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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Being a Professional Human Being

“You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aharon your brother for glory and splendor.” (28:2)

I was in a music store the other day. In the back of the store I heard someone playing the piano. Of course it wasn't a real piano. Those are a rare breed nowadays, rarely spotted outside the likes of Carnegie Hall. This was an amazingly life-like electric counterfeit. It sounded amazing. The music coming from this piano was really beautiful and I turned to see who it was that was coaxing such divine sounds from this electric beast. My eyes alighted on a guy in his thirties, somewhat overweight, with a blue shadow of a two-day beard around his jowls, and dark rings under his eyes. The contrast between him and his music was to me – to say the least – quite arresting. As I was walking to the back of the store I said to him, “You play really beautifully.” Without looking up he said, “Ani yodea,” which means “I know”. I thought of Peter Shaffer's play “Amadeus” about Mozart. The main idea in “Amadeus” is that you don't have to be a beautiful human being to make beautiful music. Shaffer's depiction

of Mozart is an uncouth slob with the manners and the sensitivity of an elephant.

“You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aharon your brother for glory and splendor.”

“Glory” was due to Aharon and his descendants by the mere fact of their lineage, even though their abilities were given by G-d. “Splendor” comes to a person only through his own effort and accomplishment.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe said that the definition of a Jew is “a professional human being”. If a Jew doesn't work on his character as hard as an aspiring concert pianist practices to get to Carnegie Hall, he will never become an Artist of the Soul.

- Source: based on the Malbim

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Chullin 65-71

The Kosher “Sea-Monster”

Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaskis says, “A liviyatan is a kosher type of fish.”

While you may not be familiar with a kosher fish called *liviyatan* from the supermarket nowadays, you are likely to be familiar with this name from learning Rashi in the beginning of the Chumash (1:21). Regarding the fifth day of Creation, when the fish, fowl and crawling life was created, the verse states, “And G-d created the great *taninim*.” Rashi

first explains *taninim* to be large fish in the sea. (Today, the word *tanin* refers to a crocodile or alligator.)

However, Rashi also cites a Midrash that teaches that these *taninim* were two large creatures that were originally created as a pair – a male and female. But, the Midrash states, G-d saw that the world would not sustain their

reproduction, and He proceeded to kill the female and salt her for the righteous in the World-to-Come. (This idea that they were created as two and then reduced to one is deduced from the lack of the letter *yod* in the word's suffix that denotes a plural noun.)

Rabbi Yossi ben Domaskis, in a *beraita* on our *daf*, states that he learns that it is a kosher type of fish from verses in Sefer Iyov which describe the awesomeness of the *liviyan*. In chapter 41, verse 7 alludes to its scales, and verse 22 to its fins, as explained in the *gemara* and in Rashi's commentary there.

The Maharsha questions the need for Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaskis to teach us that the *liviyan* is a type of kosher fish since we have already been taught that it was preserved as a reward for the righteous to eat in the World-to-Come. This clearly indicates that it is kosher!

The Maharsha answers that without Rabbi Yossi's teaching, based on the verse in Iyov, we might have thought that a *liviyan* is not a fish at all. Rather, perhaps it is a different type of kosher creature that lives in the water, such as a gigantic goose, which is not a fish. Therefore, the Sage needed to teach that it is in fact a type of *fish*.

A different answer to the Maharsha's question is offered by the Maharitz Chiyut here. He notes another Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, Shemini) that teaches that the fins of the *liviyan* will be used in the future to perform the mitzvah of *shechita* on a gigantic type of ox. The Midrash states that although this type of *shechita* with an unsmooth utensil is not considered kosher according to halacha, G-d proclaims that "a new law of the Torah will go forth from Me." The Yafeh To'ar commentary notes that this is difficult to understand since we are taught that mitzvahs will not be voided or changed in the future, and the laws of *shechita* will not be voided or changed. He explains the intent of the Midrash to be that the *shechita* done with the fins of the *liviyan* in the future will be permitted as a *hor'aat sha'ah*, an act permitted by G-d only at that specific time. Only at that time, when G-d will make a celebration for the righteous in the future, will the normal laws of *shechita* not be in effect. And likewise, asserts the Maharitz Chiyut, we might have thought that

that although the *liviyan* is not a kosher type of fish, it would be permitted for the righteous to eat at that special occasion. Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaskis teaches that this is not so. The *liviyan*, he teaches, is a *kosher* fish, and is permitted to eat even without any *hor'aat sha'ah* dispensation.

