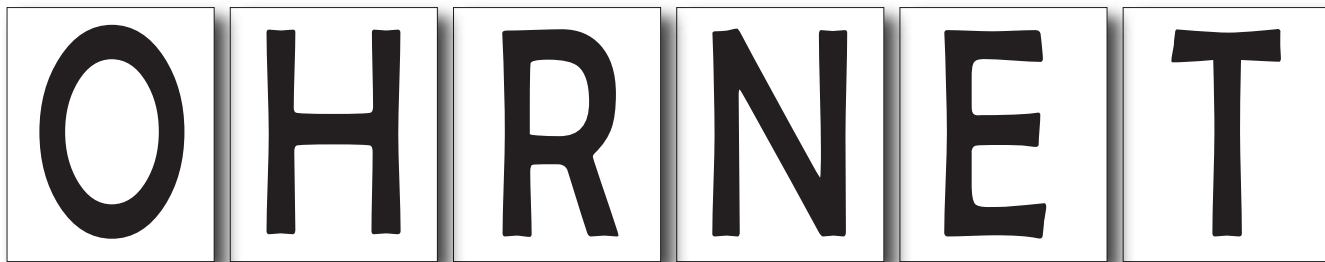

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SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYETZE • 7 KISLEV 5778 - NOV. 25, 2017 • VOL. 25 NO. 7

PARSHA INSIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Our Place

“Lavan said, ‘Such is not done in our place, to give the younger before the elder.’ (13:17)

It’s not what you say — it’s the way you say it. In the dead of night, the poacher makes his way across the moonlit field to the pond. At this chill hour the chance of being caught by the gamekeeper is extremely slim. Silently he lowers himself down and peers into the shimmering waters of the pool. Beautiful large trout are lazily meandering this way and that. A thin smile spreads across his face. He rummages for his lures and his bait.

“Gotcha!”

A powerful flashlight blinds the poacher’s eyes.

The gamekeeper stares down triumphantly at his catch.

“I see you can’t read signs,” says the gamekeeper.

“What signs?” says the poacher.

“The one above your head that says: No Fishing Allowed”.

“Ahh!” says the poacher, “No — you’re reading that the wrong way. It says: No! ... Fishing Allowed.”

“Lavan said, ‘Such is not done in our place, to give the younger before the elder.’”

Lavan was snidely hinting here to Yaakov, “In *our place* it is not done that the younger precedes the elder. Maybe where you come from you give the birthright to the younger before the elder as happened with you and your brother Esav — but not in *our place*.”

• Source: Beit HaLevi

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.”

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

Maccot 9 - 15

Learning Torah with Others

Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina said, “What is meant by the verse: ‘A sword is on the badim’? This means that ‘a sword is on the necks of the ‘haters of the Torah scholars’ (a euphemistic way of saying ‘a sword in on the necks of the Torah scholars, in order not to say ‘on the necks of the Torah scholars’) who learn Torah individually and not with others. And not only this, but they become ‘stupid’; and not only this, but they sin.”

Rabbi Yossi b’Rabbi Chanina teaches on our *daf* these quite serious and harsh warnings to those who study the Torah by themselves. He derives them from a verse in the Prophet Yirmiyahu 50:36.

We see from here the importance of being involved in Torah study together with a *chevruta* (study partner), a Yeshiva with many students, and with a Rabbi to guide each person’s Torah study. A person who studies Torah without others is in *danger* of incorrect and improper study, which can lead to thoughts, speech, and actions which are not in accordance with the true way of the Torah.

This *gemara* reminds me of a true story that I heard in my youth. A businessman in Jerusalem worked for many years, and then decided one day to retire and devote himself entirely to Torah study. So he closed up his store to customers, and began to study Torah all day — day after day — by himself in his closed-up store. After many years he died. But he left an unusual written request: “I insist that when I die that all of the notebooks of my Torah writings from my Torah study during my retirement should be buried along with me.”

