

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The ABC of Ecology

"This is the thing that Hashem has commanded: 'Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats - an omer per person - according to the number of your people, everyone according to whoever is in his tent shall you take.'" (16:16)

The world gets smaller every day. One of the fears of living in a global village is that the village store is going to run out of food. Will we wake up one day and find our planet can no longer support its population? For years, science fiction has dwelled on highly imaginative schemes to "farm" the solar system. Here's the good news. You can relax and stop planning your trip to Andromeda. It isn't going to happen. Although waste is certainly wrong, there is no need to worry about the nourishing bounty in our world.

The letters of the Hebrew language are the building blocks of Creation. When G-d created this existence, He did so using "speech." "And G-d said: Let there be light...And G-d said: Let there be sky....And G-d said..." This is not merely a narrative tool, a stylistic convention. It means that existence consists of nothing more than G-d speaking, that it is built out of letters and words. This explains why the Hebrew word for "thing," *davar*, is comprised of the same letters as the word for "speech," *dibur*. Ultimately, "things" are no more than G-d's "words."

There's a prayer we say three times a day called *Ashrei* (*Ashrei* is the first word of this prayer.) *Ashrei* is a combination of two of the Psalms of King David. But what is so important about these particular Psalms that we say them three times a day?

If you open a *siddur* you'll notice that the first letters of each line of *Ashrei* go in alphabetical order. The first line starts with *aleph*, the second with *beit*, etc. *Ashrei* also contains the verse, "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of all life." This is a promise that G-d will sustain each one of us. What is the connection between having enough to eat and the *aleph-beit*?

With that same *aleph-beit* that G-d created the world, He creates a sufficiency for every living thing. G-d created this world with a plan. Man is the centerpiece of this plan. Just as He created the ABC of Creation, He has made sure that His plan will be fulfilled, right down to XY and Z. Every creature will receive its needs. We don't have to worry that there won't be enough for everyone to eat. We don't have to worry that the world will become overpopulated. With that same "whole cloth" that G-d fabricated existence, the *aleph-beit*, He provided a sufficiency for His Creation at all times.

"This is the thing that Hashem has commanded: 'Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats - an omer per person - according to the number of your people, everyone according to whoever is in his tent shall you take.'"

In this week's Torah portion we learn of the manna, the miraculous food that sustained the Jewish People for 40 years in the desert. Manna is the prototype of G-d sustaining man miraculously, providing for his every need. Just as in *Ashrei*, the above verse illustrates that every person receives according to his needs. And interestingly, it also contains all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Also, if you count the Hebrew letters of this verse, you will find they add up to 70. This corresponds to our global village's seventy nations who are constantly sustained by the Creator.

You don't have to worry. The "village store" is never going to be "out of bread."

- Sources: Rabbi Sholem Fishbane in the name of Rabbi Uziel Milevsky from *Rabbeinu Bachye*

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Beshalach: Berachot 30-36

The Taste of a Mitzvah

One who says (in prayer – Rashi) “You show us the way of mercy in the mitzvah of sending the mother bird before taking eggs” – is shushed.

The reason for this halacha in the *mishna* is a matter of dispute between two Amoraim. One explains that saying this implies that Hashem shows mercy in this case, but not in others, to other creatures. The other Amora argues that saying this implies that this mitzvah was given to teach mercy, but “they are *only* decrees.” A mitzvah exists purely because it is the will of G-d.

Does this mean that mitzvahs are not attached to any reasons aside from the fact that they are mitzvahs from Hashem? This cannot be so, since *Chazal*, the *Rishonim* and the *Achronim* all attempt to find reasons for the mitzvahs. The Ramban (Devarim 22:6) points out that all mitzvahs – even those known as *chukim* (statutes) – have reasons, and that “the absence of reasons for the Torah [that we can understand] is a result of our intellectual blindness.” Similarly, the Rambam (Moreh Ha’nevuchim 3:31) maintains that all mitzvahs have reasons: “Every mitzvah of the 613 commandments either imparts to us a true philosophy, eradicates a false philosophy, enforces a rule of social justice, nullifies injustice, bestows noble character traits, or warns against evil traits.”

My revered teacher, HaRav Moshe Shapiro *zatzal*, once asked Rav Eliyahu Dessler to explain the term “*ta’amei hamitzvos*” (the Hebrew term used by the Talmud meaning the “reasons” for the commandments.) Rav Dessler replied, “The *ta’am* of a mitzvah is the *geshmakeit* (taste) of a mitzvah.” Rav Dessler translated the word *ta’am* literally as “taste,” and explained that although we eat food in order to survive, we nevertheless enjoy its variety of tastes of textures as a pleasant side-effect of eating. Similarly, Hashem made the mitzvahs with varied “tastes.” We fulfill the mitzvahs because they are the will of Hashem and they are His instructions for living, but “investment” in the mitzvahs also pays other “dividends,” which are explained in the *ta’amei hamitzvos*.

