

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### The Bridge to Change

*"G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although it was nearer..." (13:17)*

**I**t's very difficult to change things we don't like about ourselves. We are creatures of habit.

One of the hardest aspects of modifying negative behavior is breaking the patterns we weave for ourselves. How long do our "New Year's resolutions" last? A day? A week? Not through lack of resolution, but because resolution is no match for habit.

Resolution is not the solution. To succeed, we must do something much more fundamental.

When Hashem took the Jewish People out of Egypt, He did not take them on the quickest and easiest and most direct route from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael – northeast, along the coast of the Mediterranean, through what is today Gaza. Rather, He took them on a long, difficult and tortuous path across a sea and through a major desert. Why?

As the saying goes, "Easy come, easy go." When the Jewish People left Egypt, they had not entirely freed themselves from the clutches of the negative drive, the *yetzer hara*. If Hashem had brought them on the easy way, they would have been in danger of being lured back to the constricting but comfortable life of slavery in the fleshpots of Egypt. Hashem, as it were, burned their bridges. He made it virtually impossible to return to Egypt – which was just as well. For, as we see, when the going got tough in the wilderness, the Jews were more than willing to return to Egypt. Had that been an easy option, the history of the Jewish People might have been very different.

Ostensibly, then, when faced with trying to escape the clutches of our negative drive, we must burn our bridges. If we want to separate from bad company, we must be prepared to leave and move to a different neighborhood. If we have a serious weight problem, we must put a lock on the fridge and entrust the key to our spouse (unless he's/she's trying to lose weight as well).

However, in *Parshat Vaera* (8:23), the Torah presents an apparent contradiction to this logic. When Moshe tells Pharaoh that the Jews are leaving, he talks of "only a three-day journey." Moshe knew full well that once they were out, they were not coming back, so why did he tell Pharaoh it was for only three days?

Part of Moshe's intention was to appease the latent negative drive still lingering in the hearts of the Jewish People. Leaving for three days is a far less daunting prospect than leaving forever. The Jews thus felt they had a "get-out clause," if they needed it, and were prepared to go along with Moshe. For three days, at least.

But was this bridge-burning?

The Exodus was effected then both through a bribe to the negative drive, the lure of a three-day round-trip ticket on the one hand, and on the other, an iron-fisted scorched earth policy of no return.

When we wish to leave our own personal "Egypt" – our personal prisons that the negative drive

constructs for us – which is the correct course to follow?

The answer is that we need both. For someone who smokes forty cigarettes a day, the idea of going cold turkey is horrendous. But tell him that if after two weeks he's not happy, he can go back to smoking like a chimney, you will see a different picture.

Seduction and bribery are our opening guns against the negative drive. Afterwards we have to follow up

by burning our bridges. It was the lure of a round-trip ticket that got the Jewish People as far as the edge of the water, but it was only Nachson ben Amiadv's jumping headlong into the sea, showing there was no turning back, that made the waters divide.

- Sources: based on Rabbi E. E. Dessler and *Lekach Tov*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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

After three days' travel, only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain mitzvahs. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. Hashem sends quail for meat and provides manna, miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday, a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations.

When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle, and Moshe prays for their welfare.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Beshalach: *Pesachim* 72-78

### Service with a Smile

*Rabban Gamliel asked Rabbi Tarfon, "Why were you not in the Beit Midrash last night?"*

On our *daf* we learn a *beraita* that records a clever verbal exchange between Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Tarfon. When Rabban Gamliel made the above query of Rabbi Tarfon, who was normally studying Torah at night in the Beit Midrash with Rabban Gamliel, the reply Rabbi Tarfon gave was a puzzling "riddle." Rabbi Tarfon, who was a *kohen*, explained "*avadi avodah*" – a term whose simple meaning is that he was preoccupied with his priestly sacrificial duties in the Beit Hamikdash.

Rabban Gamliel replied, "All of your words are nothing but amazing (i.e. absurd)!" He continued, rhetorically, "Where do you get such an idea that there exists sacrificial service nowadays (i.e. after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash)?"

