

The LACHEM Factor

Parshat Bo ends the "mitzva drought" of the past 18 sedras. (That's a third of the Torah's sedras with only 5 mitzvot altogether, out of 613.) First on the list of the twenty mitzvot counted in Parshat Bo is the mitzva of Kiddush HaChodesh, the setting up of the Jewish Calendar. Commentaries point out that this mitzva was the first given to the almost-but-not-yet People of Israel while they were still in Egypt. This mitzva seems to be a pre-requisite for the mitzvot related to Pesach - both the first one in Mitzrayim and the ones thereafter in perpetuity.

Also noteworthy in the Torah's statement of this mitzva is the twice mentioned word - LACHEM. This month (of Nisan) is YOURS as the first of the months, and again (seemingly redundant), it is the first for YOU of the year's months.

With the word LACHEM, G-d is offering (commanding) us a partnership with Him in the formation of the Calendar, the sanctification of the firsts of the months, and the fixing of the cycle of festivals... and in the Sanctification of Time itself.

G-d had first sanctified time on His own - so to speak - by making the day He completed Creation of the World a holy day - SHABBAT.

More than two thousand four hundred years later, He tells us that there are more days that will be holy and that we are to be active participants in the process of sanctifying them.

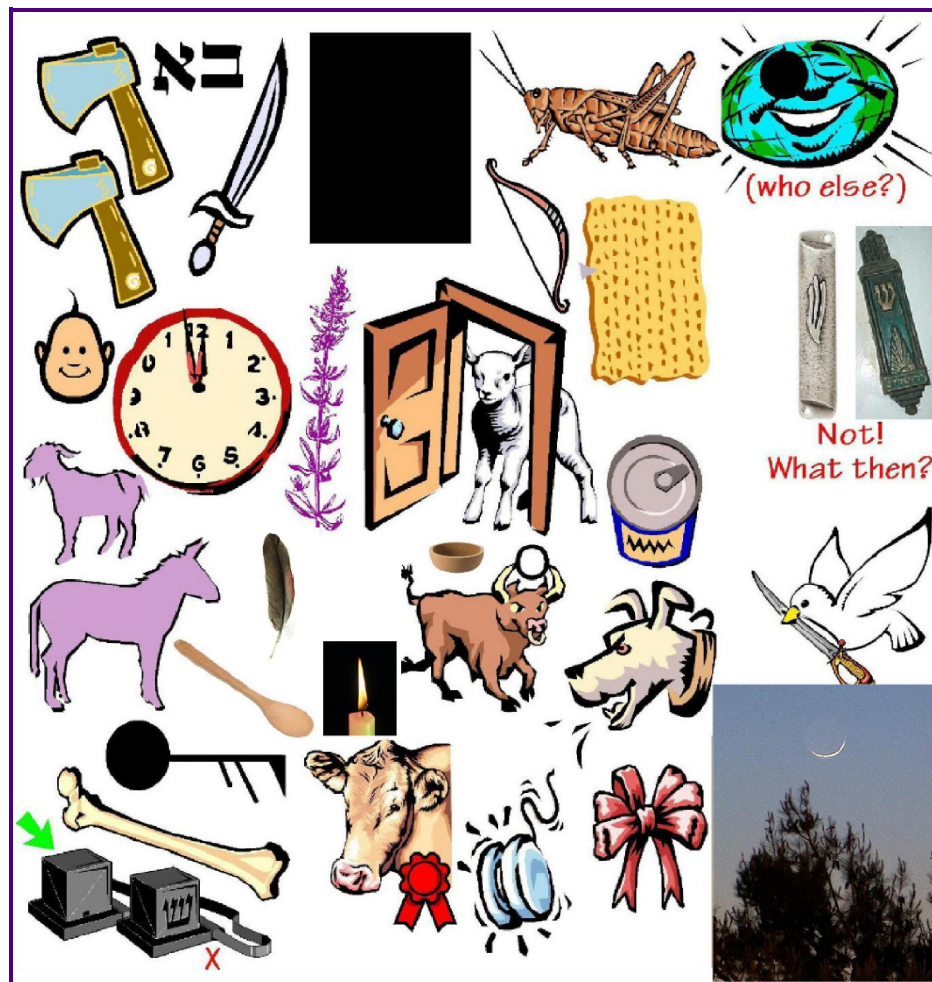
Without going into details, the fact is that officially LACHEM is addressed to the whole people of Israel and not to each individual Jew.

cont. on page 4

Jerusalem Shabbat in/out times for Parshat BO

4:15pm / 5:31pm (see page 3 for other zmanim)

Checked, double checked, and triple checked for Parshat BO (m'vorchim)



(who else?)

Not!
What then?

Word of the Month With the molad of Sh'vat occurring on Tuesday night (LEIL R'V'I), the first opportunity for Kiddush L'vana according to Minhag Yerushalayim is Motz"Sh Parshat Bo, eve of the 4th of Sh'vat, Jan. 8th. Those who wait until 7 full days after the molad have their first op on Wednesday night, Jan. 12th. Technically, KL can be said even by the 7-day people on Tuesday night, after 10:11pm. The moon sets on that night before 11:30pm. 7-day people should know that there are halachic rulings that KL can be said "a bit" before the full 7 days is reached - esp. in the winter. Based on this, Tuesday (Jan. 11th) after Maariv is good, too.



<u>Candles</u>	BO	<u>Havdala</u>	<u>next week</u>
4:15pm	Yerushalayim	5:31pm	4:21 / 5:37
4:33pm	S'derot	5:34pm	4:39 / 5:40
4:30pm	Gush Etzion	5:32pm	4:36 / 5:37
4:30pm	Raanana	5:32pm	4:36 / 5:38
4:31pm	Beit Shemesh•RBS	5:32pm	4:37 / 5:38
4:30pm	Netanya	5:32pm	4:36 / 5:37
4:31pm	Rehovot	5:33pm	4:37 / 5:38
4:31pm	Be'er Sheva (& Otniel)	5:34pm	4:37 / 5:39
4:30pm	Modi'in• Chashmona'im	5:32pm	4:36 / 5:38
4:15pm	Petach Tikva	5:32pm	4:21 / 5:38
4:15pm	Maale Adumim	5:31pm	4:21 / 5:37
4:30pm	Ginot Shomron	5:31pm	4:36 / 5:37
4:29pm	Gush Shiloh	5:30pm	4:35 / 5:36
4:31pm	K4 & Hevron	5:32pm	4:37 / 5:38
4:30pm	Giv'at Ze'ev	5:31pm	4:36 / 5:37
4:31pm	Yad Binyamin	5:33pm	4:37 / 5:38
4:33pm	Ashkelon	5:34pm	4:39 / 5:40
4:16pm	Tzfat	5:28pm	4:22 / 5:34
4:29pm	Zichron Yaakov	5:31pm	4:35 / 5:37

Rabbeinu Tam Havdala - BO 6:08pm

**Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI
29 Tevet - 9 Shvat • Jan 5-14**

Earliest Talit & T'filin	5:46-5:46am
Sunrise	6:41-6:40am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 8:33-8:35am)	9:12-9:14am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:31-9:33am)	10:02-10:05am
Chatzot (halachic noon)	11:44¼-11:48am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)	12:15-12:18pm
Plag Mincha	3:45¼-3:52pm
Sunset (based on sea level: 4:48-4:56pm)	4:54-5:01pm

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Stalactite = נְטִיף, נְטוּף תְּלוּי
That's the one hanging from
above. Stalagmite = זְקִיף, נְטוּף נִיבֵץ

How do you want your steak?
Rare, with mint leaves, please - now

first double the last, little one

My father, adults only, my servant

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LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

This we are taught from the command being directed to Moshe and Aharon as representatives of the people. That role is taken over by the Sanhedrin throughout the generations.

Again, without detail, the above results in a Plan A for the calendar when we have a Sanhedrin - past and future - and a Plan B when we don't (like now). Plan B has the endorsement and authority of Sanhedrin, which is why we currently have a sanctified Jewish Calendar. (More, some other time.)

If technically, the LACHEM is directed at the Jewish people as a whole - through our representative Sanhedrin, there is another aspect of LACHEM that does speak to each and every Jew. If we view the concept of a Jewish Calendar not only as a mitzva but as a gift from G-d to His people, that which He gave us to separate us from all the other nations, something that demonstrates our intimate partnership with G-d... then what the LACHEM should tell each of us is, Get to know the calendar. Use it. Study it. Appreciate it. Both Plan A and Plan B.

We've written in the past about using the Jewish date when writing checks - something completely legal and acceptable in Israel, and something special to do to show our pride and joy at being G-d's partners in the Calendar.

We've written about avoiding indentifying the months of the civil calendar by numbers, since the Torah tells us

that Nisan shall be month #1, not January. Whether this is a halachic issue or not is besides the point. Even if one is not forbidden to refer to January as month #1, why would we want to if it "flies in the face" of Nisan's claim to that honor.

Let's take a look at how much G-d wants our partnership in this special (ongoing) act of Sanctification of Time. In the time of Sanhedrin, if a man sees the first visibility of the lunar crescent, he is to go to the headquarters of Sanhedrin to testify to what he saw - even if it is Friday night. Shabbat steps aside, so to speak, not only for life-threatening situations, but for Kiddush HaChodesh, as well. Other people who might be necessary in getting the possible witness to Jerusalem can also act on Shabbat in a manner that is otherwise forbidden.

And for what? To testify before a select committee of Sanhedrin judges who are experts and are required to pre-determine if, when, and where the moon will be visible on a given night, so that they may effectively question the potential witnesses. They know in advance the exact circumstances of the moon and the possible witnesses do not. Yet they travel on Shabbat if necessary to appear before the panel. The Sanhedrin even has the authority to declare Rosh Chodesh (in certain cases) if witnesses don't show up. Yet, potential witnesses "violate" Shabbat to possibly be accepted. Why? LACHEM. Pro-active partnership with G-d.

