

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON BO - 5760

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Weekly Divrei Torah - Parshat Bo

Parshat Bo Guest Rabbi: RABBI FABIAN SCHONFELD Young
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In the parsha of Bo we come across the first mitzva given to our people as, indeed, Rashi points out in his very first commentary on the Book of Breishit. The mitzva concerns the celebration of Rosh Chodesh which determines the days and dates in our calendar as they relate to our various holidays. The text is "this month is given unto you". Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch draws our attention to the statement of our Sages: "It (time) is handed into your care and its fate is determined by you: you are not handed to it and your fate is not determined by it." In his essay on Chanuka, Rav Hirsch makes a similar comment in reacting to the question that is asked so often by so many: Is Judaism in accordance with the times? Rav Hirsch reacts by saying that we have to turn the question around and ask "Are the times in accordance with Judaism?"

What Rav Hirsch is telling us is that it is not Judaism or the Torah which are outdated, obsolete and backward but it is the time or times in which we live which have not yet obtained the level of morality and ethical conduct outlined by the Torah. We could paraphrase this idea by saying the times are behind the times.

In this connection it would not be too far fetched to state that, for example, the NEW YORK TIMES or LOS ANGELES TIMES are a perfect illustration of the ideas expressed thus far. When the newspapers claim that they present "all the news that is fit to print" they have lost their sense of moral direction because much of what the press reports is truly not "fit to print". The world has a long way to go before it reaches the spiritual heights of the Torah and its teachings and before it attains even a semblance of ethical conduct which emanates from every pasuk in the Chumash.

The ultimate question is "who is in control"? Is it the Torah and its values or is it humanity pressured by the demands of modern age. Thus the caveat and the warnings of our Sages with which we began this message has great meaning for us all. Is it the Chodesh - time which directs us or is it we the Jewish people which controls and directs it?

In our day and age this message is all the more powerful and vital.

Modernity confronts us and as much as we cannot ignore it we have to tame and guide it so that one day the world will understand the truth of the philosophy presented to us by the great giant of Torah Im Derech Eretz who gave us the tools with which to confront the challenge of the so called modern age: Samson Raphael Hirsch, Z"TL.

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Rabbi Appel's Parsha List

Aish HaTorah: APPEL'S PARSHA PAGE
PARSHAT BO

BY RABBI YEHUDA APPEL Aish HaTorah Cleveland

In the aftermath of World War 2, Germany offered to pay reparations to victims of the Nazi regime. This offer was met by an incredibly heated debate in Israel. In fact, the controversy was so great

B'S'Dhat there was actually speculation in the Israeli media that acceptance of the reparations would cause a civil war.

When Prime Minister Ben Gurion ultimately agreed to accept the reparations, riots took place and there was a march on the Knesset which resulted in the Knesset building being stoned. Though peace and order was eventually restored, it is clear that for many Israelis at the time it was despicable to think that any "blood money" should be accepted.

A similar phenomenon is found in this week's Torah portion, Bo. The Jewish people are being led out of Egypt to freedom, but before their departure, G-d tells Moses to encourage each Jew to take from his Egyptian neighbor vessels of silver and vessels of gold. (see Exodus 11:2)

There are two puzzling issues raised by this verse. First, since the Jews would be traveling into the desert, why did they need gold and silver? Second, why did the Jews have to be "encouraged" to take these vessels?

In answer to the first question, Rashi explains that a promise had been made centuries earlier to the patriarch Abraham: After his descendants would suffer many years of bondage in Egypt, they would be freed, and in the process, they would despoil the Nile Kingdom of much of its wealth.

A fascinating Midrash describes why this despoiling of Egypt was fair and proper. Thousands of years later, the Egyptians came before Alexander the Great and registered a claim against the Jewish people, demanding that they should be compensated for all the wealth that the Israelites had seized from their forefathers a millennium earlier. In response to this claim, Gevia ben Psesia, acting as the Jews' defense attorney, noted that the Israelites had not received any wages for all the centuries they toiled as slaves in Egypt. Thus, justice demanded that the Jewish people be granted a form of reparations - i.e. compensation for the exploitation they had undergone at the hands of the ancient Egyptians.

But this brings us to the second question: If the Jews had legitimate claims to Egyptian wealth, then why did Moses have to encourage them to take it?

One explanation is that the Israelites were so anxious to escape the misery of Egypt, that they didn't want to stay around in order to enrich themselves. When a person is in great pain, his focus is exclusively on ending that suffering - and not on the acquisition of wealth.

Furthermore, the Israelites feared that such an action could provoke their former masters into pursuing them, as they made their way out of the Nile Kingdom.

Oznaim L'Torah, a modern commentator, offers a very different explanation. As victims of two centuries of unspeakable horrors, the Jews simply abhorred having contact with anything connected to Egypt.

Additionally, they did not want their seizure of Egypt's wealth to be seen as some type of "quid pro quo" for all the suffering they had endured. Thus Moses had to encourage them to take this property - in order to fulfill the Almighty's promise to Abraham.

This reluctance to take any money from the hands of their murderous exploiters is an issue that was tragically duplicated by the Jews in Europe some three millennia later.

The author, Rabbi Yehuda Appel, is an American who studied and taught Torah for many years in Jerusalem. In 1990, he and his family moved to Cleveland where he now serves as Executive Director of Aish HaTorah. (C) 1999 Aish HaTorah International - All rights reserved. Email: yappel@aish.edu Home Page: <http://www.aish.edu>

From: rachrysl@netmedia.net.il [SMTP:rachrysl@netmedia.net.il]
Subject: MIDEI SHABBOS by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler - Parshas BO
MIDEI SHABBOS BY RABBI ELIEZER CHRYSLER
Trickery for Trickery

The Gemoro in B'rochos (9a) explains that, when G-d instructed Moshe to tell the people to "borrow" precious vessels and clothes, He used the word "please". Why? In order that Avrohom should not accuse Hashem, so to speak, of only keeping the first half of His promise - to take Yisroel out of Egypt, but not the second - to send them out with great possessions. They responded: "Let us just leave - never mind the possessions!" And the Gemoro goes on to compare this to a prisoner who was promised his freedom "tomorrow", with a lot of money. His response was that they should rather take him out today, without the money. (A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.) Now this Gemoro is extremely difficult to understand. Firstly, why should Hashem need to beg Yisroel to take out silver and gold from Egypt? Secondly, what has keeping His promise got to do with what Avrohom might say? Surely, G-d would have to keep His word even if Avrohom were to remain silent. And thirdly, the facts do not tally with the parable, since, in the parable, the prisoner was willing to forego the money for the sake of one day less in prison, whilst in our case, Yisroel just didn't seem interested in the money at all? This is what we wrote in Vol. 4 Parshas Bo, in Gems from the Parshah, 'Let's Go Out Now', and we cited there the explanation of the Gro, who answers all the kashyos.

