

<u>Candles</u>	KI TISA	<u>Havdala</u>	<u>next week</u>
4:52pm	Yerushalayim	6:06pm	4:58 / 6:11
5:10pm	S'derot	6:09pm	5:16 / 6:14
5:08pm	Gush Etzion	6:06pm	5:13 / 6:12
5:08pm	Raanana	6:07pm	5:14 / 6:12
5:08pm	Beit Shemesh•RBS	6:07pm	5:14 / 6:12
5:08pm	Netanya	6:07pm	5:14 / 6:12
5:09pm	Rehovot	6:07pm	5:14 / 6:13
5:07pm	Be'er Sheva (& Otmiel)	6:08pm	5:13 / 6:13
5:08pm	Modi'in• Chashmona'im	6:07pm	5:14 / 6:12
4:52pm	Petach Tikva	6:07pm	4:58 / 6:12
4:52pm	Maale Adumim	6:06pm	4:58 / 6:11
5:07pm	GINOT Shomron	6:06pm	5:13 / 6:12
5:07pm	Gush Shiloh	6:05pm	5:12 / 6:11
5:08pm	K4 & Hevron	6:06pm	5:13 / 6:12
5:07pm	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:06pm	5:13 / 6:11
5:09pm	Yad Binyamin	6:07pm	5:14 / 6:13
5:10pm	Ashkelon	6:09pm	5:16 / 6:14
4:55pm	Tzfat	6:04pm	5:01 / 6:10
5:07pm	Zichron Yaakov	6:06pm	5:13 / 6:12

Rabbeinu Tam Havdala - KI TISA - 6:41pm

**Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI
12-21 Adar Alef • Feb 16-25**

Earliest Talit & T'filin	5:30-5:21am
Sunrise	6:21-6:12am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 8:30-8:26am)	9:07-9:02am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:32-9:28am)	10:02-9:58am
Chatzot (halachic noon)	11:53¼-11:52¼am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)	12:24-12:23pm
Plag Mincha	4:16¼-4:22¼pm
Sunset (based on sea level: 5:25-5:33pm)	5:31-5:38pm

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The K'toret-Gefilte fish connection

unlocker infusion toothed tool

Destitute YMCA K-kilo

Some will say it four times, others thrice.
Some only twice?

Lots of cows or only one Torah

Were his subjects also his niblings?

The Escape key. One of the most important
keys on the computer keyboard. In Hebrew?
K'LIID HAMIMLAT קלייד הממלט

Does Stacte teach at the Center?

Top of the 6th, bottom of the 3rd

The five Rabbinic fast days and then all the way through Yom Kippur

_ Yitzchak, Yaakov (2), Yosef, Aharon, Moshe;
_:: Yaakov, Moshe (3)

Yaakov, the spring grain
between the fast and the Yom Tov

FYI: Regular Shushan Purim falls on Shabbat 11.5% of the time. Shushan Purim Katan can fall on Shabbat 12.5% of the time. (Shushan Purim Katan is Shabbat 1/3 of all 2-Adar years.)

No Tachanun at Mincha on Thursday and no Tzidkatcha on Shabbat afternoon because of Purim Katan and Shushan Purim Katan

LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

Eigel HaZahav. The golden calf. About which some of the same mouths that had proclaimed NAASEH V'NISHMA now said EILEH ELOHECHA YISRAEL. These are your gods, O' Israel.

Let's now revisit the Zebra Question. The poem was written (and performed) by Shel Silverstein a"h, in his book, "A Light in the Attic". Apologies for letting it run on, rather than following the line arrangement of the original - no room.

I asked the Zebra, Are you black with white stripes? Or white with black stripes? And the zebra asked me, Are you good with bad habits? Or are you bad with good habits? Are you noisy with quiet times? Or are you quiet with noisy times? Are you happy with some sad days? Or are you sad with some happy day? Are you neat with some sloppy ways? Or are you sloppy with some neat ways? And on and on and on and on and on and on he went. I'll never ask a zebra About stripes Again.

If we call NAASEH V'NISHMA and all other good things we have ever done - as a nation and as individual Jews - and we call the golden calf and a myriad of bad things we have done - again, as a nation and as individuals - then we need to ask the Zebra Question. Is/Are the Jewish People white with black stripes or black with white stripes?

Using this Silverstein poem is not too far afield. Take a look at the Midrash on Shir HaShirim. 1:5 says: SH'CHORA ANI V'NAVA... I am black and beautiful. In addition to explaining this along the long of "Black is beautiful", the Midrash takes a different position. We, the Jewish People were black in Egypt and beautiful at Sinai, when we said NAASEH V'NISHMA. We were black with the EIGEL HAZAHAV and

were beautiful with the building of the Mishkan. And the Midrash goes on and on with other contrasts of behavior, calling one SH'CHORA and the other NAVA.

This is close enough to the Zebra Question. Which still needs asking... and answering.

How about measuring the surface area of a zebra to determine what its color is? If it has more white, does that make it white? If it has more black, is it black with white stripes? Not necessarily. What about the color of its body rather than its fur (hair) - will that tell us?

Maybe, maybe not - to all of the above. But we are not primarily interested in zebras at this moment. What about B'NEI YISRA'EL?

The answer has to be that we are white... with black stripes. Sometimes, a lot of black stripes. But no matter how dominant black might be, we are essentially good. Our commitment to G-d at Sinai - the NAASEH V'MISHMA and everything that goes with it - determines who and what we are. This is a message we find over and over in the Torah and Tanach.

Being essentially a good people - and good people - is not enough. It is not the whole story. We must live our lives in such a way to minimize the black stripes and stains on our national bearing and on our individual slates. But the starting point is important. Whatever we are as descendants of the Avot and Imahot - that is our starting point. We must take things from there and always try to become better people and a better people.

SEGULA, Chosenness and being CHAVIVIM LAMAKOM is our essence. Our continuous challenge is to deserve those descriptions.

Ki Tisa stats

Shushan Purim Katan

21st of 54 sedras; 9th of 11 in Sh'mot

Written on 245.17 lines in a Torah, rank 8th

14 Parshiot; 10 open, 4 closed

139 p'sukim - ranks 10th, 1st in Sh'mot

2002 words - ranks 5th, 1st in Shmot

7424 letters - ranks 8th, 1st in Sh'mot

Large sedra in general plus relatively long p'sukim, which explains the jump in rank from 10th for p'sukim to 5th for words. Only 4 other sedra have more than 2000 words.

MITZVOT

Contains 9 mitzvot; 4 positive and 5 prohibitions

And as long as we're talking numbers, 9 doesn't seem like very many mitzvot, but only 17 of the remaining 53 sedras (less than a third) have more mitzvot than Ki Tisa.

Summary: 17 sedras have double-digit mitzvot; 17 sedras have no mitzvot. The other 20 sedras have between 1-9 mitzvot.

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 45 p'sukim - 30:11-31:17

There are three sedras that have fewer p'sukim than the first Aliya of Ki Tisa. It's the longest First Aliya in the Torah, by far (but not the longest for Monday, Thursday, and previous Shabbat Mincha reading, since we don't read all of this first Aliya at those times - Eikev's is the longest in that category, or Mas'ei according to the opinion that we should read all of the "travelog"). The reason it is so long is so that the episode of the Golden Calf will be in the second Aliya, which is read by/for a Levi - the only one who need not be embarrassed, so to speak, by the story of the Calf.

[P> 30:11 (6)] The first 6 p'sukim of the sedra are the portion of the Mitzva of the Silver Half-Shekel [105,A171 31:13], which will be read again, IY"H, in two weeks, as the Maftir for Parshat Sh'kalim.

Mitzva Watch

The half-shekel was used to count the People and to create the fund for the purchase of communal offerings throughout the year, as well as other spiritual needs of the community. The half-shekel was required of males from age 20 and up. It was optional for

women. (Since the half-shekels were used to count the standing army, it was necessary to keep separate records of a woman's optional contribution. Nonetheless, women could participate in this mitzva.) Although Kohanim were also required to give a half-shekel, they were not forced by the courts in the way that non-kohanim were, as a courtesy to their standing and function in society. Sh'kalim were NOT accepted from non-Jews. (There were funds in the Beit HaMikdash to which a non-Jew may contribute, but NOT the half-shekel. It is sort of like membership dues in Klal Yisrael - for members only.) Collection took place in Adar, so that the fund would be ready for Nissan, the beginning of the "Beit HaMikdash year".

The mitzva applies during the time of the Beit HaMikdash, at which time even Jews living abroad contribute(d).

Without the Beit HaMikdash, we do not perform the mitzva, but we have commemorative practices, namely the reading of Parshat Sh'kalim (on the Shabbat of or right before Rosh Chodesh Adar (Sheni), which was when Sh'kalim were "announced") and the giving Zeicher L'Machatzit HaShekel before Megila reading (there is an connection between our mitzva of Sh'kalim and the sh'kalim that Haman promised the king in return for permission to kill the Jews in the kingdom).

We can say that participation in the mitzva of the Half-Shekel indicated that a person wanted to be part of Klal Yisrael, thereby including the individual in the atonement of the People.

Remember: Today we don't give Machatzit HaShekel, we just commemorate it. This is an important distinction.

[P> 30:17 (5)] The next portion deals with the Laver and its stand (KIYOR V'KANO), for the Kohanim to wash their hands and feet before their sacred Avoda [106,A204 30:19]. A kohen who does not wash (sanctify) his hands and feet before doing "service" in the Beit HaMikdash is liable to "death from Heaven" and the korban he has brought is invalid.

