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PARSHA INSIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Wasted on the Young

“The years of the life of Sarah” (23:1)

Those of us who are old enough to have trouble recalling large areas of our youth will at least have no trouble remembering some standout moments of total irresponsibility: Like speeding down a German autobahn at 100 miles an hour on the back of a BMW 900 in the dead of night in driving rain on a hitchhike.

“Youth is wasted on the young” runs the old adage. As our hair thins and our waistlines thicken we try to shed the immaturity of youth and improve our characters and our actions.

It comes out then that what we really can call our “life” — our arriving at some kind of perfection in this world — happens pretty close to our departure from

this world. Viewed in this way, our “lives” are even shorter than we thought, even without the help of lunatic escapades and motorcycle madness.

All the above is true of the average person. However, there are those special people whose entire lives are unspoiled. Such were “*the years of the life of Sarah.*” As Rashi says, “*all of them were equal in their goodness.*” None of them were wasted or misspent. And even though, of course, Sarah’s stature grew in old age, this was the dividend of a holy life spent in doing *mitzvot* and good deeds, rather than the necessity to forsake the foolishness of youth for “*all of them were equal in their goodness.*”

• Source: based on the Sfat Emet

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.”

TALMUD TIPS

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

Sanhedrin 107 - 113

Sustenance: Bitter or Sweet?

Rabbi Elazar said that the dove (that returned to Noach's ark) offered a request and a prayer: Master of the Universe, let my sustenance be bitter as an olive but be delivered from Your Hand, and let my sustenance not be as sweet as honey but be delivered from the hand of Man.

This statement on our *daf* is Rabbi Elazar's manner of explaining the verse which describes the return of the dove from the ark that Noach sent out to see if the water had receded yet or not. The verse states, "And the dove returned to him in the evening, and it had a plucked olive leaf in its mouth, and Noach knew that the water had subsided from the earth. (Gen. 8:11)

The *gemara* explains that we understand the olive leaf in its mouth to be its food, and not merely a symbol of the receding water, based on comparing the word "*teref*" in this verse with a different verse which uses the same word, and clearly its meaning there is "food" — "provide me my allotted bread". (Mishlei 30:8; the Maharsha explains in a beautiful manner why the *gemara* chooses this particular verse to prove that *teref* means food, instead of quoting other seemingly equally satisfactory verses that also show that *teref* means food.)

How do we know that the dove was "offering this prayer", or as we would say, expressing a message, by its carrying an olive leaf in its mouth? Rashi seems to address this question by focusing on the word "*piha*" in the verse, which means "in its mouth". Why does the verse need to point out where the leaf was? The phrase "in its mouth" teaches us that the dove was actually offering the above prayer with its mouth, so to speak, in order to express its desire to receive its food directly from G-d, and not from the hand of Man, even if the food is bitter and not sweet.

This is a lesson that is applicable not only to doves, of course, but is taught here as a lesson for all of Mankind.

The Maharsha explains that this is a lesson for every man — to be content with even the little he receives from Heaven and not seek the luxuries which will make him dependent on other humans. He also points out that the dove brought back a *leaf* from an olive tree, but not an olive from the tree. The leaf is bitter, whereas the fruit is not. Bringing back the leaf also hints at the above idea that it is by far preferable for a person to be satisfied with less and more basic sustenance from G-d than to desire larger amounts and luxurious provisions from a fellow human being. As our Sages teach, "Make your Shabbat meals similar to your weekday ones, rather than being dependent on others." (Shabbat 118a)

For this reason we ask in *birkat hamazon*: "And please, let us not be dependent, L-rd our G-d, neither on a gift, nor on a loan from a human being, but rather on Your full, open, holy and generous Hand, so that we should never feel embarrassed or ashamed." "Embarrassment and shame" come as a direct result of being dependant and sustained by a fellow mortal.

