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# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHT

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BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

### Un-boxing

***“It was told to the king of Egypt that people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants became transformed regarding the people, and they said: ‘What is this that we have done that we have sent away the Jewish People from serving us?’” (14:5)***

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler writes in his classic “Essay on Kindness” that the two “root motivations” of the human personality are the desire to give and the desire to take. The “desire to give” is the root of all good in the world, and it is the higher level of the personality that connects us to the Ultimate Giver. When we are motivated by the desire to give we fulfill G-d’s command to create a being who is created in His Image: *“Be holy because I, the L-rd your G-d, am Holy.”* (Vayikra 19:2)

The “power to take” is the root of evil in the world: wars, infidelity, and egotism. Interestingly, the desire to take does not focus on a specific object, but rather it is the desire to make mine what is not mine, to move that which is beyond the perimeter of possession to within it. And thus this desire can never be satiated, for as soon as the object of desire has become the object of possession it loses its intoxicating aroma. It takes its place in the junk room of past trophies. And thus, on to the next! And then the next and the next and the next...

The desire to take is the green-eyed monster that mocks the food it preys upon.

One of the quirky new phenomena of the BNI (Brave New Internet) is the YouTube, “Unboxing Video.” For the uninitiated, an unboxing video is a video, which is usually self-filmed, of someone unwrapping or unboxing a new acquisition. We sit on the edge of our seat while Jimmy unwraps his new “Chibson,” his fake Chinese Gibson electric guitar, peeling off layer by layer of bubble wrap and brown paper; while Patrick unboxes his new iPhone X, every sliver of cellophane crackling with delight and expectation; while Phillippe extracts his Rolex from the innards of a red plastic toy fire-engine.

Why are unboxing videos so popular? Why would anyone want to watch someone unwrapping a new acquisition from which they will never have the merest *frisson* of pleasure?

And yet these videos are hugely popular. One of them called: *“Play Doh Ice cream cupcakes playset playdough by Unboxingsurpriseegg”* had notched up over 838.9 million views as of April 2017.

Maybe unboxing videos represent what Rav Dessler says. The pleasure of watching someone else acquiring is vicarious. It is the enjoyment in sharing

*Continued on page eleven*

ADVICE FOR LIFE

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

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BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

## Avodah Zara 2 - 8

*Rabbi Dimi bar Chama said, “The Holy One, Blessed is He, held a mountain (Sinai) as if it were an enormous vat over the heads of the Jewish People who gathered at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, and said, ‘If you choose to accept the Torah, good! And if not, here will be your burial place!’”*

The Talmudic Sage quoted here seems to derive this teaching from the manner in which the verse describes how the Jewish People stood at Mount Sinai immediately prior to receiving the Torah. “Moshe brought the people out towards G-d from the camp, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.” (Shemot 19:17) Rabbi Dimi bar Chama saw that the word “*b’tachtit*” that appears in this Torah verse is a somewhat unusual word choice since the word “*b’raglei*” (lit., at the foot of) or “*al yad*” (next to) would have been more natural ways to express that they stood at the foot of the mountain. The word “*b’tachtit*” is from the root meaning “*tachat*”, which implies being underneath something else. Saying “*b’tachtit*” therefore implies that the Jewish People were standing literally underneath the mountain, due to the fact that G-d held the mountain over them with the threat that they would either receive the Torah or would be buried under the mountain.

A question that is asked by many commentaries is why G-d acted in this manner to essentially force the Jewish People to accept the Torah, seeing as how the Jewish People had already stated that were quite willing to accept the Torah when they said, “We will fulfill what it says, and we will listen to what it teaches.” (See Shemot 19:8 and 24:7)

One answer is that although the Jewish People indeed wanted to accept the Torah with great passion and love, G-d nevertheless wanted to compel and force the Jewish People to receive the Torah. Giving the Torah in this manner teaches an important lesson. The Torah is a “must” for the world and everything in it to exist. A world without Torah cannot truly exist as the Creator intended it to be.

• *Avoda Zara 2b*

### Like a Fish Out of Water

*Rav Yehuda said in the name of the Sage Shmuel, “Why are the Jewish People compared to the fish of the sea? To teach you that just as fish of the sea die immediately when they leave the water for dry land, likewise, Jewish people die immediately if they separate themselves from learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvot.”*

This warning is one of a number of teachings that the *gemara* states is possible to derive from a verse in the writings of the Prophet Chavakuk (1:14): “You have made man like the fish of the sea.”

