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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Bereishet - The Sweetest Thing

"And G-d said, 'Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.'" (1:26)

Here's a thought for when you "dip the apple in the honey." Apparently, a honey-bee's life is around forty days long. In that brief span, it collects pollen sufficient for but one teaspoon of honey. At no point in that honey-bee's life does it think of the tremendous effort expended for such a limited outcome. Like everything in Hashem's world, the bee does its work because, on its level of understanding, that is its purpose, that's what it's here for. The sun doesn't think about shining, the ocean waves do not think about their crashing assault on the beach and the trapdoor spider has no regrets as it sets its lure to seduce its unwary prey.

Everything in this creation does the bidding of its Creator without a second thought. With one exception – Man. Man is the only creation capable of rebellion. Man is the only creature with choice – "in Our image," like Hashem, so to speak. Maybe that's one of the ways we can understand the dictum of our Sages that a person should say to himself, "The world was created for me." (*Sanhedrin 37a*) At every second of my life I have the ability to validate this creation of the world by choosing to serve my Creator with no less commitment than a honey bee.

Noach - Human vs. Humanoid

"May G-d extend Yafet, but He will dwell in tents of Shem..." (9:27)

In a recent Hollywood gangster movie charting the life of hitman Frank Sheehan and labor union leader Jimmy Hoffa, rather than employ younger actors to portray the two characters as younger men, Hollywood used the latest 'de-aging' technology, and two well-known Italian-American films stars – one 76 and the other 79 – shed 40 years electronically. To de-age actors, a visual effects team creates a computer-generated, younger version of an actor's face and then replaces the actor's real face with the synthetic, animated version. Moshe Mahler, who worked for Disney Research for many years, writes that audiences are much more sensitive to distortions in computer-generated faces than to even larger, seemingly more obvious distortions that are present on the body. His research showed that viewers often experience an uncomfortable feeling when they see computer-generated faces that "aren't quite right."

Robotics professor Masahiro Mori hypothesized that as a humanoid becomes more lifelike, an audience's "familiarity" toward it increases, until a point where the humanoid is almost lifelike, but not perfectly lifelike.

At this point, subtle imperfections lead to responses of repulsion or rejection. The effect is stronger if the humanoid is moving.

If today's technology allows actors to shed years, we can probably expect that future technology will allow them to win posthumous Oscars for performances constructed on a computer decades after they have returned to the ground.

“*May G-d extend Yafet, but he will dwell in tents of Shem...*” Yafet is the father of Yavan, and Yavan translates into English as Greece. The Greeks are the inventors of the drama – the father of the film. Interestingly, there are several stories in Greek literature concerning immortality.

Shem is the ancestor of the Jewish People, who have always proclaimed that immortality is not to be found in works of art or works of computers, but in connecting to the Source of all. Because every mitzvah allows a Jew to turn the present into the future – before it becomes the past.

INSIGHTS INTO HALACHA

New Beginnings for Shabbat Bereishet

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

It is customary in many *shuls* and *yeshivot* around the world to make a special *kiddush* on Shabbat Bereishet. The question is, “Why?” Why is making a special *Kiddush* on this particular Shabbat such a widespread custom?

Those readily partaking in the *kugel* and *cholent* might just say, “Why not?” But there must be more to it than just indulging in gastronomical pleasures.

Some might posit the reason as a connection to Simchat Torah, or the ending and restarting of the Torah cycle. However, those events were already celebrated on Simchat Torah. If so, what is the deeper meaning of celebrating on Shabbat Bereishet?

I would like to preface the answer with a story I recently heard from Rabbi Yaakov Minkus, a *rebbe* in Yeshivas Beis Yisrael.

Once during the Simchat Torah *hakafot*, the Rabbi of a certain *shul* noticed two congregants just standing in the back schmoozing away the time. Concerned, he approached them and asked them to come join in the traditional dancing. They politely refused. “Rabbi”, they told him, “This dancing is not for us. For you, as the Rabbi, to dance with the Torah makes perfect sense. But not for us! You see, to tell you the truth, we didn’t learn anything this past year, nor did we set aside any specific time to learn Torah. Any time we had the chance to learn, we spent the time schmoozing and wasting time. So on Simchat Torah we are doing the same. We have no right to dance with the Torah.”

The Rabbi replied, “You are right and you are wrong. As you know, there are two different honors that are given out on Simchat Torah: that of the *Chatan Torah* and that of the *Chatan Bereishet*. The *Chatan Torah* is the *aliyah* where we celebrate the concluding of the Torah. This is customarily given to the Rabbi or another *Talmid Chacham* who has made great strides in his Torah learning over the past year. According to your own admission you are correct, you do not have much to dance for.

But there is another aspect to our dancing on Simchat Torah, and that is of the *Chatan Bereishet*. This is the *aliyah* where we celebrate the starting anew of the Torah. Anyone can receive this *kibbud* (honor). So for this aspect of Simchat Torah you should also join in! It's a new cycle, a new starting point. So even if last year you fell short, now is the time to pick yourselves up and get dancing for all the Torah you *will* learn over the next year!"

This starting point, this new beginning is now – Shabbat Bereishet. We see it clearly in this week's *parsha* – Bereishet. Aside from reading about the actual creation of the world from nothingness, which in itself is an excellent example of a new start, there is also the story of Kayin and Hevel (Cain and Abel).

