



BS"D

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

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BO - 5774

In our 19th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahogroups.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.

**Sponsored in memory of
Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov**

Sponsored by **Isaac & Frieda Schlesinger** and family
in memory of
Simcha Ika Bas Reb Shmuel Smelka a"h

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

<http://www.rabbisacks.org/>
Covenant & Conversation
**Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British
Commonwealth

The Far Horizon

To gain insight into the unique leadership lesson of this week's parsha, I often ask an audience to perform a thought-experiment. Imagine you are the leader of a people that has suffered exile for more than two centuries, and has been enslaved and oppressed. Now, after a series of miracles, it is about to go free. You assemble them and rise to address them. They are waiting expectantly for your words. This is a defining moment they will never forget. What will you speak about?

Most people answer: freedom. That was Abraham Lincoln's decision in the Gettysburg Address when he invoked the memory of "a new nation, conceived in liberty," and looked forward to "a new birth of freedom." Some suggest that they would inspire the people by talking about the destination that lay ahead, the "land flowing with milk and honey." Yet others say they would warn the people of the dangers and challenges that they would encounter on what Nelson Mandela called "the long walk to freedom."

Any of these would have been the great speech of a great leader. Guided by God, Moses did none of these things. That is what made him a unique leader. If you examine the text in parshat Bo you will see that three times he reverted to the same theme: children, education and the distant future.

And when your children ask you, "What do you mean by this rite?" you shall say, "It is the passover sacrifice to the Lord, because He passed

over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses." (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, "It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage." (Ex. 13: 14)

It is one of the most counter-intuitive acts in the history of leadership. Moses did not speak about today or tomorrow. He spoke about the distant future and the duty of parents to educate their children. He even hinted – as Jewish tradition understood – that we should encourage our children to ask questions, so that the handing on of the Jewish heritage would be not a matter of rote learning but of active dialogue between parents and children.

So Jews became the only people in history to predicate their very survival on education. The most sacred duty of parents was to teach their children. Pesach itself became an ongoing seminar in the handing on of memory. Judaism became the religion whose heroes were teachers and whose passion was study and the life of the mind. The Mesopotamians built ziggurats. The Egyptians built pyramids. The Greeks built the Parthenon. The Romans built the Coliseum. Jews built schools. That is why they alone, of all the civilizations of the ancient world are still alive and strong, still continuing their ancestors' vocation, their heritage intact and undiminished.

Moses' insight was profound. He knew that you cannot change the world by externalities alone, by monumental architecture, or armies and empires, or the use of force and power. How many empires have come and gone while the human condition remains untransformed and unredeemed?

There is only one way to change the world, and that is by education. You have to teach children the importance of justice, righteousness, kindness and compassion. You have to teach them that freedom can only be sustained by the laws and habits of self-restraint. You have continually to remind them of the lessons of history, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt," because those who forget the bitterness of slavery eventually lose the commitment and courage to fight for freedom. And you have to empower children to ask, challenge and argue. You have to respect them if they are to respect the values you wish them to embrace.

This is a lesson most cultures still have not learned after more than three thousand years. Revolutions, protests and civil wars still take place, encouraging people to think that removing a tyrant or having a democratic election will end corruption, create freedom, and lead to justice and the rule of law – and still people are surprised and disappointed when it does not happen. All that happens is a change of faces in the corridors of power.

In one of the great speeches of the twentieth century, a distinguished American justice, Judge Learned Hand, said:

I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.[1]

What God taught Moses was that the real challenge does not lie in gaining freedom; it lies in sustaining it, keeping the spirit of liberty alive in the hearts of successive generations. That can only be done through a sustained process of education. Nor is this something that can be delegated away to teachers and schools. Some of it has to take place within the family, at home, and with the sacred obligation that comes from religious duty. No one ever saw this more clearly than Moses, and only because of his teachings have Jews and Judaism survived.

What makes leaders great is that they think ahead, worrying not about tomorrow but about next year, or the next decade, or the next generation. In one of his finest speeches Robert F. Kennedy spoke of the power of

leaders to transform the world when they have a clear vision of a possible future:

Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills -- against misery, against ignorance, or injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young monk began the Protestant reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and 32 year old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal. 'Give me a place to stand,' said Archimedes, 'and I will move the world.' These men moved the world, and so can we all."^[2]

Visionary leadership forms the text and texture of Judaism. It was the book of Proverbs that said, "Without a vision [chazon] the people perish." (Prov. 29: 18). That vision in the minds of the prophets was always of a long term future. God told Ezekiel that a prophet is a watchman, one who climbs to a high vantage-point and so can see the danger in the distance, before anyone else is aware of it at ground level (Ezek. 33: 1-6). The sages said, "Who is wise? One who sees the long-term consequences [ha-nolad]."^[3] Two of the greatest leaders of the twentieth century, Churchill and Ben Gurion, were also distinguished historians. Knowing the past, they could anticipate the future. They were like chess masters who, because they have studied thousands of games, recognise almost immediately the dangers and possibilities in any configuration of the pieces on the board. They know what will happen if you make this move or that.

If you want to be a great leader in any field, from Prime Minister to parent, it is essential to think long-term. Never choose the easy option because it is simple or fast or yields immediate satisfaction. You will pay a high price in the end.

Moses was the greatest leader because he thought further ahead than anyone else. He knew that real change in human behaviour is the work of many generations. Therefore we must place as our highest priority educating our children in our ideals so that what we begin they will continue until the world changes because we have changed. He knew that if you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for a decade, plant a tree. If you plan for posterity, educate a child.^[4] Moses' lesson, thirty-three centuries old, is still compelling today.

[1] "The Spirit of Liberty" - speech at "I Am an American Day" ceremony, Central Park, New York City (21 May 1944).

[2] The Kennedys: America's Front Page Family, 112.

[3] Tamid 32a.

[4] A statement attributed to Confucius.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit www.rabbisacks.org.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Jan 2, 2014

Parshat Bo: **Unnecessary Roughness?**

Excerpted from **Rabbi Shmuel Goldin's 'Unlocking The Torah Text: An In-Depth Journey Into The Weekly Parsha-Context**

As the intensity of the afflictions increases over the course of the plagues, Pharaoh offers three compromise positions to Moshe and the Israelites: worship your God in Egypt, depart Egypt temporarily with some of the people while others remain, depart Egypt temporarily with

the entire nation but leave your cattle behind. Moshe emphatically rejects each compromise in turn. The second of these potential compromises appears towards the beginning of Parshat Bo, in the following puzzling conversation between Moshe and Pharaoh: Pharaoh: "Go and worship your Lord! Who are they that shall go?" Moshe: "With our young and with our old we will go! With our sons and with our daughters! With our sheep and with our cattle! For it is a festival of the Lord for us!"

Questions

How can Pharaoh ask, after all that has taken place, "Who are they that shall go?" Hasn't God made it abundantly clear that He demands the release of the entire people? Why, in addition, does Moshe answer Pharaoh in such confrontational fashion? He could simply have said, We all must go. Why risk further antagonizing the king with the unnecessarily detailed proclamation "With our young and with our old we will go...?"

Approaches

A Much more is taking place in this conversation than initially meets the eye. The negotiation between Moshe and Pharaoh overlays a monumental confrontation between two towering civilizations, as Pharaoh and his court begin to face, with growing understanding, the true nature of the new culture destined to cause Egypt's downfall.

B Pharaoh is, in reality, being neither deliberately obtuse nor intentionally confrontational when he raises the question "Who are they that shall go?" His response to Moshe is, in fact, abundantly reasonable in light of Moshe's original request of the king. As we have already noted, God did not instruct Moshe to demand complete freedom for the Israelites. From the very outset, the appeal to the king was, instead, to be, "Let us go for a three-day journey into the wilderness that we may bring offerings to the Lord our God." (See Shmot 4.) In response to that request Pharaoh now argues: All right, I give in! You have my permission to take a three-day holiday for the purpose of worshipping your Lord. Let us, however, speak honestly. Moshe, you and I both know that religious worship in any community remains the responsibility and the right of a select few. Priests, elders, sorcerers – they are the ones in whose hands the ritual responsibility of the whole people are placed. Therefore I ask you, "Who are they that shall go?" Who from among you will represent the people in the performance of this desert ritual? Let me know, provide me with the list and they will have my permission to leave.

C Moshe's emphatic response is now understandable, as well: You still don't get it, Pharaoh. There is a new world a-borning and we will no longer be bound by the old rules. No longer will religious worship remain the purview of a few chosen elect. A nation is coming into existence that will teach the world that religious participation is open to all. "With our young and with our old we will go, with our sons and with our daughters...." No one and nothing is to be left behind; our "festival of the Lord" will only be complete if all are present and involved.

D Moshe's ringing proclamation reminds us that the Exodus narrative chronicles not only a people's bid for freedom, but the beginning of a new chapter in the relationship between God and man. Step by step, a nation is forged that will be based upon personal observance, study and spiritual quest – a nation that will teach the world of every human being's right and responsibility to actively relate to his Creator. With the Exodus and the subsequent Revelation at Sinai, the rules will change forever. The birth of Judaism will open religious worship and practice to all.

From Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-To: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com To: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> Subject: [Rav Kook List]

Rav Kook List Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Bo: The Exodus and Tefillin

The Torah commands us to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt by wearing tefillin (phylacteries) on the arm and head. "These words will be for a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes, so that God's Torah will be in your mouth; for God brought you out of Egypt with a strong arm." (Ex. 13:9) What is the connection between tefillin and the Exodus? How does wearing tefillin ensure that the Torah will be 'in our mouths'?

An Outstretched Arm Superficially, the redemption from Egypt was a one-time historical event, forging a potent memory in the collective consciousness of the Jewish people and all of humanity. But if we listen carefully to our inner soul, we will recognize that the Exodus is truly a continuous, ongoing act. The Divine miracles and signs that took place in Egypt launched the continual revelation of the hand of God, openly and publicly, on the stage of world history. The Exodus was an outburst of Divine light, potent and vibrant, in all realms of the universe, and its impact continues to resonate throughout the ages. Before wrapping tefillin on the arm, we reflect that this mitzvah commemorates God's "zero'a netuya," His "outstretched arm" with which the Israelites were extracted from Egypt. What does this metaphor mean? The word 'arm' (zero'a) comes from the root zera, meaning 'seed.' The Divine redemption of Israel in Egypt was a holy seed, planted at that point in time. That wondrous event initiated the dissemination of its message, unhindered and uninterrupted, over the generations. As we bind the tefillin to our arms, we are reminded of God's "outstretched arm," the inner Godliness that continually develops and perfects the world, until it elevates its treasures of life to the pinnacle of Divine fulfillment.

A Strong Arm The Torah uses a second metaphor to describe the Exodus - the "yad chazakah," God's "strong arm." This phrase indicates a second, deeper connection between the mitzvah of tefillin and the Exodus. The liberation from Egyptian bondage served to combat the debasement of life, which threatened to drown humanity in the depths of its crassness and vulgarity. Since the materialistic side of life is so compelling, it was necessary for God to reveal a "strong arm" to overcome our base nature, and allow the light of our inner holiness to shine from within. The holy act of fastening the tefillin to the arm and head helps us transform the coarse and profane aspects of life into strength and vitality, revealing an inner life beautiful in its holiness. To triumph over humanity's coarseness, then at its peak in the contaminated culture of Egypt, required God's "strong arm." We similarly need to make a strong effort so that the Torah will remain in our minds and hearts. Tefillin are called a 'sign' and a 'reminder,' for they evoke the wondrous signs and powerful miracles of our release from Egyptian slavery. We must engrave the legacy of those miracles on all aspects of life: deed, emotion, and thought. Thus we bind these memories to our hand, heart, and mind, and transform our coarse nature to a holy one. Then the Torah will naturally be "in your mouth," in the thoughts and reflections of the heart. Through this powerful mitzvah, engaging both the arm (our actions) and the eye (our outlook and thoughts), we continue the Divine process that God initiated in Egypt with a "strong arm." (Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 118-120. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 26-27,39) Comments and inquiries may be sent to: <mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com>

from Shabbat Shalom <postmaster@ou.2dialog.com> reply-to
shabbatshalom@ou.org to internetparshasheet@gmail.com
date Thu, Jan 6, 2011 at 11:32 PM

Rabbi Weinreb's Torah Column, Parshas Bo
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Sometimes we feel inspired. We may be working hard, but we don't seem to mind, because we love the work we are doing and believe in it.

Our objectives are based on our heartfelt convictions, and our labors are consistent with our deepest attitudes. No task feels onerous, because time flies by and we have a constant feeling of accomplishment.

This sense that everything is just right and the ability to do all that is expected of us effectively and enjoyably is called "flow" by some psychologists. One such psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, has written a book entitled Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience, where he reports his research on this vital feeling of how the work we do conforms with our innermost beliefs and highest principles.

Other times, however, there is also a very different manner in which we work. We feel unhappy with our jobs not merely because they are difficult, boring, or stressful, but because we don't really want to be doing what we are required to do. We perform out of a sense of obedience and duty, but we would rather that someone else take up our task.

In this instance, we often do not feel competent to perform our labors. We are certain that there are others much more capable than we are who could do much better. We feel unworthy and uncertain of our success.

In reading the recent Torah portions, this week's (Bo) and last week's (Shemot), we encounter one man, Moses, working very hard at some complex and almost impossible tasks: leading the Jewish people and challenging Pharaoh to free them.

I often ask myself about Moses' inner experience while carrying out his mission. Are his feelings like the first set of emotions described above? Does he feel inspired, happy, eager? Does he experience this sense of "flow"? Or does he find himself reluctant, uncomfortable, and perhaps even feel awkward, at least at times?

Does he experience thrill in his comings and goings into Pharaoh's royal court? Is he excited by the words he finds to challenge Pharaoh and to debate with him? Or does he approach these experiences with trepidation and suffer in agony as each successive attempt to free his people is disturbed?

There is a transition, in this week's Torah readings, in Moses' role. Moses' initial role is being an advocate for freedom, but by the end of the Parsha, he becomes a law giver and teacher as well. And his role further expands to that of master of logistics and desert travel guide as he prepares his people for their journey and embarks upon it.

Is Moses in "flow"? Or is he struggling inwardly with reluctance, resistance, and perhaps even resentment?

The answer lies in Moses' initial reaction to his assignment, in his ongoing expressions throughout his life, in his disappointments with his people, and in his willingness to shed his leadership role.

Initially, he asks God to send another in his stead. He insists that his handicaps disqualify him from God's mission. He does not trust his people to respond to him, and he is certain that Pharaoh will mock him. He never, even at the end of his life, seems comfortable with his many tasks.

What, then, does motivate Moses to stand before Pharaoh, suffer his taunts, threaten him repeatedly, and teach his people lessons which they often do not wish to hear?

What motivates him is his sense of duty, his commitment to a life of responsibility. He models for us, for all of us, a life of obedience to a higher authority. He teaches us that we each have a vocation, a mission, a part to play in life's drama.

More importantly, he teaches us that our tasks will often be frustrating and painful. We may not experience "flow". Our careers may not go smoothly and may not bring us gratification. But we will, nevertheless, prevail if we recognize the truth of our calling and respond dutifully and faithfully, even if it doesn't "feel good".

Obedience is a major value in Judaism. It may not be trendy these days, but it was certainly the hallmark of the life of Moses, and we are all challenged to emulate him in our own lives.

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

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein
The Priveleges Of Age

Advancing years certainly have their effect. Physically it becomes more difficult to do the things that once one was able to easily accomplish. Light bulbs now refuse to be changed, items on the floor resist efforts to be picked up, print becomes smaller and less distinct and difficult senior moments of memory become routine.

King Solomon in Kohelet lists the infirmities of advancing age in brutal and vivid detail. Yet all of us pray for long life and years of great age. As the saying goes, it certainly beats the alternative. But all of this being said, I feel that there are certain unique privileges that come with the accumulation of decades. There are certain valuable privileges that inhere to one becoming elderly. An older person, though one may now be more restricted physically and functionally, one is freed of certain social and external inhibitions.

One no longer places the importance on fashionable style and clothing that one did in one's younger years. Most of the elderly are able to make peace with their social and monetary situation and the drive to accumulate more and more diminishes, though it never really disappears completely from us as long as we are alive.

Time plays a greater role than before and there often is a problem of how to fill it. The years of retirement are often years of boredom and are emotionally unrewarding. The challenge is to be able to exploit the advantages of age and disregard, to the extent possible, the problems and disadvantages that come with advancing years.

One of the privileges that I feel age bestows is the ability to be more honest and explicit with one's own self and opinions. The fact that one no longer really aspires to greater position and/or fame (certainly one wishes no more notoriety) frees one's mind from always having to be influenced by current political correctness and the oppressive hand of conformity.

I have often thought that the Lord delayed the challenge to Abraham of sacrificing Isaac until Abraham was of very advanced age. Even then according to many commentators and Midrash, Abraham was troubled by what the world would think of him and his message of monotheism if he committed this seemingly inexplicable act of murder.

Yet since this challenge occurred as the almost final challenge of his long career, the opinions of others and the public relations angle played less of a role in Abraham's decision to follow God's commandment no matter what. Age confers upon one the courage of conviction. And therefore opinions that one would keep to one's self in one's younger years for fear of unwanted controversy are more easily expressed publicly by those who have achieved substantial years.

It is not that one does not completely care what others think when one achieves the status of being elderly. It is rather that it means that it should be possible to gain a recognition of one's true self and a truthful expression of the experience of years lived and hopefully of the wisdom of life itself.

The Talmud recognizes the privileges of age in many respects. The Talmud itself says regarding the questioning of a certain opinion of one of the sages: "If wisdom is perhaps lacking, at least age and experience is present." There are many so-called retired people that I know who now

serve as consultants and guides for companies and younger entrepreneurs. Their experience and know-how are of enormous value and importance.

One of the great privileges of age is the knowledge of failure. No one passes through this world without experiencing moments, if not even years, of small reward and even of dismal failure. Unless one knows how to deal with failure, financial reverses, personal disappointments and family problems one is unlikely to record eventual success in these areas later in life.

