

O H R N E T

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S P E C I A L C H A G I M I S S U E

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Ha'azinu

SHABBY OLD JAKE

"For G-d's portion is His People; Yaakov, the measure of His inheritance..." (32:9)

The Jewish People are the only people in the world to have become a nation prior to having a land. All other nations developed through pragmatic alliance produced by a shared culture, influenced by geography, location, and climate, which in itself shaped the deities that they worshipped. The land gave the people their identity.

Not so the Jewish People.

G-d placed us as a fully-fledged nation into a land that was already cultivated and matured by other nations.

The task of the Jewish People is to bring its spiritual, moral and social culture, fully formed by G-d, into the land, into the world. Not the reverse.

What the soil of the land is to other nations, G-d is to us. Our sustenance both physical and spiritual comes only from G-d. In their essence, the other nations' portion is their land; in our essence, it is G-d.

"For G-d's portion is His People; Yaakov, the measure of His inheritance..."

It is for that reason that our root-name is Yaakov and not Yisrael. Yaakov, the one who hangs onto the heel of history, who finds himself homeless and unbefriended throughout the long night of exile; Yaakov who has no chance to build himself a land, an empire, and a beautiful culture that he can worship; Yaakov, who is the pariah, the outcast and thus defines himself by one thing only — he is G-d's inheritance.

The other nations have had no time for G-d and less for His Torah. They were too busy worshipping the gods that they believed had made them great; their motives were far from the sanctification of morals, of truth justice and love, that is both the Torah's demand and its purpose.

So ironically, it is shabby old Yaakov, sullied and bloodied by the harshness of exile, rejected by the united nations of the world who had the privilege of becoming G-d's inheritance in this world.

• Adapted from Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch

Bereshet

HOW TO PERFORM A MIRACLE

"In the Beginning..." (1:1)

There's an old saying about building a house that goes, "The first ninety percent of the work takes ninety percent of the time, and the remaining ten percent of the work takes the other ninety percent of the time."

When considering any task, we blithely assume that all we need is to do this and do this and do this and then — then it'll be finished; our project, in all its glory, will spring suddenly into existence. So often we become frustrated when things don't go according to plan.

But if you think about it, why should they?

We assume that the actual segues from the potential; that it's all one system. In reality, plans exist in a different dimen-

sion to implementation. The gap between preparation and execution, potential and actual, is as cavernous as the gap between dreams and the waking world.

The fact that things have been done in the past, buildings built, ships constructed, records recorded and paintings painted — even in their trillions — does not lessen the fact that bringing something from the world of *could-be* into the world of *is*, is a leap of dimension, a change of magnitude.

In other words — a miracle.

The Jewish year has two beginnings. The first of Tishrei, Rosh Hashana, is known as the beginning of the new year; however, the first of Nissan is also called the beginning of the

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Ha'azinu

Almost all of Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the Heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that G-d “pulls the strings” of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. G-d's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance and for defeating their enemies. But this physical bounty leads the people to become over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty

idols and powerless gods and indulge in all kinds of depravity. G-d will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, G-d will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental — that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between G-d and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. G-d will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His own enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. G-d then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

Bereshet

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing “sin,” Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain bearing and raising children. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noah. After the death of Sheith, Mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out Man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noah, finds favor with G-d.

Noach

It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient ani-

mals to re-populate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days Noach sends the dove once more; the dove does not return. G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

- Conflicting claims re *ketubah* obligation
- Proofs of marriage as a virgin
- Singing and dancing at a wedding
- Honor shown to a bride, a king and a deceased
- Conflicting claims re ownership of a field or payment of a debt
- Witnesses who discredit the value of their signatures on financial document
- When martyrdom is required
- Conflict between two pairs of witnesses
- Mounds of earth suspected of being graves
- Certification by witnesses of their signatures
- When a witness can also serve as a judge
- When one is believed in his redeeming claim because he could have withheld his initial damaging one
- When a woman is believed to say that she received a divorce

HONORING THE KING

Two processions of diametrically opposed natures meet and one must give way to the other. The funeral procession is obligated to seek an alternate route so that the company leading the bride to her *chupah* can pass.

