

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### BODY & SOUL

*“And it was that when G-d destroyed the cities of the plain that G-d remembered Avraham; so He sent Lot from amidst the upheaval when He overturned the cities...” (19:29)*

**P**redictions of Jewish continuity are dire. We face a situation where intermarriage in the United States has topped 50%. Simply put, this means that most Jews marry non-Jews. To combat this situation, dedicated people are making tremendous efforts to dissuade such relationships by teaching what Torah is, and why a Jew should live by its precepts.

When a Jew begins observing Torah, major changes may result in his lifestyle. This is rarely easy. Spiritual awakening is often accompanied by difficult adjustments: Tensions may arise between a person who becomes religious and other family members; or the person may want to change a present job for one which makes it easier to observe the Torah fully.

To what extent is someone involved in “saving souls” also obliged to become involved in these physical problems?

In the above verse, it’s apparent that G-d saved Lot because He remembered Avraham. Isn’t this a non-sequitur? Shouldn’t G-d have rescued Lot because He remembered Lot?

If not for Avraham, Lot would probably still have been living comfortably, minding his own business in his hometown of Charan together with the rest of his family. He may never have had the spiritual advan-

tages of being close to a tzaddik, a righteous person, like Avraham, but he would also not have had any of the problems that this led to. For it was Lot’s kindness in agreeing to accompany Avraham which eventually led to Lot’s living in Sodom. Thus Lot was saved in the merit of Avraham, for had it not been for Avraham, Lot would never have been in the mortal danger of Sodom in the first place.

If, in bringing people close to Judaism, we uproot them from their birthplaces and their lifestyles, it is not

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“At our deepest center we want to do Hashem’s will. Our transgressions are external to our essence.”

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enough for us to attend to their spiritual needs, we must also involve ourselves in their physical requirements; for had it not been for our intervention, they would probably be living in a world which, for all its spiritual dangers, was a lot more familiar than the one they subsequently find themselves in.

### PERMANENT INK

*“Fear not for G-d has heard the cry of the youth in his present state.” (lit. as he was there) (21:20)*

**T**he Torah plumbs the psychological depths of Man. In this week’s Parsha, Avraham banishes Hagar and her son Yishmael. Avraham supplies them adequately, but they lose their way, Yishmael falls ill, and they run out of water. They find themselves on the brink of dying from thirst in the desert and Yishmael prays to G-d to save them.

The Torah says that despite the fact that Yishmael’s descendants would in the future murder Jews, nevertheless, G-d judged him “as he was there.” At that point in time Yishmael was worthy of being saved, and he was judged only according to his present merit.

A fascinating contradiction arises between this idea and another Torah concept: In Parshas Ki Seitze, the Torah instructs us regarding a “wayward and rebellious son.” This is a boy who shows specific signs of incipient moral degeneracy. He is put to death, not because of his current behavior, but rather because he will inevitably rob and kill to satisfy his appetites. The Torah instructs that he be executed before reaching this future depravity.

The question thus arises, why wasn’t Yishmael judged in the same way as the wayward and rebellious son? Why wasn’t he judged according to his evil progeny, and condemned immediately? Why was he judged “as he was there?”

Let’s try and answer this conun-

*continued on page three*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Three days after performing *bris mila* on himself, Avraham is visited by Hashem. When three angels appear in human form, Avraham rushes to show them hospitality by bringing them into his tent, despite this being the most painful time after the operation. Sarah laughs when she hears from them that she will bear a son next year. Hashem reveals to Avraham that He will destroy Sodom, and Avraham pleads for Sodom to be spared. Hashem agrees that if there are fifty righteous people in Sodom, He will not destroy it. Avraham “bargains” Hashem down to ten righteous people. However, not even ten can be found. Lot, his wife and two daughters are rescued just before sulfur and fire rain down on Sodom and her sister cities. Lot’s wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lot’s daughters fear that, as a result of the destruction, there will be no husbands for them. They decide to get their father drunk and through him to perpetuate the human race. From the elder daughter, Moav is born, and from the younger, Ammon. Avraham moves to Gerar, where Avimelech abducts Sarah. After Hashem appears to Avimelech in a dream, he releases Sarah and appeases Avraham. As