BO stats

15th of the 54 sedras;
3rd of 11 in Sh'mot

Written on 205.67 lines in a Torah, rank: 24th

14 parshiot; 8 open, 6 closed

106 p'sukim - ranks 29th (7th in Shmot)
tied with Toldot & Vayigash; larger than each

1655 words - ranks 21st (5th in Shmot)

6149 letters - ranks 20th (6th in Shmot)

Rise in rankings from p'sukim to words & letters
is a result of BO's p'sukim being much longer
than average for the Torah (longest in Sh'mot).

MITZVOT

BO has 20 mitzvot; 9 positive, 11 prohibitions
ending a 18-sedra run of practically no mitzvot.
(Nitzavim, Vayeilech, Haazinu & V'zot HaB'racha,
all of B'reishit, and Sh'mot & Va'eira have a total
of 5 mitzvot). The other 36 sedras have the other
608! If we were to classify sedras by mitzva
count there would be 6 sedras in the
mitzva-packed category, 11 other sedras in double
digits (Bo included), 12 sedras with 3-9 mitzot, 8
sedras with one or two mitzvot, and 17 sedras
with no mitzot. JTYLTK (just thought you'd like to
know)

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate
start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma
respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the

beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number
of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the
Mitzva-counts of Sefer HaChinuch AND
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI
(positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition) -
Rambam counts positives (248) and
prohibitions (365) separately. X:Y is the
perek and pasuk from which the mitzva is
counted.

Kohen - First Aliya 11 p'sukim - 10:1-11

[P> 10:1 (11)] G-d once again
(previously with Frogs and Dever)
sends Moshe to Par'o (in his
palace) to warn about the Locust.

SDT: *The signature of this week's sedra
- BO EL PAR'O is a phrase that occurs
three times, each time as an introduction
to one of the Plagues. Specifically, G-d
said to Moshe to "come before Par'o" for
the middle plague of each 3-plague set -
FROGS, DEVER (animal disease), and
LOCUST. Baal HaTurim points out that
when G-d sends Moshe to the royal
palace, He uses the term BO. When He
sends him to the river to find Par'o there,
He uses the term LEICH.*

This time, however, it is with the
additional statement that G-d has
hardened Par'o's heart so that His
wonders will be evident to all, and
that all will know Him. Moshe and
Aharon warn Par'o of the po-
tential devastation (the description
of which is noticeably longer than
for other plagues). Par'o's servants
(advisors?) pressure Par'o into
agreeing to release the People.

Par'o offers Moshe the adults.
Moshe's reply (something which
becomes a Jewish hallmark for the
ages - pun intended) is that our
religious experiences must include
ALL Jews, young and old.
(Judaism places a premium on
Chinuch and on the transmission
of knowledge and values from one
generation to the next.) Par'o
rejects this and expels Moshe and
Aaron from his presence.

Locust were sent by G-d to punish
Egypt by devouring the produce of
the land. This was "measure for
measure" punish- ment for the
excessive field and planting work
that Par'o imposed on the People
of Israel in order to demoralize
them and to prevent them from
having a normal family life.

Commentaries point out that Par'o and
the Egyptians continually over-did their
oppression and enslavement of the
Jews. Even if we were to suggest that
punishment is unfair to those who
were acting according to G-d's wishes,
so to speak, and carrying out His Plan,
it is for the excesses that they are
being held strictly account- able. "Yes, I
told you to rough them up, but I never
said anything about beating them so
mercilessly." (This does not mean to
suggest that people who "play a part in
G-d's plans" are not held accountable
for their "regular" actions. They are.
But there is special emphasis on the
excesses. Having the people slave at
making bricks is one thing. Withholding
straw for the purpose is excessively
cruel. For example.)

On the other hand, the excessive
cruelty of the Egyptians is partially
responsible, so to speak, for G-d's
switching to His Midat HaRachamim in
judging the people, from the Midat
HaDin which might have kept us in
Egypt longer. The original prophecy to
Avraham Avinu called for 400 years.
Actual time spent in Egypt (not even in
slavery) was "only" 210 years. The
inclusion of the years from Yitzchak's
birth is (can be seen as) G-d's reaction
(so to speak) to the excessive harsh-
ness of the Egyptian experience.

Levi - Second Aliya 12 p'sukim - 10:12-23

[S> 10:12 (9)] G-d tells Moshe to
raise his hands over the land.
Moshe raises his staff and the
locust come. So overwhelming is
this plague, that Par'o "hurries" to
call for Moshe and Aharon, admits
to them that he has sinned, and
asks them to pray for the removal
of this terrible plague. Moshe does
so, and a "reverse" wind causes
the locust to totally disappear. G-d
once again hardens Par'o's heart.

[P> 10:21 (9)] Plague #9 - Dark-
ness (just like #3 Lice and #6
Boils) is brought without warning.

The thrice-repeated pattern is (1) find
Par'o at the Nile and deliver the
warning, (2) go to his palace and bring
the warning "closer to home", and (3)
twice-warned is sufficient; he won't let
the People go, bring the next plague
without additional warning. Addition-

ally, there is an escalation in severity from the first to the second to the third plague in each set of 3 plagues. The 10th plague stands alone: Par'o was warned of it "up front" and it is mentioned more than once as the "ultimate" punishment for Egypt.

Darkness, an unusual, unnatural, tangible darkness (not merely the absence of light), descends upon the Egyptians for a paralyzing 3 days (Rashi indicates that it was for 6 days). In the Jewish neighborhoods, there is light.

Let's define "natural" darkness as the absence of light. Consistent with the other Makot, the plague of Darkness was not natural. Some of the unnatural qualities of the Darkness of Egypt were that it was substantive, and that lighting a fire would not dispel it. This was a supernatural darkness. Perhaps, a darkness like pre-Creation darkness (B'reishit 1:2). Along these lines (but different) is an explanation attributed to the Vilna Gaon. Darkness, as well as Light, is a creation; it is not just the absence of light. One of the laws of nature that G-d created is that light dispels darkness. During Makat Choshech, nature was turned upside-down - darkness dispelled light.

SDT: "Man did not see his fellow, nor did a person rise from his place..." Chidushei HaRim writes that this is a description of the worse kind of darkness in human life, when a person does not see the suffering of his fellow. Not only does he not extend his hand to help the other, but the ultimate result is the inability of the individual to even help himself. The

People of Israel had light throughout their dwellings. May we always be able to see the plight of our fellow Jews and respond with acts of Chesed worthy of our Heritage.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 9 p'sukim - 10:24-11:3

Par'o calls for Moshe and tells him to go, even with the children, but to leave the livestock behind. Moshe insists that ALL will leave.

Par'o once again refuses, and this time he threatens death (he had Moshe's in mind - G-d "applied it" in a different way) if he sees Moshe again. He thus inadvertently prophesies his own death. This is part of the "topsy turvy" aspects of the Exodus.

[P> 11:1 (3)] G-d "reminds" Moshe that there is one more plague (the "real" one; the one that was presented up front, the one mentioned before all of the others) and then Par'o will send the people on their way.

G-d tells Moshe to tell the people to "borrow" things from their neighbors. He says that the Egyptians will miraculously feel kindly towards the Jews (even though the Jews are responsible, in the eyes of the Egyptians, for their recent suffering). G-d even implanted in the eyes of the Egyptians an admiration and respect for Moshe.

Rashi points out the unusual way that

G-d instructs Moshe to talk to the people. He says, "please". DABER-NA. Rashi explains that G-d did not want Avraham Avinu to "complain" that the oppression prophesied should come true, but not the promise of leaving Egypt with great wealth. Hence, Moshe, please speak to the people and have them take... Targum Onkeles, on the other hand, translates NA as NOW (not please).

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 27 p'sukim - 11:4-12:20

[S> 11:4 (5)] Moshe says, in G-d's name, that He (G-d) will kill ALL Egyptian firstborns, that the screaming from the killings will be unprecedented, and that in total contrast, utter tranquility will reign in the Jewish area.

[S> 11:9 (2)] G-d says that Par'o will once again refuse even this threat, so that the full course of wonders and miracles will benefit the People of Israel.

SDT: *One commentator says that Moshe was distraught by the extent to which Par'o went in his refusal to let the People go. Such dedication to wickedness in the face of such devastating punishment was truly disheartening to Moshe. How can the power of evil be so strong? How can someone fight against it and hope to win? G-d's answer was that it was He Who hardened and strengthened Par'o's heart. Left on his own, Par'o would have given in long before. Theoretically, G-d could do this to punish us, but in this case it was for our benefit.*

SDT: *The Sfias Emes marvels at the fact that only G-d would give the power to a wicked person to oppose Him. Why would G-d give Par'o the ability to defy Him? In order to bring about the marvels and wonders of the Exodus, so that the People of Israel shall know beyond doubt that G-d has taken them out of Egypt.*

[S> 12:1 (20)] G-d commands the setting up of the Jewish calendar **[4,A153 12:2]** (even before we left Egypt).

He then commands the taking of a lamb or goat for each household (or so). The animal was to be taken on the 10th of Nissan (this rule was for "Pesach Mitzrayim" only, and not for future Pesachs; therefore it is not counted among the mitzvot of the Torah) and held for the 14th of the month, when it was to be slaughtered in the afternoon **[5,A55 12:6]**. Its blood was to be smeared on the doorposts and lintel (only that first Pesach). The sacrifice is to be eaten on the night of the 15th of Nissan **[6,A56 12:8]**, having been roasted, eaten with matza and maror (this being part of the mitzva "for the generations", but not counted separately among Taryag); that is, neither cooked nor partially done **[7,L125 12:9]**, but roasted whole. No part was to be left over until morning **[8,L117 12:10]**; any leftovers were to be burned **(43,A91 12:10 - not counted from Parshat Bo)**. It was to be eaten with "belt tied", in haste, ready to leave (these details are for Egyptian Pesach only).

