

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT MIKETZ • 30 KISLEV 5782 DECEMBER 4, 2021 • VOL 29 NO. 8

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

A Cow-Eat-Cow World?

“And the emaciated and inferior cows ate up the first seven healthy cows.” (41:20)

Is altruism possible? It’s often said that true altruism is impossible, because all acts of generosity and kindness leave the doer with a feeling of self-satisfaction. And we are not just talking about people who are virtue-signaling or trying to prove that they are holier-than-thou. This view says it is impossible not to feel good about doing good, and true altruism cannot exist because we always get a kick-back.

The Talmud (Pesachim 68b) relates that Rav Sheishet reviewed all his learning every thirty days. He would then say to himself, “Rejoice my soul! For you I learned (the Written) Torah! For you I learned (the Oral) Torah!” This is seemingly difficult to understand, as the *gemara* goes on to question: Rabbi Elazar said, “Were it not for Torah, the Heavens and the Earth would not exist.” Torah is not merely a matter of self-satisfaction. It is the *raison d’être* for the universe. How, then, can Rabbe Elazar learn Torah just for himself?

The *gemara* gives an answer, “The root of action is self-interest.”

This answer begs the question, “Should not Rav Sheishet’s motivation have been to perpetuate the world, the creation? Is it possible that he was motivated by selfishness?”

Let’s answer this with another question.

The *Shema* says that we must love G-d, “...with all your heart...” The Hebrew spelling here is *levavecha*. The Talmud asks why the word for heart – ‘*lev*’ – has two letter “bet’s,” when seemingly only one is needed? (Berachot 54a) And it answers that each person has two inclinations, an altruistic one and a selfish one. The verse says, “Serve G-d with all of your heart” (with two letter *bet*’s), teaching that we must serve G-d with both of our inclinations, even with the evil inclination.

“How does one serve G-d with our negative/evil/selfish inclination?”

In rabbinic literature, Esav is associated with the *yetzer hara* – the negative drive – and Yaakov with the *yetzer hatov* – the positive drive.

Esav is the first-born.

True, the beginning of all motivation is selfishness, but the job of the positive drive is to reeducate the negative, selfish drive with a redefinition of self – a redefinition of “I.”

The Talmud in Succah uses a measurement called a ‘*tefach sameach*.’ A *tefach* is a handbreadth. A ‘*tefach sameach*’ is a slightly larger *tefach*, but literally means ‘a happy *tefach*.’ Why didn’t our Sages name this slightly-larger *tefach* “a large *tefach*” or “a *maxi-tefach*”? Why call it a ‘*happy tefach*.’ How can a measurement be happy?

Happiness is the perception that I have expanded, become enhanced. When we marry, our perception of “me” is not just me, but myself and my spouse. When we have children, our “I” encompasses our family, and then our grandchildren, and then, G-d willing, our great-grandchildren.

Avraham Avinu saw himself as the entire creation. He expanded his concept of “I” to the maximum degree possible.

The job of the positive inclination is not to vanquish the negative drive but to reeducate it, to teach it who “I” really is. But if the negative drive refuses to readjust its worldview, it becomes a scrawny cow that devours the most beneficent and opulent altruism.

Q & A

Questions

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "redu" – "descend" (and not "lechu" – "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved"?
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

Answers

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "redu" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.
11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said, "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said, "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Wake-up Time

When Pharaoh dreamed in his royal slumber of seven skinny cows consuming seven fat cows, the Bible relates that at the conclusion of this portentous dream, Pharaoh “woke up” – *vayikatz* (Gen. 41:4). Then Pharaoh fell asleep once again and dreamed another dream of seven wind-blasted bundles swallowing up seven good and healthy bundles, and then the Pharaoh “woke up” – *vayikatz* (Gen. 41:7). This word for “waking up” is the same word used to describe Jacob “waking up” after his fateful dream with the ladder (Gen. 28:16). However, there is another word in Biblical Hebrew for waking up: *oorah*. For example, “Wake up (*oorah*)! Why do You sleep? G-d, wake up do not reject us forever...” (Psalms 44:24). This essay traces these two terms for “waking up” to their etymological roots and tries to show the difference between the ostensible synonyms.