promised, a son, Yitzchak, is born to Sarah and Avraham. On the eighth day after the birth, Avraham circumcises him as Hashem commanded. Avraham makes a feast the day Yitzchak is weaned. Sarah tells Avraham to banish Hagar and Hagar’s son Yishmael because she sees in him signs of degeneracy. Avraham is distressed at the prospect of banishing his son, but Hashem tells him to listen to whatever Sarah tells him to do. After nearly dying of thirst in the desert, Yishmael is rescued by an angel and Hashem promises that he will be the progenitor of a mighty nation. Avimelech enters into an alliance with Avraham when he sees that Hashem is with him. In a tenth and final test, Hashem instructs Avraham to take Yitzchak, who is now 37, and to offer him as a sacrifice. Avraham does this, in spite of ostensibly aborting Jewish nationhood and contradicting his life-long preaching against human sacrifice. At the last moment, Hashem sends an angel to stop Avraham. Because of Avraham’s unquestioning obedience, Hashem promises him that even if the Jewish People sin, they will never be completely dominated by their foes. The Parsha ends with the genealogy and birth of Rivka.

## HAFTORAH: MELACHIM II 3:1-37

### A POUND OF FLESH

It’s ironic that the world’s view of the Jewish creditor is personified by Shakespeare’s Shylock in the Merchant of Venice. When the world thinks of a Jewish creditor, it conjures

up someone who will squeeze the law to its utmost in order to exact his “pound of flesh.”

Ironically, it was not so long ago that the Torah was the *only* system in which a creditor has absolutely no rights over the physical person of a debtor. The spirit of the Torah insures a poor debtor against the unfeeling or inconsiderate use of a lien on the debtor’s chattels. And even where the protection of the debtor stops, the obligation on the creditor to love his fellow man, the debtor, begins. For we are all the children of Avraham and Sarah. Such is the righteous charity of Avraham in contrast to the Sodomite insistence on the very last penny which can be wrung out through litigation — or the last ounce of flesh.

his own soul into the boy.

This is a lesson for all teachers: One has to in-spire — to breathe one’s own life into one’s pupils — to give over of one’s own soul. Nothing less than this will do.

### WOMEN OF KINDNESS

Just as Avraham and Sarah were both old and yet Hashem gave them a child, similarly in this week’s Haftorah, Hashem grants the Shunamite woman and her husband a child.

Why then does the Haftorah begin with an entirely different incident, the miracle of the oil filling pitcher after pitcher, until the penniless widow of the prophet Ovadia became rich? What is the connection between these three women?

The answer is that they all excelled in *chesed*, in kindness to others. To this day, Sarah is a role-model of the Jewish woman. Her life was an unceasing labor of welcoming guests and teaching them about Hashem. Ovadia’s widow was also a heroine of such kindness, as depicted in the Haftorah, and the same was true of the Shunamite woman. All three cast the mold, the archetype of the Jewish woman for all generations.

• Adapted from Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch; The Midrash Says

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### INSPIRATION — THE BREATH OF LIFE

Just as in the Parsha the angel promises Sarah that she will conceive and give birth to a child, similarly in the Haftorah, the Prophet Elisha promises a barren Shunamite woman that she will give birth.

The child dies, and is resurrected by Elisha, who revives him by placing himself on the lifeless child, implanting

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

drum with another Torah concept. A Torah scroll must be written with black ink on parchment. If the ink is another color, the Torah scroll is invalid.

What if the ink is a type which starts off black but later turns red? Is it permitted to publicly read the Torah while the writing is still black? After all, at that point the ink looks identical to permanent black ink.

The answer is that a Torah scroll written with ink that eventually changes color is invalid *even when the ink is still as black as night*.

With this concept we can offer an answer to our perplexing contradiction:

The wayward and rebellious son is like the black ink which is going to turn red. We look at him as though he were really red ink masquerading as black. His true nature has yet to become visible, but that's who he is

now. It's not that he will change into a highway robber. He is a highway robber now. We just can't see it yet. So the Torah judges him according to his future behavior.

However, the descendants of Yishmael did not represent Yishmael's essence at the time he prayed to G-d when he was dying of thirst. At that point, Yishmael was still righteous, and thus he was saved.

Maybe this is one of the reasons that on Rosh Hashana we read in synagogue this section from this week's Parsha about Yishmael.