After Kayin murders Hevel in cold-blood, G-d confronts him about his crime. After first denying any wrongdoing or even knowledge of the murder ("Am I my brother's keeper?"), G-d then metes out sentencing, and Kayin finally admits to the crime. He says just three words: (Gen. 4:13): "*Gadol avoni minso*," meaning that "this sin is too great for me to bear."

We then find something astounding. G-d reduces his sentence in half! In verse 12, Kayin's sentence is that of "*Na v'Ned*" – wandering and exile in seclusion. Yet, after his admittance, in verse 16 it states that Kayin settled in the land of Nod, meaning exile and seclusion. What happened to the decree of constant wandering?

Chazal explain that we see that Kayin's *teshuva* – even though it was half-hearted and was done only when confronted, and after he at first denied any wrongdoing, and even though he committed such a despicable act causing the potential for mankind for all time to be halved – nevertheless caused his punishment to be mitigated! Not only that, he merited to see seven generations of his own offspring! (One of whom, Na'ama, was a *tzaddeket*, the wife of Noach, through whom mankind propagated after the Flood.)

All due to those three words that he said.

This is a powerful lesson to take from *parshat* Bereishet, the power of renewal and new beginnings.

This is the message we can glean, even from a *Kiddush* on Shabbat Bereishet.

Even if last year we didn't accomplish as much spiritually as we could have or even should have. Even if Elul didn't work out as well as we would have wanted.

G-d is now giving us a chance for a new start, potential for renewal. That is the reason *Klal Yisrael* celebrates on Shabbat Bereishet.

May everyone merit utilizing this message for the upcoming year, and on next Simchat Torah may everyone be able to say that the reason they are dancing is due to their own personal *aliyah* in learning, and that they are therefore worthy of being the *Chatan Torah*!

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Eruvin 58-85

Rabbi Shmuel bar Inia said in the name of Rav, "Torah study is more important than offering sacrifices."

- *Eruvin 63b*

Rav Chisda said, "There will come the days that are long and short, and then we will have plenty of time to sleep."

This was Rav Chisda's reply to his daughter's amazement at her father's lack of sleep. She noticed that he was not sleeping much, so that he could have more waking time to pursue his Torah study – and asked about his need for sleep.

Maharsha explains how days can be both long and short, as expressed in Rav Chisda's reply to his daughter. "Long," he explains, refers to the eternal of the Afterlife, which is described in the Torah as "the length of days," and is earned by living in accordance with the teachings of the Torah. The ability to earn that reward, however, is available only during a person's life in this world. The Maharsha completes his explanation by teaching that the word "short" said by Rabbi Chisda refers to the lack of any opportunity to earn reward after a person's life in this world is concluded.

Here we gain great insight into Rav Chisda's perspective on life in this world and in the Afterlife – a perspective that explains why he did not "waste time" on sleep when at the expense of earning eternal reward.

- *Eruvin 65a*

Rav said, "Where a person eats determines his residence in regard to the halacha of eruv (i.e. eruv techumin, to be able to carry an additional 2,000 amahs outside the city on Shabbat)." Shmuel said, "Where a person sleeps determines his residence regarding the halacha of eruv."

- *Eruvin 73a*

Rav Yosef said, "There is always room in the stomach for tasty food!"

This statement on our *daf*, which seems to be the basis for the famous advertising slogan, "There's always room for Jell-O™," is actually a folk-saying that Rav Yosef cited to explain why we eat more on Shabbat than on weekdays.

- *Eruvin 82b*

Q & A - BEREISHET

Questions

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. Hashem blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from Hashem?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked"?
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

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

Answers

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that Hashem, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - Hashem saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. Hashem created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. Hashem commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore Hashem took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

Q & A - NOACH

Questions

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did Hashem tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did Hashem postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did Hashem do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to "be fruitful and multiply" directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

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

Answers

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, "Hashem is bringing a flood," it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - Hashem told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. "Kosher" and "non-kosher" are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Metushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, "If we see him going into the ark, we'll smash it!" Hashem surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven *amot*.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that its better to eat food "bitter like an olive" but which comes directly from Hashem, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach's disgrace to Cham. And because Cham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Cham's fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against Hashem.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word "Yiscah" is related to the Hebrew word "to see." Sarah was called Yiscah because she could "see" the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

Q & A - SUCCOT

Questions

1. According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a *succah* roof?
2. If the *succah* causes discomfort (e.g. it's too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?
3. What two things are forbidden to do outside of the *succah* all seven days of the festival?
4. What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the *succah* during the seven day holiday?
5. Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word *etrog* mean literally?
6. What is the minimum length of a lulav?
7. What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his *etrog* in order to obtain one of greater beauty?
8. On the Shabbat that occurs during Succot, we read the Book of Kohelet, in which King Solomon refers to himself as "Kohelet." Why is King Solomon called Kohelet?
9. What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the *succah* on the eighth day of Succot?
10. We hold a *tallit* over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

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

Answers

1. It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to *tumah* (ritual defilement).
2. Because the commandment of living in a *succah* is to dwell in the *succah* for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year. (*Mishneh Berura* 640:13)
3. Eat (an 'established' meal) or sleep. (*Orach Chaim* 639:2)
4. One. Eating a meal in the *succah* the first night of Succot is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat 'snacks' which are not required to be eaten in a *succah*. (Outside Israel, one must eat a meal the second night of Succot as well. However, there is no requirement to live outside Israel!) (*Orach Chaim* 639:3)
5. Beauty. (*Ramban Vayikra* 23:40)
6. Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic handbreadths).
7. 33.3% (*Orach Chaim* 656:1)
8. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succot after the Sabbatical year. (*Rashi, Kohelet* 1:1)
9. *Bal Tosif*: "Do not add to the mitzvahs." The commandment to live in the *succah* applies for only seven days. To sit in the *succah* on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses "*bal tosif*." (*Orach Chaim* 666:1)
10. It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to Hashem.

