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“And the blood shall serve as a sign on the houses in which you are.”
(12:13)

Rashi explains this sign shall be for you and not for others. Hence we may derive that the blood was smeared on the inside of the house.

The principal reason for smearing the blood on the inside of the threshold was for the Jew to comprehend the importance of self-sacrifice in the privacy of his home. He must concentrate on the inner dimensions of his personality. The essence of the Jewish act is not the one performed on the public stage, but the one performed on the inner stage, when the audience is only Hashem. The only audience to which a Jew should attach significance is the audience of Hashem. Inner heroism and self-sacrifice is the hallmark of a Ben Yisroel.

Another lesson may be learned here. Often we will attempt to help others in the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvos, even at great sacrifice to ourselves. This may be at the expense and the neglect of our own families. We will sacrifice our time and energy for others, but will we find time for our personal study and self-development? The Torah enjoins us to establish in our homes Torah sessions for ourselves. We must be aware of our responsibilities to our own children, to guide and encourage them ourselves, not by proxy through tutors. We are obliged to do for ourselves and our families that which we so readily do for others.

“And Moshe replied, we will go with our young and old alike.” (10:9)
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Why does Moshe mention the young before the old? Should not the elders go before the young? The Kesav Sofer responds that the young had to be rescued as soon as possible. Since they lacked a proper spiritual upbringing, they were more susceptible than their elders to the Egyptian environment. Only after the youth had left, did the older generation, who still maintained some roots in Judaism, and were more likely to survive spiritually in Egypt, leave.

The Koznitzer Magid Zt"l applies a homiletical exposition to this posuk. As we go in our youth, we will ultimately go in our old age. If during our youth we strive to spiritually ascend to reach the proper level of what Hashem expects of us, then as we get older there will be ultimate blessing in our old age. This may be compared to wine, whose vintage is good, gets better as it ages, while wine which has an inferior vintage turns sour with age.

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky
Time is of The Essence

There is a theme that permeates all the mitzvos of korban Pesach and the Yom Tov of Pesach, which are given to Klal Yisroel in Parshas Bo. Specifically, time is of the essence in their performance. The korban Pesach must be offered at a very specific time; it can only be brought during the afternoon of erev Pesach. The meat of the korban Pesach must be eaten only during the night of the fifteenth of Nissan. According to one opinion, it may only be eaten according to Torah law until chatzos - halfway through the night. Unlike other korbanos that are eaten for two days, and others for a day and a night, the time to eat the korban Pesach is very limited. The mitzvos of chametz and matzah revolve around time as well - at halfway through the day of the fourteenth of Nissan, chametz becomes prohibited by Torah law. Although there are different opinions as to precisely which prohibitions (chametz on Pesach cannot be eaten, benefitted from, or owned) begin at this time, everyone agrees that the moment of chatzos on erev Pesach impacts the status of chametz. The positive mitzvah eating matza is also time sensitive. One can only fulfill the obligation to eat matzah after dark, which is different from Shabbos and most other yom tov meals. The mitzvah of eating matzah, according to some opinions, must also be performed before chatzos. The very difference between chametz and matza is related to time as well; they are made from the identical ingredients of flour and water, and differ only in that a dough that wasn't baked on time becomes chametz. What is it about the celebration of Pesach that makes it so focused on time?

Before Klal Yisroel are given the mitzvah of korban Pesach, they are commanded to observe the mitzvah of kiddush ha'chodesh - the sanctification of the new moon. It is the observance of Rosh Chodesh which determines the Jewish calendar that is the ultimate example of a mitzvah relating to time. It is this mitzvah that is the introduction to all of the mitzvos of Parshas Bo that follow. What is it about kiddush ha'chodesh that sets the stage for the entire celebration of Pesach?

There is a halacha that one cannot dedicate an object to the Beis Hamikdash unless one owns it. In a similar manner, one cannot sanctify time unless one "owns" it as well. All material possessions of a slave belong to his master; similarly, a slave's time is certainly not his own. By declaring Rosh Chodesh

and sanctifying time, Klal Yisroel declare their freedom. The multiple mitzvos that require paying meticulous attention to the details of time are most apropos for the Yom Tov of Z'man Cherusenu - our time of freedom. Only someone who is free and is in control of time can sanctify time through the performance of mitzvos. It is this connection between freedom and the holiness of time that explains the relationship that yetzias Mitzrayim has with the other yomim tovim. In davening and in kiddush, all yomim tovim are described as times that are zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim. Pesach is obviously such a remembrance and Shavuot and Sukkos are connected historically to yetzias Mitzrayim. Yet, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Shemini Atzeres don't have any historical connection to yetzias Mitzrayim but are still referred to as zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim. Why? Because The notion of a day endowed with holiness is a direct result of yetzias Mitzrayim. Yomim tovim which could not have existed without the prerequisite of freedom are truly zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim.

Chazal teach us that true freedom can only be attained by studying Torah. The mitzvah of talmud Torah which requires an immense amount of time to perform properly is truly the measuring rod of freedom. By spending one's time productively on mastering Torah, one declares that he is the owner of his time and is choosing to sanctify it. Yetzias Mitzrayim enabled us to sanctify our time, not on Pesach but for the several other days of Yom Tov as well. Only because of yetzias Mitzrayim are we able to spend our time in the study of Torah. May we always appreciate the great gift of time and sanctify it to the best of our abilities.

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Rabbi Reisman's Chumash Shiur - Audio and Print Version

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Bo 5781

1 - Topic - A Dvar Halacha on the Parsha from Rav Yaakov and Rav Pam
As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Bo. Today I would like to share with you a Machshava as well as a Dvar Halacha. I would like to start with a Dvar Halacha that has to do with the Parsha because there is a great Simcha for me to see this in the Emes L'yaakov. It is possible that I have seen this before. I don't think that I have ever mentioned it here before but you will enjoy.

The Dvar Halacha starts with a Psak Halacha from Rav Pam. Let me tell you that when we write a Kesuba at a wedding typically the Kesuba comes with blank spaces of course for the names of the Chosson and Kallah, the date and the place that the Kesuba is being written. That is typical. Everyone knows that it has to be filled in because it is unique to each wedding.

In addition, there is one word in the regular Tofes Hakesuba, the regular form which is usually left out and that is the word V'kanina. At the end of the Kesuba it says V'kanina, we did a Kinyan with the Chosson to obligate himself in the Kesuba. Why is that word left out? Halachically it does not have to be left out, however, the custom has become that first you do the Kinyan, that is usually the Mesader Kiddushin or the witnesses give a handkerchief or a pen to the Chosson and with Kinyan Chalipin the Chosson in exchange obligates himself in all of the obligations that are included in that document. The custom is not to write V'kanina until after the Kinyan has taken place.

It is important to note that that is not the Halacha. Halacha allows for the Shtar to be pre-written. Nevertheless, this is the custom among Ashkenazim that the word V'kanina is left out and is filled out after the Kinyan. That is the background.

It happens occasionally that a Mesader Kiddushin forgets to fill in V'kanina. In other words, the whole Kesuba is written but when he fills in the name and the date he can't write V'kanina yet as the Kinyan wasn't done. So he leaves it blank and they do the Kinyan and then they forget. If the Aidim already signed, writing V'kanina later doesn't work.

What Rav Pam did was to write V'ranina. That is to write in V'kanina but in the place of the Kuf to just write a Reish and then do the Kinyan and when the Kinyan is done to fill in the leg Reish so that it becomes a Kuf. I don't say that he did it all the time but it is something that he spoke about doing. There are some Kesubos that come that way with the word V'ranina which of course doesn't mean anything and the leg of the Kuf is added after the Kinyan so that the word is completed later.

Here is the Shaila. What happens if someone forgot to add that leg of the Kuf and it remained V'ranina after the Aidim signed it and the Kesuba is given? Now what do you do?

Rav Pam had a Machberes of Halachos, he had a number of them. He once gave me one of those Machberesin for whatever reason and in it he has this Shaila and he has a Raya from a Teshuva of R' Yitzchok Elchanan that it is good. That if you wrote V'ranina it is good. Why? Because everyone knows you mean V'kanina, you mean to say the full word and V'ranina is a senseless word, and everybody knows what is meant to be written. It is not the same if you leave it blank because if you leave it blank it doesn't say that there was a Kinyan, but V'ranina works. This is the Psak Halacha that he had and I saw that he had added if I recall correctly a postscript that subsequently he had heard this Psak Halacha from Rav Moshe as well. This is a Dvar Halacha.

In this week's Parsha in the Emes L'yaakov Rav Yaakov (page 291) has a piece at the end that is a very Geshmake piece towards the end of the Parsha. By the Mitzvah of Tefillin the Tefillin has to be written of course completely. It has to be written properly. We learn out of the Posuk (וכתבתם) that the writing of a Sefer Torah, Tefillin or Mezuzos has to be complete. The language that the Gemara uses on Shabbos 103b (11 lines from the bottom) is (שלא יכתוב אלפין עייניך) don't write an Aleph in place of an Ayin, (ביתין כפין) don't write a Beis in the place of a Kaf. So Rav Yaakov says why do I need a Gezairas Hakasuv, of course Tefillin have to be written properly. If an Aleph is written in place of Ayin or a Beis in the place of a Kaf of course that is not Kosher. Why would I think that it is Kosher? Why do I need a special Gezairas Hakasuv?