The Targumim always translate cognates of the Hebrew *yekitzah* into Aramaic as cognates of *oorah*. The word *vayikatz* itself is translated as *ve'itar*, with the letter TAV in Aramaic filling in for the Hebrew YOD to denote the reflexive form. The Talmudic term for a person who is half-asleep is *nim v'lo nim, tir v'lo tir* – “asleep and not asleep, awake and not awake” (*Pesachim* 120b, *Ta'anit* 12b). Rashi (to *Ta'anit* 12b) understands the word *tir* to be derived from the Targumic *ve'itar* (as though the letter TAV was somehow part of the root) and refers to a sleeping person on the cusp of waking up (see also Rashi to *Bava Kama* 117b). The Tosafists, on the other hand, explain that *tir* refers to the state of wakefulness of a person who is about to fall asleep (*Tosafot* to *Ta'anit* 12b; see also *Tosafot* to *Niddah* 63a).

The trilateralists like Ibn Chayyuj, Ibn Janach, and Radak all trace the term *yekitzah* to the trilateral

root YOD-KUF-TZADI, which means “waking up.” However, Menachem Ibn Saruk in *Machberet Menachem* traces *yekitzah* to the biliteral root KUF-TZADI, which also has several other meanings, including: “border,” “summer,” “pressure,” “disgusting,” “cutting” and “thorn.” Menachem himself does not intimate how these different meanings connect to the concept of “waking up,” but we can glean some connections by looking at some of the other commentators.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 9:24) connects the term *yekitzah* to *kutz* (“harvest,” “cut off”) and *kayitz* (“summer”). When summertime arrives and fruits have reached a certain stage of ripeness, they tend to disengage from their source of nourishment (as if they are already “cut off”) and are ready to be “harvested.” Rabbi Hirsch explains that the same is true of a person who has slept his due. Once he has slept enough and his body has been satisfied with the quantity of sleep, he will automatically wake up.

Similarly, Rabbi Hirsch (to Gen. 41:4) compares *yekitzah* to *kotz/katz* (“disgusted”), explaining that when one eats too much food he becomes “disgusted” and “sickened” by the prospect of eating more. Essentially, his body has decided that he ate enough and rejects the notion of eating more. In the same way, explains Rabbi Hirsch, when one has slept enough and has reached a point where his body no longer deems extra sleep to be necessary, he will automatically “wake up,” as if his body is “disgusted” by extra sleep.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Brelsau (1740-1814) explains that the core meaning of the root KUF-TZADI is “end/edge.” This applies both in a spatial context, as *k'tzei* means the “edge” of a given area (Gen. 23:9, Num. 22:6, and II Kings 7:8), and in a temporal context, as the word *ketz* refers to the “end” of a given span of time (Gen. 6:13, Ps.

119:96 Dan. 11:35, 12:13). In fact, the word *miketv* is derived from this last example, with the initial MEM as an added letter. Rabbi Pappenheim also notes that *kayitz* (“summer”) is the end of the year, as it is the last season before Rosh Hashanah.

Rabbi Pappenheim further explains that the term *ketzitzah* (“cutting off”) specifically refers to cutting/chopping off the edge or end of something (see Ex. 39:3, Deut. 25:12). He notes that this action is typically performed with one swift motion, as opposed to the prolonged act of sawing or slicing. In this sense, the word *yekitzah* as “waking up” refers to a sudden and complete “waking up” – in which one moment a person is asleep and the next moment he is awake. As Rabbi Pappenheim explains it, *yekitzah* denotes a type of “waking up” in which there is no intermediate state of half-awake, half-asleep. By contrast, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the term *oorah* refers to a more gradual form of waking up, whereby a person might slowly transition from being “asleep” to being “awake” by finding himself in an intermediate stage of snoozing. This concept is alluded to in the verse, “I am asleep (*yesheinah*), but my heart is awake (*er*)” (Song of Songs 5:2), which shows that one can engage in *oorah* at the same time that one is technically still sleeping.

Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) offers a relatively straightforward explanation of the term *yekitzah* by relating it to *ketz* (“end”), and explaining “waking up” as the “end” of one’s sleep.