We wish all of Ohrnet Magazine's readers and friends Chag Succot Somayach — May you have a festive, happy and joyous festival of Succot!

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WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Succot

Holy Matrimony

One of most famous passages in the entire Bible reads: “Moses commanded us the Torah, a heritage (*morashah*) for the Congregation of Jacob” (Deut. 33:4). The Rabbis exegetically interpreted the word *morashah* in this passage as if it reads *me’orasah* (“betrothed woman”), which teaches that the Torah’s “marriage” to the Jewish People is akin to a woman’s “marriage” to her husband (*Berachos* 57a, *Pesachim* 49b). In this instance, the word for betrothal is *erusin*, and cognates of that Hebrew word appear throughout the Bible in that context (for example, see Ex. 22:15, Deut. 20:7; 22:23-27; 28:30). Nonetheless, this essay explores the relationship of the word *erusin* to a later Hebrew word for “betrothal” – *kiddushin*. That word and its derivatives appear more frequently in the Mishna than do variants of *erusin*, and, in fact, the Mishnaic tractate that deals with the laws of betrothal is entitled *Kiddushin*. If these two words refer to the same Halachic procedure, does that make them synonyms? If they are indeed synonyms, then why does the Bible use one word, and the Rabbis another?

Before we delve into various linguistic insights concerning the words *erusin* and *kiddushin*, a few points about the Halachic conception of marriage must be clarified. According to halacha, Jewish Marriage is a two-step process. The first step, known as *erusin/kiddushin*, involves the bridegroom “betrothing” his intended wife. At this point, she is halachically considered his wife, and the prohibition of adultery comes into full swing. However, the new couple may not yet live together until the second stage of marriage (called *nissuin*, which is effectuated by *chuppah*).

Thus, when we refer to *erusin/kiddushin* as “betrothal,” this does not mirror the Western concept of “engagement” that colloquially refers to a couple who agreed to marry each other but did not yet do so. Rather, *erusin/kiddushin* refers to the first stage of marriage. Some scholars prefer the term “inchoate marriage,” but it is too cumbersome and obscure for our purposes. In Talmudic times, what we call “engagement” was called *shidduchin*. This is sometimes confusing because in Modern Hebrew the term *erusin* refers to a couple formally becoming “engaged” and declaring their intentions to later get married. However, as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ex. 22:16) already clarifies, the earlier Hebrew term *erusin* does not refer to this.

In the opening discussion of Tractate *Kiddushin* in the Babylonian Talmud (*Kiddushin* 2b), the Saboraic Sages ask why the Mishna (*Kiddushin* 2:1) refers to betrothal as *kiddushin* instead of using a Biblical Hebrew term. They answer that the term *kiddushin* in the sense of “betrothal” is related to the *hekdesh* (“consecrated property”), as one who betroths a woman forbids her from being with anybody else, just as consecration forbids all people from deriving benefit from the property that was consecrated.

Rabbi Yitzchak Vana (a Yemenite Kabbalist who died in 1670) writes that *kiddushin* relates to *hekdesh* because just as consecrating property causes one who misuses that property to violate a more serious prohibition than previously so, so does betrothing a woman cause one who illicitly engages her in intimacy to violate a more serious prohibition than had she been single.

The truth is that according to Biblical law a newlywed couple is already permitted to live together once the first stage of marriage (*erusin/kiddushin*) has been completed. However, the halacha remains that, by rabbinic fiat, the couple are forbidden to one another until they complete the second stage of marriage. The Rabbis instituted that a betrothed woman is forbidden to her husband until he finalizes their marriage with *nissuin* (see *Kallah* 1:1 and Rashi to *Kesuvos* 8a).

In light of this, Rabbi Alexander Sender Shor (1660-1737) and Rabbi Elazar Moshe Horowitz (1817-1890) explain the term *kiddushin* as implying a procedure akin to *hekdesh* comes into play only after the rabbinic enactment by which a betrothed woman becomes forbidden to her own husband. Accordingly, the Rabbis used the term *kiddushin* to accentuate the point that through *kiddushin* a woman becomes like *hekdesh* – forbidden to everyone else in the world (including her husband). By contrast, since the term *erusin* is not loaded with this implication, the Torah uses that term to denote “betrothal.” This makes sense because Biblical law maintains that a betrothed woman is permitted to her husband, so she does not resemble *hekdesh*.

We can offer another, similar reason as to why only the Rabbis use the term *kiddushin* and the Bible does not. Rabbi David HaLevi Segal (*Turei Zahav* to *Even HaEzer* 34:2) writes that the mere fact that Jewish Marriage is a two-step process (commencing with *erusin/kiddushin* and finishing with *nissuin*) imbues it with a special holiness (*kedushah*) unseen elsewhere. According to this, we may argue that the Rabbis coined the term *kiddushin* for “betrothal” because they were responsible for instituting this two-step framework, and that *kiddushin* is what kicks off the process. On the other hand, from the Bible’s perspective, “betrothal” is simply called *erusin*, which implies nothing about “holiness,” because from the Bible’s perspective that extra level of holiness which emanates from the two-step process does not yet exist.

