

O H R N E T

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ROSH HASHANA · 1 TISHREI 5761 · SEPT. 30, 2000

# WHAT, ME WORRY?

*“And it will be that when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself in his heart, saying, ‘Peace will be with me...’ ” (29:18)*

There once was a convicted murderer standing in the dock who said: “I believe that this court and everyone in it is a figment of my imagination. Everything here is imaginary.” To which the judge replied. “Fine. I believe I’m sentencing you to the imaginary electric chair.”

One of the more unusual birds that G-d created is the ostrich. As everyone knows, when confronted with a dangerous situation, the ostrich takes immediate action — and buries its head in the sand.

Sometimes in life, there are situations that we would prefer not to deal with. Maybe it’s a problem that we just can’t come to terms with, or a habit which we can’t seem to kick. It’s tough to admit that we’re less than perfect, that we need help. So sometimes we just pretend that the problem isn’t really there at all. We find a nice big emotional sandpit and submerge our consciousness into it. And before we all nod our heads knowingly in self-satisfaction — maybe we should take a look at our own lives. Maybe there’s something in my life that needs a little truthful

examination. Maybe, there’s a little (or not-so-little) sandpit in my own backyard? Maybe... No. It’s other people that have problems. I’m perfect.

Why is it so difficult for us to admit that we’re “other people” too?

The reason is something called

—

**“Teshuva means  
return. Return  
to reality.”**

—

cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is a kind of armor that we build up to ward off information that we don’t want to hear. According to cognitive dissonance theory, we seek consistency among our beliefs. When there is dissonance between belief and behavior, we change something to eliminate the dissonance. We could change our behavior to accord with our beliefs, but usually, we change our attitude to accommodate our

behavior. It’s much less work.

For example: You buy an expensive car and take it for a drive up the coast. Even though the car looked great in the showroom and handled well in town, you discover that on long drives, it’s about as comfortable as a wooden bench. Dissonance exists between your beliefs that you have a) bought a good car, and b) that a good car should be comfortable. Dissonance could be eliminated by deciding that it doesn’t matter since the car is mainly used for short trips (reducing the importance of the dissonant belief) or focusing on the car’s strengths such as safety, appearance, handling (thereby adding more consonant beliefs). The dissonance could also be eliminated by getting rid of the car — but that’s a lot harder than changing our beliefs.

During the Hebrew month of Elul which leads up to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we involve ourselves in an introspective process to free ourselves of cognitive dissonance. This process is called in Hebrew *teshuva*. *Teshuva* means return. Return to reality. Taking our heads out of the sandpit.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### NITZAVIM

On the last day of his life, Moshe gathers all the people in a final initiation. The covenant includes not only those present, but even generations yet unborn. Moshe admonishes the people to be extremely vigilant against idol worship, because in spite of having seen the abominations of Egypt, there will always be the temptation to experiment with foreign philosophies as a pretext for immorality. Moshe describes the desolation of the Land of Israel which will result from failure to heed the *mitzvot*. Their descendants and foreigners alike will remark on the singular desolation of the Land and its inability to produce crops. The conclusion will be apparent to all — the Jewish People have forsaken Hashem. Moshe promises, however, that the people will eventually repent. However assimilated they become, eventually Hashem will bring them back to *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe tells the people to remember that the Torah is not a remote impossibility; rather its fulfillment is within the grasp of every Jew. The *Parsha* concludes with a dramatic choice between life and death. Moshe exhorts the people to choose life.

### VAYELECH

On the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent, bidding farewell to his beloved people, encouraging them to “keep the faith.” Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, Hashem is with them. He summons Yehoshua and exhorts him to be strong and courageous. Moshe teaches the *mitzvah* of *hakhel*: That every seven years on Succot, the nation is to gather at the Temple to hear the king read from the Book of *Devarim*. Hashem tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the *Mishkan* where Hashem will teach Yehoshua. Hashem tells them that after entering the Land the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods. Hashem will then “hide His face” so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at fate’s mercy. Hashem tells Moshe and Yehoshua to write down *Ha’azinu*, which will serve as “witness” against the Jews when they sin. Moshe records this song in writing and teaches it to *Bnei Yisrael*. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah, and instructs the *levi'im* to place it to the side of the *aron* (Holy Ark) so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll that is different from the original, for there will always be a reference copy.