What might this say to us? Our Sages have commanded us to wash our hands before eating a bread-meal. There are several p'sukim in the Torah that are considered to be the inspiration for the mitzva to wash our hands. This is one of them, based on the famous concept that our (dining) table is like the Altar. We are challenged to elevate the mundane act of eating and invest it with a spirituality which is the hallmark of Judaism and a Torah way of life.

Before we approach our "Altar" to serve G-d, we too wash our hands. Just like the Kohen. Well, not really. We wash hands only. And not with the same penalty for not washing properly (thank G-d). Could you imagine a Heavenly death penalty for not washing for HaMotzi? No. But the comparison SHOULD prompt some serious reflection on our part, and hopefully, an improvement of the way we relate to this everyday mitzva.

Concerning our Netilat Yadayim, a

person should examine his own observance of mitzvot. First, am I careful about washing for HaMotzi? I am? Good. Am I careful to dry my hands BEFORE washing, so that the water has its intended purpose of removing ritual impurity in the best way. And do I properly dry my hands after washing? And do I complete the bracha before my hands are completely dry? Am I careful not to interrupt between washing and HaMotzi? Of course. Good. I don't talk until after HaMotzi (actually, there should be no talking until after the first swallow of the first bite of the HaMotzi). But silence can also be an interruption (less severe). The point is, to THINK about what we do and why we do it, and HOW we do it. Washing for HaMotzi is an example of a mitzva that is easy to take for granted, to go on "automatic pilot". Let's wash better, bench better, daven better, do mitzvot better, treat each other better. Let's be thinking and feeling Torah Jews all across the board.

[P> 30:22 (12)] Next follows the command to take specific quantities of various spices, mix them with olive oil, and prepare the special "anointing oil". The Kohen Gadol and kings of Israel are to be anointed with this oil **[107,A35 30:31]**, as were the sacred vessels of the Mikdash. It is forbidden to use this oil for personal use **[108, L84 30:32]**, or even to dare dishonor the Mikdash by copying the spiced oil for personal use **[109,L83 30:32]**.

[S> 30:34 (5)] We are next com-

manded to compound the K'toret, the incense offered twice daily in the Mikdash. The mitzva of K'toret is presented and counted in T'tzaveh; here we have the prohibition of compounding the same formula for personal use **[110,L85 30:37]**.

[S> 31:1 (11)] G-d tells Moshe that B'tzalel shall be in charge of the actual construction and fashioning of the Mishkan and its contents. His assistant shall be Aholiav of Dan, and a team of skilled artisans shall join in the work. All the objects in and of the Mishkan are enumerated, as the task-list of B'tzalel and his team.

[P> 31:12 (6)] At this point, G-d reminds Moshe that the Shabbat may not be violated, even for the construction of the Mishkan. (We might have thought otherwise, due to the sacredness of the endeavor, hence, this reminder.) Shabbat is the eternal sign between G-d and the People of Israel.

SDT: *Shabbat and Mikdash "rub elbows" several times in the Torah. They complement each other, in that Mikdash represents the Sanctity of Place, and Shabbat represents the Sanctity of Time. One may not build the Mikdash on Shabbat, but the functioning in the Mikdash "pushes aside" Shabbat. And we learn many rules and details for Shabbat from the construction of the Mishkan. There is an equation of sorts, certainly a link established, with the twice-occurring pasuk - My Shabbats you shall preserve, and my Mikdash you shall revere.*

SDT: *We know that Shabbat steps aside*

for Piku'ach Nefesh (life-threatening situations) and for Communal Offerings in the Beit HaMikdash (and for testifying for Kidush HaChodesh). That these things are able to be done on Shabbat, we learn from specific sources in the text of the Torah. That Shabbat steps aside for ANYTHING is learned from the passage here - ACH ET SHABTOTAI TISHMORU. The word ACH - but, however - is generally considered to be limiting. My Shabbats you shall keep, would mean, with no exceptions. ACH - indicates that there are situations when that which is usually forbidden on Shabbat is to be done. Again, what the specific things are, are learned from other p'sukim. The ACH here teaches us the general state of affairs - Shabbat can be "violated", under specific circumstances. [Note It is not the word ACH that teaches us its meaning; it is our Oral Law that teaches us the meaning of the ACH, when it applies and when it doesn't.]

Levi - Second Aliya 47 p'sukim - 31:18-33:11

The longest Second Aliya in the Torah, tied with that of Parshat Pinchas in number of p'sukim, but longer in words and letters.

[S> 31:18 (7)] The Torah now returns to telling us of Matan Torah, which was "interrupted" (so to speak) by the parshiyot of the Mishkan, i.e. all of T'ruma and T'tzaveh and the first third of Ki Tisa. G-d gives Moshe the Tablets of stone... (meanwhile, back in the camp...) When the People saw (or thought) that Moshe was delayed in returning from Sinai, they feared that they would be leaderless, and they appealed to Aharon to do

something. Exactly what he did is the subject of different opinions, but his delaying tactic resulted in the emergence of the Golden Calf. Most of the people were confused and did nothing (which was part of the problem), but 3000 men arose and reveled in the Calf, declaring it the god of Israel.

[P> 32:7 (8)] G-d told Moshe to look at what the People were doing in his absence. G-d indicates to Moshe that the People are deserving of destruction.

The first part of Moshe's reaction is PRAYER. (This isn't always first on his list, but it is here. Part of the greatness of Moshe Rabeinu is his knowing when to pray long, when short, and when to take action immediately and leave prayer for later. This is something that we should try to learn from him). His petition before G-d starts with the practical argument, "What will Egypt say?". Then Moshe mentions the Avot and asks G-d to forgive the people because of them, and the promises G-d had made to them. The combination of these two points seem to succeed, because Moshe is "rewarded" with G-d's expression of regret (so to speak) for what He had said He would do to the people.

[P> 32:15 (21)] Next, Moshe turns and descends the mountain with the Luchot in his hands. When he sees the Calf, the Tablets either slip from his hands and break or he intentionally smashes them

(opinions differ). He seizes the Calf, destroys it, spreads its ashes over the water, and prepares a potion for the people to drink. He asks Aharon what happened.

He calls to those "who are on G-d's side"; the Leviyim rally to his call and kill those who dared "worship" the Calf.

On the following day (the exact sequence of events is debated by commentators), Moshe castigates the people, tells them of the enormity of their sin. Then he tells them that he is returning to G-d (so to speak) up the mountain, to continue pleading Israel's case before G-d. G-d promises to punish those at fault.

[S> 33:1 (11)] As a result of the Golden Calf, G-d distances Himself from the People. He does, however, reiterate His promise to give them (us) the Land. And, He tells Moshe to have the people continue towards Eretz Yisrael, but without G-d in their midst. The People are distraught by G-d's words. Moshe too removes himself and his tent from the midst of the camp. Moshe remains in direct contact with G-d... and Yehoshua was constantly in the Tent.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 5 p'sukim - 33:12-16

[P> 33:12 (5)] Moshe argues that G-d must remain in the midst of

the People in order to demonstrate that He truly chose us. One senses the unique relationship between G-d and Moshe that permits Moshe to speak to Him the way he does. At the same time that our relationship with G-d was changing because of the Golden Calf, Moshe was asking G-d for a more intimate understanding of the Divine Essence.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 7 p'sukim - 33:17-23

[P> 33:17 (7)] G-d agrees to Moshe's request, because of His special feelings towards Moshe. Then Moshe asks that G-d reveal more of Himself to him (Moshe). G-d tells Moshe that such a revelation is impossible, but that Moshe will be able to experience more of G-d's essence. This, with the understanding that it won't be everything. The p'sukim in this portion of very enigmatic.

Here's a thought... Is it not strange that specifically when Bnei Yisrael is/are in the midst of a very rough time that Moshe asks G-d to reveal Himself to Moshe more than He already has? Perhaps Moshe had a bit of a "spiritual panic" in that G-d, Who had been so close to the people at Sinai was about to distance Himself from us. And Moshe feared that he too would lose out. Mixed with his efforts on behalf of the people, Moshe wants to safeguard and enhance the relationship that he has with HaShem. This will also help in his pleading for and leading the people.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 9 p'sukim - 34:1-9

[P> 34:1 (26)] This portion (read on Fast Days) contains the 13 Divine Attributes. One can say that not only did G-d forgive the People for the Golden Calf, but He also gave them (us) the method of approaching Him in prayer. Not only are we to recite these 13 Attributes, but we must emulate as many of them as possible. "Just as He is merciful, so too must we be merciful..." In this way we will KNOW His Attributes, live by them, and not just mechanically recite them.

G-d next tells Moshe to cut new stones to replace the ones he had broken. Moshe again ascends Sinai to receive the Luchot, the Attributes, and Divine Forgiveness. This 40 day period - Elul through Yom Kippur, become days of special closeness between G-d and us.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 17 p'sukim - 34:10-26

Our position relative to other nations is conditional upon our keeping of the mitzvot. We are forbidden to make covenants with the nations in Eretz Yisrael. Specifically, we are forbidden to eat or drink of idolatrous offerings **[111]**, this is the only mitzva counted by the Chinuch that is not on Rambam's list (there is one

Rambam mitzva that the Chinuch doesn't count). 34:15]. All this to avoid falling to their temptations and to avoid intermarriage. We must destroy their idols.