MitzvaWatch

Korban Pesach is a kind of rare example of a piece of text in the Torah that mixes episode with mitzva. Much more often, we find either/or. It is a bit confusing to distinguish between the details of the mitzva of KP for all generations and those elements of the story of the Exodus which were meant only for that first Pesach. In fact, it is not just confusing; it is impossible to accurately differentiate between the two categories of details... WITHOUT the Oral Law. The Talmud informs us as to what constitutes the mitzva of KP. The Written Word is not complete. Our Torah consists of two inseparable parts - the Written Word and the Oral Law (embodied in the Talmud and other sources). This is a fact that is reinforced over and over again throughout the Torah. If one attempts to understand the Written Word without the Oral Law and Tradition, there will be confusion at best and distortion and perversion of G-d's Word, at worst.

Then G-d will "pass through" Egypt on that night, kill the firstborns, and "pass-over" (great English name for the holiday, don't you think?) the Jewish home with the blood-marks. This shall become a holiday for all generations. Matzot are to be eaten for seven days and on Erev Pesach, Chametz is to be eliminated from our homes [9,A156 12:15]. (Eating Chametz on Pesach is a rejection of membership in Klal

Yisrael, hence the punishment of "excision".)

The basis of Yom Tov is set down in 12:16, - specifically that Melacha is prohibited, as on Shabbat, except for "that which is needed for food".

The source of "sh'mura" matza is in 12:17. The mitzva of eating matza on seder night [10,A158 12:18] is followed by the prohibition of owning of chametz during all of Pesach [11, L200 12:19]. Foods containing chametz are forbidden [12,L198 12:20].

MitzvaWatch

Because the prohibition of chametz and the mitzva of matza are linked to each other in the same pasuk, we do not view Matza as a purely positive time-related mitzva. Hence, women are not exempt. In fact, women are obligated to perform other Seder mitzvot as a package deal with matza. Specifically, women are obligated on the mitzva of Hagada - they should not be silent observers at the Seder, but should participate in transmission of the story and details to their children and guests. Women are also obligated (for a different reason) to drink four cups of wine, which is a Rabbinic command.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 8 p'sukim - 12:21-28

[P> 12:21 (8)] Moshe gathers the

elders of the People and relays G-d's instructions. He also tells them that when the People get to Eretz Yisrael, they will continue to commemorate the events of the Exodus, with questions and answers from one generation to the previous one. The People do as commanded.

Note the familiarity of the text (think Hagada) but also note the different combinations of questions and answers between Torah and Hagada.

Moshe tells the people that which G-d had previously commanded him to tell them. Here it says: Take a bundle of hyssop (EIZOV), dip it in the blood of the Korban Pesach, and daub it on the lintel and the two doorposts.

Notice: Not only is going into Eretz Yisrael part of the Promises of Redemption, but in the laws of Korban Pesach there is reference to "when you will come to the Land..."

SDT: *The Torah tells us that when G-d will pass through Egypt smiting their firstborns, and He will see blood on the doorposts and lintels of the Jewish homes, He will not let the "Destructive Force" (MALACH HAMAVET, Angel of Death) to come to your homes... What was the MASHCHIT doing in Egypt on that night, when the Hagada states that it was G-d Himself who smote the Egyptian firstborns? Some explain that the MASHCHIT was in charge, so to speak, of "regularly scheduled deaths". G-d did not allow him to enter a Jewish home that night so the contrast with Egypt would be total. Meaning that those who were*

"scheduled" to die that night were given an extension in order to highlight the contrast between Egypt and Israel.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 23 p'sukim - 12:29-51

[S> 12:29 (8)] It comes to pass at exactly midnight that the Egyptian firstborns are smitten, and that the Egyptians shower the Jews with gifts, and hurry them on their way.

[P> 12:37 (6)] And so the People of Israel leave Egypt. The People leave in such haste that they take quick-baked breads with them without taking the time to let the dough rise. Approx. 600,000 men, plus women and children leave Egypt, together with many Egyptians who are smart enough to flee with them. Thus ends a 430 year period of exile (according to some opinions, this is the time from the B'rit bein HaB'tarimto the Exodus - this is another way of explaining when the "enslavement began"). That night shall be a special night for all of Israel through the generations.

[P> 12:43 (8)] The Torah now shifts from relating the story of the Exodus back to the rules for the Korban Pesach. Jews who have "left Judaism" and embraced another religion [13, L128 12:43], non-Jews, even those who are committed to the Seven Noahide Laws [14,L126 12:45] may not eat Korban Pesach. The Korban must be eaten in one place; removing it

from its place is forbidden [15, L123 12:46], as is breaking a bone in it [16, L121 12:46]. Only Jews participate. An uncircumcised Jew may not eat of the KP [17, L127 12:48]. A true convert to Judaism is equal to a born-Jew. The People did as commanded.

[S> 12:51 (1)] On this very day, the multitude left Egypt.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya 16 p'sukim - 13:1-16

[P> 13:1 (10)] As a commemoration of the Exodus (specifically plague #10), we are to sanctify firstborns (human, kosher farm animals, and donkey. Each type of "b'chor" is treated differently) [18, A79 13:2]. The Torah sets down the yearly observance of Pesach, even after entry into Israel.

CLARIFICATION: In BO, we have the general command concerning the sanctity of the first-borns and the specifics about one type - the firstborn donkey. Elsewhere are the details about firstborn humans and those of the 3 types of domesticated animals - cow, goat, sheep.

Chametz may not be eaten [19, L197 13:3] nor even owned [20, L201 13:7] on Pesach. It is a mitzva to relate the story of what happened [21, A157 13:8] at the Seder. T'filin also serve as a reminder of the Exodus. Pesach must be in the spring, the time of renewal of nature.

This requires Sanhedrin to add an extra

month from time to time to "push" Pesach into the spring. Without a Sanhedrin, we have a fixed pattern for 13-month years; (years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 of a 19-year cycle have two Adars) when we have a Sanhedrin, it has discretionary leeway within specific guidelines.

[P> 13:11 (6)] A firstborn-male donkey must be redeemed [22, A81 13:13] (by giving a sheep or its value to a kohen) or destroyed (if the owner refuses to redeem it [23, A82 13:13] (a less desirable alternative).

The Torah reiterates the significance of the younger generation asking and receiving answers about the origin of the Nation.

The T'filin angle is also repeated.

The two final portions of BO (all of Sh'vi'i) join the two first portions of the Sh'ma as the four passages of the Torah contained in each of the two T'filin (written together on a single strip of parchment in the "shel yad" and on four separate parchments inserted into four distinct chambers in the "shel rosh").

Haftara 16 p'sukim - Yirmiyahu 46:13-28

Parallel to the sedra, Egypt's downfall (at the hands of Bavel) is prophesied. (It is quite rare that a prophecy to another nation is used as a Haftara.) Israel, however, shall not fear; G-d is with us! The pasuk that assures us about the Ultimate Redemption mentions that it might happen in the distant future. Nonetheless, we shall not

despair. This can be seen in context of the well-known notion that the Mashiach will either come in his appointed time, or sooner. It depends upon us.

The Babylonian army is compared with the countless nature of swarms of locust. Thus Egypt falls to locust again - and there is another connection to the sedra.

Divrei Menachem

Parshat Bo inclines us to see the hand of G-d in nature - primarily, of course, through the various plagues described in the parsha. But how many of us see in the first ever command given to the entire people a divine play with nature that has both spiritual and ethical ramifications?

"And Hashem said...this month shall be for you the head of all months; it shall be for you the first of all the months of the year (Sh'mot 12:1). This month, Nissan, like all the others, was to be ushered in partially by witnesses who spotted the new moon. And thus would the Jewish people establish themselves as partners with Hashem for all time.

The month of Nissan is the month that symbolizes Redemption and Renewal. It must always occur in Aviv, spring-time, in order to draw us to the lessons of the first redemption from Egypt. It is a month for us - and not for the nations; it is for us the first month of the year by which all our unique Jewish holidays are later established.

Rosh Chodesh Nissan not only shapes the rest of the Jewish calendar; it is also the New Year that stirs memories of our transformation from slaves to a free people for whom time is now pertinent and functional. For now we were suddenly able to relate to the time-honored mitzvot associated with the months and the Jewish holidays. For now, as Jews, we were suddenly able to take strength from the waxing of a dormant moon that would, step by step, bring increasing light in to the world.

VEBBE REBBE

QUESTION: *A local minyan for Mincha on Shabbat often starts before the earliest time permitted. When I asked about it, they said they are careful that the Amida is done at the proper time. Is that good enough?*

ANSWER: The only primary source we found on the matter is the Tzitz Eliezer (X:20), who infers from classical sources that Torah reading and even Uva L'tzion must be at the proper time for Mincha. He is cited by T'fila K'hilchata (21:90) and Ishei Yisrael (36:90) without a machloket. (Ishei Yisrael also relates a less conclusive oral ruling from Rav Chayim Kaniefsky to try to avoid doing so.) Although the Tzitz Eliezer does not prove there is an issue with Ashrei, he assumes one should wait for it as well.

Let us analyze the matter ourselves. Torah reading was instituted "at Mincha" of Shabbat due to yoshvei k'ranot (Bava Kama 82a). Rashi explains that these are businessmen who don't hear Torah reading on Monday and Thursday, and so this is their additional reading. The Shita M'kubetzet (ad loc.) says that it has to do with the fact that many people get drunk during the day and we set a time for Torah reading along with Mincha, which is a time of good will, to show that we are different. For some reason, the Tzitz Eliezer assumes that that would have to be at a time when one can daven Mincha. He also cites the

mishna (Megila 31a), which, after listing the various Torah readings, says that each one should be at its time.

