

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Parshas Vayelech

COSMIC HIDE AND SEEK

"I will surely hide My face." (31:18)

Once, there was a great rabbi who came upon a young child crying his heart out.

"What's the matter, yingele?" asked the Rabbi, his eyes shining with sympathy and concern.

"We were playing..." The child struggled to speak between sobs. "We were playing hide and seek...and I was the one who was supposed to go hide..." The boy looked up into the Rabbi's face. "Yes, I'm listening," said the Rabbi. "So I went and hid but...but..." The child broke down again in gales of sobs. "Tell me what happened," said the Rabbi softly. Finally, the boy managed to finish the sentence "...but nobody came to look for me!"

After a few moments, the Rabbi smiled his warm smile and said, "You know, you shouldn't feel so bad. You're in very good company." The child heaved a little, his tears abating. The Rabbi looked into the child's eyes and continued: "You're in very good company indeed. G-d feels a lot like you — not many people are coming to look for Him."

This world is a cosmic game of hide-and-seek. We are given an invitation to this world; the invitation is called life. This invitation itself is a challenge: Who brought us here? Who sustains us here? What are we doing here?

To make the game more challenging, and our success more meaningful and rewarding, there are various distractions and "false leads" which can take us away from the game. But our "Host" has not left us without a "crib

sheet" to help us navigate this ultimate virtual adventure. He has provided a clear manual which is guaranteed to allow us to unmask Him and the purpose of our existence. This manual is called the Torah.

When we keep the Torah, we see our "Host" more and more clearly. But if we don't keep the Torah, He will hide himself more and more deeply, and finding Him will be very difficult indeed.

"I will surely hide My face."

In the Hebrew language, the emphatic "to surely do" something is expressed by the repetition of the verb. In other words, the literal translation of the phrase "I will surely hide My face" is "Hide, I will hide My face."

The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this "hiding." There are two kinds of concealment. One is a concealment where you know someone is there but you just can't see them. The other is a concealment where you don't even know if they are there at all. In this second type, the very fact of their being hidden is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding — where the very hiding is hidden.

When we are aware that G-d has hidden from us, He is not really concealed, because we realize that our hiding from Him has been reciprocated by His hiding from us. And so, we humble ourselves and return to Him, imploring his forgiveness. However, when the *hiding* is itself hidden, and we think that this is the way the world is supposed to be, then we are in big trouble, because nothing awakens us to return to Hashem. We think to ourselves: "This is the way things are supposed to be — isn't it?"

Ignorance, they say, is bliss. But only

while we're ignorant of our ignorance. One day, we will all wake up in the real "Supreme" court, and we will then have to pay the price for our years of "bliss."

On Yom Kippur, we have a chance to shake ourselves out of our self-inflicted ignorance. A once-a-year opportunity to throw ourselves on the mercy of the King. If we search with all our hearts, we will find Him.

DON'T WORRY
BE HAPPY*"And he will find many evils and worries and say on that day 'Behold, because G-d is not in our midst these evils have befallen me.'" (31:17)*

How would you define happiness? Having lots of money? Status? Security? Youth and beauty?

Someone once said "Happiness is knowing things are important, and knowing that you have a connection to them."

A person who believes in G-d, believes things to be important: The world has a purpose and everything happens for a reason. I may not understand the reason but that doesn't mean that events are random. The person of faith sees everything in life as important. The Divine scriptwriter leaves no plot-twist unresolved. No-one's life is insignificant. No event is without importance. If G-d created me, I must be important; I must have significance. This is the essential source of happiness: "If G-d created me, my life must be significant." This attitude is a tremendous weapon against feelings of depression and loneliness.

If happiness is the knowledge that

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshas Vayelech

On the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent bidding farewell to his people, encouraging them to “keep the faith.” Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, Hashem is with them. He summons Yehoshua, and in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as leader of the Jewish People. Thus, he strengthens Yehoshua’s status. Moshe teaches the *mitzvah* of *hakhel*: Every seven years on the first of the intermediate days of Succos, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather at the Temple to hear the King read from the Book of *Devarim*. The sections that he reads deal with faithfulness to Hashem, the covenant, and reward and punishment. Hashem tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the *Mishkan*, where Hashem will teach Yehoshua. Hashem tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land, the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods. Hashem will then completely “hide His face,” so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, hunted by all. Hashem instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song — *Ha’azinu* — which will serve as “witness” against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to *Bnei Yisrael*. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah and instructs the *levi'im* to place it to the side of the Holy Ark, so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll different from the original, for there will always be a reference copy.

Parshas Ha’azinu

Most of Parshas Ha’azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons heaven and earth to stand as eternal witness to what will happen if the Jewish People sin. He reminds the people to examine world history and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that Hashem “pulls the strings” of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as Hashem’s messengers. Hashem’s kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become self-satisfied and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt their morals. They worship empty idols and indulge in depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, the purpose of these nations is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is to make mankind aware of the Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

לזכות רפואה שלמה מן השמים
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לחולה

אביבה חנה בת פעריל תאשא

בתוך שאר חולי ישראל

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LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

ZECHER LEMIKDASH — SEEKING ZION

Zecher Lemikdash — this term, literally translated as a “remembrance of the Sanctuary,” expresses the effort of Jews not privileged with actually experiencing the *Beis Hamikdash* to at least connect with it in some way.

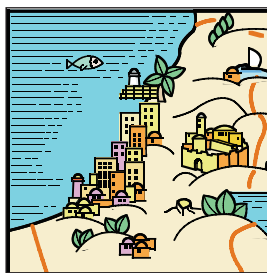
The *gemara* mentions two examples of *zecher lemikdash* which take place on Succos. One is in regard to the *mitzvah* of taking the four species. In the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, this *mitzvah* was fulfilled all seven days of Succos only in the *Beis Hamikdash* itself, while everywhere else it was limited to the first day only. After the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* a decree was instituted by the Sanhedrin under the leadership of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai to take the four species all seven days everywhere, in order to remember what was done in the *Beis Hamikdash* — *zecher lemikdash*.

The other example relates to the *mitzvah* of taking the *aravah* which was done every day of Succos by the *kohanim* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. We do our *mitzvah* of taking the *aravah* on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the seventh day of Succos, once again as a *zecher lemikdash*.