We are commanded to keep Pesach in the Spring. (This is one of the p'sukim responsible for our two Adars.) In a direct link to the Exodus, we have three types of B'CHOR mitzvot - human (which must be redeemed), kosher farm animals (which are given as a gift to a kohen and may not be redeemed, but are holy and to be brought as a korban, and donkey (which should be redeemed - PIDYON PETER CHAMOR)

Shavuot and Sukkot complete the cycle of the Pilgrimage Festivals; males are required to appear at the Beit HaMikdash (and not empty-handed). This mitzva (and others) guarantees our hold of the Land. Shabbat and the Land's Shabbat, Shmita **[112, A135 34:21]**, are mentioned.

Korban Pesach may not be offered while its owner has Chametz, nor may we leave K.P. over to the morning.

Bikurim are to be brought to the Mikdash and meat-milk mixtures (that are cooked together) may not be eaten **[113,L187 34:26]**. [Rabbinic law forbids eating mixtures of milk and meat even if they have not been cooked.]

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya 9 p'sukim - 34:27-35

[P> 34:27 (9)] G-d commands Moshe to write the Torah (and not the Oral Law and explanations, which must be transmitted orally). Moshe spent 40 days and nights on Har Sinai, not eating or drinking, during which time, the second set of Luchot were written.

When Moshe came down from the Mountain, he was unaware of the spiritual radiance that glowed on his face. Aharon and the People were afraid to approach. Moshe called to Aharon and the Leaders of the People, and spoke to them words of Torah and their explanation. Then all the people came to Moshe to be taught what G-d had spoken to him at Sinai.

When Moshe finished speaking to the people, he covered his face with a hood (mask/veil), which he removed whenever he spoke to G-d. He would then transmit G-d's words to the people.


This would be repeated over and over again. Moshe would cover his face until the time he communicated with G-d.

Haftara 39 p'sukim Melachim Alef 18:1-39

The main part of the haftara is the famous confrontation between Eliyahu HaNavi and the 450

prophets of Baal on Har HaKarmel, the result of which was the reaffirmation of faith in G-d by the fence-sitting people of Israel. The parallel to the sedra is obvious. In the sedra, there were a relatively small number of people who "worshipped" the calf, and most of the rest of the people who weren't sure what to do in the situation. Eliyahu too had the prophets of Baal and the vast majority of the people who were PO-S'CHIM BEIN SHTEI HA-S'IPIM, wavering between two opinions.

Sefardim read only from pasuk 20, the episode of Eliyahu on Mt. Carmel. Ashkenazim begin at the beginning of the perek.

 We know, more or less, what to perscribe for ourselves, but we have a pitiful knowledge of doses.

From "A Candle by Day" by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein

Diarei Menachem

Parshat Ki Tisa opens with the declaration that when taking a census of the people every man over 20 years shall give to Hashem atonement for his soul, namely a half-shekel. Donated equally by every Jew, independent of his status, this contribution was a sort of insurance policy that would prevent a plague among the people while being counted (Sh'mot 30:11-15).

In Kohlberg's hierarchy of moral development, this would be described as a lower form of morality: "I give in order to prevent punishment." At a higher level, we might note a dimension of reciprocity: "I give in order to get back," for the term, "They shall give" (V'NATNU) in Hebrew reads the same both backwards and forwards, inferring that one who gives charity receives it back.

Perhaps a higher level still is implied in the notion of giving a selfless contribution as an act of Chesed, a utilitarian act on behalf of society. We are reminded, however, of Shlomo's strange adage that "Righteousness (TZEDAKA) exalts a nation and Chesed is a reproach to any people." Tzedaka, then, is a uniquely Jewish concept incorporating within it not only the notion of the correct thing to do but also the value of righteousness.

The proposition is, of course, that when a Jew gives his half-shekel he is doing more than looking after himself, more than just a humanitarian act. He is, in fact, imitating Hashem and doing the will of Hashem by creating a society based on the rules of Righteousness as understood by our precious Torah.

VEBBE REBBE

QUESTION: *When you don't have your tefillin and someone will lend his to you during chazarat hashatz, what davening should you be doing while you wait?*

ANSWER: The gemara (B'rachot 14b) says that one who says Kri'at Sh'ma without tefillin is like one who says false testimony about himself. Rabbeinu Yona (8a of Rif to B'rachot) explains that since he reads in Kri'at Sh'ma the commandment to lay T'filin, it looks bad to read it and not put on T'filin. There are several sources that say that, for positive and/or to avoid negative issues, it is important to have T'filin on during Sh'moneh Esrei also (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 25:4; Tosafot, B'rachot 14b; see China D'chayei 30). Therefore, people do not give up their T'filin until at least after Sh'moneh Esrei and indeed usually not until after Kedusha. So, as you ask, the person waiting will have to choose between davening without T'filin and davening Sh'moneh Esrei without a minyan. (Davening at a later minyan that makes the crucial times of T'fila is, of course, best.)

There is close to a contradiction on the matter between critical sources on your question and the standard practice concerning a related one. Many people who go to a late minyan "solve" the problem of missing sof z'man Kri'at Sh'ma by reciting it before shul. Yet, several poskim are bothered by the fact

that these people usually do so without T'filin (during the week), which, as we have seen, is a problem. Rav Ovadya Yosef (I, OC 4) justifies the practice by citing those who say that it is not false testimony if one will be putting on T'filin later in the day. (Rav Shlomo Kluger (Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo 47) says that it is legitimate to rely on putting on T'filin later only if that will be during the recitation of Kri'at Sh'ma at the right time.) One can add to the picture the opinion of the Meiri that Kri'at Sh'ma without T'filin is a problem only when it is done in a manner that shows disregard for T'filin and the fact that the whole issue is only rabbinic. Standard practice, thus, is to not be overly concerned about the false testimony when T'filin will be put on later.

In apparent contradiction, the Magen Avraham (66:12) says that if one has to choose between davening Sh'moneh Esrei with a minyan and Kri'at Sh'ma and Sh'moneh Esrei with T'filin, we choose the T'filin. His main source is reminiscent of the transitive property of inequality. If one comes into Shacharit when the congregation is about to start Sh'moneh Esrei, he does not skip straight to Sh'moneh Esrei because the importance of T'fila following the mention of geula (redemption) is greater than that of Sh'moneh Esrei with a minyan (Shulchan Aruch, OC 111:3). Yet, if one's T'filin arrive right between geula and T'fila, he stops to put them on despite the break (Shulchan Aruch, OC 66:8). Thus, T'filin must certainly be more

important than Sh'moneh Esrei with a minyan. This proof is suspect because putting on T'filin between geula and T'fila is not necessarily a full break (Maharsham III, 359). We can actually use similar logic in the opposite direction. One can say Kri'at Sh'ma without T'filin in order to do so like vatikin even though many hold that T'fila with a minyan is greater than vatikin (see discussion in Yabia Omer, op. cit.). Thus, there is significant halachic logic to say that one should daven normally and put on the T'filin during chazarat hashatz (see Minchat Yitzchak II, 107, who connects the matter of Kri'at Sh'ma before davening and our question). Yet, it is hard to rule against the Magen Avraham, who is accepted by the Mishna Berura (66:40).

Assuming that one is going to follow the Magen Avraham, some suggest that he should wait until after Yishtabach, which is reasonable since the Rama (OC 54:3) says that one may put on T'filin at that time. However, the poskim do not see this as an optimum time and considering that this person is anyway not reciting the critical passages of Kri'at Sh'ma and Sh'moneh Esrei with a minyan, it is preferable to wait before starting Baruch She'amar.

Rav Daniel Mann, Eretz Hemdah Institute

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

Ki Tisa From a High Roof

It is hard to sustain a spiritual high. Those of us who are committed to religious observance know that long periods of successful adherence to our standards are sometimes rudely interrupted by sudden, seemingly inexplicable lapses. Long-enduring spiritual experiences yield to momentary temptations and vanish in a flash.

Experts in the psychology of religion, some of them within our own Jewish tradition, understood this. They have warned us that the experience of closeness to God waxes and wanes, comes and goes. It is a process of advance and retreat, of approach and withdrawal.

The Sages of Talmud refer to this phenomenon with a telling metaphor: "From a high roof to a deep pit, me'igra rama l'bira amikta."

Parents often witness this strange process in their children and are perplexed by it. A child commits himself to good behavior, cleans his room and does his other chores for months on end without complaint. Then, out of the blue, he fails to come home by curfew one evening, and a panic-stricken call to the police ensues.

As a former psychotherapist, I can attest to the experience of all my

fellow practitioners, especially those who deal with adolescents, of long periods during which the patient or client maintains a long streak of weeks of healthy adjustment, which are followed by moments of profound crisis.

I remember well a teenager I saw early in my training, when I was thankfully still under the supervision of a senior professional. The young man, from an affluent family, was arrested after many incidents of shoplifting. I worked with him and his family, and he seemed to have developed insight into his actions and great self-control. Months passed by, and then, one rainy night, I was summoned to the police station because he had shoplifted again. "From a high roof to a deep pit."

In this week's Torah portion, Ki Tisa, we have a dramatic example of this puzzling phenomenon. For the past many weeks, we have read of a people making political and spiritual progress. They are freed from slavery. They witness wonders and miracles. They experience the revelation of the Almighty and the giving of the Law. They donate generously to the construction of the Tabernacle. They enjoy the manna, the "bread of heaven".