Word of his request quickly reached the leading Rabbis of Jerusalem at the time. They felt quite conflicted and uncomfortable about burying and “losing” all of this man’s many Torah “novel ideas” that he had written. The Rabbis decided on a course of action. They sent a group of young, leading Torah scholars (*avreichim*), led by a then-young Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932), who later became a very great leading Rabbi of Jerusalem and for the Jewish People.

When this group of scholars quickly went and found the notebooks, they opened the first one and saw a question and answer the man had written regarding Yaakov’s dream. The verse states, “And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the ground and its top reached to Heaven; and behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending upon it.” (Gen. 28:12)

“There is a difficulty in this verse”, wrote the man. “Everyone knows that angels have wings. Why, therefore, did they need a ladder to go up and down on?”

The answer he wrote was, “The verse in the Torah is speaking about baby angels.”

I don’t know whether the young Rabbis who saw this laughed or cried, but they realized that their investigation was concluded, and that the man was correct in requesting that his writings be buried along with him...

• *Maccot 10a*

Teaching Torah to Others

Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina said, “Much have I learned from my rabbis, even more have I learned from my colleagues, but from my students I have learned more than from anyone else.”

The success of Torah learning is proportional to the degree of questions and discussions of a Torah subject, which lead to greater understanding. Rabbi Yossi b’Rabbi Chanina is certainly not downplaying the importance of what he learned from his teachers and friends. However, he teaches that one’s greatest understanding results from the process of intense questioning and reasoning with the various viewpoints of his students who seek to understand the Torah in a clear manner from him (Maharsha). Any teacher of Torah can easily identify with this phenomenon!

• *Maccot 10a*

PARSHA Q&A?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "G-d remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

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

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

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Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, *zt"l* • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO

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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

Cheftziba — Home of the Magnificent Mosaic

One of the most interesting relics of ancient times can be found in Kibbutz Cheftzibah at the foot of Mount Gilboa. It is the magnificent mosaic that decorated the floor of a synagogue built some 1400 years ago on the site where nearby Kibbutz Beit Alpha is located.

It was back in 1928 that the discovery of this mosaic came about while a tractor was digging in the



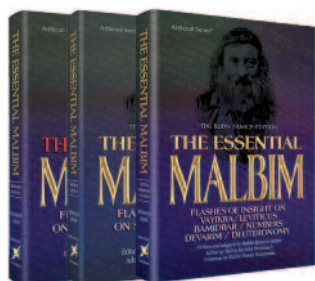
fields of Beit Alpha. Archeologists who rushed to the scene uncovered the floor of the ancient synagogue with a mosaic showing the sun encircled by the twelve signs of the zodiac (the *mazalot* in Hebrew).

The government has erected a building over the mosaic to protect it at the kibbutz to which it was moved and it is now a popular tourist attraction.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation, and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the

first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and, in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. G-d finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.



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BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

Anti-Semitism

From: Jason in Buffalo, NY

*Dear Rabbi,
Why is there so much anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish sentiment in the world?*

Dear Jason,

I will try to offer a logical explanation, although I personally believe there is a mystical reason as well.

Many different forms of Jew-hatred spring up from time to time. Several different reasons lie behind them. These include:

- 1) Jealousy towards us for having the original Bible
- 2) Anger at our continued resistance to being converted
- 3) Ideological clash

But why is it so prevalent in many parts of the world and in many cultures? Why are the Jews always the bad guys? Other nations and religions guilty of the same “crimes” are not victim to this hatred to the extent that we are.

To trace the roots of anti-Semitism we must journey back over 3,300 years to the revelation at Mount Sinai.

Before presenting the Torah to the Jews, G-d offered it to all the other peoples of the world. It was up for grabs; yet every nation turned the offer down. They simply weren’t willing to change their lifestyles in order to accommodate the Torah into their daily living.

When the Jews accepted the Torah, the jealousy of the nations was aroused. “They now have an advantage that we neglected and we can never forgive them

for it.”

We have something that the other nations lack. We were chosen for the task to be G-d’s “emissaries” to the rest of the world. Exemplary, Torah-true lives should impact on others and cause them to draw closer to G-d.