To summarize, the key word in the Rabbi Yossi ben Dormaskis's statement is "fish" according to the Maharsha, whereas the word to emphasize according to the Maharitz Chiyut is "kosher".

• *Chullin 67b*

Like a Kosher Bird on a Wire

Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Tzaddok says, "A string is pulled taut, and the bird stands on it. If the bird stands with divided toes, two on one side and two on the other, we can be certain that this (type of) bird is not kosher; if it puts three toes on one side and one on the other, it is kosher."

This "string test" is taught in a *beraita* listing various bodily signs of empirical evidence which indicate if a bird is of a kosher species or not. A bird that is called a *do'res*, is certainly not kosher. (While *do'res* means "trample" in Modern Hebrew, it is meant to describe a predatory nature when referring to a non-kosher bird according to halacha.) Other ways to see if a bird is *do'res* or not are taught in the *gemara* and by the Rishonim. For example: eating a living creature, catching and eating its food in the air, or lifting its food up to its mouth instead of pecking at it on the ground.

It is interesting to note that, unlike the signs of land animals, the signs of non-kosher birds are not mentioned in the Torah. Only their names. And since there are more categories of kosher birds than non-kosher ones, the Torah taught us in a "short manner" – an important principle in teaching – the fewer ones that are not-kosher rather than the larger list of kosher ones. (It is recommended to see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 82 for the intricate details of the signs and the *halachot* regarding kosher birds.)

• *Chullin 65a*

PARSHA Q & A

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of oil for the *menorah*?
2. How was Aharon commanded to kindle the *menorah*?
3. What does *tamid* mean in reference to the *menorah*?
4. What does *kehuna* mean?
5. Name the eight garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*.
6. To what does Rashi compare the *ephod*?
7. In which order were the names of the Tribes inscribed on the *ephod*?
8. The stones of the *ephod* bore the inscription of the names of the sons of Yaakov. Why?
9. For what sins did the *choshen mishpat* atone?
10. What are three meanings of the word *mishpat*?
11. What was lacking in the *bigdei kehuna* in the second *Beit Hamikdash*?
12. Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
13. When the *Kohen Gadol* wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the *tefillin* situated?
14. What does the word *tamid* mean in reference to the *tzitz*? (two answers)
15. Which garments were worn by a *kohen hediot*?
16. During the inauguration of the *kohanim*, a bullock was brought as a sin offering. For what sin did this offering atone?
17. Moshe was commanded to wash Aharon and his sons to prepare them to serve as *kohanim* (29:4). How were they washed?
18. What was unique about the bull sin-offering brought during the inauguration of the *kohanim*?
19. How did the oil used for the meal-offering differ from the oil used for the *menorah*?
20. What does the crown on the *mizbeach haketoret* symbolize?

Answers

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

1. 27:20 - The olives were pressed and not ground, and only the first drop was used.
2. 27:20 - He was commanded to kindle it until the flame ascended by itself.
3. 27:20 - It means that it should be kindled every night.
4. 28:3 - Service.
5. 28:4, 36, 42 - *Choshen*, *ephod*, *me'il*, *ketonet*, *mitznefet*, *avnet*, *tzitz*, and *michnasayim*.
6. 28:6 - A woman's riding garment.
7. 28:10 - In order of birth.
8. 28:12 - So that G-d would see their names and recall their righteousness.
9. 28:15 - For judicial errors.
10. 28:15 -
 - (i) The claims of the litigants,
 - (ii) The court's ruling,
 - (iii) The court's punishment.
11. 28:30 - The *Urim V'Tumim* - the "*Shem Ha'meforash*" placed in the folds of the *choshen*.
12. 28:31 - The fabric of the *me'il* was made only of *techelet*.
13. 28:37 - Between the *tzitz* and the *mitznefet*.
14. 28:38 -
 - (i) It always atones, even when not being worn.
 - (ii) The *Kohen Gadol* must always be aware that he is wearing it.
15. 28:40, 42 - *Ketonet*, *avnet*, *migba'at*, and *michnasayim*.
16. 29:1 - The sin of the golden calf.
17. 29:4 - They immersed in a *mikveh*.
18. 29:14 - It is the only external sin-offering that was completely burned.
19. 29:40 - Oil for the *menorah* comes only from beaten olives. Oil for meal-offerings may come from either beaten olives or from ground-up olives.
20. 30:3 - The crown of *kehuna*.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