On Rosh Hashana, the Jewish People stand in the dock of cosmic justice. For our past flawed actions, hopefully we have repented. As far as the future is concerned, we have taken upon ourselves an earnest undertaking not to repeat our past mistakes. However, in spite of our

most sincere intentions, it is known before Hashem that we will stumble again.

How can we hope for forgiveness?

At our core, the Jewish People are "kosher." At our deepest center we want to do Hashem's will. Our transgressions are external to our essence. They are like caked mud that sticks to us from the outside. If we do fall again in the future, it is not because we are like the rebellious son with our true nature surfacing. Rather, we are saying to Hashem: "We are in a sense like Yishmael. Now our hearts are perfect in repentance. What may happen in the future is not of our essence. Our essence is as we are, here and now."

Sources:

**Body and Soul** - Ramban,  
**Permanent Ink** - Rabbi S.Y. Zevin

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### JERUSALEM - YERUSHALAYIM

“Malki-Tzedek, King of *Shalem*, brought out bread and wine.” (Bereishis 14:18)

“Avraham called that place Hashem *Yireh*.” (Bereishis 22:14)

Both of these saintly men — Malki-Tzedek, who was Shem, son of Noach, and his descendant Avraham — were referring to the site upon which stands Jerusalem (whose Biblical name is *Yirehshalem*).

When Hashem wished to name His holy



city, He faced, as it were, a Divine dilemma.

“If I call it *Yireh* like Avraham did, the righteous Shem will feel slighted, and if I call it *Shalem* like Shem did, the righteous Avraham will feel slighted. I will therefore call it *Yireh-Shalem* like both of them called it.”

*Shalem* means both peace and perfection, while *Yireh*, as Targum Onkelos translates, means human service of Hashem. Only when man serves Hashem can he hope to achieve the peace and perfection symbolized by *Yirehshalem*.

• Bereishis Rabbah 56:10

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Because Avraham invited the angels to “sit under the tree” (Bereishis 18:4) his offspring were rewarded with the mitzvah of *succah*.

• Midrash Tanchuma

## WEEKLY DAF

PESACHIM 79 - 85

### KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

“In one house shall it (the Pesach sacrifice) be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh out of the house.” (*Shemos 12:46*)

The Torah prohibits carrying meat of the Pesach sacrifice outside of the company to which one has subscribed for partnership in the offering and eating of this sacrifice. One who premeditatedly does so is punished by flogging.

The term “carrying out” used by the Torah in regard to this prohibition endows us with two interesting dimensions seemingly unrelated to the Pesach laws.

One is the rule stated by Rabbi Ami about the manner in which this carrying out is considered a violation punishable by flogging. Since the term “carrying” is used, we equate this prohibition to the Shabbos prohibition of carrying from a private to public domain or vice versa. Just as on Shabbos it is not considered a violation unless one uproots an object from its static position in one domain and restores it to a static position in the other, so is one who carries the Pesach sacrifice meat out of his company considered guilty only if he actually puts the meat down in the other company.

The second dimension is the result of the term “out” which conjures up the association with other sacrifices which have been removed, intentionally or unintentionally, from the precincts assigned them by the Torah. Such sacrificial flesh, such as the more sacred categories which must not leave the precincts of the *Beis Hamikdash*, or the less sacred ones which must remain within the walls of Jerusalem, are called “*yotzei*” (went out) and are forbidden to eat. In the case of the Pesach sacrifice, the precinct dictated by the Torah is the company which has formed for the offering and eating of the sacrifice. Once meat of this sacrifice has been removed from the company, it is considered “*yotzei*” and if one eats it he has violated the prohibition against eating any “*yotzei*” and is punished by flogging.

• *Pesachim 85a*

### TO AVOID EMBARRASSMENT

If any of the meat of the Pesach sacrifice was not consumed on Pesach eve it had to be burned on the first of the intermediate days of *Chol Hamoed* (unless that day was Shabbos, in which case it would be burned the next day). This burning may be done either in the *Beis Hamikdash* area or in the privacy of one’s yard.

The type of wood used as fuel for such burning depends on where it is done. If one burns it in his own yard, he must use his own wood, while if he burns it in the *Beis Hamikdash* area he must use the wood which has been consecrated for use in maintaining the fire on the sacrificial altar.