Nobody likes being told what to do, and the flag that we wave flaps irritatingly in their faces. We represent a threat to them, an irritating reminder that maybe they should be striving for higher things.

This hatred frequently lies dormant in the subconscious, flaring up when an excuse can be found. Often it’s intensified at times when we enjoy material success. The Jew in the Mercedes “runs them down”! Not only do we have the audacity to advocate a Torah; we also have the chutzpah to live luxurious lives.

The State of Israel especially is a thorn in the side of many of our enemies. From the brink of annihilation in the Holocaust we have risen to become a modern, relatively wealthy nation with a powerful military.

The paupers from the *shtetl* are now high-tech tycoons.

Is anti-Semitism only a bad thing? Strange as it may sound, it may also be the best thing that the non-Jew has ever bequeathed us with! Should it happen that we begin to neglect our responsibilities as Jews, G-d nudges us to remind us who we are and what we are doing here. Anti-Semitism works as “shock treatment”. Never forget that you are a Jew. And a Jew has duties that may never be abandoned.

Nowadays, too, the problems that are rapidly escalating are a signal from G-d. Let us take this warning to heart, and do what we can to strengthen ourselves

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WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

Stones and High Altars

There are three different words in the Bible used for three different types of altars: *mizbeach*, *matzeivah*, and *bamah*. In this essay we will discuss the differences between these three types of altars in terms of how they were fashioned, what Halacha says about offering sacrifices upon them, and how that may have played out historically.

The root of the word *mizbeach* is related to the noun *zevach* (sacrifice) and the verb *zoveach* (sacrificial slaughtering). Accordingly, the *mizbeach* functioned as an altar upon which blood and other parts of sacrificial animals, birds, and flour were offered. The original *mizbeach* of the Tabernacle in Moses' time was made of copper-plated Shittim wood, while the *mizbeach* in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem (built by King Solomon) was made from stone. The Torah is very particular that the *mizbeach* must be square (i.e., its length and width must be equal) and must have four "horns" atop its four corners (Ex. 27:1-2).

Truth be told, there were two items in the Tabernacle/Temple called a *mizbeach*. What we have discussed until now is known as the *Mizbeach HaChitzon* ("the Outer Altar") and was erected in the courtyard. The other *mizbeach* was located closer to the innermost sanctum and was called the *Mizbeach HaPnimi* ("the Inner Altar"), or the *Mizbeach HaZahav* ("the Golden Altar"), upon which the daily incense was burnt. This Golden Altar was not generally associated with sacrifices or sacrificial slaughtering. So why does it bear the name *mizbeach*?

The Zohar (*Vayakhel* 219a) explains that the Golden Altar is called a *mizbeach* because the incense offered upon it has the powers to subdue evil forces (see Num. 17:11-15 in which Aaron's offering incense on the Golden Altar had the power to stop a plague). Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786) adds that the sacrifices on the Golden Altar effectively "slaughter" those evil forces, so it is therefore appropriately called a *mizbeach*, which is related to the word for "slaughtering". Alternatively, Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach (990-1050) and Rabbi Avraham Maimuni (son of Maimonides) write that it is called a *mizbeach* simply because it was fashioned in the same shape as the main altar, albeit on a smaller scale, as it too was

required to be square and have four "horns" (Ex. 30:2). According to this explanation, the word *mizbeach* as applied to the Golden Altar is actually a "borrowed term" used because the Golden Altar resembles the Outer Altar. Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim* explains that because in some rare situations (like on Yom Kippur) sacrificial bloods are brought to this altar, it is justifiably called a *mizbeach*.

The word *matzeivah* is related to the root *netziv* (standing or pillar) and Rashi explains that *matzeivah* means the same as *mizbeach* except that a *matzeivah* is an altar erected of one stone, while a *mizbeach* denotes an altar built from multiple stones. Besides denoting a single-stone altar, *matzeivah* can also refer to any monument that commemorates something and is even used colloquially to mean "tombstone". About the use of a *matzeivah* for sacrificial purposes, the Torah says, "You shall not erect for yourselves a matzeivah which the L-rd, your G-d, hates." (Deut. 16:22) In other words, the Torah unequivocally forbids offering sacrifices on single-stone altars.

