



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **BO** - 5773

In our 18th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com. A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

This week's Internet Parsha Sheet is sponsored by **Janet and Barry Weiss** and family in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of **Daniel Weiss** and in memory of **Rabbi Asher Chacham ben Meir Chacham Abittan**

This week's Internet Parsha Sheet is sponsored anonymously in memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov**

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact cshulman@parsha.net

ATERES HASHAVUA

Mesivta Ateres Yaakov Hewlett NY AteresHaShavua@aol.com
EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU **HORAV YAAKOV**

KAMENETZKY zt"l

"And all my firstborn sons I will redeem."

The Sforno on this pasuk explains that when a firstborn son is redeemed from the Kohen, he becomes allowed to work in regular mundane areas. This Sforno seems to imply that if a bechor were not to be redeemed, he would remain at the level of kedusha of a Kohen for the rest of his life.

Based on this Sforno, HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l asks a question on the minhag Yisroel of celebrating with a seudah at a pidyon ha'ben. If the pidyon ha'ben marks the baby's descent from a higher level of kedusha, what is the cause for celebration?

Rav Yaakov answers this question based on the lashon with which the Kohen blesses the child after the pidyon ha'ben. Rather than the standard bracha of Torah, Chupah uMaasim Tovim, which is given at the bris, the Kohen first adds a bracha for yiras Shomayim. For what reason was this extra bracha added to the regular nusach of a bracha?

Rav Yaakov explains this phenomenon based on an integral difference between Klal Yisroel and the rest of the nations of the world. The rest of the nations of the world believe that the physical body and the neshama are two independent functions of the person, which cannot be combined. Spiritual concepts are dealt with by the neshama, and physical aspects of a person's existence are exclusively the domain of

the physical body. However, an essential aspect of our avodas Hashem is the belief that the guf and the neshama are fundamentally intertwined. Everything, be it physical or spiritual, is affected by both the body and the soul. It is for this reason that while a non-Jew may bring a korban in the Bais HaMikdash, they may only bring a korban olah, which is completely consumed on the mizbeach. A non-Jew is incapable of bridging the gap between the physical and the spiritual, and as such, he may not derive physical pleasure from his korban.

Based on this, we now have a greater understanding of the concept of pidyon ha'ben. When the child first comes into this world, he is still living on a completely spiritual plane. While this may be a wonderful thing, it is not for this purpose that the child was brought into this world. On the contrary, a person's mission in this world is to live a physical life in a manner of kedusha. However, if we have any hope that the child will succeed in this task, we must first bless the child with yiras Shomayim, for without yiras Shomayim, it is impossible for one to raise the mundane to the level of kedusha.

This is the celebration of the pidyon ha'ben; the start of the baby's quest to bridge the gap between a world of gashmius and a neshama that is total ruchniyus. This is a cause for rejoicing, for by dint of this undertaking, the child will fulfill his purpose in this world.

From: ravadlerstein@torah.org
The Timeless Rav Hirsch
by **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**
Parshas Bo

The Moral High Road is a Two Lane Street
Based on the Hirsch Chumash, Shemos 11:2-3

Please speak in the ears of the people. Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels. Hashem granted the people favor in the eyes of Egypt. Moreover, the man Moshe was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants of Paroh, and in the eyes of the people.

It is easy to understand just how Hashem granted His people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. He provided them with a powerful demonstration of the character of the Jewish people. It was so powerful, that it was able to eradicate generations of stereotypes and contempt.

For three days, the Egyptians were immobilized by the plague of darkness. Everything they possessed was available to the Jews for the taking. Moreover, they themselves were fair game to anyone seeking vengeance and reprisal for all the horrors inflicted upon the slave-nation by their Egyptian masters.

When the Egyptians began to see again, it was not only with a sense of relief at having survived their ordeal, but of disbelief that they and their possessions had emerged unscathed and unmolested. Their dwellings were fully in order; nothing at all was missing. The Jews, free to help themselves of whatever they pleased – and with good reason to do so – had taken nothing at all. In an instant, they comprehended the moral nobility of the people with whom they had dealt so unjustly. Moshe, the leader of that people, achieved stature in their eyes for guiding them to moral greatness. This – not all the plagues he had visited upon them – made him great in their eyes.

The Jews must have sensed their triumph, and understood that they had laid firm and unambiguous claim to the moral high road. Once in possession of it, they would not part with it easily. This is why they had to be urged and cajoled ("Please speak") to ask their newly-found admirers for gifts. Having tasted the sweet taste of moral significance, they were unwilling to trade away any part of it for money. Accepting money – blood money - from their erstwhile oppressors would buy some atonement for the Egyptians, and narrow the moral gap between the two peoples.

Why, then, did Hashem want them to accept the reparations? The Jews stood on the threshold of genuine peoplehood. They would cross the border of Egypt as a nation, not a huge collection of individuals. Hashem was already looking towards the future, shaping their future well-being at the very moment that he was sculpting them into a complete nation. He was concerned about their future. Their material prosperity was no small part of it. The foundation of that prosperity should be strong, and He wanted the first deposit into their account to be made by outsiders who had recognized the moral greatness of Hashem's chosen people. The first installment in their savings plan should be elevated above the ordinary by linking it to a Jewish success in spreading awareness of Hashem and His teaching. We had to make a bit of room on the moral highway for repentant Egyptians to accomplish this, but in His love for His people, Hashem deemed it a price worth paying.

Participatory Democracy 101

Based on the Hirsch Chumash, Shemos 10:9
Moshe said, "With our young people and with our old people we will go. With our sons and our daughters, with our flock and our cattle we will go, because it is a festival of Hashem for us. Paroh asks, "How many of you, exactly, is this worship service of yours going to involve? Make the number reasonable, and we will think about it." Moshe responds, "The arithmetic is pretty simple. We all go!" Paroh counters, "That is absurd. It is not going to happen." Moshe stands his ground. "We're not negotiating. After all, it is a festival of our G-d. If these negotiations are not going anywhere, it may be time to roll out the next plague." The exchange strikes us as a battle of wits and determination. Moshe simply raises the ante against whatever Paroh is ready to offer. This really isn't so, though. Moshe's insistence that it is a festival of Hashem for us adds nothing to the argument, if we are looking at nothing more than a clash of strong wills. Instead, it is a lesson in comparative religion. Paroh thought that divine service meant discharging some responsibility to the gods. Give these deities what they need, or what they want, and they will reciprocate with their power and influence. There is no reason why the message and the accompanying tribute cannot be brought by suitable representatives acting on behalf of others. Moshe tells Paroh that he has it all wrong. Serving G-d is not about delivering messages and gifts. Therefore, there is no room for priests, intermediates, substitutes. We do not serve Hashem with what we give Him, but with ourselves. When G-d calls us, He wants us, not something from us. There are no exceptions. The smallest baby goes, as well as all our possession, i.e. our extended selves. We are, moreover, a community, and all of our members are equal before G-d. The word festival, *chag*, is related to the word for "circle." When He calls, we all gather around, as in a circle, to be with Him. Spending time in His Presence is itself a form of service, albeit one that Paroh cannot fathom, being completely foreign to the pagan conception of the relationship between Man and a Deity. Moshe's response to Paroh is one more in a series of lessons that Hashem wished communicated to the world.

<http://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha>

When Did Makkas Bechoros Occur?

By: Rabbi Raphael Fuchs

Published: January 16th, 2013

This column is dedicated to the *refuah sheleimah* of Shlomo Eliezer ben Chaya Sarah Elka.

There is a contradiction in the *pesukim* as to when *makkas bechoros* occurred. The *pasuk* in this week's *parshah* says, "vayehi bachatzos halailah, v'Hashem hikah kol bechor b'erezt Mitzrayim... — and at chatzos of the night, Hashem hit every firstborn in the land of Mitzrayim..." (Shemos 12:29). This *pasuk* states that *makkas bechoros* occurred by night. The implication from the *pasuk* in Bamidbar 8:17 is that *makkas bechoros* occurred by day, for the *pasuk* says: "b'yom hakosi kol bechor... — on the day that I hit all of the firstborn..." *Maseches Semachos* begins by posing this contradiction, and offers the following solution *Reb Yochanan* says that at *chatzos* of the night, Hashem delivered a lethal blow to all of the *bechorim* that would kill them; however, they did not actually die until the morning. Hashem made it that their souls remained in them until the morning, in order that the *Bnei Yisrael* could witness their death.