It is not clear, though, to all poskim that this short Shabbat Kri'at HaTorah has to be directly at Mincha. The Eshel Avraham (Butchatch 292) raises a doubt whether, at least fundamentally, one can do the Torah reading in a manner that is not related to davening Mincha. See also Yaskil Avdi (VIII, OC 38), who says that one can layn after people privately davened Mincha, and even after sunset. It is a valid question whether the relating of this reading to Mincha tells us to (at least preferably) attach the reading to the davening of Mincha or whether it was instituted at the time of Mincha. If the former is correct, it makes sense that if it is done minutes before the time of Mincha, it should be fine. After all, P'sukei D'zimra is meant to lead into Shacharit, and it can be done earlier than Shemoneh Esrei can (see Ishei Yisrael 16:15). But if Kri'at Hatorah is to be at the time of Mincha, it should probably not be earlier.

We have been assuming that the time in our calendars is absolute. The gemara (Yoma 28b) says that while Mincha is modeled after the afternoon sacrifice, which was brought half an hour after chatzot (astronomical midday), Avraham would daven right after midday. Tosafot (Nida 63b) and the Magen Avraham (458:1) are among those who say that conceptually Mincha is at chatzot, just that we are concerned we may do it too early. It is not so simple that the same concern

applies to Torah reading or Ashrei & Uva L'tzion. Furthermore, the Mishna B'rura (233:2) suggests that after the fact, one who davened Mincha in the half hour after chatzot fulfills the mitzva, which makes the case for leniency stronger, as starting a few minutes before the time is certainly after chatzot. There is also some question (see Sha'ar HaTziyun 233:8) how to calculate the half hour (30 minutes or one twenty-fourth of daylight). Thus, during certain times of the year, it might be possible to daven a little earlier than the time on most calendars.

The Tzitz Eliezer relies strongly on kabbalistic sources that the spiritually appropriate time for Uva L'tzion and Kri'at Hatorah is the afternoon (Mincha time). Besides the question whether we are bound by such sources, since we are talking about after chatzot (thus, afternoon) why should that half hour not be appropriate?

We lack the conviction to rule against the important stringent ruling cited without clear sources for leniency. However, we feel that since there are few sources and not compelling logic for stringency, one should not protest a minyan's practice to start Mincha a few minutes "early".

"ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE CORPORATION [5]"

A "Challenges of Money" article by Dr. Meir Tamari

The corporate form of business presents all the moral issues facing investors, directors, workers, public regulators, and internal or external auditors. As such, it seems that this would be a fitting place to outline a Torah way out of the ethical maze confronting all individuals, before we move to discuss issues facing society.

The motto that "more is always better than less" drives immorality, since that is a desire that can never be satiated. "It is difficult for one's hands to be entirely clean of theft. The eyes, instead of being ruled by the heart to reject that which belongs to others, pull the heart after them to seek rationalization for the acquisition of all that seems beautiful and desirable" (Mesilat Yesharim, Pratei haNekiyut, p.117). Greed leads to egoism and then all forms of immorality, fraud and crime are possible; (Gezeila 1:9-12). While Eisav says "I have much", which did not stop him accepting more, whereas Yaakov correctly taught, "I have all". This concept of enough is the most powerful pre-requisite for morality in every field of life.

All monetary immorality is either geneiva, in secret, or gezeila, where the perpetrator feels secure in his power. However, there are no secret crimes in Torah, for G-d is All-seeing and He

remembers all our actions. So too, it is impossible to evade the punishment of the Just and All powerful G-d. Regarding lifnei iver, ona'ah, withholding wages, false weights and measures, and ribit, the Torah writes "you shall fear your G-d". This fear is perhaps the most power tool preventing crime.

Ethical behavior is, consciously or unconsciously, equated with legality, frequently tends to be relative or situational, and is regarded as essential for mutual protection or benefit. However, in truth, ethics and morality begin where the law stops and all too often they have a price and a cost. Rabbi S. R. Hirsch teaches that "our conduct is to be guided always by that which is good and right in the eyes of G-d. We must not merely obey the duties dictated by Torah Law but also be guided by the spirit of goodness and truth explicit in that Law. Where there is a higher, positive and good purpose, we should forego even those rights that are legally ours" (D'varim 6:18-19).

David HaMelekh asks who would dwell in G-d's Tabernacle, and answers:

"He who walks in faith [that G-d provides all his needs, so he earns his livelihood with integrity], creates Justice [through economic righteousness], and speaks the truth in his heart [reveals the defects in his goods and avoids geneivatda'at]. He has no slander on his tongue [does not deprecate the integrity, goods, prices or services of his competitors] nor does evil to his fellow [by damaging their property,

health or aesthetic enjoyment or by encroaching on their livelihood], nor casts disgrace on anybody [through harassment or through browbeating employees or debtors]. In his eye, that which is despicable is repulsive, but honors those who fear G-d. He has sworn but never changes his oath [in order to evade his obligations or default on his contracts]. He does not lend out his money at interest [even not through stratagems or legal fictions while lending his money interest free] nor has he taken a bribe [to obtain business advantages or escape fines for breaches of the law]. He who fulfills all these, shall not falter nor waver" (T'hilim 15).

And we ask ourselves, can people really live up to these demands? Surely we could ask the same question regarding kashrut or taharat hamishpacha? However, there is nothing demanded by Torah that ordinary men and women cannot observe. This applies even more regarding our money, where there is an explicit promise of G-d's Providence. "You open Your hands and satisfy the needs of every living being". So the Rambam tells his son in his last will: "There is no better antidote to the weakness of the heart than a combination of the qualities of truth and justice. Be therefore zealous for the welfare of others, even lifnim mishurat hadin; keep your word and do not evade your public or private promises, either verbal or written. Reject fraudulent, underhand, and unlawful practices. Do not partake of anything, large or small, that is not yours. Be proud of your

moral values and content in your faithfulness, for there is no greater nobility and no more glorious inheritance". □

Par'o's Free Will – Use It or Lose It?

Guest article by

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher
Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

"And I (G-D) shall harden Par'o's heart" (Sh'mot 7:3). This verse raises a difficult and basic question. How could Par'o be punished for not releasing ISRAEL, when it (seems that it) was G-D Who prevented him from doing so?

How do we explain the hardening of Par'o's heart? Did G-D suddenly turn Par'o into a puppet? Did he take away his human free will?

Rambam provides an answer. He says that none of the biblical instances of G-D taking away a person's freedom of will should be read literally. Rather, they should be understood as instances in which an individual brought about a curtailing of his free will and choice as a result of his own actions (Hilchot Teshuva 6). It is Rambam's understanding that human beings can create a habitual form of behavior which, practiced enough over a long enough period of time, (almost) obliterates the possibility for change. G-D did not take away Par'o's power to make his own choices. Par'o did.

Rambam develops this idea further in his explication of the following passage, also from Hilchot Teshuva (Ch. 6): "What is meant be David's utterance, 'Upright is the L-RD, therefore He will teach sinners in the way?' He will guide those meek in judgment and will teach them the ways of the L-RD and bring them back in Teshuva. Furthermore, He endowed them with the capacity of learning and understanding, for it is characteristic of every human being that when his interest is engaged in the ways of wisdom and righteousness, he longs for these ways and is eager to follow them. Thus the Sages say, "Those who come to purify themselves, G-D will aid them."

Rambam maintains that it is precisely because G-D created human beings with rationality that once we begin to seek righteousness and perform good deeds, we have a natural desire to continue. Those who, of their own initiative, "come to purify themselves", are aided by G-D. G-D's "aid", in this sense, is built into the laws of nature - in this case, into the very essence of human nature. G-D has structured a universe in which human beings are driven by an innate capacity to act righteously. That is the meaning of divine grace. G-D is not seen only in miraculous breakthroughs, but in the very structure of human reason and human nature.

Thus, according to Rambam, the hardening of Par'o's heart is distinctly not an example of G-D intervening in

nature or compromising human will. G-D created humans in such a way that once we set out on a course in life - noble or nefarious - we become "wired", in a sense, to continue on that path. Based on this reading, G-D did not harden Par'o's heart so much as he created a world in which Par'o's ongoing refusal to free the Hebrew slaves gave birth to a self-perpetuating reality. For this reason, Par'o represents the antithesis of freedom. He is the embodiment of enslavement, of both the self and the other.

Pesach is meant to celebrate and sustain our deep yearning for freedom and to show that G-D can change the order of the universe. Pesach is a holiday that inculcates the belief that man will overcome oppression, that freedom will reign throughout the world. The faith that tyranny will ultimately be vanquished is deeply embedded in the significance and message of the Festival of Freedom.

Ed. note: Two additions to Rabbi Sprecher's article in parentheses are mine, which I inserted without "clearing" the matter with him. Secondly, Rabbi Sprecher presents in this article his understanding of the Rambam and he did not show other approaches to the question he posed; I would like to. This does not negate nor challenge the Rambam's view or Rabbi Sprecher's presentation of it; it takes a different spin on the topic.

Par'o (for example and to the point) would rather keep the people and not let them go. But he and his people are being smitten by plague after plague. For the first several plagues, he summons up the strength, resolve, stubbornness to resist the plagues and maintain his refusal to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt. Then the plagues keep up and

intensify and he is inclined to let the people go - even though that is not what he wants. His "free will" decision is being threatened, so to speak, by the severity and intensity of the plagues. If he "gives in" now, it will not be by the exercise of his free will. But he reaches a point where he is not strong enough to do what he wants, what he prefers to choose. It now needs G-d's strengthening his heart, not to force him to continue to refuse, but to allow him to further resist the latter plagues so that his refusal to allow the people out is still his free will choice. And therefore he is completely accountable for his actions, up to the very end. G-d's strengthening Par'o's heart keeps Par'o's free will intact, rather than it being shut down by the plagues. - Phil

CHIZUK AND IDUD
*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
 with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -
 Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

I am puzzled by the Rashi on Makat Choshech. Rashi says...

Why did Hashem bring the plague of darkness upon the Egyptians? Says Rashi: Because there were RESHA'IM - wicked people among the Israelites of that generation who had no wish to leave Egypt, and these people died during the three days of darkness so that the Egyptians might not see their destruction and say, "These too have been stricken as we have."

Rashi here, in paraphrasing Chazal in the Midrash Rabba and the Tanchuma, refers to the Bnei Yisrael who do not want to be redeemed from their Galut in Mitzrayim as Resha'im. The Midrash refers to them as Posh'im - as sinners or criminals.