Rav Yaakov answers a very Geshmake Yesod. When a word is written, it is meant to convey a certain message. A written word conveys the idea of the words that are behind the written word. So if you write a letter to somebody and you write words and the person could read it then you have written the words. You may have a sloppy handwriting, but you have written the words. M'ikar Hadin if you would write instead of the words Beraishis Bara you would write Beraishis Kara, you would write a Kaf instead of a Beis. Beraishis Kara Es Hashamayim V'es Ha'aretz. Really it should be good because anybody who reads it knows that it is just missing the foot of the Beis and it means Beraishis Bara. Any normal person who reads it knows exactly what is missing.

Really as far as the rules of writing are concerned that should be written well. That is why you need a special Gezairas Hakasuv (וכתבתם שיהא כתיבה תמה) that the Kesiva has to be complete. Because except for Sefer Torah, Tefillin and Mezuzos where we have this Gezairas Hakasuv, in any other topic of writing if the writing is understood then it is considered as if the item had been written. So with this he explains why you need a Gezairas Hakasuv of (כתיבה תמה).

Rav Yaakov adds that with this is answered Rav Akiva Eiger's Kasha. Rav Akiva Eiger asks if Kesiva is K'dibbur Dami, if a written word is as if it is spoken. How can anybody write a Yud Kei Vav Kei, Kesiva is K'dibbur. When you write a Yud Kei Vav Kei it is as if you speak out that Sheim and of course you are not allowed to speak out that Sheim. You are not allowed to speak out the name of the Yud Kei Vav Kei. So if you hold that writing is like speaking how are you allowed to write Yud Kei Vav Kei?

Answers Rav Yaakov, nowadays Yud Kei Vav Kei as the Sheim of Adnus it is not read the way we would pronounce Aleph Daled Nun and Yud. So therefore, Zagt Rav Yaakov the written word is only the way it is read. If you write Yud Kei Vav Kei today it is as you said the Sheim Adnus. This is the Yesod that Rav Yaakov says.

Mimeila, that is really the Psak of Rav Pam that V'ranina is good because everyone knows it means V'kanina. It is an important message that the written word is measured by how it is read.

Rav Yaakov there mentions that if you have an abbreviation, the abbreviation has a Din Kesiva for the way that the word is read. All Inyanei Kesiva are written to a degree in which the word is read.

I would add that it would seem according to Rav Yaakov if you have a one letter abbreviation, let's say you have a question and answer sheet, if you write Q by the question and A by the answers, even though by Shabbos you have to write two letters to be Chayuv, it maybe if someone just writes the A and it is understood to mean answer or Q and it is understood to mean question, according to Rav Yaakov it would seem to come out that he is Chayuv because he is writing a whole word. Tzorech Iyuv. Al Kol Panim, the Yesod I was overjoyed to see the Yesod here in Rav Yaakov.

2 – Topic – A Dvar Torah on the Parsha

This Dvar Torah is an Inyan of Machshava that also happens to have a connection L'halacha. Most people are familiar with the fact that there is a dispute as to the proper timing of the eating of the Matzah. In other words, does the Matzah have to be eaten by midnight on Pesach night or can it be eaten all night. It is a Machlokes Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya in Berachos 9a (31 lines from the top). Rabbi Akiva says that the Korban Pesach is eaten (בהפזון עד שעת חפזון) until the time the Jews rushed. Rabbi Akiva understands it to mean the Chipazon D'yisrael, when the Jews rushed out of Mitzrayim it was daybreak. So therefore, the whole night is Kosher for the eating of the Matzah.

Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya disagrees. He says it doesn't mean the Jews rushing it means Chipazon D'mitzrayim, when the Mitzrim came to rush the Jews out of Mitzrayim which took place at midnight by Makkas Bechoros.

So Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya holds it is Chipazon D'mitzrayim so it is at midnight, while Rabbi Akiva holds it is Chipazon D'yisrael which means until the morning. This is in the Gemara. The Rambam Paskens like Rabbi Akiva. Tosafos Paskens like Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya. There is a dispute. Therefore, the Shulchan Aruch says that a person should try to be careful to complete eating the Matzah by midnight, by Chatzos Laila which is our practice with the Afikomen.

The Kasha is why are we Yotzei eating Matza at the beginning of the night, if you need Shas Chipazon the Chipazon was at midnight for the Mitzrim and in the morning for the Jews. The beginning of the night when they brought the Korban Pesach where is the Chipazon, where is that, it is missing in the Chipazon, in the rushing of the Jews in Mitzrayim, amazing. How are you Yotzei on the first half of the night?

I saw a Yesodosdika answer. For Geulah, to be Nig'al, for someone to go out of Mitzrayim there are two things that are required. One is the Geulah of the Guf, that the body left Mitzrayim, the other is Geulas Hanefesh. That the souls of the Jews detached themselves from the connection to the Mitzrim. What is the Geulas Hanefesh? It always has to come before the Geulas Haguf. The soul has to be free in order for the Guf to be free. (קָרְבָּה אֶל-נַפְשִׁי) (קָרְבָּה אֶל-נַפְשִׁי גְאֻלָּה) as is says in Tehillim 69:19. (קָרְבָּה אֶל-נַפְשִׁי גְאֻלָּה) there has to be a certain K'raivus Hanefesh for there to be Geulah.

The first half of the night was the Dam Milah and the Dam Pesach, that was the Geulah. That is the time of Geulah without any Chipazon. That is the Lashon of Pakeid Yifkod Hashem Eschem, Geulas Hanefesh and Geulas Haguf, you need both. So that the first half of the night it goes without saying you can eat the Matzah Bish'as Geulah. The Chiddush is the second half of the night which is the time of the Geulas Haguf.

When is Geulas Haguf? That is the dispute. Is it the Chipazon of Mitzrayim, when they were actually chased out, or is it the Chipazon of Yisrael when they actually walked out? That is a Machlokes. But the Geulas Hanefesh that was the first part of the night when the Yidden ate the Korban Pesach.

It is important to note that any Yid who wants to free himself of the Hash'pa of the Galus, of the Hash'pa of the influence around him has to start with Geulas Hanefesh. It doesn't work. A person can't say that he is going to be

an Ehrliche Yid and he will do that without disconnecting himself from some sort of a connection with the culture, and the influence of the world around him. It just doesn't work that way. The world doesn't work that way.

A person needs to have a disconnect from the negative influence, the distracting influence. It means it is bad, it means it is not a Yiddish influence of the world around him. When a person can distract himself from the negative influence of the world around him then he can be an Ehrliche Yid. But in order to be an Ehrliche Yid he has to be able to first and foremost disconnect from the influence of the world around him. Geulas Hanefesh Kodem L'Geulas Haguf, Ai we should be Zoche to it.

If we could be Zoche to that and disconnect, we could all want to move to Eretz Yisrael. We all want to be there as what do we have here? What do we have here? Good food, comfortable homes and everything about America. Wishing one and all a wonderful Shabbos Parshas Bo a Shabbos of Geulah. Let it be a Geulas Hanefesh for all of us!

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org
date: Jan 21, 2021, 10:50 PM subject: Rav Frand - Choshech: Warning or a Punishment?

Darkness: A Symbolic Message Rather Than a Punishment

Parshas Bo contains the end of the Makos—the Ten Plagues—the ninth of which was Makas Choshech, the Plague of Darkness. I saw an interesting observation in the sefer Milchamos Yehuda from Rav Yehuda Lubart, z"l. He points out an anomaly that exists with this plague. With virtually all the other makkos, Moshe first warned the Egyptians and then the plague started. However, there was no warning prior to the Plague of Darkness. Why did Makas Choshech break the pattern?

The Milchamos Yehuda suggests a fundamental difference between Makas Choshech and all the other plagues. The other nine plagues from Dam (#1 – Blood) through Makas Bechoros (#10 – Death of the Firstborn) were punishments. These were Divine “slaps” to break the will of Pharaoh. When punishing, there is a well-established principle: Punishments are not administered without prior warning (Yoma 81a; Sanhedrin 56b; Zevachim 107a). Even before punishing our children, we first warn them: “If you do this one more time, you are going to suffer the consequences!”

Makas Choshech was not the punishment. It was the warning! The warning was, “Pharaoh, you are blind! You cannot see what is happening before your very eyes. You should wake up and open your eyes and see what is happening to you and your people.” The Plague of Darkness, unlike the other plagues, was a symbolic message. There are none so blind as those who will not see. How does the Almighty convey this symbolic message to the King of Egypt? He does so by making Choshech. That was the warning for what was coming next – Makas Bechoros. Makas Choshech did not need any warning of its own. It was the warning.