It is ironic that younger generations are reticent to accept the advice and guidance that the elderly are willing to give them. Most people somehow resent being told what and how to do things. Yet the elderly are an enormous resource for wisdom and the avoidance of error and often have a clearer perspective on life.

That is why Judaism emphasizes respect if not even homage to the elderly. It is no accident that most of the great leaders of the Jewish people and especially of the Torah world, in recent as well as past times, were people of age and experience.

Moshe begins his career at the age of eighty, hardly an age where any congregation in the world today would engage his services as a spiritual leader. Nevertheless the privileges of age are present, vital and important. They should certainly be exploited to the extent they can be, by society generally and families particularly.

Shabat shalom

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Bo

In this week's parsha the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt reaches one of its most climactic moments. Pharaoh finally succumbs to the pressures of the plagues and to the demands of Moshe and of the God of Israel. The last three plagues that are discussed in detail in this week's parsha are those of the locusts, darkness and the slaying of the firstborn. These plagues represent not only physical damages inflicted on the Egyptians but also, just as importantly, different psychological pressures that were exerted on Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

The plague of locusts destroyed the Egyptian economy, or whatever was left of it after the previous seven plagues. Economic disaster always has far-reaching consequences. Sometimes those results can be very positive, such as the recovery of the United States from the Great Depression. Sometimes they are very negative, as the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s could not have occurred if it were not for the economic crisis that enveloped the Weimar Republic.

Here the economic crisis engendered by the plague of locusts brings Egypt to its knees, so that it is only the unreasoning stubbornness of Pharaoh that keeps the drama going. The next plague of darkness is one that affects the individual. Cooped up in one's home, unable to move about, blinded by darkness unmatched in human experience, the individual Egyptian is forced to come to terms with his or her participation in the enslavement of the Jewish people.

For many people, being alone with one's self is itself a type of plague. It causes one to realize one's mortality and to reassess one's behavior in life. This is not always a pleasant experience. Most of the time it is a very wrenching and painful one.

The final plague of the death of the firstborn Egyptians, aside from the personal pain and tragedy involved, spoke to the future of Egyptian society. Without children no society can endure - and especially children

such as the firstborn, who are always meant to replace and carry on the work of their elders and previous generations. We all want to live in eternity and since we cannot do so physically we at least wish it to happen spiritually, emotionally and psychologically.

The plague that destroyed the Egyptian firstborn destroyed the hopes of eternity that were so central to Egyptian society. The tombs of the leaders of Egypt were always equipped with food and material goods to help these dead survive to the future. Even though this was a primitive expression of the hope for eternity it nevertheless powerfully represents to us the Egyptian mindset regarding such eternity.

By destroying the firstborn Egyptians, the Lord sounded the death knell for all of Egyptian society for the foreseeable future. It was this psychological pressure – which is one of the interpretations of the phrase that there was no house in Egypt that did not suffer from this terrible plague – that forced Pharaoh and his people to come to terms with their unjust enslavement of Israel and to finally succumb to the demands of Moshe and the God of Israel.

We should remember that all of these psychological pressures, even though they do not appear in our society as physical plagues, are still present and influential. The trauma of life is never ending.

Shabat shalom

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>

reply-to: ryfrand@torah.org,

to: ravfrand@torah.org

subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Bo

One Gains Holiness By Schlepping For Another Jew

In the description of the Exodus from Egypt, the Torah says: "And to all the children of Israel a dog did not wag its tongue." [Shmos 11:7] The Mechilta comments on this pasuk "That is why in the case of non-kosher meat, the Torah advises 'You shall throw it to the dogs' – to teach that G-d does not withhold reward from any creature." Since the dogs exercised restraint and did not bark when the Jews left Egypt, forever afterwards the Torah states that when there is an animal which died without being ritually slaughtered, the proper procedure is to throw it to the dogs. At the end of the parsha, the Torah talks about the mitzvah of redeeming first born animals (pidyon bechor). There is a mitzvah to redeem firstborns of humans and firstborns of Kosher animals. However, the firstborn of non-Kosher animals do not generally have any special holiness. However, there is a special procedure in the case of donkeys: Firstborn donkeys do have kedushas bechor (firstborn sanctity) and they should be redeemed with lambs; if they are not redeemed with lambs they should be decapitated. Rashi states that here too, the special procedure of Pidyon Peter Chamor was a reward for the donkeys that helped the Jews transport the gold and silver they took out from Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Donkeys are beasts of burden and Rashi says that each Jew left Egypt with several donkeys laden with booty. This can be seen as another instance of the same principle – G-d will not deny the reward of any creature. Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld asked the following question: Why do we not find the concept of "Kedushas Kelev" (Dog holiness), which would trigger a procedure to redeem first born dogs? Why is it that the donkeys were rewarded with sanctity and the dogs were given the scraps of treife meat? Rav Yosef Chaim says that we see from here that one who "schleps" (carries a burden) for someone else becomes holy. The dogs kept quiet. Fine. They were given a reward for that. But the donkeys "schlepped". That was hard work. That is a higher level of effort and for that they were rewarded with sanctity. One who helps another Jew becomes holy. If a donkey becomes holy for schlepping for a Jew, certainly a Jew will become even more holy for helping schlep for a fellow Jew.

Hidden Miracles

The Ramban's Chumash commentary is a storehouse of fundamental Jewish philosophical beliefs. There is a famous Ramban at the end of Parshas Bo which explains why the Torah contains so many commandments that commemorate the Exodus. To name just a few T'fillin, Mezuzah, Pessach, Succah, and Kiddush are all "zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim". The Ramban explains that the Exodus set the record straight and debunked all the myths that were prevalent in the world. Some argued that the Master of the Universe did not exist. Others admitted that there was a Creator, but after Creation, He decided not to have anything to do with the world anymore. Still others believed that G-d Knows what goes on in the world, but does not care about it. The Exodus contradicted all these theological errors. The miraculous unfolding of the events which led to the departure of the nation of slaves from the hands of the most powerful empire of its day proved that G-d created the world and still takes an active role in its direction, changing "nature" itself if it suits Him. This is why this historical event is so crucial for setting straight the "theological facts of life". Since G-d does not want to create open miracles on an ongoing basis, it was necessary to provide commandments that remind us of the "open miracles" that occurred in the past. The Ramban explains that from the belief in G-d's ability to create "open miracles" (in the past), a person will come to accept the concept of "hidden miracles" (that happen on a daily basis), which the Ramban calls the foundation of all of Torah. "For a person has no portion in the Torah of Moshe our teacher until he believes that everything that happens to us in all circumstances of life – whether private or public -- are all miracles." We need to believe that life itself is a miracle. The fact that I can stand here and talk and you can listen or the fact that the sun rises every morning in the eastern sky and sets every evening in the western sky is a miracle -- except that these "miracles" are disguised as "nature". We become used to these things because they have happened throughout all our lives and perhaps throughout all of history, but they are miraculous nonetheless.

I recently received the following letter. After hearing the above Ramban regarding "hidden miracles", I believe we can all have a greater appreciation of this letter and the story it tells:

"In the summer of 2004, Andrew and Sharon finally became engaged and asked me, their Rabbi from Bel-Air California, if I would officiate at their wedding. The ceremony was to take place on December 5, 2004. I told them I would be happy to officiate at their wedding provided they satisfied four basic requirements: (1) They are both Jewish; (2) The bride will go to the mikvah before the marriage; (3) The food at the wedding will be kosher; (4) Neither of them are currently married to another person and if they are currently married they must first obtain a Jewish divorce.

The couple agreed to the conditions, however "to be up front" Sharon told me that she had been married previously "but it was only for 6 hours and it was a mistake and I had the marriage annulled and I don't want to revisit it because it was a terrible mistake on my part."

I told her that in Judaism it does not matter if one is married for 6 hours or 6 years or 60 years -- one remains married until the death of the spouse or one obtains a Jewish divorce.

"But the courts annulled my marriage, Rabbi. Please understand. It was a mistake."

"I am sorry, you need a Get", I told her.

"Rabbi, what if I can't find the 'mistake'? Am I doomed forever?"

I told her "I will be there for you. Let's contact the Jewish courts in Los Angeles, and they will help us get through this dilemma."

It took several weeks. This first husband was finally tracked down. I got in touch with the Beis Din in Los Angeles. They arranged the Get and the Beis Din told Sharon, "Now that you have your Get, you can get married, but not before 92 days from today." [This is based on the law of 'havchana,' which requires a waiting period before remarriage to preclude

doubt regarding paternity issues of a child that may be born 7-9 months after the first marriage was terminated.]

The couple was now very distraught because this waiting period would push the wedding date past December 5th. All they could think about was their wedding plans, their honeymoon, their chosen dates. For days, they did not understand why they would have to wait until January 2005 before they could get married. But they finally agreed. After a few days, Andrew and Sharon called me back and told me that they wanted to do the wedding right in G-d's Eyes, so they began re-planning their wedding for January 23, 2005.

Still, in the back of their minds they could not understand why G-d was delaying their wedding. They could not understand that until December 26, 2004. Andrew and Sharon were supposed to be on the last days of their three week honeymoon in a luxury hotel on a romantic island in the Indian Ocean, which was totally swept away by the 12/26/2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which took almost a quarter of a million lives.