The wise men of any other nation would refer to people who refuse redemption as fools - but as Resha'im (wicked people)? After all, whom are they hurting but themselves? Such a person is a TIPEISH (fool) but not a RASHA.

Yet, the wise men of Israel have established for all generations to come that those who do not want to be redeemed are not only fools but also Resha'im, or better yet, Posh'im - sinners or criminals, for to be a free man is not only a privilege but also a duty, which may not be forfeited. It is an holy obligation. Just as a Jew is not permitted to harm himself nor to take his own life, so is he prohibited from forfeiting his freedom. One who does so inflicts damage upon his Tzelem Elokim. It is a distortion of Maasei B'reishit, for G-d created man to be free and not to be a slave.

Only a free individual can choose to be a servant of the Creator.

So, too, may it be said of a Jew who disdains the G-d given gifts of Torah and Eretz Yisrael, believing that one who devotes his life to Torah is a parasite, that one who lives his life in accordance with G-d's dictates is a remnant of the dark ages, and one who refuses to forfeit his land, the Holy Land, is a war monger or at least a conqueror of someone else's land.

The Jew was born to freedom, to live in his own G-d-given land in accordance with the G-d-given Torah.

I am indebted to the late Rav BenZion Firer for his keen perception

Rabbi Mallen Galinsky, Yerushalayim

Parsha Points to Ponder **Parshat BO**

1) Why does Moshe tell Par'o that the locusts will FILL YOUR HOUSE, THE HOUSES OF YOUR SERVANTS, AND THE HOUSES OF ALL EGYPT (10:6)? Wouldn't the invading locusts first enter the outer homes upon their arrival from outside Egypt, then the homes of the king's slaves, and only then reach further in and enter the palace?

2) Why did Par'o hurry to call Moshe and Aharon (VAYIMAHEIR - 10:27), something which he did not do upon seeing all the other plagues?

3) Why does Moshe command that the Jews should keep Pesach WHEN YOU ENTER THE LAND (12:25), referring to the Land of Israel? Wouldn't they keep Pesach in the desert as we see took place specifically in their second year in the desert?

Parsha Points to Ponder

by **Rabbi Dov Lipman**

Conspicuous Consumption

Context: Finally, Moshe receives the news for which he has waited. "One last affliction shall I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt", says God. "After that he shall send you forth from here."

Immediately, however, God continues with the following instruction: "Speak, please, in the ears of the people and let each man request from his [Egyptian] friend and each woman from her [Egyptian] friend vessels of silver and vessels of gold."

The Torah later attests to the successful fulfillment of God's directive: "And the children of Israel did as Moshe had directed; they requested from the Egyptians vessels of silver, vessels of gold and garments. And God granted the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and they granted their request - and they [the Israelites] despoiled Egypt."

Questions: God's instructions to Moshe at this powerful moment are deeply troubling. One would expect the birth of the Jewish nation to be heralded by lofty principles and ideas. Why, then, does God specifically ask the Israelites to mark the first footfalls of their national history with the accumulation of material wealth? Is this what the slaves should be thinking of as they prepare for their journey to freedom?

The very idea seems not only out of place, but contrary to the creation of a people for whom spiritual search and religious ideal should be more impor-

tant than material acquisition.

Why is this directive couched in terms of a request rather than a commandment? If God wanted the people to leave Egypt with possessions, why involve the Israelites in their acquisition? God could have miraculously bestowed riches upon the departing slaves in any number of ways.

Approaches:

A. Some scholars focus on the word **V'YISH-ALU**, "and they shall request", in an attempt to determine the moral underpinnings of God's directive to the Israelites.

Was the wealth transferred to the departing slaves freely given, they wonder, or did the Egyptians view the transaction as a loan which they expected to be returned?

Rabbeinu Bachya, quoting the position of Rabbeinu Chananel, emphatically rejects the possibility that God commanded the Israelites to deceive the Egyptians: "Heaven forbid that the Holy One Blessed Be He would have sanctioned fraud, that they should borrow vessels of silver and vessels of gold and not return them."

Rather, continues Rabbeinu Bachya, the verb **LISH-OL**, in this context, means to ask for the items as a full gift with no expectation of return.

Other commentaries assert, however, that the wealth was, indeed, given by the Egyptians to the Israelites as a loan with full expectation of return.

Some, such as the Netziv, go so far as to claim that God's intent is to further entrap the Egyptian population. The Egyptians fully expect the Israelites to

return after a three-day holiday. To further ensure that the Egyptians will pursue the departing slaves when they fail to return, God instructs the Israelites to "borrow" wealth from their erstwhile masters. Angered by the apparent deceit and anxious to retrieve their possessions, the Egyptians will have an additional reason to follow the Israelites to the banks of the Reed Sea. This aspect of the Exodus, like so many others, is designed to lead the Egyptians to their unavoidable rendezvous with destiny in the roiling waters of that sea.

Noting the questionable morality of such deceit, the Netziv asserts that the Egyptians had earned, through their own actions, to be treated in this fashion. He then closes his comments, however, with the statement "The mind of God remains beyond our ken."

B. The fundamental questions, however, remain: Why is the transference of wealth from the Egyptians to the Israelites so critical to the Exodus? Why, as well, must the Israelites request that wealth from their former taskmasters?

Central to the rabbinic approach to these questions is recognition of the moment of the Exodus as a powerfully formative moment for the Jewish people. The Israelites' self-perception as they leave Egypt is of vital importance to the development of their national character. God does not want the departing slaves to sneak out of Egypt in the darkness of the night.

Numerous scholars, therefore, argue that the wealth accrued by the departing slaves is actually payment for their years of service and servitude. The Kli Yakar asserts:

"Even though no obstacle prevented God from bestowing great wealth upon the Israelites without their having to take from the Egyptians through borrowing and subterfuge, nonetheless, the God of justice orchestrates events in order to redeem from the Egyptian population the wages owed to the Israelites for their labor."

The wealth of the Egyptians cannot be given to the Israelites as a gift from God. They must, instead, receive these riches directly from their taskmasters so that they will understand that their past labor had value for which they must be paid.

C. A final, additional dimension to the episode before us can be discerned if we consider the eventual use to which the wealth received from the Egyptians is put.

The gold and silver of Egypt is ultimately applied by the Israelites to two projects that could not be more vastly different: the construction of the golden calf and the creation of the Mishkan (the portable sanctuary that traveled with the Israelites through their wandering in the desert). The acquired riches thus become the medium through which the Israelites actualize their choices for good and for bad.

Freedom is only meaningful if you have something to lose. If the Israelites had left Egypt with nothing precious, nothing that they truly saw as their own, their liberation would have been incomplete. They would have had no way to actualize their responsibilities, to concretize their independent decisions.

God, therefore, directs the departing slaves to acquire wealth. He does not grant these riches as a gift. The Israelites

must see them as earned.

The true challenge of an independent nation then faces the erstwhile slaves: how will they use their own prosperity, which they have earned through the sweat of their brow? The choices they make determine the very quality of their freedom. ❧

Tricky Trup

Although this is about fine-tuning Torah reading, it is also meant to fine-tune our own reading and understanding of the words of the Torah.

וְאִכְלֹתְכֶם אֶת־כָּל־עֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ וְאֵת כָּל־פְּרֵי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר הוֹתִיר הַבָּרָד...

From Sh'mot 10:15, referring to the locust, "...they ate all the grass of the ground and all the fruit of the tree that the hail left over (did not destroy)..." To what does the phrase "that the hail left over" refer? Just to the fruit of the tree or to the grass of the ground as well?

The answer is to both - but the new question is how to read the pasuk to reflect that reading.

VAYOCHAL, and they ate...

ET KOL EISEV HAARETZ, the word HAARETZ has the Torah-note called R'VI'.

VEIT KOL PRI HA'EITZ, the word HA'EITZ has a ZAKEIF KATAN.

Here's the problem. In order to indicate that the final phrase in the selection above - ASHER HOTIR HABARAD - goes to both previous phrases, the pause after the KATON must be longer than the pause

after the R'VI'. Which happens to follow the rules of the four levels of pauses: KATON is a second level pause - one of the MELACHIM, and a R'VI' is a third level (shorter) pause, belonging to the MISHNIM category. So there shouldn't be a problem and there should not be a need for this review.

However, the way we "sing" the R'VI' is as a long, drawn out note. A breath is usually needed after it, and taken, extending the short pause it is supposed to be followed by. The KATON is a simpler note that takes less time and breath and is usually followed by a pause shorter than it is supposed to have.

Therefore, in this particular context, one should pay attention to keep the pause after the first phrase short and to perhaps exaggerate the pause after the second phrase, so that the third phrase rightly goes on the two phrases that precede it. The hail had not destroyed all of the grass of the earth nor all the fruit of the tree. The locust polished it all off.

This isn't the most earth-shaking of reading pointers, but we are talking about fine-tuning the reading and understanding of our Holy Torah. So it is worth the time we spend writing it up and the time you are spending reading this. Even if you have to read it more than once to catch the fine points.

Praying with Passion

Giving more meaning to our T'fillah
One Week at a Time

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P'sukei d'Zimra:

Hodu HaShem's Delight

עֵז וְחֵדוּהַ בְּמִקְמוֹ. הָבוּ לְהַ
מְשֻׁפָּחוֹת עֲמִים... אֶף תִּכּוֹן תִּבֶּל בַּל
תִּמוּט...

Meaning: translation...

Might and delight are in His place. Render to Hashem, O families of the peoples, ... Indeed, the world is fixed so that it cannot falter.

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Value of Struggle

Hashem treasures the strength His people display in the face of struggle.

Insight: Deeper meanings...

Receiving Credit for Our Effort

Meshech Chochma (B'reishit 50:10) explains that when the Jewish people are in exile, subjugated by the nations of the world, Hashem "cries" since His people cannot completely fulfill the mitzvot as they would when they are at peace.