In addition to these two Talmudic examples, we have the custom of circling the *bimah* in the synagogue each day of Succos (except Shabbos) with our four species as a remembrance of the circling done in the *Beis Hamikdash* each day around the altar. We also recall the singing and dancing which accompanied the drawing of the water for the water libation offered on the altar by conducting our own “*simchas beis hashoeva*” on Succos evenings as *zecher lemikdash*.

What is the source for doing anything as *zecher lemikdash*? Rabbi Yochanan (*Succos 41a*) cites a passage (*Yirmiyahu 30:17*): “For I shall restore your health and heal your wounds, says Hashem; for they have called you an outcast, saying: This is Zion whom no one seeks.” The implication of the Prophet’s words, concludes Rabbi Yochanan, is that there is a need to “seek Zion” by doing things which were done in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

It may be suggested that all of our *zecher lemikdash* actions are not only designated for the purpose of remembering but also for traversing time and space to somehow connect with the sanctity we seek in our love of Zion.



things are important and I am connected to them, then unhappiness is the reverse. Feeling that nothing is important. The antithesis of happiness is apathy. Apathy is the voice that says “I am worthless; my life is worthless; things are worthless... Why get out of bed?”

“And he will find many evils and worries and say on that day ‘Behold, because G-d is not in our midst these evils have befallen me.’”

The structure of this verse is asymmetrical. It starts off talking about “evils and worries” and ends by mentioning only “evils.” What lesson is the Torah hinting to here?

“Evils” refers to the event itself. In this world, tragedy is no stranger. Many are the lives which must bear “evil” of some kind. In our world, we divide events into good or evil. Our vision is limited. We cannot see the ultimate good of everything that happens. “Worries” refers to the mental anxiety, to depression; when all the world looks bleak. This comes in addition to the “evil” itself which has been visited upon a person. When we have no faith in G-d, not only are we afflicted by the pain of events, but worse, we have no means of putting these events into perspective. We see things as the spiteful indifference of a random universe.

However, when we put our trust in G-d, we walk through the valley of the shadow of death without fear, because we know that G-d is always with us.

Parshas Ha'azinu

A COPPER PENNY

“For Hashem’s portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His heritage.” (32:9)

Once there was a young boy standing in the courtyard of the *shul* in Vilna. He was bent over, his eyes scouring the pavement, searching intently for something. He looked here and there. Occasionally he would stoop lower and examine the ground to see if he had found what he was searching for. In frustration, tears began to well in his eyes.

The time came for *mincha*, the afternoon prayer, and the courtyard began to fill with people. They all noticed the little boy crying and searching. “What are you looking for?” They asked him. “My mother gave me a copper penny and I lost it on my way to *cheder* (school),” came the tearful reply.

Everyone started to help him look for the copper penny. They scoured the courtyard. Not a single square inch was left unexamined.

It was not to be found.

Someone said to the little boy, “Show me exactly where you were when you lost it.” In all innocence, the little boy replied: “Actually I didn’t lose it here. I lost it in the street.” “So why are you looking for it here in the courtyard of the *shul*?” came the startled reply. “Because the street is all muddy and dirty and I didn’t want to soil my shoes.”

The mystical sources teach us that there are many worlds above this one. Compared to those worlds, the world in which we live is a very dark dank place. A place of messy physicality. A place of concealment. If “Hashem’s portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His heritage,” then why did G-d put us in this lowly world? Why didn’t He put us in a higher, more spiritual world?

The Torah is the essence of the whole creation. If it were not for the Torah, the physical world and all its myriad laws would never have come into being. The Torah does not exist for the benefit of the incorporeal spiritual beings who inhabit the upper worlds. G-d wanted the Torah to be in this lowest of the worlds. Therefore, G-d also put us into this world so that we should involve ourselves with His Torah, day and night.

When a jewel is buried in the mud, there’s no alternative but to roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty. If we search for riches where there are none, even if we conduct the search in climate-controlled, air-conditioned luxury, we won’t even end up with a copper penny.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

“Hearken Heavens and I will speak. Listen Earth to the words of my mouth.” (32:1)

Greatness carries a tremendous responsibility. A great person’s actions are analyzed in fine detail, and people of lesser stature imitate them. “The Heavens” symbolize the great people of the generation. The “Earth” symbolizes the ordinary person. Thus, if the “Heavens,” those on the lofty levels, hearken, then the “Earth,” the lower echelons, will also hear.

THE WORLD IS A SONG

“Ha’azinu” (32:1)

Almost the whole of *Parshas Ha’azinu* is written as a song. One of the qualities of a song is that it always returns to the same place. It’s a circle. A circle has no beginning and no end; where you start is where you finish. Its beginning is its end and its end, its beginning.

Song always accompanies completion: When the creation was completed, Adam sang *Mizmor Shir L’yom HaShabbos* — A Song for the Day of Shabbos. When the Exodus was completed at the Red Sea, the Jewish People sang the *Shirat HaYam* — The Song of the Sea. And when King Solomon finished the *Beis Hamikdash*, he sang *Shir HaShirim* — the Song of Songs.

Shir, song, represents the finishing of something in its complete form.

Song is a paradigm of creation itself. When something reaches its completion in creation, it arrives back at the point of its departure. In other words, when we create something, the point of departure for our creation is the wish, the will that a certain thing should exist. When something reaches the point where it fulfills the wish of its creator, it is completed. When something emerges from the world of wanting, the world of potential, to the world of actuality, then it has returned to the point of its departure. We look at it and we say “That’s what I wanted!”

In this week’s Parsha, the penultimate Parsha of the Torah, there is a song, *Ha’azinu*, which marks the completion of the Torah. On a deeper level, the whole Torah is called a Song: “Write this song and teach it to the Children of Israel.” The world only reaches its completion with the Torah. It’s as if G-d says, “That’s it! This is the way the world is supposed to be. It’s finished.”

Sources:

Don’t Worry - Be Happy -

Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach in *Lekach Tov*;
Rabbi Noach Orlowek

Cosmic Hide-and-Seek - The Sfas Emes in the name of the Chidushei HaRim in *Mayana shel Torah*;

a story heard from Rabbi Zev Leff

A Copper Penny - Chafetz Chaim
Heaven And Earth - Toras Moshe in *Mayana shel Torah*

WEEKLY DAF

PESACHIM 37 - 57

A QUESTION OF TASTE

Five species of bitter herbs and vegetables are listed in the *mishna* as qualifying for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of eating *maror* on the night of Pesach.