The Seifer P'ninim mi'Shulchan ha'Gro brings a second approach from the Gro, which he introduces by first posing another kashya: Why did G-d find it necessary to trick Par'oh, by asking for permission to go into the desert for three days, when really, He planned to take them out for good? And He did this again at the Yam-Suf, as we shall see shortly.

To answer this question, the Gro points out that Hashem merely paid Par'oh back measure for measure. After all, it was Par'oh who began playing this game, when he himself began building bricks, to encourage Yisroel to follow suit. Then he tricked them further by initially paying them for their work and then demanding that they produce the same number of bricks daily - without payment. And he tricked them again, when he ordered the Jewish midwives to throw the Jewish babies into the Nile, and when they would tell the people that they had been forced into it, and they would lodge their complaints with Par'oh, he would make light of the issue and defend them (the midwives), until they would soon give up complaining. And he tricked them a fourth time, when he instructed the midwives to kill the male babies as they emerged from the womb, and to pretend that they had died naturally before they were born. That explains why, as the Medrash relates, Par'oh needed to inform them that they could know in advance that the baby was a boy by the fact that it lay inside the mother's womb, face downwards.

And that was precisely how G-d decided to deal with Par'oh, measure for measure. That is why He first ordered Yisroel to 'borrow' silver and golden vessels, and then instructed them not to return them. That is why Moshe requested from Par'oh that he let Yisroel go out into the desert a journey of three days, to induce him later to gather his army and pursue them, when they failed to return. The Medrash too, describes how, when Par'oh arrived by the Yam-Suf, G-d dried up the sea bed, so that the location of the sea was totally unrecognisable, and Par'oh actually believed that he was somewhere else. Then, having lured them there under false pretences, Hashem returned the sea to its former location, killing the Egyptians.

With this explanation, we can answer all the kashyos with which we began: When Moshe told Yisroel to borrow silver and golden vessels, he replied 'But the Egyptians will pursue us when we leave Egypt, and take them back'. 'But that is precisely what G-d wants,' replied Moshe. 'In fact, you will inherit all their wealth there'. 'But surely,' Yisroel persisted, 'that means war. In that case, just let us leave Egypt, and we will forego wealth' - just like the prisoner in the moshol, who preferred to go out today, rather than to wait for the money tomorrow.

And this will also clarify the opinion in the Gemoro there, that they borrowed the money against the will of Yisroel (in other words, reluctantly, because of the heavy burden). Now, who has ever heard of

people complaining of inheriting a vast fortune - because it was too heavy to carry (which is, in effect, the first kashya that we asked at the outset)? But according to what we explained, says the Gro, this is no problem at all. Yisroel's complaint was, why they needed to borrow the vessels in the first place, seeing as the Egyptians were destined to transport their silver and gold to the Yam-Suf anyway, and Yisroel would inherit it from them there. So why the need to borrow it in Egypt, to have to carry it all the way to the Yam-Suf for nothing? Back came Moshe's reply - so that Avrohom, who knew about the promise, and who did not know that the Exodus was not the final stage of the redemption, should not have reason to complain (even for one moment) that Hashem did not fulfill part of His promise.

From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand[SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Bo -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 224, Kiddush Levanah. Good Shabbos!

I would personally like to ask each one of you to daven and learn for a dear talmid of mine who has been stricken with a serious but curable disease. His name is: AMIEL YIGAL BEN RUCHAMA ELKA VITEL. May we only hear besuros tovos and good news. Thank you.

"Approximately" Midnight?

When Moshe Rabbeinu announced the impending plague of the first born, he used the language that G-d will appear "at approximately midnight" (k'chatzos haLaylah) [Shmos 11:4]. Rash"i explains that Moshe did not want to be precise in his declaration, lest the advisers of Pharaoh err in their calculation and attribute their mistake to G-d's imprecision or Moshe's inability to be exact. This was before the days of clocks and certainly before the days of precise digital clocks. Telling time was an estimated calculation.

Would the Egyptians really say, "Moshe is a liar" - that "it really happened at 12:02"? Hadn't they experienced a series of nine plagues for over a year now? Hadn't Moshe Rabbeinu been correct and accurate every single time about every single detail? Moshe had an immaculate track record. Should we expect the advisers to call Moshe a liar if they believed that he was off by two minutes in predicting the plague of the first born?

The answer is that such is, in fact, human nature. Human nature is to nit-pick, to take an occurrence which should be inspiring to everyone who sees it, and to find fault. "His tie was crooked;" "His Tzitzis were sticking out;" "He used a grammatically inappropriate phrase." People can witness an Exodus from Egypt where G-d intervenes in history and lets the world know once and for all that He controls human destiny. But there are always the "naysayers" the nitpickers, the pundits, and the instant-analysis people who will say "but it was 12:02 and he said midnight!"

A person, a school, a shul [synagogue], or any other organization may accomplish wonderful things. However, a tremendous amount of worthwhile accomplishments can be neutralized with one little "but did you see the color of the newsletter they sent out this week?" Such trivialities! Such nitpicking! "But it was 12:02!" Such is human nature.

The Gemara [Sotah 9b] describes the order of the process by which the suspected wife who drinks the Sotah water receives her punishment. The Ramba"n points out that this is the only example in all of Torah where a religious command is built around an implicit miracle. It is a miraculous thing. If the woman is guilty, as soon as she drinks the water she literally starts to fall apart.

The Gemara mentions that when the Kohen issues the warning to her, he must tell her precisely what will happen: "Her stomach will explode and her thigh will fall away" [Bamidbar 5:22]. If the Kohen would say it slightly differently -- for example, if he mentions her legs

first and then her stomach (when in truth it happened in the reverse order) people would speak slanderously about the Sotah water. In other words, explains Rash"i, they would attribute the miraculous sickness to other causes -- not to the Sotah water.

Since when do women have a violent, unnatural physical reaction to drinking a glass of water? This was obviously a miraculous event. But if the Kohen uses the wrong sequence when he specifies the plague that will strike her, the "naysayers" will start with their skepticism. "Nothing miraculous happened. There was no miracle. It was not like he said it would be."

This is human nature. This is how we are influenced. This tendency destroys any chance of spiritual arousal and inspiration. That is why the Torah tells us "approximately midnight". Moshe Rabbeinu knew about the "naysayers", cynics and pundits who never let us become inspired about anything. Therefore, he said, "approximately midnight".