If either of these two should have such an encounter with the procession of the king it must defer to him. This is perhaps based on the wording of the Torah command regarding giving honor to the king: “Set, you shall set upon yourself a king.” (*Devarim* 17:15) The double phrase is seen by our Sages as an indication that the honor of the king is so paramount that even if he waives the honor due to him we are still obligated. This can readily be understood in regard to the public which must continue to honor the king even if he declines. But what about the king himself — does he have the privilege of acting in accordance with his declining the honor due him?

Our *gemara* relates that King Agrippas once allowed a bridal procession to take precedence over his own and was praised for this by the Sages. The question is raised as to why he as praised if the rule is that a king’s honor cannot be

waived. The answer given is that this encounter took place at a crossroads where it was not at all obvious that the king was deferring to the bride but that he was headed for the alternate road.

What emerges from this discussion is that even if the king wishes to defer to the bride where it is obvious that he is declining the honor due to him he cannot do so. But isn’t his own honor within his jurisdiction to decline?

The solution to this problem is based on an understanding of the honor that the Torah accorded to the king. “Earthly kingship reflects the Heavenly one” say our Sages. When a subject honors his king he is reminded of the recognition due to the King of kings. It is therefore incumbent on the earthly king himself to maintain the dignity of his royal office and to avoid any action that will detract from it.

A FRUITFUL REMINDER

Ketzatzah was the name of an unusual rite whose purpose was to preserve the purity of a family’s lineage. If a member of the family married a woman unfit for him the rest of the family gathered together to make sure that this mismatch would be remembered so that the children born from it should not mingle with the offspring of the relatives. The tactic used was breaking open a container filled with fruits and inviting all present to partake of them as a memento for generations of the undesirable marriage.

Maharsha explains that the principal objective of making the fruits available was to impress the youngsters who enjoy fruit and would rush to grab some. Their memory of the event, it was felt, would last much longer as the *mishneh* in *Masechet Avot* (4:20) points out: “One who teaches a child is similar to one writing with ink on a new paper.”

Even if the adults present at this rite would forget the incident of the undesirable marriage, it was hoped that the child who so enjoyed the fruit would recall why it was provided and would be capable of testifying for the court regarding the status of the family that emerged from that marriage.

• *Ketubot* 28b

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WHAT THE Sages SAY

“If Reuven owes money to Shimon and Shimon owes money to Levi, then Levi can demand payment from Reuven.”

• *Rabbi Natan - Ketubot* 19a

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THE SECRETS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Four categories of capital punishment existed when the Sanhedrin had the power to inflict the death penalty on offenders, each of them suited to the nature of the sin. Even after capital punishment was no longer practiced Heaven saw to it that those committing grave sins died violent deaths in the manner similar to the sort of execution that would have been carried out on them in the days of the Sanhedrin.

How is it then, asks Tosefot, that we see idol worshippers and other serious offenders dying natural deaths.

The answer given is that perhaps unknown to us those sinners repented and were forgiven or at least had their sentence lightened. Tosefot adds that there may even be a possibility of a particular merit that the sinner had which spared him from a violent death and entitled him to have his retribution postponed for the afterlife.

Maharsha extends this last point to explain why we sometimes find righteous people like Rabbi Akiva dying violent deaths. In such cases the reverse is true. These saintly people are granted an opportunity in their lifetime here on earth to achieve atonement for any sin they have committed so that they can enter the afterlife with a clear record.

TWO-TIME LOSER

Katlanit is the term used to describe a woman who twice became widowed and marriage with whom is considered a danger to another husband and therefore forbidden.

This is hinted at in our *mishna* and elaborated upon elsewhere (*Mesechta Yevamot* 64b) Two reasons are given there for this danger with the accepted one being that a woman twice widowed is assumed to be fated (“*mazal*”) to have her husbands die.