However, when Hashem sees that despite the difficulties, the Jewish people exert their might to perform

His mitzvot, notwithstanding that they may not be performed in their entirety, Hashem is delighted and offers great reward, as the Mishna (Avos 5:23) states ... "according to the struggle is the reward."

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

A Pure Connection to G-d

The following is adapted from a true story related by Lady Amelie Jacobovits, the widow of the late Rav Lord Immanuel Jacobovits, Chief Rabbi Emeritus of the British Commonwealth.

In 1940, when the Nazis began bombing Paris, my mother fled with us - her four children - on the last train before the main onslaught. It was the eve of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot.

The mass of people on that train - a tornado of humanity - repeatedly wrenched us from one another. Months later, on another leg of our desperate journey, I lost track of my family altogether and began to wander from village to village. Lone children all over were doing the same.

One night just before dawn, I could go no further. I knocked on the farmhouse door of what turned out to be a kind, courageous gentile farmer. He took me to his cellar where I found another little girl. Eventually two boys and another girl joined us. None of us admitted we were Jewish for several days.

It was a dire winter. Each morning, a

few rays of light would poke their way into the cellar through two windows high on the wall. Every day, through those windows, the farmer lowered a net with five morsels of food and a bucket for our natural needs.

One day, peering through the windows, one of us saw blades of grass penetrating the frozen terrain. We concluded that, if the weather was indeed changing with spring on its way, maybe we were nearing Pesach. Each of us children came from a different range of Jewish commitment, yet we shared a strong desire to do something to celebrate what we sensed was the upcoming Pesach holiday.

When the farmer appeared with our food the next morning, we asked if he would lower in tomorrow's basket a small amount of flour, a bottle of water, a newspaper and a match. Two days later we received a small bottle of water, but we had to wait several days for the flour. The entire region was drained of provisions.

A day later, a newspaper came through - and then a match. We waited a few more days. We saw a full day of sunshine and blue skies, and we decided that, in order to cultivate a festive spirit, we would switch clothing with one another and wear them as if new. So we changed clothes; the two boys trading and the girls exchanging dresses. Before evening we baked our matza, though we hadn't a clue how to do so. We poured water into the flour and held the dough in our bare hands over the burning newspaper on the

floor. We produced something which resembled matza and, whatever it was, provided enough for the five of us.

That night we celebrated Pesach. One of us recalled the Kiddush. Another remembered the Four Questions. We told a few stories of the Exodus that we remembered having heard from our parents. Finally, we managed to reconstruct "Chad Gadya" the song which typically ends the evening.

We had a Pesach to remember. With no festive food, no silver candlesticks and no wine - with only our simple desire to connect with G-d - we had a holiday more profound than any we have known since. I thank G-d for allowing me to live to be able to tell my children and grandchildren about it. Even more, I feel obligated to the younger generations of my family, who never experienced what I did, to pass on the clarity it gave me - the vivid appreciation of G-d's presence in my life, of His constant blessings, wonders and teachings... and of His commitment to the survival of the Jewish people.

(Aish.com, March 17, 2004. This article originally appeared in The Jewish Women's Journal of the Jewish Renaissance Center, a learning institute for women located in New York City.)

Word to the Wise:

Meaning within the meaning

The Malbim explains the connection between CHEDVA, "joy", and OZ, "strength", based on the verse which states, "Do not be sad, for [your]

enjoyment of Hashem is your strength" (Nechemiah 8:10). One has strength in his heart because his bond with Hashem fills him with joy, as T'hilim 84:6 states, "Happy is the man whose strength is in You."

Try this: Think of a mitzva that does not come easily to you - one you must do frequently. Imagine that every time you do this mitzva, you become a little stronger in it. Picture the mitzva as a weight-lifting exercise; each time you do the mitzva, your spiritual muscle gets stronger and the weight becomes easier to lift. ☞

From "**OzTorah**"
by **Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple**
AO RFD, Emeritus Rabbi of
the Great Synagogue, Sydney
www.oztorah.com


Q. ...do Jewish sources say anything about cats?


A. First, do not imagine that the Jewish surname "Katz" has anything to do with cats; it is the initials of "Kohen Tzedek", "righteous priest". There are very few references to cats in the classical sources, in contrast to, e.g. lions, oxen and even dogs. Various Talmudic passages note that cats chase mice and even chickens, and the sages noted that modesty and cleanliness are attributes of the cat. Hence there is even a statement that "Had the Torah not been given we could have learned modesty from the cat" (Eruvin 100b). A comment in Horayot 13a that a dog


knows its master but a cat does not, might imply having domestic animals as pets, though some cat owners would disagree about whether their cats know them. It is said that some rabbis had animals as pets in order to fulfil the duty to feed one's animals before oneself.

A footnote about Katz: several other surnames rhyme with Katz, e.g. Matz and Schatz. They too are abbreviations. Matz is "Moreh Tzedek", "righteous teacher". Schatz is "Shali'ach Tzibur", "delegate of the community", i.e. officiant or cantor. Many well-known Jewish names such as these pre-dated the Austro-Hungarian imperial edict requiring Jews to have surnames.

ParshaPix explanations

 Top row has representations of the final three plagues, the three that are presented in Parshat Bo (the first 7 being in Va'eira). First (really, 8th) is ARBEH (locust)...

 To the right of the locust is an image representing the Torah's description of the locust as "covering the eye of the earth". Notice the question in parentheses below the eye-patched globe. Who else was described that way in the Torah? (Ask your children, grandchildren, or guests. Don't give the answer away cheaply: B'nei Yisrael was described thus by Balak to Bil'am)

 to the left of the locust is a black rectangle for the 9th plague,

CHOSHECH (darkness)...

and a sword representing MAKAT BECHOROT. In this case, the sword can represent the killing of the first borns and/or the killing BY the firstborns of others in anger over Par'o's repeated refusal to yield to the threat made by Moshe (in G-d's name) against the firstborns. Some Hagada commentators point to the slight difference between the traditional list of the makot in the Hagada and Rabbi Yehuda's Simanim (Rashei Teivot) for the plagues.

The tenth plague was MAKAT B'CHOROT, but Rabbi Yehuda uses a BET for B'CHOROT as the tenth plague. Makat B'chorot is the smiting of the firstborns. B'chorot can mean that they themselves were the plague, meaning that they killed Egyptians.

The word BO is not just the name of the sedra, but also the number (BO = 2+1 = 3) of MAKOT in the sedra.

In addition to the word BO, there is also a BOW (as in bow and arrow)

and a BOW as in a bow of ribbon

And the bow of the violin in the bullets of these ParshaPix explanations.

The clock reads almost midnight. That was the phrase Moshe used to describe G-d's intention of Makat B'chorot at exactly mid-

night. Moshe used KACHATZOT rather than BACHATZOT when he told the people what G-d intended to do. He did not want the the people to think that it was midnight when they were off by a few minutes, and think that what G-d promised was not happening. When the Torah reports what happened on that night, the term BACHATZI HALAILA is used.

The lamb in the doorway is the Korban Pesach which was to be brought into the homes from the 10th of Nissan.

Matza is matza.

The barking dog is from the Egyptian neighborhoods, because in the Jewish areas, not a dog barked its tongue. Their reward is that we "throw" them our non-kosher meat. The can above the dog can be dog food.

But the can has another meaning. In Hebrew, canned goods are called SHIMURIM, as in LEIL SHIMURIM.

The yo-yo represents Par'o's erratic behavior. Call for Moshe and Aharon. Get them out of my sight. Bring them immediately. If I see you again, you will die. Quick, get them...

The O between the horns of a bull is a PAR-O. Above the bull is a BOWL. If you say it just right (or just wrong enough) it comes out BOW-L-PAR-O.

The bone is for the prohibition of breaking a bone in Korban Pesach. It is also for the word that appears a few times: B'ETZEM HAYOM HAZEH...

Above the bone is the symbol on a weather map that indicates total cloud cover and a strong easterly wind. That represents the plague of locust that arrived on a strong easterly wind and covered the sky like heavy clouds.

T'filin are t'filin. Two of the four parshiyot inside T'filin come from the end of Parshat BO

The arrow pointing to one BAYIT with the other Xed in red, represents the requirement that Korban Pesach be eaten by its chabura in one house, not two.

The baby, goat, and donkey stand for the three types of B'CHOR, firstborns: human, kosher domesticated animals, and donkey.

The axes (and the sword) are mentioned in the haftara.

As is the EGLA YEFEI-FIYA, here represented as a prize-winning calf.

The plant is the hyssop, EIZOV, used to apply the blood of the Korban Pesach to the doorposts and lintels of the Jewish homes in Mitzrayim.

Two mezuzot are on what the blood of the KP was applied, but not these kind of mezuzot. In the

context of the sedra, mezuzot are doorposts.

The dove with a sword is the haftara's CHEREV HAYONA, lit. (but not the way the Navi meant).

Lower-right is an actual photo of the first visibility of the lunar crescent. Notice that the sky is not dark. First visibility is most often after sunset but before full darkness. This makes it harder to see. As does its low position near the horizon. And strike three is the short window of visibility for the first sighting of the moon following nights of no moon.

Portion from the Portion

ARBEH, SH'VAT and EATING

All the plagues that we read about in last week's and this week's portions were brought upon the Egyptians over the course of a year. Did you ever wonder when exactly during the year each plague actually took place? Rabbenu Bachya says that the first seven plagues happened in the months till ADAR and that ARBEH, CHOSHECH and MAKAT B'CHOROT were in NISSAN. He bases his opinion on the verse that tells us that the locusts ate all the fruit on the trees (10:15). Nissan is the time of year when the trees start having fruit.