## HAFTARAH

### YESHAYA 61:10 - 63:9

In this last of the seven “*haftaras* of consolation,” the Prophet Yeshaya describes how just as the land will

seem to bloom and flourish in the time of the *mashiach* without any prior cultivation, so too Hashem will redeem his people and shower them with kindness without any prior action on their part, and without

them deserving it.

The Targum Yonatan translates “For Zion’s sake, I will not be silent” to mean that there will never be peace in the world while the Jewish People are scattered in exile.

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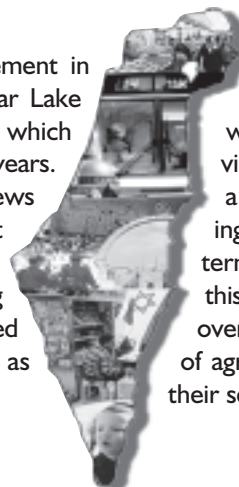
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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### YESOD HAMA'ALA

This agricultural settlement in the Jordan Valley near Lake Hula bears a name which goes back thousands of years. When the first group of Jews led by Ezra the Scribe left Babylonian captivity for *Eretz Yisrael*, the “beginning of their ascent” is described in Scripture (*Ezra 7:9*) as “*yesud hama’ala*.”



The groups of young Jews who organized their *aliyah* while still in their native Polish village envisioned themselves as a reincarnation of that pioneering spirit and assumed the Biblical term for their community. It was this spirit which helped them to overcome bandits, disease and lack of agricultural training in developing their settlement.

## EXPLOITING THE CROWN OF TORAH

The Talmud relates two incidents involving a Torah scholar's using the honor due to Torah for his own purpose. One is in our *gemara* and it concerns Rabbi Tarfon. The other is in Mesechta Bava Kama (59b) and its hero is the Sage Eliezer Zeira. Let us relate the two and compare them.

When the harvest of fig trees is over, the owners of the fig trees relinquish ownership of whatever insignificant fruit remains and everyone has a right to take them. Rabbi Tarfon availed himself of this privilege in one field. To his misfortune, however, the owner of that field had long been the victim of robberies of grapes from his field, and when he saw Rabbi Tarfon, whom he did not recognize, he assumed that he was the thief. He put the sage in a sack and threatened to throw him in the river. Afraid that his captor might indeed carry out his threat Rabbi Tarfon cried out: "Woe to Tarfon that this fellow is killing him!" Realizing that this was the Sage Rabbi Tarfon, the field owner dropped the sack and fled in shame.

All of his life Rabbi Tarfon felt regret about his behavior and opined, "Woe to me that I exploited the Crown of Torah!"

Even though Rabbi Tarfon was perfectly entitled to the fruit he had taken, and certainly he had no obligation to pay for all the stolen grapes in order to save himself, he nevertheless felt guilty, for he was a man of great wealth and should have offered money for his release rather than exploit his status as a Torah scholar for this purpose.

Eliezer Zeira's story begins with his standing in the marketplace of Nehardeah wearing black shoes, which in those times were worn as a sign of mourning. When asked by officials of the *Reish Galuta* (Exilarch) to explain this public display of mourning, he declared that he was in mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem. Since they assumed him to be only a common Jew, his action was looked upon as a flagrant display of arrogant pretentiousness in practicing public mourning for Jerusalem, an act reserved for Torah scholars only. When they arrested him, he protested that he was indeed a Torah scholar. To prove his claim he offered either to answer any question in Torah which they would ask him or to pose a question to them. He was invited to pose the question and he succeeded in stumping them and supplying his own answer. When his answer was corroborated by the Sage Shmuel, he was vindicated and freed.