The question that arises is why the same rule does not apply to a two-time widower. Should we not assume that he is fated to lose his wives and that it should therefore be forbidden to him to marry a third time?

The answer given in the Responsa of Rabbi Asher (Rosh) is that it is not the *mazal* of the two-time widow that her husbands should die but rather that she should not have the financial support of a husband. This does not apply to

the man who is not dependent on his wife for support.

According to this approach the question arises as to what the ruling will be in a case where the two-time widow is a woman of means who can support a third husband.

Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (“Noda B’Yehuda”) ruled that she could indeed marry a third time. His opinion was, however, challenged by Rabbi Moshe Sofer (“Chatam Sofer”) who ruled that such a marriage would be forbidden.

• *Ketubot* 43b

WORSE THAN THE CRUEL RAVEN

How long is a father obligated to provide for his child? There are two stages in the life of a child in regard to the support due him or her from the father. In a later *gemara* (*Ketubot* 65b) it is clearly stated that he must support his child until the age of six. But in our own *gemara* we learn that when the seat of the Sanhedrin was located in Usha a decree was made that a father should support his children until they reach bar/bat mitzvah age.

While the first stage support is mandatory and can be enforced by the rabbinical court through confiscation of resources, the second stage is enforced only through the kind of social pressure mentioned in our *gemara*.

When the case of a father reluctant to support his children beyond the age of six came before Rabbi Chisda he insisted that the fellow embarrass himself by publicly declaring that he is worse than the cruel raven who cares for his offspring.

The Sage Rava tickled the conscience of a reluctant father by asking him whether he was comfortable with the idea of his children being dependent on charity.

This last point leads to the final halachic aspect of this issue. Although no coercion is carried out when the child is over six this applies only when the father is not a man of considerable means capable of giving substantial charity. If he does have such means he can indeed be coerced to support his children as a form of charity.

• *Ketubot* 49b

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wishes all of Israel a year filled with health, happiness & peace

TEN DAYS THAT SHAKE THE WORLD

Ten days that shake the world! From the first day of Rosh Hashana until and including Yom Kippur all mankind stands in judgment before Heaven. This is why they are referred to as “Days of Awe”.

Do you see the world trembling with awe? And would you truthfully say that you are shaking with fear of ending up with an unfavorable judgment for the year that has just begun?

This is the real challenge of this very special part of the year. Only when one actually imagines himself being judged for life or death can he be moved to seek atonement for the mistakes of the year gone by in the spirit of

the “Ten Days of Return”.

For Jews living in Israel who constantly face the danger of terrorism and war, it should not be so difficult to shake a little with fear of the future. If the American president at the outset of World War Two coined the phrase “We have nothing to fear but fear itself”, we must turn it around and admit that “We have nothing to fear but the lack of fear”.

Fear of Heavenly judgment concerning the future of the Jewish state will hopefully inspire more and more Jews to return to G-d in the Ten Day of Return and secure Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

ROSH HASHANA HOSPITALITY

“Tekiot, Tekiot!” This was the excited response of the Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Maran Harav Shach, *zatzal*, to the fellow urging him to slow down as he raced from the yeshiva to his nearby home to make kiddush during the break in the Rosh Hashana service before the sounding of the shofar.

“But they won’t start without the Rosh Hayeshiva,” observed his cautious escort, “since he is the one who announces which ‘tekot’ sounds are to be made.”

The Rosh Hayeshiva was so excited about starting the tekot on time that he continued his fast pace, made a quick kiddush, took a fast bite and was already on his way back

to the yeshiva. He suddenly turned to his escort and asked him if he had made kiddush. When his hemming and hawing convinced Rav Shach that he had indeed not made kiddush, Rav Shach insisted that he return home with him. He poured him wine for kiddush, put out a plate of cookies and told him to take his time and eat comfortably. He even took off his coat and opened a *gemara* while he waited.

“But tekot will begin in a little while,” exclaimed the surprised guest.

