

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE TEARS OF A CLOWN

“If you encounter an ox of your enemy or his donkey wandering, you shall return it to him repeatedly.” (23:4)

It was the thick of night. Reb Beryl, a chassidic Jew, knocked on the door of the inn. The bitter cold was gnawing at his knuckles. There was no reply. He knocked again. After what seemed like an eternity, he heard the sound of rusty bolts sliding back.

The bleary eyes of the innkeeper peered out into the darkness. He held his lantern out to discern who was awakening the dead at this unholy hour.

“Do you have a room?” said Reb Beryl.

“We’re full up,” came the testy reply.

“But you must have *somewhere* for me to sleep.”

“Look. All the rooms are full. The circus is in town. There isn’t a spare bed in the inn. The only thing is ... You could share a bed with the clown. It’s up to you. Take it or leave it.”

“I’ll take it,” said Reb Beryl. “And please, could you wake me up before dawn. Tomorrow I have a long way to travel.”

“Maybe you’d like breakfast in bed as well?”

Reb Beryl was silent.

“Very well,” the innkeeper said begrudgingly.

Reb Beryl made his way to his room and undressed, carefully hanging his clothes on a peg next to the clown’s outfit.

At four-thirty, the innkeeper knocked on his door. Reb Beryl roused himself from his reverie. With half-closed eyes, he dragged himself from the bed, dressed and made his way into the pre-dawn light.

About an hour later, when the day had fully dawned, Reb Beryl was walking through the main street of the village. Suddenly, a villager pointed at him and burst into gales of laughter. “What’s so funny?” he thought to himself. When he came

“We must reach out to those who have little idea what it means to be Jewish, to show them the beauty and depth of the Torah.”

across the next person and a third and a fourth, and they all exploded in laughter in exactly the same way, he started to frown. “Am I in a town of lunatics?”

Just then, he walked past a shop with a large plate-glass window. He saw his reflection in the window. Frozen in disbelief, he stared at his

reflection.

Staring back at him was a Jew with long side-locks and beard, dressed in red satin pajamas with three enormous white pompoms down his front. A clown’s suit.

“That fool of an innkeeper!” said Reb Beryl. “He woke up the clown instead of me!”

Today, the Jewish people are beset with an identity crisis of staggering proportions.

Who are we?

Are we the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, the receivers of a Torah which binds us to an everlasting covenant? Or are we nothing more than a loose quasi-ethnic affiliation with *carte blanche* to redefine Judaism at will?

Our largest single concern is Jewish Continuity. The problem is: What are we continuing? We have lost the clarity of our grandparents and their forbears who knew what Judaism was. Even when they rejected Judaism, at least they had an idea what it was they were rejecting.

“If you encounter an ox of your enemy or his donkey wandering, you shall return it to him repeatedly.”

If the Torah shows such concern for the welfare of someone’s property, commanding us to go out of our way to return his animal even a hundred times over, all the more so must we be concerned **to return a person to himself**. We must do whatever we can to reach out to our brothers and sisters who have little or no idea what it means to be Jewish, to show them the beauty and depth of the Torah.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Jewish People receive a series of laws concerning social justice. Topics include: Proper treatment of Jewish servants; a husband's obligations to his wife; penalties for hitting people and cursing parents, judges, and leaders; financial responsibilities for damaging people or their property, either by oneself or by one's animate or inanimate property, or by pitfalls that one created; payments for theft; not returning an object that one accepted responsibility to guard; the right to self-defense for a person being robbed.

Other topics include: Prohibitions against seduction; practicing witchcraft, bestiality and sacrifices to idols. The Torah warns us to treat the convert, widow and orphan with dignity, and to avoid lying. Lending and usury is forbidden and the rights over collateral are limited. Payment of obligations to the Temple should not be delayed, and

the Jewish People must be Holy, even concerning food. The Torah teaches the proper conduct for judges in court proceedings. The commandments of Shabbos and the Sabbatical year are outlined. Three times a year — Pesach, Shavuos and Succos — we are told to come to the Temple. The Torah concludes this listing of laws with a law of kashrus — not to mix milk and meat.

