

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### BEYOND THE PALE

**"And the person with tzara'as is to call out: 'Contaminated! Contaminated!'" (13:45)**

In the fifties, no Hollywood Biblical epic was complete without its statutory army of Central Casting lepers littering the set, intoning in their best Mid-Western drawl "Unclean! Unclean!"

This mistaken idea that *tzara'as* means leprosy, however, pre-dates Hollywood. For centuries, *tzara'as* has borne this erroneous translation.

But even a cursory glance at the commentaries on this week's Parsha will show the inaccuracy of such a translation. Leprosy was considered a highly contagious disease. Yet, if something that looked like *tzara'as* broke out on a newlywed, or if it afflicted someone during a festival, the *kohen* would delay his examination so that the *simcha* of the wedding festivities or of the holiday

should proceed without impediment. If *tzara'as* really meant leprosy, then allowing someone with this disease to roam loose, rubbing

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"Society exists so that man may exercise kindness and caring."

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shoulders with all and sundry at a wedding feast or holiday, would be criminal negligence.

*Tzara'as* was not a physical disease but a malaise of the spirit. It was

merely the physical symptom of a chronic spiritual illness. If we do not see such a disease today, it is because our bodies have become so desensitized to our spiritual state that they can no longer act as a barometer to our spiritual well-being.

The second of this week's double parsha is *Metzora*. The word *metzora*, which refers to one afflicted with *tzara'as*, is a contraction of "*motzei ra*" — literally "to bring forth evil." This evil was principally the evil of speaking slander. However, becoming a *metzora* was also a punishment for other forms of anti-social behavior, notably, bloodshed, false oaths, immorality, pride, robbery and selfishness.

What do these acts have in common? They are all instances of the failure to be sensitive to the needs of others and to share their plight. The essence of society from the Jewish perspective is not that society should run smoothly for the sake of society,

*continued on page three*

## A Message to our Readers

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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

## TAZRIA

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'as* (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara'as* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'as*. One whose *tzara'as* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'as* on clothing is described in detail.

## METZORA

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara'as*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week, and involves *korbanos* and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara'as*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara'as* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house; if it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and how one regains a state of ritual purity.

## HAFTARAH: YESHAYAHU 66:1-66:24

This week's *haftarah* is the special one we read when *Rosh Chodesh* falls on Shabbos. The last verses relate to both *Rosh Chodesh* and Shabbos as times when in the future, the people will visit the Sanctuary to worship G-d.

The *haftarah* begins with a prophetic chastisement to people who give importance to the physical Sanctuary worship but who disregard the conceptual values. The Prophet Yeshaya rebukes those who on one hand bring offerings, but who smite their fellow, or steal the animal for the sacrifice.

Yeshayahu proclaims that G-d, who created the whole universe, does not need the Sanctuary nor our worship. He commanded the Sanctuary worship for our benefit, as a way for us to express our gratitude and respect; but internal virtue is the main idea. When that is lacking, all the rest is meaningless.

Yeshaya narrates the future redemption which will be miraculously fast and unprecedented, after which all the nations will come to Jerusalem to the *Beis Hamikdash* to worship the one true G-d.

### RIVER OF PEACE

"Like a river do I lead peace unto her..."  
(66:12)

G-d declares that in the future, He will bring peace unto the Jewish nation like a river.

The Talmud (*Berachos 56b*) derives

from the above verse that one who dreams of a river will enjoy peace. The Talmud cites two other verses by which it derives that dreaming of a bird or a pot also indicates peace. How is this to be understood?

Peace ensues when opposites live in harmony. A pot symbolizes peace, as a pot enables fire and water to coexist. A bird symbolizes the peaceful coexistence of the physical and ethereal, as a bird flies in the sky and also walks on the ground. And a river is a place where both rain from heaven and water from underground collect, and conducts the water to inhabited areas for the use of mankind.

Thus in the future redemption, both physical wealth and spiritual abundance will be present in one location, and the righteous will be also the prosperous.

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## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"He shall shave, but the nesek-affliction he shall not shave..." (13:33)

When a *nesek*-affliction, a particular form of *tzara'as* on a person's hair, requires that he shave, the actual *nesek* itself was left unshaved. This hints to the idea that a person should accept Divine punishment and not try to deny it or hide it.