The *Peirush Nachalas Yaakov* (found on the bottom of *Maseches Semachos*) explains why the *masechta* begins with this *medrash*. The *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* 39a says that a *min* (*apikores*) asked *Rebbe Avahu* the following question: Hashem is a *kohen*, as it says "veyikcho li terumah." When Hashem buried *Moshe Rabbeinu*, in what did He immerse himself? *Rebbe Avahu* answered that He immersed himself in fire. *Tosafos* there asks why the *min* did not inquire as to how Hashem was able to become *tamei* by burying *Moshe Rabbeinu*. *Tosafos* answers that this did not bother the *min* because he knew that we are considered children of Hashem and that a *kohen* is permitted to bury his children. According to *Tosafos*, Hashem would not be able to be *metamei* by killing someone, since even a *kohen* may only become *tamei* by burying his children, not by killing them. The *Haggadah* states that Hashem himself performed *makkas bechoros*. How then did Hashem himself kill the *bechorim* of Mitzrayim?

It is this question that the *Maseches Semachos* wishes to address when it brings down this *medrash*. The beginning of *Maseches Semachos* discusses the *halachos* regarding when one is dying but is still alive (*goseis*). Therefore, it began with a *medrash* that proves to us that during such a state, a person is not considered dead and thus not yet *metamei*. Since Hashem only delivered the blow that would kill the *bechorim*, He was not *metamei* to the *bechorim* since they were not yet dead. On a side note, *Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l*, is quoted as explaining the discrepancy between the *berachah* of "ga'al Yisrael" that we say after *Shema* of *Shacharis* and the same *berachah* that we say in *Ma'ariv*. In *Shacharis* we say "miMitzrayim g'altanu ... kol bechoreihem haragta." The mention of redeeming us from Mitzrayim precedes the mention of killing the *bechorim*. In *Ma'ariv* we say "hamakeh b'evraso kol bechorei Mitzrayim vayotzei es amo Yisrael mitocham lecheirus olam." The mention of hitting the *bechorim* of Mitzrayim precedes that of our redemption from Mitzrayim. This is because, as *Maseches Semachos* stated that at *chatzos* of the night Hashem only delivered the blow that would eventually kill the *bechorim*, the *bechorim* did not actually die until the morning. So at night we mention the blow that was delivered to the *bechorim* before the redemption, which only took place the following morning. In *Shacharis*, which is recited in the morning, we mention the redemption from Mitzrayim before the death of the *bechorim* because the redemption preceded the actual death of the *bechorim*, which occurred during the day.

The *Shivus Yaakov* (1:17) asks the following question on the *Maseches Semachos*: Why did the *Mishnah* not simply answer the contradiction in the *pesukim* (whether *makkas bechoros* occurred at night or by day) by saying that if a *bechor* was born after *chatzos*, even in the morning, he would die as well? The *Shivus Yaakov* suggests that based on this question it is imperative that a *bechor* who was born after *chatzos* did not die. Based on this observation, he rules that if one has a son born to him

on the night before Pesach – after chatzos – he does not have to fast for that bechor since had he been a Mitzri in Mitzrayim, he would not have been killed. Therefore, his father, who would generally have to fast on Erev Pesach for his bechor who is under bar mitzvah age, does not have to fast for his son

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein
ON CHANGING LIGHT BULBS

My mechanical ineptitude is legendary. I have never been any sort of handyman around the house and from time immemorial, dealing with burned out light bulbs has presented a dreaded challenge to me. If this was true, and it was, regarding those good old-fashioned screw-in light bulbs, the arrival of halogen lighting fixtures and bulbs has vastly compounded the problem. Those spindly little legs of the halogen bulbs never seem to fit correctly into the microscopically small sockets where they are intended to go and the dreaded warning not to touch the halogen bulb – God forbid – with one’s bare fingers has seriously impeded any hope of success in my being able to replace any burned out bulb with ease and dispatch on my own.

Since I am, thank God, at a stage of life where I am simply spending my grandchildren’s money, I now wait until a significant number of light bulbs have burned out throughout our home and then I call my beloved and trusted electrician/handyman to change all of them. There was a time when I was actually embarrassed to have to admit doing this and revealing my acute clumsiness but today I am brazenly proud of my behavior and needless to say my electrician/handyman is also quite delighted with this arrangement.

So every few months when the house turns appropriately dark enough the electrician/handyman arrives; I purchase the necessary types of bulbs; and within a short period of time our home is again bathed in the artificial light of our modern technologically advanced world.

A few days ago one of the bulbs in a halogen bedside lamp in our home burned out. In a fit of foolish courage and bravado I was determined this time to change this bulb myself. It suddenly became a test of my manhood and I was determined to accomplish it. I walked the five long blocks to the hardware store to buy the bulb. The only thing was that the bulb now was available in a myriad number of watts, volts, colors and mood tones. And the old burned out bulb that I brought along to show the storekeeper somehow was mysteriously illegible as to what size, color, etc. it had originally been. So the storekeeper sold to me whatever bulb he deemed proper in his experienced judgment – the most expensive one that he had in stock - and I went home hoping for the best. I do not know exactly what prayer the rabbis had instituted to be recited before attempting to insert a very small halogen bulb into an even smaller lamp socket, so I composed my own prayer on the spot. And lo and behold after only three previous futile attempts I suddenly and unexpectedly succeeded in inserting the bulb into its proper socket and I then tested the lamp and it actually lit and worked nicely. I was overjoyed at my very small triumph. My day was made!

It is amazing how the small things in life really do matter to humans. The prophet Yonah who is instrumental in saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the great city of ancient Ninveh rejoices not in that monumental accomplishment and in the revelation to him of God’s patience and mercy towards humans but rather in the appearance of a

gourd that shades him from the sun. And when that gourd dries out and disappears, Yonah is frustrated and angry, rebellious and unappreciative of the miraculous salvation of Ninveh that he helped bring about.

The Lord, so to speak, is forced to remind him of the difference between major and the minor, the central issues of life and the peripheral and temporary pleasures and inconveniences. There was a great hockey player who when reviewing his star-studded career stated: “I was not the strongest or the fastest skater on the ice. My shot was not always the most powerful or even the most accurate. My success was due to the fact that I always knew where the puck was!”

Burned out light bulbs and somehow replacing them is part of our daily lives. But they are not what our lives are about. Service to God and other humans, Torah knowledge and good character traits, those remain the central core of Jewish existence. And there is no electrician/handyman that can be relied upon to change those bulbs for us if they burn out. We are the only ones that can successfully reignite the lamp of our own souls. And the only way to do this is to keep our eye on the puck and not fall prey to the distractions that visit all of us regularly. Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
BO

The extraordinary devotion of the Torah to all of the intricate details of the celebration of Pesach and of its sacrifice strikes one as demanding explanation. After all, the Torah will command many mitzvot to the Jewish people in the course of the next books of the Torah, without necessarily going into particulars and details about their method of observance.

All of that, so to speak, was left to the Oral Law and to Moshe to fill in the exact details to fulfill the commandment. The Mishna and Talmud comprise sixty-three volumes of these details and explanations, but somehow regarding Pesach and its mitzvot, the Torah itself provides this necessary information.

A simple understanding is that these laws and details were given to the Jewish people before they stood on Sinai and before the Oral Law was granted to Moshe - and through him to all of Israel. Therefore Moshe had to instruct the people in clear detail what was expected of them and how to properly observe the Pesach sacrifice and holiday.

The Torah faithfully records for us Moshe’s instructions to the people – instructions which remain valid and operative in future times as well and not only for the first Pesach commemoration in Egypt. Though all of this is, in effect, correct technically, it still, to a certain extent, begs our original question of why Pesach instructions are so detailed while the commandments regarding the other holy days of the year are certainly less explicit and detailed.

The answer to this can be found in the nature of the holiday of Pesach itself. It is not an agricultural holiday as are Shavuot and Succot. Its uniqueness is not purely in being an historical commemorative day, a reminder of past events and occurrences, for both Shavuot and Succot are also days of memory and national recollection. The uniqueness of Pesach lies in its miraculous occurrence from which all of later Jewish practice and life emanates. You could say that Pesach is God’s holiday, while Shavuot requires the acquiescence of Jews to accept the Torah at Sinai and Succot requires an act by the people in building and living in succot during their sojourn in the desert. Pesach is a Divine event, God

imposing His will so to speak on Pharaoh and Egypt and upon the Jewish people as well.