Why was it any more proper for Eliezer Zeira to utilize his status as a Torah scholar to save himself from prison than it was for Rabbi Tarfon to save himself from the threat of death? One answer is fairly obvious. Rabbi Tarfon had the option of saving himself with money while Eliezer Zeira did not. Maharsha adds a second solution to this problem.

Eliezer Zeira was not imprisoned but rather detained until it could be established whether he had the right to publicly mourn Jerusalem. His presentation of his Torah credentials was therefore not an exploitation but a clarification which was perfectly proper.

• *Nedarim 62a*

## HIDDEN BEAUTY

If one wishes to annul his vow, the sage he consults must find an "opening" — some consideration which he can present to the vow-maker as a reason for regretting that he made the vow. This can even be the consideration that by vowing to deny another Jew any benefit from his possessions he is guilty of violating the Torah prohibition of hating another Jew or taking revenge. If he declares that had he been aware of this he would not have made such a vow, the sage can declare the vow annulled.

If the consideration was not in existence at the time the vow was made, there is a dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the majority of the Sages as to whether it is a valid opening for annulment of a vow. The classic example is that of the fellow who vows not to have any benefit from another. That other fellow then becomes a scribe whose services he now needs. Rabbi Eliezer sanctions an opening based on his declaration that had he known that fellow would become a scribe he would not have made such a vow. The other sages rule this out because it is a consideration which was not possible to have had in mind at the time of the vow.

An interesting application of the above is the case of a man who was being pressured to marry his sister's daughter. He was reluctant to do so because she was unattractive, so he took a vow not to have any benefit from her. Rabbi Yishmael then took her in hand, beautified her (the *gemara* says that he fixed up her appearance with a gold false tooth) and presented her to the reluctant uncle. To the sage's question whether he would have made such a vow had he seen her as she now looked, the uncle replied in the negative. Rabbi Yishmael annulled the vow.

One approach in the commentaries is that Rabbi Yishmael concurred with the view of Rabbi Eliezer, that even a consideration born *after* the vow was made can serve as a valid opening; thus, even if she was indeed unattractive at the time of the vow, her subsequent beautification can be grounds for regret and annulment. Another view is that if it was possible to beautify her then, she was never really unattractive and the vow was made in error. This is indicated in the words of Rabbi Yishmael following this incident: "Jewish girls are beautiful, and it is only their poverty which renders them unattractive."

• *Nedarim 66a*

## THE LIMITS OF AGENCY

A person can appoint an agent to act in his behalf, and the agent's action is considered as his own. We have already encountered this broad rule of *shlichut* — agency — in our own *mesechta* (36b) regarding someone appointing an agent to tithe his produce in his behalf. In other parts of the Talmud we learn of the ability to effect marriage and divorce through an agent.

Can a Jew appoint an agent to sit in a *succah* for him on the holiday of Succot, or to put on *tefillin* in his behalf? This question has been raised by both early commentators (*Tesofot Ryd in Kiddushin*) and later ones (*Ketzot Hachoshen 182:1*). Although they differ in their explanations, there is a clear consensus that one cannot fulfill such a *mitzvah* through an agent.

The Ketzot bases his explanation on our *gemara*. A man has a right to cancel a vow made by his wife if he does so during the day that he heard it made. The Sage Romi bar Chama raised the question as to whether he must actually hear the vow or whether he can declare a general cancellation even if he did not hear it. The *gemara* attempts to resolve his question by citing a *beraita* dealing with the issue of a husband appointing an agent to cancel any vow his wife will make while he is away. Rabbi Yonatan's opinion is that the agent's annulment is valid. Even Rabbi Yoshiah who disagrees does so on the basis of his understanding of the Torah passage expressly limiting this power to the husband himself. There is a consensus, however, that agency should apply in theory to cancellation of vows. This seems to suggest that it is not necessary for the husband to actually hear the vow being made.