The Precision of G-d's Justice

The pasuk [verse] says, "Draw forth or buy for yourselves sheep..." [Shmos 12:21]. The Medrash explains why the Korban Pesach [Paschal offering] must be a sheep by citing a pasuk from Proverbs: "A level and balance scale are Ha-shem's" (Peles u'moznei mishpat l'Hashem) [Mishlei 16:11]. The Medrash continues by explaining that the Korban Pesach was an example of the precision of G-d's Justice. The pasuk in Tehillim [99:6] equates Moshe Rabbeinu and Shmuel HaNovi [the prophet]. Nonetheless, the Medrash points out a difference between Moshe and Shmuel. G-d treated Shmuel with more deference than He treated Moshe. When G-d spoke to Moshe, Moshe went to the Ohel Moed [Tent of Meeting]. But when G-d spoke to Shmuel, G-d came to Shmuel [Shmuel I 3:10].

Why? Because Moshe stayed in his place when he judged and whoever had a Torah dispute came to him [Shmos 18:13]. But Samuel went to the people to adjudicate their disputes [Shmuel I 7:16]. Shmuel was an itinerant Judge, going from county to county and from city to city dispensing justice to everyone, so that they should not be troubled to come to him. Therefore G-d gave Shmuel the honor of "I'll come to you". That is how precise G-d's Judgment is. When G-d hands out reward, so to speak, He doesn't miss dotting an i or crossing a t. G-d is precise to the letter.

This is also true regarding G-d's punishment. When the Jews were enslaved in Egypt, the Egyptians would go out into the forest and catch livestock and then come home and have meat for supper. The poor slaves had to watch this with their mouths watering. They ate stale bread while their masters ate meat.

G-d therefore incorporated into the punishment of the Egyptians that the Jews would eat sheep (which was the Egyptian Deity) as part of their deliverance. "I want you to know how it feels to have someone eat meat while you can not partake". Again we see the preciseness of G-d's Judgment. "The Rock, His actions are faithful" [Devorim 32:4].

We should never be faced with troubles, but we need to have bedrock faith in G-d's Justice. When we see before our eyes, Heaven Forbid, people with troubles; things that do not seem to make any sense; sickness; illness; all the terrible things that we see... We must remember the words of this Medrash. G-d's reward and His punishment are all precise. His Justice is perfect. Whether something is a punishment or designed for a future reward is something we cannot know, but we must know that there is a reason.

As difficult as it is at times for us to accept -- often we can not fathom how certain events can be just -- that is sometimes the trial of the Jew. We need to always be able to recite with conviction the verse "The Rock, his actions are faithful".

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Yerushalayim dhoffman@torah.org Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Books by Rabbi Frand available from your local Jewish dealer: "Rabbi Yissocher Frand: In Print" and "Listen To Your Messages -- And Other Observations On Contemporary Jewish Life" [Mesorah / Art Scroll]. RavFrand, Copyright 1 2000 by Rabbi Y. Frand and Project Genesis, Inc.

From:Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Bo
Sponsored by Martin and Michelle Swartz in memory of Martin's grandmother, Elise Hofmann a"h
Today's Learning: Shabbat 14:1-2 Orach Chaim 224:1-3 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yevamot 46

We read in the Pesach Haggadah: "The more that one tells about the Exodus, the more praiseworthy he is." Why?

R' Yaakov Yisrael Berger z"l (see page 4) wrote in 1944: Bnei Yisrael were supposed to be in Egypt for 400 years, but Hashem took them out 190 years early. Yet we have now been in exile for thousands of years. The Jews probably suffer more in Europe now than our ancestors did in Egypt. In the western nations, where our brethren have found rest for their bodies, there is no rest for the soul. The foundations of the Torah in these countries are collapsing. Shabbat and family purity laws are almost forgotten. Why then does Hashem not redeem us?

He adds: This is the meaning of the Haggadah's statement, "The more that one tells about the Exodus, the more praiseworthy he is." The more that one explores the reasons that brought about the early redemption from Egypt, the more praiseworthy he is, for such a person hastens our own redemption. This is also the meaning of Rabban Gamliel's statement: "Whoever does not explain the following three things at the Pesach festival has not fulfilled his obligation - the Korban Pesach, matzah and maror." It is not enough to eat these three things. One must learn their lessons; for example, one must feel the bitterness of our own exile, and do what we can to be redeemed as our ancestors were. (Kol Yisrael Chaveirim p. 87)

...

"And he left Pharaoh's presence in a burning anger." (11:8)

Rashi writes: Moshe was angry because Pharaoh said (10:28), "Do not see my face anymore."

R' Chaim Aryeh Lerner z"l (see page 4) asks three questions:

(1) Why would Moshe be angered by those words rather than the words in the same sentence: "For on the day you see my face you shall die"?

(2) Why did Moshe become angry now more so than on other occasions when Pharaoh was disrespectful to him (e.g., in verse 10:11)?

(3) Why was Moshe upset at all? He should be happy to never see Pharaoh again since one is not supposed to look at the face of a wicked person!

R' Lerner answers: The Ba'al Haturim writes that the phrase "al tosef" / "Do not . . . anymore" appears twice in the Torah - once in the verse quoted by Rashi and once in the verse (Devarim 3:26), "Do not speak to Me anymore about this matter." (The "matter" referred to there was Moshe's desire to enter Eretz Yisrael and Hashem's decree that Moshe would not enter the Land.) Why is the same phrase used in both of these verses? The Ba'al Haturim explains that this illustrates that one should not take lightly a curse uttered by any person, even a wicked person. The fact that Pharaoh threatened Moshe with the phrase, "al tosef" / "Do not . . . anymore," had an effect and led Hashem to speak the same words to Moshe many years later.

The gemara (Megillah 3a) teaches that when a person is frightened

and he doesn't know why, it is because his "mazal" (loosely translated: his soul) has seen something that the person himself has not seen. Here, too, Rashi informs us, Moshe was frightened and angered by the words "al tosef" / "Do not . . . anymore" more so than by Pharaoh's other threats, although Moshe himself did not know why. (Imrei Chaim)

"And it shall be when your son will ask you at some future time, 'What is this?' (13:14)

This is the question that the Haggadah associates with the simple-minded son. Why, asks R' Moshe Feinstein z"l, is this question presented in the Torah before the question of the wise son (Devarim 6:20): "What are the testimonies and the decrees and the ordinances that Hashem, our G-d, commanded you?"