▪ *Berachot 33b*

The Land of Bread

On produce from the ground (ha’aretz) one says, “Borei pri ha’adama” except for bread, for which the blessing is “Hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz.”

These *berachot* are taught in our *mishna* along with other *berachot* for eating and drinking. The wording of these two specific *berachot* is intriguing. Why does the *beracha* for produce from the ground, such as vegetables, mentions *adama*, whereas the *beracha* for bread mentions *aretz* instead of *adama*? *Adama* and *aretz* are both words for the ground, so why the change?

Many answers to this question are offered by the commentaries. One approach is to distinguish between land designated for human settlement and land used for farming and ranching. While the latter is called *adama* (“a field”), the former is referred to as *ereztz* (“a country”), and often appears as a name for the Land of Israel.

Since vegetables grow from the ground the appropriate *beracha* is to relate them to *adama*. Although bread is made from grains (wheat, barley and their derivatives) from the ground, it has a special significance as human food. “Man does not live by bread alone, but rather by whatever comes forth from the mouth of Hashem does man live.” (Devarim 8:3) Therefore, bread is deserving of a special *beracha* – one that relates it to the Land of Israel. (Based on the Gaon from Vilna)

Another approach to distinguish *ereztz* from *adama* is to define them based on their depth. *Ereztz* refers to the top level of the earth, while *adama* includes greater depths. Accordingly, the *beracha* for bread reflects the idea that its grains grow from near the surface, whereas vegetables receive nourishment from further down. (Rabbi Shlomo Luria) Other commentaries, however, explain *ereztz* and *adama* in the opposite manner – *adama* being closer to the earth surface and *ereztz* being closer to its core. (Rabbi Yisrael Lifshitz)

▪ *Berachot 35a*

(With appreciation to Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein for sharing his research on this topic.)

Questions

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 week's Torah portion 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 eretz* 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 Torah portion alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

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

Answers

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 - "*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.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Take Your Spoils

In the Song of the Sea, the Jewish People recount the events leading up to the miraculous parting of the Red Sea and the Egyptians' fateful drowning therein. At one point, the Song describes what motivated the Egyptians to pursue the Jews who recently exited Egypt: "The enemy said, 'I will chase them. I will reach them. I will apportion the booty'" (Ex. 15:9). In this context, the Torah uses the word *shallal* to denote the "spoils of war." However, elsewhere, other Hebrew words are employed to mean the same thing: *baz/bizah*, *ad*, *shevi*, and *malkoach*. For example, when the Jews defeated the Egyptians, they were said to collect *bizat Mitzrayim* ("the spoils of Egypt") and *bizat ha-yam* ("the spoils of the sea") – not *shallal*. In this essay we will explain how all of these words are not truly synonymous, but convey slightly different meanings. And, in doing so, we will trace these Hebrew words to their roots and hone in on their exact connotations.

When the Jews defeated the Midianites, the Torah uses the words *shevi*, *baz*, *malkoach*, and *shallal* to refer to the booty taken from that battle (Num. 31:11-12). Rashi (Num. 31:11) explains that *shallal* refers to clothing and jewelry, *baz* refers to other movable items which are not jewelry, and *malkoach* refers to living booty (like people and animals). This approach is approvingly cited by Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (1230-1300) and the Maharal of Prague (*Gur Aryeh* to Num. 31:11) who substantiate Rashi's claims by referring to other instances in which these words or cognates thereof appear.

Radak explains that *shevi* refers to human prisoners; *malkoach*, to animal spoils of war; and *shallal*, to clothes and vessels. However, he notes, later the Torah uses the word *malkoach* without pairing it with *shevi* (Num. 31:27), and in that case *malkoach* refers to all living things – human and animals – captured in the war.

Nonetheless, Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer cites II Chron. 15:11 which speaks of offering captured *shallal* as ritual sacrifices, implying that *shallal* can mean animals (unlike Rashi and Radak).

The Vilna Gaon (*Biur HaGra* to Isa. 10:6) writes that the plunder of enemy loot typically occurs in stages. First, all of the valuables are taken; they are called *shallal*. Then, even

the less important items are taken; they are called *bizah* – a word related to *bizayon* ("disgrace" or "disparagement") – because they are not as prized as the first set. Finally, everything left is sometimes taken away from the enemy, just to make sure that they are totally bereft of all their belongings. The Vilna Gaon also explains (in *Biur HaGra* to II Chron. 14:13) that *bizah* refers to non-living things captured in battle, while *shevi* refers specifically to living people or animals taken in war.