The PRI TZADIK - Rav Zadok HaKohen from Lublin has a different view. He thinks that the plague of ARBEH happened in SH'VAT. We are just entering that month. Maybe we can find a significance to the con-

nection between locusts and SH'VAT. Rav Zadok, in his mystical manner, does just that. He says that the plague of ARBEH has a special message for the Jewish nation. The verse about ARBEH states L'MAAN T'SAPEIR B'OZNEI BINCHA UVEN BINCHA - You will then be able to relate in the ears of your children and grand children... (10:2). And in the book of Yoel, when referring to the locusts that devoured the land (1:3) LIVNEICHEM SIPRU - Tell your children about it. In Yoel it also says the word ZEFONI, referring to the ARBEH. Rav Zadok quotes the Talmud (Succah 52:) ZEFONI ZEH YETZER HARA SHETZAFUN B'LIBO SHEL ADAM - the evil inclination is hidden TZAFUN in the heart of man. He brings all these connections - the locusts in Egypt, the locust in Yoel referred to as hidden, the Yetzer Hara being hidden, and the month of SH'VAT - together to teach us that the work of the month of SH'VAT is to free the inner parts of the heart from physical desires. The Zadik begins his work by fixing his cravings for food as the verse says TZADIK OCHEIL L'SOVA NAFSHO - the righteous eat to satisfy his soul (Mishlei 13:25). The righteous one eats just in order to survive, not gluttonously.

So when we plan our Tu BiShvat seder in a few weeks, we should concentrate on the spirituality of the eating. This is also a good time to start one of those diets we've been planning for so long.

So what recipe is appropriate for this portion?

At the end of the plague, a very strong

west wind carried away the locusts VAYISA ET HA'ARBEH. The verse continues to tell us that not a single locust remained - LO NISHAR ARBEH ECHAD? (10:19). Rashi is bothered by the redundancy - if we are told that the locusts were carried away by a wind why does it have to say that not a single one remained? Rashi answers this by stating AF HAMELUCHIM - even the salted locusts were no longer to be found in Egypt. I thought this delicacy of salted locusts would be appropriate for the portion recipe this week, but then I envisioned the emails I would receive so here is a recipe for salted salmon instead.

The Puah Institute

for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

Ovarian Transplants – A Piece of History

In our last column we discussed the fascinating modern technique of ovarian transplants, in which part of the ovary of one woman is removed and placed in the ovary of another - a procedure which has become a medical reality in the last few years.

What are the halachic ramifications of an ovarian transplant? Who is considered the mother of a child born as a result of this treatment? Does the procedure transgress the prohibition against castration, for either the donor or the recipient? Should it be encouraged by halachic authorities?

Before we can give practical answers to any of these questions, let us look back

in time to a thought-provoking article which appeared in a medical journal over one hundred years ago.

In "The Medical Report", published in America on May 5th, 1906, a doctor by the name of Robert Tuttle Morris - a professor of surgery at a medical school in New York - reported his very first successful attempt to achieve a natural pregnancy and delivery of a live baby as a result of an ovarian transplant he had performed. He had tried many similar procedures in the past, he claimed, and all had failed.

Morris' report was quoted in many medical journals and sparked lively debate among doctors: Was this at all possible? Morris himself later voiced some skepticism regarding the procedure; he thought that perhaps some of the recipient's own ovarian tissue might have survived the surgery, and it was this - and not the grafted tissue from another woman - that subsequently enabled her to ovulate and become pregnant.

The article also became the center of a heated ethical debate, and medical ethicists discussed whether such procedures should be performed. They debated the maternity of a child born as a result: Some claimed that the birth mother was the natural, legal mother, while others argued that the donor was, since the recipient had simply been the 'incubator' and not the one who actually produced the egg which resulted in pregnancy and birth. Some suggested that the debate be deferred until the child grew older - his

appearance and mannerisms would then be compared with those of the two women to determine which one more closely resembled him and should therefore be considered the true mother. Decades later the debate still raged on; many doubted that Morris had actually performed the operation at all.

This intriguing point of medical history, which seems not to bear any real significance on our discussion of the halachic ramifications of an ovarian transplant, did give rise to an interesting halachic debate.

More about that next time.



Prizes for best solution sets are furnished by **Warning: Contains regular serious material in addition to the light TTriddles "stuff"**

Last issue's (VA'EIRA) TTriddles:

[1] Par'o, Bil'am, Achan, Sha'ul, David

CHATATI - I have sinned. Each one said that at least once in Tanach.

[2] BARAD was like Manna

MATAR is rain. VAYAMTEIR is the verb meaning to cause to rain (down). The word occurs in Parshat Va'eira with the plague of hail, BARAD. In T'hilim (78:24) the word is used in describing the rain of manna that G-d blessed the people with.

[3] Yosef, 32°6'36"N 35°2'4"E, Berechياهو

Yosef was an ASIR in Egypt for 12 years of his time in Egypt. The latitude and longitude coordinates in the TTriddle are for the north-western Shomron town established in 1977 by Gush Emunim - ELKANA. Berechياهو was a descendant of Levi's son Gershon. He was the father of ASAF (one of two or three Asafs in Tanach), the one who is named in 12 p'rakim of T'hilim. That makes Berechياهو AVI ASAF. ASIR, ELKANA, and AVI-ASAF are the three sons of Korach, as mentioned in Va'eira.

[4] Eisav, Moshe, and two different nations

VAYITZ-AK, and he screamed. The word (exactly that way) occurs 8 times in Tanach, 7 of which are in the Torah. In B'reishit, it is Eisav that screams in agony when he realizes that he lost the bracha from Yitzchak. Later, the people of Egypt scream for food when the famine strikes and Par'o tells them to go to Yosef. In Sh'mot (Va'eira, to be specific), Moshe screams to G-d to do away with the plague of frogs. Later (in B'shalach), after successfully crossing the Sea on dry land... the people are thirsty and turn to Moshe with the question of MA NISHTEH? What are we supposed to drink? Moshe cries out to G-d and He shows Moshe a certain tree (branch) that he is to throw into the bitter waters to make them sweet. In Bamidbar, the people of Israel cry out to Moshe after the MIT-ON'NIM are strck down by fire at the place they later called TAV'EIRA, because of the fire.

[5] 20610 - the first of 69 identical what?

The number is for book (2 = Sh'mot), perek (6), pasuk (10). That pasuk (Sh'mot 6:10) is the first of 69 occurrences of the most common pasuk in the Torah: VAYDABEIR HASHEM EL MOSHE LEIMOR (VHEML). The pasuk occurs 10 times in Sh'mot, 27 times in Vayikra, and 32 times in Bamidbar. And that's it. (Not really, we've got more to tell - maybe now, maybe later.)

[6] and one additional that continues

Sh'mot 6:29 begins with the same five words, but it continues with ANI HASHEM; DABEIR EL PAR'O... This is the only pasuk like this, bringing the total of VHEML p'sukim to 70.

In addition, there are many VAYDABEIR HASHEM EL MOSHE ... LEIMOR, as follows:

There are ten G-d spoke to Moshe and Aharon LEIMOR. Sometimes there is a location before the LEIMOR - And G-d spoke to Moshe B'HAR SINAI or B'MIDBAR SINAI, or B'ARVOT MOAV (twice). And a few more VHEM-something else-LEIMOR. A little more: Almost always, when it says VAYDABEIR HASHEM EL MOSHE, it says LEIMOR (saying) and in the following verse, it continues with what G-d spoke to Moshe. In contrast, there are 70 occurrences of VAYOMER HASHEM EL MOSHE, but only four of them have a LEIMOR. The vast majority just continue in the same

pasuk with what G-d said to Moshe. There's more, but will stop here (for now).

[7] About Yosef and the cries of Israel

We couldn't figure this one out either.

[8] Gub and Eniv and whom?

Gub is bug backwards. Bug in Hebrew is CHARAK. CHARAK backwards is KORACH. Eniv is vine backwards. Vine in Hebrew is GEFEN. GEFEN backwards is NEFEG. KORACH and NEFEG were two of the three sons of YITZHAR, son of K'HAT, son of LEVI. The third son was ZICHRI, backwards would be YIRKAZ - that's whom!

[9] Pinchas introduced in his matching sedra

The name Pinchas occurs 25 times in Tanach, all except once with a YUD after the PEI and before the N'CHAS. 18 times, the reference is to PINCHAS ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen. The first time Pinchas is mentioned is in Va'eira. The gimatriya of PINCHAS is 208. The gimatriya of VA'EIRA is 208. So Pinchas is introduced in his numerically matching sedra. By the way, YITZCHAK and HAGAR also are 208. And Pinchas and Vashti have the same ATBASH gimatriya. And PINCHAS and CHANANYA cross-match in both directions - not common. PINCHAS's regular gimatriya is CHANANYA's ATBASH, and vice versa. Sorry, got a bit carried away.

[10] The sedra of Love & Emunah

AHAVA VE-EMUNAH = 1+5+2+5 (13)

+ VAV (6) + 1+40+6+50+5 (102) = 121, the number of p'sukim in Va'eira.

[11] MazalPic

For the last several years, we've used a visual TTriddle to represent the mazal (Zodiac sign) of the month, rather than the "regular" symbols for the signs. Each year it gets harder to come up with something new. SH'VAT is Aquarius, the water carrier or drawer. D'LI (bucket) in Hebrew. This year we went with the brightest star in the constellation Aquarius. Although the alpha designation is usually used for the brightest star in a constellation, the brightest star in Aquarius is Beta Aquarii, a.k.a. Sadalsud. The name is Arabic (as are many common names of stars) meaning luck of lucks, but the name is depicted in the Mazal Pic as a saddle and suds. And yes, a picture of the MOVIL ARTZI, Israel's national water carrier is better than Saddle-suds. So are Jack and Jill. That's the way it goes.

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WISDOM & WIT
 by Shmuel Himelstein

In Radin, a dispute arose among the yeshiva students about the mashgi'ach of the yeshiva.

Some of the students thought the mashgi'ach should be let go, while others thought he should remain. This argument caused a great deal of friction within the yeshiva.

While every attempt was made to keep the argument from the Chafetz Chayim,

he eventually heard about it, and decided to address the students.