Even though this proof is rejected, it does raise an interesting point. How can we conclude, based on the fact that the husband is away, that there is no need for him to actually hear the vow? Perhaps he *does* need to hear the vow, but here he has appointed an agent to hear the vow in his behalf?

Rosh explains that although he can appoint an agent to cancel vows, it is impossible for the agent to serve in his behalf as the hearer of the vow. This is because agency is effective only in regard to acting, not to a passive experience like hearing.

The same is true in regard to *mitzvot* notes the Ketzot. When an agent performs the actions required for tithing, marriage or divorce, it is considered as if the one who appointed him is doing them. In regard to *tefillin*, however, the Torah commanded you to put *tefillin* on *your* arm and *your* head. When an agent puts them on *his* arm and *his* head it is truly considered as if *you* did the placing, because that is action. But you have placed it on *his* body, not yours, and have therefore failed to perform the *mitzvah*.

• Nedarim 72b

## CONDITION OF THE CONDITION

If a man makes a vow and states that he is doing so on the understanding that his friend can cancel it, does that friend have the power to do so?

Ran cites an opinion of some commentators that the friend does have the power of cancellation. They base this on the statement in our *gemara* of Rabbi Pinchas, that the reason a husband has the power to cancel his wife's vows is that when a married woman makes a vow, we assume that she does so with the understanding that her husband will approve. If this *assumption* is sufficient for us to relate to a woman's vow as being conditional on her husband's approval, then it makes sense that a person's *explicit statement* regarding the power of cancellation for his friend should also be considered as making that vow vulnerable to cancellation.

This is an incorrect comparison, says Ran. If we literally interpret Rabbi Pinchas' statement as meaning that a wife's vow is made with a formal condition that her husband approve, then there should be no requirement for the husband to use a particular text for his cancellation as is indicated later (77b). Rather, Rabbi Pinchas is merely providing a reason that the Torah explicitly delegated to the husband the power of cancellation: Since a woman presumably does not wish to make a vow which will not find favor with her husband, the Torah granted him the power to make a formal cancellation. Since the Torah does not mention such a power for one man in regard to another, he does not have the ability to make such a cancellation even if the vow-maker expressly wished to extend that power to him.

This is so, concludes Ran, only when the vow-maker wishes to delegate the power to *cancel*. If he makes an express condition, however, that his vow is dependent on his friend approving it, then the vow never takes effect if his friend expresses disapproval in any form, because the vow was made conditional on his approval.

• Nedarim 73b

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wishes you a happy  
and healthy new year

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### NITZAVIM

1. What was once the customary method of making a covenant?
2. What is the connection between the verse “*Atem nitzavim*” and the curses in the previous *parsha*?
3. Who are the wood-choppers and water-carriers?
4. One who ignores the Torah’s warnings “adds drunkenness to thirst.” What does this mean?
5. What two cities were destroyed along with S’dom and Amarah?
6. “The hidden things are for Hashem, our G-d, and the revealed things are for us...” What does this mean?
7. According to Rashi, how will the day of the ingathering of the exiles be “great and difficult?”
8. Where is the Torah not to be found? Where is it to be found?
9. When and where did the Jewish People become culpable for each other’s sins?
10. How do the earth and sky remind us to keep the *mitzvot*?

### VAYELECH

1. Moshe said, “I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in...” How do we know this does not refer to physical inability?
2. Which of Moshe’s statements to Yehoshua was later contradicted by Hashem’s command?
3. Why does the Torah refer to Succot of the eighth year as though it occurred during the *shemita* year?
4. Why does the Torah command that babies be brought to the Torah reading?
5. What does it mean that Hashem “hides His face”?
6. What function does the song *Ha’azinu* serve?
7. Which verse promises that the Torah will never be totally forgotten?
8. What is the difference of opinion regarding the placing of the Torah scroll which Moshe gave the *levi’im*?
9. On the day of Moshe’s death, why didn’t Moshe gather the people by blowing trumpets as he normally would?
10. Moshe said “For I know that after my death you will act corruptly,” but, in fact, this didn’t occur until after Yehoshua’s death. What does this teach us?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