He answers: This is how one should approach Torah study. Before one can start inquiring into the Torah on a deep level, he must ask: "What is this?" Only after one knows the entire Torah, writes R' Feinstein, can one ask the deeper questions. (Darash Moshe)

Rabbis of the New World The following are biographical notes on some of the sages who appear in this week's issue:

R' Yaakov Yisrael Berger z"l was a longtime rabbi in Cleveland in the period before World War II. His works include Ahavat Yisrael and Kol Yisrael Chaveirim. His descendants include the well-known writer R' Zelig Pliskin. (Source: R' Gedaliah Anemer)

R' Chaim Aryeh Lerner z"l was born in Leordina, Hungary (now Rumania) on 18 Tamuz 5653/1893. Among his teachers were R' Akiva Schreiber in Pressburg and the Sigheter Rebbe, R' Chaim Zvi Teitelbaum (the "Atzei Chaim"). About the latter, R' Lerner writes: "I was a member of his household day and night." R' Lerner settled in the United States in 1929 and served as rabbi to several congregations in New York. He died in 1977. The two volumes of R' Lerner's work, Imrei Chaim, were published in 1958 and 1972, respectively. In addition to R' Lerner's own writings on chumash, Talmud and halachah, the volumes contain previously unpublished writings of the Atzei Chaim and correspondence with the Atzai Chaim's son, the current Satmar Rebbe. (Source: Imrei Chaim)

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From: Rabbi Noson Weisz[SMTP:NWeisz@aish.edu] Subject: Mayanot - Bo - A Time for Every Purpose
PARSHAT BO "Come B" Exodus 10:1 to 13:16 A Time for Every Purpose
RABBI NOSON WEISZ

God spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month for you shall be the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.' [Exodus 12:1-2]

In his commentary on the very first verse in Genesis, Rashi states that this is the way the Torah should have begun, because this is the very first commandment addressed to the Jewish people.

While there were other commandments that were given in Genesis -- such as the commandment to be fruitful and multiply or the commandment to circumcise male children -- the commandment to use the lunar month as the basis of a calendar, and to begin the count of the months from the month of Nisan, was the first commandment addressed to the Jewish nation as a nation.

One would expect that the very first commandment would merit its position of primacy by addressing an issue of monumental importance.

But what is the difference whether one counts the months of one's year using the solar cycle or the lunar cycle. They are just different methods of organizing the identical time frame, and if anything, the lunar cycle is more inconvenient.

As a result of this commandment, the Jewish calendar has to include nine leap years in every 19-year-cycle just to keep pace with the seasons, which are

determined by the solar cycle.

So, what is the significance of attaching the Jewish months to the moon instead of the sun?

*NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN Ecclesiastes declares:

Whatever has been is what will be, and whatever has been done is what will be done. There is nothing new under the sun! [Ecclesiastes 1:9]

The Zohar points out that this declaration is quite specific. Under the sun there is nothing new, but above the sun, there is novelty to be found in the world. [See Mishpotim, 115b.]

The Hebrew word for month is chodesh, whereas the word for novelty is chodosh. They have identical letters and differ only in pronunciation.

Thus the Jewish idea of month is related to the concept of novelty. As there is no novelty beneath the sun, the Jewish people had to move over to the moon to find novelty.

For the sun rises and sets each day without change, whereas the moon waxes and wanes, renewing itself each month. There is never a new sun, but there is a new moon every month.

Thus the switch in the calendar that is mandated to the Jews about to be freed from bondage in Egypt is not merely a new way to keep track of time. It is a new identity in terms of Israel's place in the order of things:

The Sages taught: A solar eclipse is an evil omen for the nations of the world; a lunar eclipse is an evil omen for Jews. This is because the Jewish calendar is based on the moon whereas the secular calendar is based on the sun. (Talmud, Succah 29a)

To find the key that unlocks the door to the significance of all this information, we must delve into the concept of novelty. It turns out that there are two types of novelty in the world:

D the novelty of nature, and D the novelty beyond nature.

*THE NOVELTY OF NATURE Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Go bring offerings to your God in the land (of Egypt).' Moses said, 'It is not proper to do so. For that which is sacred to Egyptians we will sacrifice to God, our Lord. Behold, if we were to slaughter the deity of Egypt in their sight, will they not stone us?' [Exodus, 8:21-22]

Here Moses is referring to the Jews' plan to sacrifice sheep -- but the Egyptians worshipped sheep.

How can we relate to the idea of someone intelligent worshipping sheep?

We must bear in mind that the Torah is replete with admonitions against idolatry. Since the Torah clearly does not consider the Jews a primitive people, and yet feels constrained to offer so many warnings against idol worship, it would appear that the worship of idols is a practice that can attract even the cultured and sophisticated.

We must therefore explore the rationale behind this form of worship.

Sheep represent nature's power to renew life, and provide the world with fresh abundance.

The sheep is an animal that enriches man with all its parts. It provides wool, meat, milk, horns, leather. Of all the domesticated animals it is the only one that was bred to abundance in Biblical times.

Cattle were much too costly to maintain and served mainly as work animals. The ox was the tractor of the ancient world. But sheep became the symbols of nature's bounty. The new crop of sheep is born in the spring, at the season of all natural renewal.

It is clear that the world must provide an ever-increasing amount of all types of output for man to be able to prosper and multiply. If nature did not have the capacity to increase, man would be locked into a doomed Malthusian system.

It is equally clear that the world does not physically expand or grow larger. Yet, although the doomsayers have been declaring for many years that the world is vastly overpopulated, and have been predicting ever since Malthus (in 1798) that it will not be able to feed and support so many people, somehow it has always managed to come through with the necessary increase.

*EXPANDING POPULATION, EXPANDING RESOURCES There is no mystery to this. As human knowledge increases, we are able to extract steadily increasing amounts of the necessities of life from the same basic resources.

In fact, there is no reason to assume that nature has any limits. God created it with an infinite capacity to provide. What is required to exploit its riches is steady progress in finding new solutions -- in short novelty.

Such novelty is a product of knowledge and stems from the human spirit. The novelty of nature is uncovered by the spiritual power of mankind.

No one knows how ideas originate. We can only trace the development of technology, but the origin of ideas remains a mystery. The theory of relativity dreamed up by Einstein a century ago is an example of an idea that is still today being exploited technologically in ever new ways.

Original ideas represent the true novelty of nature -- a spiritual novelty that can only be accessed by man's spiritual powers.

People who worshipped idols were attempting to tap into the spiritual forces implanted by God in creation. We may not know how to do this, but we are capable of realizing that it is necessary.

Scientists say that there has not been any really novel ideas for quite sometime now. All the technological progress we are making -- and it is enormous -- comes from ideas that are already at least a century old. Eventually, we will need new ones, and to get them, we will need to tap in to some spiritual source.

The people who worshipped idols realized that all physical things had spiritual counterparts. It is these spiritual counterparts that endow nature with its seemingly infinite capacity. Therefore they tried to access them.

It is this type of novelty that is dismissed by Ecclesiastes as "nothing new under the sun."