Malbim writes that the difference between *shallal* and *bizah* is the same as the difference between *shevi* and *malkoach*. He explains that *shallal* is a general term for the ownerless property of the defeated party after a battle, while *bizah* refers specifically to property that was already taken as loot. Similarly, he explains that *shevi* refers to all the captured people that were defeated, while *malkoach* refers specifically to those people who were taken by the captors as slaves or for other purposes.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) traces *shallal* to the two-letter root SHIN-LAMMED, which means "moving something outside of its proper place." For example, when G-d spoke to Moshe at the Burning Bush, telling him to take off his shoes, G-d said: "Remove (*shal*) your shoes from upon your feet" (Ex. 3:5). This is the basis for the word *shallal* in the sense of booty, which entails taking property away from its previous owners as the prize of war.

In explaining the words *baz* and *bizah*, Rabbi Pappenheim traces their etymology to the biliteral root BET-ZAYIN, which refers to something "considered unimportant." Rabbi Pappenheim offers three ways of explaining how the spoils of war are related to this meaning. Firstly, he explains that because the plunderers took these treasures "for free," they are essentially degrading whatever it is that they took as though it is not worth paying for. Secondly, he explains that because the plunderers receive their loot without having to pay for it, they do not treat it with as much care, so they are more callous about it, as if it has no value. Thirdly, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that because victims of pillaging are trying to save their own lives, they are less concerned about their property. Thus, the victims themselves seem to not care about the items left behind (because their value pales in comparison to their own lives). [Although Rabbi

Pappenheim and Menachem Ibn Saruk trace the root of *bizah* to BET-ZAYIN, Ibn Janach and Radak write that its root is BET-ZAYIN-ZAYIN, which differs from BET-ZAYIN-HEY that is the verb for “disparaging.”]

The root of *malkoach* is LAMMED-KUF-CHET, which means “taking,” and relates to the spoils for war for obvious reasons.

As mentioned above, the word *ad* also refers to the booty taken by the victors. For example, Yaakov blessed his youngest son saying, “Binyamin is a clawing wolf, in the morning he will eat his *ad* and in the evening he will allocate *shallal*” (Gen. 49:27). Rashi explains that the word *ad* in this case means “plunder” and notes that in Aramaic the AYIN-DALET root has that very meaning. In fact, Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1469-1549) points out that most times the Bible uses the words *shallal* or *bizah* in Hebrew, the Targumim translate those words into Aramaic cognates of *ad*. This Aramaic root also means “removal” (see Targum Onkelos to Ex. 25:15), and even “atonement,” which is the “removal” of sin (see Targum to Isa. 47:1). These meanings are related to the concept of booty which is the “removal” of property from the defeated party’s domain.

Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *ad* in this sense is derived from the word *adi* (“jewelry,” “ornament”), and refers specifically to ornamental clothes which soldiers would wear to battle and would be stripped of when captured.

Malbim explains that the word *ad* does not refer to ordinary booty; rather, it specifically denotes dead animals which were taken as war-prizes.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) explains that the word *ad* in the sense of booty is derived from *ad* in the

sense of “transferring” because “booty” represents a change in ownership. This meaning of *ad* is similar to its more common homonym *ad* (“until,” “through”). Rabbi Mecklenburg writes that the difference between *shallal* and *ad* is that *shallal* is a catch-all phrase that includes all items taken in as booty, while *ad* refers specifically to jewelry and decorative items taken as booty. A similar point is made by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Num. 31:11), that when no other words are used alongside it, *shallal* can refer to anything pilfered in battle – even animals and humans – because ultimately all the spoils of war are the same in that they are taken through violence.

Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein (1860-1940) explains that there are two different words for living “booty” (*malkoach*) and inanimate “booty” (*shallal*) because they are taken in different ways: Inanimate objects are taken by hand or physical force, while living creatures are often taken in verbally by either persuasion or command.

When Rabbi Shmuel Ibn Tibbon (1150-1230) translated Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed* from its original Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew, he needed to coin new words to convey some of the philosophical concepts with which Maimonides engaged. *Inter alia*, he needed to come up with a pair of Hebrew terms that can mean “positive” and “negative.” To that end, Ibn Tibbon re-appropriated the word *shallal* to mean “negative” (*shelilah*, *shelili*), because when one’s property had been plundered it is “lacking” and “missing,” which is conceptually similar to the idea of “negative.” Conversely, Ibn Tibbon also redefined a cognate of *chayav* (“obligated”) to mean “positive” (*chiyuv*, *chiyuvi*), because an “obligation” is a reality which really exists and is not “missing.”

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

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authority for a ruling.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Tax-Free!

What place was the source for the *arava* willow branches brought daily to the Beit Hamikdash during the Succot festival?