### NITZAVIM

1. 29:11 - There would be two partitions, one to the right and one to the left, and the people would walk in between (to show acceptance of the covenant.)
2. 29:12 - The Jewish People asked, “Who can survive such curses?” Moshe responded, “You’ve done a lot to anger Hashem, and yet — “*atem nitzavim*” — you’re still standing before Him.”
3. 29:10 - Canaanites who joined the Jewish People under false pretenses.
4. 29:18 - He causes Hashem to reckon his unintentional sins alongside his intentional ones, punishing him for all.
5. 29:22 - Admah and Tsevoyim.
6. 29:28 - There is collective culpability only for “open” sins, but not for “hidden” ones.
7. 30:3 - It will be as if Hashem needs to take each individual by the hand and lead him out of exile.
8. 30:12-15 - The Torah is not found in heaven nor across the ocean. Rather, it is “very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart.”
9. 29:28 - When they crossed the Jordan and accepted the oath on Mt. Eval and Mt. Grizim.
10. 30:19 - The earth and heavenly bodies, although receiving neither reward nor punishment, always obey

Hashem’s will. How much more should we, who stand to receive reward or punishment, obey Hashem.

### VAYELECH

1. 31:2 - Because verse 34:7 says “His (Moshe’s) eye never dimmed, and his (youthful) moisture never departed.”
2. 31:7 - Moshe told Yehoshua to share his leadership with the Elders. Hashem later commanded Yehoshua to rule alone.
3. 31:10 - Because the laws of the seventh year still apply to the harvest.
4. 31:12 - To give reward to those who bring them.
5. 31:17 - He ignores their distress.
6. 31:21 - It warns what will befall the Jewish People if they abandon Torah.
7. 31:21 - “For (the Torah) will not be forgotten from the mouth of their offspring.”
8. 31:26 - Whether it was placed outside but adjacent to the Ark, or inside next to the Tablets.
9. 31:28 - Blowing the trumpets expressed Moshe’s dominion, and “there is no dominion on the day of death.” (*Kohelet* 8)
10. 31:29 - That a person’s student is as dear to him as himself — As long as Yehoshua was alive, it was as though Moshe himself were alive.

## CIRCULAR REASONING

**From: M. Stolzenbach in Brentwood, TN**  
<Stolzi@aol.com>

Dear Rabbi,

A friend asked me about the description of the circular brass pool in the Temple. (1 Kings, 7:23) Skeptics say that if this pool was 10 across and 30 around, then G-d doesn't seem to know the value of "pi." Either that, or the pool was not exactly circular.

One friend retorted (this was in e-mail) that approximate measurements are enough for some purposes. But my friend said that G-d certainly ought to know the exact facts, and this proved that the Bible was written by men, not by G-d. Can you help him, and me? (By the way, he liked your explanation concerning the evidence for the Exodus.) Thanks.

Dear M. Stolzenbach,

First let's define our terms: Pie is the relationship of one's belly button to one's belt buckle.

But seriously. The verse says that Solomon constructed a circular pool that was "ten cubits from edge to edge...and 30 around." The question is, how can this be? If it was ten across, it would be more than thirty around. (It would be closer to 31.4, a difference of 1.4 cubits, or approximately 3 feet.)

This has nothing to do with "knowing the value of pi." It's a simple question of circling the pool with a tape measure. Could it be that Solomon — builder of one of the architectural wonders of the ancient world, the Temple — had a tape measure that was off by three feet?

Obviously, as the commentaries explain, the verse is offering an approximation. There are many such instances where the Torah uses approximate numbers. Just one example: When the Torah tallies the members of each of the 12 tribes (Numbers 1:20-46), each tribe's population is rounded to the nearest 50.

Why does the Torah give approximations? To offer us relevant information without burdening us with details, details often dealt with in the Oral Torah. In the case of "Solomon's Pool," the approximation teaches us that in Jewish legal matters relating to construction, we may use this 1 to 3 ratio as an approximation regarding rabbinical law.