*NOVELTY ABOVE THE SUN Maimonides in his Book of Commandments comments on the positive mitzvah to sanctify the months:

In this commandment lies one of the foundations of the faith. Only someone with deep understanding can understand or appreciate it B When we today in exile consult our reckoning of the Jewish calendar and declare that this day is Rosh Chodesh, the first day of a new month, or such a day is a Yom Tov, one of the holy days, it is not through our reckoning that this day acquires the holiness of a Yom Tov, but because the Supreme Court in Israel established it as Rosh Chodesh or Yom Tov. And it is because of their determination that it becomes such, whatever their reasons for reaching this result, as it is written [Talmud Rosh Hashana, 25a]: These are God's holidays that you declare; I have no holidays other than these. That is to say, whatever days the Supreme Court may declare even if they are coerced or mistaken B [Mitzvah, 153]

Maimonides goes on to explain that our calendar only allows us to determine which are the days the Supreme Court have already sanctified, but their power to be Holy days requires the sanctification of the Supreme Court -- the Sanhedrin -- in Israel. If it were ever to happen that Israel would be totally destitute of its entire Jewish population, the holy days would cease to be holy; there would be no special sanctity in those dates on our calendar that we now regard as sacred.

We are accustomed to think of time as something that exists independently of us. The days pass whether we take notice of them or not. When it is three o'clock, it is three o'clock whether I look at my watch or not. This is quite true about natural time, the time "under the sun." There is nothing new in time itself. The seasons unfold, the clock ticks, and life goes on.

What Maimonides is stating is that all this does not apply to time above the sun.

The calendar is established by the Sanhedrin in Israel. If the court fails to establish the calendar, the day simply does not exist. Holy days are not like natural days -- they were not created by God as part of the natural world, they must be brought into being by people who establish a spiritual connection to holiness.

The Jewish people inhabit sanctified, man-made days, not ordinary natural days. The Sanhedrin declares and sanctifies the months, and the days of the months acquire sanctity.

Therefore, there are two kinds of days in the world, natural days and holy days.

*SANCTIFIED TIME The novelty "above the sun" represents the establishment of a brand new world, a sanctified world.

In the natural world, the laws of nature totally define all of man's possibilities. Although the capacity of nature is infinite and has a spiritual aspect, it has no holiness.

Nature has no good days or bad days. Man is trapped beneath the sun and has to express all his potential within the world of nature, whether physical or spiritual.

Israel, in contrast, was given yomim tovim, holy days, or literally "good days."

A good day is a window to infinite time and does not take place in the natural world beneath the sun. All activities of the day take on an infinite aspect. On such a day a Jew and a non-Jew can perform an identical act, say eat a festive holiday meal. But the non-Jew is simply having a meal, while the Jew escapes the confines of natural time and enjoys a picnic in infinity.

The world of nature and its rules and regulations simply do not apply in this world above the sun. The miracles of the Exodus are a testimony of this.

The miracles of the Exodus did not take place in the natural world at all. They took place in this holy world "above the sun." Strictly speaking they weren't really miracles at all. In the world of the infinite all things are possible. The rules of nature do not apply at all. They cannot be broken because they simply do not exist.

The transition between the two worlds was accomplished by two events:

D the Passover sacrifice, and D the smiting of the first born, the tenth plague.

*THE SACRIFICE OF THE LAMB The reason the Passover sacrifice was crucial lay in the fact that the Zodiacal sign of the Lamb is at its most powerful in the month of Nisan, as it is the sign that powers growth. Therefore, God

commanded us to slaughter a lamb and eat it, in order to inform us that it was not the Zodiacal powers that empowered the exodus from Egypt, but the edict of the Most High.

Since the Egyptians worshipped this power, this motive is all the more compelling. God informed us through this commandment that he subdued the power of the Egyptian god when it was at its peak. [See Nachmonides, Exodus 12:3] Man requires the power of renewal in order to survive. The Egyptians knew that and the Jews knew that. The natural power of renewal is represented by the Zodiacal sign of the lamb. The Egyptians worshipped it and the Jews were told to return this power to God by means of the Passover sacrifice.

When a spiritual connection to God is made by returning this power to its origin, a brand new power of renewal that is above nature is sent down through the connection made. This is the power of renewal that comes from above the sun.

*THE SACRIFICE OF THE FIRST BORN Likewise, the symbol of human renewal is the first born. The first born is called the bchor in Hebrew, and the word bchor is comprised of the identical letters as the Hebrew word brocho, meaning blessing. The next generation is always where the future and the hope of the world rests.

The slaughter of the natural power of renewal, is the smiting of the first born. The first born of Egypt died, while the first born of Israel, who represent the power of renewal that comes from above the sun lived. Since they survived only through their connection to the world of holiness, the first born of Israel have been considered sacred ever since.

One of the mysteries of human history is the power of the Jewish people to renew itself and to continually rise from the ashes of destruction apparently none the worse for wear. The secret of this power of renewal is in the sanctification of time.

Jews can always tap into this infinite power of renewal. All they have to do is preserve their attachment to the Jewish holy days, the yomim tovim, the good days of the world.

From: Rabbi Kalman Packouz[SMTP:packouz@aish.edu]

AISH HATORAH'S Shabbat Shalom Weekly

DVAR TORAH: based on Growth Through Torah BY RABBI ZELIG PLISKIN

The Torah states, "And Moshe said, 'This is what the Almighty said, 'Around midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt will die' " Exodus 11:4). Rashi cites the Sages of the Talmud that the Almighty actually told Moshe that exactly at midnight He would cause the plague of the death of the firstborn. Why did Moshe then change His words to "around midnight" when he repeated the Almighty's words to the Egyptians?

Rashi brings the answer of the Sages that "Perhaps Pharaoh's astrologers will err in their calculation of the precise midpoint of the night and say that 'Moses is a liar' (Talmud Bavli, Berachot 4a).

Amazing! Nine plagues have already hit the Egyptians. Moshe has warned them and been correct each time. Now the firstborn of each family throughout Egypt dies. What difference does it make whether it is a few minutes before or after midnight?

The answer: This illustrates the power of a person to find fault.

From what might have been a minor discrepancy -- and perhaps a discrepancy due to their own calculations -- they would seek to call Moshe a liar and discredit him totally. When a person wants to find fault, he will find something.

Our lesson: 1) Be aware of when we fall into the trap of finding fault when we should be seeing the bigger picture. 2) Be aware when others are fault-finders ... and tread gently because these personalities are easily irritated and difficult to deal with.