• Sefer Hachinuch

Dedicated in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of  
**YAAKOV YISRAEL KEST**  
Los Angeles, California

but that each individual should take up the yoke of his neighbor. Society exists so that man may exercise kindness and caring. When someone fails in these fundamental areas, he demonstrates that he has failed to understand the purpose of society itself. Thus he has no place in society until he can cure himself of this failing. It is for this reason that he is exiled until he comes to the realization that his actions have placed him "beyond the pale."

That is a reason why someone with *tzara'as* had to call out: "Contaminated! Contaminated!" For selfishness and insensitivity to others can be as contagious as leprosy.

## RAISING AN EYEBROW

*"On the seventh day, he shall shave off all his hair — his head, his beard, his eyebrows, and all his hair shall he shave off" (14:9)*

If the *metzora* has to shave his entire body — "all his hair" — as part of his purification, why does the Torah specify "his head, his beard, his eyebrows?"

The head represents haughtiness. He held his head high over others, thinking himself better. Through his mouth, framed by his beard, he spoke gossip and slander. Under his eyebrows, his eyes narrowed in jealousy. It was that jealousy that engendered the wish to destroy another's reputation — which can be done with just the raising of an eyebrow.

## THE PREJUDICE OF PRIDE

*"Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying: If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a s'eis" (13:1,2)*

Pride comes before a fall. When we think that we are at our most indispensable, at that very moment we are at our most dispensable. G-d doesn't need us to run the world. He doesn't need us to even be in the world. At best, we are guests in this hotel called life. Any day, any second, we may be asked to vacate our room by ten o'clock.

And yet, we live our lives as though we were immortal. We know that everyone dies; but somehow this knowledge fails to impact our actions. We act as though there were two clubs in life, the "live-ers" and the "die-ers," and that we have decided that we are members only of the former.

It's difficult to live out the knowledge of our own mortality, because our perception of ourselves comes largely through our physical interaction with the world. Most of our life consists of action, of impacting on the outside world. Thus, it is very difficult for us to imagine a world without us being here. We can conceive of such a thing, but we cannot imagine it. In the mystical vocabulary, our active connection to reality is called *hispashutus* (lit. "expansion").

Consider, for example, the fact that we are much more comfortable doing the positive mitzvahs, like putting on *tefilin* or shaking a *lulav*, than observing the Torah's prohibitions. The reason is because it's *me*

putting on *tefilin*. It's *me* shaking the *lulav*. I am impacting on the world. Me. "I act, therefore I am." My non-action, however, leaves no visible trace on the creation.

In every action there is a trace of pride. Even when we do a mitzvah, when we give *tzedaka*, when we study Torah, there's the feeling "it's *me* doing the mitzvah, giving the *tzedaka*, studying the Torah."

S'eis was a spiritual affliction of the skin. S'eis means pride, haughtiness. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "Come and see how great are the humble of spirit before G-d. For when the Holy Temple stood, a person who would offer an elevation offering, the reward for the elevation offering would be in his hand; a flour offering, the reward for the flour offering would be in his hand. But as for someone who was humble and broken in spirit, it was considered that he had brought each and every offering." Someone who brings an offering instinctively feels that he did something, and subconsciously he cannot help but give himself the smallest pat on the back. That's what it means that the reward was "in his hand." It was his hand that did it. However, the heart of someone who is humble in spirit lies broken within. In his hand there is nothing. The Torah considers that such a person has brought every possible offering.

Sources:

*Beyond The Pale* - Talmud Arachin 15b, 16a;  
Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch  
*Raising An Eyebrow* - Kli Yakar  
*The Prejudice Of Pride* - Talmud Sota 5;  
Shem MiShmuel in the name of his father  
Avnei Nezer in Iturei Torah

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### YAVNEH

This ancient city, known in Biblical times as Yabniel, is most famous as the seat of the Sanhedrin at the time of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. One of the three requests made by Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai on the eve of that destruction was "spare me Yavneh and its Sages." (*Gittin 56b*) This center of Jewish learning is referred to as "*Kerem B'Yavneh*" (Vineyard of Yavneh) because its scholars sat in rows similar to



the arrangement of vines in a vineyard (*Berachos 63b – Rashi*).

"Follow Rabbi Gamliel to Yavneh" urge our Sages (*Sanhedrin 32b*), and this is where this great head of the Sanhedrin is assumed to be buried.

Modern Yavneh is a development town populated mostly by immigrants from North Africa, and nearby is Israel's first atomic reactor which was completed in 1960.