(I recall a commentary which asks: "Why did Rabban Gamliel consider only the possibility of *avodah* as referring to the Beit Hamikdash service, but did not consider that Rabbi Tarfon perhaps meant *prayer* when he spoke of his *avodah*? Prayer is also called *avodah* – *avodah sh'balev*, service of the heart – as taught in Masechet Ta'anit 2a: "The verse states, 'To love Hashem and to serve Him with all of your heart' (Devarim 10:12). What service (*avodah*) is done with the heart? You must say: This is *tefillah* (prayer)." Rather, it must be that understanding the word *avodah* in this case as a reference to prayer was not considered for obvious reasons: Rabbi Tarfon would have prayed in the Beit Midrash, in addition to the fact that the evening prayer service elsewhere would not be sufficient reason for him not learning

Torah in the Beit Midrash after the prayer concluded.)

So, what, in fact, was the *avodah* that preoccupied Rabbi Tarfon the previous night? Rabbi Tarfon explained his specific *avodah* in the following manner: "The verse states (in Bamidbar 18:7) 'And you (Aharon) and your sons shall keep your *kehunah* in all matters concerning the Altar, and concerning what is within the *parochet*, and you shall serve; *avodat matana* (literally, 'service of a gift') I have given you *kehunah*, and any non-*kohen* who approaches will die.' We see here that the Torah makes an equation between the *eating of terumah* by a *kohen* with the *avodah* of a *kohen* who is offering sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash." Rabbi Tarfon's reply was that he *needed to go home* to eat *terumah* in a state of ritual purity and an environment safeguarded to be ritually pure – and he was therefore not able to go to the Beit Midrash that night. (As we learn in the first *mishna* in *Shas*, in many cases a person who became ritually impure needed to wait until nightfall before eating *terumah*.)

The Torah did *not* write *matnat avodah* – "the gift of *avodah*" – which would imply that the merit given to the *kohen* to do *avodah* in the Beit Hamikdash is a gift to *kehunah*. (This is actually the *pshat* that Rashi gives in explaining the verse i.e. that Hashem is saying to Aharon HaKohen and his descendents that the *avodah* service that will be performed by them is a gift to them.) Rabbi Tarfon, however, sees from the "reversed order" of the words – *avodat matana* – that the *matana* gifts that are given to a *kohen* are also

to be seen as, and called, *avodah*. This means that when a *kohen*, such as Rabbi Tarfon, would eat *terumah*, it is also a type of *avodah* of a *kohen*. (And, of course, this does not mean the work of preparing and eating the *terumah* food...)

In what sense is a *kohen* eating *terumah* considered an *avodah*? One explanation offered is that the Torah mandates that *terumah* and another twenty-three special gifts be given to the *kohanim* to enable them to fulfill their purpose as *kohanim*. The *kohanim* were not given a share in the Land of Israel at the time when the Land was divided among the tribes by Yehoshua bin Nun. This type of gift to them is not their 'share.' Rather, "Hashem is their share." The *kohanim* were designated to offer the *korbanot* for the public and individuals at the time when the Beit Hamikdash stood. And they were also to be teachers of Torah to the Jewish People. Everything they did was a type of *avodah* – including accepting and eating the twenty-four types of gifts from the nation. The people of the nation gave them these gifts to sustain them, and, in turn, these gifts returned to the people in the many forms of *avodah* of the *kohanim* serving the Jewish People and serving Hashem on behalf of the nation. The goal of this 'arrangement' is to help the Jewish People become closer to their Creator by

means of the various *korbanot* offered by the *kohanim*, mitzvah fulfillment which they were instructed by the *kohanim*, and, last but not least – through dedicated Torah study, which they learned from the mouths of the *kohanim*.

(I have seen the following idea, which is appropriate to our *gemara*, in the writings of Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein, on the topic of the exact meaning of various words in the Torah that mean 'gift.' Rabbi Klein writes, based on the works of Rabbi Tzvi Yaakov Mecklenburg (1785-1865): "It is inappropriate to use the term *matana* when discussing an offering to Hashem. A *matana* serves to fill a certain need on the part of the recipient. In the case of Hashem, He is complete and has no needs, so He certainly does not require any sort of gift. For this reason, sacrifices to Hashem are never described as a *matana* in the Torah." In this sense, the *avodah* in our verse is not (only) the offering of *korbanot*, but the *avodah* of fulfilling the needs of the *kohanim* by their accepting and consuming the twenty-four gifts for the purpose of enabling them to help fulfill the needs of the Jewish People.)