Hashem promises that He will lead the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, helping them conquer the nations that live there, and tells them that by fulfilling His commandments they will bring blessings to their nation. The people promise to do and listen to everything that Hashem says. Moshe writes the Book of the Covenant, and reads it to the people. Moshe ascends the mountain for 40 days in order to receive the two Tablets of the Covenant.

HAFTORAH: MELACHIM II Ch. 11

Parshas Shekalim

In the months of Shevat, Adar and Nissan, we read four special passages of the Torah. Each is accompanied by its own special Haftorah. The Torah portions are to help us prepare for Purim and ultimately for Pesach. The four passages are: **Parshas Shekalim** which deals with the collection of the compulsory half-shekel for offerings in the *Beis*

Hamikdash; **Parshas Zachor** to remember the mitzvah of eradicating the memory of Amalek who attacked the Jewish People after the Exodus from Egypt; **Parshas Parah** which details the laws of how a person can purify himself from the spiritual impurity resulting from contact with the dead; **Parshas HaChodesh**, the mitzvah of the sanctification of the new moon.

plan, Hashem gave the Jewish People the merit of the mitzvah of the half-shekel donation to the *Beis Hamikdash* a thousand years before Haman's plot.

It was this half-shekel, given in the service of the Creator, which outweighed Haman's 10,000 *kikar* of silver, and led to the salvation of the Jewish People in the time of Purim.

WHEN 1/2 IS GREATER THAN 10,000

The Midrash (*Eliyahu Rabbah*) tells us that Hashem knew that in the month of Adar, Haman would offer Achashverosh, king of Persia, 10,000 *kikar* of silver if he would agree to the genocide of the Jewish People.

Thus, "in anticipation" of Haman's

WHEN 1/2 IS LESS THAN 100%

Why was it that specifically a half-shekel was given, and not a whole shekel?

A Jew must understand that alone, he is only half the picture. Without his attachment to the community, he can never reach a state of completeness. A Jew has to look at himself as a "half-shekel." He only becomes whole when he links himself to the body of the Jewish People.

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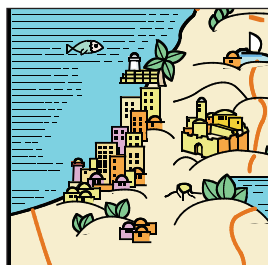
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LOVE OF THE LAND

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

A SHARE IN THE LAND

Why does the Torah (*Bereishis* 33:19) bother to inform us that Yaakov purchased the plot of land in Shechem where he pitched his tent, and how much he paid for it?



This is to reveal to us the importance of *Eretz Yisrael*. A share in *Eretz Yisrael* is considered as valuable as a share in the World to Come.

• *Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary on the Torah*

PARSHA INSIGHTS

The greatest distance is when there is no sense of the distance. You are farthest lost when you have no idea that you are even lost — with no desire to go back home, because you think *you are at home*.

For those of us who can be shepherds, it is a tremendous mitzvah to inspire the Jewish community with a genuine self-awareness and continuity.

For behind the greasepaint smile, lie the tears of a clown.

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

“And these are the statutes.” (23:9)

You can distinguish Judaism from other religions easily enough. Jews don’t eat pork. They wear prayer-shawls. But when it comes to social justice, you might think there’s not a large difference between Judaism and other religions or systems of morality.

However, you’d be wrong. Although the Torah’s code of social justice is superficially similar to other codes, there’s an enormous difference.

And that difference lies in one Hebrew letter: *Vav*. (The letter *vav* at the beginning of a word means “and.”)

Rashi explains that the reason our *Parsha* begins “*And these*” rather than just “*These*” is to connect this week’s *Parsha* to last week’s. Just as the laws of man’s relationship with Hashem come from Sinai, so too the laws of social justice come from Sinai.

In Judaism, even the laws of social justice are by Divine mandate from Sinai. In the rest of the world, they are based on civility and pragmatism. No society can exist without some code of acceptable behavior, but the difference between the Torah and every other system of laws is enormous and fundamental. No man-made law can withstand the onslaught of a person’s baser instincts. In times of trial and test, these laws go “out the window.”

Rivers of innocent blood have flowed in wars in every era, including our own, in spite of the fact that “*You shall not murder*” is a universally accepted tenet.