Based on this central theme of our desire to receive our sustenance directly from G-d's Hand, there is a halacha in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 167:18) that states regarding distributing the challah to guests after saying Hamotzi and cutting it up: "One who cuts the bread should place a slice *in front of* each person, and each person should pick up his slice, and the 'cutter' *should not put it into the hand of the eater* unless the eater is a mourner." I have heard that this halacha, based on the "Talmud Tip" for this week from our *sugya*, is the reason why the host usually places the slices of challah on a plate or tray to be passed around the table to allow the guests to take from, instead of placing the slices directly into the guests' hands.

• *Sanhedrin 108b*

PARSHA Q&A?

1. Name the four couples buried in *Kiryat Arba*.
2. What did Sarah hear that caused her death?
3. What title of honor did the *B'nei Chet* bestow upon Avraham?
4. Where was Avraham born?
5. How were Avraham's camels distinguished?
6. What is meant by "all the good of his master in his hand"?
7. What special character trait did Eliezer seek when choosing a wife for Yitzchak?
8. Why did Avraham's servant, Eliezer, run toward Rivka?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Eliezer?
10. When Lavan told Eliezer that the house was cleared out, what did he remove?
11. Who did Eliezer want Yitzchak to marry?
12. Aside from Eliezer, to which other people did Rivka offer to give water?
13. Lavan answered Eliezer before his father, Betuel, had a chance. What does this indicate about Lavan's character?
14. What did Rivka mean when she said "I will go"?
15. What blessing did Rivka's family give her before she departed?
16. Who was *Ketura*?
17. What gift did Avraham give to Yitzchak?
18. How old was Avraham when he died?
19. For how many years did Yaakov attend the Yeshiva of *Ever*?
20. How many times is Eliezer's name mentioned in this week's Parsha?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 23:2 - Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.
2. 23:2 - That Yitzchak was almost slaughtered.
3. 23:6 - Prince of G-d.
4. 24:7 - Ur Kasdim.
5. 24:10 - They were muzzled, so they wouldn't graze in the fields of others.
6. 24:10 - Eliezer carried a document in which Avraham gave all he owned to Yitzchak so that people would want their daughter to marry him.
7. 24:14 - He sought someone who excelled in performing acts of kindness.
8. 24:17 - He saw that the waters of the well rose when she approached.
9. 24:29 - Lavan coveted his money.
10. 24:31 - Idols.
11. 24:39 - His own daughter.
12. 24:44 - To the men who accompanied Eliezer.
13. 24:50 - That he was wicked.
14. 24:58 - I will go even if you don't want me to go.
15. 24:60 - That the blessings given to Avraham would continue through her children.
16. 25:1 - Hagar.
17. 25:5 - The power of blessing.
18. 25:7 - 175 years old.
19. 25:17 - 14 years.
20. None!

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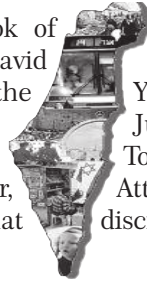
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LOVE of the LAND

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

Yarcha — Tomb of a Loyal Hero

Chushai Ha'Arki is described in the Book of Shmuel as the loyal supporter of King David who played an instrumental role in foiling the rebellion of Avshalom against his father. By countering the wise counsel of Achitophel with strategic advice that appealed to Avshalom as even wiser, he succeeded in convincing him to take a step that



led to his destruction.

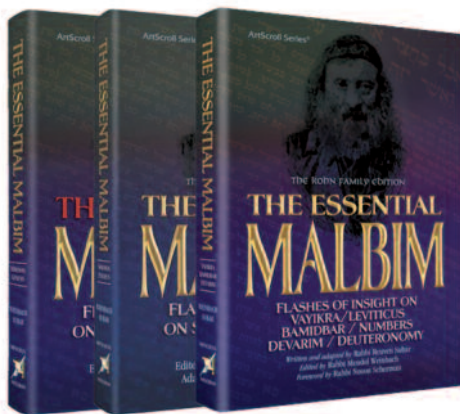
His tomb, which is located in the village of Yarcha, some four miles northeast of the Achihud Junction, was reportedly visited in 1742 by the great Torah commentator and kabbalist Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, who studied Torah and prayed together with his disciples at the site.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Sarah, Mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum. Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avraham's family. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of

his thirsty camels. (Some 140 gallons!) This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable Mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother Lavan result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother. Avraham remarries Hagar who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

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BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

Birthday Maze

From: Anna

*Dear Rabbi,
My friend and I have the same birthday. If our birthdays are the same, why are the Hebrew dates for our birthdays different? Her Hebrew birthday is after mine.*

Dear Anna,

If you and your friend had literally been born on the same day, you would both celebrate your birthdays, secular or Hebrew, together every year.