For this reason, it was necessary for the Torah to clearly delineate and detail for the Jewish people what God expected, hence the complexity of the laws of Pesach as they appear in this week's parsha. Pesach is a top-down holiday while the other holidays are more of a two-way street type of commemoration.

By observing Pesach as commanded in every detail of the instruction manual the Jew submits Divine authority without question or logical demands. The laws of Pesach tested Jewish loyalty and discipline even before the Torah was given to them. It is therefore the leading holiday of the year, the one still mostly treasured and observed by the masses of Israel.

Shabat shalom

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
To weekly@ohr.edu
Subject Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Bo
For the week ending 19 January 2013 / 7 Shevat 5773
by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

A Sign For Our Times

"And it [tefillin] shall be a sign upon your arm, and an ornament between your eyes, for with a strong hand G-d took us out from Egypt." (13:16)

There was once a child prodigy who, at the age of three, could play Rachmaninoff better than the best.

A concert was arranged for her to play in public. Months before, posters and TV advertisements proclaimed that she would perform for one concert, and one concert only.

In order that this once in a lifetime event would not be forgotten, special mementos of the concert would be sold. For example, a tiny white concert piano on a bracelet, or a tiara with a piano on it.

The morning after the concert, the newspapers fell over themselves trying to find superlatives to describe the performance.

About a month later, a couple of louts who had missed the show turned up at the child's home and demanded a "command" performance.

"Yeah, we know everyone says she was great. We read the newspapers and all, but we don't believe it. If you bring her down from her bedroom now and get her to perform here in your sitting room on this grand piano, then we'll believe she's as good as everyone says she is; if not we don't believe..."

When G-d created the world, there was no doubt that it was He who had brought everything into existence, that He knew all that was going on in the world, and that He was involved in the smallest event that happens in this world.

From the time of Enosh, Adam's grandson, people started to make mistakes about G-d. Some people denied that there was a G-d at all. Others conceded the existence of a Divine Power, but said that He was so removed and exalted that He only had knowledge of the spiritual realm, but didn't know what was going on down in this world.

Yet a third group admitted that G-d knows what is happening in the lower realms, but He isn't interested in what we do. In other words, He created the Universe, and then, as it were, went off to play golf.

G-d decided once and for all to quash these mistakes. He would bring a series of miraculous events that would show, by altering the course of nature, that He creates nature.

Not only this, but He would take a nation out of the midst of another nation and make them His people. This would show that not only is He

aware of what transpires in this world, but He cares and interacts with Mankind.

G-d would do this only once, because by performing these miracles, He would remove the ability of man to have freedom of choice to believe in Him or not, and the purpose of Creation was the existence of a being, Man, who has free will to believe or not.

This is the story of the Exodus. G-d took the Jewish People out of Egypt to prove that He is alive and well and the world is living in Him!

In order that we should not forget this once-and-once-only re-orchestration of nature, He gave us souvenirs of the "concert" such as a mezuzah to put on our doors and tefillin to bind on our arms. Someone who has these reminders will go through his life as though he had a string tied around his pinkie and will never forget.

Not only that, G-d made it incumbent on every generation to pass-over - to recreate the events of this great concert of nature in every generation at a Seder so that each generation would know that it had actually happened. Parents don't lie to their children about things of importance. For this reason, G-d will not perform at the whim of every boor who comes along and claims that he doesn't believe there was a concert at all. There are millions of fans who still have their tiny white concert pianos carefully handed down from generation to generation to prove the others wrong.

© 1995-2013 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>
Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas **BO**

Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels. (11:2)

Klal Yisrael left Egypt with enormous material wealth. Hashem promised Avraham Avinu that his descendants would be subjugated to difficult toil and slavery. When they would be finally liberated, however, they would leave as kings, triumphant in their victory over tyranny and laden with material bounty. On Pesach night, we celebrate the Egyptian exodus by remembering that night of triumph. During the Seder, we recall the slavery, celebrate the liberation and praise the Almighty, Who orchestrated the entire experience. The Korban Pesach, Pascal-offering, was offered together with the Korban Chagigah, Festival-offering. We no longer have the Bais Hamikdash as a place for offering Korbanos. We, therefore, have a zeichar, remembrance, for the korbanos - placed on the Seder plate. A piece of roasted meat and a roasted egg are parts of the ritual of remembrance. Was leaving Egypt with a surfeit of material wealth any less of a celebration? If so, why is there no ritual of recollection, no reminiscence dedicated to this seemingly mundane, but no less significant, realization of Hashem's promise?

In his Ben Ish Chayil, Horav Yosef Chaim, zl, m'Bagdad, explains this by relating an incident that took place in his community. The episode occurred one Erev Pesach, featuring a young married man - a Torah scholar who had earned an enviable reputation prior to his marriage - and his father-in-law. Apparently, prior to the wedding, the young man had been assured of a dowry to the tune of three hundred gold coins. The issue was not whether this was a considerable amount of money or not; the issue was the fulfillment of a promise.

The young man prepared for the festival, purchasing the goods and food necessary to celebrate the festival properly. Being a young couple, they needed dishes, utensils and much more to set up their Pesach kitchen. They purchased everything on credit. The young groom had a fine reputation, and credit was rendered by every merchant with the due date

for payment Erev Pesach. After all, that was when his father-in-law had promised to pay him the remainder of his dowry.

The time had come, and the young man was waiting for the "package" from his father-in-law to arrive. Sure enough, by late morning, a messenger arrived from his father-in-law with an envelope - no bag of money, no check, no promissory note - just a note wishing him a Gut Yom Tov, all the best, with blessings for wealth, honor and satisfaction. It was a nice note, but one cannot pay bills with a note. We can imagine that the young man's incredulity soon became a slow burn which was becoming "warmer" with each passing moment. He had been royally exploited.

Not one to waste time, the young man proceeded to his father-in-law's home and presented himself with a strong complaint. "I was waiting for something more than your good wishes for wealth and welfare," he began. The father-in-law was no slouch, and he quickly replied, "I thought I was taking a Torah scholar for my daughter. Your complaining indicates that you have no clue as to the 'value' of my message." The son-in-law retorted, "Apparently, I am unable to perceive your intentions. Perhaps you might enlighten me." "I decided to follow the pattern evinced by our daily tefillah," the father-in-law began. "We say, 'Ribon HaOlamim, You have commanded us to offer the Korban Tamid daily in order that it atone for us. Now [that we are unable to do so since we no longer have the Bais Hamikdash] let the words that emanate from our lips be as significant and acceptable before You as if we [actually] offered the Korban Tamid.' I did the same. Since I do not have the necessary funds to pay you, I instead sent you my blessings and best wishes. May they take the place of the gold and silver I was to give you." Clearly this father-in-law was not setting the tone for a great relationship. The son-in-law was not naïve. He understood that his father-in-law was either himself very callow or quite disingenuous. In any event, it behooved him to respond and clear the air once and for all. "Tonight, we will celebrate the festival of Pesach," the son-in-law said. "On the Seder table, there will be remembrances of the Korban Pesach and Korban Chagigah. I wonder why there is no commemoration of the gold and silver which our ancestors removed from Egypt. The answer is simple. We only employ testimonials, and recite, 'Yehi ratzon (May it be the will of Hashem, as we do in the Ribon Ha'Olamim)', if it is with regard to those activities which concern our relationship with Hashem, since we can no longer offer the korbanos of Hashem, because the Bais HaMikdash no longer exists. Concerning those mitzvos that man must personally do, such as donning Tefillin, one may not replace the mitzvah by studying the parshah of Tefillin. If it is a mitzvah that is incumbent upon man, he has no excuse not to carry it out. We must pay our debts. We neither have a Korban Pesach, nor do we have a Korban Chagigah, but we do have material abundance. We may not recuse ourselves with a note expressing our good wishes for wealth. Nothing short of cold cash is accepted."