“Don’t worry,” came the reply from this Torah giant performing the mitzvah of hospitality. “I am the one who announces the tekot to be sounded and they won’t start without me.”

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Rosh Hashana is the birthday of mankind. The first day of Tishrei was the sixth day of creation when the Creator said “Let us make a man.”

The first man, Adam, was formed from matter taken from all over the universe whose creation preceded him. His head was formed from the dust of Eretz Yisrael, his torso from that of Babylon and his limbs from dust taken from every other land. (*Mesechta Sanhedrin 38b*)



Maharsha explains that since the entire universe was created for the use of man, Adam was formed from all its parts to symbolically give him domain over the entire universe. It was therefore logical that his head, repository of his spiritual and intellectual power, should be formed from the land which is the most hospitable to wisdom — the very air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise — and where the soul has access in Jerusalem to the Gateway to Heaven.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Ha'azinu

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

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ha'azinu's Questions!

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

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Elyahu "My Father." (*Melachim II 2:12*)
7. 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avot*.
9. 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings."
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. G-d would not let His name be desecrated like this.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to G-d.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys G-d's commands, all the more so should we.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Bereshet

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. G-d blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from G-d?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked?"
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Bereshet's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that G-d, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - G-d saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. G-d created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. G-d commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced. Therefore G-d took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

PARSHA Q&A ?

NOACH

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did G-d tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did G-d postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did G-d do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Noach’s Questions!

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

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, “G-d is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - G-d told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” G-d surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven amot.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it’s better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from G-d, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach’s disgrace to Ham. And because Ham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Ham’s fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against G-d.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yiscah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

AGE OF THE UNIVERSE

Michael from Los Angeles wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

It is hard for me to understand the fact that many relics such as dinosaur bones, cave art, and rock formations are thought to exist for millions of years. I asked this to a local Rabbi. He told me that dinosaur bones were planted by G-d to test our faith. I do not really understand this answer. How can you explain this apparent contradiction with the Jewish calendar?

Dear Michael,

The resolution of the apparent contradiction between the “scientific” age of the universe and the Jewish date of 5758 years since Creation has two standard approaches:

The scientific estimate is true, and the text of Genesis can be reconciled: For example, saying that the six “days” are not really days, but rather six “time periods.”

The Jewish date is true, and the scientific estimate must be explained (away).

Several satisfactory explanations following the first approach can be found in the book *Challenge* and I recommend that you look there. Since you asked about the second approach, I will address it.

It’s definitely *possible* for G-d to create a world that looks older than it is. Adam was created as an adult. Observing him a few minutes after he was created, you would assume him to be at least twenty years old. The Garden of Eden had full-grown trees laden with fruit. According to the Torah text, these trees were no more than three days old.

Let’s take this idea a step further: A star 10 million light-years from the earth *could have* been created with its light *already* reaching the earth. The star would appear 10 million years old, even though it was just created.

Now you’re probably thinking, “But why would G-d do that? Why create bones, artifacts, partially decayed radium, potassium-argon, uranium, red-shifted light from space, etc.

— all pointing to an age which is not true?”

Strictly speaking, this isn’t a problem. *Not knowing why G-d did something doesn’t prove that He didn’t do it.* But I’ll try to answer this anyway:

The purpose of this world is to *hide* G-d’s presence. This allows us to exercise free will. In fact, the Hebrew word for “world” — *olam* — means “hiding.” Evidence which “hides” the age of the universe could be part of G-d’s general “policy” of hiding.

Now you might say “According to this we can *never* rely on our observations. Doesn’t this approach negate *all* scientific findings?”

No. This approach merely questions evidence that contradicts *other* reliable evidence.

Let me give you an analogy: Suppose George is accused of murder. We find his fingerprints at the scene of the crime, the murder weapon on his premises, and he has a motive. The defense argues that George was framed. Will anyone take that seriously? But suppose that reliable witnesses testify that they saw George 100 miles from the scene at the time of the murder. Suddenly it becomes appropriate to take the “frame-up” defense seriously.

