has sanctified us through His commandments, and has commanded us to..." as is found in other blessings for mitzvot?

The Shulchan Aruch writes: If one says the Shema without reciting its blessings he still fulfills the mitzvah of Shema, but he must still go back and read the blessings of the Shema without reciting the Shema (Laws of Shema 60:2). The Mishneh Berurah explains this ruling as follows: One fulfills his obligation of saying Shema even if he does not say the blessings of Shema at all. However, he has not fulfilled his obligation to recite the blessings

of the Shema. He may say the blessings without saying the Shema since these blessings were not instituted specifically for the mitzvah of the Shema, as we see from the text of the blessings that does not include the phrase "Who has sanctified us with His mitzvot...."

From the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch and explanation of the Mishneh Berurah it is clear that the blessings of the Shema are not said for the mitzvah of the Shema. This is also proven from the fact that one can still recite the blessings of the Shema for one full hour after the time of the Shema has already passed, and according to some authorities he may recite them during the entire day (Rambam, Pri Chadash, Chida).

They are, in fact, blessings of praise and gratitude. That is why even if one already fulfilled the mitzvah of the Shema he still needs to say these blessings. Regarding a blessing said for a mitzvah it is forbidden to recite a blessing *after* one already fulfilled the mitzvah.

It must be noted that the Shema may be said more than several times a day, just as one may read any passage from the Torah numerous times. Accordingly, the Shulchan Aruch writes that one should say the Shema when saying the blessings of the Shema even if he has already fulfilled the mitzvah of the Shema.

@OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Staff, Alumni and Students

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Zichron Yaakov, where he learned for three years under Rav Osher Reich, from whom he received *smicha*, in addition to another *smicha* from Rav Yitchak Kulitz, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem at the time.

In 1984 Ohr Somayach asked him to open an outreach center in London. Danny Kirsch had found his life's calling.

Originally the center carried the name of "Ohr Somayach". After a few years Danny changed it to the Jewish Learning Exchange. On a visit to London, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Ohr in Jerusalem, asked him why he changed the name. Danny answered that it more accurately reflected his mission. "People come in with an interest and we exchange it for Jewish learning."

Today the center, located in Golders Green, London, has a staff of over 40 full- and part-time employees. They offer more than 80 weekly classes given by such renowned personalities as Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz, Aaron Hersh and Benji Morgan. In all, there are about 1,500 attendees per week. In addition, the JLE center has a fully operational shul with daily and Shabbos *minyanim*, and a lively Beit

Medrash. Programs targeting high school and university students are conducted both in the center and on various campuses throughout England. The JLE also operates as a social gathering place, hosts Shabbos dinners for young professionals and other singles and families, and organizes BBQ outings as well as trips to Eastern Europe and Israel.

Danny and his wife have been blessed with many children, almost all married and most of whom are involved in *harbatzas HaTorah*. As we say in the West, "Nothing breeds success like success." Danny and his wife are certainly proof of this dictum.

Of his beloved mentor, Rav Mendel Weinbach, *zatzal*, Danny Kirsch says: "Hardly a day goes by when I don't hear Reb Mendel's voice directing me and making sure I'm on the right path." Danny is a frequent visitor to Ohr Somayach Jerusalem and continues to consult with Rav Nota Schiller, *shlita*, on almost every trip. We wish Danny and his wife continued success as they and their family go from "strength to strength" with continued *siyata d'shamaya*.

CONSOLATION AMID DESTRUCTION

The custom is to ease some laws of mourning after midday on Tisha b'Av. For example there is a *minhag* (custom) not to wear *tefillin* in the morning as a sign of mourning, but in the afternoon this becomes permitted (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 555:1). There is also a *minhag* to read verses of consolation in the afternoon. However, these customs need explanation in light of the *gemara* that says the Beit Hamikdash was set on fire on the ninth of Av during the late afternoon (Ta'anit 29a). According to this, why is it that we ease the intensity of the mourning specifically at that time? One would think that the mourning should be even more intense while the Beit Hamikdash was burning.