It is a Pesach feast-offering to Hashem. (12:27)

The above pasuk is used as the response to the wise son in the Haggadah. The highlight of the Seder for many people is the recitation of the section addressing the arba banim, four sons. It allows us to reflect upon the individual natures and proclivities of different people and to analyze "what went wrong." Why does one boy become a chacham, wise man, while another boy in the same class, from a similar family, becomes a rasha? It is in the genes, or is there more to it? I do not think that anyone has a definitive answer to this question. I did see an inspiring story in Rabbi Yechiel Spéro's Haggadah, which I present to the reader, along with my personal take on it.

The author of the Haggadah states: K'neged arba banim dibrah Torah, "Concerning four sons does the Torah speak: echad chacham, "one is wise;" echad rasha, "one is wicked;" echad tam, "one is simple;" v'echad she'eino yodea lishol, "and one is unable to ask." The correct

grammatical formula would be to say simply that the Torah speaks about four sons: a wise son, a wicked son, a simple son, and a son who is unable to speak. Why is the word echad, one, placed between each son? The story is told that on Pesach night, Horav Tzvi Elimelech, zl, m'Dinov, commonly known by his brilliant sefer, the Bnei Yissachar, would take time out from conducting his own Seder in order to walk the village streets and observe how the pashute Yidden, simple Jews, were conducting their Sedarim. Going from house to house, he peered into the windows and was satisfied that the Jews of his community were doing it right. Their Sedarim were carried out in accordance with Jewish law and tradition. After his little excursion, he began to make his way home, to conduct his Seder with his family. It was at this point that he saw a strange "ritual" being enacted in the home of Moshe, the tailor. Moshe was a good Jew, a trusting soul, who, albeit not intellectually inclined, was concerned about how he observed the mitzvos. Tradition was an important part of his life, and he made sure never to veer from the past. This is why the Rebbe was so surprised. Moshe recited the Arba Banim, but, instead of just reading it as is common with most people, he stopped at each echad, stretching out the word and concentrating on every letter, much like one would do concerning the echad of Shema Yisrael. In other words, to observe Moshe at that moment, he was changing Arba Banim into Shema Yisrael!

From a cursory glance by the average person, it seemed that Moshe, the tailor, was making a mistake, mixing up the echad of Hashem's unity - which must be emphasized and vocalized correctly to stress its proper meaning - and the echad, individuality, of each one of the sons. The Bnei Yissachar was thoroughly fascinated. Moshe concluded his "reverie," and the Bnei Yissachar went home to conduct his seder with a new perspective on the arba banim. What was it?

Horav Yehoshua, zl, m'Belz, explained what took place and suggested its practical meaning for us. Every child has his own individual issues and challenges in life. Growing up is not a simple feat. Raising one's children is far from simple, and the "one size fits all" approach does not work. Every child requires tipul meyuchad, his own individualized form of attention. One should expend the same sincerity and effort as he does being mekabil ol malchus Shomayim, accepting the yoke of Heaven upon himself, in raising his own children. Every child is an echad, individual, with specific talents, personality, tendencies and emotions. Each parent and teacher must take care to ensure he or she treats every child in such a manner.

Indeed, when a child realizes his special place in a parent's heart and mind, the reciprocity is incredible: the learning is different; the attitude is changed. In order for this transformation to occur, the parent or teacher must perceive that exclusive quality in the child. While any parent sees the uniqueness of his child - or, at least, should see it - it is quite different in the classroom. A secular writer once said, "Every person is gifted in some areas. We just have to find out what." While this, of course, is the ideal, it does not always happen, resulting in the lack of self-confidence and self-esteem evinced by some people. These people are the victims of adults who did not bother "looking" for that special quality, that unique gift, which each one possessed.

I recently read an anecdote which is quite appropriate for this message. While its ending is funny, it is what I would render a bittere gelechter, sad joke, since it is all-too common for many of us - both as parents and teachers - to ignore each child's distinct quality. A new teacher - young, idealistic, and quite inexperienced - was assigned a teaching position in an inner-city classroom in the middle of the year. Had she been given the job in September, she might have had a chance; January was an entirely different story. A job is a job, however, and she needed the experience and the money. Apparently, the "starting" teacher had left the position midyear because the discipline was an impossible task, as the principal had informed her that this was a class of "special students." Learning was

not an essential requirement, as long as the students were kept off the streets and out of trouble.

The young teacher walked in on bedlam: feet were on desks, radios blaring, spitballs flying, the noise in the room deafening. She walked to the front of the room, opened up the attendance book and noted the number next to each name. The numbers ascended from 140 to 160 - quite an impressive lot. No wonder these students were impossible. Their IQ's all bordered on the genius level. As gifted students, they had reason to be high-spirited. They were probably bored by the level of education they were receiving. She called the room to order and began to teach. At first, the students ignored her, failing to turn in work, with those assignments that were completed done hastily and thoughtlessly. She did not give up, talking to them about their innate gifted qualities, their abilities to succeed, to grow and become wonderful, contributing members of society. "As your teacher, I expect nothing short of excellence from each of you," she said. "You are all quite capable, and to expect less would be demeaning your inherent potential. Therefore, get with the program!" This went on regularly, as she reminded them of their G-d-given talents and added intelligence.

As she kept on encouraging them, they slowly began to respond. Their assignments were well-written; their test scores improved considerably; and their total demeanor was altered for the better. Their work was creative, precise, original - something which they had previously been deemed incapable of achieving. One day, the principal walked by the classroom and saw that the "new" teacher kept the students spellbound. He reveled in the rapt attention they gave her. He later read some of their essays and could not believe that these were the same students who had driven out the last teacher.

The principal called the teacher to his office and asked, "What have you done with your students? Their work has surpassed anything we have ever had from them. You are literally a miracle worker!" he declared. She looked at him and said, "Well, what do you expect? They are gifted, aren't they?"

"Gifted? This class is comprised of special-needs students - both behaviorally disordered and emotionally challenged. How can you call them gifted?"

"If so," she asked, "why are their IQ's so high?"

"Where did you see their IQ's?" the principal asked.

She showed him the attendance list. The principal smiled and then began to laugh. "Those are not their IQ's! Those are their locker numbers!"

It sounds like a funny story, but, in reality, it is sad. People often view themselves through the mirror of public sentiment. If you call someone a derogatory name long enough, he will begin to believe it. On the other hand, when a parent/teacher expresses praise and positive feeling towards their child/student, it will encourage, empower and inspire his/her living up to our expectations of them. We must remember the significance of echad.

It was on this very day that all the legions of Hashem left the land of Egypt. (12:41)

Yetzias Mitzrayim, the exodus from Egypt, was the seminal event that commenced our journey toward nationhood, with its conclusion at Har Sinai, where we accepted the Torah and became Hashem's People. The Torah is the contract that binds us to the Almighty, but it all started with yetzias Mitzrayim. Had we not been liberated, then we could never have achieved nationhood. Indeed, zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim, remembering the Exodus, is part and parcel of Jewish tradition. Our national motif is included within the heritage of every Jewish Festival, as a constant reminder that the event we are presently celebrating would not have been possible without the experience of yetzias Mitzrayim. How does one remember that which he did not personally experience? It was our ancestors who were there and who left Mitzrayim. While we believe in the transmission of our heritage throughout the generations, a certain

emotion must accompany this belief which, regrettably, for the most part is not present today.

This question has always bothered me. I recently came across a story which I think can be extrapolated in some way to illuminate our dilemma. There are circumstances in which the only way to relate to the "big picture" is through a much smaller picture. If we take an isolated event out from the greater experience, we can somehow relate to the greater experience through it. For instance, many years ago there appeared an op-ed in the New York Times in which the writer wrote that he simply could not relate to the Holocaust. The sheer size of the number six million befuddled his mind. The number was just too great. It is an absolutely overwhelming number - six million Jews slaughtered in one of the most cataclysmic tragedies of all time. How does one even begin to fathom such a magnitude? The author did, however, come across a story which took place during the Holocaust. Through this story, he was able to relate to the much larger systematic murder of six million Jews. He told about a little boy, no more than two and a half years old, who could not climb up the steps to the gas chamber. The guard was "kind" enough to lift him up, so that the child could keep pace with the doomed adults who were walking to their deaths. It was this repulsive act of "kindness" on the part of the Nazi that he was able to apply as a cognate for relating to the mass murder which occurred during the Holocaust. When he thought of this incident, he was able to grasp to some extent the tragedies of the millions more.