There is a fairly obvious reason why *Beis Hamikdash* wood is not allotted for home burnings. There is always the danger that some of this wood will be left over and used for private purposes, in violation of the law banning such use of sacred property. But why should one not be permitted to supply his own wood for the burning in the *Beis Hamikdash* area?

The Sage Rava states the reason: We are concerned that if someone brings his own wood to the *Beis Hamikdash* and subsequently takes home any leftover wood, he may be falsely suspected of absconding with *Beis Hamikdash* wood. According to this approach, one may bring those types of wood which are never used on the altar (because of their inability to sustain a fire for very long) since no one will suspect that he is using *Beis Hamikdash* wood.

Rabbi Yosef, however, contends that the ban on private wood extends to any sort of wood, because the reason for this ban is to avoid embarrassing the impoverished Jew who cannot afford his own wood, but must rely on wood from the altar supply. A similar concept is found in regard to the celebration of the Jewish maidens on the Fifteenth of Av described in *Mesechta Taanis (31b)*. Every girl, rich or poor, borrowed a dress from others before going out, in order to avoid embarrassing those who did not have impressive dresses of their own.

• *Pesachim 82a*

Weekly Parsha newsletter, Monthly Seasons of the Moon, Weekly Daf, Ask the Rabbi, Holiday specials, Ohrnet magazine, Yossi & Co., Poetry, Essays on Jewish thought and contemporary issues, Excerpts of books by Ohr Somayach faculty, Audio catalog on-line, Jewish Educational Extensions - University on-line, Explore Jerusalem, Mark Twain’s Concerning the Jews, JLE summer & winter programs in Israel, ChoppedLiver cartoons, Meet the children of Odessa, The Center for Torah Studies, A road map to Jewish learning, Top Ten lists, and much, much more...two billion bytes of Torah literature and information. Join tens of thousands of people from around the world and...get connected to Ohr Somayach on the Web at...

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why did Hashem appear to Avraham after the *bris mila*?
2. Why was Avraham sitting at the entrance to his tent?
3. What were the missions of the three angels?
4. Why did Avraham enjoin the guests to wash the dust off their feet?
5. Why did Avraham ask Yishmael to prepare the food for the guests?
6. The angels asked Avraham where Sarah was. Why?
7. When Hashem related Sarah's thoughts to Avraham, He did not relate them precisely. Why?
8. What "cry" from Sodom came before Hashem?
9. How many angels went to Sodom?
10. Why was Lot sitting at the gate of Sodom?
11. Lot served the angels *matzos*. Why?
12. Why did Lot delay when he left Sodom?
13. Why were Lot and his family not permitted to look back at Sodom?
14. Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Why was she punished in this particular way?
15. In what merit did Hashem save Lot?
16. Why did Avraham relocate after the destruction of Sodom?
17. Why did Avimelech give gifts to Avraham?
18. Why was Avraham told to listen to Sarah?
19. Why did Hashem listen to the prayer of Yishmael and not to that of Hagar?
20. Who accompanied Avraham and Yitzchak to the *akeidah* (binding)?

## SHERLOX

### THE WEANING-PARTY MYSTERY

“Dr. Watstein,” said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, “sometimes you need to know the entire *Tanach* in order to understand a single word of it. That’s why I’m especially delighted to invite you to the big feast I’m making tomorrow in honor of my recent completion of the study of the entire *Tanach*.”

“Congratulations, Mr. Holmes!” said Watstein. “Speaking of big feasts, perhaps you could help me understand this difficult text: *And Avraham made a great feast (mishteh gadol) on the day that Yitzchak was weaned.*” (*Bereishis 21:6*)

“It makes sense to me,” said Sherlock.

“It’s Rashi’s comment that’s stumped me. Rashi says that it was called a *great* feast because the generation’s *great people* were there — Shem, Ever and Avimelech.”

“Would Avraham, known throughout the land as ‘Prince of G-d,’ make a big feast without inviting these prominent people?” asked Sherlock.

“That’s irrelevant!” cried Watstein. “The only relevant thing is, what does the phrase ‘*mishteh gadol*’ really mean? To me, it seems to mean a *big feast*, plain and simple; ‘*Gadol*’ (great) describes the feast, not the guests. Why, then, does Rashi take this word *gadol* seemingly out of context? Why does Rashi say that it describes the prominence of the guests? What’s bothering Rashi?”