Here too, scientific observations have to be understood in light of the *other* available evidence — i.e., the Torah. The Jewish People were *eyewitness* at Sinai who *observed* the giving of the Torah (hence the term “observant Jews?”). For us the Torah’s account of events is first-hand testimony. Therefore, the idea that scientific observations *might* be misleading should be taken seriously.

Speaking of archeological finds that ought not be taken too seriously, did you hear this one?

Caveman 1: Ugh!

Caveman 2: Ugh! Ugh!

Caveman 1: Stop changing the subject!

Sources:

- *Challenge, Carmell and Domb, 1978, Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, pp. 124-41, 164-75.*
- *ibid., pp. 142-49.*

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LOVE of the LAND

VOLUME ONE - THE GLADSTONE EDITION

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year.

How can there be two beginnings to something?

Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the year spiritually. This was the day when God thought to create existence. This is why we refer to Rosh Hashana as *harat olam*, the day of the world's conception. God "conceived" the world on Rosh Hashana, however the first of Nissan is the day that the world became a physical existence. Thus Nissan is related to the word *nitzan*, which means 'first bloom'. Just as the first bloom is the beginning of the completed state of the flower, so Nissan marks the first bloom of existence. Thus Nissan is always in the Spring when new life 'springs' forth, blooming from the earth.

After the original creation *ex nihilo*, G-d does not bring anything new into existence; rather He forms and re-forms, using the existing building blocks of creation. Anything we manage to create uses pre-fabricated pieces of existence in new and different permutations.

With one exception.

The process of actualizing our thoughts and aspirations, of giving substance to our dreams, is akin to God 'thinking' to create the world and then bringing His thoughts to fruition.

When we manage to transform a concept into a reality, we are imitating G-d actualizing His 'thoughts' to bring existence of out total nothingness.

Maybe we should remember that we just performed a miracle.

Sources: *Tosefot Rosh Hashana, 27a; Shir Hashirim 6:11; Ramban Bereshet 1:1*

THE HANDS OF THE ARTIST

"May G-d extend Yafet, but he will dwell in the tents of Shem..." (9:27)

Any recorded medium, be it video or sound, has a tremendous advantage and serious drawback — and ironically they are both the same.

You can change things forever.

In a concert hall, the singer has only one chance to hit that top C — if he or she blows it, that's it. In the recording studio, the possibility exists to go for that top C *ad infinitum* — and often *ad nauseam*.

As in so many things, possibility commands necessity. "Let's just give it one more take..." The road to insanity is paved with the millstone of perfectionism.

Worse however, perfectionism very often leads to mediocrity.

A well-known record producer used to quip in the studio, "Let's improve it till it's dreadful."

He told me that whenever he finished a record there were parts with which he was less than satisfied; maybe a certain instrument could have been louder or softer, or a piece of the vocal wasn't quite smooth enough.

Ironically, if the record became a hit, often the parts with which he was the least enamored were the parts that made the record original and unique.

Why?

One of the prerequisites of being a good artist is knowing how to get out of your own way.

All creation begins with imitation. But if art never escapes imitation then it is doomed to blandness; it will never be more than a recapitulation of what preceded it. Great art has the ability to lead you down the path of the familiar and then reveal something you never dreamed of.

How does it do this?

The greatest artist whoever lived was called Betzalel. It was Betzalel who built the Mishkan in the desert after the Jewish People left Egypt. The greatness of Betzalel's creation was that succeeded in doing what every artist dreams of — to make heaven dwell on earth. To make the spiritual dwell within the physical. The Mishkan was the way in which the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence became apparent in this world.

Betzalel knew how to take the building blocks of creation, the *aleph bet*, and with mystical *kavanot* (thoughts) combine the letters to create G-d's dwelling place on earth, similar to the way G-d Himself created the whole universe with those same letters.

Betzalel's name means "In the shadow of G-d" — *B'tzeil Keil*. The greatest artist is he who can get out of his own way and allow G-d to paint the picture.