The *gemara* says that when the enemies came to desecrate the Beit Hamikdash, they removed the *kravim* from the *kodesh hakedoshim*, and humiliated the Jewish people by dragging them through the streets. *Chazal* tell us that while this was happening, the *kravim* were embracing each other (Yoma 54b). This *gemara* appears problematic, though, in light of another *gemara* that says that the *kravim* only faced each other when G-d was happy with the Jewish People (Bava Batra 99a). During the time of the *churban*, the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, it would seem that G-d was rejecting the Jewish People. Why then would G-d show the Jewish People such a deep sign of love during this climactic time of destruction and devastation?

The commentaries explain that the Jewish People did not really believe that the Beit Hamikdash would actually be destroyed, and thus did not do adequate *teshuvah* — they had been relying on the atonement, that the Beit Hamikdash provided them. In fact, some even felt that their spiritual state did not need any correction. The danger of being in such a situation is that one may easily end up destroying himself without realizing the repercussions of his actions. This is similar to someone receiving anesthesia at the dentist's office. The dentist warns the patient after receiving the anesthesia not to bite his lips. The dentist gives this instruction because the patient does not feel the pain from the bite, and may actually end up biting through his entire lip without noticing. G-d, therefore, destroyed the Beit Hamikdash to bring awareness to the

Jewish People of the nature of their low status — and so they would do proper *teshuvah*. Essentially, G-d brought the *churban* to make the Jewish People feel the pain of their low spiritual state.

Consequently, the Jewish People understood the lesson behind the harsh reality of seeing the Beit Hamikdash destroyed, and responded with *teshuvah*. In addition, the suffering that they experienced from the *churban* also aided in cleansing them from their sins.

The commentaries explain that this is why the *kravim* were embracing each other at the time of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. It was a sign that G-d was satisfied with the Jewish People's response in doing *teshuvah*, and achieving their new, elevated spiritual state (see Pri Tzadik, Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5 and Shem M'Shmu'el, Devarim 5677). Seen in this light, we see G-d's tremendous kindness by bringing the *churban*. In effect, He destroyed "physically" to preserve "spiritually".

With this idea we can understand the following teaching of *Chazal*. The chapter of Tehillim that describes the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash starts with the words "*Mizmor l'Asaf* — A psalm for Asaf." The Midrash asks: Why is this chapter called a song? Seemingly, it would be more fitting to call it a lamentation. The Midrash answers that when Asaf saw the Beit Hamikdash set on fire he understood that the Jewish peoples' own lives were spared, as G-d had evidently decided to destroy the Beit Hamikdash instead of the Jewish nation, and that He had given them a second chance by conveying that they are in dire need of *teshuvah*. That is why Asaf sang then, and that is why the chapter is a "song" (Eichah Rabbah 4:14).

We can now answer the question that we started with. When the enemy attacked, the Jewish nation was on the verge of annihilation, as decreed by G-d. Once the Beit Hamikdash was set on fire, however, the enemy was satisfied and stopped the killing spree. The reduction of mourning at precisely the time when the Beit Hamikdash began to become destroyed is to emphasize G-d's mercy amid the destruction. G-d chose to destroy the Beit Hamikdash for the Jewish People's sins instead of actually destroying the Jewish People (see Kaf Hachaim 559:76 in the name of the Arizal and Mishna Berura 555:3 in the

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MEAT FOR BREAKFAST AND THE NINE DAYS?!

Many people living in Eretz Yisrael, when making a *bris milah*, will make sure that the accompanying *seudah* (festive meal) is *fleishig* (meaty). Even though the very thought of this to many American expatriates to whom a *bris* means bagels and lox is as foreign as eating burritos for the Shabbat *Seudah*, here in Israel it's practically *de riguer*. Not only that, it's actually cheaper to make a full *fleishig bris seudah* than to make a milky bagels and lox one, due to the law of supply and demand.

The question is: "Why would this be? Simple economics should prove the opposite. Also, what's wrong with bagels and lox? Eating *fleishig* at a *bris* is downright un-American!"