The Maharsha explains that this teaching in our *gemara* — that Torah and *mitzvot* are essential for life — is the very same message that is taught in the well-known parable of Rabbi Akiva, as recorded in *Masechet Berachot* (61b), as follows. The wicked kingdom of ancient Rome decreed that the Jewish People were forbidden to study Torah. A man named Pappus ben Yehuda saw Rabbi Akiva gathering large groups of people and teaching them Torah in public. Pappus asked Rabbi Akiva why he was not afraid of the government’s decree. Rabbi Akiva answered with a parable:

A fox was walking along a river and saw fish jumping from place to place. The fox asked them why they were fleeing. The fish answered that they were fleeing from the nets of people who were trying to catch them. The fox then invited them to join him on the dry land where he told them they would be safe. The fish replied: “Are you really the one who has the reputation of being the cleverest of animals? You are not wise, but stupid! If in the place where we naturally survive (the water) we fear for our lives, all the more so would we have cause for fear in the place where we would naturally die (dry land)!”

Rabbi Akiva explained to Pappus that the same message applies to the Jewish People. “When we study Torah, of which it’s written (in Dev. 30:20) that ‘It is your life and the length of your days’ we are presently in danger due to the evil decree, how much more so would we be in peril if we would abandon Torah study!”

• *Avoda Zara 3b*

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
  2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
  3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
  4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
  5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
  6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
  7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
  8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
  9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
  10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling"?
  11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the parsha indicates this?
  12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
  13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
  14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
  15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
  16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
  17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
  18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
  19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
  20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?
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## PARSHA Q&A!

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

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1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
  2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
  3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
  4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
  5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
  6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
  7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
  8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
  9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
  10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
  11. 15:17 - "*T'vi-aimo...*" — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
  12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
  13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
  14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
  15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
  16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiety.
  17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
  18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as He provided for your ancestors in the desert."
  19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
  20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.
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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

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# The Seven Species How They Represent the Land of Israel

“For the L-rd, your G-d, brings you to a good Land, a Land of wheat and barley, of grape and fig and pomegranate; a Land of oil-rich olive and sweet date.” (Devarim 8:7-8)

This is how the Torah introduces the seven species of grain and fruit with which Eretz Yisrael is blessed.

These species are mentioned in a number of places throughout Tanach. In many cases there is a comparison between them and our nation, to whom G-d gave this Land.

Our Sages (*Mesechta Succah* 5b) even saw in these seven species hints to the various measurements of substance and time that play a crucial role in halachic matters.

We pay special tribute to G-d after consuming any of these species by making a special blessing, different

from the one we make after all other food and drink. Whether it is the *birkat hamazon* (“grace after meals”) we say after eating bread made from wheat or barley and their three sub-species, or the condensed version (*me’ein shalosh*) said after partaking of cake, wine or the rest of the species, we offer thanks to G-d, not only for the food but also for the Land with which it is identified.

Regardless of whether these species grow in Eretz Yisrael or elsewhere, this special blessing is made simply because a species which is described in the Torah as one of the blessings of Eretz Yisrael sets it apart from everything else, just as Torah sets the Land and the Jewish People apart from the rest of the world.

This is the ultimate expression of our nation’s love of the Land.



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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the *Pelishtim* (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue them, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days’ travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain.

Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews into battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

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BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## Recycling

**From: Benny**

*Dear Rabbi,  
Is there a need to recycle from a Jewish perspective?*

Dear Benny,

First of all, it is a Torah requirement to keep the law of the land. Thus, if one is in a place where local, civil law requires one to recycle, a person is required to do so according to Judaism in order to respect and observe the law.

However, even if the law does not require it, insofar as recycling preserves natural resources and the environment, Jewish teachings mandate it. This is perhaps most emphatically stated in the following Midrash:

*When the Holy One, blessed be He, created mankind, He said: See My works, how fine and excellent they are! All that I have created, for you have I created them. Think upon this and do not spoil and destroy My world. For if you do, there is no one to set it right after you. (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:28)*

Since recycling paper products saves trees, and recycling other goods reduces the amount of landfill or burning required to treat garbage, while also resulting in a higher percentage of more environmentally-friendly biodegradable waste, recycling fulfills this Divine mandate to preserve natural resources and to maintain a clean, natural and healthy environment.