Alternatively, we may explain that *yekitzah* refers to the “end” of a dream or other false impression of reality. Most times that cognates of *yekitzah* appear in the Bible, they are related to waking up from a slumber that involved dreaming (Gen. 28:16, 41:4, 41:7, I Kings. 3:15, Ps. 73:20, Isa. 29:8), or to a drunk person “waking up” from his intoxicated stupor (Gen. 9:24, Prov. 23:35, Ps. 78:65, Yoel 1:5).

In explaining why certain types of angels are called *irin*, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that this name derives from the word *er* (“awake”), because these angels are always “awake” and cognizant of man’s deeds.

Shoresh Yesha explains how derivatives of the root AYIN-VAV-REISH are all related to “revealing”

and “exposing.” The Hebrew word *ohr* (“skin”) refers to the part of one’s body that is visible and exposed, as opposed to the flesh and bones which are covered by the epidermis. The term *ervah* (“nakedness”) also refers to “exposing” that which ought to be covered. In a similar sense, when a person sleeps, his eyes are closed and he sees nothing – as if nothing has been “revealed” to him. This is why when a person wakes up, it is called *oorah* – now, an entire world has been “revealed” to him. A “blind” person is called an *iver* because it is as though he sleeps an eternal slumber, because he sees nothing. *Shoresh Yesha* alternatively suggests that he is called an *iver* because it is as though he has a layer of “skin” always covering his eyes.

Similarly, Rabbi Pappenheim traces all of these words to the biliteral root AYIN-REISH, which he too relates to the concept of “revealing.” But when it comes to the word *oorah*, Rabbi Pappenheim explains the connection to this core root a bit differently: when one sleeps, his or her abilities are not readily apparent; rather the sleeping person appears inanimate and even immobile. But when a person awakens, those abilities are suddenly “revealed,” so the very term for “waking up” is related to the word for “revealing.” Building on this, Rabbi Pappenheim further explains that *noer* (“roar”) is an outburst of sound that a lion suddenly lets out and “reveals” as within his repertoire.

In the *Nishmat* prayer recited every Shabbat and holiday mornings, we describe G-d as *HaMe’orer Yesheinim v’HaMekitz Nirdamim* – “He Who awakens the sleeping and He Who wakes up those who fell asleep.” This expression uses the two different verbs for “waking up,” but also uses two different terms for “sleeping.” Rabbi Yechezkel Pannet of Karlsburg (1783-1845), Chief Rabbi of Transylvania, seems to suggest that the term *orrer* is most appropriate when somebody sleeps a deep sleep (*yesheinim*), along with dreams and the whole nine yards, and now awakens from that sleep (*me’orer*). On the other hand, the term *yekitzah* is most appropriate when waking up a person who merely happened to “fall asleep” (*nirdam*, in the reflexive tense), i.e., he was dozing off but never fell into a deep slumber.

Alternatively, the Malbim explains that these two terms describe the gradual process of "waking up." First one comes to one's sense, which is denoted by the term *oorah*. Only afterwards does one actually get up from one's bed and remains fully awake, a stage denoted by the term *yekitzah*

The prophet Habakkuk cursed those who put their trust in idols, saying: "Woe unto he who says to wood 'Wake up,' [or says] 'Awaken' to an inanimate stone" (Hab. 2:19). The Malbim points out that the prophet used a different term for "waking up" when discussing wooden idols (*hakitzah*) than when he spoke about stone idols

(*oori*), because of the difference in sentience of those items. Meaning, Kabbalistic and philosophical traditions speak of four levels of existence: "inanimate" (*domem*), like rocks and stones; "growable" (*tzomeach*), like plants and other flora; "living" (*chai*), like animals and other fauna; and "speaking" (*midaber*), i.e. human beings. On this scale, wooden items are considered more "sentient" than stone items. Accordingly, the Malbim explains that Habakkuk used the word *oorah* when discussing stone idols because it denotes the most basic form of "waking up," while he used *yekitzah* for wooden idols because it represents a more responsive state of being awake.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim.

Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey they discover the money, and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin, he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin to be his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

*Ohr Somayach wishes all of our friends,
alumni and readers of Ohrnet Torah
Magazine a festive and luminous
Chanukah that will light up our lives with
good health, much happiness and success.*

Chanukah Somayach!