• *Pesachim 72b-73a*

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# Q & A

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## BESHALACH

### 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 parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

*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 - "*T'v'aimo ...*" ~ "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiety.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river...."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### Beshalach: Through the Looking Window

In the *Haftarah* of *Shabbat Shirah*, Deborah and Barak sing G-d's praises for delivering the Canaanite general Sisera into their hands.

Their poetic song lists all the heroes who led the Jews to victory. Towards the end of the song, it switches scenes to focus on Sisera's mother and her anxious anticipation of Sisera's triumphant return: "She gazed through the window (*chalon*) and she sobbed / Sisera's mother [peeked] through the window (*eshnav*)..." (Judges 5:28). In this short passage we encounter two Hebrew words that mean "window." What, if anything, is the difference between a *chalon* and an *eshnav*?

Let's start with the word *chalon* because it is more common (appearing 31 times in the Bible) and its etymology is much simpler.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) traces the etymology of the word *chalon* to the two-letter root CHET-LAMMED, which means "circular movement" and the "empty space" within a circle. Other words that Rabbi Pappenheim understands derive from this root include: *chalil* ("flute," a hollow musical instrument), *machol* (a type of "dance" performed by going around in a circle), *chalom* ("dream" because it is a reflection of one's thoughts going around and around in one's mind), *chillul* ("desecration," a reference to the empty void in lieu of holiness), *challal* (a "human corpse" emptied of its life-force), *choli/machalah* (a "sickness" that affects the body all around), and *cheil* (a "short wall" that surrounds a higher wall, effectively creating an empty space between the two walls).

In the same vein, Rabbi Pappenheim explains in *Yerios Shlomo* that *chalon* derives from this root because a "window" is essentially just an empty space or hole in a wall. Interestingly, in *Cheshek Shlomo* Rabbi Pappenheim adds that *chalon* specifically denotes a "round window," thus connecting the word to both core meanings of the

biliteral CHET-LAMMED. Even grammarians like Radak and Ibn Janach – who do not subscribe to the notion of biliteralism – list the word *chalon* as a derivative of the trilateral root CHET-LAMMED-LAMMED ("emptiness"), but the meaning is just the same.

We may now turn our attention to the word *eshnav*. This rather obscure word appears only twice in the entire Bible. Once in the above-cited passage concerning Sisera's mother, and once in Proverbs 7:6 when warning how the strange woman (a metaphor for strange wisdom) might entice a person through the window. In Modern Hebrew, *eshnav* refers to a "service window," like that which you would find in a post office or a bank. However, as we will soon see, that is nothing but a modern neologism.

Rashi (to Judges 5:28) defines *eshnav* as *chalon*, as do Ibn Janach and Radak. This suggests that both words mean "window" in the same sense. However, other commentators differentiate between the sort of window denoted by *chalon* and that denoted by *eshnav*. For example, Rabbi Yosef Kara (to Judges 5:28) and Meiri (to Proverbs 7:6) write that an *eshnav* is a "small window," while, presumably, *chalon* is a general term for any type of "window."

Rabbi Yishaya of Trani (1180-1250) explains *eshnav* as akin to a peephole, in that it is smaller on the end that opens to the outside and wider on the end that opens to the inside. (Rabbi Yishaya then offers a Latin/Italian translation of *eshnav*, which Rabbi Shaul Goldman reads as *balustraria*, "a narrow opening or slit from which arrows may be fired.")

The Malbim (to Proverbs 7:6) somewhat cryptically comments that through a *chalon* one sees revealed things, while through an *eshnav* one sees hidden things. But, what does this mean?

The *Zohar* (Toldot 140b) relates that some idolaters would use the powers of astrology to see things hidden to the naked eye. These visions were seen by gazing through an enchanted window, using some form of witchcraft. The *Zohar* explicitly says that Sisera's mother engaged in this sort of witcheries' divination when she looked out the window to find out if her son would return from battle. Another example of this is Avimelech using a window to divinate that Rebecca was Isaac's wife and not his sister (see also *Tzror HaMor* to Gen. 26:8, *Sefer Ikkarim* 4:43, *Abarbanel* to Judges 5:28, and *Alshich* there). Based on this, the Malbim (to Judges 5:28) writes that *eshnav* denotes an enchanted window created through witchcraft, by which Sisera's mother expected to be able to see her son's fate. By contrast, *chalon* denotes a regular "window."