In addition, recycling is also related to the prohibition of “*bal tashchit*” — which forbids destroying useful objects. The source for this is the Torah prohibition against destroying fruit trees: “When you shall besiege a city...you shall not destroy (*lo tashchit*) the trees thereof...so you may eat of them. You shall not cut them down...Only the trees of which you know that they are not trees for food, them you may destroy and cut down, that you may build bulwarks against the city that makes war with you.” (Deut. 20:19-20)

However, the prohibition of *bal tashchit* was understood by the Talmudic Sages to extend to all other forms of unnecessary destruction as well. Thus, the Talmud (Kiddushin 32a) teaches, “Whoever breaks vessels, or tears garments, or destroys a building, or

clogs a well, or does away with food in a destructive manner violates the prohibition of *bal tashchit*.” Rambam fixes this principle in his code of law. (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings and Wars 6:8, 10)

Accordingly, throwing away paper products, clothes, boxes, cans, bottles, plastics or other goods and materials in a way that destroys them and prevents their future use is arguably a form of *bal tashchit*, since through recycling they can still be used. Conversely, recycling preserves these objects, preventing them from being broken and destroyed.

Regarding this second consideration, the Talmud (Berachot 52b) states “Jews should be taught when very young that it is a sin to waste even small amounts of food”. As above, this need to educate applies to all forms of destruction, and by extension, to the need to recycle. The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 529) offers a beautiful explanation of the purpose of this mandate:

This mitzvah teaches us to love that which is good and worthwhile and to cling to it, so that good becomes a part of us and we will avoid all that is evil and destructive. This is the way of the righteous and those who improve society, who love peace and rejoice in the good in people and bring them close to Torah: that nothing, not even a grain of mustard, should be lost to the world, that they should regret any loss or destruction that they see, and if possible they will prevent any destruction that they can. Not so are the wicked, who are like demons, who rejoice in destruction of the world, and they destroy themselves.”

Regarding this last point of educating children in this mitzvah, since recycling often involves a monetary incentive, for example refunds for bottles and cans, this is a good opportunity to educate children to recycle and become accustomed to environmental issues. One can encourage children to recycle by giving them the responsibility to save or gather recyclables and return them in order to receive and keep the refund as compensation or for spending money. In this way one fulfills the teaching of the Sages to educate one’s children in this important mitzvah, such that he and they will be among the righteous who improve society!

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

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BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

### Sweet and Pleasant

Not long after the Jews' Exodus from Egypt they travelled in the desert for three days and finally reached a place called Marah — aptly called so because its waters were bitter (*mar*). Predictably, the Jews complained to Moshe that they had nothing to drink, so G-d instructed Moshe to cast a tree into the waters and miraculously render them sweet (*matok*). The word *matok* is not the only word in Hebrew which means sweet. We pray every morning, “*ve’ha’areiv na...*” in which we ask G-d to make His words of Torah “sweet” (*areiv*) in our mouths. Similarly, in the Holiday Mussaf Service, before the Blessing of the Kohanim, we ask G-d “*ve’tai’areiv lifanecha...*” in which we ask G-d to make our prayers “sweet” (*areiv*) like sacrifices before Him. What is the difference between *areiv* and *matok*?

The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) does not directly address this question, but does explain the difference between *matok* and another word. He writes that *na'im/noam* (pleasant) refers to visual appeal, while *matok* refers to gustatory appeal (which, of course, has to do with the sense of taste).

Indeed, if one parses the Bible for instances of the words *matok*, one will notice a pattern in its appearances. Words related to *matok* or *metek* commonly refer to culinary “sweetness” (something which *tastes* sweet), while the word *areiv* never appears in a gastronomical context, except in Proverbs 20:17. In Song of Songs (2:14), the word *areiv* applies to auditory sweetness, as one lover says to the other, “Allow me to hear your voice because your voice is sweet (*areiv*)”. Moreover, according to one opinion in the Talmud (*Berachot* 43a) the proper blessing to be recited over the scent of sweet-smelling balsam oil is ...*borei she-men areiv* (“...Who creates *areiv* oil”). This suggests that the word *areiv* also applies to the realm of the olfactory. According to this, it seems that *matok* refers specifically to a sweet *taste*, while *areiv* can also refer to a sweet *voice* and a sweet *scent*.