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SHEMA (PART 10)

“The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched
- they must be felt with the heart.”
(Helen Keller)

The third blessing continues: “True, the G-d of the universe is our King, the Rock of Yaakov is the Shield of our salvation. From generation to generation He endures and His Name endures and His throne is well established; His sovereignty and faithfulness endure forever. His words are living and enduring, faithful and delightful forever and to all eternity. For our forefathers and for us, for our children and for our generations, and for all the generations of Your servant Israel’s offspring.”

Our blessing is pointing out one of the most fundamental tenets of all: G-d is the King of the entire universe, and not just the G-d of the Jews. He created the world and He continuously sustains the world with all who inhabit it. But, we, the Jewish People, have a unique relationship with Him. Why is this relationship being delineated now in the blessing after the *Shema*? Because the *Shema* is our declaration that G-d is our King, and that we joyfully accept His dominion over us. It is now that we are able to state with absolute conviction: In addition to His being the G-d of the universe, He is also *our* King, with whom we have both a national and a personal relationship. And that is why we describe G-d as being our Shield. One of the tasks of a King is to safeguard his nation and to ensure that his kingdom will endure. A shield has a dimension to it that other weapons of war do not have. A shield is passive. All a person needs to do in order to seek protection is to stand behind it, and it will defend them. Other weapons need active input to make them work. Swords must be wielded and spears must be thrown – but a shield just needs something to get behind, and it will do its job. By describing G-d as being our

Shield, we are reiterating the fact that by committing ourselves to living our lives according to G-d’s Will, we will merit all-encompassing Divine protection.

Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv Broida (1824-1898) was one of the foremost disciples of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter and the founder and head of the legendary Yeshiva in Kelm, Lithuania. He points out that, at first reading, the description of G-d and His Name enduring throughout all the generations seems to be somewhat cumbersome. Why is so much emphasis placed on the concept of eternity? He answers that all *finite* pleasures are, by definition, transient. Regardless of how much gratification we may get from them, at some point it dissipates and we move on to the next indulgence. In our blessing, the words of the Torah are described as “living and enduring, faithful and delightful forever and to all eternity” because only everlasting pleasure is *truly* genuine, and the only place such pleasure can be found is in the Torah.

The Torah is the font of all truth and all knowledge. In Biblical times we had the prophets to guide us and to teach us G-d’s lessons and messages. Unfortunately, since the destruction of the First Temple and its immediate aftermath, we no longer have access to their clarity and the unequivocal instruction they conveyed. Bereft of the prophets, what has remained with us is the Torah. And contained within the Torah is the absolute truth, with all its ethical lessons and principles. Ethical lessons and principles which are unchanging and eternal.

William Safire, the renowned author and journalist, once commented on why politicians no longer talk about “principles”. He remarked that, in our age, politicians talk about “values” and they do not mention principles because, “Principles are eternal truths. Values change; principles are sacrosanct. Politicians deal in values because they are expedient – they stand on a moving platform of self-interest, not a bedrock of foundation of eternal truth”.

Our Sages instruct us (Tractate Yoma 19b) to speak words of Torah and not to busy ourselves with speaking about “other” matters – subjects that are not Torah-related. Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman (1874-1941), one of the closest disciples of the saintly Chofetz Chaim and one of the most prominent leaders of the Ashkenazic Torah world before and during the Holocaust, asks what is

wrong with speaking of non-Torah matters. He would question rhetorically, “Surely there is important information out there that is of tremendous importance and benefit to mankind. Why, then, do our Sages describe them as ‘other’ matters?”

Rabbi Wasserman then answered his own question by explaining that, just as the contemporary scientific community has entirely dismissed much of Aristotle’s scientific conclusions, so too will much of current science (in the early twentieth century) also be dismissed in generations to come. That is why our Sages label them as “other” matters, because they pale into insignificance when held in contrast to the eternal and ageless truth that is the Torah. And that is why the blessing describes the words of Torah as being alive. Because the Holy Torah is applicable to each and every single generation.

To be continued...

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. info@ohr.edu

Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Nota Schiller – Rosh HaYeshiva, Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Avi Kaufman, Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Yaakov Meyers, Mrs. Rosalie Moriah, Rabbi Moshe Newman, Rabbi Shlomo Simon, Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, Mrs. Helena Stern.

©1992-2021 Ohr Somayach Institutions – All rights reserved – This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Editor’s disclaimer – Ohrnet Magazine is not intended to be a source for halachic rulings. In any real and specific case one should consult a qualified halachic authority for ruling.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Ta'anit 9-15

How Many Blessings?