And then, one fine day, their leader Moshe returns a little late from his rendezvous with God Himself, and the bubble bursts. Gone is the exhilaration of freedom, and gone are their cries of commitment to a new way of life. Yesterday: "We will do and we will heed." (Sh'mot 24:7)

Today: "Let us make for ourselves a Golden Calf." (32:1)

In all of my years of Torah study, of carefully reading the weekly parsha, it is this sudden backsliding that confounds me more than any other narrative. And of course, I am by no means the first to be amazed by this rapid deterioration of commitment, by this utter transformation of a people from a faithful, grateful, self-disciplined folk into a wild crowd, dancing and singing in orgiastic enthusiasm around an idol.

Every year, I attempt anew to resolve this puzzle to find an answer for myself and for those who looked to me to help them understand the Bible. This year, I find myself contemplating a new answer based upon a very unusual source.

A few weeks ago, on January 8th, the Wall Street Journal carried an essay by one Amy Chua. The essay was entitled Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior. The author describes her own experience as a Chinese mother, and the strict expectations she has of her adolescent daughters.

This column evoked strong reactions all over the world. Many believed that her approach was the correct one and represented a much-needed corrective antidote for the permissiveness of American parents. Others found her approach to be nothing short of cruel and even sadistic.

While I personally found some of her prescriptions worthy of consideration, I believe that most of them are

excessive. But in her article, she makes an astute remark that I find to be memorable and useful, despite, or perhaps because of, its simplicity.

"Chinese parents understand that nothing is fun until you are good at it. And you can only be good at it if you work at it."

We all would like our activities to be fun and our lives to be enjoyable. But the roads to fun and the paths to joy are effortful ones. Hard work and persistence are necessary in all fields of endeavor, and religion and spirituality are no different. They too require diligence and toil.

No wonder, then, that we are capable of many months of perfect religious behavior, of adherence to the highest moral standards, and of spiritual edification. But it's hard work, as promises of "easy fun" often surround us and seduce us.

There is an insight here that can help parents, teachers, and psycho-therapist deal with the unpredictable shifts in the behaviors of those they work with.

There is also a profound lesson here for those who look for an explanation of the Golden Calf episode in this week's Torah portion. The way of life that the Jewish people were just beginning to learn is a wonderful and rewarding one. But the wonder and the rewards, the fun, come only when we are "good at it", when we work hard to perfect our lives.

We all are well advised to be on guard against the promise of "easy

fun". The Golden Calf took no work at all. The verse in Sh'mot 32:34 suggests that the Jews had to only cast their gold in to the fire and the Golden Calf effortlessly emerged. The Golden Calf imposed neither moral restrictions nor ethical standards. Just dancing and singing. Fun?

Amy Chua teaches us that that's not fun. Having real fun in life requires that "you be good at it", good at life. And that takes work. □

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WISDOM & WIT
by Shmuel Himelstein

R' Moshe Kliers, one of leading rabbis in Eretz Yisrael, was very reluctant to rule in any case involving disputes between people. Wherever possible, he tried to reach a compromise that both sides would accept.

On one occasion, he found himself unable to arrange a compromise between the two parties, and was forced to hear the case and rule on it. The case involved a large company and a poor widow. R' Moshe heard the case, and eventually ruled in favor of the widow. Nevertheless, he was tormented by the fact that he had been forced to issue a ruling, as every ruling bears the possibility of error.

Finally, after a few sleepless weeks due to his uncertainty, a friend told him: "Why should there be a problem? After all, the company can certainly afford the settlement, and the woman is, after all, a widow."

"What do you mean by that?" shouted R' Moshe. "We are told clearly in the Torah that 'Justice belongs to Hashem'! Whether the person is rich or poor is totally

irrelevant. The only thing that counts is that the verdict be just!"

"YOUR BROTHER SHALL LIVE WITH YOU" [1]

The Challenge of Money

by **Dr. Meir Tamari**

Charity has always been recognized, both by friends and by enemies, as the hallmark of the Jews, but it is not always clear that in Judaism the term covers many different actions and concepts, far beyond the personal philanthropy and assistance that are commonly understood by charity. The various terms used in connection with charity [chesed, tzedaka, ma'asim tovim, matnat aniyim, interest-free loans, taxation etc.] show the wide scope both of the actual acts themselves as well as the legal, spiritual and religious perspectives within which these acts are to be performed.

It is simply incorrect to translate Tzedaka as charity, implying monetary philanthropy flowing either from a feeling of pity for the recipient or from considerations of mutual help or from an insurance type of concept that one day the giver also may need similar assistance. Rather, since tzedaka is rooted in the word tzedek - justice, it involves the basic understanding of Judaism that all wealth is given to us, not only for satisfying our own needs and those of our families, but also to be the means of assisting and supporting the poor, the sick, the aged and the weak. "This purpose of our money is the acceptance by human beings that

not only is there a horizontal relation between them and G-d but that flowing from this Fatherhood of G-d there is the vertical relationship of the Brotherhood of Man" (Admor of Tolna, Yitschak Twerski, Boston). So our charity is not based on any consideration other than fulfilling the demands of that vertical-horizontal relationship between Man and G-d. Regarding mistreating of strangers, widows and orphans, who usually have no protectors, the Torah writes, "If you cause him pain, if he should cry out to Me, I shall hear" (Sh'mot 22:22). In that verse the phrases 'cause pain', 'cry out', and 'I shall hear' are repeated to emphasize the ease with which they are exploited, the double pain they feel because of their defenseless position and the swiftness and sureness of Hashem's reaction to their injury.

Tzedaka is not limited merely to fulfilling one's preferences, nor merely to accommodating one's frame of mind nor just to following philanthropic impulses but, like all other acts and deeds in Judaism, because the halakha imposes a legal obligation on the ownership of money - an obligation which, we will see, takes varied and numerous forms. This area, more than in any other area of Jewish life, requires the merger of spontaneity, spirituality, and personal sensitivity with formalism, ritual and legalism. Nobody likes to give their money away to somebody else, together with, people's objection to give charity and thereby forego their use of money to satisfy their own needs and unlimited

wants and simple common human egoism, all these combine to limit the voluntary acts of charity. Therefore, the mitzvot associated with tzedaka, like any other positive and negative mitzvot, are meant to be enforced by rabbinical authorities and to be subjected to communal legislation and to codified peer pressure. Without these forces of imposed halakhic obligations, our positive emotions and idealistic agendas may easily remain just that, good intentions. However, if Judaism was simply legalism as many non-Jews and Jews wrongly believe, then these obligations would be sterile and even destructive, without feelings of kindness, spiritual empathy and religiosity. So, one does not merely give tzedaka but one does acts of tzedaka, not only with one's money but also with one's body, with one's time and with one's mind; la'asot tzedaka vachessed.

Chazal have taught us that the reward for keeping mitzvot are received in 'The World to Come', yet a distinction is made by them in this regard between those mitzvot of tzedaka vachessed and those pertaining solely to Heaven. In the passage from the Talmud which we recite every day in our morning prayers our Sages taught, "These are the acts for which the doer [enjoys the reward and] eats the fruits in This World while the principal remains intact for him [to enjoy] in the World to Come" (Shabbat 127a). Then the Baraita continues and lists all those acts for which there is, as it were, a double reward and they are predominantly all acts of charity in the truly Jewish sense of the word: "Acts of

loving kindness, hospitality to strangers, visiting the sick, helping provide for needy brides, attending to the dead and bringing peace between a man and his fellow, and between a man and his wife".

Praying with Passion

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

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P'sukei d'Zimra: Hodu Keep Praying!

אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, הַמַּעֲלֶךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם,
הַרְחֵב פִּיךָ וְאִמְלֵאֶהוּ... אֲשִׁירָה
לָה', כִּי גִמַל עָלַי.

Meaning: translation...

I am Hashem, your G-d, Who raised you from the land of Egypt, **open wide your mouth and I will fill it...** I will sing to Hashem, for He dealt kindly with me.

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

A Constant Cause for Prayer

A person always has something for which to daven.

Insight: Deeper meanings...

Asking and Appreciating

Reb Moshe Schwab, the Mashgiach of Gateshead Yeshiva, England stressed that a person must strive to embody

King David's expression: "Va'ani tefillah:" "When davening to Hashem I feel undeserving of his largesse, yet I'm asking for more and more." The Torah permits us to ask for as much as we want... as the verse says, -- HARCHEV PICHA VA'AMAL-EIHU... Open wide your mouth and I will fulfill (your request)... "A person always has something to daven for. First he needs success in his Torah studies... in earning a livelihood; then in finding a mate, in having children, and success in bringing them up. He must ask G-d to grant them intelligence, success in their studies ... and for grandchildren. One is asking for things an entire lifetime, and that is what G-d wants. View yourself as undeserving, and appreciate G-d's limitless generosity.

One should not only daven three times a day. Even in the middle of the day one should ask Hashem for anything, as the need arises.

Once the chassidim of the Magid, Reb Motel of Chernobyl, saw him standing by the window moving his lips. They came close to hear what he was saying, imagining he was saying some deep Kabbalistic prayer. They were shocked by what they heard; the Rebbe was saying: "Ribono Shel Olam, the maid that helps out my wife wants to quit, but my wife really needs her help, so please make the maid change her mind." The chassidim asked the Rebbe why he, the great gaon, was praying like a simple person, asking Hashem for such a simple thing. Replied the Magid: "Who else should I ask?"