With his signature diligence, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) explains the differences between all three words in question. He argues that the word *matok* refers to an objective way of measuring taste, and therefore refers specifically to the type of taste that is widely-acknowledged as

“sweet”. “Sweet” is the polar opposite of “bitter”. “Sweet” is the form of taste found in such foodstuffs such as honey, figs, dates, and the like. Accordingly, the word *matok* primarily denotes a universally-recognized, positive taste. Nonetheless, the word was borrowed to refer to anything which one might argue is positive, desirous or worthwhile.

That said, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the waters at Marah are described as *matok* not because they were objectively “sweet”, *per se*, but because of the contrast in their transformation. Previously those waters had been objectively “bitter,” and now they had lost that bitterness.

Rabbi Pappenheim writes that as opposed to the word *matok*, which denotes an *objective* sweetness, the word *areiv* denotes a *subjective* sweetness or pleasantness. In that vein, a masochist who has an affinity for bitter foods might say, “Bitter is *areiv* for me”, but he would not say “Bitter is *matok* for me.” *Areiv* is an acquired taste; it is a matter of personal choice.

Perhaps, for this reason, we pray that the Torah should be *areiv* in our mouths because we want the Torah to appeal to us on a *personal* level. Similarly, this might also be the reason we ask G-d to look at our prayers as *areiv* like sacrifices, instead of *matok*. As opposed to paganism, Judaism does not believe that the rituals of sacrifices have any *intrinsic* (or “magical”) value, but that their value comes from the fact that G-d commanded us to offer these sacrifices. Accordingly, the word *matok*, which denotes something objectively sweet, is inappropriate, so we use the word *areiv*, which means that they should appeal to G-d on the basis of His *personal* favor.

Rabbi Pappenheim continues to explain the meaning of *na'im/noam*. As opposed to the Vilna Gaon who understood that those words refer to visual sweetness, Rabbi Pappenheim argues that these words do not refer to any type of physical property, but rather to the transcendental pleasure that one derives from enjoying something sweet. In this way, *matok* and *areiv* refer to the physical, while the term *na'im* focuses on the sublime. The root of *na'im* is NUN-AYIN-MEM, the last two letters of which also make up the root of the word *im* (“with”), because one’s soul tends to bond with that which he considers pleasant or enjoyable. In this way

*Continued on page eleven*

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

## The Power of a Whisper

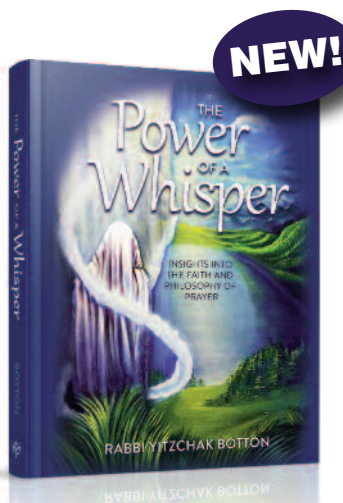
*“For what great nation has G-d close to it, as the L-rd our G-d is to us whenever we call to Him?” (Devarim 4:7)*

Regarding this verse our Sages relate that although G-d appears as if He were far beyond our reach, in truth there is none so close. G-d resides beyond this world and beyond all galaxies, beyond the abode of even the angels. In the highest Heavenly realm lies G-d’s Throne of Glory, and how far away G-d seems from us! But in fact there is none as close as He is. How close? A person enters the Synagogue, prays in a mere whisper, and G-d is there listening. (Based on the Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachot 9:1)

Ramchal explains that one should strive to see himself as if he were literally standing before G-d, exchanging words with Him as with a friend. When one truly senses that G-d is “right there with him,” listening to words that emanate from his heart, he makes G-d a real part of his life and gains a best friend. When we approach G-d in prayer and ask for help we must real-

ize that He is *there*, ready to listen to all of the details. Why? Because He cares.

Through prayer one can be said to fulfill the verse from Tehillim (16:8), “I have placed G-d before me always.” (Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch) Many communities display this verse, or the phrase, “Know before Whom you stand” (Berachot 28b), in the Synagogue above the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark). These words are not mere decorations, but are there to remind us that the Divine Presence resides in the Synagogue (see Berachot 6a-b; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 13, Hilchot Beit HaKnesset). The Synagogue is “G-d’s home”, a remnant of the Holy Temple where Jews traveled to encounter the Divine. Our Sages go so far as to say, “When one prays in a Synagogue in this world it is as if he prayed in the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple.” (Yalkut Shimoni, Yechezkel 351)