The answer is a small settlement just outside Jerusalem called Motza and sometimes referred to as Kalania Both of these names refer to the special status that the

government gave to this community by exempting it from taxes.

While today's residents of this attractive suburb of the Israeli capital are no longer exempt from taxes, their area still yields a bountiful crop of *aravot* which Jews use for the mitzvah of the four species on Succot.

ASK!

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Try It! You'll Like It!

Dear Rabbi,

I would like to know where I can find this passage in the Talmud. I think the indication I found in the Internet is wrong or defective. "Rabbi Hezekiah the Kohen said in the name of Rav: A person is destined to give an accounting before the Heavenly Tribunal for everything he saw but did not enjoy, ignoring G-d's world which He meant for man's enjoyment."

The source that you are looking for is the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Kiddushin Chapter 4 Halacha 12 (page 48, side b).

The Talmud states that anyone who saw food and did not partake of it will, in the future, have to give an accounting of his actions.

This statement means that when a person partakes of food he must make a blessing before he eats it. That blessing serves as a method to 'enhance' G-d's presence in this world. By choosing not to eat, a person is relinquishing the ability to praise G-d and His creation. Obviously, the Talmud is referring exclusively to kosher food.

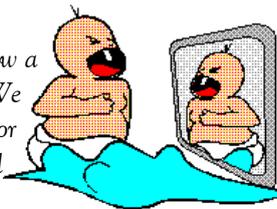
The Jewish outlook on physical pleasure is very beautiful. We believe that G-d is kind, and therefore made a world full of pleasure for us to enjoy.

- Sources: Pnei Moshe, commentary on the Jerusalem Talmud

Reflections of a Newborn

Paula wrote:

Friends and I heard that one should not allow a baby in its first year to look into mirrors. We have been unsuccessful in finding a source for this and would appreciate it if you could help us. Thank you.



Dear Paula,

I've heard this as well, although there are differing versions of how long to keep the baby away from the mirror: During the baby's first year; until the baby gets its first tooth; and for a boy until the *brit milah*. However, I once consulted with Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg about this, and he said that he knew of absolutely no source for this whatsoever and indicated that it is a mere *bubba maiseh* ('tall-tale').

LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Weapons of Faith

With their matzahs in one hand and weapons to defend themselves in the other, the newly-freed slaves were led out of Egypt. Their destination, of course, was the Promised Land, the Land of Israel. But G-d purposely chose not to take them on the direct route to Israel. That was too straightforward and close – and G-d suspected they would flee back to Egypt – home base – at the first sight of war, even though they were outfitted with weapons. Instead, He would lead them through the desert, in a roundabout way.

We see here that the people possessed no trace of the power and courage with which they could have attained their own freedom, and not even enough courage to retain that freedom. Both the attainment and retainment was through the work of G-d alone. If it had been up to them, then, upon seeing war on the road to independence and freedom they would returned to the slavery of Egypt – this despite the fact that they were fully armed!

Aside from lacking courage in their hearts, they were lacking something even more fundamental. They still lacked trust in G-d – the quality that itself gives a person determination and courage, no matter what the task and under any circumstance. They needed this not only for their own courage and success, but also because it was an essential aspect of the Jewish mission. The Jewish nation was to be the single nation fully aware of G-d as the source of all success and failure, triumph and defeat, prosperity and ruin.

The Land they were being led to does not, by its nature, provide material prosperity and political independence. Quite the contrary – it is unpredictable in its yield and

vulnerable to invaders. And, in furtherance of the nation's mission, precisely for this reason it was chosen.

Peace and prosperity in this Land will be granted or withheld directly by Hashem. It is situated at the crossroads where Europe, Asia and Africa meet, ensuring it will be caught in the crosshairs of conflict and war between other nations. Only by devotion to G-d and His Torah can the Jew hope to find peace and prosperity in the Land of Israel.

However, the Jewish People were not yet ready for this way of life. Only extraordinary experiences would educate them to the awareness that G-d's Providence not only saves His adherents from destruction but also sustains them, day by day, in all conditions and in all situations.

This was the meaning of the detour through the desert. Within their first few days they were to experience the miraculous salvation of the sea splitting and then drowning their Egyptian pursuers, and learn of G-d's special closeness at extraordinary moments. Then, through the provision of the manna, they will learn that one can – indeed must – place his trust in G-d under all circumstances, and for the provision of everyday necessities. When they will see that their attempts to secure tomorrow's sustenance in contravention of G-d's instruction results in the manna's spoilage, they will learn that hoarding one's storehouse against G-d's Will never yields the desired prosperity or security.

By the time their detour is complete, the people will be armed with a different sort of weapon – allegiance to and trust in the Almighty.

- Sources: Commentary, Shemot 13:17-8, 16:20; Bereishet 14:1

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