The Malbim's explanation proves somewhat difficult because in the case of Avimelech, the Torah reports him gazing through a *chalon*, which suggests that the *Zohar's* explanation concerning enchanted windows should apply to the word *chalon*, not *eshnav*. In fact, Rabbi Shmuel Landiado of Aleppo (d. 1610) writes in *Kli Yakar* (to Judges 5:28) just the opposite of the Malbim: In the case of Sisera's mother, he explains that the term *chalon* refers to a mirror on the wall used for divination, while *eshnav* was a real "window" in her room that opened to the outside street. He explains that Sisera's mother would first consult with her "hexed window," and only then would she actually look out through her real window to see what was happening outside.

In his later work — *Yair Ohr* (on synonyms in the Hebrew language) — Malbim offers another fascinating way to differentiate between *chalon* and *eshnav*. In that work, Malbim writes that an *eshnav* is a window/mirror/lens that makes objects farther away appear to be closer. As the Malbim notes, fashioning such an item requires somewhat advanced knowledge of optics. Rabbi Chaim Futernik points out that the Malbim fails to give his source for this novel interpretation. Interestingly, the Malbim's explanation is also found almost word-for-word in two works by Rabbi Elazar Reines (d. 1903), *Shorashei Leshon HaKodesh* and *Mishlei Shlomo*.

Other commentators take an entirely different approach to the word *eshnav*. Menachem Ibn Saruk (920-970) writes that *eshnav* refers to the mesh/lattice openings on upper floors. Rabbi Moshe David Valle (1697-1777) similarly explains that *eshnav* refers to wooden latticework that pampered women would tie to their window to allow them to look outside without being seen. The Latin term for this sort of apparatus is *gelosia* (which is, believe it or not, related to the English word *jealous*). Rabbi Valle then posits that the very word *eshnav* ought to be read as an acronym/abbreviation for the term *ishah notenet b'chalonoteha* — "a woman places [this] at her windows."

The Italian scholar Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Tedeschi Ashkenazi (1821-1898) explains in his work *Hoil Moshe* that the root of *eshnav* is the trilateral SHIN-NUN-BET, which (through the interchangeability of NUN and LAMMED) is related to SHIN-LAMMED-BET ("step" or "layer"). The way he explains it, *eshnav* refers specifically to a window equipped with metal shutters.

The Israeli archaeologist Dr. Shmuel Yeivin (1896-1982) independently came up with this explanation as well. In a 1959 article published in *Leshonenu*, Yeivin further buttresses this explanation by noting that several archeological artifacts were found across the Levant that depict the motif of a woman looking outwards from the top half of a window. In those ivory images (which were said to depict the Canaanite fertility goddess Ashtoreth), the bottom half of the window was typically closed shut with various forms of mesh or lattice bars. According to him, the Biblical *eshnav* refers exclusively to a window that was partially blocked with such blinds. (Once we are already connecting *eshnav* to ivory depictions of women looking through a window, we could also consider parsing the word *eshnav* as comprised of ALEPH-SHIN for "man," i.e. woman, and NUN-BET for "tooth," i.e. ivory).

Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) suggests that the word *eshnav* is derived from the root NUN-SHIN-BET (by way of metathesis), which refers to the "blowing" of the wind. Needless to say, opening a window allows the wind to blow inside. Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein (1860-1941) writes the

same thing, adding that *eshnav* specifically denotes a window used for cooling. This etymology of *eshnav* is the one preferred by the eminent linguist Rabbi Dr. Ernest Klein (1899-1983). It is reminiscent of how the English word *window* is derived from the English word *wind*. Another

English word for “window” is *fenster* (more common in German and Yiddish), which is borrowed from the Latin word *fenestra* (“hole” or “breach”). The semantics of this etymology actually resembles our explanation of the Hebrew word *chalon*, allowing our discussion to come full circle.