As Andrew said, "The best advice the Rabbi ever gave us was to follow the rules of G-d's Torah. He assured us that it would be a blessing for us in the end."

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

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
to: weekly@ohr.edu
subject: Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Bo
For the week ending 4 January 2014 / 3 Shevat 5774
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

Excuse Me - What Happens If I Press This Large Red Button...?

“And it shall be when your son will ask you at some future time, ‘What is this?’ — You will say to him, ‘With a strong hand G-d removed us from Egypt from the house of bondage’.” (13:14)

Every schoolboy's dream is to be invited into the cabin of a large airplane flying at 35,000 feet above an azure sea, sailing by fluffy cumulus clouds as high as the Empire State building. Sitting in the captain's seat, he watches the joystick being moved by some unseen hand as the autopilot eerily corrects the smallest deviation in the aircraft's correct "attitude".

But it's not only aircraft that need the correct attitude.

Imagine our young schoolboy turning to the pilot and nonchalantly asking, "Excuse me captain, but what is the purpose of the third green button in the fourth array of the second bank in the left hand rear panel above the co-pilot's seat?" The captain replies, "And the function of all the other 532 buttons in this cockpit are self-explanatory?! (He's probably a Jewish pilot.) You understand what every button, lever and dial does in this cockpit except for that one?!"

"And it shall be when your son will ask you at some future time, 'What is this?' — You will say to him, 'With a strong hand G-d removed us from Egypt from the house of bondage'."

Rashi says that the question "What is this?" characterizes the son as a fool. This appears to be problematic. For this exact same question: "What is this?" is asked by another son. The wise son. How can the same three words connote both foolishness and wisdom?

Imagine a different schoolboy in the cabin of that 747. He says to the pilot, "What an incredible array of buttons, levers and switches! It would be wonderful if you would tell me a little of what they all do..."

The wise son says "What is this?" to mean "What are these amazing buttons levers and switches by which we can affect ourselves and the world along with us?" He is asking that it be explained to him, as much as is possible, the laws, the statutes and the commandments of the Torah. When the foolish son says "What is this?" he is not impressing anyone

with his knowledge when he singles out one mitzvah. He is merely revealing his ignorance. His question reveals his belief that there's no one behind the control column. It's just the autopilot speaking.

Sources: Devarim 6:20; Rabbi Shimon Schwab in Ma'ayan Beit HaShoeva, heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter

© 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

There shall be a great outcry in the entire land of Egypt, such as there has never been and such as there shall never be again. But against Bnei Yisrael, no dog shall whet his tongue. (11:6,7)

There was a remarkable contrast of sound that fateful night in Egypt. The Egyptian firstborn were dying amid a cacophony of weeping throughout the land. In contrast, not a sound was heard in the Jewish ghetto of Goshen. While under most circumstances one can hear sounds even during the dead of night, on the night the firstborn died, it was silent in the area of the Jews: no dog barked; the crickets were silent; no noise whatsoever; total silence.

This was all part of Hashem's plan. It was His demonstration, a lesson to remember for all time: a fundamental difference exists between Jew and gentile. L'maan teidun asher yafleh Hashem bein Mitzrayim u'bein Yisrael; "So that you shall know that Hashem will distinguish between Egypt and Yisrael" (Ibid 11:7). We must hammer the lesson that we learned that night into our psyche, so that we never forget and never lose sight of the fact that there is absolutely no connection, on any level, between Jew and gentile. The contrast between the unrestrained, tumultuous noise that reigned in Egypt that night, and the extreme silence that prevailed in the area of the Jews, rendered this distinction translucent.

Horav Yisrael Belsky, Shlita, delineates the three mitzvos, which, in order to be properly executed, require a person to contemplate the intended message of the mitzvah. In other words, Hashem gave us these three mitzvos for a specific reason: that we cogitate and apply their message. They are: the mitzvah of Tzitzis; the mitzvah of Tefillin; and the mitzvah of Succah. "So that you remember and perform all My commandments, and be holy to your G-d" (Bamidbar 15:40). To wear Tzitzis and not "remember" their meaning, such that we concentrate on their message to carry out Hashem's other mitzvos, undermines the very essence of the mitzvah. Likewise, we find that the mitzvah of Tefillin directs us towards Torah study. "So that the Torah of Hashem might be in your mouth" (Shemos 13:9). Intrinsic to the mitzvah of Tefillin is the follow-up of Torah study. Last, we find the mitzvah of Succah, "So that your generations may know that I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in Succos when I took

them out of the land of Egypt" (Vayikra 23:24). Succah catalyzes remembrance, perpetuating Hashem's care for us in the Wilderness following the exodus from Egypt. Each of these mitzvos is followed by a phrase that reveals its purpose, beginning with the word l'maan, "so that."

The Rosh Yeshivah extends this idea of a mitzvah, through a message that must be internalized, to the utter silence that prevailed and surrounded the Jewish People on the night of yetzias Mitzrayim, the Exodus. The Torah also qualifies the silence, which is personified by Lo yecheratz kelev leshono, "No dog shall whet its tongue," with L'maan teidun, "So that you may know that Hashem shall distinguish between Egypt and Yisrael." We must acknowledge and remember that the distinction between Jew and gentile which occurred that night was not intended to be for that night alone. It is here permanently. It was intended to demonstrate for all time that Klal Yisrael, the Jewish nation, is a people apart from all other nations. We are a nation that must distinguish itself in our exclusiveness. We are different, and the only way we will continue to remain so is if we take pride in our heritage by transmitting it to our children.

The Jew who forgets this lesson opens himself up to accepting the base level of conduct that characterizes contemporary society. While it is primarily endemic to the gentile world, it is creeping in to our world via those who have sold their Jewish birthright for a bowl of red lentils. The Torah admonishes us to shun the practices of the Canaanite nations who inhabited the Holy Land before we returned there. The Torah warns us not to go in their ways. Regrettably, when we do not take pride in "our" ways, in the glorious Jewish culture with religion as its centerpiece, we are left with very little with which to maintain our fidelity to Judaism.

The only way to elevate oneself above the pitfalls of the baseness which surrounds him at every turn is to constantly remind himself of the lofty nature of the Jew. Thus, Rav Belsky notes, the lessons of the Exodus are as significant for us today as they were when the redemption took place. Never - never - should a Jew think that he has anything whatsoever in common with the gentile. This does not countenance elitism; rather, it encourages the Jew to take pride in his heritage.

But against all Bnei Yisrael, no dog shall whet his tongue. (11:7)

A number of years ago, I wrote of an incident which took place in Brisk, when the city was under the leadership of its Rav, Horav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zl, popularly known by his sefer, Bais HaLevi. A dispute had broken out in the city among its movers and shakers, the most prominent and wealthy members of the community. The issue was concerning the direction of the community and how it should be led. They brought up the matter to the Rav, asking him to render a decision. In an attempt to discern in which direction the "wind" was blowing and how to best resolve the issues, the Bais HaLevi invited the community's finest and most influential laymen to render their opinions concerning which position was best for the community. Once the Rav had developed a consensus of opinion and had absorbed all of the factors concerning the issues on the table, he could better make an intelligent decision.

The response from these laymen was something to which the Jewish communities have become quite familiar: "We do not want to get involved. We would rather remain neutral. We do not want to take a stand, lest it offend someone." The diplomatic "cop out" is regrettably the response we hear when we have a sensitive issue involving difficult parties. It is so much easier to remain neutral. In one's myopic mind he even begins to believe that, by staying out of the fray, he is helping those who need him.

The Rav was visibly irritated by their response. "Remaining neutral was the position for which the dogs in Egypt opted the night that Hashem slayed the Egyptian firstborn." He continued with an explanation, "In the Talmud Bava Kamma 60b, Chazal maintain that, when dogs are 'playing,' it is an indication that Eliyahu HaNavi has come to town. Apparently, quite the opposite occurs when the Malach HaMaves, Angel of Death, pays a visit. Then, the dogs wail. On the night of Makkas Bechoros, slaying of the firstborn, the dogs were in a quandary. Egypt was visited by both Eliyahu HaNavi and the Malach HaMaves! What were the dogs to do? Cry or play? The Torah informs us of the dogs' decision: No dog shall whet his tongue. They remained neutral, neither crying nor playing. The dogs refused to take a stand." The Brisker Rav effectively conveyed his message.

Chazal tell us that in the End of Days, P'nei hador k'p'nei ha'kelev, "The face of the generation will be like the face of a dog." This means that the generation's leadership will appear to behave in a manner similar to, or acceptable to, the dog. The commentators explain that, although a dog runs before his master, it always turns around and looks back to assure itself that its master is following. Likewise, Jewish leadership in the End of Days will always "turn around" to assure themselves that the community is acquiescing with the position that they have taken.

Once again, we see that neutrality, refusing to take a stand on issues that go to the very core of Klal Yisrael, bespeaks the weakness and indifference displayed by leadership who refuse to tackle issues that are hurting the Jewish community. We concede that the issues are varied and sensitive, and not all of them will necessarily be resolved by taking a stand. This is certainly true if the stand is taken only by a small group of individuals, but, when a prominent group of leaders takes a position and issues a call to arms, people will begin to listen.