Shimon Hatzadik Meets Alexander

A historic confrontation took place on the 25th day of the month of Tevet, one that became the source for a day of celebration during the Second Temple era.

The Kutim, those heathens who the great Assyrian conqueror Sancheriv had brought to Eretz Yisrael to replace the Ten Tribes he had exiled, attempted to incite Alexander of Macedon to destroy the Beit Hamikdash. When news reached Jerusalem that this head of the Greek Empire which now ruled the Holy Land was on his way to carry out this destruction, the *Kohen Gadol*, Shimon Hatzadik, donned his priestly robes. Accompanied by some of the nobility of Jerusalem carrying torches, he marched all night to head off this attack. With the first rays of dawn they were sighted by Alexander, who asked the Kutim leading him who they were. The reply he got was that they were the Jewish rebels he had been warned about.

When the two groups came face to face at Antipares, the sunrise exposed Shimon Hatzadik to the view of Alexander, who descended from his royal chariot and prostrated himself. The shocked Kutim asked why such a mighty king bowed to a Jew. "This was the vision that led me to victory in all my battles," he explained, and then turned to ask why Shimon Hatzadik had come to meet him now. "These Kutim", he replied, "are trying to deceive your majesty into destroying the House in which we pray for you and your kingdom!"

Alexander then gave the Jews permission to punish the inciters. After giving them what they deserved, the Jews proceeded to the idol worship temple of the Kutim on Mount Grizim and demolished it. It was *their* temple that was destroyed, rather than ours, and the day this took place was subsequently known as the Day of Mount Grizim.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the *menorah* in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments): a breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate, and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices,

dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil. G-d commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the altar in courtyard of the Mishkan. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. G-d commands that another altar be built, for incense, from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this altar every day.

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Your Jewish Information Resource – www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman

Past Your Prime

From: Marcel

Dear Rabbi,

I have been involved in business for most of my life, and, thank G-d, I have had blessing. I think people have considered me to be a good person, and a charitable Jew, as well as a good businessman. However, as I have gotten older, and am now retired, I feel as though the world is leaving me behind. The feeling of being past my prime and no longer able to conduct business in the way I used to is causing me to question my value and getting me depressed. I'm wondering if there are any ideas you might be able to share with me to help me cope with this situation. Thank you, Rabbi, for any insights you may have.

Dear Marcel,

I note that you describe yourself first as a good person and upstanding Jew, and then as a successful businessman – preceding your value as a human being before your value in business.

It is very good that you see it this way, which has a tremendous bearing on how you should define being “past your prime”. You see, insofar as you might not have the same business acumen that you once had, that stage in your life might have passed. However, since business is not the primary way you define yourself, by no means have you thereby passed your prime. On the contrary, since you clearly place prime value on your being a good person and a good Jew, you are very much *before* your prime!

The main thing is to always remember the purpose for which we come into this world and how the various things we do here should serve this purpose.

The soul is placed in this world through its connection with, and guidance of, the body. This is in order for the soul to elevate and perfect itself in ways which can't be achieved in the spiritual realm. For a Jew, this is through studying Torah, performing the *mitzvot* and refining one's character.

In order for the material body of this world to be able to perform the soul's bidding, the body must be

sustained in material, this-worldly ways. Obviously, for most people, this requires earning a living.