For a Jew, the essential imperative in social law is not moral, pragmatic or cultural. Rather it is the Will of Hashem, no less than not eating pork or wearing a prayer shawl.

This is what gives the Torah’s code of social justice power and durability thousands of years after its institution.

THE BIG STICK

“You shall not taunt or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (22:20)

All bullies are cowards. When someone feels there’s nobody to stop him doing what he wants, he can become a tyrant. If there’s someone waving a big stick, he’ll think twice.

That’s the connection between this command not to oppress a stranger and the Jewish People being strangers in the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh felt free to oppress the Jewish People because he thought there was no one to stand up for them. No Big Stick. He rejected Hashem and His protection of the Jewish People.

Similarly, when someone oppresses a stranger or a convert, he is tacitly implying that they are “fair game.” Nobody’s going to stand up for them. Thus he, in his own way, is denying the G-d who hears the cry of the convert, the widowed and the orphaned.

Sources:

The Tears Of A Clown - *The Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Mendel Weinbach*

The Letter Of The Law - *Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin*

The Big Stick - *The Ramban*

BONUS QUESTION?

Rashi never “just” comments; something in the text always impels him to do so. Rashi answers unspoken questions arising from a thoughtful reading of the Torah text. Anyone who wants a true understanding of Rashi’s classic Torah commentary must always ask: **“What’s Bothering Rashi?”**

“You shall not take a bribe, for the bribe will blind those who can see and will pervert the words of the righteous (*divrei tzadikim*).” (Exodus 23:8)

Rashi: “*Divrei tzadikim*: Words that are righteous; judgments of truth.”

Rashi translates the Hebrew in an unusual way. *Divrei tzadikim* would normally mean “words of the righteous people.” Why does Rashi reject this in favor of the translation “righteous words?”

What’s bothering Rashi?

BONUS ANSWER!

Rashi can’t reconcile calling judges who take bribes “righteous people.” It is a contradiction in terms! Therefore, the words — not the judges — are righteous, coming as they do from the Torah.

• Based on Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s new book “*What’s Bothering Rashi?*” Feldheim Publishers

WEEKLY DAF

SHABBOS 79 - 85

CREDIT RATING

Although it is forbidden on Shabbos to carry any item from the private to public domain, i.e., from the house to the street, one who does so does not become liable to the death penalty for willful violation — or a sin offering for an involuntary one — unless the item carried has some minimal value. Almost the entire eighth *perek* of *Mesechta Shabbos* is devoted to explaining what a minimal value is considered for everything from wine and oil to rope and paper.

It is in regard to paper that we find a most interesting dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and one of his colleagues. If the paper in question has a debt note written on it, then there is a consensus that it has sufficient value to be the instrument of serious Shabbos violation if carried. But what if the debt has already been paid and the note has been returned to the borrower, and the borrower carries the note out into the street?

In contrast to his colleague's opinion that there is no value in such a used document for the borrower, Rabbi Yehuda rules that he is guilty of violating the Shabbos and liable to the aforementioned penalties.

But what value can such a paper have for the borrower? Although we sometimes find that such papers could be utilized as bottle caps, it is hardly likely that a borrower would do so for fear that unless destroyed the debt document might fall into the hands of the lender who could then, out of avarice or forgetfulness, once again demand payment of the debt. What other use could there then be for the borrower to warrant holding on to it?

Rabbi Ashi comes to the rescue with a brilliant interpretation of Rabbi Yehuda's point. The paid up debt note is valuable to the borrower because he can show it to other potential lenders as evidence that he pays his debts and has a good credit rating.

• *Shabbos 79a*

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TORAH LITERATURE AND INFORMATION

KILLING YOURSELF TO LEARN

“Torah knowledge,” says Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, “is not truly acquired unless one kills himself in order to learn.”

A number of explanations of this statement have been offered by commentaries through the ages.

One approach is that one must invest tremendous effort in his search for an understanding of Torah. “Should a man tell you that he discovered the meaning of Torah without investing extreme effort,” say our Sages (*Megillah 6b*) “do not believe him.”