*For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)*

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## COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

### A BLESSING ON YOUR HEAD (PART 2)

*“May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His Countenance upon you and be gracious to you. May Hashem turn His countenance to you and establish peace for you.” (Numbers 6:24-26)*

The second verse reads, “May Hashem illuminate His Countenance upon you and be gracious to you.” In general, our Sages teach us that light is a metaphor for the Torah. The Midrash on our verse follows that approach and teaches that G-d’s illumination is referring to the “light of the Torah.” It is clear that this verse refers to the spiritual blessings, which is why it follows the previous verse which focused on the physical. Our Sages teach us as a general rule that in our religious endeavors we must always strive to move upwards in spirituality, and not to lessen our enthusiasm. Accordingly, the verses are moving in an upward trajectory, and therefore the second verse represents a concept more spiritual than the first.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, in his indomitably eloquent style, explains that it is through the teachings of the Torah that G-d spreads His light throughout the world and runs His world. The more we expose ourselves to the brilliant and dazzling spiritual aura that is the Torah, the more we perceive that G-d controls the world. And our ability to understand that all of our material blessings derive only from Him is also greater.

And, just as in the previous verse, the Midrash spells out in distinct and lucid language: “G-d should illuminate His Countenance upon you – your eyes and

your heart should be enlightened through the Torah and He should grant you children who live according to the Torah.”

The verse ends with the request that the accumulation of Torah wisdom “be gracious to you.” The commentaries have a fascinating disagreement about to whom the “you” in the verse refers. Nachmanides understands that the verse is a plea that we find grace and favor in the Eyes of G-d. However, the simple understanding of the verse seems to suggest that it refers to the person who has accumulated Torah knowledge. The verse teaches us that it is not enough to be a brilliant and erudite scholar. Together with scholarship, one needs to find favor in the eyes of others in order to have the maximum impact on the community and for the community.

Toward the end of his life, the saintly Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933) attempted to have a series of laws being legislated in the Polish Senate abrogated. The underlying purpose of these laws was the Senate’s desire to undermine and finally destroy the educational and communal infrastructure of Polish Jewry. In fact, the Chofetz Chaim was so disturbed by the impact the legislation would have that he undertook a journey from his



hometown of Radin all the way to Warsaw (approximately 400 kilometers!), despite the fact that he was more than ninety years old and extremely frail. Thus, together with the Rebbes of the three largest Chassidic sects in Poland, the Chofetz Chaim traveled to Warsaw, where he was granted an audience with the Polish Prime Minister. The Chofetz Chaim began to speak in impassioned and heartfelt Yiddish about the dangers that the legislation presented for the Jewish community. As

the interpreter began to translate the Chofetz Chaim's words into Polish, the Prime Minister stopped him and told him that the passionate words of the venerable Rabbi require no translation. "The words of this holy man pierce the heart. No one can listen to him and remain unmoved." And, with that, the vicious and destructive legislation was dropped.

*To be continued...*

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## LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

### Beshalach

#### Education in the Wilderness

In this one Torah portion, the people have several formative experiences that will shape their understanding of their relationship with nature and with other nations.

The exodus from Egypt and the parting of the sea demonstrated to Israel for all time G-d's special closeness at extraordinary moments. But only by their journey through the wilderness were they to learn that one can place his trust in G-d under *all* circumstances – such as for the provision of everyday necessities like food and drink.

Through the manna, they learn that survival requires trust in the Almighty along with a degree of disengagement from the anxiety of worrying about sustenance. The ruthless pursuit of security is not only futile, but can easily overtake life and leave no room for other aims and goals.

The manna also laid the foundation for the Sabbath, as it did not fall on the Sabbath, and people saw double provision on Friday. More than any other mitzvah, the Sabbath requires the unshakable conviction that G-d watches over the individual and over all the requirements of his

daily livelihood. The entire experience of sustenance through manna taught that man's own efforts will not yield mastery of nature and security in sustenance. Instead, only by following G-d's Will and seeking a livelihood in accordance therewith – by not greedily hoarding, and by observing the Sabbath – will one realize that security in sustenance.

Their thirsting for water and questioning whether G-d is in their midst was met with water gushing from a rock – testimony that G-d is not bound by nature, but freely controls it.

Finally, after these experiences had taught the people about their relationship with nature and that independence from the forces of nature is possible only through subjugation to and trust in G-d, the experience of Amalek's attack would teach them about their standing vis-à-vis other nations.

Amalek was the first to attack this fledgling nation – families, women, children, described as "weak and weary," without any obvious threat or provocation. However weak they may have appeared, the power of G-d hovered over them so

that all the other nations trembled – *Philistia feared, Edom was stunned, Mo'av trembled, Canaan was dumfounded*. (Shemot 15:14-15). Only Amalek *had no fear of G-d*. (Devarim 25:18) They chose the sword as their lot, seeking renown in the laurels of blood.