But I can tell from what you write that even if you were both born on the same *date*, you were not born literally on the same *day*. Rather, if your secular birthdays and Hebrew birthdays do not coincide, you must have been born in different years, which makes for different dates in the Hebrew calendar. I'll explain:

The secular or Gregorian calendar is solar-based. That's why it's comprised of 365 days, which is the time it takes the earth to revolve once around the sun. For this reason its months are in sync with the seasons of the year — spring, summer, fall and winter. But these months are not, as the word would suggest, connected to the moon. So while the secular calendar is in sync with the seasons, there is no relationship between its months and the various phases of the moon.

The Jewish calendar, however, is primarily lunar, where the beginning of the month occurs on the new moon, the middle of the month occurs on the full moon and the month concludes at the end of the waning moon. Since there are approximately 29.5 days in the lunar cycle, some Jewish months are 29 days and others are 30, but all average out and correspond to the twelve 29½-day moon-months, which result in a 354-day year.

This is the fundamental reason why dates of the Gregorian and Hebrew calendars do not coincide. There is a built-in discrepancy of 11 days between a 354-day lunar-based year and a 365-day solar-based year. Thus two people such as you and your friend who were born on the same secular date of different years will have been born on different Hebrew dates!

By the way, because of this 11-day difference, the months of a purely lunar calendar will lag behind the solar-based seasons by approximately one month every three years. And throughout the years, its months will drift throughout the entire spectrum of the seasons.

The Islamic calendar is such a purely lunar system, where, for example, the month-long, day-time fast of Ramadan is sometimes in the short, cool days of winter and other times in the long, hot days of summer.

So while the Gregorian calendar is in sync with the sun, its months are out of sync with the moon. Conversely, while the Islamic calendar's months are in sync with the moon, they are totally out of sync with the sun and the seasons.

However, the earlier, ancient Jewish calendar ingeniously resolves the inherent tensions of the purely solar or lunar systems as adopted by the Gregorian or Islamic calendars. It does so by using a lunisolar calendar that simultaneously preserves true lunar months within the seasons of the solar year.

The way this works is that since a discrepancy of about one month occurs over three years, approximately every three years (specifically, 7 times in 19 years), a second month of Adar is added at the end of the winter in order to fulfill the Torah's mandate for Nisan, the month of Redemption, to occur in the spring. The intercalation of this extra month ensures that all of the months and their respective holidays are always in balance with their relevant seasons.

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WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

Maybe Yes, Maybe No

The word “maybe” in English is neutral; it belies not the speaker’s preference regarding the possibility of which he speaks. The same is true of the Aramaic words *dilma/shema** (“maybe”). Rabbi Shlomo of Urbino (a 16th century Italian scholar) writes in *Ohel Moed* (a lexicon of Hebrew synonyms) that the Hebrew word *ulai* likewise has a neutral charge. However, two other Italian grammarians who lived at the same time disagree. Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1469-1549) in *Sefer HaTishbi* and Rabbi Immanuel Benevento in *Livyat Chen* write that in Biblical Hebrew there is no neutral word for “maybe.” Instead, there are two different words for “maybe”, each of which carries implications as to the speaker’s preference for the possibility which he introduces with his “maybe”: Using the word *ulai* as “maybe” implies that the speaker desires that possible outcome, while using the word *pen* connotes the speaker’s hopeful rejection of that outcome. Malbim similarly writes that the word *ulai* implies a certain desire for the realization of this possibility or implies the recognition that this possibility is more likely to materialize than the alternative.

To illustrate this distinction, we can use an analogy: if one says, “I bought a lottery ticket because *maybe* I will win”, the Hebrew word *ulai* is appropriate. On the other hand, if one says, “I wear a seatbelt because *maybe* I will get in a car accident”, then the Hebrew word *pen* is appropriate.