Another approach to “killing yourself” is to deny yourself the comforts of life which may serve as distractions or which tempt you to take away valuable time and energy from Torah study in order to acquire them. “Such is the way of Torah study,” say our Sages (*Avos 6:4*) “eat simple bread and salt and drink your water in measure.”

While these two approaches focus on the dimensions of exertion and self-denial required for someone to achieve maximal success in his study of Torah, there is yet another approach which is suitable even to the Jew who can afford only an hour or two a day to study Torah. Such a Jew often finds that he is interrupted during the time period he has set aside for Torah by visitors and telephone calls. One Jew solved this problem by instructing his wife to tell all callers that he was unavailable because he was “dead.” Only after she heard their astonished reaction was she to explain that during the time he finally found for Torah study he “killed himself” in order to avoid any distractions.

• *Shabbos 83b*

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. In what context is a *mezuzah* mentioned in this week's *Parsha*? (tricky question)
2. What special mitzvah does the Torah give to the master of a Hebrew maidservant?
3. What is the penalty for striking one's father or mother and causing a wound?
4. 'A' intentionally hits 'B'. As a result, B is dangerously close to death. Besides any possible monetary payments, what happens to A?
5. What is the penalty for someone who tries to murder a particular person, but accidentally kills another person instead? Give two opinions.
6. A slave goes free if his master knocks out one of the slave's teeth. What teeth do not qualify for this rule and why?
7. An ox gores another ox. What is the maximum the owner of the damaging ox must pay, provided his animal had gored no more than twice previously?
8. From where in this week's *Parsha* can the importance of *work* be demonstrated?
9. What is meant by the words "If the sun shone on him"?
10. A person is given an object for safe-keeping. Later, he swears it was stolen. Witnesses come and say that in fact *he* is the one who stole it. How much must he pay?
11. A person borrows his employee's car. The car is struck by lightning. How much must he pay his employee for the damage to the car?
12. Why is lending money at interest called "biting"?
13. Non-kosher meat — "*treifa*" — is preferentially fed to dogs. Why?
14. Which verse forbids listening to slander?
15. What constitutes a majority-ruling in a capital case?
16. How is the festival of *Shavuot* referred to in this week's *Parsha*?
17. How many prohibitions are transgressed when cooking meat and milk together?
18. What was written in the *Sefer HaBris* which Moshe wrote prior to the giving of the Torah?
19. What was the *livnas hasapir* a reminder of?
20. Who was Efras? Who was her husband? Who was her son?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Parshas Mishpatim, dealing largely with monetary laws, precedes *Parshas Terumah* which details the donations needed to build the Sanctuary. This teaches that even when donating to charity (*terumah*), a person must be sure that the money honestly belongs to him (*mishpatim*).

Beis Halevi

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 21:6 - If a Hebrew slave desires to remain enslaved, the Torah tells his owner to bring him "to the door or to the door post — *mezuzah* — and to pierce his ear.
2. 21:8,9 - To marry her.
3. 21:15 - Death by strangulation.
4. 21:19 - He is put in jail until 'B' recovers or dies.
5. 21:23 - One opinion: The murderer deserves the death penalty. Another opinion: The murderer is exempt from capital punishment, but must compensate the heirs of his victim.
6. 21:26 - Baby teeth, because they grow back.
7. 21:35 - The full value of his own animal.
8. 21:37 - From the "five-times" penalty for stealing an ox and then selling it or slaughtering it. This heavy fine can be seen as a punishment for preventing the owner from working with his ox to plow his field.
9. 22:2 - If it's as clear as the sun that the thief has no intent to kill.
10. 22:8 - Double value of the object denied.
11. 22:14 - Nothing.
12. 22:24 - Interest on a loan is like a poisonous snake bite. Just as the poison is not noticed at first but soon overwhelms the person, so too interest is barely noticeable until suddenly it accumulates to an overwhelming sum.
13. 22:30 - As "reward" for their silence during the plague of the first born (*Shmos* 11:7).
14. 23:1 - Targum Onkelos translates "Don't bear a false report" as "Don't receive a false report."
15. 23:2 - A simple majority is needed for an acquittal. A majority of two is needed for a ruling of guilty.
16. 23:16 - *Chag HaKatzir* — Festival of Reaping.
17. 23:19 - One. There are three prohibitions (cooking, eating and deriving benefit) involving milk and meat. Only one is violated by cooking them together.
18. 24:4,7 - The Torah, starting from *Bereshis* until the giving of the Torah, and the commandments given at *Mara*.
19. 24:10 - That the Jews in Egypt were forced to toil by making bricks.
20. 24:14 - Miriam, wife of Calev, mother of Chur.