There is only one indomitable threat to the glory-seeking sword – as long as one nation's heart keeps beating and pays no homage to it, it will not rest. Amalek does not hate nations that are its equal in power and armament, but rather regards their military preparedness as a sign of respect for its sword. Amalek fights them but honors them, since they acknowledge its power and shares its principles.

Amalek reserves its scorn for those who dare view the sword as dispensable – and instead place their trust in spiritual and moral power. This is the one enemy of Amalek, and the war between the sword and spirit will rage for generations. Israel, here, is taught that winning this war is only through the staff of Moshe, not through the sword of soldiers. The hands of Moshe are termed *emunah* (17:12), for it is the devoted trust of the people, awakened by the uplifted hand, that prevails over Amalek.

This war only weakened Amalek – the struggle would continue until the final defeat at the end of days, when that trust in G-d reaches full bloom.

- Sources: Commentary, Shemot 15:25; 16:8, 28; 17:9-12

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### Book Review

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

#### ***Food: A Halachic Analysis***

By Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Mosaica Press (2020) 483 pages

I was tempted to begin my review of Rabbi Spitz's newest addition to Ohr Somayach's Jewish Learning Library by saying that one cannot read it and remain *parve*. But that sounded too corny (which is *parve*) so I rejected it in favor of the following:

When I was asked by Ohrnet's editor, Rabbi Moshe Newman, to review Rabbi Spitz's book, *Food: a Halachic Analysis*, I was hesitant. I told him that I would consider it. It is a big book – with over 480 pages. And I thought to myself, it's probably very densely written with esoteric discussions on the various problems involved in the certification of food products and most likely filled with extensive footnotes, referencing *halachic* discussions. In short, I thought it was going to be quite boring.

Boy, was I wrong! This book reads more like a fast-paced, page-turning detective novel than a dry *Halacha sefer*. But that is its uniqueness and brilliance. The author has managed to write a *sefer* that is both comprehensive in its treatment of every topic discussed *and* excellently written. Even the footnotes, which account for most of the text, are intriguing and well written.

In his Foreword to the *sefer*, attesting to Rabbi Spitz's scholarship Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz, well known for his own encyclopedic knowledge, noted several remarkable features of this book.

“Accuracy: many *halachic* works, both in English and in Hebrew, will quote or paraphrase sources based on how those sources are cited in earlier works without bothering to verify the original source. More than once, this has led to the widespread perpetuation of error, as a mistake or omission by one author gets automatically followed by later authors, as each one uses the predecessor text as the source. Rabbi Spitz has gone to great effort to trace every quoted *psak* and *sevara* to its original source and does not rely on secondary quotations or paraphrases. And if there is ambiguity in the reports he will note it.

“A completeness: When Rabbi Spitz addresses a topic, he will give you all the views on the topic. He does not limit himself to a selection of the views he finds most persuasive. He includes many oral *psakim* that cannot always be found in writing and carefully documents the source of them as well....”

The subjects discussed are also very topical and interesting. They include, among others, the following chapters headings: Hard Cheese Complexities; The Great Dishwasher Debate; Genetically Engineered Meat; Buffalo Burgers and Zebu Controversy; The *Erev Pesach* Meat Scandal; The *Halachic* Adventures of the Potato; The Quinoa-Kitniyos Conundrum: The Coca-Cola Kashrus Controversy; *Chodosh* in *Chutz La'aretz*; Margarine, Misconceptions, and *Maris Ayin*; *Chalav Yisrael: A Halachic History*; *Kashering Teeth*; and my favorite, Leeuwenhoek's *Halachic Legacy: Microscopes and Magnifying Glasses*.

He masterfully shows connections between stories in the *Chumash* and contemporary *halachic* issues. In discussing the need for a *hekker* (a physical object which functions as a reminder not to mix milk and meat) when two or more individuals are eating their separate dairy and meat meals at the same table, he brings *halachic* sources that cite the story in *Parshat Vayera* of *Avraham Avinu* feeding the three angels, disguised as Arabs, tongue and butter. The Torah tells us: “And he stood over them, under the tree, and they ate.” Why was it necessary to mention the fact that *Avraham* stood over them while they ate? Because, say these authorities, the three might have been eating milk and meat meals at the same time and *Avraham* needed to supervise them to ensure that one wouldn't take food from the other's plate. And a *shomer* (a supervisor) can also function as a *hekker*.