I would like to attempt to apply a similar approach towards remembering yetzias Mitzrayim. It is not an "Egypt" story, but it is a remarkable lesson concerning hakoras hatov, gratitude, which I found in Rabbi Yechiel Spero's, *Touched by a Seder*. A middle-aged fellow, whom we will call Reuven, entered one of the sefarim, book, stores in Meah Shearim. One can easily get lost in the vast array of books, relating to every area of Jewish erudition, to be found in these stores. It is not an experience that one wants to rush through. Reuven selected a volume and began to peruse its contents, to determine whether it was a sefer he wanted to add to his collection at home. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a man, whom we will call Shimon, standing at the rear of the store staring at him. Now Shimon was not just staring, his eyes were boring through him. Reuven began to feel uncomfortable. Shimon appeared to be a normal Jew, dressed in average clothes. There seemed to be nothing unusual about him - outside of the fact that he just kept on staring at him. Reuven continued looking at the sefer until, a few moments later, he felt a sharp tug at his sleeve and a hand firmly planted on his shoulder. Shimon had left his perch at the rear of the store, and he was now standing before him. This time, Shimon appeared to be looking straight at him, as he tapped his shoulder and asked, "Sir, are you planning on purchasing this sefer?"

Reuven was taken slightly aback and retorted, "Yes. Do you have a problem with it?"

"Please forgive me," Shimon replied. "I do not mean to be nosey. I am just curious if you are buying this sefer. If you are, I would like to pay for it."

Reuven was blown away. This was a surprise to end all surprises. It was the last thing that he expected to hear from this man, but he noted a sincere ring to his request. He really wanted to help him, but he was not in any serious need of support. He could easily pay for the sefer. He told this to Shimon.

"Please, sir" Shimon began, "I really would like to pay for the sefer. It would mean so much to me if you accept my gift."

Finally, Reuven said, "OK, you may pay for it, but why are you doing this?"

Shimon's stare was now focused elsewhere. He seemed to be looking away, staring into space, as he said, "You see, I am blind..." Hearing these words, Reuven almost keeled over. "I will never be able to see again, to study Torah from the sefarim that had once meant so much to

me. This is why I want to pay for the sefer, so that you will learn from it as much as possible. When the time comes, and you become weary and want to close the sefer, think of me, and keep it open a little longer." Reuven's eyes began to moisten, as tears formed and slowly made their way down his face. The storekeeper confirmed that this was a constant occurrence. Many times a week, Shimon would visit the store and ask to pay for a sefer. This was his manner of learning Torah. Reuven would not put down that sefer- lightly. When he tired, he would regenerate himself and continue learning. He owed it to Shimon. After a while, this attitude spread to his other sefarim. The value of learning from a sefer was now so different.

This idea applies to remembering the Exodus. We must think of where we would be and how we would look had Hashem not taken us out of Egypt. We need only to look at contemporary society and its effect on those of our People who are still in Egypt, who refuse to leave, in order to realize for how much we must be thankful. We cannot remember Egypt because we were not there, but, if we open our eyes, we can see Egypt all around us.

Following the Holocaust, the surviving Jews had choices before them. Would they return to the way of life they had led in their shtetl, to a life of commitment and observance, or would America be different? It was a time to forget the past. Remembering the past brought sadness and pain. Looking forward to the future inspired hope. The past was then - the future is now. This was their motto.

No one can blame anyone who chose to reject his past. We have no idea of the indescribable pain and misery which they endured with the loss of their entire families. Yet, sadly, today, seventy years later, those who are still alive look around at their assimilated families and realize that they lost everything. I recently attended the bar mitzvah of the son of a close student of mine. My student's grandparents were Holocaust survivors who had lost everything. They came to this country and, with unwavering commitment and resolute dedication, persevered scorn from within and without - and prevailed. Four generations later, they are today in Gan Eden reaping their just reward, as they peer down to see their many descendants who are growing in Torah and commitment to Klal Yisrael. They remembered; they refused to forget. They understood the meaning of leaving Mitzrayim, and each day of their lives they kept remembering, by imbuing this memory into the psyche of their family. Just as "Reuven" had developed a new perspective on learning, they acknowledged where they would be now, had they forgotten their past.

Sponsored l'ilui nishmas Aidel bas R' Yaakov Shimon a"h Keller niftar 13 Shevat 5767 - Idu Keller. By Marcia & Hymie Keller & Family, Perl & Harry M. Brown & Family

from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org
reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org
subject: Parsha - Shabbat Shalom from the OU

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Freedom's Defense

And you shall explain to your child on that day,
'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free
from Egypt'.

It was the moment for which they had been waiting for more than two hundred years. The Israelites, slaves in Egypt, were about to go free. Ten plagues had struck the country. The people were the first to understand;

Pharaoh was the last. G-d was on the side of freedom and human dignity. You cannot build a nation, however strong your police and army, by enslaving some for the benefit of others. History will turn against you, as it has against every tyranny known to mankind.

And now the time had arrived. The Israelites were on the brink of their release. Moses, their leader, gathered them together and prepared to address them. What would he speak about at this fateful juncture, the birth of a people? He could have spoken about many things. He might have talked about liberty, the breaking of their chains, and the end of slavery. He might have talked about the destination to which they were about to travel, the "land flowing with milk and honey". Or he might have chosen a more sombre theme: the journey that lay ahead, the dangers they would face: what Nelson Mandela called "the long walk to freedom". Any one of these would have been the speech of a great leader sensing an historic moment in the destiny of Israel.

Moses did none of these things. Instead he spoke about children, and the distant future, and the duty to pass on memory to generations yet unborn. Three times in this week's sedra he turns to the theme:

And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?' you shall say . . . (Ex. 12:26-27)

And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt' (Ex. 13:8)

And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him. . . (Ex. 13:14)

About to gain their freedom, the Israelites were told that they had to become a nation of educators. That is what made Moses not just a great leader, but a unique one. What the Torah is teaching is that freedom is won, not on the battlefield, nor in the political arena, nor in the courts, national or international, but in the human imagination and will. To defend a country you need an army. But to defend a free society you need schools. You need families and an educational system in which ideals are passed on from one generation to the next, and never lost, or despaired of, or obscured. So Jews became the people whose passion was education, whose citadels were schools and whose heroes were teachers.

The result was that by the time the Second Temple was destroyed, Jews had constructed the world's first system of universal compulsory education, paid for by public funds:

Remember for good the man Joshua ben Gamla, because were it not for him the Torah would have been forgotten from Israel. At first a child was taught by his father, and as a result orphans were left uneducated. It was then resolved that teachers of children should be appointed in Jerusalem, and a father (who lived outside the city) would bring his child there and have him taught, but the orphan was still left without tuition. Then it was resolved to appoint teachers in each district, and boys of the age of sixteen and seventeen were placed under them; but when the teacher was angry with a pupil, he would rebel and leave. Finally Joshua ben Gamla came and instituted that teachers be appointed in every province and every city, and children from the age of six or seven were placed under their charge. (Baba Batra 21a)

By contrast, England did not institute universal compulsory education until 1870. The seriousness the sages attached to education can be measured by the following two passages:

If a city has made no provision for the education of the young, its inhabitants are placed under a ban, until teachers have been engaged. If they persistently neglect this duty, the city is excommunicated, for the world only survives by the merit of the breath of schoolchildren. (Maimonides, Hilkhos Talmud Torah 2:1)

Rabbi Judah the Prince sent R. Chiyya and R. Issi and R. Ami on a mission through the towns of Israel to establish teachers in every place. They came to a town where there were no teachers. They said to the inhabitants, "Bring us the defenders of the town." They brought them the military guard. The rabbi said, "These are not the protectors of the town but its destroyers." "Who then are the protectors?" asked the inhabitants. They answered, "The teachers." (Yerushalmi Hagigah 1:6)

No other faith has attached a higher value to study. None has given it a higher position in the scale of communal priorities. From the very outset Israel knew that freedom cannot be created by legislation, nor can it be sustained by political structures alone. As the American justice Judge Learned Hand put it: "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it." That is the truth epitomized in a remarkable exegesis given by the sages. They based it on the following verse about the tablets Moses received at Sinai:

The tablets were the work of G-d; the writing was the writing of G-d, engraved on the tablets. (Ex. 32: 16)

They reinterpreted it as follows:

Read not charut, engraved, but cherut, freedom, for there is none so free as one who occupies himself with the study of Torah. (Mishnah Avot 6:2)

What they meant was that if the law is engraved on the hearts of the people, it does not need to be enforced by police. True freedom – cherut – is the ability to control oneself without having to be controlled by others. Without accepting voluntarily a code of moral and ethical restraints, liberty becomes license and society itself a battleground of warring instincts and desires.