The Sh'lah HaKadosh (cited in Matnas Chaim, Ma'amarim) advises: "...Each individual is required to pray to Hashem for every need... And after he prays he should deal with his transactions and place his trust [in Hashem]..." After the endeavor, he should verbally attribute the success to Hashem.

Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz, Mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Europe said (Sefer Daas Chachmah U'Mussar), "Chazal did not make even the smallest movement, without prayer. When they entered the study hall to learn Torah, they prayed; when they departed, they prayed." Did these Torah giants lack confidence in their ability to learn? On the contrary, they were brimming with confidence - not in their own abilities, but in Hashem's love for them and His ability to grant them success.

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Go to the Source

The father was ill in bed. He was too weak to help his son with his learning. Nor could he help his wife bring in the heavy grocery bundles, as was his habit. He didn't even have the energy to tell his little daughter a bedtime story. But the family was fortunate, for their friends and neighbors filled in for the father, lightening the family's load. While the father was glad that help was available, his spirits sank each time he heard someone else providing the loving care to his family had always been his to provide.

Weeks went by and at last, the father began to recover. As his family began to come to him again for his help and support, his heart exulted. They needed him. They turned to him, and there was nothing that gave him more joy than putting his hands, heart and mind to work, fulfilling his family's needs.

Likewise, Hashem wants us to turn to Him. In doing so, we demonstrate that we know He is the source of all our help and sustenance. By asking for our needs, we show our faith and love.

Try this: When you find yourself worrying, stop a moment and turn the worry into a prayer. When you find yourself hoping for something, turn to Hashem and transform your hope into a prayer. ☞

Portion from the Portion

THE KETORET

Every Shabbat at the end of the Musaf a section from the Talmud K'RITOT (6) is recited. This is the PITOM HAK'TORET (Incense) which is also read every day by some people at SHACHARIT and MINCHA. What is so special about this passage?

The KETORET which is described in these verses was brought twice a day in the MIKDASH on the Altar that was inside the OHEL MOED, right in front of the Holy Ark. The other sacrifices were brought on the Altar that was outside of OHEL MOED. The ME'AM LO'EZ explains that all other

KORBANOT - CHATAT, OLAH, ASHAM, SH'LAMIM, MINCHA, that were brought in the Temple, are connected in some way to sin. The KETORET is not like that. It is very different.

The KETORET was brought for happiness - as we read in MISHLEI (27:9) "SHEMEN UKTORET YISAMACH LEIV", the oil (of the Menorah) and the KETORET - the services done at the same time, were brought in order to make people happy. The sweet smell of the KETORET had a purifying effect on a person and made them want to repent. There is something to aromatherapy after all.

For this reason some people say it is even more important to recite the PITOM KETORET than the KORBANOT - since the KETORET itself was more special than the KORBANOT.

What was included in the KETORET? The verse (Sh'mot 30:34) says to take the fragrances Balsam, Onycha, Galbanum and pure Frankincense all of the same weight as well as other specified fragrances. Tradition teaches that another 7 fragrances were added - Myrrh, Cassia, Spike-nard, Saffron, Costus, Cinnamon and Cinnamon bark.

Tradition teaches that the CHEL-BONA spice gave off a foul smell. And yet, if it is missing, the person preparing the KETORET would die. What is the significance of this spice?

To teach us that we need to include the Jews who are not so committed in our community. But one might say that

such a person could be a bad influence on the other Jews around him. So why is it included? All in all there are 11 ingredients in the Ketoret - 10 good smelling ones and one with a foul smell. We must have a strong base of a community - ten - a minyan of committed people, and then others should be included, but they will not have a negative effect on the others.

Parsha Points to Ponder

KI TISA

1) Why does G-D use the words **WHEN YOU COUNT THEM (BIFKOD OTAM)** twice in the same verse (30:12)?

2) What does G-D mean when He says **SEE, I CALLED IN THE NAME (BISHEIM), BETZALEL THE SON OF URI (31:2)**? Why couldn't He simply say **I CALLED BETZALEL** and we would know it was his NAME?

3) Moshe pleads with G-D to remain close to the the Jewish people (33:12-13) and G-D then seemingly grants this request when he replies, **MY PRESENCE WILL GO AND PROVIDE YOU REST (33:14)**. Why, then, does Moshe respond to those words by saying, **IF YOUR PRESENCE DOES NOT GO ALONG, DO NOT BRING US FORWARD FROM HERE (33:15)** and then G-D grants this request again when He responds, **EVEN THIS THING OF WHICH YOU SPOKE I SHALL DO (33:17)**? Didn't He already tell this to Moshe in verse 14?

by **Rabbi Dov Lipman**

"Mah yomru hagoyim" - what will the nations of the world say. Throughout our history and our personal lives this has often been an injunction, both for good and sometimes, perhaps, for less than good, to see our actions from the perspective of others. In the case of potential chilul Hashem, it is obviously most necessary. But in the political arena, for example, often the right thing to do is overshadowed by the need for approbation from others.

Yet it is this very same thought that Moshe Rabeinu uses to convince HaKadosh Baruch Hu, after chet ha-eigel, that Am Yisrael should be judged with compassion. "Lamah yomru Mitzrayim... (Sh'mot 32:12).

A little disconcerting - since when are G-d's decisions susceptible to public opinion?

I think that an answer can be found in the following pasuk wherein Moshe states his second argument on behalf of Bnei Yisrael - the promise of Eretz Yisrael to Am Yisrael "...eten l'zarachem v'nachalu l'olam." As Rashi teaches us in the first pasuk of the Torah, this promise will be contested over and over again. This promise is not a private covenant. It is a public irrevocable statement that affects all the nations of the world and it is therefore most appropriate that Moshe pleads with Hashem to consider world

opinion. They are the ones who must know that the promise is permanent.

May we merit that the nations of the world finally understand the divine nature of our connection to this Land.

Tova Rhein, Efrat

Esther's Debate with the Rabbis

Guest article by

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher

Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

When Esther sent the Sages her request, "Write my story for future generations" (Megila 6a), they responded, "You are arousing jealousy between us and the nations".

Seemingly, their response is puzzling. Since when do we censor Scripture because of what the nations will say? The Rambam in Igeret Teiman asks a similar question:

"What nation is so great that they have such righteous rules and laws?" (D'varim 4:8). G-d's setting us apart through His laws and commandments, thus highlighting our superiority over the nations, made all the idolaters enormously jealous of us."

Would we ever consider erasing or hiding our Torah-based superiority so as not to arouse jealousy among the nations? What then was the argument between Esther and the sages?

We can understand the Sages' response according to their times. When they

lived, new works were still being added to Tanach, and Esther was asking the Sages that her scroll, as well, should be included in the Bible. Our Sages had their own yardstick for what should or should not be included in the Bible. As they said (Megila 14a), "Many prophets arose in Israel, twice as many as the number of Jews who left Egypt. Yet, prophecies needed for future generations were included, and those not needed were excluded." The argument between Esther and the Sages was: Is or is not the content of Megilat Esther relevant to future generations?

According to our Sages (whose wisdom was based on past experience), the Purim story could not be classified as "needed for future generations", because until Haman's appearance, there was no precedent of genocide. Hence, the Purim story seemed to be a one-time event such that no one could ever imagine it recurring. It is true that the Jewish people had previously known trials and tribulations, for example Eisav and Lavan, or Par'o in Egypt, who decreed, "Every boy who is born must be cast into the Nile" (Sh'mot 1:22). After that there was Amalek in the desert, and all the other enemies of Israel from the period of the Judges and the Kings. Yet such an "insane" decree as this one, "to destroy, to stay, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day" (Esther 3:13), the Jews of Mordechai and Esther's day had never known. The Rabbi's based on their past experience, viewed this genocidal plot as an extraordinary, one-time event that

would never repeat itself. They therefore concluded that the Bible should not include such a transient event. For them it was a prophecy irrelevant to future generations.

Esther, by contrast, was one of the seven prophetesses who prophesied to Israel (Megila 14). Prophecy is not the product of past experience. Rather, it looks forward, transcending the limits of time and place. Esther in her prophecy looked towards the future of the Jewish People, and with her ru'ach hakodesh [spiritual holy intuition] she knew that the Purim story was not a one-time event, but rather, one that unfortunately and tragically would repeat itself many times throughout the future history of the Jewish People. Through her prophecy she knew that a prolonged and bitter exile awaited the Jewish People in the desert of nations, an exile whose end could not be seen on the horizon. It was an exile in which the Jewish People would face harsh and terrible trials. They would view themselves as a person drowning in an endless sea of sorrow and in desperate need of a life-raft.

Such a life-raft - in Esther's view - was Megilat Esther, for it taught the Jewish People that even if Israel in exile reached a situation of total annihilation, of a Holocaust, and even if the light could not be seen at the end of the dark tunnel, even then they should not despair, because a decree could sometimes be transformed overnight. Indeed, V'NAHAFOCH HU [the overturning of expectations - Esther 9:1] was the lesson of the Megila, and throughout

Jewish history there was never a prophecy so needed for future generations as that of Megilat Esther, to inspire hope for a better future. The Rabbis ultimately conceded and accepted her view, and Megilat Esther was included in the Bible.

The Puah Institute *for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha*

Do Ovaries Produce Eggs or Develop Eggs?

We will continue our discussion of the exciting technology of ovarian transplant in which part of an ovary is removed from one woman and grafted to the non-functioning ovary of another woman. Some recent reports have shown success with this procedure that has resulted in pregnancies and live births.