With this idea, Rav Lubart provides new insight into two Medrashim.

The pasuk in Tehillim [105:28] says, “He sent darkness and made it dark and they did not defy his words.” The Medrash comments on this pasuk as follows. The Almighty asked the Angels: Are the Egyptians deserving to be smitten by Darkness? There was no objection from any of the Angels to such a punishment. They all agreed that it would be appropriate.

What is the pshat in this Medrash? Why did HaKadosh Baruch Hu need to ask the Angels in the first place whether they agreed with Him regarding this plague? The answer is that we know this is the custom of the Almighty “to consult with His Heavenly Court” before taking dramatic action. Apparently, by the other plagues there was a difference of opinion in the Heavenly Court. Some argued that certain punishments were too harsh; the Egyptians are not deserving of such. There was at least a discussion in the “Palmalya shel Ma'alalah” about the matter. The pasuk in Tehillim takes note of the fact that regarding Makas Choshech, there was no rebuttal whatsoever from any of the Angels in the Heavenly Court.

Why not? Why were there suddenly no “defense attorneys” arguing for the Egyptians in the Heavenly Court? The answer is that this was not going to be a punishment, it was only a warning. If it was not a punishment, there was no

justification for weighing the issue of whether it was or was not a fair punishment.

Then Rav Lubart interprets another Medrash, using a homiletic, but very beautiful drush. The Medrash states that the Darkness of the Ninth Plague was as thick as a dinar (a certain kind of coin). But what does this comparison indicate? Darkness is not “thick” – it is the absence of light. If we turn off the lights in a room, it will simply be dark. There is nothing to feel. So what does the Medrash mean?

Rav Lubart explains that the Medrash is alluding to the fact that a dinar (money) can also cause blindness. People do crazy things – not only for money per se, but for all types of materialistic matters. People are blinded by the tremendous ambition to make money and accumulate wealth, possessions, or any physical pleasure. We always hear about executives that somewhere along the line get burned out. They have been spending 18 hours a day at the office for decades and then suddenly, at some point in their sixties, they suddenly regret how they have spent their years. They resign from their position and say, “I want to spend more time with my family.” What family? They grew up without you and moved on during those 40+ years when you were blinded by your ambitions and busy accumulating dinars.

Just like Pharaoh was blinded, and the Almighty tried to show him that he was blinded, so too are we also blinded by our drive to accumulate more and more material possessions and physical pleasures. Maybe we are not as obtuse as Pharaoh, but we are also blinded – blinded by the dinar.

What’s the Big Simcha of a Pidyon HaBen?

I have quoted the following thought many times on the occasion of a Pidyon HaBen.

The end of Parshas Bo contains the mitzvah of the Redemption of the First Born. The Sforno on this mitzvah says an incredible idea: the Sforno defines the mitzvah as one which enables the child to engage in “secular work” (Avodas Chol). According to him, until the Pidyon HaBen ceremony is completed, the child is holy (kadosh). Just like we may not work with a first-born kosher animal because it is the property of the Kohen, so too, a human first-born child may not work.

Now if truth be told, when a child is four weeks old, there is not much work that he can do. It is the other way around—he forces his parents to do the work for him! But, theoretically, the Sforno seems to be saying that if a child was, for whatever reason, never redeemed when he was thirty days old, he would retain the status of Kedushas Bechor (first born sanctity), and would be forbidden to do any non-sacred work. It is apparently a wild Sforno!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky asks a simple question. It is not that common to have a Pidyon HaBen today. There are many situations which rule out such a scenario. First of all, it only applies to a son. That knocks off 50% of the population. Then, it only applies to a first-born, so there is a maximum of one first born per mother. Furthermore, it only applies to natural deliveries and not to Caesarian deliveries. If a woman has a miscarriage prior to giving birth to her first live child, again there is no Pidyon HaBen. On top of that, if either the father is a Kohen or Levi or the maternal grandfather is a Kohen or Levi, again, there is no Pidyon HaBen.

So, it is a rare occurrence, but it is a beautiful Simcha. At a Bris, everyone is worried. The mother is still in pain from the delivery, the child is certainly in pain from the circumcision, and the father is nervous. Everyone is uptight. A Pidyon HaBen is a wonderfully joyous occasion. There is time to plan, it is not rushed. It is a beautiful thing. They bring in the baby on a silver platter with the sugar and with the garlic. Beautiful!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky asks – what is this big Simcha all about? Why are we not mourning? The child changes from being holy (kadosh) to being profaned (chullin). Yesterday he was holy; now he becomes just another baby boy! Furthermore, Rav Yaakov asks, the text recited at a Pidyon HaBen is “...Let this son enter a good life, one of Torah and Fear of Heaven. May it be Thy Will that just as he entered the Pidyon (redemption), so too may he enter to Torah, Chuppah (wedding canopy), and Ma’asim Tovim (good deeds). Now we are familiar with this last phrase, which is also said at a Bris

Milah. But what about the first part of this Tefillah: Let this son enter a good life, one of Torah and Fear of Heaven. Where does that come from? Why don’t we say that by a Bris?

Rav Yaakov formulates a principle he repeats many times in his sefer. There is a fundamental difference between Judaism and other religions (especially the Christian religion). Christianity has a dichotomy between the holy and the mundane. There is a perpetual conflict between body and soul. They believe that man has both body and soul but they feel that “never the twain shall meet.” They feel it is impossible to have a blend of holiness and the mundane. This is part of the reason that their priests are celibate. They have to live a life that has nothing to do with the physicality, which marriage entails.

By Judaism, it is just the opposite. The highest level of spirituality—the reason a person was put on this earth—is to blend body and soul. The goal is not that the body and soul should negate one another, but that the soul should influence the body and make us into holy beings. “Men of holiness shall you be for Me.” [Shemos 22:30]. Human holiness is the name of the game. That is our purpose.

Ideally, a person should reach the level where his eating is for the Sake of Heaven and his sleeping is for the Sake of Heaven, and all his other physical activities are for the Sake of Heaven as well. This is the power of the soul, to rule over the body. It is a challenge. It is difficult.

This is why the only korban a non-Jew can bring is the Olah sacrifice, which is entirely burnt on the Mizbayach. Neither the Kohanim nor the person who brings the offering eat any part of it. It is entirely for G-d. A Jew, on the other hand, can bring a Korban Shlomim (“Peace Offering”). This is a sacrifice, but the person who brings it sits down and eats the steak from this animal. We eat the lamb chops! The lamb chops have a status of kodshim (holy sacrificial meat), but this consumption becomes a mitzvah because there is no contradiction between being engaged in holy and elevated spiritual activities and the body experiencing physical pleasure.

The highest spiritual goal in life for the Jew is not to rid himself of physicality but to sanctify the physicality in his life, to infuse it with holiness.

This is the simcha of the Pidyon HaBen. This child was holy until now. But remaining holy is no trick. The challenge now is to redeem the child, make him into chullin, and now challenge him to sanctify this non-sacred entity he has become. Despite the fact that he was holy before and now he is not, the game is not over. Life is just beginning for him.

With this idea, Rav Yaakov interprets the above cited text of the Pidyon HaBen prayer. To achieve this goal in life requires a lot of Yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven). For a person to confront and engage in activities of physicality and elevate them requires Yiras Shamayim – a focus that I want to be a Servant of G-d (Eved HaShem). Therefore, this prayer invokes the hope that this young child should enter into a life of Torah and Yiras Shamayim. Only through Torah and Yiras Shamayim can a person elevate physicality and make it into holiness.

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This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2020 by Torah.org. support Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> to get your own free copy of this mailing or subscribe to the series of your choice. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site

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Pearls of Wisdom by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

You Can Change Your Nature

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - 9 Shevat 5781 – January 21, 2021

“Until when will you refuse to be humbled before Me? Send out My people that they may serve Me” (Shemos 10:3).

Two verses earlier, the Torah tells us that Hashem hardened the heart of Pharaoh. How, then, could he be expected to humble himself now before Hashem?

The Medrash Rabbah (22) states that when Adam encountered Kayin after he killed Hevel, he asked him, “What happened with your verdict?” Kayin replied, “I did teshuvah and a compromise [with Hashem] was reached.” Adam responded, “I didn’t realize the power of teshuvah!”

The Zohar states that certain egregious sins have no atonement. R’ Yechiel Dancyger, the Aleksander Rebbe, however, explains that the Zohar merely means that an individual who commits certain sins no longer merits divine assistance to do teshuvah, and it’s therefore exceptionally difficult for him to defeat his yetzer hara. Hashem, however, will still offer the person a concession if he humbles himself and shows sincere remorse. No matter how far a person has strayed from the true path, he should never despair.

Pharaoh was evil and defiant, so Hashem punished him and his heart was hardened. He no longer merited divine assistance, a benefit he desperately needed. If he would have been penitent, though, he could have achieved forgiveness. And if that’s true for Pharaoh, certainly it’s true of any Jew regardless of the gravity of his sin or how low he has fallen. As we say in our prayers, “Hashem extends a hand to those who sin.”