ASK the RABBI

IS A MEDIUM RARE?

Robert Liberman from Atlanta, GA
<rhliberman@juno.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I recently saw a well-known medium, James Van Praag, on the Larry King TV show. He is supposedly able to communicate with the dead; he took several calls where he was able to relate very specific information about the deceased to the callers. As skeptical as I am about these sort of things, I was very impressed by his ability; he seemed very genuine. My question is this: The Torah specifically forbids communication with the dead. But, the mere fact that it is prohibited makes me wonder if it is, in fact, possible. Otherwise, why would Hashem mention it? Thanks!

Dear Robert Liberman,

Regarding your question, there's an apparent dispute between Maimonides [Rambam] and Nachmanides [Ramban].

Nachmanides indicates that certain occult practices can be effective, but that they are forbidden by the Torah. Hashem created a universe which follows an ordered structure called "nature." Nachmanides writes that sorcery and the occult "contradict" G-d's will because they act in opposition to the simple, plain structure and order of nature. The Torah forbids these things because G-d wants us to conduct ourselves in this world according to natural laws.

Maimonides indicates otherwise. Writing about occult practices such as communicating with the dead, Maimonides calls them "falsehood and deception" used by idolaters to deceive the masses and gain their loyalty. He writes that it's wrong for the Jews, who are extremely wise and rational, to think there's any benefit in these things.

This comment of Maimonides seems to contradict explicit passages in the Talmud and Midrash that refer to departed spirits communicating with the living and revealing things about the past and future. Some commentators explain that Maimonides is referring to an ideal person who lives totally according to the truths of the Torah. Such a person will rise above all these practices, and from that exalted vantage

point see that these practices have no reality. However, these forces of falsehood can indeed affect a person who has not yet reached this level.

Sources:

- Ramban, Deuteronomy 18:9-15
- Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Idolatry 11:16
- Tractate Berachot 18b

PYREX-MANIA

Benny Danon from Istanbul, Turkey
<ertantekstil@superonline.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I will ask something about Pyrex kitchen instruments. Is Pyrex considered glass or pottery? If it's non-kosher, can we make it kosher? (Note: I need a Sephardic answer.) Thanks for now. Shabbat Shalom.

Dear Benny Danon,

Sephardic Jews follow the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch which states that glass is non-absorbent. According to this, a glass utensil can never become non-kosher. Similarly, it can never be considered "dairy" or "meat," meaning that you can use it alternately for both milk and meat, cleaning it out well between use.

Pyrex is glass that is reinforced with other materials. This raises the question: Does Pyrex have the same halachic status as glass or not? While there is a dispute about this matter, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, *shlita*, rules that Pyrex has the same status as glass. Most Sephardic Jews follow this custom.

(Ashkenazic Jews follow the ruling of the Rema that glass can become non-kosher and cannot be made kosher again.)

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 451:26
- Yechave Da'at 1:6

FROG FEARS OR CROCODILE TEARS?

Yisrael <Lcjds@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I would like to thank Ohr Somayach

for the excellent and hard work done for the "Ask the Rabbi" column. I have learned much from your mailings. Speaking of which, I have a question. I understand that some commentaries interpret the word "tzfardeah" as "crocodile," and not like Rashi's interpretation of "frog." Who believes this way and why? Why has tzfardeah taken on the meaning of the word "frog" and not "crocodile?" Are there other places in the Tanach where the word tzfardeah appears? In what context? If applicable, does that word take on the meaning of "frog" or the meaning of "crocodile?"

Dear Yisrael,

The Abarbanel writes that *tzfardeah* means crocodile. There are two logical reasons to support this:

- The Egyptians worshipped a crocodile god. Therefore, in keeping with the purpose of the plagues — which was not only to punish but also to educate — the Egyptians were attacked by their very own god. This demonstrated Hashem's mastery over the Egyptian god.