Noach's son, Yafet, was the father of Yavan, who was the founder of Ancient Greece. Greece, and all its gifts to the world: aesthetics, poetics, drama — the depiction of the world as it looks from the outside in, finds its true purpose when Yafet dwells in the tents of Shem, the tents of Torah — for it is the Torah that gives us a view of the world from the inside out.

The greatest art comes when the artist recognizes that he is merely a tool in the Hands of The Artist.

A POUND FOR WEIGHING *Chest-Beating on Yom Kippur*

Reflections on Yom Kippur by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Pounding one's chest conjures up memories of jungle king Tarzan demonstrating his primitive sense of macho.

But if chest-beating is viewed as a sign of masculine strength in the secular world, it is appreciated as a sign of human weakness in the Jewish world.

Throughout Yom Kippur a Jew pounds his chest as he confesses his sins before his Creator on the day when his judgment is sealed. Once right before the Fast Day begins, and five times throughout the night and day of Yom Kippur, the Jew recites his long list of sins, each of which is accompanied by a fist striking at the heart

Teshuva — repentance and return — is comprised of regret for past sin, resolution for the future and a verbal admission of the sin. All of these ingredients are readily understandable as being indispensable elements for genuine return to G-d. But why is it necessary to pound the chest while making that admission of guilt?

The answer can perhaps be found in the dialogue between Iyov (Job) and the friends who came to console him for the loss of his children, his health and his fortune that Heaven had inflicted on him as a trial of his faith in G-d. On the verge of total despair, Iyov presented an argument that attempted, says the Talmud (*Bava Batra 16*), to free all of mankind from responsibility for their sins. The evil inclination which G-d created to challenge man in his use of his free will is so powerful, argued Iyov, that man is as helpless in being a sinner as an animal with uncloven hooves is in being not kosher for consumption. To this, his consolers responded that G-d had indeed created a powerful poison to persuade man to sin, but He also created an equally powerful antidote called Torah. Man could therefore not blame his Creator for his own failures to meet the

challenges to his free will.

Iyov's futile effort at self-justification echoes throughout the generations. It is heard in the international courtrooms from defendants on trial for crimes against mankind who plead they were helpless because they were only obeying orders in perpetrating their atrocities. It is heard in local courtrooms where a glib lawyer pleads for his criminal client on the grounds that his crime was not the product of any evil in him, but rather the result of a problematic childhood, corrupting environment or economic despair.

It is also heard in the privacy of our hearts whenever we feel too weak to overcome temptation or to admit our sin in failing to do so. How many times have we heard ourselves and others say "That's the way I am!" "I'm only human!" when backed against the wall with criticism of our behavior?

This is why a Jew pounds upon his heart, home of the evil inclination and the good one, as if to say "You caused me to sin!" The Jew who is courageous enough to confess his sin is actually admitting that he cannot "pass the buck" of responsibility to the Creator, but rather declares that "the buck stops here!" At this moment of truth he avoids putting all the blame for his shortcomings on his parents, his teachers, his neighbors and friends and admits he is ultimately the guilty party. In the same heart and mind where lurks the poison of the evil inclination there is available the good one which obedience to Torah can activate as an antidote.

The repentant Jew pounds on his heart as he imagines the Heavenly Court weighing his virtues against his faults on this Day of Judgment. He knows that each pound will help to tip the scale in behalf of a favorable judgment for a good year to come.

The Succah & the Four Species

TWO WAYS TO UNITY

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

At first sight, the *mitzvot* of the festival of *Succot* seem to be divided into two distinct categories: The *succah* on the one hand, and the four species (the *lulav*, *etrog*, *hadass* and *arava*) on the other. Is there a connection between the two?

Let's answer one question with another: Why do we go out and live in a *Succah* after Yom Kippur?

On Rosh Hashana, G-d judges the world, and on Yom Kippur He seals the decree. Now, it may be that He has decreed that the Jewish People go into *galut* (exile). So we make ourselves a *succah* and "exile" ourselves from our homes, and G-d considers this as though we had in reality gone into exile.