There is no question that issues, such as dysfunctional families, children at risk, recalcitrant husbands who employ their halachic dispensation to withhold a get from their wives while they extort them for all they and their parents are worth, are not going to disappear overnight. If we continue our indifference by maintaining neutral, however, these problems will only deepen.

It shall be yours for examination until the fourteenth of the month. (12:6)

The lamb used for the Korban Pesach was taken on the tenth day of the month and not used until the fourteenth. During those four days, the animal was checked for blemishes that would render it unfit for use as a sacrifice. This requirement applied only concerning the first Korban Pesach, which was offered in Egypt. Chazal explain that, after the many years of the Egyptian exile, the Jewish People had descended to a very low level of spirituality. They had plummeted to the nadir of depravity, and they had no z'chusim, merits, to warrant their redemption from Egypt. Hashem gave them two mitzvos: Korban Pesach and Bris Milah, circumcision. Both of these rituals involve blood. Since the circumcision had to take place on the tenth day of Nissan, in order to allow for the three-day healing process to be completed before the Korban Pesach was actually slaughtered, it was

incumbent that they take the lamb also on the tenth day of the month. Thus, they were involved with mitzvos, in whose merit they were redeemed.

The Midrash teaches that all of the people did not immediately acquiesce to the circumcision command. They said, "We would rather remain slaves in Egypt than have our bodies physically maimed." Hashem had Moshe Rabbeinu prepare the Korban Pesach. He then had the winds of Gan Eden attach themselves to the Korban Pesach and allow the aroma to waft through the camp. The people were mesmerized by the aroma. They asked Moshe, "Please, may we partake of your Korban Pesach?" Moshe replied, "You can partake of the Korban Pesach only if you are circumcised." They immediately agreed, performing the mitzvah. Hashem then kissed each one.

The Midrash is absolutely mind-boggling. Two mitzvos - that is it! The Jewish People carried out two mitzvos - shelo lishmah - not for the sake of the mitzvah, but rather, for ulterior motives. Yet, it was these two mitzvos that warranted their redemption. How are we to understand this anomaly? There has to be something more than two mitzvos to sanction their redemption after such a long period of bondage. Apparently, this was it. Why?

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, relates that he once visited Horav Chaim Kreisworth, zl, when the Rav was Chief Rabbi of Antwerp, Belgium. Antwerp is known as one of the preeminent diamond centers of the world. It makes sense that many members of the Jewish community are employed or involved in this industry in some way. Rav Kreisworth said to Rav Galinsky, "Let me share with you a din Torah dispute that came before me for adjudication yesterday. A broker had closed a deal on a sale of diamonds and demanded his brokerage fee of six percent. The owner of the diamonds claimed that he had only promised him five percent. The dispute centered around one percent."

Rav Galinsky laughed. After all, how small-minded and petty can a person be, to argue over one percent? Rav Kreisworth noted Rav Galinsky's attitude and immediately said, "One percent may not be very much, but when the sale is for fifteen million dollars, it suddenly becomes quite a huge sum of money." We now understand, explains Rav Galinsky, how two mitzvos can have the required merit power to ensure the Jews' redemption from Egypt. When one takes into mind the incredible reward that the performance of a mitzvah generates, it is awesome and beyond our imagination to perceive. Thus, even a mitzvah that is carried out not for the sake of the mitzvah, is still of inestimable value - very much like the percentage of a large principle. If we take the two mitzvos and multiply their reward by 600,000, we have a substantial total.

And it shall be when your son will ask you at some future time, "What is this?" You shall say to him, "With a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt from the house of bondage." (13:14)

Rashi explains the above pasuk as presenting the question of a foolish child who is unable to ask a question in depth. Therefore, he is vague and simply asks, "What is this?" Elsewhere, the Torah presents the question differently: "What are the testimonies, statutes and judgments, etc.?" This is the question of the wise son. Thus, the Torah speaks with respect to four sons: the wicked one; the one who is unable to ask; the one who asks in a vague manner; the one who asks in a wise manner. Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, derives from the Torah's addressing four different types of sons that a father must be acutely aware that he could quite possibly be in such a predicament in which he has four different personalities sitting at his table. He must, therefore, be attuned to their questions and be prepared to answer them - each commensurate with his level of cognition, ability and proclivity to listen. In other words, the father must maintain a shprach, conversation, with each

son - regardless of his spiritual affiliation. Even if for some reason one has a ben rasha, whom we will define as a misguided son, he must find a way to reach him. One achieves nothing by writing off a child, viewing him as non-existent, simply because he is not spiritually on the same page with the rest of the family. The Torah refers to the questioner as bincha, your son. Likewise, the Baal HaGaddah reiterates, "Concerning four sons does the Torah speak." We must remember that the rasha is bincha, your/our son. He is not a stranger, an uncivilized, recalcitrant human being lost in the shuffle of humanity, deferring to his base passions. He is ours! Therefore, we must respond. If our response is to be effective, we must know how to speak to him in such a manner that he will understand.

It is important that we delve into the psyche of the ben rasha, so that we have a better way of understanding what motivates his negativity. Unless we understand what makes him "tick," we will have no idea on how to respond to him. We must do this because, as parents, we may not write off a child as being irrevocably wicked. If we are unable to forgive our child, how can we expect our Father in Heaven to forgive our infractions? One more issue concerning the wicked son must

be addressed. I know I tread on shaky ground when I pose the following question: What role did the parents play in their son's distancing himself from Judaism? Did they send mixed messages, emphasizing one thing while they did another? Were they present for their child when he or she was acting up, which essentially was his or her way of crying out for help? The topic is hurtful, so I will not pursue it. Let it suffice to say that, as parents, we must respond, and we must know what to say.

The dialogue must

continue, or else we will have no one to blame but ourselves.

The response we give a child must be honest. We may not avoid the issues. We must explain what we can and apologize for what we did not do. When a child alludes to a parents' hypocrisy, it is best that the parent not cover up the truth. It will only make it worse.

Regrettably, some parents are so hurt that they refuse to allow the wicked son at their table. They do not realize that the mere fact that he is willing to join the Seder table is in and of itself an indication that he is not really wicked. He has strayed; he is lost; he simply does not know how to return. He needs direction, guidance, fueled by love and sensitivity.

The Torah distinguishes between one who has completely revoked his relationship with Judaism - the *mumar*, *mi shenisnakru-maasav l'Aviv she'baShomayim*, the apostate who has turned himself totally away from his Father in Heaven - and one who is a *chotei*, sinner: *Yisrael, af al pi shechata. Yisrael hu; A Jew, although he has sinned, remains a Jew. The ben rasha is at the Seder table. He might be a chotei, but he is not a mumar.*

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, relates that, one day in the winter of 1967, the fellow who delivered fruits and vegetables to the yeshivah in Chadeira, appeared with puffy, red eyes. It was clear that he had been crying profusely. "What happened?" Rav Galinsky asked him. "My daughter ran away with an Arab from Baka Al Garbiah," he replied. "How will I bear this terrible shame?" Apparently he was more concerned about his personal humiliation than his daughter's decision to cut herself off from her people spiritually. Be that as it may, the situation was tragic, and the man certainly had reason to weep. Rav Galinsky needed very little prodding to encourage him to do something about the unfolding tragedy. The problem was that, for a Jew to enter an Arab village in 1967 was beyond dangerous: it was suicidal. Rav Galinsky said that he would take his chances. He had confronted death a number of times in his life. He did not fear Arabs. He feared only Hashem.

Rav Galinsky ordered a taxi. When he stated his destination, the driver flatly refused to take him. "You will be killed if you go there. That is an Arab village whose inhabitants have very little love for their Jewish neighbors." The Rav was undeterred. He was going to save a Jewish life. He was a man on a mission; thus, he feared nothing and no one.

The taxi driver was adamant. If the Rav insisted on going he could not prevent him, but he was not going along. The taxi stopped about a mile from the village, and Rav Galinsky walked the rest of the way. As he neared the village, he was greeted by a stone which barely missed him. He was not deterred. He entered the village and asked the first Arab that he saw to direct him to the Cadi, who was the religious leader in charge of the village. As soon as the Rav indicated that he had business with the Cadi, the attitude changed from derision to respect.

The Cadi seemed to be a reasonable man. The best approach was to be direct. The Cadi spoke Hebrew, so the two were able to converse without the help of an interpreter. "I am a Rav," Rav Galinsky began, "and, by the Jews, the Rav performs the marriage ceremony. I assume it is no different in the Moslem faith." The Cadi agreed. "If a Jew would come to me and ask me to officiate at an interfaith marriage, I would refuse to do so," Rav Galinsky said. "I would insist that there be a proper ritualistic conversion supervised by a court of Jewish Law." The Cadi replied that it was not much different in his faith. They varied in the requirements for one to be accepted for conversion. Rav Galinsky said that it would be a minimum of one year of learning, while the Cadi said that they required a revocation of their previous faith.