Our sages tell us (Yoma 38b), “If one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.” The Klausenberger Rebbe points out that the Talmud uses the word “comes” to indicate that a person must merely take a few steps forward to come closer to Hashem and he will merit to be purified. In fact, receiving divine assistance to do teshuvah is a definitive proof from Heaven that his motives are sincere. And not only does heaven assist him personally, but he is imbued with added divine assistance so he can sway others to do teshuvah as well, says the Klausenberger Rebbe.

The medrash states that teshuvah is so great that it preceded the creation of the world. The Be’er HaMayim notes that even Bilaam realized that his only means of avoiding punishment was teshuvah. He therefore said, “I sinned” (Bamidbar 22:34) and was saved from the angel.

The Talmud teaches (Yoma 86a), “Great is teshuvah that reaches the heavenly throne.” Rabbeinu Chananel explains that teshuvah helps atone even for those sins that reach the heavenly throne – meaning, even if a person brought evil into the world, teshuvah will annul his sins. Of course, one main component of teshuvah is sincere remorse and penitence.

Teshuvah is difficult when it means changing one’s middos. One year, a devoted chassid of the great R’ Dovid Tzvi Shlomo, the Lelover Rebbe, brought mishloach manos to his Rebbe on Purim. The chassid was known to be hot-tempered, and when the Rebbe saw his mishloach manos, he refused to accept it. He told the chassid he would only take it if the chassid promised to control his temper.

The chassid was hesitant and replied that he could not promise to vanquish his rage, but he would certainly make every effort to do so. The Rebbe refused to accept this compromise and explained to the chassid that he would only accept the mishloach manos if he explicitly promised not to get angry anymore.

The chassid left deeply pained because he couldn’t make the promise the Rebbe demanded. All day he was acutely distressed and, finally before sunset on Purim, he returned to the home of the Lelover Rebbe. He angrily placed his mishloach manos on the table and loudly proclaimed, “May it be the will of Hashem that this rage that I have right now will be the last I ever have.”

Indeed, from that day on, he never again lost his temper and was soft as a reed, amicable and pleasant to everyone.

The elders of Yerushalayim, who were supported by this individual, testified that one would never have believed that he had been such an ill-tempered person. He was always forbearing and agreeable. Indeed, his transformation teaches us the power of teshuvah. It can even cause a person to change his nature.

from: The Office of **Rabbi Sacks** <info@rabbisacks.org> via
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5781)

Rabbi Sacks zt”l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

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 is enslaved and oppressed, that has suffered exile for more than two centuries. 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.”[1] 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.”[2]

Any of these would have been the great speech of a great leader. Guided by G-d, 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 civilisations 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.[3]

What G-d 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.”[4]

Visionary leadership forms the text and texture of Judaism. It was the book of Proverbs that said, “Without a vision [chazzon] the people perish.” (Prov. 29:18). That vision in the minds of the Prophets was always of a long-term future. G-d 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].”[5] 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.[6] Moses’ lesson, thirty-three centuries old, is still compelling today.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com> subject:

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

www.peninim.org Hodu l’Hashem Ki Tov!! We are happy to announce that after much effort we have successfully launched our new website www.peninim.org. This website will avail the reader access to all thirty years of Peninim Al HaTorah (over 6,000 divrei Torah) Our search engine responds to searches by year, parasha, topic and keyword . This labor of love has been sponsored *l’zchus harabim* by our dear friends Rabbi & Mrs. Roberto Szerer in memory of Bina bas Eliyahu Yehoshua Z”L.

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Bo פרשת בא תשפ"א מי ומי ההולכים Which ones are going? (10:8)

Pharaoh seemed overly concerned with knowing whom Moshe *Rabbeinu* was taking to the “prayer retreat” in the wilderness. What difference did it make to him who went? *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, explains that Pharaoh could not accept that anyone other than *Klal Yisrael’s gedolim*, Torah leadership, would be involved in this trip. Hashem is *Ram al kol goyim*, above all Nations, His glory is above the Heavens. Why would He listen to the prayers of simple people – certainly not that of children? Pharaoh wanted to know who among the leadership of the Jewish People was leaving to pray. Moshe replied that everyone would be attending, especially children, because their pure, sincere prayers have the greatest efficacy. *Horav Yaakov Mutzafi, zl*, was a *mekubal*, mystic, who was proficient in all areas of *Kabbalah*, Jewish esoteric/*nistar*/mystical writings. He devoted much time to praying, especially during the High Holy Days. He would stand in prayer, deep in devotion, following the *kavanos*, meditations, prescribed by the holy mystics such as the *Arizal*. Nonetheless, since his young son stood next to him during *davening*, he would make a point to look constantly to make sure that his son was following the *chazzan* who led the service. One time, he noticed that the child was “lost” in the *machzor*, prayer book, and no longer was following as he should. *Rav Yaakov* stopped concentrating on the esoteric profundities and focused on the simple translation of the words. This way, he could focus more on his son’s *davening*. He was more concerned with his son’s *davening* than of his own. A well-known female dentist did not yet merit to have biological children. An observant woman, she prayed constantly and went to *gedolim* petitioning their blessing, but she had yet to be answered with a child. After much contemplation, she and her husband decided to adopt an infant, a little girl, whom they raised with abundant love and care. The child attended school, and when she became six years old, she received her first *siddur* at the school’s *siddur* party. Her mother was very excited to attend. It meant so much to her to finally participate in her child’s educational milestone events. Her little girl walked up to the stage to receive her *siddur* and returned to be greeted by her mother’s tear-filled, beaming face. The child looked up at her mother and said, “*Ima*, now that I know how to *daven* to Hashem, I am going to pray that you will give birth to a little boy, so that I could have a brother.” A year later, the mother, who was almost forty-years-old, embraced her son. The pure prayers of a young child have awesome efficacy. Inspiring stories, but why do the prayers rendered by young children have such influence? The *Maggid, zl, m’Dubno* explains with a parable. A father and son were

returning from a long journey. It was getting late, and the father, concerned that the city gates might close before they returned, encouraged his son to walk faster. The boy, who was young in age and small in build, said, "I can only go so fast. I am sorry." If they were stuck outside of the city gates for the night, they would be easy prey for violent men and wild animals that surfaced after dark. They kept pushing and even attempted to run, to no avail. By the time they reached the city, the gates were closed. Now what? They screamed, called out, made all sorts of noises, but no one heard them. The father raised his eyes Heavenward in prayer and, simultaneously, he saw a small window at the top of the gate, where the watchman slept and where the keys to the gates hung in plain sight. The father ruminated that, even if he would climb the wall, he could never fit through the small window, but perhaps his son... He lifted his son up and directed him from the ground as the young boy climbed up the side of the wall. Finally, the boy reached the small opening/window. He wiggled and pushed, and he finally made his way through the opening. He immediately fetched the keys and threw them down to his father. The *nimshal*, lesson, is quite simple. We pray and pray, cry our hearts out, but often it is too late: the gates of prayer have closed. The obstacles, consisting of prosecuting angels coupled with our own indiscretions and shortcomings, hamper our prayers from making it in, from penetrating the partitions (many of them self-constructed by our failings) that block our prayers. However, "the world is sustained by the pure breath of children learning Torah" (*Shabbos* 119b). Their words of Torah and *tefillah* are pure, untainted by sin; thus, they have the ability to achieve what we cannot, to reach where we cannot, to sustain when we are unable. Pharaoh could not understand this.

בְּמִשְׁכַּתוֹ לֹא רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו ... וְלֹכַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹר בְּמִשְׁכַּתוֹ **No man could see his brother... but, for all Bnei Yisrael, there was light in their dwellings.**

(10:23) During *Makas Choshech*, plague of darkness, the Egyptian people were overwhelmed with an opaque, fog-like condition that enveloped the country and extinguished all flames. Thus, even if an Egyptian could reach his lamp, any flame that he would kindle would immediately be extinguished. *Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita*, says that the word *b'moshvosam*, in their dwellings, contains within it the letters which comprise the word *b'shabbosam*, in their *Shabbosos*, which he feels alludes to the notion that the reason the Jewish people were able to withstand the darkness of the Egyptian exile was that they observed *Shabbos Kodesh*. Indeed, *Chazal (Shemos Rabbah 1:28)* teach that the Jewish People in Egypt took upon themselves to observe *Shabbos*. Concerning the *pasuk Va'yaar b'sivlosam*, "He observed their burdens" (Ibid. 2:11), *Moshe Rabbeinu* went out to his brethren and saw that they had no rest. He went to Pharaoh and contended that one who owns a slave and does not grant him one day of rest will end up burying his slave. No human being can work non-stop without time off to rest. Pharaoh acquiesced and instructed Moshe to provide the Jewish people with a rest-day. Moshe established *Shabbos* as their day of rest. The spiritual illumination engendered through the medium of *shemiras Shabbos* eradicated the darkness of the exile that suffused the lives of the Jewish People throughout the ages. This idea is alluded to in the *Havdalah* service, which we recite at the conclusion of *Shabbos. Hamavdil bein ohr l'choshech*; "He Who makes distinction between light and darkness." This verse implies that immediately following *Shabbos* we enter into a period of darkness. *Rav Gamliel* explains that the weekdays that follow *Shabbos* are dark in contrast to *Shabbos*. When one observes *Shabbos* properly, he causes the *Shabbos* illumination to overflow and continue during the entire week. Thus, *Shabbos* continues to be a source of light that radiates our lives throughout the various circumstances that we confront. Entire volumes of Torah literature have been dedicated to explaining the profundity of *Shabbos Kodesh*. Yet, for the majority of the Jewish People, it remains an ancient tradition heaped together – often rejected – with the rest of Jewish tradition and values. Perhaps, it is its profundity which makes it so difficult to accept. After all, what is the difference between one day of the week and another? At times, the most profound question can be elucidated with a simple answer: To Hashem, *Shabbos* has special meaning. He asked you/us to observe this