However, since the ultimate purpose of all bodily activities is to perfect the soul in the ways mentioned above, whether one is eating, drinking, sleeping or earning a living, one must maintain primary focus on the task of serving G-d throughout his lifetime. After all, this was the reason why the person was created, the reason why his soul was put into a body, and the reason why he must engage in these activities in the first place.

Thus, even when a Jew is in the prime of his working years he must still set aside daily time for learning Torah, for prayer and for mitzvah observance. For the working stage is only temporary, the purpose of which is to provide one with the resources necessary to prepare him and enable him to dedicate himself more and more to the reason for living. What's more, G-d designed the world such that as one gets older and the various dynamics in life change, one naturally transitions toward that higher dimension of serving G-d.

Accordingly, after your successful business career, during which time you maintained proper focus on the real, relative values in life, thereby earning not only wealth, but also a good name for yourself and charitable deeds, you are now being liberated from that task. You can now further realize your potential and purpose by dedicating yourself more fully to being the good person and upstanding Jew that you've always valued being.

Therefore, you are not at all “over the hill”. On the contrary, you're climbing the next summit, ascending even higher. For this reason you're certainly not past your real prime. Since now you can give what really matters in life prime time, you're in your prime! And nobody in the work world is leaving you behind. If anything, you're leaving them behind. But even better, since you can be sure life will also cause them to follow the path you're on, you are in a position to take the lead and help show them the way to better serve G-d.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Is Cotton a Type of Linen?

The Hebrew language has several words to refer to “linen”: *pishtah/pishtan/pishtim* (“flax”), *butz, sheish* (*Yoma* 71b), and *bahd* (*Zevachim* 18b). In fact, the Talmud explicitly defines the last two words as “linen” – which is known in the Talmud as *kitna* (see also Targum to Ex. 9:31). The word *kitna* refers to “linen” in several other Semitic languages (like Akkadian and Arabic), and is possibly even the basis of the Biblical Hebrew word *ketonet* (“tunic”). As Professor Edward Yechezkel Kutscher (1909-1971) explains, the Greeks borrowed the Aramaic word *kitna* as *chiton* (“linen shirt”), which, by way of metathesis, became the Latin word “tunic”. In this essay we will explain the differences between these ostensible synonyms for “linen,” and we will explore whether the English word “cotton” is also derived from *kitna*.

Gersonides and Abarbanel (to Ex. 25:4) explain that *pishtim/butz* refers to linen as a material, while *sheish* and *bahd* refer to specific types of linen threads. *Sheish* refers to a thread comprised of six fibers (as the Hebrew word *sheish* also means “six”), and *bahd* refers to a linen thread made up of one individual fiber (as the Hebrew word *bahd* refers to something “alone,” like *levad* or *hitbodedut*). See also Maimonides’ Laws of *Klei HaMikdash* 8:14, where such a distinction is made.

Some say that *sheish* is actually an Egyptian word which refers to the choicest type of linen (see *Daas Zekanim* to Gen. 41:42), and that *butz* is the Aramaic/Hebrew translation of that Egyptian word. Interestingly, *byssus* – a Latin word for a thin silk-like linen – is said to be directly derived from *butz*.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) explains that these different words refer to different stages in the production of linen items. *Pishtah/pishtan* refers to the flax plant while it is still attached to the ground. *Sheish* refers to combed strings of linen which have not yet been spun into

threads. This word is related to *shayish* (“marble”/“limestone”) on account of its smoothness. *Bahd* refers to an article of clothing made from linen. He explains that in ancient times linen fabric did not have threads of any other type of fabrics mixed in because no other material could retain its dyed color in the same way that linen could. For this reason linen is called *bahd* (“alone”).

Rabbi Yaakov Zev Lev (1946-2018) in *Me’at Tzari* (to Lev. 16:4) makes a similar distinction about the Aramaic words for “linen”. He explains that *kitna* refers to linen/flax when it is still unprocessed and attached to the ground, while *butz* refers to processed linen.

Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Schulsinger (1941-2010) writes in his work *Mishmar HaLevi* that he was bothered by why the Talmud needed to prove the meaning of these linen-words that appear in the Bible. Why can’t we assume that the meaning of Hebrew words in the Bible should already be understood through tradition? Rabbi Schulsinger mentions that he posed this question to two great rabbis and received two different, but similar, responses.

Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (1899-1985), known as the Steipler Gaon, wrote to Rabbi Schulsinger that the literal meaning of the word *sheish* is not “linen”, but is a certain type of color. He supports this contention by comparing the word *sheish* to other words used to describe fabrics in the passages concerning the Tabernacle. The words *techeilet* (roughly “blue”), *argaman* (“purple” or “orange”), and *shnei tolaat* (“red”) do not refer to a specific type of fabric, but instead refer to a specific color. This same idea, argues Rabbi Kanievsky, is true of *sheish*, which refers to the color of a whitish fabric, but does not say what sort of fabric it is. In the case of the three aforementioned fabrics tradition tells us that they are made of wool, and the Talmud sought to prove that

sheish is different in that it refers to linen. Similarly, the word *bahd* simply means “alone,” and the Talmud sought to prove that this refers to “linen”.

Along these lines, Rabbi Dov Landau (a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshivat Slabodka in Bnei Barak) wrote to Rabbi Schulsinger that *sheish* is a general term which can refer to any type of honorable clothing. Because of this, the Talmud needed to prove that in certain instances, when the Torah calls for the use of *sheish*, it refers specifically to “linen”.

So how do you say “cotton” in Hebrew? The truth is that since cotton simply did not exist in the ancient Near East, it makes sense that there would be no word for it. That said, some linguists argue that the word *karpas* (which appears in Esther 1:3) is a loanword from Persian where it meant a cotton garment. The Greek *carbasus* and the Latin *karpasos* also refer to a cotton garment. In Rabbinic Hebrew the common term for “cotton” is *tzemer-gefen* (literally, “wool-vine”), which happens to be quite similar to the German word *baumwolle* (literally, “tree-wool”).

Despite all of this, in Modern Hebrew the word for “cotton” is *kotna*. Is the Modern Hebrew word for “cotton” derived from the abovementioned Semitic word *kitna* (“linen”)?

Professor Kutscher resoundingly answers “No”. Instead, he points to the English word *cotton*, Italian word *cotone*, Spanish word *algodon*, and the French word *coton*. He understands that all of these words are derived from the Arabic word *qoton*.

Regarding the Arabic word itself, Kutscher accepts the etymology proposed by noted linguist Sir

Godfrey Rolles Driver (1892-1975), that it is derived from the Semitic root *KUF-TET-NUN*, which means “small” (like the Hebrew *katan*). Kutscher explains that cotton was called “small” because its fibers tend to be smaller and thinner than wool, whose hairs are much thicker (see *Shabbat* 105a concerning thin threads which are called *ketini*).

Based on this, Kutscher argues that the Modern Hebrew word *kotna* is ultimately derived from the Hebrew *katan*. He notes that the fact that *kotna* and *ketonet/kitna* are phonetically similar is merely coincidental, because really the former should be spelled with a *KUF* and *TET*, while the latter is spelled with a *KAF* and *TAV*. (See also Rashi to *Berachot* 28b, *Shabbat* 21a, *Shabbat* 110b and *Niddah* 17a, in which he spells the French word *coton* with a *KUF* and *TET*, as well as Maimonides’ commentary to the Mishnah *Kelaim* 7:2, where he correctly translates *tzemer-gefen* into Arabic as *al-qoton*). In short, *cotton* is not related to *kitnah* (“linen”), but to *katan* (“small”). [According to linguists, the Aramaic word *pekolin*, which refers to “cotton tufts,” is actually borrowed from the Greek word *phakelos* (“bundle” or “fascicle”).]

We conclude by referring to a journalistic principle known as Betteridge’s Law of Headlines: “Any headline that ends in a question mark can be answered by the word ‘no’.” This article, of course, is no exception.

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rklein@ohr.edu

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LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch
by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Kindling the Light of Torah

The *parsha* opens with instructions to Moshe to command the people to take pure, pressed olive oil for light “to make light spring up continually.”