Five species of grain are listed in an earlier *mishna* (35a) as qualifying for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of eating *matza* on that night. There is one interesting difference between the two *mishnayos*. In the case of *maror* we are informed that one may combine parts of the different species in order to make up the minimal amount (*k'zayis*) necessary for fulfilling the mitzvah. While it is certainly true that one can also combine *matza* baked from wheat with that of barley or oat to make up the required *k'zayis* of *matza*, no mention is made of this in the *mishna* about *matza*.

Rabbeinu Nissim offers an explanation based on a ruling of Rava in the latter part of our *mesechta* (115b): If one swallows *matza* without chewing and tasting it, he has fulfilled the mitzvah of eating *matza* on Pesach night; but if one thus swallows *maror* he has not fulfilled the mitzvah. Rashbam explains that the Torah insists on our tasting the bitterness of the *maror* in order to recall the bitterness of the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt. The technical act of eating which suffices for *matza* (although one should preferably chew *matza* as well) is not adequate for the mitzvah of eating *maror*, which must be tasted.

Since *matza* need not be tasted, explains Rabbeinu Nissim, there is no reason to assume that we should *not* be able to combine the different species of grain. And therefore, the *mishna* need not mention this latitude. In regard to *maror*, however, we might have assumed that since tasting the bitterness is a prerequisite, combining different species would be ruled out because the taste of one species interferes with the taste of the other. The *mishna*, therefore, needs to inform us that combining them is permissible, and that the common sensation engendered by all of them is a bitterness which achieves the desired goal — recalling the bitterness of our ancestral experience.

• Pesachim 39a

WHEN WINE TURNS TO VINEGAR

When there was a *Beis Hamikdash* and wine was brought from Judea to be poured as libations on the altar, the wine in *Eretz Yisrael* never turned sour unless barley was intentionally added in order to create vinegar. Vinegar was then referred to only as vinegar with no surname.

After the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, it is the wine of the Edomites (Romans) which does not spoil until barley is added, and vinegar now is referred to as “Edomite vinegar.”

This observation of Rabbi Nachman is cited as a vindication of the historical conflict between the Jewish nation of Yaakov and the Edomite nation of his brother Esav. When their mother sensed their prenatal struggle within her womb she was prophetically informed that “one nation would achieve power at the expense of the other.” (*Bereishis* 25:23) This seesaw struggle was characterized by the Prophet

Yechezkel (26:2) as the boast of Edomite Tyre that “I shall fill up on the destruction” of Jerusalem.

Maharsha explains the relationship between the libations in the *Beis Hamikdash* and the quality of Jewish wine on the basis of the blessings which Yitzchak gave to his sons. Yaakov’s descendants would enjoy the blessings of power and prosperity as long as they properly served Hashem. If they sinned, their power and prosperity would pass over to their adversaries, the descendants of Esav.

So long as Jews brought wine on the altar of the *Beis Hamikdash*, their wine was blessed from the Source of blessing, just as the rains of the year were blessed through the pouring of water on the altar during the Succos festival. Once our sins brought about destruction and exile, this blessing passed over to the Edomites and their wine.

• Pesachim 42b

PREPARING IN TIME

Although cooking and baking are forbidden on Shabbos, they are permitted on Yom Tov holidays for the purpose of preparing meals for the day itself. It is not permitted, however, to cook and bake for the next day. (This is true even outside *Eretz Yisrael* where the second day is also a holiday by rabbinic law.)

What happens when Yom Tov is the day before Shabbos and you want to cook and bake for Shabbos? You may do so only if you have made an *eruv tavshilin* before Yom Tov. This is done by setting aside two food items, one which has been baked before Yom Yov and one which has been cooked before Yom Tov, and designating them as the start of your Shabbos preparations which will be completed on Yom Tov itself. (*Eruv tavshilin* literally translates as the “blend of cooking” achieved by beginning the process on one day and completing it on the other.)

Eruv tavshilin is a rabbinic creation to ensure that one who cooks on Yom Tov for Shabbos will not mistakenly extend this right to cooking on Yom Tov for a weekday. But what about the Torah ban on preparing on Yom Tov for another day? The Sages certainly did not sanction the violation of a Torah law through the medium of *eruv tavshilin*.

Two approaches are found in our *gemara* as to why the Torah ban is not applicable. Rabbi Chisda’s position is that if one cooks on Yom Tov, even though he has no intention of eating from that food, he has not violated Torah law because there exists the possibility that unexpected guests may arrive who will enjoy this food on Yom Tov itself. There is a rabbinic ban on cooking in such a case because it may lead people to cook for tomorrow even where no such possibility exists, but this ban is lifted when an *eruv tavshilin* is made as a distinction between the permitted and the forbidden.

The Sage Rabba disagrees with Rabbi Chisda. Rabba contends that one who cooks on Yom Tov for a weekday has violated Torah law. But when that next day is Shabbos, he adds, the Torah does permit preparing from Yom Tov for Shabbos because both days are viewed as one long Shabbos. He too agrees that there is a rabbinical ban on doing so for fear that this right will be improperly extended, and an *eruv tavshilin* is

necessary to create the distinction.

The crucial difference between these two approaches is hinted at by Tosefos and expanded on by the *Shulchan Aruch* commentaries: According to Rabba's approach, we satisfy the Torah law even if we do our cooking for Shabbos at the very end of the Yom Tov day preceding it. But according to Rabbi Chisda's approach, the food must be prepared in time for those unexpected guests to enjoy it on Yom Tov itself.

Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 627:1) urges an early preparation of the food in such a situation in order to satisfy the requirements of Rabbi Chisda's approach. *Mishna Berura*, however, rules that in a situation where one forgot or was unable to do so, he may rely upon Rabba's approach and do his cooking at the very end of Yom Tov.

• *Pesachim 46b*

WITH TALMUD IN HAND

When Rabbi Yosef miraculously recovered from a deathly coma, his father, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, asked him to describe the glimpse he caught of the World of Souls where he had briefly sojourned.