- The verse in *Tehillim* says that Hashem sent "wild animals which consumed them, and *tzfardeah* which destroyed them." Frogs are not generally instruments of destruction, whereas crocodiles are.

Most commentaries disagree with this interpretation for several reasons:

- In describing the *tzfardeah*, the Torah writes that "they will come into your houses, your bedrooms and your beds...." The verse implies that the mere presence of the *tzfardeah* was the only source of the suffering. If it was a crocodile plague, the suffering would consist of much more than the fact they filled the houses.

- The *tzfardeah* are described as "swarming." This word usually implies small creatures.

- Our Sages say that one aspect of the plague of *tzfardeah* was the incessant, maddening croaking noise. Frogs croak, whereas crocodiles smile.

Sources:

- Abarbanel Commentary to the Torah
- Shmot 7:28, Tehillim 105:30.
- Tehillim 78:45
- Rashi Shmot 8:17 citing Midrash Tanchuma

ASK the RABBI

RACE TRACE

Tyrone <tknibbs@swri.ja.dswa.mil> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I have read somewhere that all the different races of the world are all descendants from The Twelve Tribes of Israel. Is there any truth to this and if yes, can you please explain?

Dear Tyrone,

This is certainly not true. The Twelve Tribes of Israel are ancestors of the Jewish people. In fact at the time that they were born different races

already existed (early Bronze Age), so they could not have been descended from them.

HASHEM'S ATTRIBUTES

Asher Kassel from Rehovot, Israel <asher@mami.co.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
How do we know that the directive to emulate Hashem's attributes is limited only to the so-called "good" attributes of Hashem (the 13 midot)? What about attributes such as anger, vengeance, etc.?

Dear Asher Kassel,

Actually, we are supposed to emulate *all* of Hashem's attributes. There is a time and place for anger, such as Pinchas's attack on Zimri and Cozbi. There is even a place for revenge, such as Jacob's sons' revenge against Shechem, and the Jewish People's revenge against Midian.

However, these attributes must only be used according to the dictates of halacha. We're not omniscient, so we don't always know all the relevant factors and consequences. Therefore, we need extreme caution and Torah guidance in these matters.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving people the benefit of the doubt

New Feature !

Judging favorably means finding excuses for questionable behavior, excuses which make sense to us and leave us with a positive feeling towards the person in question. When we find ourselves suspecting others, we must ask ourselves: Are there any redeeming factors? Did I miss something? Did I jump to the wrong conclusion? For instance, take the case of...

"THE FAUXTOGRAPHER"

It was late Tuesday night when the phone rang. It was my good friend J.P. "I'm making a wedding. Do you know a good photographer?" J.P. asked me. I gave him the name of an excellent photographer who is very reasonably priced.

"I've heard of him," said my friend, "but I also heard he's unreliable."

"What makes you say so?" I asked.

"Well, I'm told that he was recently hired for a bar mitzvah and he arrived after it was half over. He

missed half the affair. There's no way I'd hire a person who is so irresponsible."

"Are you sure it's true?" I asked him.

"I'm positive," he said. "Yisrael was the head of the band that night, and he told it to me himself. I met someone else who attended that same affair and he verified the facts. It's 100% true."

"Maybe due to unforeseen circumstances he was delayed" I said, trying my best to judge favorably. "What makes you so sure it was a case of negligence or pure laziness?"

"Perhaps you're right," replied J.P. "But I just can't risk it. Besides, there is no reason in the world for coming late. He should have started out early enough so that even if his car broke down he could have taken a car service and made it on time. There is absolutely no good excuse for a photographer to walk in after half the affair is over!"

He had a strong point. When I hung up the phone I found myself in a real quandary. Could I really recommend someone who is unreliable? Was it truly negligence on his part? I decided to check out the

story on my own. I called the musician and he verified the whole story.

The very next day, I bumped into my good friend, the photographer. I brought up the subject of the bar mitzvah.

"Is it true that you arrived halfway through the bar mitzvah?" I asked.

"Yes, it certainly is," he said. "But why are you asking?"

"I just recommended you for a job, and the people refused to take you. They claimed you were unreliable because you didn't come on time."

He looked at me in disbelief, and then began telling me his story.