This idea, fateful in its implications, was first articulated by Moses in this week's sedra, in his words to the assembled Israelites. He was telling them that freedom is more than a moment of political triumph. It is a constant endeavour, throughout the ages, to teach those who come after us the battles our ancestors fought, and why, so that my freedom is never sacrificed to yours, or purchased at the cost of someone else's. That is why, to this day, on Passover we eat matzah, the unleavened bread of affliction, and taste maror, the bitter herbs of slavery, to remember the sharp taste of affliction and never be tempted to afflict others.

The oldest and most tragic phenomenon in history is that empires, which once bestrode the narrow world like a colossus, eventually decline and disappear. Freedom becomes individualism ("each doing what was right in his own eyes", Judges 21:25), individualism becomes chaos, chaos becomes the search for order, and the search for order becomes a new tyranny imposing its will by the use of force. What, thanks to Torah, Jews never forgot is that freedom is a never-ending effort of education in which parents, teachers, homes and schools are all partners in the dialogue between the generations. Learning, talmud Torah, is the very foundation of Judaism, the guardian of our heritage and hope. That is why, when tradition conferred on Moses the greatest honour, it did not call him 'our hero', 'our prophet' or 'our king'. It called him, simply, Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our teacher. For it is in the arena of education that the battle for the good society is lost or won.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chief Rabbi.org.

Two of the four parshios contained in the tefillin are found at the conclusion of parshas Bo. Many of the laws of tefillin are halacha l'Moshe miSinai, (i.e. taught to Moshe by Hashem during his tenure atop Mount Sinai.) Among these laws is the requirement for tefillin to be black square boxes containing four paragraphs from the Torah that reference the mitzvah of tefillin. Another such law requires that the tefillin worn on one's arm has one compartment that contains the four paragraphs on one long piece of parchment, while the tefillin worn on one's head has four compartments, each housing a separate paragraph. The Torah does not give a reason for the aforementioned difference between the two tefillin. The Meshech Chachma (13:9) suggests an interesting approach. Regarding the Bais Hamikdash, Shlomo Hamelech speaks for Hashem (Melachim 1, 9:3) and declares, "My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days". The Meshech Chachma takes the liberty of extending this relationship of Hashem directed to the Bais Hamikdash, to the connection of man to Hashem when he dons his tefillin (see Rambam Hilchos Tefillin 4:24.) The Tefillin of the hand placed across from the heart corresponds to the love that Hashem has for all Israel. As a parent loves all their children equally, so does Hashem love all Israel, and hence the four parshios are included on one klaf (parchment) in tefillin worn on one's arm. The tefillin on one's head is placed between one's eyes and hints at Hashem's hashgaca pratis (divine providence), his watching over us. In this realm there are four compartments, corresponding to the four types of Jews. The Medrash (Vayikra Rabbah 30:12) teaches that the four species of esrog, lulav, hadassim and aravos correspond to those individuals with both Torah and good deeds, those with only one or the other, and those with neither. Commensurate with one's accomplishments is His divine providence.

With the above teaching we can now understand and appreciate the teaching of the gemarah (Menachos 37b) which identifies that the tefillin on one's head is to be worn on the high part of the head. The Talmud asks what is the source that the tefillin are to be donned above one's hairline and opposite the space between one's eyes? The answer given is a gezara shava, one of the thirteen rules by which the Torah is expounded. When similar words are used in two independent laws, there is a Sinaitic tradition that they are meant to shed light one upon the other. The Torah in parshas Bo (13:16) mandates that tefillin be "between your eyes", and the Torah teaches (Devarim 14:1) regarding a mourner "you shall not make a bold spot between your eyes for the dead". In both places the Torah mentions the space between your eyes; the gezara shava teaches that just as regarding a mourner it must refer to the high part of the head, a scalp, as that is the place to potentially make a bold spot, so too regarding the tefillin the Torah mandates that it be placed on the high part of the head.

I believe the above cited gemarah is teaching a great deal more than where to place the tefillin; the Talmud is teaching an important philosophical lesson of the tefillin. In the very place that others would rip out their hair in an expression of despair and helplessness over the death of a loved one, our Holy Torah directs us to place the tefillin, a symbol of our faith in God, who in His Divine Providence controls and directs everything. Thus, the tefillin which contain the oneness of G-d as found in the Shema and the exodus from Egypt bolster the belief and faith of the Jew, enabling him to accept and appreciate all that Hashem does. The gezara shava not only explains the where of the Tefillin, but the why as well.

Copyright © 2013 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

From TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>
To weeklydt@torahweb2.org

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin
The TorahWeb Foundation
The Black Box That Tells the Whole Story

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org & genesis@torah.org
To ravfrand@torah.org
Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Bo

The Lesson To Be Learned From The Reward Of The Dogs

The Yalkut Shimoni [Siman 187] quotes the following story: Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa had a disciple named Rabbi Yeshaya who fasted 85 days because he could not understand the interpretation of a certain rabbinic teaching.

The Rabbis taught that the dogs (referenced in the story of the Exodus) will one day sing a Song: "Let us all go and bow down in front of Hashem our Creator." Rabbi Yeshaya was troubled by the fact that according to rabbinic teaching, dogs are very brazen. They are called azzei nefesh [brazen of spirit]. Therefore, why did dogs merit to be able to sing the above referenced Shirah?

[As an aside, let us ask ourselves: Have we in our life ever fasted because we did not understand a particular teaching? If I would fast for every Medrash that I do not understand, I would probably weight 90 pounds!]

This perplexing Yalkut Shimoni continues... An Angel came down from Heaven and asked him: "Yeshaya, for how long are you going to fast? It is a decree from the Almighty, from the day He revealed this secret to the prophet Chabakuk, He never revealed it to any creature in the world. But since you are a disciple of a great person (Rav Chanina ben Dosa), I have been authorized from Heaven to tell you the secret: Since the pasuk teaches that when the Jews came out from Egypt, the dogs did not bark [Shmos 11:7], they will be rewarded in this way that they will sing Shirah."

This Medrash is difficult to understand on many levels:

What does it mean, because they did not bark, they can say the Shirah? Why was this such a "state secret" that the last person who knew it was Chabakuk and it was only because of his great merit that an Angel was sent to Rav Chanina ben Dosa's disciple to reveal the secret to him? What does this mean?

I am going to suggest something that is partially based on an interpretation I saw in the Sefer Otzros HaTorah.

One of the things the Almighty hid from mankind is the reward for the various commandments. We do not know what reward is given for which mitzvah. [The two exceptions are Honoring One's parents (Kibud Av v'Em) and the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird (Shiluach haKen).] The reason is simple – if everyone knew the reward given for each mitzvah, then people would pick the mitzvahs that have a good "return on investment" and would neglect the others. The Angel revealed the following to Rav Yeshaya: "The more difficult a mitzvah is for you, the greater reward you will get for it" (I'fum tza'rah agra). On a personal level, a person will receive the greatest reward for the thing that he finds the most difficult to do.

Some people can sit in front of a Gemara for 3 hours at a time and they do not even look up at a clock. There are others who sit at a Daf Gemara and after twenty minutes they start squirming and looking at what time it is. Some people are naturally generous. For them to give away their money is as easy as falling off a log. Some people have a lot of money, but they are naturally stingy. This is the way it works with all mitzvahs, with every experience. In the area in which we find that it is most difficult to personally serve G-d, that is where we will find our greatest reward from working against our evil inclination and properly serving Him in that area!

We all know that dogs bark. They have an intuitive sense of when something is scary. On the night of the Exodus, there was a great cry in Egypt. Everyone was screaming and yet the dogs kept quiet. They went against their natural tendencies. That is why they will merit saying Shirah. Since they conquered their evil inclination in an area that was very difficult, they will be rewarded with the opportunity to sing praises to the Almighty. They will get to recite "Come let us bow down and prostrate ourselves before Hashem our Creator."

The dogs did something that all of us need to learn to do and that is to battle with our evil inclination precisely in the area which is most difficult for us, based on our natural tendencies.