"I saw an upside down world," he replied, "in which those so honored here because of their wealth were placed very low, while those so low here because of their poverty were there so highly placed."

"You saw a clean world," his father assured him. "But tell me, what was the status of Torah scholars like ourselves?"

"The same honor we enjoy in this world," replied the son, "is accorded to us there."

"I also heard an announcement made up there," added the son, "which declared: *Fortunate is he who arrives here with his Talmud in his hand.*"

There is a popular tradition, based on this *gemara*, that a person specialize in one *mesechta* of the entire Talmud, in addition to his general study of the rest, so that when the time comes he will arrive in the World to Come with "his Talmud in his hand." This is the concept of an "*Olam Haba's Mesechta*"— a tractate for the World to Come — which is touted by this tradition as a ticket to a place of honor in the hereafter.

Maharsha makes an interesting observation: We generally think of the Talmudic learning we have achieved in our lifetime as something stored in our heads and our hearts. What is the significance, then, of arriving in Heaven with the Talmud in our hand?

The most lasting impression which Torah study can make on a person, he explains, is when it is accompanied by writing what he learns. For this reason, he concludes, Talmudic Sages are referred to as Scribes.

• *Pesachim 50a*

WHAT'S FOR PESACH?

It is forbidden, declares Rabbi Yehuda in the name of the Sage Rav, to say "this meat is for Pesach." The reason he gives is that such a statement creates the impression that one has consecrated the animal as a sacrifice — the *korban Pesach* which was offered and eaten in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* — and when he subsequently eats from it, it

appears as if he is illegally eating from a sacrifice offered outside of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

But if one says "this wheat is for Pesach," adds Rabbi Papa, there is no problem, since it is clear that he means that he is merely putting this grain aside as food for consumption on Pesach.

How far does the ban on saying "this meat is for Pesach" extend?

One approach is that it applies only to the meat of a lamb or kid, animals which qualified for use as a Pesach sacrifice. Even if he makes such a statement after the animal has been slaughtered, people may think that this is an indication that he had made the consecration while it was alive and had offered it as sacrifice, something which is forbidden to do when we have no *Beis Hamikdash*.

Rashi, however, extends the ban to all animals, because the misleading statement can be interpreted as consecration of the *monetary value* of that animal for the purpose of buying a lamb or kid for the Pesach sacrifice, a suspicion strengthened when he is subsequently seen eating that meat on Pesach night.

The *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 469:1)* rules in accordance with Rashi, that the ban extends to every sort of animal, domesticated or wild. The implication is that this applies only to animals because of their similarity to the species offered as the Pesach sacrifice. Other authorities extend the ban even to fowl and even to fish.

If even a statement about fish, which is something never offered as a sacrifice, can be misinterpreted as consecrating the monetary value of the fish to purchase an animal for the Pesach sacrifice, why, then, is wheat not a problem?

The answer is that since wheat has to be guarded from becoming *chametz*, the meaning of "this wheat is for Pesach" is clearly that it is being watched to assure that it will be kosher for Pesach use.

[This explanation given by the *Mishna Berura (469:1 in Sha'ar Hatziyun 6)* implies that anything which cannot become *chametz* would come under the ban, according to the opinion that fish is included. But perhaps the rabbinical decree was limited to things of the animal kingdom while all other foods were placed in the category of wheat.]

• *Pesachim 43a*

SILENT PRAISE

After we loudly proclaim our classical "pledge of allegiance" to our Divine King with the passage "*Shema Yisrael*," we silently add the words "*Baruch shem kevod malchuso le'olam va'ed.*"

The *gemara* explains that "*Shema Yisrael*" was first said by the sons of Yaakov when they reassured him ("Hear, our father Yisrael...") that they were as loyal as he in their monotheistic belief. The response of Yaakov-Yisrael was the praise of "*Baruch shem kevod...*"

What should we do? asked the Sages. Shall we say "*Baruch shem*" as Yaakov did? But Moshe did not record that praise in the Torah! Shall we then omit it? But Yaakov did say it! The solution they arrived at was to say it, but silently.

Rabbi Avahu notes, however, that in places where

PARSHA Q&A ?

PARSHAS VAYELECH

1. How old was Moshe when he died?
2. Why was Moshe unable “to go out and come in” (31:2)?
3. What happened to Moshe’s Torah knowledge on the day of his death?
4. How did Moshe foresee the relationship between Yehoshua and the Elders?
5. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua concerning his relationship with the Elders?
6. How often does the *Hakhel* (assembly of the Jewish People) take place?
7. Why does the Torah call the year of the *hakhel* the “*shemita* year”?
8. What sections of the Torah does the King read at the *hakhel*?
9. In what physical location does the King read at the *hakhel*?
10. Why were the men commanded to come to the gathering?
11. Why were women commanded to come to the gathering?
12. Why were the parents commanded to bring their infant children to the gathering?
13. What does it mean when Hashem hides his face from the Jewish People?
14. What function does the song *Ha’azinu* serve?
15. Where was the Torah that was written by Moshe placed?
16. What was the normal manner of assembling the congregation? Why was it not done that way for the teaching of *Ha’azinu*?
17. In 30:19, Moshe called upon the heavens and the earth as witnesses, and in 31:28, he does so again. What is the difference between the two times?
18. What did Moshe claim the Jewish People would do immediately after his death?
19. How long after Moshe’s death were the Jewish People careful in their service of Hashem?
20. How did Moshe perceive the period in which Yehoshua led the Jewish People?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT

“*And Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Israel (31:1).*” Where did Moshe go? Into the heart of every Jew.