The answer is actually very interesting, but to properly understand it we have to learn some *halachot* of the Nine Days. The Shulchan Aruch (O. C. 551:10) states that during the week that Tisha B'Av falls out on ("*shavua shechal bo*"), the *minhag* is to refrain from eating any sort of meat and chicken. Although several later Sefardic authorities are more stringent, nonetheless the general Sefardi custom follows the Shulchan Aruch. The Rema (O. C. 551:3 & 9), however, maintains that all of the restrictions start from Rosh Chodesh Av, and Ashkenazi custom follows this — hence the common name "The Nine Days", meaning from Rosh Chodesh Av until after the fast of Tisha B'av. Therefore, practically, the Ashkenazi custom is to abstain from eating meat products during the whole Nine Day period.

However, there are several exceptions to this prohibition: Shabbat is not included, as the mitzvah of *Oneg Shabbat* (enjoying Shabbat) overrides this prohibition. Also, a *seudat mitzvah*, even during the week, will also take precedence over it, and meat may be served. This is where it gets interesting. The examples of a *seudat mitzvah* listed by the Rema include: a celebration on concluding a Tractate of Talmud, a Pidyon HaBen, a betrothal *seudah*, and... a *bris milah*!

This means that the *seudah* at a *bris milah* is considered a *seudat mitzvah*, and is of such significance that those celebrating may even eat meaty, and not only during the Nine Days but even on the *actual week of Tisha B'Av*! Although the Rema concludes that on *shavua shechal bo* only ten others beside (some say including) the immediate family should partake of the meat, nonetheless, this rule emphasizes that the proper *minhag* is to eat *fleishigs* at a *bris*

seuda, due to its importance and status as a *seudat mitzvah*! If a standard *bris* has such ability, why should one wait until the Nine Days to make a *fleishig bris*?! Thus, it turns out that the proclivity and propensity for *fleishig brissos* in Eretz Yisrael is actually based on the *halachot* of the Nine Days.

Accordingly, from a halachic perspective the Bagel 'n Lox Deluxe at a *bris* just doesn't have the same appeal.

That's Not All, Folks!

There is another possible difference between Sefardic and Ashkenazic custom about the restrictions of the Nine Days, aside from the amount of days that these restrictions apply. The Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) states that the prohibition of eating meat does not apply to a "*tavshil shel basar*". This is referring to an item that was cooked together with meat or chicken, but no actual residue remains, only a bit of the taste. Think of an airplane meal where the rice might taste a bit like the chicken it was cooked with, without the physical residue. Many other authorities, on the other hand, maintain that we do not make such a distinction, and rule that is also proscribed.

This also parallels a similar disagreement by the *halachot* of Milk and Meat, that the Shulchan Aruch (Y. D. 89:3) maintains a similar stance, that a "*tavshil shel basar*" does not share the status of meat, and the prerequisite waiting period of six hours is non-applicable. Likewise, many other Ashkenazic decisors disagree with his opinion, and hold it is difficult to make that distinction.

What is interesting to note is that several later Sefardic authorities, as well, follow the Ashkenazi *poskim* and maintain that one should wait even after a "*tavshil shel basar*", and consider it like meat itself.

It would therefore stand to reason that likewise, even a Sefardi should refrain from eating a "*tavshil shel basar*" during the week preceding Tisha B'Av. Although many of the Sefardi authorities cited above do not mention this, some contemporary authorities do, however, and maintain that even a Sefardi should refrain from eating this *tavshil* during said week.

Just another fascinating example of the entwinement of all facets of halacha.

Consolation Amid Destruction

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name of the Gra).

We may still ask one more question: If the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash was for the best, as are all of G-d's actions, then why mourn at all? Like all other tragedies that are for the best, the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash was the best thing for the Jewish People. G-d chose to give the Jewish People a second chance by destroying the Beit Hamikdash, and thus show them the need to change their ways. There is still mourning, however, over the sins that brought them to a state that the

best thing was this very loss — the loss of the holiest place on earth, and our “meeting point” with G-d. The *gemara* says that any generation during which the Beit Hamikdash is not built is as though that generation destroyed it (Yerushalmi Yoma 1:1). Every year we mourn the very severe reality that the best thing for us is the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash today. May we be *zocheh* to spend this Tishah B'Av with rejoicings, instead of with mourning.

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