“You sometimes need to know the entire *Tanach* in order to understand a single word of it,” said Sherlock.

*answer on page eight*

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 18:1 - Avraham was sick, so Hashem came to ‘visit’ him.
2. 18:1 - He was looking for guests.
3. 18:2 - To announce that Sarah would give birth, to heal Avraham and to destroy Sodom.
4. 18:4 - He thought they were Arabians who worship the dust, and he didn’t want any object of idolatry in his home.
5. 18:7 - To train him in the performance of *mitzvos*.
6. 18:9 - To call attention to Sarah’s modesty, so as to endear her to her husband.
7. 18:13 - For the sake of peace.
8. 18:21 - The cry of a girl who was put to death because she gave food to a poor man.
9. 19:1 - Two; one to destroy the city and one to save Lot.
10. 19:1 - He was a judge.
11. 19:3 - It was Passover.
12. 19:16 - He wanted to save his property.
13. 19:17 - Since they too really should have been punished, it wasn’t fitting for them to witness the destruction of Sodom.
14. 19:26 - She was stingy, not wanting to give the guests salt.
15. 19:29 - Lot had protected Avraham by concealing from the Egyptians the fact that Sarah was his wife.
16. 20:1 - Because travel in the region ceased and Avraham could no longer find guests.
17. 20:14 - So that Avraham would pray for him.
18. 21:12 - Because she was greater in prophecy.
19. 21:17 - Because the prayer of a sick person is more readily accepted than the prayer of others on his behalf.
20. 22:3 - Yishmael and Eliezer.

## THE BOSS'S BAD SIDE

**Name@Withheld from Miami, FL wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
On teshuvah (repentance), when one has sinned against another, it is not going to have been a pleasant experience. Judaism teaches us as individuals to "do" rather than to give lip service for something. Therefore, is it not better to just "do" and improve upon a sin rather than apologize and ask for forgiveness?

I think of a time when my employer and I had a heated discussion and things were said that were better left unsaid. While I feel the need for teshuvah through my disrespect of my employer, I feel that this can be accomplished by improving upon my work product and attitude, rather than re-visit a sensitive and bothersome approach. I would appreciate your insight.

Dear Name@Withheld,

Although you are correct regarding the main components of teshuvah, you also have an obligation to appease your employer if he still holds a grudge. However, it does not have to be in an embarrassing way; you can send chocolates or a bottle of whisky with a short note.

## LUNAR LITURGY

**Peter Merker from NYC  
<peter106@aol.com> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
Where does the halacha for kid-dush levana (blessing for the New Moon) come from and have there been any Torah authorities who were opposed to it?

Dear Peter Merker,

The source for blessing the new

moon comes from the Talmud. To my knowledge, there have never been any Torah authorities who opposed it.

I assume that your question is based on the misconception that sanctifying the moon bears a resemblance to moon-worship. This is an absolute fallacy. We are not worshipping the moon, we are praising G-d for His marvelous creations, including the miracle of the moon's monthly rebirth. One of the principal ways to recognize G-d is through G-d's works; the immutable monthly cycle of the moon is one of the more visible aspects of G-d's masterful creation.

Additionally, we see the monthly rebirth of the moon as a symbol of G-d's promise to ultimately redeem the Jewish People and to make us whole again.

Sources:

- Talmud Sanhedrin 42a

## THOUGHT AND ACTION

**Name@Withheld wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
I have heard that Halacha is related to philosophy and you can learn philosophical ideas through Halacha, but I don't understand how, please help.

Dear Name@Withheld,

This is true. Here's an example: The Code of Jewish Law states the following: "It is customary to say to someone who has bought new clothing, 'May you wear it out and renew it.' And there are those who wrote that one should not say this for shoes or clothing made of leather, for if he does wear it out, another animal will have to be killed to make a new garment, and it states, 'His mercy is upon all His creations.' Now, although this reasoning is not conclusive, many people do not say this [blessing over leather shoes or clothing]."