“We are taught in a beraita: The only difference on a fast day between the prayer of an individual and the prayer of the shaliach tzibur (the leader, aka chazan) is that the Amidah (main, standing, ‘silent’ prayer) of an individual has eighteen blessings, whereas the Amidah of the shaliach tzibur has nineteen blessings.”

This beraita is taught in the context of certain special fast days when there was a drought and the halachic protocol was that the people fast and add supplications to Hashem to grant them rain so they would have what to eat (from the rain-needy crops) and have water to drink.

Specifically, the additional blessing alluded to on our *daf* is called “Aneinu,” which literally means “[Hashem,] answer us.” One important aspect of this day is fasting, which helps remove thoughts of physicality and is therefore conducive to *teshuva* (returning to the way of Hashem). In addition, we also say a special prayer to Hashem, asking Him to please, in His great mercy, grant us the essential needed rain that has not yet arrived despite our being relatively deep into the precious normally “rainy season.”

Rashi explains our *beraita* in the following manner: An individual says eighteen blessings in his *Amidah* prayer even on a fast day, as he includes his *Aneinu* blessing/prayer for rain as part of the already existing “*Shomeah Tefillah*” blessing, where we turn to Hashem, asking Him to hear our prayers and answer them favorably. The nineteen blessings that the *beraita* says are part of the *shaliach tzibur*’s prayer on this day comprise the standard eighteen blessings of the *Amidah* plus a *separate* and *additional* blessing that is said between the standard blessings of “*Go’el Yisrael*” and “*Refa’einu*.”

In Rashi’s commentary, addressing the topic of the number of blessings in the *Amidah* for an individual and a *shaliach tzibur* on a fast day, he raises a fascinating question regarding the nomenclature and the “mathematics” of the *Amidah*. Unless specified otherwise, the *Amidah* is called the “*Shmoneh Esrei*,” which means “The Eighteen,” an apparent reference to the *eighteen* blessings that comprise it. However, asks Rashi, we clearly see that there are actually *nineteen* blessings in the *Amidah*! (Just open any *Siddur*!)

Rashi answers that the *Amidah*’s original composition by the *Anshei HaKnesset Hagedolah* (the Torah leaders during the Babylonian Exile) consisted of *eighteen* blessings. This explains its being referred to as the *Shmoneh Esrei*. And this is the *Amidah* that existed at the time of the *beraita*. Some years later, however, an additional, *nineteenth* blessing was added to the *Amidah* by the Beit Din of Shmuel HaKatan, as is taught in the *Masechta Berachot*. The additional blessing is a prayer to Hashem for help against the heretics and slanderers, who pose a serious danger to Jewish lives by falsely portraying the Jewish People as anti-government traitors and rebels.

So, according to Rashi, the original *Amida/Shmoneh Esrei* consisted of eighteen blessings, as its name implies, and an additional nineteenth blessing was added later by our Sages to be a permanent part of the *Amida*. The name “*Shmoneh Esrei*,” however, remained even after the addition and is the prayer’s name today as well, despite its having nineteen blessings.

Yet, there is another manner to explain the nature of the *Amida* blessings and the *Shmoneh Esrei* name of the prayer, a manner that is quite different than Rashi’s explanation. This alternate approach involves

a reexamination of two blessings in particular, which also leads to a practical difference in halacha. What is this second way of viewing the blessings of the *Amida*?

In examining the individual blessings of the *Amida*, we nowadays find that there are two separate blessings for the two themes of “the rebuilding of Jerusalem” and the “restoration of the Davidic royal dynasty.” Therefore, we find eighteen blessings even without the blessing addressing the heretic issue. According to the alternate understanding of the *Amida*’s makeup, these two blessings actually appear as only one combined blessing! This combination is not a “stretch,” due to the overlapping nature of these two themes. Accordingly, the eighteen blessings of the *Amida*, which include the “blessing against heretics,” *exactly* reflects the total number of blessings in the *Amida/Shmoneh Esrei* – eighteen.

This alternate text of the *Amida*, while differing from Rashi’s presentation of the *Amida*, has a solid basis in Torah sources. However, it is not the text that is used for prayer anywhere worldwide, as far as I am aware.