"I am very happy to hear this," said Rav Galinsky. "I have a member of my faith, a Jewish girl, who plans on marrying an Arab boy. I would like to inform her that both religions negate interfaith marriages." The Cadi actually walked the Rav outside and pointed to the home of the boy, wished him well, and bid him a good day. The Arabs looked on with venom in their eyes, but could do no harm out of respect for their Cadi.

Rav Galinsky knocked on the door and asked for the girl who spoke Hebrew. The young lady came to the door and was shocked to see a Rav standing there. "I have best regards for you from your father," Rav Galinsky began. "You have left him with such grief. Indeed, I am afraid your abandoning the family will kill him."

"What! Now he is troubled? For one year I was seeing a boy from Kibbutz HaShomer HaTzair (a secular settlement). The boy neither believed in G-d, nor

observed any of His mitzvos. He ate on Yom Kippur. None of this seemed to bother my father, because, after all, he was Jewish. Now, I am seeing a boy who is religious, adheres to his faith, believes in his god, and I am accused of killing my father! Rebbe, explain to me, what is better: marrying an agnostic or a believer?" The girl presented an argument which, albeit filled with holes, needed to be refuted. The Rav countered, "Let me explain the difference. If someone is in an accident and his hand is cut badly, barely hanging on by a thread, as long as the arteries have not been severed, there is hope that the hand can be attached and saved. If, however, the arteries are cut and there is no blood flow from the elbow to the hand, it is hopeless (modern medicine has made incredible strides in the last forty-five years, but the lesson is still obvious). A Jewish boy who has turned on his observance, who claims not to believe and does not maintain an active participation in mitzvos, is still a Jew. He has not completely reneged his faith. He might be a casualty of contemporary society, but his children and grandchildren still have the chance of returning to the faith of their ancestors. An Arab can proclaim belief in the Creator; he can even pray to Him, but he is still an Arab! One who marries himself severs her bond with the Jewish People!"

The girl listened respectfully and said, "Thank you, but I do not agree with the Rav." Rav Galinsky's parting words to her stung, but anything less than the truth would have been ineffective: "I cannot remain here any longer. My life is at stake. Let me leave you with one last thought. If a war were to break out between the members of your faith, your family, the Jewish People, and your adopted family, what do you think would happen? Your ex-boyfriend from HaShomer HaTzair, the secular, agnostic Israeli, would join the army, fight for his country and save your father's life. Your Arab boyfriend would grab his sword and slaughter your father! Think about that!"

Rav Galinsky left. This was his "good-bye" to the girl: "Remember who you are and from where you come." Little did he know that within a few months, the Egyptian president would close the Straits of Tehran which effectively would seal Israel off from the Red Sea. The United Nations peacekeeping force would be sent packing. War with Israel became imminent. The entire world waited to see who would make the first move. One day, the delivery man came to the yeshivah in Chadeira, sought out Rav Galinsky, and with great emotion, whispered, "She came back!"

The father explained that the Cadi had refused to perform the marriage for her until after she had contemplated for some time, changing her faith to that of Islam. He also wanted her to become more acquainted with its culture and doctrine. During her waiting period, she overheard her fiancé commenting that he had already sharpened his sabre with which he would slaughter the Israelis. She then remembered what the Rav had told her months earlier. She imagined her fiancé slicing her father's throat. She then realized the error of her ways, escaped, came home. Apparently, Rav Galinsky knew precisely what to say and how to convey his message persuasively.

Va'ani Tefillah

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, cites a remarkable statement made by the Rambam at the end of Hilchos Mezuzah: "Every time, when he comes and goes, he should be aware of the existence of the One G-d and remember his Love of G-d; and this will awaken him from his 'sleep' and his erroneous way in his fleeting life." A number of observations may be noted. First, we see that most people are not "fully awake." As a result of this spiritual slumber, one walks around and ignores the more important things in this world. He just passes by without giving them a second thought. When one passes a mezuzah, it should remind him of Hashem, wake him up to realize that there is a Creator Who sees it all, everything that he is - or is not - doing. This wake-up call will/should motivate him to mend the error of his ways and get with the program. This world is our temporary abode, a mere preparation for the real world which we hope that we will be worthy of entering. If we sleep through life, we will have great difficulty obtaining an entrance visa.

The Rambam continues: "When he passes the mezuzah, he should remind himself that nothing is permanent except the knowledge of Hashem." This means both His knowledge of us and our knowledge of Him, if we connect with Him. Everything comes to an end. All physical/material objects eventually cease to exist. The only way that we, as human beings, are able to immortalize ourselves is to connect with Hashem through Torah and mitzvos. Mortality is, of course, finite; Hashem is infinite. We must bond with the Divine in order to transcend our finiteness. The mezuzah on the doorpost witnesses a person's comings and goings. Everything in life changes; thus, one day there will no longer be a house or a person. The only thing that does not ever change is Hashem's Oneness - Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Eched. When one leaves the house, looks up at the mezuzah, he reminds himself of Hashem's permanence, of his own mortality. He acknowledges that this might even

be the last time that he will walk out of this house. It might all come to an end - suddenly, without warning. This will generate a wake-up call in his mind. He will begin to think that perhaps it might be a cogent idea to set his life straight, correct his ways, get his spiritual act together. The mezuzah's message is poignant and compelling: One's house and one's material possessions are fleeting. The only real permanence is the awareness and reality of Hashem.

Sponsored in loving memory of Vivian Stone Chaya Leah bas Shimon a"h niftara 18 Shevat 5769 - By her children Birdie and Lenny Frank and Family

from: Yeshiva.org.il <subscribe@yeshiva.org.il>

reply-to: subscribe@yeshiva.org.il

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Yeshiva.co The Torah World Gateway Bet El Yeshiva Center, Bet El D.N. Mizrah Binyamin 90628 Email: beitel@yeshiva.org.il

It's About Time

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Quiz Question #1: Whose bris is first?

Mrs. Unger* gave birth to two healthy twin boys, both of whom had their brissin on the first day that halacha mandates, yet the younger Unger had his bris several days earlier than his older brother. How can this happen?

Question #2: Isn't he too late?

I have often wondered why my chassidishe brother-in-law davens mincha after sunset, when the Mishnah Berurah rules that one should not daven this late!

Question #3: Frum receptionist

"My sister and I live in the same yishuv (community), and the nearest hospital is Laniado, in Netanya. She went into labor on Shabbos and left for the hospital. Immediately after Shabbos, I phoned the hospital to find out how she was and if she had a boy or a girl, and was told by the gentile receptionist that she could not put the call through until after 'Rabbeinu Tam' time arrives, which would not be for another half an hour. Why was the non-Jewish receptionist so frum?"

What does our parsha have to do with time?

This week's parsha includes the mitzvah of establishing the Jewish calendar, providing an excellent opportunity to discuss what to do when there is an uncertainty what day it is.

Bein Hashemashos

As we know, observing bris milah overrides even Shabbos. However, this is so only for a bris bizmanah; that is, a bris that transpires on the eighth day of the child's life, but not a bris that is delayed. A bris that is delayed should take place at the earliest opportunity that halacha allows, but not on Shabbos or Yom Tov (see Shu't Dvar Avraham 1:33; 2:1-3). One reason why a bris may be delayed is because of a medical concern, a topic we will leave for a future article. Another common reason why a bris is delayed: The baby was born during bein hashemashos, a halachic "twilight zone," a time when we are unsure if it is already Shabbos or not, since we are uncertain whether this period of time belongs to the previous day or the next.

The Mishnah (Shabbos 137a) addresses this issue:

A child is circumcised on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth – no earlier and no later. How can this be? The normal circumstance is the bris is on the eighth. If he is born during halachic twilight (bein hashemashos), his bris is on the ninth. If [he is born] on Friday's twilight, he is circumcised on the tenth [that is, Sunday]. If Yom Tov falls on Sunday, he is circumcised on the eleventh [Monday]. If Rosh Hashanah falls on Sunday and Monday, then he is circumcised on the twelfth [day after birth, which is Tuesday]."

We see that the only time we perform the bris on Shabbos is when we are certain that the baby was born on Shabbos. If a baby was born during bein hashemashos on Friday evening, then he was born at a time that we are uncertain whether it is still considered Friday or it is already Shabbos. As the Gemara (Shabbos 34b) expresses it: We are uncertain whether bein hashemashos is day or night... and we treat it strictly regarding both days. Therefore, when a baby is born during bein hashemashos on Friday evening, we cannot perform the bris on Friday, because maybe the baby was born on Shabbos, and Friday is only the seventh day, too early to perform the bris. We cannot perform the bris on Shabbos, either, because maybe the baby was born on Friday, and Shabbos is the ninth day, not the eighth, and only a bris bizmanah, a bris performed on the eighth day, supersedes Shabbos. Since there is no choice, we are forced to postpone the bris to Sunday, as the first available opportunity. However, if a Yom Tov falls on that Sunday, the bris cannot take place on that day, either, since only a bris bizmanah supersedes Yom Tov, and not a bris that is postponed to a time after the eighth day. As a result, the earliest day to perform this bris is Monday.

Rosh Hashanah Starting on Sunday?!