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]

Halacha Discussion: Common Hilchos Shabbos-Questions and Answers #2 BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

Question: Which bottle caps may or may not be opened on Shabbos? Discussion: Bottle caps which lift off with a bottle opener may be removed(1). Most poskim(2) hold that bottle caps made out of metal(3)

which break when unscrewed and leave a ring around the bottle neck [and bottle caps which perforate along the edge when the bottle is opened(4)] are forbidden to be unscrewed(5). This is prohibited since the cap, which originally served as a seal, now becomes a functional cap which is used as a cover⁶. Thus, the first time the cap is unscrewed, it completes the formation of a utensil-the bottle cap. While other poskim(7) disagree with this and allow metal bottle caps to be opened, it has become accepted custom to follow the opinion of the poskim who are stringent. If, mistakenly, such a bottle was opened on Shabbos, it is permitted to drink the beverage. The bottle cap itself, however, is muktzeh(8). But only caps made out of metal are included in this prohibition. It is permissible to unscrew a plastic cap, even if it separates and leaves a ring around the bottleneck. This is because plastic caps are functional even before they are screwed onto a bottle [as opposed to metal ones which-due to technological differences-become operational only after being unscrewed from the bottle the first time (9)]. Often, people break off the sharp edges of a metal cap [which was opened before Shabbos] so that they will not injure themselves on them. It is prohibited to do so on Shabbos(10).

Question: May a woman daven Minchah after she has lit candles on Friday night? Discussion: L'chatchilah, all poskim agree that she should daven Minchah before lighting candles. When a woman lights candles, she automatically accepts upon herself the restrictions and obligations of the Shabbos day. This precludes her davening the previous day's Minchah. If, however, a woman is running late and has not davened Minchah by candle-lighting time, the poskim differ as to what she should do. There are three views: She should go ahead and light candles. She should then daven the Shemoneh Esrei of the Shabbos Ma'ariv twice to compensate for the lost Minchah(11). Even though women do not usually daven Ma'ariv, she may do so in this case in order to make up the lost Minchah(12); Before lighting, she should stipulate that she is not accepting the Shabbos until after she has davened Minchah(13). Some poskim hold that this should not be done on Yom Tov if she recited shehecheyanu at the candle-lighting (14); A minority view rules that she may daven Minchah after lighting candles even if she did not stipulate that she was not accepting the Shabbos(15). Note that when men light candles, they do not automatically accept the Shabbos with their candle-lighting(16). They may daven Minchah after lighting candles.

Question: What are the halachos that govern handling and touching flowers on Shabbos? Discussion: Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle(17). Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos (18). They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds(19). One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water(20). Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming. Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos(21). On Yom Tov, however, water may be added but not changed (22). Flowers should be placed in water before Shabbos. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Shabbos(23). One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water (24).

1Mishnah Berurah 314:17; Chazon Ish 51:11. 2Harav Y. Kamenetsky quoted in Emes L'yaakov O.C. 314:8; Harav Y.Y. Weiss quoted in Divrei Moshe O.C. 12-13; Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Minchas Shelomo, pg. 551 and in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 9:17; Hara v Y. S. Elyashiv quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 104; Harav S. Wosner quoted in Shomer Shabbos Ka-das; Az Nidberu 3:40. 3Common on liqueur bottles, etc. 4Harav S.Z. Auerbach in a written responsum published in Me'or ha-Shabbos vol. 1, pg. 481; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 9 note *61. 5One may, however, puncture a hole in the cap and then unscrew it; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 9:17, or better yet, puncture a wide hole in the cap and then pour the beverage through the punctured hole; Meleches Shabbos, pg. 344. 6Even if the cap was

partially unscrewed before Shabbos, but it remained attached to the ring, it is prohibited to unscrew it further on Shabbos; Binyan Shabbos, pg. 139; Meleches Shabbos, pg. 343. 7Harav Y.Y. Fischer in Even Yisrael vol. 2:14; Tzitz Eliezer 14:45; Yechaveh Da'as 2:42; L'horos Nasan 7:21; Kinyan Torah 4:34; Harav Y. Roth in Ohr ha-Shabbos, vol. 11. [Igros Moshe does not address this issue, and there are conflicting reports as to what Harav M. Feinstein's opinion was.] 8Harav S.Z. Auerbach, written responsum published in Me'or ha-Shabbos, vol. 2, pg. 612. 9Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Tikunim u'Miluim pg. 14 and in Me'or ha-Shabbos, vol. 1, pg. 481-482. See further explanation in Binyan Shabbos, pg. 94. [Harav Y.Y. Weiss is quoted (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14) as prohibiting plastic caps as well.] It is also permitted to remove the plastic caps that are opened by tearing a narrow strip connected to the bottom of the cap - Binyan Shabbos, pg. 94 quoting Harav S.Z. Auerbach. 10Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Binyan Shabbos, pg. 97). 11This is the view of the Mishnah Berurah 263:43. 12Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:110). 13Eishel Avraham 263:10; Kaf ha-Chayim 263:35; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfeh on Tefillah, 2nd edition, pg. 201). 14Tzitz Eliezer 10:19-5. This is based on the view of several poskim who hold that one cannot recite shehecheyanu, which celebrates the arrival of the Yom Tov, and at the same time stipulate that he is not accepting Yom Tov's arrival. But other poskim disagree and hold that the shehecheyanu recited during candle lighting does not celebrate the arrival of the Yom Tov; rather she is reciting shehecheyanu over the mitzvah of lighting candles, see Emes L'Yaakov O.C. 585:2. 15Several poskim quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:128. 16Mishnah Berurah 263:42. It is still, however, preferable even for men to stipulate that they are not mekabel Shabbos when lighting candles. 17Mishnah Berurah 336:48. 18Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64). 19Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73); Bris Olam, pg. 32. 20Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333). 21Mishnah Berurah 336:54. 22O.C. 654:1; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333. 23See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:48; Yechaveh Da'as 2:53. Harav S.Z. Auerbach is quoted (Nishmas Avraham O.C. 336) as being stringent on this. 24Igros Moshe O.C. 4:73.

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Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Bo by Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - The Midrash describes the heavenly competition of the twenty two sacred letters of the Hebrew alphabet, from alef to tav, vying for the honor to begin the Torah, we can only imagine the supernal symphony which must have emerged from the request of each of the 613 commandments to be the first of the statutes of G-d commanded to the emerging nation Israel. The recipient of that much - coveted honor is, "This month (of Nissan) shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you." [Ex. 12:2-3].

Of course 'Jewish' time, the ideal of not only utilizing time but also sanctifying time, is a critical contribution of Judaism to the world; but even so, would not a more logical choice for 'first place' have been 'Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy,' or, better still, the more universal 'Love thy neighbor as thyself'?

Why, then, did the Torah choose to begin its commandments with how G-d shows Moses the moon, in its first stage of renewal, commanding him: 'The time when the moon renews itself thusly, shall be unto you the beginning of the month [rosh chadashim]...' [Ex. 12:2, and Rashi there]. This commandment seems rather obscure, at least.

To answer this question, let us first pose several other questions generated by the commandment "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months...."

First, to the untrained eye, the Jews who gather once a month outside their synagogue doors under the open sky, usually the Saturday night between the third and fourteenth day of the new month, seem to be participating in some sort of moon-rite. Not only do the congregants go outdoors, look at the new moon (some Hassidic groups in New York even rent a helicopter on the closest Saturday night to the month of Nissan to make sure the moon will be visible to them), and recite blessings and psalms, but they even join hands, singing and dancing their praise to the moon in a circle!