(In particular, I suggest learning the commentary of Rabbeinu Yishaya of Trani, one of the *ba’alei Tosefot*, who is often referred to “Tosefot Ha’Rid.” An Italian Torah scholar who lived in this world from 1180 to 1250, he offers a rigorous treatment of this alternate manner of understanding the *Amida/Shmoneh Esrei*, citing sources such as the *Tosefta* and the *Talmud Yerushalmi*).

It is of note that halachic authorities write a fascinating practical halachic situation that can be a result of this text that combines the two close-related themes of the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the renewal of King David’s kingdom. Although according to the second approach it is ideal to combine these two themes into one blessing, it is possible that even if a person mistakenly (according to this approach, which is *not* the accepted approach in halacha, it must be stressed) divides these themes into *two separate blessings* (as we always do in our prayers), he has still fulfilled his obligation to pray the *Amida*. According to the first approach (i.e. our text), however, if a person mistakenly combines these two themes into one blessing, he has not fulfilled the obligation to pray.

▪ *Ta’anit 13b*

PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF THE SEAS

The ocean says: “More than the sounds of the great, mighty waters and the breaking ocean waves, mighty on high is Hashem”. (Tehillim 93:4)

The mighty oceans sing of Hashem’s unconquerable might. He holds back the water from flooding the land, and so too, the enemies of Israel from overrunning us. Moreover, the waves may be strong, but their strength is only from the wind and the pull of moon – which in turn are controlled by Hashem from on high. So too, the nations are powerless marionettes who discipline us at times, according to Hashem’s omnipotent will.

The fact that we are standing on dry land, and that we survive and even thrive in the midst of seventy wolf-like nations, is a constant testimony of Hashem’s desire for us to live here on earth. We, too, should hold steadfast to our traditions and ideals, and live in a way that justifies His colossal efforts.

▪ *Source: Based on Rashi*

**In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*

LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Restoring Brotherly Love

The drama in this week's Torah portion is spellbinding. Upon recognizing his brothers, Yosef designs an elaborate plan to test their allegiance, and seemingly bring about the realization of the dreams of his youth. But, how are we to understand Yosef's behavior? He has been viceroy in Egypt for nine years – did it not occur to him to send a message to his grieving father that he was alive and well? Or at least now, reveal himself to his brothers immediately, if only for his father's sake? Surely, a man of Yosef's intelligence could not have believed that he was obliged to put himself at the service of his dreams; if the dreams had fateful significance, their realization could have been left to the One Who sent them. And a man of Yosef's character surely could not have intended senseless harassment in retaliation for his brothers' wrongs.

If Yosef wished only superficial restoration of the family relationship, this could have been achieved immediately, even years earlier. But Yosef wished to restore a warm and healthy family relationship. For this, two things would be required: he would have to change his opinion of his brothers, and they would have to change their opinion of him.

After experiencing the shocking callousness which met his entreaties from the pit, the only way for Yosef to overcome his natural feelings of resentment to his brothers was to be convinced that they had changed. Only if he could prove that their hearts had been warmed and their souls had been moved could he erase those feelings. And so, he devised the test: when faced with the real prospect of life imprisonment and their families' starvation, would

they still choose not to deprive their father of another son? When their actions proved their allegiance and change of heart, Yosef could banish from his heart the bitterness that remained.

But what about their feelings towards him - the feelings that led to his alienation in the first place? Yosef *remembered his dreams* (Ber. 32:9). He remembered how they had caused his brothers to suspect him of lust for power, how they had felt so threatened by him that they were driven to sell him. These feelings would be magnified tenfold now, if, as viceroy, with good reason to take his revenge, he revealed his identity to them. The rift of their youth would have become an unbridgeable gulf.

First, Yosef makes known to them the extent of his governing power in Egypt. It must be made abundantly clear to them that this man can do with them as he wishes. Then, through the course of events, Yosef reveals his true character. When he deals kindly with them and repays evil with good, he hopes they will change their view of him. With all of the pieces in place, the stage is set for his revelation in next week's Torah portion. At that moment, when the blindfold would drop, it would be possible for both Yosef and his brothers to restore the warm, brotherly relationship that would be essential to the survival and flourishing of this emerging nation of Bnei Yisrael, *the sons of Israel*.

- Sources: Commentary, Ber. 42:9