This is a very strange idea — how can it be, that by merely walking a few meters from our houses it is as though we had gone into exile? ... and what a pleasant exile at that! Let us try and understand how the "exile" of the *succah* works.

The Distance Between Us

Another question: What makes people distant from each other?

Answer: The desire to take, to grab.

The underlying rationale of acquisitiveness is that whatever you have depletes from what I have. In other words - you are using my space, you are breathing my air, you are filling up my world! Everything you have means I have less! When a person feels like this, the very existence of other people bothers him. This is what is called *Sinat Chinam* — baseless hatred. *Sinat*

Chinam brings exile to the Jewish People. Two thousand years ago the Second *Beit Hamikdash* was destroyed and we were exiled and dispersed all over the world because of *Sinat Chinam*.

But the punishment for *Sinat Chinam* — exile — is also its cure. Exile causes a person to feel rootless and destabilized, and inevitably this negates his trait of acquisitiveness. The feeling that others are depriving me from what is rightfully mine is replaced by a feeling of unity, of "I may have very little, but you are welcome to share it!" And so the punishment of exile cures the separation between people.

The *succah* represents the nullification of material power and acquisitiveness. However wealthy a person may be, he is obliged to leave the realm of his wealth, his house and all its symbols of power and status — all the things that make him think that the world is his — and dwell in a temporary dwelling. Destabilized, he feels how much he needs G-d to protect him. That his own power is nothing. He dwells under the "shade of faith." By living in a temporary dwelling, he sensitizes himself to the very temporary nature of his dwelling in this world.

This creates the sense of vulnerability and instability, which is the hallmark of exile. It is this feeling of exile which unifies the Jewish People and nullifies the selfishness that leads to *Sinat Chinam*, which was the reason for the verdict of exile in the first place. And, remarkably, by moving just a few meters out of our homes, we have in reality experienced *galut*.

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THE LAST LAUGH

Question: In my business affairs I am sometimes ridiculed by non-observant Jews or Gentiles for my religious appearance and practices. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The Chafetz Chaim compared your situation to the rookie businessman who was greeted with laughter and mockery by the seasoned merchants when he brought his goods into the marketplace.

The newcomer ignored their warnings that he would

never be successful in his undertaking. He continued with determination and eventually became a very prosperous businessman. He indeed had the last laugh at those who mocked him.

In the same manner, concluded the Chafetz Chaim, a Jew must pay no attention to those who make fun of him for living a Torah life. This world is like a marketplace and whoever studies Torah and does *mitzvot* will earn great profits in the World to Come. There he will have the last laugh at those who laughed at him here.

OHRNET Special _____

The Succah & the Four Species - TWO WAYS TO UNITY

SUCCOT

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Another Way to Unity...

But how do the *Four Species* fit into the picture?

The *Four Species* represent four types of Jew. The *lulav* is from a palm tree. The palm has no smell, but it has fruit, the date. It represents the Jew who has Torah learning but doesn't observe the *mitzvot*. The *hadass* (myrtle) has fragrance but no fruit. That's the Jew who keeps *mitzvot* but has no Torah learning. The *etrog* has fragrance and is also an edible fruit. That's someone who has both Torah and *mitzvot*; and the *arava* (willow) has neither fruit nor smell — he has neither Torah nor *mitzvot*. G-d says that it is impossible for any of these

types to be lost; rather they should be “bound together” like the *Four Species* (which we bind together). Then, the ones with Torah and *mitzvot* will atone for those who have neither, and the merit of those who had neither Torah nor *mitzvot* will be that they were the means, the vessel by which the others could do the *mitzvah* of elevating them through being joined together with them. The end result is that unity reigns amongst the Jewish People. They are bound together like the *Four Species*. The *succah* and the four species — two ways to unity.

• Adapted from Michtav M'Elياهو

The Ohr Somayach Family wishes you and yours and all of Israel a year filled with happiness, health and peace.