How can the Torah say that G-d hates single-stone altars if we find in the time of the forefathers that G-d was pleased with such worship, such as when Jacob (Gen. 28:18-22) erected such an altar at Beth El? He even identified Himself to Jacob later on as the One to whom the single-stone altar at Beth El was erected (Gen. 31:45)? The Midrash (*Sifrei* to Deut. 16:2) explains that although G-d originally cherished single-stone altars in the era of the forefathers, by the time the Jews exited Egypt He abhorred such constructions because they had been formally adopted by the Canaanites as a medium of idol worship. Once the idolatrous Canaanites began to use single-stone altars for their perverted rituals, G-d was no longer fond of such tributes, and, in fact, forbade them in the Torah.

Nachmanides disagrees with the notion that *matzeivah* refers to a type of altar. He argues that if both *matzeivah* and *mizbeach* mean "altar" and the Canaanites served idolatry on both types of altars (as evident from many Scriptural passages), then why does the Torah differentiate between a *matzeivah* — which is shunned — and a *mizbeach*, which is com-

Continued on page seven

PRAYER Essentials

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

Laws of *Kedusha*

One of the reasons we pray together as a congregation is in order to sanctify G-d's name publicly by saying *Kedusha*. One of the most exalted prayers we recite, according to the Zohar (Emor 93), it is considered a positive Biblical command, derived from the verse, "I (G-d) shall be sanctified amidst the People of Israel." (Vayikra 23:32) This idea is mentioned in the writings of the Kabbalists (such as the Arizal), as well as in the works of the halachic authorities (Be'er Heitev 125:3; Aruch HaShulchan 125:4; and the Chafetz Chaim in Ahavat Chessed). Here are the words of the Be'er Heitev (also quoted in Mishnah Berurah 4): "One must have great *kavanah* (concentration) to sanctifying G-d's Name in order to cause a spirit of holiness to descend upon him from Above." (Piskei Teshuvot)

There exist several different formulas (*nuschaot*) for the *Kedusha* prayer. Sefardim and Chassidim, praying a similar *nusach* that follows in general the instructions of the Arizal, begin with "*Nakdishach vena'aritzach*". Nusach Ashkenaz begins with "*Nekadesh es shimcha*". Though there are differences in the opening and closing of the *Kedusha* prayer, its essential part is the same for everyone. All answer in unison to the congregation leader with the following three verses: 1) "*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh, A-do-noi Tze-va-ot, melo kol ha'aretz*

kevodo" – Holy, holy, holy is G-d, Master of Legions, the whole world is filled with His glory (Isaiah 6:3). 2) "*Baruch kevod A-do-noi mimkomo*" – Blessed is the glory of G-d from His place (Ezekiel 3:12). 3) "*Yimloch A-do-noi le'olam, Elo-hai-yich Tzion, ledor vador halelu-yah*" – G-d shall reign forever – your G-d, O Zion – from generation to generation, Hallelu-yah (Tehillim 146:10).

The *Kedusha* prayer is of utmost importance. As such, the Rabbis permit interrupting one's own prayers in order to join together with the congregation for its recital. Before *Baruch She'amar* one can say the entire *Kedusha*, even the parts that the congregation leader says. If one is in the middle of *Pesukei DeZimra* one may interrupt only to say the three verses of *Kedusha*. He can also say the verse *Yimloch*, since many authorities consider it part of the essential *Kedusha* prayer. If, however, one is in the middle of the *Shema* or its blessings, he interrupts only for the first two verses, since there are *poskim* that do not consider the third verse *Yimloch* as part of the essential *Kedusha* prayer. Even during the *Shemoneh Esrei*, when one cannot interrupt at all, one should pause and *listen* to the *Kedusha*, and afterwards resume the *Shemoneh Esrei* (Piskei Teshuvot).