day by sanctifying it. Is it so much to ask? *Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl*, visited his *Rebbe*, the saintly *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, in Radin. *Rav Elchanan* related that in a nearby city, a number of shopkeepers had decided to keep their establishments open on *Shabbos*. He was able to convince all but two of the owners to shutter their stores for *Shabbos*. The remaining two were determined to play hardball and defy his request that they close. When the *Chafetz Chaim* heard this, he said, "Quick, we are traveling to that city, so that I can pay a visit to these two men." *Rav Elchanan* did not want to burden his *Rebbe*, whose advanced age transformed this trip into a major hardship. Thus, he said that he would not go. The *Chafetz Chaim* countered, "Fine. So I will go myself." Obviously, *Rav Elchanan* would not permit his *Rebbe* to travel alone; he accompanied him. They arrived at the store of one of the recalcitrant owners. The *Chafetz Chaim* did not waste any time getting to the point. "Tell me, my friend," he asked the owner, "do you have money?" "I have done well. I am quite comfortable." "Do you have children?" the *Chafetz Chaim* asked. "Yes, I have a decent sized family." "Is there anything that you are missing?" the sage asked. "Nothing, I am doing well. I have no complaints." When the *Chafetz Chaim* heard this, he began to weep bitterly and asked, "Hashem has been so good to you. He has given you everything: wealth and children. You are lacking nothing. Yet, Hashem makes only one request of you: that you give Him *Shabbos*. Is that too much to ask? Why will you not grant this to him?" When the man heard such a "simple" request emanate from such a pure soul he could not say no. He acquiesced to closing his store for *Shabbos*. The second storekeeper agreed as well. The most profound questions can sometimes be answered with a simple, sincere response.

וְהַגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ד' לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם **And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, "It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt."** **(13:8)** No religious ceremony focuses more on the inclusion of children as does the *Seder* meal. Cloaked in profound esoteric meaning, the *Seder* is brought down to an elementary level in order to engender youthful participation. Indeed, we have activities and traditions that cater to youthful imagination, all for the purpose of motivating a child's questions and the adults' reply. The reason for this display is that *Pesach* commemorates our liberation and the path to nationhood, which we embarked on at *Har Sinai* when we accepted the Torah. In order to ensure that *Pesach* and its eternal message remains an integral part of Jewish life, we must see to it that its significance be inculcated in our children. The only guarantee of their continued commitment is our transmission of the message and its significance to the next generation. When children grow up realizing that something, a tradition, holds great significance, it becomes a part of them and they see to it that they observe its message and transmit it to the next generation. Pharaoh was acutely aware of this verity. Thus, he instructed *Moshe Rabbeinu* to take only the adult men on their "three day" trip to the wilderness. Without the children to impress and inspire, the trip would have a low success rate. *Moshe's* response was immediate: "We are all going... the old and the young... for, without the young, the trip will have no enduring meaning." Therefore, every *Pesach Seder* night, we follow the *halachah* and do everything to motivate youthful participation, but does it succeed? Just doing the right things and following the presumed prescription for success does not guarantee success. Do we have a general recipe that works? *Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz* relates the following story. A distinguished Torah scholar had a young son who was not successful in his learning. His problem was retention of the material. Regardless of the number of times that he reviewed the *Chumash* and *Gemora*, he proceeded to forget what he had been taught. His father visited with professionals who specialized in this field, but they were baffled by this case. One day, father and son walked together through the fruit market and noticed the watermelon peddler calling out, "Watermelon on the knife, watermelon red and lusciously sweet!" over and over again. Half an hour later, as they continued to walk, the young boy began to call out, "Watermelon on the knife, watermelon red and lusciously sweet." It dawned on the father that his son, who had a severe retention problem, did not seem to have a problem

remembering what the fruit peddler had been calling out. The father began to wonder. Perhaps his son's retention problem was exclusive to Torah, but he would have no problem remembering mundane education. He would seek the sage advice of a *gadol*, Torah giant. That night he met with a holy Torah giant, a *Rosh Yeshivah* whose knowledge of Torah was without peer, but whose wisdom also traversed secular disciplines as well. The *gadol* said, "I could tell you that there is a *klipah*, (spiritual) shell wrapped around your son's soul which prevents him from learning. If you persevere, your efforts will ultimately penetrate this shell and your son will become a *talmid chacham*. I do not, however, think that this is your son's problem. The reason that your son remembered what the fruit peddler called out is that his shouts emanate from the deepest recesses of his being. The watermelons that he sells represent his family's livelihood. He is not simply shouting; his heart is screaming, "Buy watermelons!" Obviously, your son's educators are not teaching from the heart, but from the mouth and the mind. Unless his *rebbe* teaches passionately, your son will continue to have a retention problem." As a follow-up to this notion about passionate teaching, imparting the lesson from the heart, he related another story of a father whose last words to his son remained with him throughout his life and served as his lodestar for raising and educating his own children. A Jew who was born in Austria was able to leave as a young child and make his way to Germany – on his own – alone in the world, without his parents. While in Germany, he was able to connect with one of the *Kinderstransports* ferrying children to England. From there, he finally made his way to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he settled in Petach Tikva. Since he spent most of his youth on the run, without parents, he was unable to have the "luxury" of a Torah education. He knew how to *daven* and could learn *Chumash*. Aware of his limited background and acknowledging the fact that he was not going to become a Torah scholar, he decided to devote himself so that others could learn. To this end, he became a *shamash*, caretaker, at a *shul*, handling all the maintenance, both physical and spiritual. He saw to it that the *shul* provided an array of *shiurim*, Torah classes, to satisfy the needs of its growing, diverse crowd. He lived a full life, and he merited to see each of his sons become a solid *talmid chacham*, and each of his daughters marry a Torah scholar of note. How did it happen? How did a person who grew up with no solid Jewish education become such a Torah-devoted Jew that he raised a family that would be the envy of a *Rosh Yeshivah*? This question was posed by a *Rosh Yeshivah* who was close with one of the sons: "How did your father achieve such Torah *nachas*? What motivated/inspired him to seek such *nachas*?" The eldest son explained, "We grow up taking our parents for granted. Do we bother asking them, 'How was your life growing up? Did you have challenges? How did you achieve such success? Who helped you? Who guided you?' One day, I decided to ask my father how he – without parents, spending most of his youth on the run – remained a Torah observant Jew who raised such a family? This is what he told me: "When I left Austria, I left alone. It was not supposed to be that way. My father was supposed to travel with me to Germany and attend to my arrangements. At the last minute, he had a problem with his passport which precluded his accompanying me. Instead, he took me to the train station to see me off. I never saw him again. "I will never forget my father as the train pulled out of the station. He started running alongside the car I was in to say goodbye. He waved to me and called out, *Ze! a gutten Yid*, "Be a good/observant Jew." He continued to run as the train picked up speed, yelling, *Ze! a gutten Yid, ze! a gutten Yid!* At the last minute, he tripped and fell, but he still yelled out to me, *Ze! a gutten Yid!* "This was my father's parting message to me. I knew that whatever happened in life, this was one thing I had to do: be a good Jew!" The son continued, "My father's life revolved around those four parting words. This is why our family and the *shul* we grew up in looks the way it does. He never forgot his father's plea: 'Be a good Jew.'" We now understand the significance of our participating with the children during the *Seder*. This is the night that we impart *Pesach* to them: *Pesach*, its meaning; our nation, its meaning; Judaism, its meaning. There is, however, one stipulation: We must teach with heart; our children must feel the passion. If we teach

dispassionately, if we are hungry and rush through the *Seder*, so that we can eat, this is what they will remember. We will have only ourselves to blame. If we want to make an enduring impression, we must feel as if these are the most important moments of our lives. This is the lesson that they will take from us for the rest of their lives. How we present the lesson determines the student's ability to retain the message. This is something to take to heart.