That is the halacha. What is the philosophical lesson? Even though we

are allowed to use animals, we should nevertheless not celebrate their death. As Nachmanides says: The regulation of shechita (ritual slaughter), in all its details, is in order to reduce the pain that the animal registers, and it acts as a reminder that we are not dealing with things outside the law; they are not automatons devoid of life, but they are living beings.

This is just one of the examples of the connection between Jewish law and Jewish outlook. There are countless others. Perhaps the best exposition of this idea is found in a book called Horeb, by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 223:6 Rema
- Nachmanides, Deuteronomy 22:6

## IS HASHEM IN THE BIBLE?

**Marilyn Brewer**

**<mbrewer@fastdata.net> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
Who is Hashem? I have never found that name in the Bible.

Dear Marilyn Brewer,

We use the word Hashem to refer to G-d. Literally, Hashem means "The Name." The word Hashem actually appears in the Torah, as in "...fear the great and awesome Hashem (Name) — the L-rd your G-d." (Deuteronomy 22:28).

Essentially, the reason for using a substitute is out of respect. The actual name of Hashem has inherent sanctity and must be treated with respect; for example, it may not be erased.

## TALMUD CHACHAM

**Sheldon J. Eifenbein from  
Massapequa Park, NY**

**<ivorydoc@optonline.net> wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,  
Please differentiate Talmud, Mishna, and Gemara.

Dear Sheldon J. Efenbein,

The *Mishna* is the famous composition by Rabbi Yehudah the Nasi in which he compiled the Oral Law (revealed at Mt. Sinai) and the major teachings of the *Tanaim*, the early scholars from the time of the Second Temple until about 100 years after its destruction. The Talmud is the composition containing the explanations

of the Mishnah by the *Amoraim*, the later scholars who lived after the death of Rabbi Yehudah the Nasi, circa 220 CE-500 CE. It was compiled mainly by the Sages Ravina and Rav Ashi in the last generation of *Amoraim*.

The word *Gemara* is simply the Aramaic word meaning *Talmud*; hence these terms are used interchangeably.

**PUBLIC DOMAIN**  
Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

**Re: Little Kippur (Ohrnet Vayelech):**

Regarding the question of Hoshana Rabba being called Yom Kippur Katan, allow me to explain the background as to how this misunderstanding arose. Coming from a North-Hungarian Germanic extraction (*Ungarisha Overlander*), allow me to say that in my Father's house, Hoshana Rabba was always referred to as a Mini Yom Kippur; in other words, if you had not quite made it by Yom Kippur itself, you could still correct the sealing of your decree up to the end of Hoshana Rabba. Now take the English expression Mini Yom Kippur and translate it into Hebrew, what do you get? "Yom Kippur Katan."

• Joseph Lunzer, Har Nof, Jerusalem

**Re: Mini Ha Ha (Ohrnet Bereishet):**

Regarding your Yiddle Riddle, the shortest word in the Torah is the *hey* in Parshat Ha'azinu in the word *Ha'lashem*. It is written as a large letter and is considered a word to itself. I am a *ba'al koreh* and was taught that when reading this passage, one should read it as two words (i.e., *Ha Lashem*) similar to the word *aish dat* in Parshat V'zot Habracha, which is pronounced as two

words although written as one.

• Michael Mirsky <mirskym@mail.interlog.com>

**Ohrnet Notes:**

There are several accepted customs regarding the conducting of the Torah reading. Please see *Minchas Shai* on *Devarim 32:6*

**Re: Suffering for Adam's Sin (Ohrnet Bereishet):**

Your explanation of why future generations suffer from Adam's sin reminded me of an illustration I once heard from a well known scholar: If a rich person squanders his wealth and his children are raised in poverty as a result, they are not "punished" for their father's actions, yet they suffer as a result of their father's actions. This does not contradict the principle that one is not punished for the sins of his fathers.

Similarly, I saw that statistically, people whose mothers smoked while they are in utero are more likely to become smokers than people whose mothers didn't smoke. These children definitely suffer because of their mothers' actions, but certainly have the free will to choose whether to smoke or not, and if they choose to smoke, are responsible for their own actions.

On a humorous note, I remember the line of the beggar from "Fiddler on the Roof:"

Beggar: "Only one *kopek*? Last week you gave me two *kopek*!"

Rich Man: "I had a bad week."

Beggar: "If you had a bad week, why should I suffer?"