We have seen the halachic discussion as to who can be considered the mother in such a case, the donor or the recipient? While there are halachic arguments to support the position that the recipient is the mother it is difficult to reach a clear decision in this area.

However, new research can shed light on this question.

It has long been accepted that the ovary contains all the cells that will ever grow and develop into mature eggs. Thus it can be stated that the ovary does not produce eggs but rather develops and matures existing potential eggs.

New research brings this into question. A team in Massachusetts implanted bone marrow cells into mice with chemically sterilized ovaries. They found that these

dysfunctional ovaries actually started to function again and ovulated. This showed that old ovaries can still produce eggs and therefore it could be postulated that the ovary does not only develop eggs but in fact can produce eggs.

Later a team in Shanghai went even further. They found that there are certain types of cells in the ovary that are able to replenish themselves and can be grown in culture. These cells act similar to stem cells that can grow to become different cells in the body.

The Chinese team then injected these cells into mice with sterilized ovaries and again found that they started to function and to ovulate. This went further than the previously mentioned research since the cells could be used from one mouse to another.

While there has been a lot of skepticism and questioning of these papers, and it is clear that we are far from any clinical application of this research, still, this information is very interesting. It may change our whole outlook on the working of the ovary and possibly we will find out that the ovary really does create eggs.

If this is true then the transplanted ovary may continue to produce eggs in the recipient's body. These eggs and any subsequent children will definitely be considered hers and are not connected to the donor.

This lends weight to the halachic position that the recipient is the mother.

However there are other halachic problems with this treatment and we will discuss these next week.

FROM BADBAD TO KUSHWAIT part un

Ed. note: *The Purim 5741 issue of the OU's Jewish Action carried an updated Purim story by Yaffa Ganz. She has done some further updating since. Beginning with Purim Katan (this week), Torah Tidbits is please to present Yaffa Ganz's...*

From Badbad to Kushwait

A Contemporary Purim Saga
as reported by chronicler Ffaya Zang
© Yaffa Ganz 1990

I dunno - I just don't know. You'd think that after 2365 years the story would be over already. Finished, old hat, dead as a doornail and utterly boring. I mean, how long can the same story keep happening, over and over again, even in updated versions? Yet here it is again in all its gory and glory. Although we're still in the middle and not yet at the end, we know of course that the end will be good. After all, whatever G-d orchestrates in our earthly world is good - but until we reach the last act of the play, hold your breath. Things can get bumpy along the way. But to get on with our tale...

ACT ONE: AN OILY PLOT

Achashdinejad A. Husseini, Glorious Ruler of Shuran, from Badbad to Kushwait, was the new conqueror of old Persia and he was getting skinnier and angrier, day by day. He had no oil to fry his food, no fat to feed his geese, no grease to shine his guns or lubricate his lovely planes and tanks. The wondrous wells of Kushwait had ceased to flow.

"There must be an explanation!" he shouted. "Things like this don't just happen to happen! Is it the ozone? Acid rain? Radioactivity? Allah knows we have no such things here in Kushwait. Even our poison gas is kept in air-tight containers, sealed

with the seal of the Holy Wakf, to be used only in dire emergencies against the enemies of Slam. Is there no one here who can explain what has happened to our wells? No one who can tell me why that delightful sound of black, bubbling oil is no longer swooshing through my kingdom? If the Isforeals were still around, I'd accuse them of poisoning the wells, but not a one of them is left after our last clean-up campaign. Who else is there for me to blame?"

Hamin Houmaini bin Malek, First Advisor and loyal counselor to the King, spoke up. "I have heard it said that Eshtamir, the Mysterious Maiden in the Holy City of Peace in the Land of Isforeal, knows why the oil has ceased to bubble. But no stranger can speak with her. It is said that her Uncle Multichai guards her zealously. I have even heard it said that she is veiled like our women, although that may only be hearsay."

"Multichai? Do you mean my old enemy Mortify? How I loathe that man! His memory is blacker than the blackest oil in my kingdom! Ah... if only I could administer some true Slamic justice to him! But now that he is in the Land of Isforeal, he is out of range of my rockets. You say that Eshtamir is veiled? But why? Only our women are veiled. Eshtamir doesn't even live in Badbad! Maybe someone is mixing her up with my wife Villnisht".

"Your previous wife, sire. Remember? She's deceased", said Hamin with dignity.

"Ah yes, deceased. May she rest, clothed in glory."

"Amen, and may my beloved wife Tzores soon rest with her! But to get back to Eshtamir, it is said that the women of Isforeal are exceedingly modest and Eshtamir is very beautiful. Perhaps

Multi..er..Mortify wishes to protect her from strange eyes. But if she has indeed taken the veil, it is only because she herself has chosen to do so. We all know that the women in the West are highly independent."

"Hmm... Mortify is clever, but so am I. I will find a way to get my hands on Eshtamir and you, my First Advisor, will assist me. Eshtamir is our only hope. Without our black gold, we are lost! And even with it, the presence of the beautiful Eshtamir could enhance my life. The palace is a lonelier place without Villnisht. Perhaps we could do a bit of convincing. Surely Eshtamir would not refuse the delights of Shuran. And even if she did, we have our means and methods. Nothing crude like terrorists, mind you, but a bit of gentle hostageing. People do find themselves in unexpected places and situations nowadays. It's a common occurrence, like catching a cold. This would, of course, be a legitimate exercise in self defense, designed to guarantee the continuation of our Divine right to rule the East, control the west and man the oil pumps of the world."

"Impossible, Sire!" piped in the minor advisor Hebrona. "Now that they have returned to their land, the G-d of Isforeal has promised to protect Mutichai and Eshtamir and their people forever and ever. It doesn't pay to mess around with Him. Hamin's revered ancestor Haman tried it once and look where it led him - straight up a tree!"

"But we have no trees in Kushwait, only cactuses", replied the King. "Besides, Haman was much too crude. We've learned a thing or two since then. G-d only protects the Isforeals if they obey His rules, and we all know how lax they have become. Their G-d is called Echad - One, yet they can barely find ten men to agree

to pray together in one room. They're so fractured that it's a miracle they even use the same bus system. All the Sons of Arobber, however, are united through the spirit of Slam. (Yes yes, I know about the slight differences of opinion between Hamsa and Hezba and problems in the county of Lozleban. It is an unfortunate exception to our united Slamic rule.)

"As I was saying, the Isforeals are absolutely contemptuous - always self-righteously claiming how precious their people are to them. Well, we're Semites too, aren't we? It's all one family. So how can they sit back and watch our children starve and suffer, deprived of their toys and Mercedes, our women shorn of their Gucci gowns, our soldiers languishing for lack of arms and other innocent, simple hardware? Send out a fax to the Central Shuk of Arobbia and we'll get a macrominyan together in no time."

"A macrominyan?"

"Yes - a macrominyan! The Isforeals pray with ten. We'll do them one better. We'll pray with ten thousand! This is an emergency, do you understand? If we don't get that oil going, we'll lose our place in the desert sun.

"Let me think... I have the perfect dozen to start! The twins - Iwreck and Yourun - are two. The triplets - Tzoridan, Alergica and Sianide - make five. And we'll bring the best of our neighbors - Kadoffel of Fibbia, Mubankes (not anymore - ed.) of Gyppe, Lozleben the Unfortunate, M'tournit of Tonis, and of course the biggest and the dumbest (and unfortunately the richest...) - Sheroodia of Saudia, 7th of the 37 sons of Arob. Now that's a family for you!"

"That's only ten."

"Ten? Two and three and five make... ten? Of course, ten. I will be the eleventh, or

rather, the first. And you, Hamin, will be the twelfth! That's an even dozen, right? Then we'll round up another nine-thousand, nine hundred and ... let's see... eighty six from the mosques."

"You need two more for ten thousand, sir."

"No problem we'll get two more and we'll have a mass minyan, held in tents in the midst of Arobbia. Now get going or I'll see that you're put on dry ice in Siberia. Speaking of Siberia, get hold of Gorbona. Or is it Petunia now? They keep changing leaders out there. There's absolutely no stability out west. Gorbona won the Nobel Peace Prize a few decades back which makes him the perfect eleventh for my minyan. What righteous god could refuse to answer the prayers of a worldwide Peacenik? And just for good measure, invite whoever is on duty in Lozleben. They're having a hard time there. Let everyone see how kind and merciful I am. It's a beautiful plan, if I say so myself."

"Where will the minyan be?"

"In Makah, of course. Makah was always the Slamites' holiest city until Al Kuds, the Holy City of Peace, won the title a few years back. But now that the Isforeals are making it difficult to hold massive protests - er... prayers - on the Temple Mount, Makah will have to do. It's a pity. The sanitary facilities and the satellite connections are much better in Isforeal, but fax Sheroodia and tell him to get the place in shape and we'll fly in two or three million daveners to answer Amen.

to be continued...

ParshaPix explanations

🕯 Yes, we are a month early with this week's bullets - hamantashen or oznei haman, if you prefer, but not really. This Friday and Shabbat would have been Purim if this year had only one Adar. So maybe have a little hamantash for dessert this Shabbat to mark Purim Katan.

🕯 The sedra begins with the command to count the people. The abacus is for keeping tally...

🕯 half-shekel coin represents (only represents - it isn't THE half-shekel) the silver half-shekel that was used for the count.