This distinction is also somewhat supported by linguists. Some experts explain that the word *ulai* is a portmanteau of the words *oh lo* (“or not”) or is related to the Hebrew word *loo* or the Aramaic word *levay* (which mean “if only”). Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) argues that the word *pen* is related to the Hebrew verb *panah* (“turned away”) because it connotes the speaker’s hope that the listener will “turn away” from the unfavored possibility which he raises.

Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer of Vilna (1720-1797), better known as the Vilna Gaon, made famous the idea that the Hebrew words for “maybe” differ from their English and Aramaic counterparts by applying it to exegesis: The Torah relates that Eliezer was commis-

sioned to seek out a suitable wife for Yitzchak in Abraham’s Mesopotamian homeland and to bring the maiden back to the Land of Canaan. When presented with this plan, Eliezer raised the possibility that the girl in question might not want to follow him to the Land of Canaan, “...maybe (*ulai*) the woman will not follow me...” (Gen. 24:39). Rashi explains that embedded in this clause is Eliezer’s secret desire to see his own daughter marry Yitzchak. Where did Rashi see this ulterior motive in Eliezer’s words? The Vilna Gaon explains that Rashi saw this in Eliezer’s word choice, which used the word *ulai* to introduce the possibility that the girl will not want to follow him, instead of the word *pen*. Had he used the word *pen*, Eliezer would have demonstrated that he truly wants his mission to the East to succeed, and remained hopeful that the girl would not refuse to follow him. However, because he used the word *ulai*, Eliezer showed his true colors that he had a hidden hope that the suitable girl would not want to travel to Canaan, so that his own daughter could marry Yitzchak.

Nonetheless, there is a significant problem with how HaBachur, Rabbi Benevento, and the Vilna Gaon explain the connotation of the word *ulai*. The Torah tells the story of how Yaakov received a special blessing from his father Yitzchak by impersonating his hairy brother Eisav. When Rikva first proposes to Yaakov that he pretend to be Eisav, Yaakov notes that his father could easily detect the ruse by simply feeling Yaakov’s smooth body and realizing that he is not Eisav. In Yaakov’s own words, “Maybe (*ulai*) my father will feel me...” (Gen. 27:12). If the word *ulai* implies that the speaker wants that particular possibility to come true, then why would Yaakov use the word *ulai* to introduce the possibility that his subterfuge will be discovered?

The commentators answer that Yaakov is most associated with the commitment to the truth. In fact, the prophet Micah (7:20) explicitly associates Yaakov with “truth” (and Avraham with “lovingkindness”). Accordingly, Yaakov actually wanted his father to feel him and put an end to his deception. He was so concerned with the truth that he felt uncomfortable passing a lie to his father, even if justified. This

Continued on page seven

PRAYER Essentials

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

Laws of “*Devarim Shebekedusha*” Part 2

Kaddish d’Rabbanan

It is the accepted custom to recite *Kaddish* (called “*Kaddish d’Rabbanan*”) after learning Torah — whether after a session of study of the Written Torah or of the Oral Torah. So too, this *Kaddish* is said after the public reciting of Tehillim. Ideally, this rule applies only when the above events are done with at least ten men present, thus constituting a *tzibur*, a congregation.

The Taz requires there to be ten people present only when *saying* the *Kaddish* after learning or reciting verses, even if there were *less* than ten people for the actual learning. However the Magen Avraham requires there to be ten people present for the learning as well and this also seems to be the opinion of the Gra. Therefore, in the event that Torah learning or verses are read *without* ten people present, *Kaddish* should not be said afterwards when there are ten people, unless a *mizmor* or some verses are first recited (Mishneh Berurah 55:2). The Piskei Teshuvot further explains that if Tehillim was recited, verses should be said, and if Torah was learned than the Mishna of Rabbi Elazar or Rabbi Chananya Ben Akashya should be said.