• Benjie Gerstman, Jerusalem  
<gerstbpg@netvision.net.il>

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## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

# GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

To put a bad scenario in a good light sometimes takes more than just imagination. Sometimes...

## IT TAKES A THIEF

Last summer, in the midst of the various terrorist attacks in Israel, a Jewish person at the rush of a bustling Dizengoff intersection in Tel Aviv alerted those surrounding him that the bag he just brought there contained a live bomb!

After the squad disconnected the explosive, the person was investigated by the police. The man explained

that earlier he was at the beach; and meaning to steal the contents of a good-looking bag, he picked it up, escaped the security and opened it at the Dizengoff intersection.

To his dismay, inside, instead of finding something of value — he found a bomb!

Apparently that bag had been planted at the beach by terrorists earlier that day. Through his intention to steal, this “bag-picker” saved a hazard. If, G-d forbid, that bag had exploded a minute earlier in the midst of a bustling intersection, what would the world have thought about this man? Would anyone have let his

imagination drift and thought: “That guy probably stole the bag, and it just so happened to contain a bomb?”

Many times, what seems to be imagination proves to be reality. So let’s follow the directive of the Torah and judge favorably.

• Avroham Shor, Neve Yaakov, Jerusalem  
Concept based on “The Other Side of the Story”  
by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

**OHRNET NOTES:** The above is a powerful illustration of how wrong we can sometimes be about others. However, in no way is it meant to justify those who actually perform acts of terror and murder, nor meant to justify theft.

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

**Last week we asked:** During a certain period of the year, there is something we do three times a day, almost every day. We do it twice with one part of the body and once with another part of the body (according to Ashkenazic custom). What is it?

**Answer:** *Nefilat apaim* (*tachanun*) during *selichot*. It is performed twice with the left arm and once with the right, as follows:

Starting several days before Rosh Hashanah and continuing until Yom Kippur, we say penitential *selichot* prayers, part of which includes *nefilat apaim*, the putting down of the head. *Nefilat apaim* is performed by putting one’s head down upon one’s sleeve and saying a prayer. It is customarily performed by putting one’s head down upon one’s weaker arm (for most people, the left arm.)

*Nefilat apaim* is repeated two more

times as part of the normal daily prayers, once during the morning prayers (*shacharit*) and once during the afternoon prayers (*mincha*). During *mincha*, it is also performed as mentioned above, by putting the head on the left arm. During *shacharit* however, in deference to the *tefillin* which one wears on one’s left arm, one performs *nefilat apaim* upon one’s right arm.

• Submitted by Rabbi Yonasan Taub

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## SHERLOX ANSWER!

“Look elsewhere where the *Tanach* states that someone ‘made a feast,’” said Sherlock. “In every case, the verse tells for whom the feast was prepared.”

“Really?” said Watstein. “Hmm, let me think...Yitzchak ‘made a feast for them’ (*Bereishis 26:30*), Lot ‘made a feast for them’ (*Bereishis 18:3*), Pharaoh ‘made a feast for all his servants,’ (*Bereishis 39:20*). But is this always true? Are there other examples?”

“There are many such examples throughout *Tanach*,” said Sherlock. “To the best of my knowledge it is always true: Whenever it states that someone ‘made a feast’ it always tells who the guests were. Therefore, Rashi is bothered by an incongruity: Why doesn’t this verse state or imply for whom Avraham made the feast? Why is this feast different than all other feasts?”

“I see,” said Watstein. “If not for Rashi’s explanation, the verse would be

out of step with dozens of similar expressions throughout *Tanach*; It would be missing the guest list, so to speak! Therefore, by explaining that ‘great’ refers not to the feast but rather to the guests, Rashi addresses this difficulty: Avraham made a feast for the greats.”

“Dr. Watstein, you’re headed for greatness.”

• Source: *Maskil L'David*  
Sherlox is by Reuven Subar

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

18:7 The Love of Kindness  
18:13 For the Sake of Peace  
18:15 Sarah’s Laughter  
19:8 Lot’s Disgrace  
22:1 The Meaning of a Trial  
22:16 The Promise of Eternity

### SFORNO

18:2 The Love of Kindness  
18:22 Persistence  
19:8 Lot’s Reasoning  
19:11 The Nature of the Wicked  
19:37-8 Meaning Well