• *Mayana shel Torah*

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 31:2 - Exactly 120.
2. 31:2 - Hashem did not let him, because the power of leadership was being transferred to Yehoshua.
3. 31:2 - The well-springs of knowledge were closed up for him.
4. 31:7 - He foresaw that they would work in partnership.
5. 31:7 - That he alone would be the leader – for there can only be one leader in each generation.
6. 31:10 - Once every seven years, in the first year of the new *shemita* period.
7. 31:10 - Because the laws of *shemita* still applied to the harvest.
8. 31:11 - From *Devarim*: 1:1-6:9; 11:13-21; and 14:22-28:69.
9. 31:11 - On a wooden platform erected in the *azara*.
10. 31:12 - In order to learn.
11. 31:12 - In order to hear words of Torah.
12. 31:12 - So that the parents could receive a special reward for bringing them, because they demonstrated how precious Torah learning is even for those who cannot yet understand it.
13. 31:17 - He ignores their distress.
14. 31:21 - It comes as a warning to the Jewish People of what will befall them if they abandon Torah.
15. 31:26 - It is uncertain. There are two opinions: It was placed beside the *Aron*; or it was placed inside the *Aron* itself.
16. 31:28 - The Jewish People were normally assembled by blowing the trumpets, however at this time the trumpets had already been hidden away.
17. 31:28 - In 30:19, he was informing the Jewish People of his intention to call upon them as witnesses. In 31:28, he was actually calling upon them.
18. 31:29 - Corrupt themselves.
19. 31:29 - Throughout the entire reign of Yehoshua.
20. 31:29 - As if he himself were still ruling.

PARSHA Q&A ?

PARSHAS HA'AZINU

1. What is so special about the heavens and the earth that Moshe chooses them as witnesses?
2. Why is the Torah compared to rain?
3. In what way is Hashem "faithful without injustice?" (32:4)
4. Why is Hashem called a "Tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did Hashem bring upon the world?
6. Which group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did Hashem separate the peoples of the world into exactly 70 nations?
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"?
9. How is Hashem's behavior toward the Jewish People similar to an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Hashem says regarding punishment of the Jewish People "I will spend my arrows on them" (32:23). What is the *positive* aspect of this punishment?
11. How does the idea of "chillul Hashem" not allow the nations to destroy the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When Hashem overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When Hashem punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will Hashem's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People?
16. On what day was *Ha'azinu* taught to the Jewish People?
17. In verse 32:44 Yehoshua is called *Hoshea*. Why?
18. In verse 32:47 what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
19. Why did Hashem tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of his brother Aaron?
20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT

The Torah is often compared to water. In 32:2, the Torah is likened to rain, dew, light rain, and showers, corresponding to the four types of students in the fifth chapter of *Pirkei Avos*. One who is quick to learn and quick to forget, one who is slow to learn and slow to forget, one who is slow to learn but quick to forget, and one who is quick to learn but slow to forget.

• *Ba'al HaTurim*

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - Just as rain gives life and promotes growth, so too does the Torah.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" and rewards the righteous, and He is "without injustice" and rewards even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - Everyone will agree that his judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. The first was in the generation of Enosh the grandson of Adam, and the second was in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets are called "fathers." When Eliyahu was leaving this world, his student Elisha called after him, "My father, my father" (*Melachim II* 2:12).
7. 32:8 - Corresponding to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avos*.
9. 32:12 - He is merciful by waking them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings."
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the supply of arrows will come to an end, but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their own might and to the might of their own gods. Hashem would not allow His name to be desecrated through the complete annihilation of His people.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their own sins, and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to Hashem.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbos on which Moshe died, and Yehoshua took over as leader.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the leader of the Jewish People, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah, and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - If the rock had produced water without being struck, then the Jewish People would have reasoned that if a rock, which receives no reward or punishment, obeys Hashem's commands, all the more so they should too.

WALLS ON WHEELS

Shira Schmidt from Kiryat Sanz, Netanya, Israel
<shiras@netvision.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I would like to know whether it is okay during Succot if one is traveling around long distances, to build a succah on an uncovered pick-up truck and move it around (of course, not on Yom Tov)? If it is parked, can you use it on Yom Tov? Thank you.

Dear Shira Schmidt,

Good idea! The *mishna* states: "One who makes a succah on a wagon, or on a ship, it is a valid succah and one may enter it on Yom Tov." Similarly, you are allowed to build a succah on your pick up truck, and you can even use it on Yom Tom (when the truck is parked).

Sources:

- Tractate Succah 22b
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 628:3

LITTLE KIPPUR

W. Mann from Australia
<billm@alphalink.com.au> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

As I am of the opinion that Hoshana Rabbah was known as Yom Kippur Katan in parts of pre-war Eastern Europe, could you please confirm this? Looking forward to a prompt reply.

Dear W. Mann,

Yom Kippur Katan ("Little Yom Kippur") commonly refers to the day before Rosh Chodesh, as many use the beginning of a new month for introspection and repentance.

I've never heard the phrase Yom Kippur Katan applied to Hoshana Rabbah; however, such usage is readily understood: Hoshana Rabbah, the seventh day of Succot, is in some ways a mini Yom Kippur. In the Midrash, G-d says to Abraham, "I will give your

descendants a special day for forgiveness: Hoshana Rabbah. If they are not forgiven on Rosh Hashana then let them try Yom Kippur; if not, then Hoshana Rabbah." Some of the Hoshana Rabbah prayers are similar to those of Yom Kippur in both text and melody.

On Hoshana Rabbah some people wish each other "pitka tava," which basically means "a good ticket." This refers to the idea that the final sealing of a person's yearly judgment occurs on Hoshana Rabbah. Rabbi Yeshaya Horowitz, author of *Shelah* (*Shnei Luchot Habrit*) compares the ten days between Yom Kippur and Hoshana Rabbah to the Ten Days of Repentance.

Sources:

- *Shnei Luchot Habrit, Succah 70*

USHPIZIN

Mrs. Alexis S. Berman wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I seem to be having a difficult time understanding the concept of inviting Abraham, Isaac, et al, to join as guests in the succah. This is my first time observing Succot. I would appreciate it if you could explain it to me as easily as possible.

Dear Mrs. Berman,

This concept that you mention is called the "ushpizin" — "guests." According to tradition, the ushpizin visit us in our succah every night of succot.

The source for the concept of the ushpizin is the Zohar:

"When a person sits in his succah, the Shechina (G-d's Divine Presence) spreads its wings (metaphor) over it from above; and then Avraham together with the other five tzad5 dikim (Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe and Aharon) and King David dwell together with him."

One of the important experiences of Succot is that of leaving the protection of our permanent dwellings and basking in the shade and protection of G-d's presence. Each of the seven ushpizin exemplified this idea during his lifetime. For instance, Avraham left the security of his home and the house of his father and went off on a journey protected by G-d's promise. Yitzchak had to leave his home and dwell amongst the Philistines because of famine. Yaakov had to leave his home and live with Lavan, etc.