Immediately following the details of the construction of the Mishkan we are instructed regarding the service of “tending to the lights.” This service precedes all other service in the Mishkan. Symbolically, this teaches that the enlightenment drawn from the Torah (the “kindling of the light”) precedes all practical observance of *mitzvot*. The details of this service teach much about how we are to kindle the light of Torah, and ensure its impassioned and accurate transmission throughout the generations.

Moshe is to command *The children of Israel*, and to collect the oil from the entire nation. Torah study is not reserved for the priestly caste, but is to be the concern of every Jew, of the entire nation. The “oil” of the entire nation is to be offered for the light of the Torah, and the Menorah symbolizes the tree of life of the national spirit, not of the priestly spirit. Indeed, while preparing the wicks and oil may be performed only by a Kohen, the actual lighting may be performed by a non-Kohen.

The text describes the action in this service as *l'ha'alot ner tamid*: to make light spring up continually. This language

describes the duty to hold the kindling flame against the wick until the wick continues to burn on its own. The flame is transferred so that the new flame may rise with its own passion and vitality. This signifies that the task of the Torah teacher – the kindling flame – is to *make himself superfluous!* His task is not to keep the student continually dependent on him, but rather to light the flame of his pupil so that the flame is an independent bright light which can burn on its own.

Finally, the placement of the Menorah is significant: *in the Ohel Mo'ed, outside the dividing curtain that is in front of the Testimony*. A person who directs his mind to the Torah and draws enlightenment from it must be kept aware at all times that he stands *outside* the Torah, and that Torah was given to man. It is not a product of the human intellect. Man is to draw and increase his enlightenment from and through Torah, but he must not introduce his own light into the realm of the Torah in order to amend or reform it. In this way he will contribute to the collective *ner tamid*, the eternal light of Torah.

Sources: *Commentary, Shemot 27:20-21*

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MEZUZAH MAVEN

by Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines

Hear O Israel!

Although the Torah does not openly specify which words to write on our doorposts, the Oral Law teaches that “these words” refers to the two paragraphs where the mitzvah of mezuzah is found: the first and second paragraphs of the Shema Yisrael. Similarly, though the Torah does not specify which scrolls must be placed in *tefillin*, the Oral Law prescribes the four paragraphs where the mitzvah of *tefillin* is found: the first two paragraphs of Shema, as well as two others at the end of Parshat Bo.

The Torah’s choice of these power-packed Divine messages is obviously based on the fact that these paragraphs contain fundamental values and beliefs of Judaism. According to the classic *Chovot HaLevavot*, the opening words of the Shema, “Hear O Israel,” do not refer to hearing of the ear, but rather to the acceptance of the heart. Indeed, the Torah continues, “And these words, which I command you this day, shall be on your heart,” which means to cleave them to our inner being.

Each phrase of the following verse – “You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources” – is supremely meaningful and challenging:

Your heart – We must control all the desires of our heart and sublimate them in service of G-d.

Your soul – We must be ready to give up our very souls rather than abjure the faith of our fathers.

Your resources – We must be willing to devote our energies and our money towards the fulfillment of the commandments.

The Torah continues with “You shall teach them to your children” – the all-important commandment to learn and teach Torah to one’s children and to one’s fellow Jews. Torah study is the life-blood of Jewish continuity.

Without continuous study we would be clueless as to how to navigate the ever-changing circumstances of our lives.

The Shema paragraph ends with the mitzvahs of *tefillin* and mezuzah, which cause us to remember the Creator and express our constant devotion to Him. As *Song of Songs* exhorts: “Set Me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm.” (Songs 8:6)

The Talmud also asserts that the principles of the Ten Commandments are contained within the Shema Yisrael.

For example:

Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d | *I am Hashem your G-d.*

Hashem is One | *You shall have no other gods before me*

You shall love Hashem | *You shall not take the name of Hashem your G-d in vain (One who loves a king will not swear falsely in his name).*

The second paragraph of the mezuzah speaks about the importance of sincere prayer – the service of the heart. Among many other themes it also explores the principle of reward and punishment, the significance of the Land of Israel, and the core dynamic of Jewish history: exile and redemption.