🕯 The faucet stands for the washing basin and the kohein's requirement to wash hands and feet before doing service in the Mikdash. Note the cold and hot faucets. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem is in the process of making a new KIYOR for the next Beit HaMikdash. Not a model, mind you, but a vessel that can (and hopefully, will be used by kohanim before their daily Avoda. Part of the new design includes water temperature regulators so the kohanim will have comfortable water for their use.

🕯 Mortar & pestle, used to grind the spices for the incense (K'TORET) and the special anointing oil

🕯 Bottle of olive oil for that same SHEMEN HAMISHCHA

- ⚠ The two fellows checking the blueprints represent Betzalel and Aholiav, the two chief craftsmen in charge of the construction of the Mishkan
- ⚠ Finally completing the topics of the first Aliya of Ki Tisa, we have Shabbat candles, representing the reminder of the command to keep the Shabbat
- ⚠ There is an edited version of Davka's Golden Calf graphic
- ⚠ And another Davka graphic of Moshe holding the Luchot high (perhaps just before he smashed them and/or upon his return to the people with the second pair)
- ⚠ The hatchet can be that which Moshe used to destroy the Eigel, or the tool used to fulfill the commands at the end of the sedra to destroy the Avoda Zara in the Land of Israel upon our entry and conquest
- ⚠ There is a slab of meat together with an ice cream pop in a frying pan over a camping stove. This, of course, stands for the prohibition of MEAT-IN-MILK. In Ki Tisa, it is eating cooked mixtures that is prohibited.
- ⚠ The welder's mask might be the most appropriate method of shielding the people from Moshe's radiance
- ⚠ The quill and feather remind us of the command of G-d to Moshe to write the Written Torah down for the people
- ⚠ Matza is matza, as in a reiteration of the command to eat matza on Pesach
- ⚠ The ear with the gold earring refers to the stalling tactic of Aharon which resulted in the Golden Calf
- ⚠ The eraser stands for Moshe's powerful statement to G-d: If you don't forgive the people then erase me from the Book which You wrote. As is well known, his name does not appear in Parshat T'tzaveh - starting from Ki Tisa where Moshe made that statement, G-d reluctantly (so to speak) "complied" by removing Moshe's name from the last sedra possible, T'tzaveh.
- ⚠ The black goblet was used to give the people the Golden Calf potion that Moshe prepared from the remains of the destroyed calf. It can also represent Kiddush, as part of the Shabbat morning Kiddush comes from Ki Tisa - V'SHAM'RU.
- ⚠ But that isn't really it. Look again at the goblet. It is a famous optical illusion. Focus on the white on either side of the stem of the goblet (rather than on the black goblet itself) and you will see two face-to-face profiles, as in PANIM EL PANIM, the description of the direct communication between G-d and Moshe Rabeinu.
- ⚠ At the bottom of the ParshaPix is a rare S'fardit-Ashkenazic Visual TTriddle. The KEY is the KI, as in KI SEESAW, if you follow the KEY with the SEESAW below it - or KI TISA, if you follow the KEY with the El Al flight number.
- ⚠ Upper-right is a large L and a large CC representing the big NUN (L=50

as does NUN) in the word NOTZEIR, within the portion of the 13 Midot of HaShem, and a large REISH (CC=200+REISH) in the word ACHEIR, as in EIL ACHER, another god. Some say that the large REISH is to emphasize the difference between this word, that refers to idolatry, and the word ECHAD in the first pasuk of the SH'MA, which, of course emphasizes G-d's uniqueness. ECHAD is written with a large DALET. REISH and DALET resemble each other.

- ⚠ And a couple of Unexplaineds that are visual TTriddles to challenge you as well as your family and Shabbat guests. No fair if you have all the answers - is it?

Maharal on the Sedra

Which Book?

Sh'mot 32:32 - And now, bear their sin! Otherwise, please erase me from Your book that You wrote.

Rashi: Moshe is pleading to Hashem to forgive His people. "If You bear their sin, then good, I am not asking You to erase me. But if not, erase me." This is an abbreviated verse, lacking the consequence of the first clause, and there are many like it. "From Your book" means the entire Torah, so that it not be said of me that I was not worthy enough to seek mercy for them.

Gur Arye: Moshe can't intend that "Your book" means the book Moshe himself wrote, for the final book of that Torah would not be written by Moshe for another forty years. By saying "which You wrote", the possibility that the book is the five books of Moshe is clearly eliminated. What Rashi refers to here is the Torah which is the "Law of Fire from His right hand" [D'varim 33:2], described by Rashi as "black fire on white fire". This is the Torah that was the blueprint for Creation. This is the Torah from which Moshe asked to be erased.

This view is not congruent with the view of our sages [Rosh HaShana 16b] that this verse refers to the three Books of Life. "Erase me" refers to the book of evildoers, "from Your book" to the book of in-betweens, and "which You wrote" refers to the book of the righteous. Just as the world is reflected by a supernal, spiritual representation, man's deeds are similarly represented in the higher spheres. Do not think that when a deed is completed, for good or evil, it no longer exists. Its spiritual "picture" is permanently recorded in this book. Moshe asks to be erased from this book if he fails to gain atonement for his people. This is the Book of Universe, also known as the Book of the History of Man.

Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr

TTTRIDDLES

Last issue's (T'TZAVEH) TTriddles:

[1] The reluctant prophet's lower-right destination

The reluctant prophet is YONA, who attempted to flee rather than prophesy to the people of Ninvei as instructed to by G-d. His plan was to travel by ship to TARSHISH, but a G-d-controlled storm prevented the ship from going anywhere until YONA was tossed overboard. (There's more to the story - see the Book(let) of Yona for further details.) The fourth and lowest row of stones on the Choshen, the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol, consisted of the TARSHISH, SHOHAM, and the YOSH'FEI. Assuming that the stones were placed right to left, the Tarshish would be the lower-right stone, as well as the namesake of YONA's intended destination. FYI, according to Rav Aryeh Kaplan z"l in The Living Torah, the TARSHISH was either a yellowish stone (perhaps the color of pure olive oil) called chrysolite (also called olivine and peridot) - or a blue-green aquamarine.

[2] A minyan of firemen, dispatchers, EMTs and paramedics in New York

Some of New York's Jewish firemen, nay - firefighters (politically correct term), dispatchers, emergency medical technicians and paramedics belong to the NER TAMID Society, a fraternal organization. NER TAMID is a term

introduced in Parshat T'tzaveh. We find it also in Parshat Emor. The eternal flame in shuls (Ner Tamid) derives from the Menora and/or from the flame of the Mizbei'ach that was not permitted to ever be extinguished.

[3] From Yechezkeil HaNavi to Shimon HaTzadik

Yechezkeil was a prophet and kohen who lived before and after the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash. Shimon HaTzadik was a Tanna and kohen gadol who served in the second Beit HaMikdash. So far, that is just informational, because the TTriddle is referring to Rechov Yechezkeil and Rechov Shimon HaTzadik in the Shmuel HaNavi area of Jerusalem. When Yechezkeil intersects Rechov Shmuel HaNavi, it curves to the right and straightens out to become Rechove Shimon HaTzadik. The curved part of the street between Yechezkeil and Shimon HaTzadik is called Rechov Pituchei Chotam, which is a term found in Parshat T'tzaveh referring to the engraving on the Shoham stones on the shoulder straps of the Eifod and on the 12 stones of the Choshen. Literally, it means engraving on a signet (ring). The (piece of) street is actually named for R' Yitzchak Pituchei Chotam Rosenthal (his father was a repairer of signets and seals), a 19th century leader of the Ashkenazi community in Jerusalem and one of its representatives to the authorities of the time.

[4] St. Louis football players were in the ROTC

The NFL team in St. Louis is the Rams. ROTC is the Reserve Officers Training Corps (for the US army). In Israel, the reserves are called MILU'IM. In T'tzaveh we find reference to EIL HAMILU'IM. The ram of milu'im.

[5] A person should be accustomed to say, All that G-d does is for the good. **Middle of emerald?**

The first row of stones on the Choshen consisted of ODEM, PITDA, and BAREKET. Many sources translate PITDA as the emerald. The four rows of the Choshen's stones are called TURIM. The Four Turim is the precursor of the Shulchan Aruch, the four sections of each are, ORECH CHAYIM, YOREH DEI'A, EVEN HA-EZER, and CHOSHEN MISHPAT. With PITDA in the middle of the first TUR, the middle of the emerald would be the middle of the ORECH CHAYIM section of Shulchan Aruch. And that's where the TTriddle went off the track. For some reason, the halacha of the

Correction:

Last week we wrote that the RIMONIM (pompoms) at the bottom of the ME'IL (alternating with gold bells) were made with wool and linen. That is not correct. They were made with three different colored threads of wool - T'chelet, Argaman, and Shani (blue, purple, red or close enough). The garments that did contain linen, in addition to wool - i.e. the garments that were Shaatnez, are the EIFOD, CHOSHEN, and AVNEIT.

TTriddle is from the end of section 230 of Orech Chayim. That would have worked had there been 460 sections. But there are 697 sections, making section 349 the middle one. And with 5 s'ifim, the third one is the exact middle of the emerald. So the TTriddle should have asked if this is the middle of the emerald: A person may pick up an object in a public domain (without an Eiruv) and hand it to a person next to him, and he to the next person, etc. even though the object ends up being moved a great distance... (there's more), and someone forbids it. Sorry, we botch a TTriddle once in a while.