“This argument has caused people to speak badly of others,” he began, “and the Rambam rules that one who speaks badly about others has no place in the World to Come. That statement is so severe that I omitted it from my volume, the Chafetz Chayim.

“In Tractate Sanhedrin we are told that the great Sages convened and debated about whether Shlomo HaMelech should be in the World to Come, because we are told after all that ‘he did evil in the eyes of Hashem.’ In Heaven, though, they did not agree with this debate, and a fire came down from Heaven and burned up all their benches. That did not dissuade the Sages, and they again debated the point. Finally, a Bat Kol - a Heavenly voice - told them to desist from this line of debate.

“Now, the question can be asked: What difference should it make in Heaven whether the Sages in this world decide whether King Solomon should or shouldn’t be in the World to Come? Can’t Heaven decide on its own, regardless of what the Sages in this world decide?

Yet, from this story we see that what the Sages in this world decide can determine what happens in Heaven.

“While I know that all of you feel that your position in regard to the question at hand is an impeccable one in regard to halacha and that what you are doing is out of concern for halacha, the fact is that things have been said to disparage others, and regarding this Rambam says that people who speak evil of others have no place in the World to Come.

“In case any of you think that what Rambam says is only his view but that that is not the halacha, I want you to know that once Rambam said it, that is the halacha ...”

Maharal on the Sedra

Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder

Sh'mot 12:28 - And the Children of Israel went and did as Hashem commanded, so they did.

Rashi: The verse counts going as well as doing to teach that there is a separate reward for the going [s'char halicha].

Gur Arye: If we are told they did that which Hashem commanded already, why now are we told “they went”? It is to inform us the importance of the going to do a commandment as a separate act worthy of reward. The sages said, “Let my portion be with those who died on the way to doing a commandment” [Shabbat 118b]. It is known that if one begins moving toward an object, his emotional connection to it is greater than one already close to it, for although the object is not with him, he is motivated to approach it. This is a more complete emotional attachment.

MDK: Consider the verse we recite as we place tefillin on our hand. “I betroth you forever, etc.” [Hoshei'a

2:21]. Our relationship as a people with Hashem is perpetual engagement, not marriage. Engagement implies distance and the longing that goes with it, and occurs on the level of soul. Marriage and consummation would have implied closeness, which can result in diminution of longing. Rabbi Mayer asks [Nida 31b] why the Torah decrees separation of the nida [menstruant woman] from her husband. He answers it is in order that she be loved and desired as she was when he brought her under the marriage canopy.

Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr

**The Jerusalem Institute
of Jewish Law
Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean**

Lesson # 546

Paying for the Theft

When the thief has to make restitution for what he stole, there are different opinions. There is one opinion that holds that the thief may make payment in cash or in kind, or by transferring real estate of that value to the victim. These payments in kind may be made even if the thief has cash. If the payment is made by the thief transferring real estate it must be made from the highest quality of land of the thief. There is another opinion that if the thief possesses cash or real estate he is not

permitted to pay in kind.

If the thief does not have assets to make restitution, the amount owed becomes a debt and can be collected at any time without limit. (In Biblical times, the thief who could not make restitution was sold as a slave to be able to pay the debt. This applied only to males.) A thief who wants to make peace with his Maker will try to make an effort to pay off this debt.

If two persons steal an object, they are jointly liable for the entire value of the stolen object. Each is deemed to be a guarantor of the other to make restitution. Even if one fled or has no assets to pay for the theft, the victim may collect the entire amount of the theft from the other thief.

Levi saw Reuven enter into Shimon's premises and steal an object. The object came into the hands of Levi. If Levi is certain that Reuven stole the object, Levi must return the object to Shimon. If Levi returns the object to Reuven, he must pay Shimon for the object. If Levi loses the object, Shimon may collect the compensation from either Reuven or Levi.

If Levi is not certain that Reuven stole the object from Shimon, as for example Reuven, before taking the object from Shimon's premises informs Levi that the object is Reuven's and he is retrieving his own object, then if Levi returns the object to Reuven, Shimon cannot sue Levi since Levi was told by Reuven that the object was his and Levi does not know otherwise. Shimon must sue Reuven. But if Levi returns the object to Shimon, Reuven can sue Levi,

since Levi had no right to return the object to Shimon, once Reuven claims the object was his. Levi may not help Shimon at the expense of Reuven. Levi should have brought a lawsuit in Beit Din naming both Reuven and Shimon and let the Beit Din decide who should get the object.

If the thief hides a stolen object and has to flee the city without it, and then asks his fiend Yehuda to bring the object to him, Yehuda is also liable to the victim for the value of the object.

Reuven sends Naftali to steal an object from Shimon, which Naftali does, Reuven is not liable since Naftali should know that it is wrong to steal and should not listen to Reuven.

IYH, next lesson: theft of intellectual property

The following D'var Torah does not appear in the regular hard-copy edition of Torah Tidbits - it is a BONUS DT for Large Print readers and for those who read the electronic versions

From **"OzTorah"**
by **Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple**
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GONE TO THE DOGS

The Torah tells us in such comforting language, "Against none of the Children of Israel shall any dog whet his tongue" (Sh'mot 11:7). Ibn Ezra translates YECHERATZ

L'SHONO as bark or bite, which gives point to the following story.

Jews were often scared of dogs, especially in Eastern Europe, where the pogroms involved setting ferocious dogs loose on the Jews. It is said that someone came to his rabbi and said, "Rabbi, I am frightened of dogs!" The rabbi replied, "Don't worry; the Torah says that no dog will attack one of the Children of Israel!" "That's all very well, rabbi," said the man, "But how do I know the dogs understand Hebrew?"

Fair enough. The sages had a poor opinion of dogs, however, long before the pogroms and the Cossacks. Even in ancient days the dogs would prowl in search of food and would often bark or howl all night. The sages said, "Anyone who indulges in evil talk (lashon hara) deserves to be thrown to the dogs". The connection with dogs is probably that evil talk uses (or rather, misuses) the tongue, and the verse about dogs also mentions the tongue.

The dangers of evil talk are constantly emphasised in Judaism, and many of the Yom Kippur confessions have to do with sins committed with the tongue. Warning that malice and gossip would be severely punished is the message of the rabbinic interpretation that the leper, the m'tzora, is suffering because he was motzi ra, "the utterer of evil". In the case of

our verse, the sages were quite literally telling people that because of evil talk they would go to the dogs. It's not entirely fair to the dogs to be demonised in this way, especially since Biblical and rabbinic literature are well aware of dogs as loyal friends, but preachers often cannot avoid the temptation of bringing folk prejudices into their homilies.

HACHODESH HAZEH LACHEM

According to an email from the Israel New Moon Society, "For the first time in years, the Moon is expected to appear on the 29th of this Hebrew month. That means that the Moon that would require testimony will appear on the date that matches the calculated calendar."

This is indeed rare because of several factors: the divergence between the actual (astronomical) molad and the announced molad which is based on the average time it takes the Moon to go through its cycle of phases, the fact that Rosh HaShana in our fixed calendar is often on a day that the Moon would not have been visible the night before, and the various rules for lengths of months that only approximate the reality.

In other words, it is not common that Rosh Chodesh (of any month) would be on the same day in today's fixed calendar as it would be if we had a Sanhedrin that proclaimed Rosh Chodesh based on eyewitness testimony to the first visibility of the lunar crescent.

Not necessarily significant in any real way, but it is certainly a curiosity of the two calendar systems that we have - one when we have a Sanhedrin (past and future) and one when we don't. But who knows - maybe it does mean something special...

HACHODESH HAZEH LACHEM...

The pasuk in this week's sedra that contains the first mitzva G-d gave to the Jewish People - even before they (we) left Egypt is the establishment of the Jewish Calendar. Twice the pasuk says LACHEM, to you (to us). We therefore should know more about this special gift from G-d to His Chosen People.

Months have either 29 days or 30 days. This is so because the months are based on the cycle of the Moon, which takes a bit more than 29½ days to complete its cycle of phases. In the time of Sanhedrin and Kiddush HaChodesh based on eye-witness testimony to the first visibility of the Lunar crescent and the adjustments made by the Sanhedrin, when necessary, any month could (and will be able to) have 29 or 30 days. But in our fixed calendar, specific lengths are assigned to the months.

We start with the months alternating between 30 and 29 days.

Tishrei 30, Marcheshvan 29, Kislev 30, Tevet 29, Sh'vat 30, Adar 29, Nisan 30, Iyar 29, Sivan 30, Tamuz 29, Av 30, Elul 29.

Two months can vary. Marcheshvan sometimes has 30 days. Kislev sometimes has 29 days. Adar Alef (when we have one) has 30 days. The Adar that precedes Nisan always has 29. Thirty days hath...

Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat (the first of the eleventh month) is the day Moshe Rabeinu began his review of Torah

Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat was the unsuccessful candidate for Rosh HaShana LaIlanot honors.

Its candidacy was championed by Beit Shammai, but the honors went to TU BiShvat.

Calendar trivia: Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat was on Dec. 31st, 1785. It's scheduled to be on Feb. 1st, 2196. For the 410 years between, it is always in January, on any date from the 1st to the 31st. (All Jan. dates are covered from 1900 to date.)

Parsha Points to Ponder

Suggested answers

1) The Kli Yakar answers that G-D made a miracle to punish in the precise order of the origination of the persecution of the Jews and made the locusts invade the palace first since that is where the plot to persecute the Jews originated, then worked their way outward to the homes of his servants who carried out the king's plot, and then to the rest of Egypt who joined in on the persecution.

2) The S'forno explains that the plague of locusts was the only one in which permanent damage could be caused if Moshe did not stop the plague immediately. While all the crops had been eaten, Par'o wanted to make sure that the locusts would not eat the roots of the crops and prevent them from ever growing again.

3) The Ohr HaChayim points out that according to the original plan, the Jews would enter Israel soon after receiving the Torah. Thus, the next time they would observe these laws would be after they enter the land. Unfortunately, sin prevented that from taking place and that is why there had to be a specific command to observe Pesach when their second year in the desert came around.