Second, the words of the 'musaf amidah' (Additional Prayer) which we intone at the end of each New Month (Rosh Chodesh) service refers to the day as a period of forgiveness, or atonement- and at least one Talmudic source, suggests that it is the day of G-d's atonement! The Talmud records, in the name of Resh Lakish: "What is so different about the he-goat offering on Rosh Chodesh that the phrase is used in

connection with it: 'As in offering for the Lord' [Num 28:15]? It is because the Holy One Blessed be He said, 'This goat shall be an atonement for Me, for My having diminished the size of the moon.'" [B.T. Shevuot 9a].

This idea is further amplified in a second Talmudic passage, in which R. Shimon b. Pazzi analyzes the Divine creation on the fourth day: "And G-d made two great lights, the great light to rule the day, the small light to rule the night." [Gen. 1:16] R. Shimon examines the seeming contradiction wherein the verse opens with two great orbs, and concludes with one large orb (the sun) and a second small orb (the moon). R. Shimon explains: "...The moon said unto G-d: 'Master of the Universe, is it possible for two kings to rule with one crown? He answered, 'Go then and make yourself smaller! 'Master of the Universe', cried the moon. 'because I made the right suggestion, should I be the one who ends up smaller?'...On seeing that it (the moon) could not be consoled, the Holy One, blessed be He said: 'Bring an atonement for Me for making the moon smaller.'" [B.T. Hulin 60b]

What a difficult and amazing notion: G-d needs atonement! And consider the sin: He made the moon small! Apparently profound symbolism is taking place here, symbolism which touches at the very foundations of the creation of the universe. And this fundamental truth is somehow bound up with our celebration of the new month.

During the primordial week of creation, G-d created the two great orbs of light. But something was amiss, almost as if the states of mind of these two lights foreshadow the eventual tragedy about to transpire upon the creation of the first human beings, when the serpent unleashes the powers of his treacherous tongue.

Since envy is one of the most universal sources of evil--after all, the root of the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth commandments can all be traced to aspects of envy--the seemingly innocent observation on the part of the moon as to the impossibility of two kings and one crown expresses the basic evil within the very fabric of creation. The moon wanted to be number one. The moon must be punished. But if the moon is guilty, why then does G-d require atonement?

The answer to this question is perhaps the answer to all our questions. Atonement for G-d is the way our Sages express the fact that the Almighty chose to create a world with envy as well as graciousness, with evil as well as good. "I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I, G-d, make all these things." [Isaiah 45:7]

G-d wants us to be aware that the evil in the world is not to be assigned to some shady underworld, as is often the case in polytheistic systems, dividing reality into divinities with multiple identities. We have to understand that a single G-d, is the only G-d there is. And he Chose to create an incomplete, imperfect world, a world with evil and envy, with good and graciousness--and a human being who will be free to choose between them. And, if he chooses wisely, humans will become G-d's partners in perfecting the imperfect world.

Without the potential for evil, there can be no free choice, and without free choice, we're either angels or zebras. Free choice inevitably results in some people choosing the morally correct path of virtue and others choosing the immoral road of venality--as well as the various shades and paths in-between. Free choice means that one may not always rise to the occasion, that good people will sometimes suffer as a result of the evil actions of others, that an imperfect and unredeemed world will often be filled with tragedy and suffering. It is for that fact of evil-within-world that the Almighty Himself requires atonement.

Thus when G-d gives us the marking of the 'renewal of the month' (rosh chodesh) as the first commandment, He is telling us that in the imperfection of a smaller, lessened moon is reflected the imperfection of human nature, the imperfection of the world as it was created, and the atonement that G-d Himself requires for having created such a universe. But the source of this 'original' sin is also the source of our potential redemption. One can live by the words spoken by the moon on the fourth

day, making all sorts of arguments to justify the 'crown' for oneself alone, or one can turn around and sanctify the moon. Sanctify the time and the life symbolized by the moon, and so bring the world to its ultimate redemption on the month of Nissan, when we were redeemed from Egyptian servitude. According to Rashi, G-d Himself teaches Moses how to look at the moon. G-d wants us to sanctify the possibility of change--chodesh and chidush and chadash. 'Chodesh' is month, 'chadash' is new, and 'chidush' is renewal. G-d wants us to sanctify the fact that there can be a renewal, that there can be a change for the good, that there can be a development, that there can be growth.

Kiddush Levana, the ritual of the 'Sanctification of the Moon,' closes with these words: "May it be by Your will.... to readjust the deficiency of the moon, so that it may no longer be reduced in size. May the light of the moon be again as the light of the sun as it was during the first seven days of creation, before it was reduced..." This prayer brings us full circle. Ultimately, when the day of redemption finally arrives, even the moon will return to its former glory, when jealousy will no longer exist--neither between the lights in the sky nor between the lights down on earth, the human lights. And redemption will only happen when we humans join G-d in making it happen--by our sanctifying the moon, by our sanctifying life, by our sanctifying ourselves.

Shabbat Shalom You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean

From: Mordecai Kornfeld[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il]
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Yevamos 35b

SHLOMO HA'MELECH'S RULING IN THE CASE OF THE BATTLE FOR THE BABY The Mishnah teaches that if a man dies childless but leaves behind a pregnant wife who later gives birth to a child, and the child dies within thirty days, the child is deemed a "Nefel," stillborn, and the woman is thus obligated to do Yibum.

Based on this Halachah, the ME'IRI (Yevamos 17a) offers an ingenious insight into the justice of Shlomo ha'Melech (see also DRASHOT IBN SHU'IB on Parashas Mishpatim; SHEMEN ROKE'ACH -- by the author of Sha'ar Ha'chazakos -- in his introduction, YEDEI MOSHE to Shir ha'Shirim Raba 1:1:10).

The Navi relates that Hashem promised Shlomo at the age of twelve that he would be granted great wisdom; he would be the wisest man ever to live (Melachim I 3:12). In order to illustrate that the blessing of immeasurable wisdom was indeed fulfilled, the Navi relates a case that was brought before Shlomo and how Shlomo arbitrated the case.

Two women came to the king, arguing over a child. One woman claimed that the child was hers, while the other claimed that the child was hers. The Navi records in detail each woman's claim:

"One woman said: 'My master, I and this woman dwell in the same house, and I gave birth while with her in the house. On the third day after I gave birth, this woman gave birth as well. We live together; there is no outsider with us in the house; only the two of us were in the house. The son of this woman died that night, because she lay upon him. She arose during the night and took my son from my side while I was asleep,

and laid him in her bosom, and her dead son she laid in my bosom. When I arose in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead! But when I observed him [later on] in the morning, I realized that he was not the son to whom I had given birth!"