The seven also correspond to attributes of G-d to which we aspire. For instance, Avraham represents *chessed* (loving kindness), Yitzchak *gevurah* (strength), etc. These seven attributes also refer to much deeper concepts — which are often discussed in Chassidic texts as well as the Kabbalah — called the *Sefirot*. These are aspects of the way in which G-d interacts with His Creation.

There is a custom attributed to the Arizal to invite seven poor people to eat in the succah corresponding to the seven ushpizin. You then have seven exalted guests from above, with seven earthly guests and G-d's Divine Presence hovering over it all.

Some Sephardic Jews have the custom of setting aside a chair in the succah for the guest of the day. The chair is decorated and an announcement is made each day that this is the chair of the ushpizin.

In my neighborhood here in Israel, the children have a beautiful custom of gathering together and then visiting every succah that has a child with the same name as that day's ushpizin. They dance and sing in the succah; and they get some treats for their effort. My children wait each year with such excitement for the night when the boys will come and dance in our succah. I suggest it for communities everywhere.

Sources:

- Zohar - Parshat Emor
- Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov - *The Book of our Heritage* (English edition), vol. 1, pp. 155-161
- Otzar Yisrael Encyclopedia - Ushpizin

MOM, DAD, ME, AND THE TREE

David Sher <106031.1643@compuserve.com>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I've spent a short time (around 11 days) in Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem and a few weeks in Ohr Somayach in Monsey and have enjoyed both. Alas, it is difficult for adults such as myself with professions to be able to take off much more than a week or two every few years for immersion in Torah study.

So anyway, I've just arranged to have my parents have a succah. Since I have an apartment, it was impossible for me to have one. However there are questions that came up, particularly about the schach (roofing). I'll try to ask my rabbi, but it is a very busy time and perhaps you can point me in the right direction in case he is not available. Here's my question: If a tree above a succah prevents one from seeing the sky because of its leaves, does that invalidate the succah? A tree is above the porch which would be the most convenient place for a succah. However, an alternate location with clear sky is available.

Dear David Sher,

A succah must be directly under the sky; if it's built

underneath anything else, it's invalid. Even if the foliage of the tree is very thin, it could still invalidate an otherwise valid succah according to some authorities. Therefore, extreme caution should be taken when building a succah in order to avoid placing it under a tree.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 626:1
- Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 626

HAVDALAH BREAK-FAST

Chava Miriam from Miami, FL
<amlsong@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I would like to know if after the Ne'ila (concluding) service of Yom Kippur, do we do a full Havdalah or just light a candle?

Dear Chava Miriam,

After Yom Kippur, we recite the Havdalah service over a cup of wine, and we say the blessing over a havdalah candle as well. Unlike Shabbat, this candle should be lit from a flame that was alight throughout Yom Kippur. We omit the spices, unless Yom Kippur occurs on Shabbat.

Source:

- Aruch Hashulchan 624:1,2

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Touching Lives

I just want to take this time to tell you how much I appreciate your commentary on the weekly Parsha. I look so forward to your comments. Several times, questions that I have had for many years are answered. I share these things with our family and friends. Sometimes a person has an

influence on others and they don't even know it. You have influenced my life for a deeper love for Torah. Blessings, Shalom.

- Roi and Family <RoiGar@aol.com>

Re: 3 Cheers for Ears (Ohrnet Shoftim)

Regarding your answer to the question "Why do we say a daily blessing for sight, but not for hearing": A friend of mine, Rabbi Zevi Trenk, once explained it a different way. He pointed out that when a person is asleep, all of his senses remain on alert. If you touch him or say his name, he'll wake up. If he smells fire, he'll wake up. But a person cannot see when he is asleep. Therefore we thank Hashem every morning for restoring our faculty of sight.

- Alter <alterbentzion@juno.com>

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Question: Did Esav get nachas from any of his children? (Note: "Nachas" generally refers to getting satisfaction or pleasure from someone or something). **Answer:** Yes. Nachas son of Reuel was the name of one of Esav's grandchildren (Bereshet 36:17). Hence, Esav got "Nachas" from his son Reuel. For this reason, some people bless each other with the phrase "You should have 'yiddishe' (Jewish) nachas, as opposed to 'Esav-type' nachas.

- Riddle submitted by Rabbi Dovid Alexander, Neve Yaakov Jerusalem

The **BOOK OF YONA** is read during the mincha service on Yom Kippur.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do we read the Book of Yona on Yom Kippur?
2. How long was Yona inside the fish?
3. What did the sailors do when they saw their ship floundering in the storm?
4. In which well-known sea was Yona when he was inside the fish?
5. What did Yona do inside the fish?
6. How big was the city of Ninveh?
7. What length of time were the people of Ninveh given in which to repent?
8. How did the people of Ninveh react when they heard Yona's

- prophecy?
9. Why did Yona originally try to escape from delivering G-d's prophecy to the people of Ninveh?
 10. Give another answer to question number nine.

ANSWERS:

1. The repentance of the people of Ninveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree. (*Shelah Hakadosh*) Also, it teaches that even Yona could not flee from G-d. (*Sefer Hatoda'ah*)
2. Three nights and three days. (2:1)
3. They prayed to their gods, cast their vessels into the sea, and then drew lots to find out on whose

account the storm came about. (1:5-7)

4. *Yam Suf* — The Sea of Reeds. (1:6)
5. He prayed. (2:2)
6. A three-day walk from end to end.
7. Forty days. (3:4)
8. They fasted, covered themselves in sackcloth, repented and returned all stolen property. (3:5-8)
9. He was afraid that if the non-Jews in Ninveh repented but the Jewish People did not repent it would look bad for the Jewish People. (1:3)
10. He was afraid that the people of Ninveh would think he was a false prophet, since he said that the city would be destroyed and it wasn't. (4:2)

The **SCROLL OF KOHELES** is read on Shabbos during Succos.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do we read Koheles during Succos?
2. Who wrote Koheles?
3. What is the meaning of the words in the verse "Don't be too righteous?"
4. In the Book of Koheles, King Solomon refers to himself as "Koheles." Why?
5. In verse 1:2, how many "vanities" are referred to? Why this number?
6. The verse states "And the wise man's eyes are in his head." What does this mean?
7. "A time to cry and a time to laugh?" Which specific times is the verse referring to?
8. What example does Rashi give for the verse "Cast your bread upon the

waters, for after many days you will find it?"