The Mishneh Berurah writes: “Just as it is good to decrease the amount of blessings one recites (i.e. that one should not make “extra” blessings when they are not really necessary), so too one should decrease the amount of *Kaddeshim* said. It seems that the intent of this instruction is not to say *numerous Kaddeshim* after reading verses of Tanach, Mishna or Gemarah. However, saying *one Kaddish* at the completion of learning Torah, or after reading chapters of Tehillim, is a great and wonderful thing, and this is also an obligation according to the law. (Piskei Tshuvot)

The Birkei Yosaf, authored by the Chida writes in the name of the *sefer* Vayakel Moshe that there is nothing better to protect against the threat of *mazikin* (spiritual damage) like reading Tehillim, and thus children who are within the year of mourning for the passing of a parent should say Tehillim, while reciting a *Kaddish* afterwards daily. (Brought in Kaf HaChaim 55:26)

There is also a well-known Midrash of Rabbi Akiva which explains the great benefit to the soul of a deceased person when *Kaddish* is said by his children. According to the story recounted there, through the power of *Kaddish* the soul was able to rise from *gehinnom* and enter *Gan Eden*.

What’s In a Word...continued from page six

answer is proposed by a bevy of commentators, including, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Edel (1760-1828), Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chayes (1805-1855), Rabbi Seligman Baer (Yitzchok Dov) Bamberger of Würzburg (1807-1878), Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935), and Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin (1881-1966).

Rabbi Mecklenburg too argues that Yaakov *wanted* his father to feel him, but not in the context of realizing his ploy, rather in the context of placing his hands over Yaakov’s head when giving him the special blessings. Alternatively, we could answer that according to the Malbim (cited above), the term *ulai* does not necessarily imply that Yaakov *wanted* that to happen, but that he simply felt that it was *most likely* to happen. (Rabbi Wertheimer uses a similar argument to justify

the appearance of *ulai* in Gen. 18:28.)

NOTE: Although the Aramaic word for “maybe” (spelled SHIN-MEM-ALEPH) is traditionally pronounced *shema* (with a *kamatz* under the MEM), there are two alternatives: Rabbi Meir Mazuz (a contemporary Sephardic grammarian in Bnei Barak), basing himself on HaBachur’s vowelization of the word and on other sources, claims that the correct pronunciation is *sheme* (with a *segol* under the MEM). Alternatively, the oldest vowelized manuscript of the Mishna, known as the Kaufmann Manuscript, consistently vowelizes the word as *shemay* (with a *tzayrei* under the MEM).

Ellyu Nishmat my mother Bracha bat R’ Dovid and my grandmother Shprintza bat R’ Meir

Letter & Spirit

Insights based on the writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

Authentic Innocence and Beauty

The Torah leads us to the end of our noble Matriarch's life, and has inscribed upon her monument the following words: *Sarah's life was a hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years: years of Sarah's life.*

Our Sages, noting the atypical way in which her lifespan is recorded, comment that Sarah's life is divided into three distinct periods. She did not live for 127 years, but rather for one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years. Our Sages regard these words as the perfect character sketch of the most worthy life. They draw the following parallel between these distinct phases of childhood, young adulthood and old age: *at one hundred she was as innocent as when she was twenty, and at twenty as beautiful as when she was seven.* Beauty at seven? Innocence at twenty? Should it not be the reverse?

But if we were to contemplate beauty... we would notice that there are many more beautiful children than young men and women. Hardly any child is born ugly — all newborns are beautiful. A child's face is beautiful because passions and wrongdoing have not yet etched their lines on its face. The face of one who has not yet known rage or resent, avarice or arrogance, vanity or vulgarity, will reflect none of those ills in its countenance. Those destructive paintbrushes stroke the self-portrait of man only beyond his childhood years — his face becomes a reflection of his true face. And so, as Sarah's life was one uninterrupted song of goodness and virtue, her true face retained the beauty of childhood. Had Sarah mounted her own picture of Dorian Grey in her tent, it never would have grown distorted. At young adulthood, the prime of unchecked passion, her face remained as it was at seven. Decades could have passed, and not a single wrinkle or blemish would have appeared on that portrait. For there were no blotches or misstrokes in her character. Beauty, in fact, is more than skin deep.