NEVER UNDERESTIMATE

## THE Power OF A Whisper

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# Letter & Spirit

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

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

## Authenticating Doubts

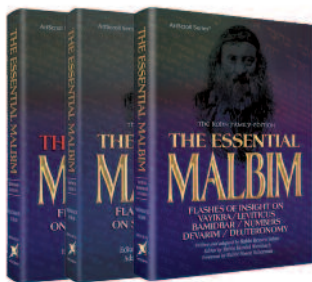
The anticipated moment of redemption has finally arrived. After two hundred and ten years of servitude, of grueling and dehumanizing slave labor, the Jewish People are finally set free. They have followed Moshe's instructions regarding the *korban Pesach* to precision and they are freed from the Egyptian grasp, led by a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. The future, it seems, is bright.

But then Pharaoh has a change of heart and directs six hundred chariots with the finest crews to chase and retrieve the Jewish People. The Jews, camped by the sea, watch in horror as the Egyptian army appears, marching in hot pursuit. In view of the situation, one can easily understand their misgivings about Moshe's mission. They had no basis to assume that G-d would perform such an extraordinary miracle as the splitting of the sea. They doubt Moshe, saying to him, "*Is it for lack of graves in Egypt that you brought us here, to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us to take us out from Egypt?*"

These doubts, which persistently reemerge in the people's minds, points out Rabbi Yehuda Halevi

(Kuzari 1:49, 41-87), are an important testimony of the authenticity of Moshe's mission. Ten times throughout their sojourn in the wilderness the people challenge Moshe's leadership. This is a clear indication that the Jewish people were of lucid mind, and were not easily duped or bought. They were not fogged by fanciful notions, nor willing to accept any alternative to their miserable lot in Egypt. If this people, full of challenge and doubt — a *stiff-necked* people — ultimately commit themselves to Moshe and the Law he transmits to them, this is proof that the impact of the events created an unshakeable belief in the authenticity of Moshe and the Torah. The Torah records these doubts to underscore that the mission of the Jewish People was not accepted by the unvarnished whimsical masses. Indeed, the same sentiment is expressed by our Sages when they describe how all the blind, deaf, and lame were cured at Mount Sinai. The Law was not given to the disabled, feeble misfits of society. It was presented to, and accepted by, the strong and lucid, who recognized its power and truth.

• Sources: *Commentary, Shemot 14:11*



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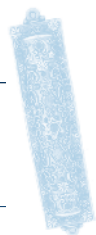
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BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

## Mazikin: Negative Spiritual Energies

Rashi asserts that the mezuzah has the spiritual power to protect the house from negative spiritual energies, commonly referred to in the Talmud as *mazikin* (“damagers”). The Midrash derives this also from the daubing of Jewish doorposts with blood to prevent the *mashchit* (destructive force) from entering their homes on the night of the Pesach Exodus:

*Is not the matter logical? If, regarding the blood of the korban Pesach in Egypt that was only for a night, the Torah writes, “He will not allow the mashchit (to come into your home)” — even more so (in the merit of) the mezuzah, which contains ten inscriptions of the ineffable Name and applies day and night for all generations, will He prevent the mashchit from entering.*

In *Zohar Chadash*, Rabbi Yossi bar Yehudah teaches that a mezuzah affixed to the doorpost of a home serves as a protection against the “messengers of evil.” These messengers, when confronted by the name of G-d, י-ד-ש, which is on the exterior of the mezuzah, realize that G-d is watching over this domicile and they will refrain from entering. Rabbi Nahorai adds that the word “מזוזות - *mezuzot*” is a combination of the words “זז - *zaz*” and “מות - *mavet*” which mean literally: “Death: Move away!”

This factor has halachic and even monetary implica-

tions. The Talmud rules that one who moves from a house may not remove its *mezuzot*. Doing so would expose the home to *mazikin* and thereby cause possible damage to the subsequent dweller. The Sages report that this disregard for the safety of the subsequent dweller can have severe consequences.

The famous Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg at one point ruled that his Beit Hamidrash was exempt from mezuzah placement. He reported that during that period he sensed the presence of *mazikin* disturbing his afternoon rest.

Whether the nature of the mezuzah’s protective power is moral, physical or spiritual, it remains merely a secondary byproduct of the awesome power embedded in the fulfillment of the Divine Word itself.