עֵינֶיךָ וְלִזְכְּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְלִזְכְּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ **And it shall be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes. (13:9)** Ohr Yehudah is a city in the Tel Aviv district of Gush Dan, *Eretz Yisrael*. A member of the community was in the restaurant business. In fact, he owned all the restaurants in Ohr Yehudah. This was not because no one else was interested in competing, but rather, because he was a coarse person who did not do well with competition. Whenever someone had the "courage" to open a competing establishment, he would send his hoodlums to pay the man a visit. They subtly reminded the would-be restaurateur that there could be only one restaurant franchise in Ohr Yehudah, subject closed. The man's wife was on a different spiritual plane than her husband. She had a burning desire to know more about Judaism, its rituals, traditions and their observance. Thus, she attended lectures on Judaism. At a recent lecture, the *Rav* had spoken about the significance of *Tefillin* and the enormous merit accrued by one who puts them on daily. *Tefillin* altered a person's life with the merit of eight *mitzvos* one fulfills when he wears *Tefillin*. It adds holiness to the wearer and protects him from harm. Following the lecture, the wife approached the speaker and asked him how best to encourage her husband to don *Tefillin* daily. He said that nice and easy, coaxing and explaining, was the most basic way to convince a person of his spiritual obligations. She made the attempt; she even pleaded, all to no avail. He was just not interested in putting on *Tefillin*. The restaurateur had a daily schedule which he followed like ritual. He arose at 8:00 a.m. and, shortly thereafter, he would drive his new car to one of his restaurants, where he would eat a large breakfast. He then travelled to each one of his establishments to touch base and do paperwork. One day, he did his usual; arose at 8:00 a.m., dressed and enjoyed a cup of coffee as he read the paper. At 9:00 a.m., he left his house to drive to work. As he was about to get in his car, he heard screaming from his house. He turned around and saw his wife at the door, screaming after him. He could not hear what she was saying, so he returned home. "I cannot live like this anymore!" she declared emphatically. "I have never asked you for anything. Now, all I am asking is that you put on *Tefillin*. Five minutes, put them on, and take them off. If you cannot do this, then our marriage is of no significance to you." "Fine," he answered. "I will put on *Tefillin*. If this makes you happy, I will do it." They began to search for his *Tefillin*, which he had not worn since his *bar mitzvah*. He found them and tried to remember what he was supposed to do. His wife helped him. He recited *Krias Shema*. At the very moment that he covered his eyes and said the hallowed words, *Shema Yisrael*, they heard a loud explosion. They immediately ran to the window to discover that his brand new car had exploded and was burning fiercely. An investigation revealed that one of the would-be restaurateurs whom he did not allow to open, had hired someone to blow up his car – with him in it. Had he not taken the time that day to don *Tefillin*, he would have been in the car, and he would now be history. He was saved by the *mitzvah* of *Tefillin*. *Tefillin* lengthens a person's life. This incident demonstrated this verity. Let me add one thought. We all perform activities that add to good health and longevity, but do we continue or cut them short after the "revealed" benefit has been achieved? Certainly, the man who was saved cherished *Tefillin*, but for how long? In his case, he became fully observant. He added to his life.

וְאָנִי תְפִלָּה **וְשִׁמּוֹ שְׁלוֹם – Sim Shalom**. Establish Peace. Peace is the ultimate blessing, because, without peace, no other blessing has endurance. If one is blessed with health, prosperity, material or (even) spiritual abundance, but does not have with whom to share his beneficence - what good is it? Thus, the seal of peace lends permanence to our other blessings. The *Ksav Sofer* teaches that we identify three levels of peace: within one's family; within the country that one lives; and throughout the world. If one's

character is deficient, peace will elude him, writes the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna* (in his *Even Shleimah*). Ultimately, true peace is achieved with the perfection of one's character. The quality of one's character seals all of the other blessings. Positive character traits preserve one's blessings. Negative character traits undermine whatever blessing he achieves. Indeed, an unhappy/negative person is not able to achieve harmony in his life. The bitterness which overwhelms him destroys whatever good he has, thus preventing him from achieving a lasting relationship with anyone. The greatest peace one can have is peace of mind – or peace within oneself. לעילוי נפטר י"ג שבט תשס"ז Idu Keller נשמת איידל קעללער בת ר' יעקב שמעון פאללאק ז"ל - Marcia & Hymie Keller & Family, Perl & Harry M. Brown & Family Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

from: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kooklist+owners@googlegroups.com to: **Rav Kook List** <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Jan 20, 2021, 4:21 AM subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Bo: The Passover Leap

Spiritual Leap Lofty teachings cannot be revealed to those who are unsuitable or not ready for them. The enlightenment itself risks becoming debased and twisted when it is associated with sordid individuals. There are, however, exceptional cases, when the current spiritual-moral level of the receiver may be disregarded, and a spiritual 'leap' may be accomplished. G-d's revelation to the Israelite slaves in Egypt will forever stand out as an example of such a miraculous "leap." This is the inner significance of the Passover offering, the korban Pesach, which literally means to "leap" or "skip." The Jewish people in Egypt had sunken to the lowest levels of degradation and idolatry. In the words of the Midrash, they were on the 49th gate of tum'ah - just one before the lowest state of impurity. For G-d to be revealed to them during their redemption from Egyptian bondage required a spiritual jump of historic dimensions. Nonetheless, even the leap of Passover has its limitations. "This is the law of the Passover offering: no foreigner may eat of it." (Exodus 12:43) Who is a "foreigner" who may not partake of the korban Pesach? The Sages taught that this refers not only to Gentiles, but even to Jewish apostates who have abandoned G-d. These are Jews who have forsaken the Torah's principles to such an extent that they now fall under the category of "foreigners" (Zevachim 22b). In other words, even the spiritual leap of the Passover redemption was not boundless in its scope. It could not encompass those Jews who had so completely assimilated into their surrounding idolatrous culture that they lacked even an elementary faith in G-d. Rescuing the Light of the First Luchot This understanding of G-d's revelation during the redemption from Egypt sheds light on another historic event. Moses' act of breaking the luchot habit (the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments) took tremendous courage. How did Moses dare destroy such a uniquely holy object? How did he know that this was the correct thing to do? The Talmud suggests that Moses' act was based on the above-quoted law of the Passover offering. "The Passover offering is just one of the 613 mitzvot, and yet an apostate may not share in it," he reasoned. "Certainly the Jewish people, after they have sinned by worshiping idols, are unworthy of the Torah in its entirety!" (Shabbat 87a) In light of our previous comments, Moses' a priori reasoning becomes even more forceful. What is the inner message of the Passover offering? That G-d revealed Himself to the Jewish people, despite their spiritual poverty. Nonetheless, even this mitzvah cannot encompass those who reject the fundamental tenets of monotheism. Certainly the Torah as a whole could not be bestowed to the Jewish people in their idolatrous state after worshipping the Golden Calf. Had Moses in fact given the first set of luchot to the Jewish people, this would have bound the Torah to the state of spiritual impoverishment that enveloped the Jewish people at that time. This would have brought a terrible spiritual danger - to the world, to Israel, and to the Torah itself. Only by hiding that great light, by breaking the physical vessel that bound it to the material world, was Moses able to ensure the spiritual development of the Jewish people and the entire world. The first luchot, however, were not lost forever. Moses' act rescued that lofty

light, so that it may be revealed at the end of days with a pure and eternal illumination.

from: **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** <rmk@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: drasha@torah.org date: Jan 20, 2021, 4:10 PM subject: Drasha - You Are What You Eat

Drasha Parshas Bo - You Are What You Eat Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

After 210 years on foreign soil, many filled with sadistic slavery, the Jewish people get a taste of freedom. The Egyptian oppressors are devastated with plagues, and the Jews are readied for freedom. But before they are released, they are charged with two mitzvos. The sanctification and establishment of the New Moon, and the laws of the Korbon Pesach (Passover Lamb). These mitzvos entail some of the most complex statutes in the entire realm of Jewish law. Establishing new months and setting the calendar entails knowledge of astronomical calculations and celestial sophistication that was hardly a charge for a slave nation! The laws of the Passover sacrifice are defined in intricate detail, not only pertaining to its preparation, but the way the sacrifice is eaten, and who may partake of it. First, the Torah tells us that the offering may only be eaten with those who have been pre-designated as members of the festive meal. The Torah also instructs that the lamb must be wholly roasted, not one piece may be pan-fried or boiled. The Torah also commands how the lamb is eaten. It must be eaten in a rush — after all, the Jews were about to exit Egypt — and there was no time for long, drawn-out festivities. In fact, the Torah tells the nation to eat the korbon with their back packs readied and their staffs in hand! The instructions continue. "You must not break a bone. Do not leave over any meat." The lamb was to be eaten meticulously, every bit of meat was to be finished, yet no one was allowed to sink their teeth into it to the extent that the tender lamb's bone would break. One may ask: Why is the introduction to Judaism so abstruse and replete with detail? After all, the nation had been slaves for 210 years! Time was never a factor, let alone a lunar calendar. They probably never ate meat, the god of the Egyptians, for the duration of that time. Why not as soon-to-be free men were they not allowed to indulge the way they wanted, in high style and with unmitigated freedom? Why is the first allowance of carnivorous cuisine so restricted and detailed? Shouldn't the first commands to a fledgling people be simple feel-good symbolism? Dr. Viktor E. Frankel was a longtime prisoner in the bestial concentration camps of Nazi Germany. His parents, brother, and wife were killed and cremated in the ovens. Yet as a psychiatrist he devised a method of survival through the ravages of sadistic barbarism, detailed in his work, *Man's Search for Meaning*. He writes that though the Nazi's goal was to every eradicate every human trait, "hunger, humiliation, fear and deep anger are rendered tolerable by closely guarded images of beloved persons, by religion, and even by the healing beauties of a tree or a sunset." Frankel describes how he learned to relish every physical and spiritual entity he could grasp. These small acts would elevate their humanity. Scraps of wood formed pieces of meaningful art. He would analyze in his few free seconds every bit of good that was left to his existence. One evening a fellow prisoner rushed into the barracks and asked him to run out to the assembly grounds to watch the beautiful sunset. He whole sky became alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel-gray to blood-red. They watched the contrast of the majestic billows compared to the muddy-brown earth-tethered huts. After minutes of moving silence the prisoners turned to each other, "how beautiful the world could be." Every nuance of life is actually filled with spiritual opportunities. By affording the nation two initial two commands that were replete with thousands of details, later expounded upon through thousands of pages of Talmudic and Halachic literature, The Holy One opened a new outlook to the formerly bonded. The moon that they watched for 210 years now became the embryo of spirituality. The sign of its lumens would herald the New Year and the Festivals. The experience of eating meat would become a royal meal filled with mitzvos and responses to Hashem's command. There would be no chomping at bones like barbarians. Cooked in a precise and instructed