# WEEKLY DAF

SUCCAH 13-19

## THREE IS A ... "GROUP"

How many does it take to form a group? Regarding the blood of the *korban Pesach* which Jews slaughtered on the threshold of their Exodus from Egypt, the Torah commanded: "Take a group of *eizov* (a kind of vegetable), dip it into the blood in the vessel, and apply it to the doorposts." (*Shemos 12:20*)

*Eizov* is also prescribed by the Torah (*Bamidbar 19:18*) for sprinkling the purifying waters upon people and objects spiritually contaminated by contact with the dead. In that context, the Torah does not use the word "group." Nevertheless, our Sages derive from the Torah that there, too, a *group* is required. (*Sifri Parshas Chukas*)

What is the definition of a group? This question has relevance to the laws of *succah* as well, since there is a rabbinic decree disqualifying a *bunch* of *schach* sticks tied together (for fear that someone may bring home such a bunch of wet, freshly cut sticks from the field, place them atop his *succah* to dry, and only *later* decide to leave them for the purpose of *schach*. Such a *succah* is invalid, as the *schach* must at the outset be placed for the purpose of shade.)

In regard to all of these areas, Rabbi Chisda states that *three* constitute a "group." This leads Tosefos to ask how we reconcile this definition of "group" with the one we find in *Mesechta Avos* (3:6). The *mishna* there tells us that when five people study Torah, the Divine Presence is with them. The source for this is the passage (*Amos 9:6*) "His grouping was the foundation of the earth." This seems to indicate that the minimum "group" is five. How, asks Tosefos, can Rabbi Chisda define a group as consisting of three?

Tosefos' resolution is that although in all other matters three is enough to form a group, the *mishna* in *Avos* understood that the "group" in the verse about Hashem's creation of the earth must refer to five. Why? Because in another verse (*Yeshayahu 48:13*) Hashem says, "My hands founded the earth." We must therefore conclude that the terms "group" and "hand" used in this context help define each other. A "hand" contains five fingers, and that number therefore constitutes a "group."

Tiferes Yisrael sees in the number five a hint to the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *hei*, with which Hashem created the earth (*Menachos 29b*); the combination of five people learning the Torah for which the world was created brings that world into closer contact with its Creator.

• *Succah 13a*

## THE SLANTED WALL

The "slanted wall" is one of those special laws of a *succah* which Moshe received at Sinai but which are not recorded in the Torah. Earlier in this *mesechta* (4a) we were introduced to this concept, but it is here that it appears in a *mishna* and this is its classical expression:

The roof of a one-room house has collapsed in the middle, leaving only a section adjoining the walls. The owner now wishes to convert this house into a *succah* by placing *schach* on the empty section of the roof. The only obstacle is that this *schach* will not reach the wall (or walls) necessary for making it a *succah*. The remnant of roof separating them is not kosher *schach* because it was initially put there for a house and not for a *succah*. If this remnant is less than four *amos* (cubits), we apply the principle of "*dofen akumah*" (slanted wall) to render the *succah* kosher. This principle allows us to view the roof remnant as being an *extension* of the wall, and therefore no non-kosher *schach* separates the wall from the kosher *schach*.

This principle requires greater clarification, however, in light of the first part of the *mishna*. There we are told about someone who places *schach* in a regular *succah* but leaves an airspace between that *schach* and the wall, or walls. The *mishna* tells us that if that airspace is less than three *tefachim* (handbreadths), then the *succah* is kosher. This too is based on one of those unwritten laws received by Moshe at Sinai. This principle is called "*lavud*," and it allows us to view as nonexistent any airspace which is less than three *tefachim*.

We now see a sharp distinction between removing the obstacle of non-kosher *schach* as a separation between kosher *schach* and wall, in which we allow up to four *amos*, and removing the obstacle of airspace, in which we allow only an eighth of that amount (six *tefachim* = one *amah*). Why do we not apply the principle of *dofen akumah* for up to four *amos* of airspace as well, by viewing the wall as having slanted laterally to reach the *schach*?

Rabbeinu Asher (*Rosh*) explains that *dofen akumah* does not allow us to view a wall as slanting to meet *schach*, for then indeed it would apply to airspace as well. Rather, it allows us only to view the remnant of the roof as a part of the wall which we imagine as slanted. Airspace, however, can never be considered as part of a wall, and therefore only "*lavud*," with its shorter dimensions, is applicable.