Tosafos (to *Kiddushin* 7b) mention a halachic difference between one who effectuates betrothal using the terminology of *kiddushin* and one who uses

the terminology of *erusin*. There is a Talmudic principle that even if a man betroths “half” a woman, the betrothal still goes into full effect. However, the Tosafists explain that this applies only to a man who betroths a woman using the terminology of *kiddushin*. Their unspoken logic is that the law of *kiddushin* is comparable to the law of consecrating an animal (*hekdesh*). If one consecrates “half” an animal for sacrificial purposes, the halacha follows that the entire beast becomes holy. The Tosafists understood that the same is true concerning *kiddushin*: If one betroths “half” a woman, then the *kiddushin* comes into full effect. However, the Tosafists maintain that this comparison between the two areas of halachah is true only when betrothing a woman using the term *kiddushin*, which is related to *hekdesh*. If, however, the groom expressed his nuptial intent using the terminology of *erusin*, then this paradigm is not in play and the betrothal will only take “half” effect (whatever exactly that entails).

Although the Saboraic Sages mentioned above connect the word *kiddushin* to *hekdesh*, the Tosafists (to *Kiddushin* 2b) point out that the plain meaning of *kiddushin* relates to *kiddush* in the sense of “preparing” or “designating” something (e.g. see Ex. 19:10, Num. 11:18). The word *kedeishah* (“prostitute”) is a cognate of this root because such a woman is “set aside” or “designated” for a specific purpose (see Rashi to Gen. 38:21 and Deut. 23:18). Others understand that the Hebrew word *kedeishah* as related to the Akkadian word *qadistu*, “woman of special status.” That general definition can apply to both a prostitute and a wife, leading Professor Shamma Friedman (a member of the Academy of the Hebrew Language) to entertain this as a possible etymology for the term *kiddushin*. Either way, these approaches maintain that *kiddushin* is unrelated to “holiness” or “consecration,” *per se*.

The commentators buttress the Tosafists’ point with two arguments. First, in the speech act that contributes to the creation of *kiddushin*, the groom says to the bride “with this ring, you are *mekudeshet* to me...” Rabbi Avraham HaLevi of Barcelona (1235-1303) in *Chiddushei HaRaah* (*Kiddushin* 2b), and Rabbi Yosef Ibn Ezra (1560-1620) in *Atzmot Yosef*, both note that if the term *mekudeshet* was meant in the sense of “consecration,” then the groom would effectively be “consecrating” her to himself. But this

would mean he is *forbidding* her to himself, just like consecrating property renders that property *forbidden!* Since this is certainly not the groom's intention, it must be that *mekudeshet* is a term of "preparing" or "designating." Moreover, Rabbi Eliezer Asheknazi (1512-1585) argues that, grammatically-speaking, if the bridegroom means to "sanctify" her, he should say *mukdeshet*. The fact that the traditional formula instead reads *mekudeshet* indicates that he meant to "set her aside" or "designate" her as a wife, not to "sanctify" her.

Dr. Michael Satlow suggests that the Mishnaic term *kiddushin* is actually a "loanword" from the Greek legal term *ekdosis*, which refers to a bride's father "handing over" the girl to her new husband. While this is a fascinating proposal, it is quite difficult to accept because "handing over" the bride is actually the definition of *nissuin* (see *Ketuvos* 4:5). It is thus quite problematic to argue that this is the etymological basis for the term *kiddushin*. Nevertheless, one could argue that the Rabbis may have adapted/adopted this Greek word, and slightly modified its pronunciation and meaning – as they often did when making use of foreign words.

Let's now turn our attention to the word *erusin* and its possible etymologies. The Yemenite Sage Rabbi Shalom Mansoura of Sanna (d. 1888) explains that *erusin* is an expression of "tying" (similar to the English euphemism for marriage, "tying the knot"). Rabbi Yitzchak Ratzabi offers two ways of explaining this etymology. First, he cites Rabbi Baurch HaLevi Epstein (1860-1940), who writes that the root of *erusin*, ALEPH-REISH-SIN/SAMECH, should be understood as congruent to the root *erez*, ALEPH-REISH-ZAYIN, because the letters SIN/SAMECH and ZAYIN are interchangeable. The latter root refers to something packed tightly (see *Yechezkel* 27:24), like the word *arizah* ("package") in Modern Hebrew, so it makes sense that *erusin* would also refer to the powerful bonds of matrimony. Rabbi Epstein also notes that *erez* is related to *aizor* ("tight belt") by way of metathesis, continuing in the same theme of "tying" something tightly. Alternatively, Rabbi

Ratzabi suggests that Rabbi Mansoura means that *erusin* is related to "tying" by way of a simpler metathesis without replacing any of the letters. If we simply transpose the final two letters of the root ALEPH-REISH-SIN/SAMECH, then we get ALEPH-SIN/SAMECH-REISH, which means "tie" or "bind." A betrothed woman is "tied" to her husband in the sense that the only way she can marry someone else is if he grants her a bill of divorce (or dies).

Rabbi Vana argues that the word *arusah* ("betrothed woman") is related to the Hebrew word *eres* ("poison"), because once a woman is betrothed to another, then she becomes like a poisonous snake or scorpion in the sense that anyone who illicitly approaches her is liable for the death penalty.