9. Why was Man created?
10. Why is "the end of the thing is better than the beginning?"

ANSWERS:

1. Koheles teaches that the physical world is empty and fleeting, and that the purpose of life is mitzvah observance and awe of G-d. The *succah* also teaches this: It is a flimsy temporary structure which we enter for the purpose of doing Hashem's Will.
2. Shlomo Hamelech. (1:1)
3. Don't transgress Hashem's command even if you think you're doing a good deed by doing so, as did Shaul Hamelech (when he spared Agag the Amalekite king). (7:16)
4. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gath-

ered the nation on Succos after the Sabbatical year. (1:1)

5. Seven, referring to the world which was created in seven days. (1:2)
6. At the the beginning of a matter, he foresees what will be at the end. (2:14)
7. A time to cry: Tisha B'Av. A time to laugh: The Future, about which David Hamelech wrote "then our mouths will be filled with laughter (*Tehillim 126*)." (3:4)
8. Yisro fed Moshe; later Moshe became his son-in-law and accepted him as a convert and Yisro's offspring sat on the *Sanhedrin*. (11:1)
9. In order to have awe of Hashem and to observe Hashem's commandments. (12:13)
10. Only at the end is it known that the thing is well-done: whereas in the beginning it is yet unknown how it will end. (7:8)

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Vayelech

- | | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| | RAMBAN |
| 31:1 | Bidding Farewell |
| 31:2 | Loss of Knowledge |
| 31:18 | Hiding Redemption |
| | SEFER HACHINUCH |
| 612 | The Gathering |
| 613 | Writing a <i>Sefer Torah</i> |
| | SFORNO |
| 31:18 | Hiding of Hashem |
| 31:21 | Attitude |

Ha'azinu

- | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|
| | RAMBAN |
| 32:1 | Biblical Witnesses |
| 32:16 | The Rebuke of <i>Ha'azinu</i> |
| 32:40 | The Testimony of <i>Ha'azinu</i> |
| | SFORNO |
| 32:2 | Waters of the Torah |
| 32:13 | Purpose of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> |
| 32:19 | Purpose of Galus |
| 32:27 | Salvation of Dispersion |



YOM KIPPUR

Q Passover commemorates the going out of Egypt. Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah. What historical event can Yom Kippur be said to commemorate?

A Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the tenth of Tishrei with the second set of Tablets, signifying forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. Yom Kippur can be said to commemorate this event, the first national day of forgiveness for the Jewish People.

Q For what kinds of sins does Yom Kippur not atone?

A Sins committed against other people, including hurting someone’s feelings. Yom Kippur does not atone for these sins until the perpetrator gains forgiveness from the victim himself.

• *Orach Chaim 606:1*

Q What should someone do if the person he wronged does not forgive him the first time?

A He should try at least two more times to gain forgiveness.

• *Orach Chaim 606:1*

Q Why is the *vidui* confession included during the mincha prayer the afternoon before Yom Kippur?

A Lest one choke while eating the pre-Yom Kippur meal and die without atonement, or lest one become intoxicated and unable to concentrate on the prayers at night.

• *Mishna Berura 607:1*

Q On Yom Kippur we refrain from: Working, eating, drinking, washing, anointing, family relations and wearing leather shoes. Which three of these prohibitions are more severe than the others?

A Eating, drinking, working.

• *Mishna Krisus 1:1*

Q In what two ways does the prohibition against eating food on Yom Kippur differ from the prohibition against eating pork the entire year?

A 1. Although any amount is forbidden, eating on Yom Kippur is not punishable by a Sanhedrin until one has eaten food equal in volume to the size of a date. Eating pork, on the other hand, is punishable for eating even an olive-sized piece, which is smaller than a date.

• *Mishna Berura 612:1*

2. Eating on Yom Kippur incurs the punishment of *kares* — spiritual excision, whereas eating pork does not.

Q Who wrote the prayer “Unesaneh Tokef” said during the *chazan’s* repetition of musaf?

A “Unesaneh Tokef” was written by Rabbi

Amnon of Mainz, Germany about 1000 years ago.

Q Why didn’t the *kohen gadol* wear gold garments when entering the Holy of Holies?

A Gold is reminiscent of the sin of the Golden Calf.

Q In what two ways does havdalah after Yom Kippur differ from havdalah after Shabbos?

A After Yom Kippur, the blessing over spices is omitted from havdalah. Also, the source of the flame used for havdalah after Yom Kippur must be a fire kindled before Yom Kippur.

• *Orach Chaim 624:3,4*

Q Ideally, what mitzvah should one begin immediately after Yom Kippur?

A Building the *succah*.

• *Rema, Orach Chaim 624:5*

I Didn’t Know That!

“Al Chet ...” The word ‘chet’— sin — has a silent “alef” at the end. This indicates that a person does not sin unless he first forgets about Hashem, who is called “*Alufo shel Olam*” — “Master of the World.”

• *Ta’amei Haminhagim in the name of the Degel Machaneh Efraim in the name of the Ba’al Shem Tov*

SUCCOS

Q According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a *succah* roof?

A It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to *tumah* (ritual defilement).

Q If the *succah* causes discomfort (e.g., it’s too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?

A Because the commandment of living in a *succah* is to dwell in the *succah* for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year.

• *Mishna Berura 640:13*

Q What two things are forbidden to do outside of the *succah* all seven days of the festival?

A Eat (an “established” meal) or sleep.

• *Orach Chaim 639:2*

Q What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the *succah* during the seven day holiday?

A One. Eating a meal in the *succah* the first night of Succos is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat ‘snacks’ which are not required to be eaten in a *succah*. (Outside Israel, one

must eat a meal the second night of Succos as well. However, there is no requirement to live outside Israel!)

• *Orach Chaim 639:3*

Q Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word *esrog* mean literally?

A Beauty.

• *Ramban Vayikra 23:40*

Q What is the minimum length of a *lulav*?

A Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic handbreadths).

Q What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his *esrog* in order to obtain an *esrog* of greater beauty?

A 33.3%

• *Orach Chaim 656:1*

Q Why does a right-handed person hold the *lulav* in the right hand and the *esrog* in the left, and not the other way around?