• *Succah 17a*

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### TAZRIA

1. "Any holy thing she shall not touch." In this context, what does "touch" mean?
2. After a woman gives birth she is required to offer two types of *korbanos*. What are they?
3. Who declares whether an affliction of *tzara'as* is impure or pure?
4. How many hairs in a suspected area must turn white before the *kohen* can declare a person *tamei*?
5. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'as*?
6. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair indicates *tumah*?
7. What is the name for *tzara'as* of the scalp or beard area?
8. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
9. Why must a *metzora* call out, "Tamei! Tamei!"?
10. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?

### METZORA

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does a *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. When the *metzora* was presented "before Hashem" (14:11) in the *Beis Hamikdash*, where did he stand?
6. Toward what direction does the *kohen* sprinkle the oil from the *metzora's korban*?
7. How was having *tzara'as* in one's house sometimes advantageous?
8. When a person enters a house that has *tzara'as*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
9. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things, what is his status?
10. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who "has not washed his hands"?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

### TAZRIA

1. 12:4 - Eat.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatas*.
3. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
4. 13:3 - At least two.
5. 13:12 - Poor vision.
6. 13:29 - Golden.
7. 13:30 - *Nesek*.
8. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow and enshroud his face.
9. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
10. 13:46 - Since *tzara'as* is a punishment for *lashon harah* (evil speech) which divides people, he is isolated measure-for-measure.

### METZORA

1. 14:2 - At night.
2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara'as* comes as punishment for *lashon harah*. The *metzora* offers birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree, hinting that *tzara'as* is a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
6. 14:16 - Westward, toward the Holy of Holies.
7. 14:34 - Fearing Jewish conquest, the Amorites hid their valuables in their walls. After the conquest, *tzara'as* would afflict a

house and the Jewish owner would tear down the wall and find the treasure.

8. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
9. 15:4,5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies upon it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the garment he is wearing also becomes *tamei*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
10. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.

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## ANOREXIA

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Our daughter is ill with a form of anorexia. She is at Stanford Hospital for the second time and we are doing everything we can to help her. Do you have any suggestions, Jewish prayers, something that may give us some inspiration and hope to help her get well? She is a beautiful girl of 14 with her whole life ahead of her. We are also in family therapy to assist the problem. Do you have any suggestions?

Dear Name@Withheld,

Firstly, may Hashem grant your daughter a complete and speedy recovery. Tradition teaches that reciting the entire Book of Psalms in one sitting and offering a personal prayer afterwards can have a tremendous effect. You can even say everything in English. I heard in the name of the great kabbalist Rabbi Yisrael Abuchatzera (known as the "Baba Sali") that reciting the entire Book of Psalms once a month is of great benefit. Giving charity is also a powerful merit.

## PORKY CHEWS HIS CUD

Barak from Philadelphia, PA  
<bakbak101@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
If science could genetically alter an animal that chews its cud but does not have split hooves — a camel for instance — to give birth to camels which do have split hooves, would it then be kosher?

Dear Barak,

Great question! The Mishna actually discusses such a case. The Mishna says, "If a non-kosher animal gives birth to an apparently kosher animal, the offspring is not kosher...because whatever comes from a non-kosher animal is also non-kosher." So even if a camel were born with split hooves, it

wouldn't be kosher.

On the other hand, if we could genetically engineer a kosher animal, such as a cow, to give birth to a type of camel or pig, then theoretically such a camel or pig would be kosher, as the Mishna says, "If a kosher animal gives birth to a non-kosher animal, the offspring is kosher...because whatever comes from a kosher animal is kosher."

So, the moral of the story is: If your cow has a camel, don't have a cow.

Sources:

- Tractate Bechorot 5b
- Rambam Hilchot Ma'achalot Assurot 1:4
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 79,2

## MISHNA, TALMUD AND KABBALAH

Willem-Jan from Utrecht,  
Netherlands  
<wdewit@freemail.nl> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Where does the Mishna find its origin?

Kara from Sweet Treatz, PA  
<sugar\_04@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I am working on a project involving the Talmud. I found your website by a search engine. I especially liked the content of the site and was wondering if you could answer some questions that involve the writing of the Talmud. Who were the original writers of the Talmud? When and where was it written? Why was it written?

Ben Schneider  
<ben.schneider@gte.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
What is the relationship between the Torah, the Talmud, and the Kabbalah?