And if we were to contemplate innocence... our Sages teach here that the peak of innocence is not reached in infancy. Those who are genuinely sinless must have first developed clarity of mind to have chosen that path. A child's innocence is mostly a product of his unsuspecting nature. He is still too simple-minded to sin. In our notion of outgrowing this innocence, as man grows in his worldly wisdom, he is bound to do evil. But consider how the view of our Sages ennoble man! Age twenty: mind and body are mature, and judgment is sharpened, but the heart is still wide and warm, eager to embrace things good and noble. Idealism is the child of this "innocence." Sarah never outgrew this innocence — at one hundred her heart still swelled with the loving-kindness, hope, and energy it did at twenty.

These years together are called *chayei Sarah*; she *lived* in all of them. She took the crowning quality of each stage of life into the next stage. A phrase describing the final days of the noble and righteous is *ba bayamim*, literally "he comes *through* the days." (*Bereishet* 24:1 - *Avraham*; *Melachim I* 1:1 - *David*) He does not sink in his days; he passes through them. He retains the spiritual and moral attainments of his past and takes them with him into the future. The threads of purity in childhood are not dropped or worn out — they continue their stitch into adulthood, where new colors and shades are added. And that spool of idealism is not replaced by those of economy, pride, and pragmatism. Instead, all of his days are stitched, through and through, with the color of its virtue.

- *Bereishet*, 23:1; *Collected Writings*, Vol. 8, "Beauty and Long Life," pp. 137-144

BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

Supple as a Reed

When we conjure up an image of a *sofer* plying his craft, we usually envisage a wizardly grey-beard with furrowed brows hunching over a scroll, writing cautiously with a graceful feather quill by candlelight. So it has been from time immemorial...

What's wrong with this picture? The quill. In Biblical and Talmudic times, *mezuzot*, Torah scrolls and other holy works were written using a reed pen. Even in our time, the reed pen remains the instrument of choice for many Sephardic scribes. In a fascinating passage, the Sages assert that the supple nature of the reed makes it the perfect match for the Torah:

"A man should always be flexible as the reed, and let him never be unyielding as the cedar. And for this reason the reed merited that of it should be made a pen for the writing of the Torah, tefillin and mezuzot."

Some authorities rule that the "merit" derived from this consonance is an actual entitlement, allowing the reed to assert its moral rights over the quill. Nevertheless, the practical advantages of the quill, such as its ability to be carved with fine precision and retain its shape, have led to its acceptance in halacha and tradition. A well-made quill will create sharp, fine lines; bold, flat strokes; and clean, rounded corners. The softer reed requires constant sharpening. This time-consuming task decreases the *sofer's* productivity, and also makes it more difficult to achieve uniform consistency of letter formation from the manually reshaped nib. Because Sephardic scrolls are often written with reed pens, their letters are noticeably thicker, and a specialist scribe is engaged to attach the spindly crowns (*tagim*) at their top.

Because all of the processes in the production of

mezuzot and other scrolls must be done with kosher materials, the plume of the graceful goose was used for centuries but was later ousted by the hardier nib of the decidedly ungraceful turkey.

One might wonder why the turkey has merited that its quill should be the obvious choice of the stainless-steel pen. Some authorities assert that just as the Torah does not allow the use of iron instruments used in war to sculpt the stones of the holy altar which brings peace, so too iron and steel pens should not be used to inscribe the holy words of Torah. In deference to this concern there are those who allow casing the quill nib in gold, which has no military association.

Plastic pens write quickly and precisely and are used by some scribes. But they tend to wear out quickly and are expensive to keep on replacing. More recently, the ceramic never-needs-sharpening "*Kulmus Shamir*" has come onto the market and has been adopted by some *sofrim*. But these options are not accepted universally, and there are those who insist on obtaining scrolls inscribed with traditional instruments. Nevertheless, it should be noted that many authorities do not agree that the "war" analogy is applicable to scribal writing and would allow using a steel nib. Indeed, for precision touch-up work and minor repairs, many *sofrim* commonly use a metal-tipped rapidograph filled with traditionally made ink.

• Sources: *Ta'anit* 20a; *Rema* Y.D. 271:7; *Keses Hasofer* 3:16

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*

on the
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