A Since the *lulav* is tied together with the *hadassim* (myrtles) and the *aravos* (willows), it contains the majority of the species is therefore taken in the dominant hand.

Q What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the *succah* on the eighth day of Succos?

A *Bal Tosif* — “Do not add to the *mitzvos*.” The commandment to live in the *succah* applies for only seven days. To sit in the *succah* on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses “*bal tosif*.”

• *Orach Chaim 666:1*

Q We hold a tallis over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

A It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to Hashem.

I Didn’t Know That!

Tishrei is called the seventh month, because it has seven *mitzvos* in it: *Shofar*, fasting on Yom Kippur, *succah*, *lulav*, *esrog*, *hadas* and *aravah*.

• *Avudraham*

One should dance and sing vigorously in honor of the Torah, just as King David danced ecstatically in front of the Holy Ark of the Torah. It was said about the Gaon of Vilna that he danced before the Torah scroll with all his might.

• *Mishna Berura 669:10*

Hoshana Rabba is identified with the *Ushpizin* guest King David. King David woke every midnight to study Torah. The moon, too, the symbol of David’s dynasty, “pays tribute” to King David on this night: The moon rises at midnight on *Hoshana Rabba*. Its light helps us study Torah till dawn!

heretics were prevalent, the rabbis decreed that this praise be said aloud so that they would not be able to claim that we were silently making some sort of disclaimer of our faith. In Nahardea, where there was no such danger, they continued to say it silently and this is the custom everywhere today.

An apparent contradiction to this conclusion is posed by the commentaries from a *gemara* (*Berachos 12a*) which tells us that the Sage Ameimar wanted to institute in Nahardea the daily recital of the

Ten Commandments along with the *shema*. He abandoned the plan for fear that heretics would claim that this was the only part of the Torah which is true because we heard it directly from Hashem.

If no exception was made for Nahardea in regard to the danger of heretics, despite the lack of heretics in that Torah-true community, why was an exception made in regard to the silent saying of “*Baruch shem...*”?

The difference, explains Rabbi Shmuel

Shtrassen of Vilna in his footnotes in the back of the Vilna Shas, lies in the degree of danger involved. The damage to the truth of Torah in its entirety which could arise from singling out the Ten Commandments was considered so grave that it was outlawed in every place. But the suspicion that the silent praise following the *shema* be construed as disclaimer was so remote that it was given consideration only where heresy was rampant, not in Nahardea then, or anywhere today.

• *Pesachim 46a*

HAFTORAH VAYELECH: HOSHEA 14

SHABBOS SHUVA - PARSHAS VAYELECH

Shabbos Shuva is the first Shabbos of the year. It is the prototype, the blueprint for the whole year. Because of this, we must be especially careful to guard its sanctity — as it is *the first*. The Talmud tells us that if the Jewish People had kept the first Shabbos properly, no nation nor tongue could have ruled over them.

On Rosh Hashana a new order is created for all the days of the year — thus if the first Shabbos of the year is correctly observed, then the whole year follows suit.

Man was created on *erev Shabbos*, on Friday afternoon, in order that he could immediately enter into Shabbos. But before Shabbos came, Man had already sinned.

Shabbos is an aid to *teshuvah*. As our Sages teach (*Berachos 37*), a person who never sinned cannot stand in the place of a *ba'al teshuva* — someone who returns to Judaism.

Tzaddikim uphold the world, as it says in Proverbs “A *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world;” however, “*teshuvah* preceded the world” (*Pesachim 54*). Therefore, the level of a *ba'al teshuva* is *before* the world, and thus above the world.

Just as the *ba'al teshuva* is before and above the world, so Shabbos too has a radiance which is higher than the six days of the week — a reflection of the world to come.

A BURNING SENSATION

An unbelievable sight. A young fellow with all the visible signs of an Orthodox Jew walks into MacTreife’s Burger Bar and orders a cheeseburger! He then proceeds to eat it in full view of everyone.

Later he suffers tremendous heartburn from the indigestible fast-food. Much later however, he suffers an even greater “burn” in the spiritual department.

The Shabbos between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is called *Shabbos Shuva* — *the Shabbos of Return*. The name is taken from the first verse of the Haftorah “*Return O Israel to Hashem, for you have stumbled in your iniquity...*”

The Meshech Chochma asks, “What does it mean to ‘stumble’ in ‘iniquity?’ If a person is already doing something wrong, how can he make it worse by stumbling in it?”

There are two aspects to wrongdoing. The offense in itself, and the desecration of Hashem’s name that may result from it.

It’s one thing for a Jew to slink into MacTreife’s with a baseball cap and blue jeans, in “plain-clothes.” It’s quite another to waltz in wearing full uniform. It’s one thing to commit *iniquity* — to give in to one’s desires — but it’s quite another to *stumble* and desecrate Hashem’s name in public.

• *Heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner*

HAFTORAH HA’AZINU: SHMUEL II 1-51

This Haftorah is known as “The Song of David,” which David wrote in his youth when he was beset by so many troubles. It is an all-inclusive psalm, relating to any possible evil which could occur during David’s lifetime. He kept this psalm with him throughout life, reciting it in praise every time David experienced Hashem’s salvation.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Judging favorably is a mitzvah. To do so, however, sometime it takes...

A BIT OF CORN

We live in Israel. This past week I sent our son to the corner store to buy canned corn. Before he left, I wrote a note for him to give to the store owner specifying how

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

many cans, and underlining three times “No sugar!” When he returned ten minutes later, he proudly pulled out the corn, and ran for the can opener in the kitchen. I, however, inwardly groaned. One glance at the label and I knew it was the wrong stuff. Yup. Right there on the list of ingredients: Corn, Water, Sugar! Yick. Why would he send the kind I specifically wrote not to? Well, think quick and judge favorably, I chastised myself. “Did you pick out these cans yourself?” I asked our son. “No.” “Hmmm. Did you give the

store man the note?” He nodded yes. Suddenly, I remembered! It wasn’t anyone’s fault but my own! On the note, I had by mistake written the Hebrew words “*bli melach!*” (no salt), underlined three times, instead of “*bli sukar!*” (no sugar). I pointed out to our kids what had happened, and how quickly I had judged unfavorably our innocent store owner!

• *Chava Dumas*

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Concept based on “The Other Side of the Story” by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series