Dear Willem-Jan, Kara, and Ben Schneider,

The Torah is the Five books of Moses. When G-d taught Moshe the Torah at Mount Sinai, He didn't just give Moshe a written text (that wouldn't take 40

days!). Rather, G-d explained what everything meant. These explanations are what we call "the Oral Torah" or "the Mishna."

The Jewish people preserved the Mishna as an unwritten teaching for about 1,400 years. After the destruction of the Second Temple, the leading Sage Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi realized a long exile was about to begin, and that if the Mishna wasn't written down it would become lost. He thus took the unprecedented step of writing it down.

Not long after this, the leading Sages in Babylon again saw a decline in scholarship, so they wrote a more comprehensive explanation of the Mishna, called the Talmud.

Kabbalah is also part of the Oral law. It is the traditional mystical understanding of the Torah. Kabbalah stresses the reasons and understanding of the commandments, and the cause of events described in the Torah. Kabbalah includes the understanding of the spiritual spheres in creation, and the rules and ways by which G-d administers the existence of the universe.

## TWO FOR TREE

John Rosen from Lenexa, Kansas  
<jrosen@qlx.quintiles.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
My 5 year old son named Ilan asked: "If an 'ilan' means specifically a fruit tree (as opposed to the generic "eitz" which refers to any type of tree, as two Israelis explained this distinction to him), why do we say 'borei p'ri ha-eitz' instead of 'borei p'ri ha-ilan?" Thank you — this question has stumped a number of people.

Dear John Rosen and Ilan,

"Eitz" is the Torah's term for "tree", whether a fruit tree or not. The format of the blessings were chosen by our Sages to correspond to the terminology used by the Torah.

"Ilan" is the term for "tree" in common speech, but it never appears in the Torah. "Ilan" is actually an Aramaic word.

Sources:

- Deut. 20:19, 20
- Responsa Batzel HaChochma

MR. GOOD-MAN

Marie Dupont <mariedupont@excite.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Thank you for your page. It is the most informative and enjoyable page on the web. I was wondering what Judaism say about man being born evil. Thank you for your answer. Regards.

Dear Marie Dupont,  
No, man is not "born evil."  
The Torah says that "the inclination in man's heart is evil

from his youth." (Genesis 8:21) The Talmud explains "youth" here to mean from the time of birth. However, this evil inclination is external; it is not intrinsic to a person's pure soul. Our pure soul is given to us even earlier, at the time of conception.

So, Judaism sees man as basically good, created in G-d's image, but with temptation towards evil. While the evil inclination is strong, Judaism believes that a person can choose to overcome it. This is the concept of free choice, which is basically the purpose of our existence: To choose good over evil.

Sources:  
• Yerushalmi Berachot 3:5  
• Bereishet Rabba 34

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

Re: The More I Study:

In your "Public Domain," a reader wrote: "Many 'chance' happenings are not chance, but are guided from Above; many such 'coincidences' occur in my own life, and they seem to increase the more I study, the more observant I become."

Champion golfer Arnold Palmer once mentioned something similar. After sinking a very long putt, his opponent congratulated him on his "luck." Palmer paused, replaced his club, and replied: "Yes, and you know what? The more I practice, the luckier I get!"

• Lee Budgie Barnett  
<budgie@compuserve.com>

Re: "Grab a Megilla" by Rabbi Chaim Salenger (Ohrnet Purim):

I read "Grab a Megilla" and enjoyed singing it very, very much. I would like to know if you have a nice poem that I could use for my bar-mitzvah. Today I had my first lesson in "Iaining" Parshas Noach. I learn in the Yesode-Torah school in Antwerp. I wish you good luck and *hatzlacha rabba* in the future.

• Michael Marelus (12.5 years old), Antwerp Belgium  
<bt110634@turboline.be>

Re: College Advice (Ohrnet Vayakhel-Pekudei):

Regarding the university student feeling lax in his obser-

vance: I went to Northwestern. Although it has a large Jewish population, it has a very small Orthodox population and I felt isolated. I found that going to stay with Orthodox families in West Rogers Park on Shabbos was enough to keep me connected. I thought this experience might be helpful to the university student.

• Larry Weinberg <larryw@bu.edu> Boston, MA

Re: Thanks for "Ask the Rabbi":

Just want to let you know how much joy I get from reading "Ask the Rabbi." I wait for it, impatiently I must admit, every week. It always brings a smile of recognition or from learning a new idea. *Toda raba* for doing it. I truly think it's a *kiddush Hashem*.