"The other woman replied: 'It is not so! My son is the live one, and your son is the dead one.' But the first woman said, 'It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the live one!' And they went on speaking before the king.

"The king said, 'This one claims: My son is the live one, and your son is the dead one. And the other claims: It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.' So the king said, 'Get me a sword!' and they brought a sword before the king. The king said, 'Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.'

"The woman whose son was the live one turned to the king, because her compassion was aroused for her son, and she said, 'Please, my master, give her the living baby, and do not kill it!' But the other one said, 'Neither mine nor yours shall he be. Cut!' The king spoke up and said, 'Give her (the first woman) the living baby and do not kill it; she is his mother!'" (1 Melachim 3:16-27)

There is an obvious problem with this incident as it is recorded by the Navi. The woman who was lying was obviously interested in taking the child for herself, for otherwise, the case would never have been brought before the court. However, when the real mother offered to let the liar keep the child in order to spare its life, the liar refused, insisting that the court kill the baby -- "Neither mine nor yours shall he be. Cut!"

Why did she suddenly lose interest in having the child for herself? Furthermore, granted that Shlomo's wisdom gave him the insight to foresee that one of the women would back down when she heard of his intention to kill the infant, but how could he possibly have known that the other woman would react the way she did -- by insisting on complying with the brutal "compromise?" Surely it was more likely that the second woman would respond, "Yes, you have finally admitted that the child is mine! I see that although you are cruel enough to steal my child, you are not so ruthless as to see him killed for your lie!" What, then, would Shlomo have done? The liar would have walked away victorious!

The Me'iri explains Shomo ha'Melech's thought process as follows. The Midrash (Kohes Rabah 10:16; Shir ha'Shirim Rabah 1:1:10) tells us that the reason both of these women were so desperate to have the living child declared theirs was that they were both potential Yevamos. The husbands of both women had died with no other living children. Whichever woman would be judged to be the childless woman would not only lose the infant, but would also be stranded in the unpleasant situation of a Yevamah, being bound to marry the brother of her deceased husband. Another Midrash asserts that the husbands of the two women were father and son. That is, one woman was the mother-in-law of the other.

Combining the facts related to us by these two Midrashim, it emerges that the two women -- the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law -- had just become bereaved of their husbands, and they each needed a live child to exempt them from the status of Yevamah. Both gave birth to babies. However, these two babies were less than thirty days old at the time that one of them died, as the verse states. The mother of the dead child would therefore be subject to the laws of Yibum. This, then, was the motive of the deceitful mother in attempting to kidnap the other woman's child!

Now, if it was the mother-in-law's child who had died, she would have no reason to try to seize her daughter-in-law's child. The living child -- if he was not her own child -- was at least her *son's* child, and a grandchild is enough to exempt one from Yibum (Yevamos 70a)! Only the daughter-in-law would have a motive to lie and to claim that the child was hers. If it was her baby who had died within thirty days of birth, leaving her childless, she would indeed be bound to her husband's

brother as a Yevamah. Who, though, would that brother be? That brother would be none the living baby -- her mother-in-law's child -- who is her deceased husband's brother!

Since her brother-in-law was a newborn infant, the daughter-in-law would have to wait thirteen years before this brother would be able to perform Chalitzah with her and free her to marry others (Yevamos 105b; a Katan cannot perform Chalitzah)! This baby was the only living brother of her husband. There could not have been any other older brothers because, as the Midrash points out, the mother-in-law was herself a potential Yevamah. This means that her husband had no living children except for the baby in question.

Shlomo ha'Melech, in his wisdom, realized all of this. He reasoned that since the only one with a strong motive to lie was the daughter-in-law, the child must really belong to the mother-in-law. In order to confirm this conclusion he ordered that the child be cut in half. What would that accomplish?

If the child were to be killed, this would free the daughter-in-law from her Chiyuv of Yibum, since the living baby was her only brother-in-law. In fact, from the daughter-in-law's perspective, killing the child would be an even *better* solution. True, by kidnapping the child she might convince the court that she was not a Yevamah, but she herself would know that the child was not really hers and that she really was not permitted to remarry until Chalitzah was performed. By having the baby killed, though, she would be fully released from the obligation of Yibum! This is the reason the daughter-in-law suddenly lost interest in keeping the child when she saw that Shlomo ha'Melech was ready to cut the child in half. This would serve her interests even better than taking the child for herself. "Cut!" she insisted.

Shlomo had predicted that this would be the woman's reaction to his suggestion. By tricking her into making such a seemingly ludicrous statement, he revealed her true motives. In this manner, Shlomo demonstrated beyond doubt that the daughter-in-law was indeed lying!

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il]
The Weekly Daf #309 By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Your People are My People

In addition to circumcision and immersion in a mikveh, a non-Jew who wishes to convert to Judaism must commit himself to fulfilling all the mitzvot incumbent on Jews. As a source for the sort of basic instruction given to the conversion candidate, the gemara cites the dialogue between Naomi and Ruth, which is only hinted at in the words of Megillat Ruth (1:16-18).

"Amech ami -- Your people are my people," Ruth says to the mother-in-law who is pointing out the difficulties of being a Jew. This, explains Rabbi Elazar, was a response to Naomi's informing her that Jews are obligated to fulfill 613 mitzvot.

Where, ask the commentaries, is it hinted in these words of Ruth that she was expressing a commitment to this large body of commandments?

Maharsha offers two approaches, one based on the numerical value of the letters in the Hebrew word "amech," and the other on the connotation of the words as a distinctive hallmark of the Jewish people.

"Amech" consists of three letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The first, "Ayin," has the numerical equivalent of 70, and the second, "Mem," equals 40. The final letter, a "final Chaf" has a numerical value of 500 (after the last letter "Taf" which equals 400 come the five letters which

have a different form when they appear at the end of a word, and their numerical equivalents range from 500- 900). Combine these three numerical equivalents and add three, representing the number of Hebrew letters in "Amech," and you arrive at 613.

The second approach refers us to a derisive comment about Jews made by heathen critics (Mesechta Shabbat 88a and Mesechta Ketuvot 112a) to the effect that we are "an impulsive people" because we "put our mouths before our ears." Unlike the other nations who rejected the offer of the Torah, we accepted so many commandments upon ourselves even before hearing what they involved by saying shall do" even before saying "we shall hear."

This "impulsiveness," which the Sage Rava (Shabbat ibid.) explains as the result of our having confidence that the Creator would not obligate us in anything beyond our ability, is what made us a people unique in the range of its obligations. Ruth's response to this was that "your people are my people" and I am prepared to assume responsibility for all that you took upon yourselves at Sinai.

Yevamot 47b

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