Rabbi Ratzabi cites another Yemenite scholar who explains that a betrothed woman is called an *arusah* in the same sense that a sharecropper is called an *aris*. The sharecropper enters a sort of partnership with the owner of the field, and thus retains partial rights to its produce. In a similar vein, a betrothed woman enters into a partnership with her future husband, who at that point only has a partial "claim" over her (in that she is now forbidden to commit adultery), but not a complete entitlement (i.e. if she dies, he does not inherit her property).

Finally, Rabbi Ratzabi offers two suggestions of his own towards understanding the etymology of *erusin*, both of which invoke the interchangeability of the letter ALEPH with AYIN. He explains that the root AYIN-REISH-SIN/SAMECH refers to "mixing," like in the case of *arisah* ("dough") which is mixed/kneaded. In some sense, *erusin* (spelled with an ALEPH) also refers to a "mixture" of sorts, as it represents the joining of man and wife in matrimony. Alternatively, Rabbi Ratzabi connects the word *erusin* to *eres* ("bed"), spelled with an AYIN, as an allusion to the conjugal reasons for marriage.

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

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

THE FIFTEENTH AND FINAL MORNING BLESSING: THANKFUL TO BE HELPLESS

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids. And may it be Your will, Hashem, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You accustom us to Your Torah and attach us to Your commandments. And do not bring us to error, or to transgression, or to sin, or to challenge, or to humiliation, and that the Evil Inclination should not rule over us. Distance us from an evil person and from an evil friend. Attach us to the Good Inclination and to good deeds, and force the [Evil] Inclination to be subservient to You. Grant us today, and every day, grace, kindness and mercy in Your Eyes and in the eyes of all who see us, and bestow beneficent kindness upon us. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who bestows beneficent kindness upon His people, Israel.”

The final blessing stands out for two immediate reasons. First, it is uncharacteristically lengthy. And, second, its syntax is different from that of the other blessings. If the blessing would have been comprised of just the opening sentence, it would have effortlessly matched the preceding fourteen blessings, and the blessings would have flown seamlessly one into the other. But it does not.

As we have learned together over the last few months, the sequence of the blessings has carried us higher and higher, to the point where we have reached the elevated level of being able to give strength to the weary. Effective leadership requires foresight and clarity. A successful mentor is one who can offer coherent spiritual, practical and emotional advice. Such a leader requires eyes that see only the truth. Eyes capable of discerning what is being asked – and *why* – so that the appropriate answer can be given. For this reason, the spiritual leadership of the Jewish Nation is described as the “eyes” of the people.

The opening sentence of our blessing spells out this idea straightforwardly and clearly: “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids.” To be blessed with unerring spiritual vision should be the climax of everything that we strive for. Therefore, we thank G-d for removing the “spiritual cataracts” that

blur our vision and cloud our judgment. And if the blessing were to end here, it would be a perfect finale to the incredible journey that the Morning Blessings have taken us on.

But we have not yet reached the end of the blessing. The final blessing continues, at great length. What makes it even more surprising is that the continuation of the blessing seems to have nothing whatsoever to do with its opening sentence. To compound the issue, however important the concepts mentioned throughout the remainder of the blessing may be, they do not seem to fit into the typical structure of the Morning Blessings. From the get-go, the blessings have been motivating us to move continuously upwards in our spiritual quest to draw closer to G-d. They have been spurring us on to climb another step, and another step – one after the other – using a logical and systematic method. Each step brings us within reach of the ultimate goal, which is to serve G-d to our utmost. And then, as the very pinnacle of our hopes and desires are within reach, our blessing lists an entire series of requests to G-d that seem almost simplistic. Certainly they are all crucial to our spiritual growth and they are absolutely fitting for the Morning Blessings, but why do they appear in the final blessing? They would seem to be more suited to have been mentioned towards the beginning of the Morning Blessings, which deal with the more rudimentary dimensions of our relationship with G-d.

To exacerbate the situation, there is a general rule that whenever we invoke the Patriarchs within prayer, it is an indication that we are about to ask for something that requires more than our own merits alone. Including the Patriarchs in our prayers is an admission that without their merits there is little, if any, chance that our supplications would be answered based solely on merits. And here, after the opening sentence of our blessing, we continue, “And may it be Your will, Hashem, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You accustom us to Your Torah and attach us to Your commandments. And do not bring us to error, or to transgression, or to sin, or to challenge, or to humiliation, and that the Evil Inclination should not rule over us. Distance us from an evil person and from

an evil friend. Attach us to the Good Inclination and to good deeds, and force the [Evil] Inclination to be subservient to You. Grant us today and every day grace, kindness and mercy in Your Eyes and in the eyes of all who see us, and bestow beneficent kindness upon us. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who bestows beneficent kindness upon His people, Israel.”

Not only do we mention the Patriarchs, but, on reading through the blessing, it seems as if we are asking for their assistance in things that do not seem to be all that difficult to accomplish. We do not seem to require their intervention in these matters. Certainly, learning Torah, not making mistakes, not sinning, not allowing the Evil Inclination to rule over us, not being exposed to evil people nor to evil friends, and being attached to the Good Inclination, are all vital ingredients to our spiritual growth. There is no doubt that they give us the wherewithal to belong to something that is infinitely greater than our physical existence. But to invoke the Patriarchs for such a list would seem, at first glance, to almost be like turning to the President of the United States to take care of a parking violation – effective but exaggerated.