"The job was not mine at all," he began. "The photographer who had been hired for the job failed to show up. I received an emergency call in the middle of the affair to come down immediately. Despite being very busy at that moment, I dropped everything I was doing and raced down to the hall as quickly as possible."

With a hurt look on his face he added, "I only did it as a personal favor to them."

• Based on "The Other Side of the Story" by Mrs. Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ask-the-Rabbi" features

Re: "Kabbalah-Wannabee" (Ohrnet Parshat Vayigash):

I greatly appreciated your recent response regarding the book *Raziel Hamalach*. I was always fascinated by it, and I did graduate work on it a couple of years ago. Rav Eliezer Rokeach MiGermiza, one of the Hasidei Ashkenaz, wrote a book called *Sodei Razaya*, and about half of it is quoted in the book *Raziel Hamalach*. The rest of *Raziel Hamalach* contains various other sources written in different times and places, and at least one of them is of an extremely questionable nature. No less a source than Rav Nachman of Breslov stated that the book *Raziel Hamalach* today has nothing to do with the one mentioned in the Zohar, and that it does not protect against fire. ("Tzaddik" paragraph 478, Breslov Research Institute)

• Scott K <scottk@mail.netvision.net.il>

Re: Bunny Bugs (Ohrnet Parshat Vayigash):

Concerning the verse in the Torah stating that the "arneves" chews the cud. I have researched the identification

of the *shafan* (translated as hyrax) and *arneves* (sometimes translated as rabbit) for the purposes of a book I am soon publishing on nature and the Torah. The book will be published by Targum Press, with whom I've already published two books — *Lying For Truth* (Yaakov's deception of Yitzchak) and *Focus* (essays on the Parsha.)

• Nossan Slifkin <nslifkin@netvision.net.il>

Re: Why we still say "I'shana haba'ah b'Yerushalayim — Next year in Jerusalem" (Ohrnet Parshat Vayechi):

It is worth it to mention that many add the word "*habenuyah*" — "the rebuilt" at the end. This addition clearly answers the question by implying that we wish to be in a *rebuilt* Jerusalem, namely the city the way it will be in the time of the Mashiach.

• Daniel I Mark <treas@juno.com>

Re: Yiddle Riddle "Who was the first person to die after the Great Flood (mabul)?" (Ohrnet Parshat Shmos):

Canaan, son of Cham. He was cursed to be a slave, and since the property of a slave belongs to his master, a slave should be considered property-less, that is, poor. Chazal say that a poor person is "like" he is dead. Therefore Canaan was the first person to "die" after the mabul.

• Rabbi Yehuda Albin, Chicago Illinois <OrSomayach@aol.com>

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

A neighbor asked me the following riddle: *Shemoneh Esrei* consists of 19 blessings. Who, when, where and in what situation does a person say 21 blessings during the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*?

• Avraham Rosenthal <rosentha@netmedia.net.il>

Answer:

A *kohen* in Jerusalem leading the service on a fast day. On a fast day, the one leading the service adds the "*aneinu*" blessing during the repetition of the morning and afternoon *Shemoneh Esrei*. If he is a *kohen*, he will also say a blessing before *bircat kohanim* — the priestly blessings. (In Jerusalem, and many other places in Israel, *bircat kohanim* is said every day).

Sources:

• Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 566:1

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN	22:20-22	Prosecutor of the Helpless	52	Despising Destruction	
21:1-2	Parallel with Ten Commandments	22:30	Holiness of <i>Kashrus</i>	62	The Danger of Sorcery
21:6	(first part) Divine Role in Human Justice	23:25	Blessings and Destruction	66	Why Hashem Creates the Poor
21:15	The Severity of Cursing One's Parents	24:1	<i>Matan Torah</i> Chronology	70	Blasphemy
21:29-30	Death Penalty and Ransom		SEFER HACHINUCH	71	Respect for Authority
22:6	(first part) Two kinds of <i>Shomrim</i>	42	Human Kindness	73	<i>Kashrus</i>
		43	Divine Kindness	78	Antidote to Anarchy
		47	Capital Punishment	84	<i>Shemita</i>
		50	Penalty for Anger	93	Relations with Heathens