Continuing the explanation of the Mishnah: If Rosh Hashanah falls on Sunday and Monday, then he is circumcised on the twelfth. If the baby was born during bein hashemashos of the Friday evening ten days before Rosh Hashanah, and the two days of Rosh Hashanah fall on Sunday and Monday, then the bris is postponed until Tuesday the day after Rosh Hashanah, which is the twelfth day from the Friday on which the baby was born.

But one minute: the first day of Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on Sunday! How does the Mishnah say differently?

Although our calendar is set up such that Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on Sunday, so that Hoshanah Rabbah does not fall on Shabbos and thus does not jeopardize observance of Hoshanos, at the time of the Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah could and did sometimes transpire on Sunday. When Rosh Chodesh and Rosh Hashanah were determined by the testimony of witnesses who observed the new moon (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 1:1, 7; 5:1), it was halachically more important to have Rosh Hashanah fall on its more correct day than to be concerned about having Hoshana Rabbah fall on Shabbos (Ha'emek She'ailah 67:22; Gri'z, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh). Only once it became impossible to declare Rosh Chodesh on the basis of observation, and Hillel Hanasi created a permanent calendar, did he include some innovations, including making certain that Hoshanah Rabbah does not fall on Shabbos, by making sure that the first day of Rosh Hashanah does not fall on Sunday (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 5:2). (There is an alternative approach, that of Rav Saadiya Geon and Rabbeinu Chananel, to explain this subject, which will be left for another time.)

Why Did the Younger Baby have an Earlier Bris?

At this point, we already have enough information to answer Quiz Question #1 above: Why would a younger twin have his bris earlier than his healthy, older brother? The answer is that the older twin was born during bein hashemashos on Friday evening -- at a time that we are uncertain whether he was born on Friday or on Shabbos. Because of this uncertainty, we cannot perform his bris on either Friday or Shabbos, as explained above, and his bris is postponed to Sunday. However, his younger brother was born at a time that is certainly Shabbos, and therefore his bris takes place on Shabbos.

When is Twilight?

This explains the fundamental principles, but still leaves a basic question: When is bein hashemashos?

Answering this question requires delving into the following issue: We all are aware that the Jewish date begins at the beginning of the night. But at what exact moment does one day end and another begin? Do we know the precise instant when one day marches off into history, and its successor arrives with its banner unfurled?

A verse in the book of Nechemiah might help resolve this question. There, it describes the unenviable circumstances in which the Jews were rebuilding the Second Beis Hamikdash, while protecting themselves from the enemies determined to thwart its erection: And we were continuing the construction work from daybreak until the stars come out [tzeis hakochavim], while half our men were holding spears... and at night we were on guard, while in the day we could proceed with the work (Nechemiah 4:15-16). Nechemiah implies that "night" begins from when the stars emerge. The time of dusk, before the stars are visible, is still considered the previous day (see Berachos 2b; Megillah 20b).

However, we still need more definition. Which stars? Can we pinpoint the moment that the stars come out since the stars of the firmament do not all become visible at the same time?

Additional confusion is caused by a different verse that implies that the day ends when the sun sets, as the Torah (Vayikra 22:7) proclaims: And when the sun sets, he shall become pure, stating that the final stage of purification from some types of tumah is the sunset after immersion in a mikveh. However, at sunset, no stars are yet visible, and the halacha is that this taharah transpires at nightfall, implying that the changing of the day transpires at sunset, not when the stars appear (see Berachos 2b).

What a Phenomenal Dusk!

Is there any discussion in the Gemara that can "shed light" on our question? Indeed, there are several passages, and much literature is devoted to understanding them.

One passage (Shabbos 34b) describes certain celestial phenomena that define when bein hashemashos begins and when it ends. The commentaries debate exactly what occurrences are being described, and, unfortunately we derive little usable information from this passage.

When Three Stars Appear

Another passage indicates that the end of the day is determined by the appearance of stars. When one star appears, it is still day. When two appear, it is bein hashemashos, and when three appear, it is night. Not large stars that appear even in the day, and not small stars that appear even at night, but middle-sized stars (Shabbos 35b).

Now the job appears easy. Let us look at the darkening firmament this coming evening and count stars!

I am sure at times you have tried. Ever spent Shabbos on a camping trip and attempted to determine the end of Shabbos by stargazing? How did you decide which stars are considered "small," "large" and "middle-sized"? And this is assuming that one does not need to deal with light pollution!

Perhaps locating a Gemara discussion that indicates more objective criteria, such as units of time, can be more helpful in our search to determine the end of day. Does such a discussion exist in the Gemara?

Yes, it does -- and not only one passage, but two. However, the two passages appear contradictory.

Conflicting Gemara Passages

The Gemara in Pesachim (94a) states that the time between shekiyah, a word usually translated as sunset, and tzeis hakochovim equals four mil, which we will assume is 72 minutes. (This concurs with the more obvious way of explaining the opinion of the Terumas Hadeshen [#123] and the Shulchan Aruch [Orach Chayim 459:2; Yoreh Deah 69:6 with Shach] that a mil, used as a unit of time, equals 18 minutes.) However, a different passage of Gemara (Shabbos 34b) quotes a dispute between Rabbah, who states that nightfall occurs three-quarters of a mil, or 13½ minutes, after shekiyah, and Rabbi Yosef, who rules that it transpires a bit earlier, two-thirds of a mil, or 12 minutes, after shekiyah. Obviously, we need to explain why one Gemara states that nightfall occurs 72 minutes after shekiyah, and another states that it occurs only 12 or 13½ minutes after shekiyah!

Rabbeinu Tam's Explanation

Among the many resolutions to this conundrum, the two most commonly quoted are those of Rabbeinu Tam and that of the Gra. Rabbeinu Tam contends that these two passages of Gemara are using the word "shekiyah" to refer to two different phenomena which occur about an hour apart. The Gemara in Pesachim uses the term shekiyah to mean sunset -- when the sun vanishes beyond the western horizon. Rabbeinu Tam refers to sunset as techilas shekiyah, literally the beginning of shekiyah. However, when the Gemara in Shabbos refers to "shekiyah," it does not mean sunset, but a point in time about an hour later when virtually all light of the sun's rays has disappeared from the western horizon. Rabbeinu Tam refers to this later time as sof shekiyah, literally the end of shekiyah, and in his opinion, until sof shekiyah occurs, halachah considers it definitely day, notwithstanding the setting of the sun and the appearance of hundreds of stars in the firmament. All these stars are considered "small stars," whose appearance does not demonstrate that the day has ended. Only at sof shekiyah does it become bein hashemashos, the time when we are uncertain whether it is day or night. At sof shekiyah, bein hashemashos has begun, meaning that now there are two, but not three, visible "middle-sized" stars, and we await the appearance of the third "middle-sized" star to know that it is now definitely night. (However, cf. Minchas Kohlen for a variant understanding of Rabbeinu Tam's position.)

Since, according to Rabbeinu Tam, it is definitely still day until about an hour after sunset, there is no problem with davening mincha considerably after sunset. Thus, there are communities who base themselves on Rabbeinu Tam's opinion and daven mincha well after sunset.

Rabbeinu Tam and a Friday Night Birth

According to Rabbeinu Tam, a baby born 58 minutes after sunset on Friday evening, and certainly any time earlier, was born halachically on Friday and not on Shabbos. In Rabbeinu Tam's opinion, this baby's bris takes place the following Friday. A baby making his appearance a bit later is considered to be born during bein hashemashos and cannot have his bris on Shabbos, because perhaps bein hashemashos is still Friday -- which makes Shabbos his ninth day of life. This bris will be postponed to Sunday. However, if the baby is born a bit later on Friday evening, at a time when it is definitely Shabbos, then the bris is performed on Shabbos the next week.

It goes without saying that according to Rabbeinu Tam, one may not perform any melacha on Saturday night until a considerable time has passed after sunset. There are various opinions as to exactly when Shabbos is definitely over according to Rabbeinu Tam, but most people assume that Shabbos is over by 72 minutes after sunset (Biyur Halacha).

By the way, at this point we can answer our third question above: why the telephone lines at Laniado Hospital are not open to non-pikuach nefesh related calls until more than a half hour later than the time Shabbos ends according to most calendars. The founder of the hospital, the Klausenberger Rebbe, insisted that Shabbos be observed at the hospital until the time at which Rabbeinu Tam would concur that Shabbos is over.

The opinion of the Gra

Since we know that many highly observant Jews do not wait this long for Shabbos to end, there must be another way of interpreting the two passages of Gemara that

reaches a different halachic conclusion. Indeed, one such approach is that of the Gra, who presents a completely different approach to explain the seeming contradiction between the two passages of Gemara. He contends that both passages use shekiyah to mean sunset, and this is the same sunset to which we customarily refer -- however, they are not referring to the same tzeis hakochovim. The Gemara in Pesachim that refers to tzeis hakochovim being 72 minutes after sunset means that all visible stars of the firmament can now be seen, a time that the Gra calls tzeis kol hakochovim, literally, when all the stars have come out, whereas the Gemara in Shabbos refers to the time at which three "middle-sized" stars are visible. The Gra concludes that sunset marks the beginning of bein hashemashos, the time when we are uncertain whether it is day or night, with tzeis hakochovim occurring when three "middle-sized" stars are visible. The Gemara in Pesachim that requires 72 minutes until the stars appear is not discussing when the day ends -- the day ended much earlier -- but was concerned about other laws that are affected by the appearance of a skyful of stars.