Why, then, does this last blessing in the series – which represents the very pinnacle of our spiritual aspirations – seem to focus on the more foundational concepts? And why is it uncharacteristically long? It would seem to have been more fitting for this blessing to emphasize thoughts that are loftier, and that reflect the heights that we have reached on our voyage. Yet the beauty of this final blessing is that, now, at the very end of our remarkable journey, we are being taught the most fundamental and essential lesson of all.

Without G-d it is not possible to succeed.

We are supposed to live our lives with the awareness that G-d is accompanying us in all that we do. But frequently, and paradoxically, the greater our accomplishments, the more we attribute our triumphs to our own personal acumen. Somewhere along the way, G-d’s participation becomes less and less palpable. And that is a terrible mistake. Because, as our blessing states, without acknowledging that G-d is an integral dimension in our lives, even our most basic responsibilities become almost insurmountable. Or, to put it another way: A “little” humility wouldn’t hurt.

The Torah describes Moses – the greatest person in world history – as the humblest of people (Numbers 12:3). Initially, this seems incongruous. How can those two descriptions coexist harmoniously? Infinite greatness and immeasurable humbleness do not seem to be dimensions that sit easily with each other. More than that, in order for Moses to reach the ultimate level of connection to G-d that he did he had to be absolutely aware – not just of his own personal greatness but of the eternal impact that he will make in the world. And, yet, the Torah, in defining Moses for posterity, chooses to describe him as a humble person. Because knowing one’s greatness is no contradiction to humility. On the contrary, it was precisely his understanding of this point that caused Moses to be so humble. Ultimate humility is achieved only by a person who excels in good attributes but takes no credit for his greatness. A person who realizes that all of their achievements come from G-d cannot be conceited or self-congratulatory. That is why the Torah emphasizes that Moses’ greatness was the source of his humbleness. Judaism is conveying that to reach the level of true humbleness, you must be completely aware of how great you are and of your achievements. But it also requires continual awareness that whatever you have attained, you did so because G-d gave you the abilities and the strength to be able to do so.

And that is the essence of our final blessing. A detailed list of things that I am begging G-d to assist me with. Yes, they seem simplistic, and, at first glance, they sound as if the right place for them should be nearer the beginning of the Morning Blessings than at the end. But, in reality, they symbolize my absolute recognition that as I reach upwards towards greatness, the more completely dependent on G-d I become. With this blessing I am definitively declaring that without continuously “working on” that awareness, I am helpless. And, to reach such a remarkable level of comprehension is the greatest achievement that I can realize.

Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet on The Morning Blessings by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
www.ohr.edu/morning-blessings

LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Bereishet

Instinct and Conscience

The story of the first sin is the story of all sins. The animal – in this case the serpent – applies its “logic” to overcome human conscience. The animal is not wrong in following animal logic – the animal instinct is the voice of G-d... to the animal. The serpent urges man to eat from the forbidden fruit, promising this will enlighten him so that he is “like G-d, knowing the difference between good and evil.” (Ber. 3:5). Indeed, animals are endowed with instinct – Divine guidance from within – and can act only in accordance with that instinct. They are “like G-d” and they can do only good and no evil. Animals have only one nature, whose call they must heed.

Not so man. Man’s distinction is his morality, born of the ability to *choose* good and shun evil. He has physical drives but must give them their due only out of a sense of duty, and always acting with moral freedom. His task is not to follow his animal instincts, but to overcome them. An animal acting in accordance with his instincts *follows* them, but a man who does the same – *succumbs*.

Man’s physical nature must, of necessity, be opposed to good and attracted to evil, for only in this way can he properly *choose* good, not *because* of his senses but *in spite* of them. For this reason, the voice of G-d speaks not from *within him*, but *to him*, telling him what is good and what is evil. But there is also a soft, innate voice of G-d within man. This is the conscience, whose messenger is the sense of shame. Shame allows us to rise above the animal instinct and choose good even when it is against our physical gratification. Shame is the faithful guardian of morality. It fortifies the ability to choose good. It allows us to repay debts, return lost objects, and refrain from illicit relationships. (See *Duties of the Heart*, Gate of Reflection, chapter 5.) Shame cautions man *in general terms* to do good and refrain from evil, but does not define *what is good* and *what is evil*. This, man learns only from the voice of G-d, which speaks to him from outside himself.

To the serpent, what is pleasing is good. To an animal, instinct is the Divine voice. The tree was appealing to man’s senses – it appeared good to the *taste*, tempting to the *sight*, and delightful to *contemplate*. (Ber. 3:6) Everything from within him said: “This is good.” But G-d’s word to him told him not to eat the fruit, and *this* was to be the guiding rule for man to distinguish between good and evil – G-d’s word.

Man was placed in paradise not to enjoy its fruits, but to *work and guard it*. (Ber. 2:15) Only by following the rule of G-d, with the aid of his conscience, can he succeed.

- Sources: Commentary, Bereishet 3:1

Noach

Young at Heart – Evil at Heart?