manner, every step of a seeming earthly – even physical — act took on a magnificent sense of spirituality. Those most intricate, detail and sophisticated acts forged slaves into princes. Every detail was filled with spirituality and cognizance. There were messages of dignity, of restraint. No more were they starving prisoners grabbing any available food. These prisoners needed to reserve a place to dine. The slow means of preparation entailed finesse and patience; not one morsel was allowed to be eaten raw. Instead of grabbing the food and sinking their teeth straight to the bone, they were warned, do not shatter a bone! And they could not nibble at it and leave some over, as they were commanded not to leave any meat over. In the minutest detail there is great magnitude. And in the magnitude of those actions lie the magnitude of man who recognizes the magnitude of his Creator. Good Shabbos (c)1999 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Dedicated by Peter & Donna Kash in honor of the anniversaries of their parents Robert & Leona Kash and Herb & Marilyn Friedman

from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Jan 17, 2021, 3:53 AM subject: Where the Deer and the Antelope Play

The *yahrzeit* of Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, often referred to by the name of his *seforim*, *Seridei Eish*, occurs this week. Since a *teshuvah* by him on the subject of kosher animals is the basis for much of this article, I thought it appropriate to discuss this topic this week.

Where the Deer and the Antelope Play

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Home, home “Are there any ‘take-home lessons’ I can learn from split hooves?” Question #2: On the range “Is there a variety of wild pig that chews its cud and is kosher?” Question #3: Where the deer “May I eat the fat of a reindeer? What about the impala, the dik-dik and the kudu?” Question #4: And the antelope play “Is the American pronghorn a kosher species?”

Foreword In two places, first in *parshas Shemini*, and then again in *parshas Re’eih*, the Torah explains which species of animals, fish and birds are kosher. Since all of our opening questions are about the status of various kosher mammals, this article will limit itself to defining which of them is kosher and various other *halachos* that result.

Presumably, you noted that I used the word “mammal” rather than “animal” or “beast.” To the best of my knowledge, there is no word in *Tanach* or *Mishnaic Hebrew* for “mammal.” The Modern Hebrew word used is *yoneik*, which simply means “that which nurses,” certainly an accurate definition of what separates mammals from other members of the animal kingdom. I am using the word “mammal” as an easy and accurate way to distinguish what the Torah calls “animals that are upon the ground” from the birds, fish, sea animals, creeping creatures, locusts, insects, invertebrates and reptiles whose *halachic* status is discussed in the Torah.

Introduction The Torah writes, “Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying to them: ‘Speak to the Children of Israel, saying, these are the beasts from which you may eat. From the animals that are upon the ground: Whatever has a split hoof that is separated completely and is *ma’aleh geirah* [usually translated as “ruminating” or “chewing its cud”] among the animals: Those you may eat” (*Vayikra* 11:1-3). The Torah then lists three animals, the camel, the shafan and the arneves [intentionally not yet translated] as being non-kosher because they do not have fully split hooves, although they are *ma’aleh geirah*. Finally, the Torah mentions that a pig is not kosher, even though its hooves are completely split, because it is not *ma’aleh geirah*. Thus, the Torah defines any land animal with a totally split hoof that chews its cud as kosher. These two signs are possessed by sheep, goats, giraffe, deer, antelope, cattle, buffalo, bison, yak and okapi. The okapi lives in deep forests in the Congo, has a skull almost identical to that of a small giraffe, and, indeed, possesses split hooves and is a ruminant.

Does it ruminate too much? “Ruminating” means that an animal has many stomachs (sometimes described as a stomach with several chambers) and chews its food in two stages. First, it harvests grass, leaves and/or other vegetation which it deposits into the first chamber of its stomach, the rumen, where it is fermented and begins to decompose. The partially digested food, now called “cud,” is regurgitated back to the mouth, where it is chewed again to further break down its cellulose content, which is difficult to digest. The chewed cud then goes directly to the second chamber of the stomach, the reticulum and, eventually, to the last two chambers, the omasum and abomasum, where further digestion is assisted by various microorganisms that reside in the ruminant’s stomach. This is Hashem’s way of having grass, leaves, bark and tree roots (which the human stomach cannot digest), converted into products that can now benefit mankind in the forms of milk, cheese, meat, wool and leather. The term *ma’aleh geirah* might include other processes that are not the same as chewing cud. Ultimately, the question is how we translate the non-kosher species that the Torah teaches are *ma’aleh geirah* but

do not have fully split hooves. The Torah mentions three: the camel, the shafan and the arneves. The camel chews its cud. Although its stomach has only three chambers, it still digests its food in a way similar to the four-chambered ruminants.

Hyrax? The other two animals that the Torah describes as *ma’aleh geirah* are shafan and arneves. We are uncertain as to the identification of these two animals. In Modern Hebrew, the word shafan *sela* is used to mean hyrax, sometimes called the rock hyrax, a rodent-like mammal commonly found in wooded areas in Eretz Yisroel. I often see them in the wild, a ten-minute walk from my house. It is called the rock hyrax because they often stand on rocky areas in forests, and hide in holes between the rocks. The *posuk* in *Tehillim* (104:18), *sela'im machseh la'shefanim*, rocks are a refuge for the shefanim, indeed implies that shafan is indeed a rock hyrax. However, the difficulty with defining the shafan as a hyrax is because the hyrax is not a ruminant.

Hare or rabbit Arneves is usually identified as a rabbit, a hare, or both. Hares and rabbits are similar to, but are not, rodents, and in modern science are categorized as lagomorphs. The main difference between hares and rabbits is the stage of development at which their young are born. Newborn hares are able to function on their own within hours, whereas newborn rabbits are blind and completely helpless. In any case, neither the rabbit nor the hare are considered ruminants.

Will the real shafan please stand up? In a *teshuvah* on the subject, the *Seridei Eish* (*Shu"t Seridei Eish* 2:64) mentions several attempts to identify shafan and arneves. One approach insists that shafan and arneves cannot be hyraxes and hares, since neither of these species ruminates, but that shafan and arneves must be species that indeed ruminate and yet are not kosher. These would be species that, like camels, have partially, but not fully split hooves and are therefore called cameloids. However, the only species currently known to man, other than the camel, that fit this description are native South Americans of the llama family: the domesticated llama and alpaca, the vicuna, and the guanaco, which are collectively called lamoids. Since shafan is mentioned in *Tanach* several times as a commonly known animal, it is highly unlikely that it refers to a South American native that was unknown in the Fertile Crescent until well after the Europeans invaded South America in the beginning of the sixteenth century. There are also descriptions of arneves in the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 9b) that indicate that, in that era, they were very certain how to identify an arneves, again making lamoids a very unlikely choice. Another option is that shafan and arneves refer to Bactrian (two-humped) camels, native to China and other parts of Asia. However, this is also a difficult approach to accept, since the differences between the one-humped dromedary (also called Arabian camel) and the two-humped Bactrian are not distinctive enough to imagine that they would not both be called *gamal* by the Torah. I would like to note that the *Gemara* was well aware of the existence of dromedary and Bactrian camels, calling them Arabian camels and Persian camels, and insisting that they qualify as one species for *halachic* purposes (*Bava Kama* 55a). (Scientifically, they are treated as two separate species, *Camelus dromedarius* and *Camelus bactrianus*. By the way, Bactria was a country in today’s Afghanistan, bordering on Persia, so both the contemporary conversational term and the scientific terms for the two varieties of camel are identical to the way Chazal referred to them.)