• Natalie Cohen, Tamiment, PA

I have saved all the "Ask the Rabbi" e-mails that deal with kashrut. They are such a great source!

• Paula and Daniel Silberman <PandD@lanminds.com>

Re: Final "Fe" and Scarlet (Ohrnet Vayakhel-Pekudei):

My best wishes and blessings for your good work. *Yishar kochachem*.

Regarding your Yiddle Riddle in "Vayakhel Pekudei," there is an additional source about the absence of the final "fe" from *Birkat Hamazon*. This source predates the Tashbetz Koton and contains additional information. It is the Roke'ach in *siman 337*, who writes that the "Yotzeir Or" prayer and the "*Shmoneh Esrei*" don't contain any final "fe" either!

Also, in "Sherlox" of that issue, you translate "*tola'as shani*" as scarlet silk. To translate it as silk is quite tenuous. The Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel do so, but I believe that the bulk of classical Biblical and Talmudic commentators render it, like *t'cheiles* and *argaman*, as died wool. Keep up the truly wonderful work.

• David Solomon <dsolomon@actcom.co.il>

*COMMUTER*

I'm a commuter. Every day I travel from my hometown to Jerusalem. Usually I take a bus, but sometimes I get lucky and catch a hitch. This is very advantageous, saving quite a lot of time and hassle, not to mention money.

I have many friends and acquaintances who are fellow commuters. So, when one morning my friends saw me approaching the bus stop with an empty car, they probably became quite enthusiastic about a good hitch. However, I passed them by, with an apologetic expression on my face.

Now if this had happened only once, it wouldn't have been so bad. But every few weeks I pass by in that same car with that same apologetic expression.

Now it doesn't stop there: Imagine you're walking on a hot summer day up a steep hill and you hear a car approaching. You turn around to perhaps catch the compassion of the driver, and it's me! You smile, relieved, until you make out through the windshield that same apologetic expression as I pass you by.

Or maybe it was just after a hard day in Jerusalem when I passed you on the way home. To say the least, I'm farthest from your favorite friend any more. "Some friend," you may think, "always has a 'good excuse' not to help me out."

Let me explain. My parents visit Israel for a few months every year. They finally decided it would be economically sound to buy a car instead of renting each

time. This would only be beneficial if the car was looked after between visits to avoid additional maintenance costs.

So they left the car in my care. At first, whenever I needed to go anywhere I told my friends, and always stopped to pick up people even if just on the way to the store or back. The next time my parents came, they were a bit surprised to find a few friends (whom I called in advance) waiting by the car whenever we decided to go to Jerusalem, and surprised by all the errands I ran for good friends.

On the day he left, my father told me that I could no longer under any condition take anyone in the car. He never told me his reasoning, but it's safe to assume his concern was for the longevity of his car.

PS: I've explained this to many of my friends, but it's impossible to tell everybody. And it's out of the question to stop for someone in order to explain why it is that you can't give him a ride. Unfortunately I may have already strained some relationships due to the misunderstanding. That may explain the tinge of pain hidden under my apologetic expression.

This may sound odd, but I'd prefer, if you do decide to print this, that you leave out my name. I don't want to make it sound like I am just writing this up as an excuse. It should be enough that people strengthen their sense of judgment through the good work this column does.

• Submitted by an Ohrnet Reader  
Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story"  
by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

**YIDDLE RIDDLE**

What name is mentioned three times in the Torah, once as a non-Jew, once as a convert, and once as a Jew?

• Submitted by Yitzy Kimmel <yitzy@sprynet.com> from Brooklyn, NY

**Answer next week....**

**RECOMMENDED READING LIST**

**TAZRIA**

**RAMBAN**  
12:2 Procreation  
12:7 The "Sin" of Childbirth  
13:47 The Greatness of Tzara'as

**SEFER HACHINUCH**  
167 Respect for Kedusha  
168 A Gift of Thanks

**SFORNO**

12:8 Self Involvement  
13:47 Garments

**METZORA**

**RAMBAN**  
14:2 Compulsive Cleanliness  
15:11 The Zav

**SEFER HACHINUCH**

174 Purification and Rebirth  
175 Cleansing Waters

**SFORNO**

14:12 The Asham of the Metzora  
14:36 The Reason for Waiting  
15:2 The Zav