When the flood is over, and Noach, his family and all living creatures emerge from the ark, G-d reflects on the destruction of the land, and states, *I will no longer curse the ground for the sake of man, for the design of man's heart is evil from his youth, nor will I destroy every living thing as I have done.* (Ber. 8:21)

The traditional explanation of this verse is as translated above: G-d's decision to never again bring destruction upon the world is *because* man is bound to be evil from his youth. Rav Hirsch rejects this explanation on logical, textual, and grammatical grounds. First, it cannot mean that G-d has given up on educated humanity, for it is futile. It would not be in keeping with G-d's dignity and majesty to make such a statement about Himself or His creations. Second, a strikingly similar sentiment is expressed above (Ber. 6:5) as the *reason* for the punishment of the flood. It would be absurd for the unavoidable evil designs of man to be both the reasons for punishment and for clemency! Third, the emphasis in the verse is on the two statements, "I will no longer," which flank the parenthetical statement, "*for the design of man's heart is evil from his youth.*" The Hebrew word *ki* can mean 'because' or 'when/if.' Rav Hirsch reads this verse with the second meaning: *If the design of man's heart should again become evil – even from his youth – and the destruction of the generation should be the only way of salvation, nevertheless, never shall I do as I have done.*

The word for youth, *na'ar*, is composed of the same letters as the verb 'to shake' (*l'na'er*). Young people want to develop "out of themselves." Neither good nor bad impressions are permanently absorbed by them. A youth's nature is not yet cloaked by hypocrisy and still 'shakes off' both good and bad impressions.

It is not true that children have a wicked nature and that they aspire to bad. We are not doomed by an evil inclination from youth. While young adults may do evil things, this is generally because they have not yet learned the art of subordinating themselves to a higher calling, the art of self-control and respect for duty. In their quest for independence, they seek to "shake off" these burdens. But it is this independence of will which will ultimately serve them well, when intellectual maturity teaches them to use it for moral development. They can learn to use this same obstinacy in the tenacious and steadfast pursuit of good.

Now, the adults who have not learned this art are the ones who remain addicted to base desire and greed. Once the adolescent quest for independence has passed, he learns to accommodate and conform, and also succumbs to desire and selfishness. The time when evil prevails is usually well past youth.

Our verse speaks of a most unusual era, when even the *young* consciously aspire to evil as their hearts' ideal. Were this to be the case, all hope for the generation would appear to be lost. But even in this desperate era, G-d promises not to bring destruction again. Instead, a new model of the education of man, one that depends on climactic change and dispersion to create a gamut of experiences for mankind, will bring man back to his noble calling.

- Source: Commentary, Bereishet 8:21

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Bereishet

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days.

Adam and Chava – the human pair – are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing "sin," Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain in childbirth. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history.

Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock, and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth.

The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noach. After the death of Sheis, Mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noach, finds favor with G-d.

Noach

It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d

resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants, except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to repopulate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days, the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later, Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days, Noach sends the dove once more, and this time the dove does not return.

G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibitions against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Cham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons, from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended.

The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. This Torah portion concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

SEASONS – THEN AND NOW

Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

The commentaries address the question of why the Rabbis chose to finish the Torah and celebrate Simchat Torah on Shemini Atzeret and not on Shavuot, the day when we received the Torah. They explain that when the Jewish People accepted the Torah without first going through it, they were unable to truly appreciate the depth of this gift when they received it on Shavuot. Only once they finished going through the Torah did they really come to the realization of the special present they received on Shavuot. Therefore, the Rabbis chose to finish the Torah on a different day than Shavuot, to mirror the experiences that the Jewish People had when they received the Torah (see the Ben Ish Chai's *Yedei Chaim*, *siman* 669).

This idea, though, addresses only why Simchat Torah is not celebrated on Shavuot, but it fails to answer why the Rabbis specifically chose to finish the Torah and celebrate the *siyum* on Shemini Atzeret (or the second day of that Chag outside of Israel). Furthermore, in light of the halacha that one shouldn't mix two different celebrations together, why did the Rabbis choose to make Simchat Torah exactly on the same day as Shemini Atzeret?

One More Day...

Commenting on the verse that refers to Shemini Atzeret as "Atzeret," literally translated as stopping, Rashi explains:

Like a king who invited his sons to a meal, when it came time for them to go, the king said, "My sons! I beg of you stay with me one more day, it is hard to be separated from you!" (Rashi on Vayikra 23:36; see also Rashi on Bamidbar 29:35)

The commentaries ask a basic question on this: How would staying another day ease the parting

from one another? Wouldn't it just simply delay the hardship of having to part? Or, in fact, wouldn't it even make it harder, following another day of close bonding?

Spiritual Climax

The commentaries explain that through Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Succot, we come closer and closer to Hashem, until reaching a climax of intense closeness on Shemini Atzeret. In fact Sefat Emet points out that the spiritual level that is reached on Shemini Atzeret (and Shavuot) is so high that it cannot be condensed into a physical mitzvah. This is why, unlike other holidays, there is no specific mitzvah that is associated with Shemini Atzeret (other than the offerings brought in the Beit Hamikdash - Sefat Emet, Succot 5637, "*v'hayita ach sameach*"). In a similar vein, the sources tell us that as a result of the close bond between us and Hashem on Shemini Atzeret, it is the most auspicious time of the year for one's prayers to be accepted (see Moed l'Kol Chai 25:1 and Ben Yehoyada on Mo'ed Katan 9a' based on the Zohar, Tzav 32a).

Practically speaking, the work that is demanded from us on Shemini Atzeret is to feel the closeness with Hashem that we developed from all these special days that have just passed, and try to extend that closeness to the mundane days that follow. That is why this day is called "Atzeret" (stopping). On this day, one is meant to *stop* the influences of the 21 days prior from going away, by absorbing the lessons learned and spiritual heights achieved (Shem M'Shmuel, Shemini Atzeret).