Elevating The Physical: A Jew's Goal In Life

At the end of Parshas Bo, the Sforno says about the mitzvah of Pidyon HaBen that the reason a father redeems his first born son is "in order that the son will be permitted to engage in non-sacrificial work (avodas chol)". This is a novel idea. He writes that when we redeem our first born son, we are de-sanctifying him, so to speak. The implication is that until the "redemption" takes place, the first born is holy. This would parallel the law of a first born animal, who indeed is holy until it is redeemed and is indeed not allowed to be used for any type of labor or mundane purpose. Theoretically, this would mean that if a first born child never had a Pidyon HaBen, no one could ask him to do anything. He would be a "sacred cow" – or at least a "sacred son".

Rav Yaakov Kamenesky asks – if that is the case then why is there such great celebration when one makes a Pidyon HaBen? Here is a boy – holy from the womb. The father gives the Kohen 5 silver shekel and tells him "this is in place of my son". The transfer is made and now the father can take the son home and the son will be able to take out the garbage. Someone who had been holy is now profaned. Where is the joy here?

Rav Yaakov asks a second question. The text of the Pidyon ritual is that the Kohen, after receiving the money from the father states the following formula: "This is instead of that; this is in exchange for that; this is pardoned because of that. May this son enter into life, into Torah and into Fear of Heaven. May it be Your will that just as he has entered into this redemption, so may he enter into the Torah, the marriage canopy, and good deeds." Now the latter portion of this formula is exactly analogous to the statement made at the Bris of a son when we say "...just as he has entered into the Covenant, so may he enter into the Torah, the marriage canopy, and good deeds." However, what is the significance of the earlier statement: "May this son enter into life, into Torah and into Fear of Heaven"?

Rav Yaakov answers that there is a basic difference between Judaism and other religions. Other religions believe that there is a dichotomy – an unbridgeable gap – between the holy and the secular. There is physical (gashmiyus) and there is spiritual (ruchniyus) and never the twain shall meet. That is why many religions look at the pleasures of life as 'treife', as an indulgence to man's physical side. If one wants to really be holy, he must be celibate.

Judaism takes the opposite position. The goal of living an ideal Jewish life is to sanctify the physical aspect of life. "With all your ways you should know Him" [Mishlei 3:6]. A person's eating and sleeping and bodily pleasures can all become part of the service of the Master of the Universe. This is the highest form of spiritual life.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that the book of Vayikra opens with a treatment of the various sacrifices (korbonos). The last sacrifice discussed is the animal tithe. Ma'aser beheima is a korbon, but it is not eaten by the Kohen, it is eaten by the Israelite. It is thus possible for a regular Jew, not of the priestly class, to eat a juicy steak as an act of piety and sanctity.

The only sacrifice that an Akum is allowed to bring is a burnt offering (korbon olah) – which is entirely consumed on the altar. He cannot eat meat as an act of Service to G-d. There is a total dichotomy between his spiritual activity and his physical activity. However, not only is this a recognized form of our Divine service – "elevating the physical," in Judaism, it is the highest form of spirituality.

For this reason, Rav Yaakov writes, Pidyon HaBen is a Simcha. Until this moment, the child was entirely sacred. Now we redeem him so he can engage in secular activity (avodas chol). But he now has the

opportunity to take this avodas chol – those mundane acts – and make them holy.

It is for this reason also, adds Rav Yaakov, that we add the words "May this son enter into life, into Torah and into Fear of Heaven (Yiras Shamayim)". The only way to bridge the gap of the spiritual and the physical is through Torah and Fear of Heaven. The little baby was entirely holy. We take him and make him profane, but we still expect him to be a holy person by entering into a life of Torah and Yiras Shamayim.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>
reply-To neustadt@torah.org, genesis@torah.org
To weekly-halacha@torah.org
Subject Weekly Halacha
by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)
Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Birkas ha-Mazon

I had some cake and meant to say Al ha-michyah but mistakenly I bentsched instead. Do I still need to recite Al ha-michyah?

No, you do not. B'diavad, you have fulfilled your obligation of Al ha-michyah through bentsching. This holds true even if you said only the first bracha of bentsching (until hazan es hakol); you do not continue the rest of bentsching nor do you recite Al ha-michyah.

What about the reverse: I washed and ate bread, and by mistake I said Al ha-michyah. Do I still need to bentsch?

The poskim debate this question extensively, and since no clear consensus emerges, one should be extra careful not to make such a mistake. If, however, this mishap occurs, the proper thing to do is to wash again and eat another k'zayis of bread and then recite the full bentsching. If for some reason one cannot do so, he may rely on the lenient views and not bentsch.

Am I required to recite Birkas ha-mazon in the exact spot where I ate or may I bentsch anywhere in the room?

Many poskim hold that even l'chatchilah one may recite Birkas ha-mazon anywhere in the room in which he ate, even if the room is so large that he cannot see the spot where he ate from where he presently is. The halachah follows this view. Still, a minority opinion holds that whenever possible, one should bentsch in the exact place where he ate.

This halachah applies to a meal eaten indoors. If, however, a meal is eaten outdoors, e.g., a picnic, birkas ha-mazon must be recited at the exact spot where the meal was eaten or, when necessary, within four amos of that place.

If one finished eating, forgot to bentsch, and left the premises, must he return to where he ate in order to recite birkas ha-mazon?

If, by the time he remembers to bentsch, the food has already started to become digested, i.e., he no longer feels full, he can no longer recite birkas ha-mazon. [Although many poskim mention seventy-two minutes as the time when digestion begins, in reality, this time frame depends on each individual's digestive system and on the amount of food that he ate. Thus, a better method to determine the onset of digestion is when one no longer feels full from the previous meal and is ready to eat again.]

But one who remembers to bentsch before the food has begun to be digested is obligated to bentsch even though he is no longer at the premises where he ate. The Rishonim, however, disagree on whether or not the halachah requires him to return to where he ate in order to bentsch, or whether he may bentsch at his present location. Whenever possible, therefore, one should make every effort to quickly return to the place where he ate and bentsch. But under extenuating circumstances one may rely on the lenient opinions and bentsch wherever he finds herself at the time he remembered to bentsch.

There are two exceptions to the above rule: 1) If by the time he will return to the place where he ate, more than seventy-two minutes will have passed from the time he finished eating, he should bentsch immediately and not go back. 2) If there is bread available at the place where he presently finds herself, he need not return to the place where he ate originally. Instead, he should wash her hands (without reciting al netilas yadayim), recite ha-motzi, eat (at least) a small amount of bread (even less than a k'zayis) and then recite birkas ha-mazon. If one finished eating mezonos, wine or the fruits of shiv'as ha-minim, and then forgot to recite the appropriate bracha acharonah (Al ha-michyah, etc.) and left the premises, must he return to where he ate in order to recite the brachah acharonah?

If he can return to where he ate without undue delay, he should do so. Otherwise, he may be lenient and recite the appropriate blessing in her present location.

However, when one eats foods whose bracha acharona is borei nefashos, he need not return to where he ate if he left without reciting a bracha acharona (But l'chatchilah he should not leave the location where he ate until after reciting borei nefashos); instead, he recites borei nefashos at her present location.

Are women obligated in the mitzvah of zimun?

If a woman ate a meal together with at least three other men, she is obligated to join in the zimun together with them. She may not leave the table until the zimun takes place, and if, for some reason, she must leave temporarily, the men should wait for her to return to the table in order to proceed with the zimun.

Three or more women who ate a meal together may recite the zimun for themselves if they wish, but they are under no obligation to do so. [Ten or more women who join together for a meal may recite the zimun for themselves if they wish, but they are not permitted to recite the word "Elokeinu" during the zimun.] For undetermined reasons, this optional zimun is not practiced today among the Ashkenazim

In all other cases, such as two women and a man, or two men and a woman eating together (or nine men and a woman eating together who would like to recite the zimun with Elokeinu), it is forbidden to recite the zimun.

Weekly-Halacha, Weekly Halacha, Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org.

Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com

From Yeshiva.org.il <subscribe@yeshiva.org.il>

reply-To subscribe@yeshiva.org.il

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Saying Amen to my own Beracha By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The beracha of Ga'al Yisrael, which commemorates our Exodus from Egypt, is one of the blessings whose laws are discussed in this article, and therefore this topic is very appropriate for parshas Bo.

Question #1:

“Why do Ashkenazim recite "amen" after the beracha of Bonei Yerushalayim, but not after any other beracha that we recite?”