Besides, there is no number to express the value of "pi." (That's why it's called "pi" and not written as a number.) No matter how specific the verse would be, you could always ask, "why wasn't it more specific?" That is, if the verse had said the pool was 31.4 units around, you could say, "that's wrong, it was really 31.415..." and so on.

In conclusion, the Torah sometimes approximates, and in

the case of "pi" approximation is mandatory, and none of this shows anything about the Torah's authorship, Moses' ability to count or Solomon's ability to wield a tape measure!

A fascinating footnote for the mathematically-minded: The Vilna Gaon enlightens us to the fact that the value of "pi," 3.1415, is hinted in this verse. In Hebrew, each letter has a number associated with it. In the above verse, the word "circumference" (kav) is written one way "kuf vav heh" which equals 111 but it is pronounced a slightly different way "kuf vav" which equals 106. (That is, there is a stated value and an actual value.) The ratio of these two numbers equals the ratio of 3 ("pi" as stated by the verse) 3.1415 (the actual value of "pi" to the 10,000th).

$$(111 / 106) \times 3 = 3.1415.$$

Sources:

- Rambam, Commentary on the Mishna
- Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 363:22
- See Eruvin 14a

## GOOD NEWS FOR JEWS?

**From: Al Samarov**  
<Realsmart@Juno.com>

Dear Rabbi,

These days, I'm much more interested in the Olympics than in politics, but I have one question for you: What do you think about a person as Jewish as Joe Lieberman is, in a position as prominent as the Vice Presidency is? Is it "good for the Jews?"

**From: Elana in Memphis, TN**  
<eleto@aol.com>

Dear Rabbi,

Hi! I don't know if y'all have received a lot of questions about this, but I was just wondering what the Orthodox think of this new Joe Lieberman guy running for vice president. Do y'all think it be good for the Jews and Israel or not?

Dear Al Samarov and Elana,

My great-great-grandfathers might have known; they were prophets. I am not. Certainly Mr. Lieberman personally is pro-Israel. But what might be the reaction of others to the phenomenon of a Jew in such a high office?

Let me offer one classical Jewish approach to this question, although there certainly may be others: The verse says that in exile, the Jews will suffer "many conflicting evils." The commentaries explain: "Evils that conflict with one another, like the sting of a wasp and a scorpion."

The remedy for a wasp sting, says tradition, is cold water. Hot water aggravates it. For a scorpion bite, it's the exact opposite: Hot water heals, cold water hurts. But what if

*continued on page eight*

Give your fellow the benefit of the doubt, even if you think he has performed a...

## TALLISJACK

I recently bought a new *tallis* and *tallis* bag for the first time in more than 30 years. During the week, I store it in a cabinet at our *shul* (synagogue) until it is needed on Shabbos. One Shabbos, I arrived to find the *tallis* and bag missing. I was distressed.

When I entered the main sanctuary, I saw someone wearing what appeared to be my *tallis* (of a distinctive style), with the same bag (also distinctive) nearby. Apparently, this man had borrowed my *tallis*, thinking it wouldn't be missed. I

didn't know how to raise the subject without the risk of embarrassing him or appearing accusatory, such was my state of mind over losing my new *tallis*. So, I said nothing.

At the *kiddush*, I saw what looked like my *tallis* bag sitting in our social hall. Assuring myself that the "borrower" had already gone home, I opened the bag and found some of my personal items inside; indeed, it was mine.

I mentioned to a friend where I had found it. "Yes," he replied, "It's been sitting there all week." Apparently, I forgot to put it away the previous Shabbos!

A couple weeks later, I saw that other person in *shul* again, with his *tallis* and *tallis* bag, that just happened to match mine!

• David Weiner, Dallas, Texas <dweiner@cyberramp.net>

"What, Me Worry?...continued from page one

In last week's *parsha*, the Torah spells out the dire results of collective Jewish "ostrich-ism." Ninety-eight curses — each more chilling than the former. After hearing such a litany, a person could think, "Okay — but that's for you religious guys. I don't believe — so I'm going to be okay."

