# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

#### PARSHA INSIGHTS

#### A HAPPY LOT

"...on Mount Sinai..." (25.1)

The mitzva of shemitah commands the Jewish People to stop working their fields every seventh year and promises that miraculously, Hashem will provide for their needs.

However, the miracle of *shemitah* varied according to their level of *bita-chon* (trust in Hashem).

When the Jewish People had a high level of *bitachon*, the amount of food that was harvested in the sixth year was no different from any other year — however, it was able to nourish for three years instead of one.

When the level of the Jewish People's trust in Hashem was low, however, then the fields yielded, in actual terms, three times the amount of a normal year.

The first way was through a hidden miracle, the second through an open miracle. Why did the *lower* level of trust invoke the seemingly *greater*, open miracle?

An open miracle is always a 'secondbest' in Hashem's plan. Man is the creature who is designed specifically to have freedom of choice. Open miracles are so compelling that they limit Man's freedom of choice.

Nevertheless, Hashem responds even to our lower level of trust in Him and provides the pyrotechnics of an open miracle; if that is what is needed to make the people feel secure.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin once asked the Vilna Gaon what the Talmud means when it says that one of Hashem's attributes is 'to be satisfied with His lot'.

The Vilna Gaon replied that Hashem's lot is the Jewish People. He would like us to be on a higher level, but nevertheless He is content with us at whatever level He finds us.

#### HIGHER THAN EVEREST

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying..." (25:1)

Hashem told Moshe all of the *mitzvos* on Mount Sinai. Why is it, then, that the Torah specifically records that the mitzvah of *shemitah* was told to Moshe 'on Mount Sinai?' Weren't the rest of the *mitzvos* also told to Moshe on Sinai?

One of the effects of the mitzva of shemitah was to plant in the hearts of the Jewish People the idea that Hashem, for

"In Judaism, the end does not justify the means. We are judged, not by results alone, but also by the method by which we achieve those results."

all His Transcendence, nevertheless supervises every last detail of this world.

Shemitah teaches us that Hashem provides for our needs even though we are seemingly but a small dot in intergalactic space. In His eyes, all those billions of light years are no more than a blink.

It is not 'beneath His dignity,' as it were, to involve Himself with this lowly physical plane. For 'in the place of Hashem's greatness, there is His humility.'

Hashem chose as the place of His revelation, not Everest, not the highest mountain in the world, but rather the lowly Sinai. It was on Sinai that He chose to reveal to us His Torah. For all Hashem's ineffable Majesty and Transcendence, humility and lowliness of spirit are dear to Him.

That's the connection between *shemi-tah* and Sinai: Just as *shemitah* demonstrates that Hashem is involved with the lowliest of worlds, so He revealed the

Divine Presence to us on Sinai, the lowliest of mountains.

# PESACH SHEINI SPECIAL THE NELSON TOUCH

In 1801, Lord Horatio Nelson was engaging the Danish fleet in a desperate battle off Copenhagen. The English fleet was being badly mauled. Nelson's superior officer hoisted the signal to withdraw from action. On the bridge of Nelson's ship, the crew indicated to Nelson that the Admiral had ordered a retreat. Nelson promptly put a telescope to his blind eye and said, "I really do not see the signal." He then turned away and continued to engage the enemy, turning probable disaster into total triumph.

As every English schoolboy knows this is called "The Nelson Touch." Overriding orders and snatching victory from the laws of defeat.

Nadav and Avihu were two of Aaron Hakohen's sons. They died when they brought a 'strange fire' as an offering in the Holy-of-Holies. They took the law into their own hands, acted independently and ignored the Halacha. Even though their motives may have been noble, they stepped outside the bounds of what the individual may do by himself, with dire consequences.

In Judaism, the end does not justify the means. We are judged, not by results alone, but also by the method by which we achieve those results. There are no 'Nelsons' in Judaism.

But what possessed Nadav and Avihu to behave in such a fashion?

The Arizal says that Nadav and Avihu carried within them fragments of the soul of Adam, the first man.

Adam was alone in his world. Not only was he *a* man, he was *Man*. *He was both an individual and a category*, a species by himself. Therefore he was able to act independently of anyone else, because there *was* no one else. He was alone in his world.

continued on page four

#### PARSHA OVERVIEW

he Torah prohibits normal farming of the Land of Israel every seven years. This "Shabbos" for the land is called shemitah. (5754 was a shemitah year in Israel.) After every seventh shemitah, the fiftieth year, yovel (Jubilee), is announced with the sounds of the shofar on Yom Kippur. This was also a year for the land to lie fallow. Hashem promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the shemitah and yovel years to sustain the Jewish People. In the year of yovel, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work. A Jewish indentured servant may not be given

any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free. The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption is limited to only the first year after the sale. The Levites' cities belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of each other by lending or borrowing with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment.