Are you sure that you don’t ruminate? The *Seridei Eish* also mentions a completely different approach, suggested by Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman, that although shafan and arneves are not cud chewers, they appear to do something similar to ruminating. A hyrax has a three-chambered stomach containing special bacteria allowing it to digest leaves and grasses, similar to ruminants that can digest leaves and grass. It is also interesting to note that hyrax babies are born without the bacteria they need for digestion. For nutrition, they consume the waste matter of adult hyraxes until they are able to eat. Apparently, the adult’s waste contains enough live bacteria such that the baby hyrax stomach is eventually able to digest the cellulose itself, without relying on reprocessed food. *Mah rabu ma’asecha, Hashem!* It is possible that either the digestive system of the hyrax or its method of feeding its offspring may be what the Torah means, when it calls them *maalei geirah*.

Arneves Rabbits and hares are not classic ruminants and do not possess the proper physiology for rumination, but instead digest through a process called hindgut fermentation. These animals and some rodents digest in a unique way, by the formation of *cecotropes*. Their first swallowing does not complete the digestion process, and they produce two different kinds of droppings: little black round ones and softer black ones known as *cecotropes*, or night feces, which they then eat and re-digest. The *cecotropes* contain lots of essential vitamins and protein. It is very possible that this process is what the Torah refers to as *ma’aleh geirah*, although it is not what is usually referred to as “chewing the cud.”

On the range At this point, let us examine the second of our opening questions: “Is there a variety of wild pig that chews its cud and is kosher?” To the best of my knowledge, all members of the pig/hog family, including the boar, the South American peccary, the Indonesian *babirusa*, and various wild species that include the name “hog” or “pig” in their common name, such as the warthog, the bushpig, and the almost extinct pygmy hog, have split hooves, and are, to some extent, omnivorous. (Please note

that hedgehogs and porcupines, despite the references to “hog” and “pork” in their names, are called this because they have long snouts reminiscent of pigs, not because they have split hooves.) Although South African rangers have told me that warthogs are exclusively herbivorous, research shows that they do scavenge dead animals and also consume worms and insects while foraging. Several varieties of wild hog, among them the peccary, the babirusa, and the warthog, native to Africa, have more complicated stomach structures than does the common domesticated pig. Over the years, I have seen various news articles claiming that some of these animals are kosher, based on the assumption that they have both split hooves and ruminant. However, none of these species does, indeed, chew its cud; so, although they all have split hooves, as do all hogs, they are not kosher. Although the posuk mentions only chewing the cud and split hooves as criteria for kosher animals, there may be additional reasons why wild hog species are not kosher. Based on a passage of Gemara, some authorities contend that any species of animal without any type of horn is not kosher (Shu't Beis Yaakov #41, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah, Yoreh Deah 80:1), and the peccary, the babirusa, and the warthog have no horns. Although both the warthog and the peccary have tusks that look like horns, these are really oversized teeth and grow out of the mouth, not on the top of the head. By the way, many authorities disagree with the Beis Yaakov, contending that absence of horns does not define an animal as non-kosher (Pischei Teshuvah ad loc.).

Where the deer The third of our opening questions began “Is the fat of a reindeer permitted?” Let me explain what is presumably being asked. The Torah divides mammals into two categories, beheimah and chayah. Beheimah is usually translated as animal or domesticated animal, whereas chayah is often rendered as beast or wild animal. However, these translations of the terms beheimah and chayah are not entirely accurate. Although most domesticated species, such as cattle, sheep and goats, qualify as beheimos, there are species of beheimah, such as the African or cape buffalo, the Philippine tamarau and the anoa, a native of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, that cannot be domesticated. (See the dispute between the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema, Yoreh Deah 28:4, which relates to the Asian water buffalo, domesticated already in antiquity.) On the other hand, some species of chayah, such as reindeer, are domesticated and raised as livestock in the northern regions of Europe, particularly by the Lapps (the Sami), as are other varieties of deer in central Asia. So, what is the difference between a beheimah and a chayah? The Gemara (Chullin 59b) explains that it depends on the type of horn it has. If it is branched, as are all deer antlers, it is a chayah. The major noticeable difference between antlers and horns is that antlers shed annually (are deciduous) and are extensively branched, whereas horns are permanent and unbranched. Moose and elk have massive, branched, deciduous antlers, and are varieties of deer. All antelope (a general category that includes dozens of species) have unbranched horns, and therefore one would need to examine the horns of each species to determine whether it is a beheimah or a chayah, as I will explain shortly. Kudu, eland, gnu, impala and dik-dik all have unbranched horns and are varieties of antelope. The same is true of the dorcas gazelle which is a common species in Eretz Yisrael, and the largest permanent resident of the wooded area near my house where I often go for relaxing walks. There are some other differences between antelope and deer; for example, antelope have gall bladders and deer do not. So, you can rest assured that your pet moose cannot develop gallstones.

What type of horn? But what type of horn am I looking for? If an animal possesses an unbranched horn, the answer as to whether it is a beheimah or a chayah becomes more complicated: If the horn has all three features that the Gemara calls keruchos, haduros and charukos, it is a chayah; if not, it is a beheimah. There are different opinions among rishonim how to explain and define these three words, which is why I have not translated them, and depending on this answer is whether different varieties of antelope may qualify as beheimah or as chayah.

What difference does it make? There are a few mitzvot of the Torah that apply to a beheimah and not a chayah, and vice versa. Among these mitzvot is the prohibition against eating cheilev, the forbidden fat that protects the posterior-lying organs such as the stomachs and the kidneys, which applies only to a beheimah, but this fat is permitted on a chayah (Mishnah Chullin 89b). Another mitzvah is that of giving the zero'a, lechaya'im and keivah to a kohein, which applies only to a beheimah but not to a chayah (Yoreh Deah 61:17). A third mitzvah is kisuy hadam, requiring covering the blood of shechitah, which applies to a chayah (and to poultry) but not to a beheimah (Mishnah Chullin 83b). Whether the fat is permitted depends on whether a reindeer is a beheimah or a chayah. If it is a chayah, the cheilev is permitted. All deer are known to be chayah because of their antlers, and therefore “reindeer fat” is kosher, if the reindeer is properly shechted. On the other hand, when we have no mesorah whether a species of animal is a chayah or a beheimah, we treat it stringently both ways (Shach and Pri Megadim, Yoreh Deah 80:1). Therefore, unless we have a mesorah as to whether a specific species of antelope is a chayah or a beheimah, we would prohibit its cheilev and perform kisuy hadam, without a brocha.

And the antelope play At this point, we can discuss the fourth of our opening questions: “Is the American pronghorn a kosher species?” I suspect that most of our readers have

no idea what a pronghorn is, let alone whether it is a kosher species. Most species of antelope in the world are in Africa. There are some in Eurasia; none are native to Australia or the Americas. However, the various fauna native to North America include a species called a pronghorn, which possesses characteristics similar to that of a deer or antelope but also is different from both deer and antelope. It is a ruminant that has split hooves. Thus, it meets the Torah's definition of a kosher species, although I admit that I have never tasted pronghorn chops. The horn of a pronghorn is unusual in that it branches into sharp front and rear sections that are reminiscent of prongs, hence its name. As I mentioned above, deer have multi-branched antlers, which are deciduous. Antelopes have unbranched horns that are permanent. The horn of a pronghorn falls off annually, which is like a deer and unlike any antelope species. On the other hand, the pronghorn has a gallbladder, which antelope have, but not deer. For these and other reasons, the scientific community considers a pronghorn to be neither a deer nor an antelope. Nevertheless, the Europeans who came to America called it an antelope, and Brewster M. Higley, who, in 1872, wrote the lyrics to the poem now called and sung as “Home on the Range,” certainly meant the pronghorn when he referred to the playing of the “antelope.”

Home, home At this point, let us examine our opening question: “Are there any ‘take-home lessons’ I can learn from split hooves?”

Although we can never explain why Hashem commanded us His mitzvot, we are permitted to explore what lessons we can derive from them, provided we realize that these are merely lessons and not a reason allowing us to decide when and whether we observe the mitzvah. It appears clear that the birds that the Torah ruled to be non-kosher are, for the most part, predators, whereas the kosher birds tend to be the pursued. Can we possibly present a logical reason why the Torah restricted our mammal consumption to ruminants with split hooves? The following lesson might be why the Torah permitted only ruminants with split hooves. In general, animals that have split hooves flee from opposition. For example, Africa has dozens of species of antelope; when confronted by a lion, they run. On the other hand, a zebra attacked by a lion will fight, as will a honey badger. Perhaps this is a lesson to learn from a ruminant, to run as far and as fast as we can from any machlokes. Ma'aleh geirah animals spend a lot of time consuming their food. It takes a long time for their food to complete being digested. They learn patience. Thus, perhaps the lesson here is to be patient when we fulfill our basic needs (Shu't Beis Yitzchak, Even Ha'ezer, Tzela'os Habayis 5:8).