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

manded? Instead, Nachmanides explains that idolaters would erect a pillar to mark the entrance to an idolatrous temple and this pillar is called a *matzeivah*. According to this, G-d did not reject any type of altar upon which ritual sacrifice was offered, but He did reject this *matzeivah* monument which served a utilitarian purpose for idolatry.

The word *bamah* literally means "high place" and refers to private altars, which were generally built at sites with higher elevation. It is related to the word *bimah* which refers to the raised platform upon which the Torah Scroll is customarily read in the Synagogue. The Torah forbids a Jew from offering sacrifices outside of the central place of worship (Deut. 12:5-18), thus making worship at a *bamah* (or *bamot* in the plural) illegal. Nonetheless, the Mishnah (*Zevachim* 14:6) explains that this prohibition did not take effect

while the central place of worship was a wholly temporary Tabernacle. In other words, before the Temple in Jerusalem was built, as long as the place of central worship was the Tabernacle, Jews were free to offer certain sacrifices at private altars. However, once the Temple in Jerusalem was built (and during the 369 years that the Tabernacle stood semi-permanently at Shiloh), sacrifices on a *bamah* became prohibited. Unfortunately, during much of the First Temple period, Jews in the two Jewish Kingdoms of the Holy Land continued to offer sacrifices at *bamot*, an illicit deviation which led them down the slippery slope towards idolatry.

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

Tefillat Haderech A Prayer to Travel Through Life

Yaakov has just left his home, and is headed to Haran to find a wife from the house of Lavan. He will spend the next twenty years building his family, and establishing his financial independence. En route, he vows to G-d: *If G-d will be with me, and guard me on this path on which I am going, and will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear, and I return in peace to my father's house — then G-d will be G-d to me.*

In the context of the priestly blessing, we first mention material blessing (*yivarechecha*) and then ask that G-d protect that blessing (*v'yishmirecha*). But here, Yaakov first asks for protection (*guard me on this path*) and then for the blessing (*bread to eat and food to wear*). Since he has no more than the shirt on his back, he cannot be referring to his possessions. But there is something he did pack for his journey, in abundant supply — his spiritual and moral attainments.

Until now, Yaakov has been a *yoshev ohalim*, dwelling in the tents of study. He now sets out to seek a wife and a livelihood to support a family. He is right to fear the dangers that lurk ahead. Once Paradise was lost, and man was to eat by the sweat of his brow, earning an independent livelihood became complex. More than effort and skill are required to gain that loaf of bread. Rarely is the race for that loaf unaccompanied by pressure to attain social status. That “path to bread and clothing”, having become a dizzying quest for success, is ridden with potholes. Unscrupulous business practices, dubious marketing techniques, unfair competition, and undignified treatment of employees are

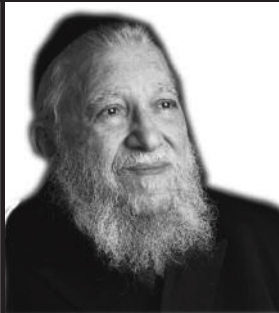
but a few of the stumbling blocks on this path. “This path,” our Sages comment, alludes to cardinal sins such as idolatry, illicit relations, murder, and slander. It takes courage and conviction to walk this road with honesty and integrity, to continue to value hard work, even as the outcomes of clever cunning seem ever more gainful. The path is indeed steep and thorny, with luxuries and windfalls beckoning the traveler to stray from his honest and Law-abiding toil.

Yaakov's prayer is a model for similarly situated travelers. First, he prays for the preservation of his character, that he not forfeit his integrity. Only then does he ask for respectable sustenance (food) and social position (clothing). His third wish is for “shalom,” peace, and “return to his father's home,” intact family ties.