I was particularly impressed by Rabbi Spitz's mastery of the science behind many of the *Halachic* issues discussed. In his chapter on genetically engineered meat, he seems to have a firm grasp on the biology and chemistry involved in its making. This is especially important in today's world of food production, which is increasingly high-tech and difficult for even the average rabbi, not involved in this specialty, to understand.

Rabbi Spitz seems to be indefatigable in his research. Even after exhausting all the written literature on a topic, he recounts extensive discussions of these issues with the top *poskim* of our day.

I have seen many excellent *halacha sefarim* in English which are informative, some which are even scholarly, but none which are informative and scholarly and humorous. As an example, in his chapter titled “Microscopes and Magnifying glasses,” he concludes as follows:

“Still, the bottom line is that using a magnifier or microscope to see something that *cannot* be seen at all by the naked eye would have no *halachic* bearing whatsoever, ‘*bein lehakel bein lehachmir*’. So, although Leeuwenhoek's (the inventor of the microscope) impact on the world in various important areas is immeasurable, nevertheless, his *halachic* legacy remains – quite ironically - microscopic.”

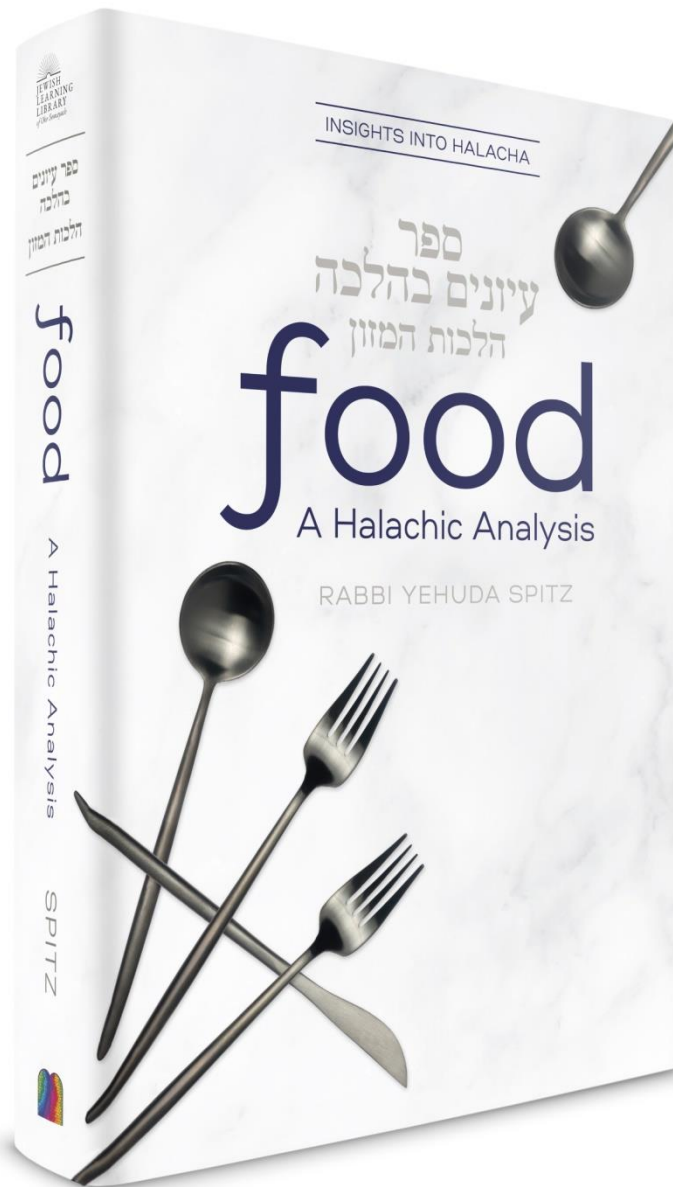
I highly recommend this book to every Jew who likes to eat, wants a deeper understanding of kashruth and who has a sense of humor.

*Rabbi Yehuda Spitz is a lecturer and the shoel u'meshiv for the Ohr LaGolah smicha program.*

# Just Published!

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## Food: A Halachic Analysis



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