Question #2:

“Why do Sephardim follow a different practice? And, why do they appear to be inconsistent?”

Question #3:

“Someone once told me that some authorities rule that one may recite “amen” after reciting the beracha of Ga'al Yisrael right before Shemoneh Esrei, and that this does not constitute an interruption. Can this possibly be true?”

Answer:

The Gemara (Berachos 45b) quotes two apparently contradictory statements whether one should recite "amen" after one's own beracha; one Beraisa stating that it is meritorious to do so, and the other frowning on the practice. To quote the Gemara:

"It was taught in one source, 'Someone who responds "Amen" after his own blessings is praiseworthy,' whereas another source states it is shameful to do this." The Gemara explains that the two statements do not conflict, but refer to two different situations. The Beraisa that declares that it is praiseworthy to recite amen after one's own blessing is referring to reciting amen after reciting the beracha Bonei Yerushalayim in bensching, whereas the Beraisa that asserts that reciting amen after one's own beracha is shameful refers to someone reciting amen after any other beracha. The halacha concludes that one who completes a beracha at the same time as the chazzan or anyone else may not recite amen to the other person's beracha, since, in doing so, he recites amen to his own beracha. For example, when reciting Baruch She'amar, if one completes the beracha at the same moment as the chazzan, one may not recite amen (Elyah Rabbah 51:2).

Why Bonei Yerushalayim?

What is unique about the beracha Bonei Yerushalayim that one may recite "amen" after one's own beracha?

The Rishonim note that it is not the beracha Bonei Yerushalayim that makes its law special; rather, it is its location, as the last of the three main berachos of birchas hamazon. (Although there is still another beracha afterwards, this last beracha is not part of the series, since it was added later. The fourth beracha of birchas hamazon, which Chazal call Hatov vehameitiv, was added hundreds of years after the Anshei Kenesses Hagedolah wrote the rest of the birchas hamazon as a commemorative to the burial of those who had fallen in the destruction of Beitar. This is a topic that I will leave for a different time.

Because it is not part of the series, it begins with a full beracha "Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech HaOlam," whereas berachos that are part of a series do not begin with these words [Pesachim 104b].) Reciting amen after Bonei Yerushalayim demonstrates the completion of a series of berachos (Rambam, Hilchos Berachos 1:17, 18). On the other hand, reciting amen after one's own beracha any other time implies that one has completed a unit, which is not true (Rabbeinu Yonah). We find a similar idea that upon completing the pesukei dezimra where we repeat the last pasuk (both at the end of Chapter 150 and at the end of Az Yashir) to demonstrate that this section has now been concluded (see Tur, Orach Chayim Chapter 51).

Is Bonei Yerushalayim unique or simply an example of the last beracha of a sequence? If the latter is true, are there other instances when it is praiseworthy to recite amen to your own beracha at the closing of a sequence?

Rashi, in his comments to the above Gemara, indeed mentions that one concludes "amen" after reciting the last beracha of the birchos kerias

shema, those berachos that surround the daily kerias shema that we recite every morning and evening. These two “concluding” berachos -- Ga'al Yisrael in the morning, Shomer Amo Yisrael La'ad in the evening -- would then both be followed by the word “amen” to indicate the end of the series. (The beracha that begins with the words Baruch Hashem Le'olam, recited after Shomer Amo Yisrael La'ad on weekdays by Nusach Ashkenaz outside Eretz Yisrael, is a later addition added in the times of the Geonim, and technically not part of the birchos kerias shema.) Many other Rishonim advise reciting amen at the end of any sequence of berachos, adding to Rashi's list also Yishtabach, considered to be the end of a "sequence" of two berachos that begins with Baruch She'amar; and the closing beracha of Hallel, considered the sequel to the beracha beginning Hallel (quoted by the Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 66). Rabbeinu Hai Gaon goes even further, advising the recital of amen after every “after blessing,” considering it the end of a series begun with the beracha recited before (cited by Rabbeinu Yonah).

Ashkenazim all realize that there is something more to the story.

Whereas Ashkenazim always complete the beracha of Bonei Yerushalayim with amen, we do not follow this procedure for any of the other berachos mentioned. This specific practice is very old and is already mentioned by Tosafos.

To explain this practice, we will first see what other Rishonim have to say about it. For example, although accepting the premise that we may recite amen following the last beracha of a series, the Rambam appears to dispute what we have quoted above as to what is considered a succession. He appears to hold that if anything interrupts in the middle, the berachos are no longer considered a series – thus, Yishtabach, the latter beracha of Hallel and the beracha of Ga'al Yisrael are not considered the ends of series, although the berachos immediately before kerias shema are (see Hilchos Berachos 1:17, 18, as explained by Beis Yosef). The pesukim recited in the middle break up the succession, and therefore one should not recite amen. Those who dispute with the Rambam contend that both Yishtabach and the ending beracha of Hallel are considered the end of a series, since they connect back to the original beracha.

How do we rule?

The Shulchan Aruch, reflecting Sefardic halachic practice, rules a compromise position; contending that after Yishtabach one may add amen after his own beracha, but one is not required to do so (Orach Chayim 51:3). It is curious to note that in another place (Orach Chayim 215:1), the Shulchan Aruch mentions that Sefardic custom is to recite amen after Yishtabach and the last beracha of Hallel, and the Rama there notes that, according to the Shulchan Aruch's conclusion, one should also recite amen after concluding the beracha Shomer Amo Yisrael La'ad, the last beracha of the evening kerias shema series.

Although Ashkenazim agree that one may recite amen after these berachos, we usually do not do so. However, if one hears the closing of someone else's beracha when completing one of these berachos, one answers amen to the other person's beracha (Elyah Rabbah 51:2). Thus, we see that there is a qualitative difference between berachos that complete a sequence and those that do not. After the first group, one may recite amen after his own beracha, whereas after the second group, one may not.

However, we have still not answered the original question: Why single out the beracha Bonei Yerushalayim? If, indeed, one may recite amen after the last beracha of any series to signify that the series is completed, why does the Gemara mention this halacha only regarding the beracha Bonei Yerushalayim? And, furthermore, why is the prevalent Ashkenazic custom to recite amen, almost as if it is part of the beracha, only after the beracha Bonei Yerushalayim, but not after other closing berachos? Both of these questions can be answered by studying a different passage of Gemara (Berachos 45b), which cites a dispute between Abayei and

Rav Ashi as to whether the word amen recited following Bonei Yerushalayim should be said aloud. Abayei used to recite this amen aloud, in order to let everyone know that he had completed the first three berachos of birchas hamazon. He did so in order to remind workers employed by other people that it was time for them to return diligently to work. That is, although Chazal had instituted a fourth beracha to birchas hamazon, they specifically exempted those working for others from reciting this beracha, thereby emphasizing the responsibility of an employee to his employer to observe a full day of work. (In today's environment, where it is assumed that workers take off for coffee and rest breaks during the workday, an employee is required to recite the fourth beracha of birchas hamazon.) Abayei recited "amen" aloud at the end of the third beracha so that everyone would realize that the fourth beracha is not part of the series and is treated differently.

Rav Ashi, on the other hand, deliberately recited amen softly, so that people would not treat the fourth beracha with disrespect. It appears that the practice of reciting amen after the third beracha of Bonei Yerushalayim is a carryover of Abayei's practice – that is, we choose to emphasize that the fourth beracha is not min haTorah.

At this point, we understand the laws applicable to whether one recites amen after Bonei Yerushalayim, Yishtabach, Shomer Amo Yisrael La'ad, and the end of Hallel. Sefardim recite amen after all these berachos. Ashkenazim hold that this is permitted, but do so only when reciting amen to someone else's beracha at the same time.

However, the Beis Yosef and other early Sefardic authorities note what appears to be an inconsistency in Sefardic practice: whereas they recite amen after the above-mentioned list of berachos, they do not do so after other series of berachos, such as the morning berachos, or sheva berachos. The answer is that a series for our purposes means a group of berachos connected into a unit in a way that it is forbidden to interrupt between them. Thus, although morning berachos, and the berachos of sheva berachos are recited as a group, they are technically not a unit. The designation of a group of berachos as a unit is limited to cases where one may not interrupt between the berachos, such as in Hallel, pesukei dezimra, birchos kerias shema and birchos hamazon