• Sources: Rashi, *Menachot* 33b; *Mechilta* 22:76; *Zohar Chadash*, *Rut* 84a; *Bava Metziah* 101b-102a; *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 291:2; *Tur* Y.D. 286:10

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# Rav Bulman zt"l

on the  
Torah Portion of the Week

BY RABBI BINYOMIN FISHMAN

## Apples vs. Carrots

### New Year's Day

**T**u B'Shvat is called "The New Year of the Trees." While this might draw a mental picture of apple trees gathered around a TV set, watching a ball drop and sipping champagne, it really refers to the demarcation of different years' crops. Certain agricultural laws require differentiation between each year's yields. Tithes for one year, for instance, cannot be taken from last year's crops. Tu B'Shvat is a delineation between years.

Interestingly, Tu B'Shvat is relevant *only* to trees. The new year for vegetable tithes is a more familiar date, the first day of the month of Tishrei, otherwise known as Rosh Hashana. It seems as though there is some significance to trees that warrants their own New Year, something trees have "over" vegetables. While clearly an apple is not a carrot, we need to identify the relevant differences.

The question becomes more poignant when we view the verse in Devarim 20:19: "For a man is a tree of the field..." This statement is made in the midst of the laws of war, and is used as justification not to wantonly destroy fruit-bearing trees while laying siege to an enemy. In this context the verse seems a bit perplexing. Some commentators explain that the verse can be read differently (though equally acceptable according to the Hebrew original), and read as a rhetorical question: Is the tree of the field a man that you can count him as an "enemy" and cut him down? However, many commentators follow the literal translation, which seems to indicate that man is indeed compared to a tree. This requires further investigation.

### Fruits and Vegetables

There are two major differences between a fruit tree and a vegetable, one regarding the planting procedure and one regarding the results. When you plant a vegetable, within the same season you can harvest it. From seeds to cucumbers is a matter of weeks or months. Fruit trees, on the other hand, take years to receive anything. A person can work and sweat, and at the end of the season he still has to go to market to buy his apples. At first glance it would seem that a vegetable garden is a better idea than an orchard.

Now we come to the second difference. That vegetable garden might give results right away, but next season you have to do all of the effort again from the very beginning or there won't be any produce. The orchard,

on the other hand, once it gets started it will provide fruit for years and decades to come. In the short run, veggies are a good idea. But fruit trees are a much better long-term investment.

Herein lies the difference between the types of produce. Vegetables represent more of the "quick fix, instant gratification" module. You harvest exactly what you invested, and quickly. Trees, on the other hand, refer to delayed gratification. It is harder in the beginning, when more work is required without enjoying the fruits of your labor. But in the long run, it is substantially more satisfying.

If we could contrast vegetation to living beings, we could compare vegetables to animals. The Hebrew word for animal, "*bahema*", is explained by the commentators to be a contraction of the Hebrew words "*bah* and *ma*", which loosely translated means: "What you see is what you get." There is very little difference between a one-day old animal and its fully-grown counterpart. Within a very short period of time it reaches full maturation and complete independence. But, while animals mature very quickly, they also hit their potential very quickly. There is only so much an animal can develop.

Humans, on the other hand, are more similar to trees. Initially, an infant is completely helpless. It takes years of investment before children become fully independent. However, humans are also capable of almost unlimited growth and development. As humans mature they become less dependent on their parents and more able to express themselves. Taking stock of almost any great achiever, it is hard to picture him as a new infant needing his parents to diaper him! This is how people are parallel to trees. The years of hard work with no immediate fruits ultimately lead to an independent "tree" capable of providing fruit for many years to come, way out of proportion with the seed from which it started. And like trees, great individuals make an influence that bears fruits for generations to come.

Let's use this Tu B'Shvat as motivation to think long-term. Instead of being drawn after instant gratification, let's focus on developing the latent potential inside of us. May we merit the fulfillment of the verse in Tehillim 1:3: "He shall be like a tree planted on abundant water, that give fruit at its time... and everything he does is successful!"

*An alumnus of Derech, Ohr Somayach and Ohr Lagolah, Rabbi Binyomin Fishman is the Associate Director of Vchol Bonayich Youth Program and Adult Education, focusing on building vibrant Judaism in all levels of the community.*

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

the pleasantness of *na'im/noam* focuses on the spiritual aspect as it binds disparate entities and joins them together.

According to etymologists the origin of the word *areiv* is unknown. However, some linguists suggest that its original meaning was related to the word *arev* (mixed) in the sense of “to be well-mixed”. So, for example, a glass of wine that is properly-mixed with the right proportion of wine to water is considered pleasant and especially appealing. According to these etymologists this is the basis for the meaning of the word *areiv* in the sense of “sweet”.