According to the Gra's opinion, once sunset arrives on Friday, it may already be Shabbos, and we therefore refrain from performing any melacha from this time, and consider this time to be already bein hashemashos. In the Gra's opinion, a baby born after sunset Friday will have his bris performed on Sunday nine days later unless he is born after three "middle-sized" stars appear, in which case his bris will be performed on Shabbos. (In practice, since we are uncertain exactly which stars are called "middle-sized," we wait a bit longer, see Biur Halacha to 393) According to Rabbeinu Tam, this same baby would have his bris performed on Friday, unless he is born at least 58½ minutes after sunset. If he is born between 58½ minutes and 72 minutes after sunset Friday evening, according to the Gra, his bris is on Shabbos, whereas according to Rabbeinu Tam, his bris will be on Sunday. Both agree that a baby born later than this on Friday evening will have his bris performed on Shabbos.

Mincha tima!

At this point, let us refer to our other opening question: "I have often wondered why my chassidische brother-in-law davens mincha after sunset, when the Mishnah Berurah rules that one should not daven this late!"

The Gra rules that one should not daven mincha after sunset, since this is already a time at which the previous day may have already passed. Thus, it is already time to daven maariv. However, according to Rabbeinu Tam, one may daven mincha lechatchilah until 58½ minutes after sunset.

How do we rule?

Although in the past there were Torah communities who did not follow the Gra at all, even regarding the onset of Shabbos, today it is universally accepted to consider it Shabbos from sunset on Friday. Many communities follow the Gra's opinion fully, and do not wait until 72 minutes after sunset on Saturday to end Shabbos. In a responsum on the subject, Rav Moshe Feinstein took great umbrage to this approach, contending that since a large number of Rishonim followed Rabbeinu Tam's approach, one should act stringently and not end Shabbos until after Rabbeinu Tam's time is over (Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 4:17:26). As in all areas of halacha, the reader is encouraged to discuss the shaylah with his or her mara de'asra for a final ruling.

*all names have been changed to protect privacy

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org

subject: TorahWeb

Copyright © 2014 by The TorahWeb Foundation.

The TorahWeb Foundation

Rabbi Yakov Haber

World Time, Jewish Time

One of the central features of existence is time. Scientists speak of the time and space dimensions. Its existence is readily apparent but is yet intangible, untouchable, and unfathomable. Modern scientific theory has arrived more recently at the Torah truth (see Ramban to Breishis 1:1) that time, like space and all other aspects of existence, is a creation. The Creator, then, having created it is not subject to it. G-d does not exist forever in time. He is timeless.

All of humanity, Jew and non-Jew alike, are subject to time. They all age through time, celebrate special events in time, and mourn tragedies in time. But here the similarity ends. The first mitzvah of our parasha distinguishes between World time and Jewish time. "Hachodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim, rishon hu lachem l'chadshai hashana" (Bo 12:2). The second half of the verse commands that the month of the exodus, Nissan, be counted as the first month of the months of the year. Throughout the Torah and most of Tanach, the months are referred to by number starting from Nissan as month one. Ramban (ibid.) explains that this

commandment directs us to remember the Exodus constantly. When one refers to Kislev, for example, as the ninth month, one recalls that Nissan is the first month since that is the occasion of our leaving Egypt.

Based on this approach, Ramban explains why we currently use different names for the Jewish months. We no longer refer to Nissan as chodesh harishon but as Nissan; Iyar is called Iyar not chodesh hasheini. The Talmud Yerushalmi teaches that the Jewish people brought the names of the months from the Babylonian Exile with them when they returned in the days of Zerubavel to build the second Beit HaMikdash. Interpreting this not as a historical statement but as a halachic statement, Ramban explains that the mitzvah is to recall redemption with the naming of the months. During the first temple period, the exodus from Egypt was the most relevant redemption to recall. After the destruction of the Mikdash and the subsequent exile, followed by the shivat tzion starting the second temple era, it was the redemption from Babylon which was the most relevant exodus. Hence, the names of the months were changed to Babylonian ones, commemorating the last redemption.[1] Elsewhere,[2] Ramban takes this approach one step further. When we (may it be speedily!) merit the final redemption from the Edomite-Roman exile, we will once again change the names of the months to ... April, May, June, July etc. - the Roman names of the months - for Nissan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz[3] to commemorate the final redemption!

Ramban compares the numbering of the months recalling the exodus from Egypt to the numbering of the days of the week which recall Shabbat. The commandment "Remember the Shabbat" is interpreted by Ramban[4] as a directive that we should refer to the days of the week as yom rishon baShabbat, yom sheini baShabbat[5]. What emerges then is that the days of the week, counting as they do toward Shabbat, recall creation and our months recall the exodus. Thus, we do not just experience time, we elevate time.

Let us now turn to the first half of the passuk. On a simple plane, it states the same idea as the second half of the passage. But Rashi quotes the d'rash of Chazal[6] that it refers to the mitzvah of kiddush hachodesh. "Hachodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim" teaches that the sighting of the first sliver of the new moon will serve as the sign for witnesses to testify to a beis din to sanctify the new month. Is there a connection between the two halves of the verse?

Rav Chaim Ya'akov Goldwicht zt"l, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, explained[7] that the mitzvah of kiddush hachodesh indicates Jewish mastery over time, and, more generally, over all of nature. The beis din is in supreme control of declaring the new month. Chazal teach us "atem - afilu m'zidin, atem - afilu muta'in" (Rosh HaShana 25a). Your declaration of the new month will be binding even if you erroneously or even deliberately declare the new month on the wrong day (the day the new moon was not sighted)[8]. This halachic concept, explained Rav Goldwicht, informs us of Hashem's granting beis din, as the representatives of Klal Yisrael, mastery over time and nature. They, when connecting to G-d through the study and keeping of his Torah, will not be subject to the regular rules of time and history. The Torah, being created before the world and serving as its blueprint, supersedes nature. Those who connect to it also do[9]. The exodus from Egypt entailed a total overriding of the "regular" natural order. The plagues which wrought havoc on the water supply, the agriculture, the cattle, and the very lives of the Egyptians, breaking quantitatively and qualitatively all of the forces of nature and statistics, demonstrated G-d's absolute mastery over the world. But they also indicated that the Jewish nation on whose behalf they were performed, when connecting to Torah would for all eternity, if not as dramatically and openly, be subject to a "higher order" system, not the ordinary, natural system. Klal Yisrael's survival does not depend on the regular rules of the rise and fall of nations. An individual Jew's well-being or c"v misfortune does not solely depend on the "regular rules." (See Ramban at the end of our Parasha.)

Mori v'Rabi Rav Hershel Schachter shlit"a often explained[10] why Jewish kings count their rule from Nissan and non-Jewish kings count from Tishrei (Rosh HaShana, Perek 1). Tishrei was the month of creation; it represents the natural rules of physics, time, and history. Hence, non-Jewish rulers count from that month as they are subject to the natural order. Nissan was the month of the miraculous Exodus; it represents the Jewish people's unique status and ability to override all of these rules when connecting to G-d. Therefore Jewish rulers count from it.

We can now link the two halves of the passuk. The Jewish beis din has mastery over time and nature as demonstrated by the laws of kiddush hachodesh. The Jewish nation counts the first month as Nissan since the exodus represents their transcendence above nature. Through the very first mitzvot, Hashem did not just command us concerning particular activities. He provided an overview of the great adventure of Torah life: one of spiritual elevation, of a link to a transcendental order, of connection to the very Master of time, nature and history Himself.

[1] See drasha for Rosh Hashana where Ramban writes that these new names were used as an addition to the original numbering system, not as a total substitute. See also the enlightening comment by Rabbi Chavel in his introduction to this drasha in his edition (Kitvei Ramban, Vol. I, footnote 6).

[2] I believe I saw this in the drasha for Rosh Hashana. I did not succeed in finding it in preparation for this article. I would appreciate if a reader who knows the source can inform me.

[3] Apparently the fact that the Roman months do not represent lunar months as do the Jewish (and Babylonian) months does not pose a difficulty for Ramban since there is generally a clear correspondence - April for Nissan, May for Iyar, etc.

[4] In addition to Chazal's interpretation that it refers to the mitzvah of kiddush.

[5] See Sh'mirat Shabbat K'Hilchata (42: fn. 11) that this commandment is fulfilled by our recitation before shir shel yom: "Hayom yom ... b'Shabbat".

[6] The seeming redundancy of the passuk seems to be the basis of this d'rash.

[7] See Asufas Ma'arachot (Chanuka, introduction).

[8] This rule, of course, has its limits. Since the lunar cycle is approximately 29 1/2 days, Rosh Chodesh can only be on the 30th or the 31st day from the previous Rosh Chodesh. It is only within these two days that Beis Din's authority is final even if in error.

[9] Also see Defying Human Nature and Divine Miracles in the archives of Torahweb.

[10] See Jewish History: Stranger than Fiction in the archives of Torahweb.

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