The Chafetz Chaim used to say that people at a funeral think two

clubs are represented there: The "live-ers" and the "die-ers." And everyone believes they belong to the "live-ers." The truth is — no one gets out of here alive. When a person comes before the Heavenly court, he will not be able to plead atheism.

*"And it will be that when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself in his heart, saying, 'Peace will*

*be with me...'"*

One week to Rosh Hashana.... If there's one thing we can do in these crucial seven days, it is to realize that the slogan "peace will be with us" is a self-deluding folly. It is the slogan of the ostrich. And for the ostrich — there is no peace.

May G-d write us all in the Book of Life for a good year! (Ostriches included.)

שנה טובה

בתיבה וחתומה טובה

The

*Ohr Somayach family wishes you and yours  
 a prosperous, healthy and sweet new year*

continued from page six

someone gets stung by a bee and a scorpion at the same time? He can't heal it with hot water; he can't heal it with cold water. That's called "conflicting evils."

Sadly, this fairly well describes the Jewish position during much of our history. When we are weak, we're oppressed because we are weak. When we are strong, we're hated because we are strong. We seem to get stung either way.

In another vein, note that when Esther became queen of Persia, Mordechai instructed her to *hide* the fact that she was Jewish? Why? Among other reasons, Mordechai didn't want the Jews in Persia to say "Hey! We've got a sister in the

palace!" and thereby increase their complacency and lessen their feelings of dependence on G-d.

But in the U.S. today, one hopes that complacency is already at its lowest, and that the nomination of a person who observes halacha and who calls Judaism "the anchor of his life" would evoke renewed interest in Judaism and Torah observance.

Sources:

- Devarim 31:17
- Da'at Zekeinim Mi'ba'alei Hatosefot, *ibid.*

## KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

"You will return to Hashem and listen to His voice.... And Hashem will circumcise your heart.... And you will return to Hashem...and do all His commandments." (30:2-8)

After we have already "returned to Hashem," why will there be a further need to "circumcise our hearts?" And why, after that, does the verse repeat "And you will return to Hashem"?

### Answer:

There are three parts to the observance of the Torah's com-

mandments. One, the study of Torah; two, refraining from what the Torah forbids; and three, doing the positive commandments.

All three are represented in the above verses: First we will "return to Hashem and listen to His voice," i.e., we will study Torah which is the expression of Hashem's voice. Then Hashem will "circumcise our hearts" and cut away our desire for forbidden things. Finally, we will return to Hashem and "do all His commandments," i.e., the commandments which require "doing."

Do you have a KASHA? Write to [kasha@ohr.org.il](mailto:kasha@ohr.org.il) with your questions on any Parsha!

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"Hain (Behold), the time is coming for you to die...." (31:14) Why did Hashem announce Moshe's death using the word *hain*?

*Hain* is spelled with the Hebrew letters "*hei*" (which equals five) and "*noon*" (which equals 50). These letters are unique in that neither one can pair with another letter to add up to 10 or 100. *Alef* (1) plus *tet* (9) equals 10, *bet* (2) plus *chet* (8) equals 10, etc. But "*Hei*" (5) has no such "partner." The same is true for *noon* (50); it has no pair among the numbers from 10 to 90 with which to add up to 100, as the other letters do.

Because Moshe is unique among the prophets, his leaving this world and entering the next world is announced with the two letters that are unique among the letters.

- Da'at Zekeinim Mi'ba'alei Hatosefot

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

**RAMBAN**  
 29:18 Refusing the Covenant  
 29:28 Accidental Sins  
 31:1 Bidding Farewell  
 31:2 Loss of Knowledge

**SFORNO**  
 29:18 Denying the Curse

30:6 Cleaving to Hashem  
 30:9-10 Our Own Merit  
 31:18 Hiding of Hashem

**SEFER HACHINUCH**  
 612 The Gathering  
 613 Writing a Sefer Torah