I would argue that just as Rabbi Pappenheim understood that *na'im* is related to the idea of connection and attachment, so too does the word *areiv* refer to a type of binding. The common denominator between all of the different groups of words that use the root AYIN-REISH-BET is that they all denote a form of connec-

tion or a joining of disparate elements: an *arev* is a guarantor on a loan (he connects the lender and borrower), *erev* (evening) connects day and night, *ta'arovut/irvuv* is a mixture, an *eirev* is the woof-component of woven fabric, an *eruv* connects space into one halachic domain, the plague of *arov* consisted of an assortment of beasts, and the *erev rav* are the mixed multitudes. The same applies to the word *areiv*. Sweetness/pleasantness creates a connection between the object in discussion and the one who beholds it. The more pleasing or sweet something or someone else is, the more the other wants to come closer to it. Therefore, because sweetness is an impetus for that link, it is related to the words for binding or connection.

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

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## Parsha Insights...continued from page one

that moment when the object of desire becomes the object of possession, and its evanescence is delectable, even for a *voyeur*.

*It was told to the king of Egypt that people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants became transformed regarding the people, and they said, “What is this that we have done that we have sent away the Jewish People from serving us?”*

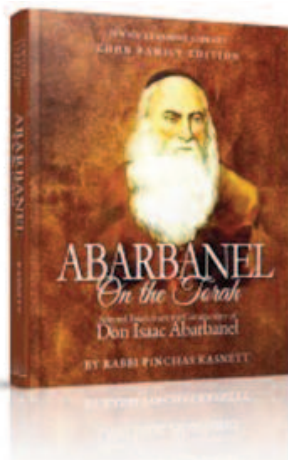
Rashi says that when it was reported to Pharaoh that the Jews had no intention of returning to Egypt after three days, he and his courtiers “became transformed” and they regretted having freed the Jews.

Had Pharaoh forgotten the terrible plagues that were visited upon him and his nation?

F.O.M.O. (Fear Of Missing Out), the desire to take, allows us to rationalize anything.

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BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

## Noble Blossoming

The fifteenth of Shvat is the New Year for the trees, when the tiniest buds of spring emerge from their wintery hibernation. Surely it is a time to reflect on the glory of Nature and appreciate the pleasures we enjoy from its yield. But the New Year for trees has greater significance: This day regulates the array of obligations which the annual gifts of Nature impose on the Jew. In fact, Rav Hirsch explains, the two must go hand-in-hand — a duty is attached to every enjoyment, in order to imbue the enjoyment with its true taste, to transform it from selfish indulgence to an acknowledgement of Divine love.

On the Jewish field, no seed ripens for the owner alone. At every stage in the process of cultivating food for nourishment we are reminded of our obligations to G-d and to our fellow man. Precisely where selfish and sensual desires enter, we are instructed to sanctify. *Orlah*, the prohibition against eating the fruit of a tree during its first three years, is measured from Tu B'Shvat. The first lesson in our approach to physical pleasure is one of restraint. By observing G-d's command to refrain from the fruits of his own property, one practices the self-restraint necessary to keep all pleasure within the limits of morality. Next, during the three phases of production — nature's ripening, man's harvesting, and domestic preparation, we dedicate the

first thing that comes to fruition to the Source of all blessing.

When the first ripened fruit appears each year, its owner marks it, setting it aside to be brought as *bikkurim* to the Beit Hamidkash, where he will verbally acknowledge his thanks to the Almighty for the bounty of the Land.

When the landowner works his land and gathers his produce, he sets aside the gifts to the Kohen and the Levi. He gives *ma'aser*, a tenth of his produce, to the Levi — providing his sustenance in order that the Levi will be able to devote himself wholly to the service of G-d. An equal amount, *ma'aser sheni*, is brought to Jerusalem to be enjoyed by its owner, again demonstrating that obligation and enjoyment are meant to coexist in the life of a Jew. Finally, when the grain is processed and turned into dough, before it is baked into bread, "*challah*" is removed for the Kohen. Before we put the final human effort into our nourishment, we dedicate a piece of that effort to His priests. Each stage is thus ushered in with its own sanctification, defining our relationship to the physical joys of nature, allowing for the noblest blossoming to take root within us.

• *Based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch*

## 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.”*