Only Torah

The only way for this to happen is through the Torah. This is because through the Torah, which is

above time and above physicality, even without auspicious times, such as the holidays, and without the means of timely mitzvahs such as shofar and succah, one can still connect to Hashem in a very intense way. It is therefore only through the Torah that we can transfer over the closeness we feel to Hashem on Shemini Atzeret to the mundane days that follow. According to this, it is no surprise that the Zohar, which preceded the custom of finishing the Torah on Shemini Atzeret, says to rejoice with the Torah on this day. Even prior to this day being a time when we celebrate the finishing of the Torah, there was an intrinsic connection between this day and the Torah.

Now we can understand why the extra day of Shemini Atzeret actually eases the departure. On this day we prepare and carry with ourselves the influences of the *Yamim Noraim* and Succot through rejoicing with the Torah. On the day when we reach the climax of spiritual connection to Hashem, we rejoice with the Torah to instill in ourselves the principle that through the Torah we

can reach similar heights even after the auspicious holidays. Now we can also understand why the Rabbis chose to institute the finishing of the Torah specifically on Shemini Atzeret. The rejoicing with the Torah, which helps us retain our intense closeness with Hashem even after the *Yamim Noraim* and Succot, fits the theme of Shemini Atzeret perfectly. It is also clear now why the Rabbis did not worry about the halacha of not mixing two different celebrations by instituting Simchat Torah on Shemini Atzeret. Since the Torah is an intrinsic part of Shemini Atzeret, it is not considered the mixing of two different celebrations, but rather one big celebration (based primarily on Moadim Uzmanim VI *siman* 79 and Siftei Chaim, Moadim I, pp. 345-346).

May we all merit making the most of this auspicious day and carry the closeness to Hashem that we achieved during the High Holidays into the mundane days that follow.

Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet - Harmony of a Nation - Overcoming Baseless Hatred by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh https://ohr.edu/Sinat_Chinam.pdf

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The students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

An Open Letter from an Ohr Somayach Alumnus

More than ten years ago it was discovered that my wife Linda had a disease known as polycystic kidneys. She was informed that within a few years her kidneys would stop functioning completely and she would require a transplant. To obtain a transplant she would need to find a person who would be willing to donate one of their kidneys to put in my wife's body.

As her kidneys became weaker and weaker and the cloud of dialysis hung over her head, a 53-year-old mother of five children heard of our need and answered our prayers. It was seven years ago that the transplant took place, but the new kidney never functioned properly. Every time a woman gives birth, her body develops antibodies that make accepting another person's organ more difficult. Linda's health began to deteriorate. She had to leave her job due to lack of strength and stamina. Linda spent many

weeks in the hospital. She had no choice but to go on dialysis.

The search for another altruistic donor began, but the doctors and the organizations that help people find donors had little hope. A woman who gave birth seven times and had already received a transplant has such a high level of antibodies that there is hardly a person in the world whose kidney would function in her body.

We made a trip to a hospital in Toledo, Ohio, where many kidney transplants are performed. But our hopes were dashed. We then made contact with the Irgun Renewal in Boro Park, an organization that has arranged 600 kidney transplants. Renewal told us to go to Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx for preliminary tests in case they found a donor for us. Their first piece of advice was to buy American insurance, whatever the cost, in case a suitable donor was found.

They told us to go home and wait. Maybe they would find a needle in a haystack. We waited for close to a year. We were resigning ourselves to the fact that Linda may have to spend the rest of her life doing twelve hours of dialysis a week, and suffer all of the physical and mental stress that dialysis brings.

A month ago, on Motzei Shabbos, we received an email from Renewal saying that they had a match for us. We would have to be in New York in ten days to spend two weeks in quarantine before the hospital would agree to do a transplant. We immediately made travel arrangements. With the help of a friend we found a place to stay in Monsey.

It is a strict policy of Renewal that there be no contact between the donor and the recipient until after the transplant. All we knew about the donor was that he was from Baltimore. He requested from us a letter of *beracha* from Reb Chaim and Elimelech Biderman. We were already in America, and so our sons took care of this matter. Because of his request, we found out that his name is Meir Yitzchak ben Nechama.

Last Wednesday, the 20th of Elul, the transplant took place. The surgeon was an Orthodox doctor from Teaneck, Dr. Stuart Grenstein.

My daughter and I were sitting in the "Kosher Room" in the hospital during the five hour procedure, when a lady walked in and sat down. She told us that her husband was in the process of having one of his kidneys removed and given to a woman, Leeba bas Hadassah. She said that her husband was giving a kidney as a *z'chus* for the *neshama* of his father. We told her who we were, and then I asked her the family name of her husband.

When she told me the family name I was overwhelmed with emotion. I had to leave the room. The first thing I did was to call Rabbi Yehuda Samet (with whom I speak at least twice a week). I was sure he would want to know.

Who is the donor?

Meir Yitzchak ben Ze'ev Kraines.

B"H, the transplant was a success. Linda feels like a new woman and she is steadily recovering from the effects of surgery.

We will be in Monsey for two more months, as my wife has to go back to Montefiore every few days for standard tests and observation.

Ohr Somayach saves lives in many different ways.

Shana tova,

Nachum Hirschel

Rabbi Simon's note:

Not only is the author of the letter an Ohr Somayach Jerusalem alumnus, but the kidney donor, Meir Yitzchak Kraines, is the son of one of our first alumni, Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines, zatzal. Rabbi Kraines was sent by the Yeshiva to Johannesburg, South Africa in the early 1990s to head the community in Sandton, a Johannesburg suburb. He led that community as its Rav for nearly 30 years. He was niftar earlier this year in Israel.