[6] Three Unexplaineds from the ParshaPix

Upper-right corner is a spread out hand, the distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the pinky is called a SPAN. In Hebrew, ZERET (which is also the name for the pinky). The ZERET in the Pix is measuring a square. The Choshen was woven material with the 12 gemstones set in gold settings, that when folded in half (as was the way it was worn by the Kohein Gadol) formed a square that measured a ZERET by a ZERET. A ZERET, by the way, is half an AMA, making a ZERET about 25cm (about 10").

Note also that the ParshaPix contains several dominoes, which are rectangles that are double squares (i.e. twice as long as wide), the shape of the unfolded Choshen.

Next to the golden (incense, inner)

Mizbei'ach, is the emblem of the HAREL BRIGADE, "a reserve brigade of the Israel Defense Forces, today part of the Northern Command. It is best known as one of the driving forces during the Israeli war of independence." The HAR-EL is mentioned in the haftara of T'tzaveh as the altar-hearth (part of the Mizbei'ach).

The other emblem, to the left of Murex Trunculus, is for the city of ARIEL, the name also coming from the haftara and seeming to refer to the same of similar part of the Mizbei'ach as the HAREL.

KI TISA Adapted from
Unlocking the Torah Text
by **Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

A Sin for the Ages

Context: Rooted at the base of Sinai, the Israelites grow restive as they wait for Moshe to descend from the mountain's summit. Turning to Aharon, they demand, "Rise up, make for us gods who will go before us, for Moshe - this man who brought us out of the land of Egypt - we do not know what has become of him!"

Aharon responds by instructing the people to contribute gold, which he fashions into a molten calf. He then proclaims, "A festival for the Lord tomorrow!"

Rising early the next morning, people bring offerings and celebrate with food, drink and revelry.

Even before Moshe descends from the

mountain, God informs him of the sin of the golden calf and threatens the nation with immediate extinction, only relenting after Moshe's impassioned pleas.

The perpetrators of the sin are punished and the rest of the nation earns forgiveness through repentance. The sin of the golden calf remains, however, according to rabbinic thought, a seminal transgression that continues to affect the Jewish people in countless ways across the centuries.

Questions: No event within Jewish history is more puzzling or more frightening than the chet ha'egel.

How could the people who experienced the Exodus from Egypt, the parting of the Reed Sea, the defeat of Amalek, the gift of the manna and the powerful Revelation at Mount Sinai fail so completely in the very shadow of that mountain?

Forty days earlier, against the dramatic backdrop of God's manifestation at Sinai, the Israelites heard the clear commandment against idol worship. How could they now, at the first sign of difficulty, create and deify a golden calf?

In a different vein, the rabbis maintain that the sin of the golden calf reverberates across the ages, affecting each era of Jewish history. And yet, the chet ha'egel seems irrelevant to our lives - an ancient event rooted in idolatrous practices distant from our experience. What possible eternal message might be contained in what the rabbis clearly perceive to be a formative, instructive tragedy?

Approaches:

A. In spite of the apparent disconnect between the chet ha'egel and the

backdrop against which it occurs, initial sources do view and identify this sin as an outright case of idol worship.

"By worshiping the calf, the Israelites clearly indicated their acceptance of idolatry", the Talmud proclaims, mirroring a position which finds even earlier voice in a passage of Tehillim: "They exchanged their glory for the image of a bull that feeds on grass." Similar opinions are found in the Midrash, as well.

A powerfully insightful approach to the behavior of the Israelites at the foot of Sinai can be gleaned from the writings of the Rambam. In his Guide to the Perplexed, this great scholar develops the principle that human behavior does not change abruptly and that a people cannot journey immediately from one extreme to the other: "It is not in man's nature to be reared in slavery... and then 'wash his hands' and suddenly be able to fight the descendants of giants [the inhabitants of the land of Canaan]."

The Rambam goes on to explain that the full transformation of the Israelites eventually requires a forty-year period of wandering and "schooling" in the wilderness - a period during which they acquire the traits necessary for successful nationhood.

Abrupt events, no matter how miraculous and awe-inspiring, do not carry the power to make fundamental changes to human nature. True behavioral change is gradual. In spite of all they had seen and experienced, the Israelites standing at the foot of Sinai were unable to make the leap beyond their idolatrous origins. Battered by the fearful forces surrounding them, bewildered by Moshe's apparent disappearance, they return to the comfort of the familiar -

and create an idol of gold.

B. In stark contrast to those who view the actions of the Israelites at Sinai as classically idolatrous, numerous scholars offer radically different approaches to the chet ha'egel.

Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, for example, maintains that the Israelites are actually motivated by a desire to worship God effectively. Reared among religions that make extensive use of physical images, the Israelites feel unable to approach their God in the absence of a tangible symbol towards which to focus their devotion. The people fully expect that Moshe, with his descent from Mount Sinai, will bring such a symbol: the Tablets of Testimony (inscribed with the Ten Declarations). When they conclude that Moshe has failed to return with the tablets, the Israelites turn to Aharon and demand a substitute.

Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi goes on to explain that the nation's transgression lies not in their fundamental intent or assumptions, but in their methods. Symbols are certainly critical to Judaism, as can be seen from the extensive use of symbolic ritual in the building and operation of the Mishkan. Only symbols that flow from God's law, however, are acceptable. The Israelites have no right to devise and create their own mechanism through which to approach God. Their sin can be compared, says Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, to an individual who enters a doctor's dispensary and prescribes drugs - thereby killing the patients who would have been saved had they been given the proper dosage by the doctor himself.

Numerous later authorities follow in the footsteps of Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi's interpretation, some with attribution and some without.

In his work the Beis HaLevi, Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik offers a slightly variant approach. The Israelites know that the ritual service will be performed by a specific individual, Aharon, and will be conducted in a specific location, the Mishkan. They therefore believe that they have the right to create their own "Tabernacle" as they see fit. They fail to realize, however, that each detail of the Sanctuary is purposeful, filled with divinely ordained mystery and meaning.

Other commentaries, including the Ramban, Ibn Ezra and Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, focus on the wording of the Israelites' demand of Aharon: "Rise up, make for us gods who will go before us, for Moshe - this man who brought us out of the land of Egypt - we do not know what has become of him!"

The Israelites, they say, are not attempting to replace God. They are, instead, attempting to replace Moshe. Deeply frightened by Moshe's apparent disappearance (their fear exaggerated, the rabbis say, by an error they make in computing the days of Moshe's absence), the people feel unable to approach God without the benefit of the only leader they have known. They therefore demand of Aharon that he create a new "leader".

The sin of the Israelites, says Hirsch, lies in the "erroneous idea that man can make, may make, must make a 'Moses' for himself..." The grave error in their thinking is their belief that in order to bridge the unimaginable chasm between man and the Divine, an intermediary is required. This suggestion is diametrically opposed to the fundamental Jewish belief in man's ability to forge his own direct and personal relationship with God. ❧

Parsha Points to Ponder

Suggested answers

1) The Ohr HaChayim answers that G-D used this phrase twice to counter anyone who may have thought that these rules associated with the proper way to count people only applied to the generation in the desert who were deserving of punishment because of the sin of the golden calf. The repeated words emphasize that this applies to all situations when people are counted.

2) The Kli Yakar teaches that, through these words, G-D was telling Moshe why He chose Betzalel for the role of building the Mishkan. His name indicates that he was IN THE SHADOW OF G-D (BITZEL KEIL), a level of spiritual connection which was required to be the architect of the Mishkan which would serve as conduit for G-D's presence to be felt by the Jewish people.

3) Daat Zekainim MiBaalei HaTosfot explain that when G-D seemingly granted Moshe's request in verse 14, He was saying that Moshe will be able to feel His presence but not the rest of the people. Moshe did not accept this and requested that G-D enable the entire nation to feel His presence, a plea which G-D accepts in verse 17.

OWLS

Birds of prey... There are approx. 200 extant species. Most are solitary and nocturnal with some exceptions... hunt mostly small mammals, insects, and other birds... a few species specialize in hunting

fish... found in all regions of Earth except Antarctica, most of Greenland and some remote islands... 2 families: typical owls, and the barn-owls...

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Wisdom for the Wise

Adapted from Orot HaKodesh vol. 1, pp. 66-67

When appointing Betzalel and other craftsmen to construct the Mishkan, God declared, "In the heart of all wise-hearted, I have placed wisdom" (Sh'mot 31:6). Why should God give wisdom to the wise - it is the fools who need it!

A person who wishes to increase his physical strength will not achieve his goal by developing his intellectual powers. He needs to concentrate on building up his body, with physical exercise, healthy food, and proper sleep.

But the opposite can also be true. When we strengthen the body, we enable the mind to reach its full potential. This is nature's rule of "A healthy mind in a healthy body."

Beyond the objective of strengthening the intellect and broadening one's knowledge lies an even higher goal: the pursuit of divine inspiration (ru'ach hakodesh) and prophecy. The relationship between the body and the mind

parallels the relationship between "natural wisdom" (the arts and sciences) and "divinely-emanated wisdom." We may aspire to prophetic enlightenment, but we must first gain proficiency in the natural sciences.

Ramban mentions this requisite intellectual preparation for prophecy in the Mishneh Torah, Yesodei HaTorah 7:1...

Prophecy is only bestowed to a sage who is great in wisdom, of strong character... and he must possess an extremely expansive and accurate worldview.

We need to expand all of the mind's intellectual capabilities in order to fulfill the rule of "a healthy mind in a healthy body" on a spiritual level. Then an enriched prophetic inspiration will emerge within the broadened framework of a penetrating, enlightened mind.