With all this in mind we can understand the classic commentator Ramban’s assertion that he who buys a mezuzah and affixes it to his doorway is thus acknowledging and broadcasting to the world his devotion to the central beliefs of Judaism.

- Sources: *Yerushalmi, Berachot 1:5; Chovot HaLevavot 1:Intro.; Ramban, Shemot 13:16*

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Insights into Halacha

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

A Tale of Two Adars: Computations and Complications

Part 1: Bar Mitzvahs

Recently, *Klal Yisrael* celebrated Rosh Chodesh Adar Rishon. As the month of Adar is the only one in the Jewish calendar that gets twinned (7 years out of every 19 in our calendar established millennia ago by Hillel II), every time such a leap year occurs, aside from the ‘*Mi’shenichnas Adar*’ celebrations, there is also some cause for concern and calculations.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 6b) concludes that all Purim-related observances (including the *Arba Parshiyot*) are celebrated in Adar Sheini to ensure that the *Geula* (Redemption) from Haman (Purim) and the *Geula* from Egypt (on Pesach) should be observed in consecutive months. Nevertheless, figuring out in which Adar other life cycle events, such as Bar Mitzvahs and Yahrzeits, should be observed, is quite complicated.

Who Is Truly Older?

It is widely known that adding a leap year into the mix always has interesting Bar Mitzvah-related ramifications. The majority consensus is that if a boy was born in a non-leap year, one in which there was only one Adar, and on the year of his Bar Mitzvah there are two Adars, his Bar Mitzvah will occur in the second Adar, since it is considered the true one concerning when he becomes a man.

The same holds true if our lad was actually born in Adar Sheini. In fact, the only way one would celebrate a Bar Mitzvah in the first Adar is if he was actually born in an Adar Rishon. This is the accepted practical ruling by all authorities, both *Ashkenazic* and *Sefardic*.

This makes for a remarkable dichotomy. If one boy is born on the 21st of Adar Rishon, and his buddy a week and a half later on the 2nd of Adar Sheini, then in any standard year following, the second lad would be celebrating his birthday almost 3 weeks **before** his “older” friend. Since in a standard year there is only one Adar, the second-born’s birthday would be on the 2nd of Adar, while his “older” friend’s birthday would be several weeks later, on the 21st. In fact, only in a leap year would the

older one truly be considered older. This would also affect their Bar Mitzvahs. If their Bar Mitzvahs are in a standard year, the younger lad would become a man several weeks before his older compadre. Yet, if their Bar Mitzvahs also occur in a leap year, then the older stays the older and the younger stays the younger one for Bar Mitzvah purposes as well.

Anecdotally, it is due to this classic calendar conundrum canon that my daughter celebrated her Bas Mitzvah on her 12th birthday 13 months prior to her twin brother’s Bar Mitzvah!

Bar Mitzvah-ed Early

Another interesting related issue: Although the universal practical *psak* is that the Bar Mitzvah of a boy born in a standard Adar is observed in Adar Sheini, nonetheless, there are *poskim* who maintain that the Bar Mitzvah boy should start to lay Tefillin from Adar Rishon, a month and a day before his actual Bar Mitzvah, even if his personal *minhag* is not to do so until the Bar Mitzvah itself. This is done out of deference to the minority opinion that the boy becomes a Bar Mitzvah in Adar Rishon. Hence, starting to lay *tefillin* (with a *beracha*) in Adar Rishon ensures that our eager *bachur* will not miss out on a potential day of wearing *tefillin*, even though the halacha follows the majority consensus that he has yet to become a man until Adar Sheini.

In fact, the *Tzitz Eliezer* opines that it is for a leap year like this that the common *minhag* to start laying *tefillin* a month before the Bar Mitzvah date actually developed. This is just another tidbit to add to the additional calculations and complications to a year with double Adars.

However, and quite interestingly, Yahrzeit observance seems to be an entirely different story...

To be continued...