Finally, Yaakov vows that he will respond to G-d's preservation and blessing by declaring, “G-d will be to me Elokim.” Most who have been so blessed would surely wish to continue that relationship with the G-d of mercy (*Hashem* — spelled *Yud, heh, vav* and *heh*), but Yaakov expresses the lofty wish of the Jew, to continue the relationship also with G-d as Lawgiver (*Elokim*). He vows: *The G-d who showered upon me the bounty of His love and goodness, will be to me G-d Who not only gives and bestows, but also demands that His Will be done with all that bounty.* With that vow he has directed every thought in his mind, every sentiment in his heart, and every penny in his possession to be used in accordance with the Will of G-d.

• Source: *Commentary, Bereishet 28:20-21.*

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Rav Bulman ^{zt"l}
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

What's in a Name?

Three Hebrew letters peek out from the back of a mezuzah scroll, casting a spiritual aura on the room. **י-ד-ש** (*Shin, Dalet, Yud*). *Sha-dai*, pronounced in common speech as *Shakai* to avoid “over-familiarity”, is one of the Divine Names found in several verses of the Torah. Because nothing may be added to the prescribed verses written on the front side, it is inscribed on the back of the parchment. The Zohar teaches that the placement of the Name on the back symbolizes that G-d guards us from all sides. It also states that negative spiritual energies (*mazikin*) are repelled by the spiritual force emanating from the mezuzah and the Name.

This Divine Name symbolizes the power of the mezuzah to embrace a Jewish home with G-d's presence and protection. The classical Torah commentaries interpret this Name in a variety of interesting ways, all of which shed light on its relevance to mezuzah.

Using this Name, G-d introduces himself to Avraham (then still called Avram) when he commands him regarding the covenant of *Brit Milah* (circumcision):

“And Avram was ninety-nine years old, and G-d appeared to Avram, and He said to him, ‘I am *Ei-l Sha-dai*; walk before Me and be perfect. And I will place My covenant between Me and between you, and I will multiply you very greatly.’” (Genesis 17:1-2)

Rashi paraphrases G-d's words in this way: “I am He Whose G-dliness suffices for every creature (*sheh* = that, *dai* = is sufficient). Therefore, walk before Me, and I will be your G-d and your Protector.” Similarly, that same Name, emblazoned on our mezuzah scrolls, broadcasts its message of Divine care and protection into the homes of Avraham's grandchildren.

Others interpret this “sufficiency” in another way. They say that the Name symbolizes that we should be satisfied with the material possessions within our homes.

In contrast, the great Torah commentator Ramban asserts that this Name derives from a Hebrew word meaning “conquest.” He explains that G-d is assuring

Avraham that He has the power to overcome the constraints of natural law and will bless him and Sarah with children in their old age. This supernatural event is symbolic of G-d's covenantal promise to Avraham's descendants that He will involve Himself with their destiny and not abandon them to the natural rise and fall of nations. Similarly, the Name on our *mezuzot* proclaims that one who enters a Jewish abode is stepping into a unique space of direct Divine Providence where small miracles are the norm.

Interestingly, we also form these same three letters when wrapping ourselves in *tefillin*. The letter *shin* is pinched into the leather of the head *tefillin* and wrapped on the back of our hand. The *dalet* is wound around our palm and knotted into our head straps at the nape of the neck. The knot touching the arm *tefillin* is a *yud*.

It is preferable to purchase transparent mezuzah covers, or at least ones that have a small plastic or glass “window” through which the Name is visible. This window is important, as it protects the Name from being erased over time by touching.

However, opaque covers are required in rooms where people are unclothed or near where diapers are changed. Opaque covers also offer better protection for outdoor *mezuzot* exposed to direct sunlight. The letter *Shin* is inscribed on opaque covers to hint that the full Name is hidden within.

Considering all of these themes, it is no wonder that the letters also allude to the assurance: “*Shomer Dirat Yisrael*” — The Guardian of the Dwelling of Israel.

• Sources: Zohar, *Va'etchanan* 266, cited in *Beit Yosef* 288:14; *Sefer HaChareidim* 66:127; *Rema* Y.D. 288:15; *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 286:5; *Prishah* Y.D. 288:16, citing *Kol Bo*

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