Dedicate an issue of

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#### FATHERLY ADVICE

Tidbits From the 'Ethics of the Fathers'
Traditionally Studied on Summer Sabbaths

"Never say 'I will study when I have free time' for that time may never come."

• Rabbi Gamliel ben Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi (2:4)

his is directed to every person who is so busy that he finds only a little time in the midst of his activities to study. Let him not say "What can I learn in such little time? When I have a serious amount of free time then I will do some serious studying."

That time may never arrive, and in the meantime, through his neglect he has lost forever the quarter of an hour he had available, a part of his life which, after all, is nothing more than a chain of such fragments of time.

Tiferes Yisrael

# THE LIGHT OF TORAH

Tongues of flame reaching into the darkness, climbing ever higher. The bonfires of Lag B'omer commemorate the anniversary of the passing of the giant of Torah, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

hy fire? Fire symbolizes a passionate striving to reach for God. The Mishnah tells us, "Warm yourself by the fire of the Sages" (Avos 2:15). Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai spent years of intensive labor developing his masterpiece of Kabbalistic

insights into the Torah — the Zohar. Zohar means light - brilliant light. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was the one who brought the brilliant light of the Torah to the world to banish the darkness of falsehood. The fires on Lag B'omer remind us of this great light and warmth of Torah.

### PARSHA Q&A?

- I. Why does the Torah specify that the laws of shemitah were taught on Har Sinai?
- 2. If one possesses shemitah food after it is no longer available in the field, what must be do with it?
- 3. The Torah commands, "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year." How is this done?
- 4. Which two 'returns' are announced by the shofar during yovel?
- 5. From where does the yovel year get its name?
- 6. What prohibitions are derived from the verse "V'lo sonu ish es amiso..." A person shall not afflict his fellow..."?
- 7. What is the punishment for neglecting the laws of shemi-tah?
- 8. If shemitah is observed properly, how long is the crop of the sixth year guaranteed to last?
- 9. Under what circumstance may one sell ancestral land?

- 10. After selling an ancestral field, when can one redeem it?
- 11. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
- 12. What does the word 'days' mean in this week's Parsha?
- 13. What is considered a walled city?
- 14. What is the definition of a "ger toshav?"
- 15. To what is one who leaves Eretz Yisrael compared?
- 16. Why does Rashi mention the plague of the first born in this week's Parsha?
- 17. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a lewish indentured servant.
- 18. Who supports the family of the Jewish indentured servant during his years of servitude?
- 19. If a Jew is sold as a servant to a non-Jew, does he go free after six years?
- 20. Where is it permitted to prostrate oneself on a stone floor?

#### **BONUS QUESTION?**

"If you say: 'What will we eat in the seventh year? — behold! We're not going to plant seed, and we're not going to gather in our crops!' Then I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year and it will produce a crop enough for three years." (25:20) This verse implies that the crop in the sixth year will be miraculously blessed only if the People say "What will we eat in the seventh year?" But if they don't say this, then the land will produce only the normal amount of food. If that should happen, how would the people survive? What would they eat?

#### I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Rabbi Yishmael said, "When the People of Israel do the will of Hashem, they will keep *shemitah* one year out of seven. But when they do not do the will of Hashem, they will end up keeping *four 'shemitahs'* every seven years! How so? Their land will not be very productive, and so they will need to leave it fallow every other year (in order to replenish the depleted mineral supply)."

• Ramban based on the Midrash

#### HAFTORAH: YIRMEYAHU 32:6-27

he history of the People of Israel has not been terminated by conquest and exile. These are mere digressions, sub-plots in its mission. However removed we may seem from the center-stage of history, Hashem has promised us ultimate survival and success.

This theme is illustrated in this week's Haftorah: The *Parsha* speaks of the sale and redemption of land. Similarly, in the Haftorah, Hashem commands the prophet Yirmiyahu, even while he is in prison, to redeem a family property.

Yirmiyahu knew that the whole of *Eretz Yisrael* was about to fall prey to the Babylonians. What possible need was there to redeem a property which was about to be captured?

Hashem told Yirmiyahu that however great the tragedy, however long the exile, eventually Hashem will redeem His People. The redemption of this property was not merely symbolic, for eventually the Jewish People would return to their land and dwell in it in peace.

Even in the face of disaster, we should conduct ourselves with the assurance that Hashem is running the world and make our preparations accordingly.

#### RIGHT AND RAMIFICATIONS

"Great of counsel and mighty of deed, Whose eyes are cognizant of all the way of humankind, to give each man according to his ways and the fruit of his deeds." (32:19)

hen someone is judged deserving of the death penalty in the Heavenly courts, Hashem throws into the balance the tremendous grief that his innocent parents, his wife and children will suffer if the sentence is executed.

Therefore, Hashem does not punish anyone until he also calculates whether this will cause undeserved punishment to one of his family members. That is the meaning of this verse: "Great of counsel and mighty of deed...." Only Hashem is capable of calculating the precise extent of a person's due, that he should only be called upon to bear "according to his ways and the fruit of his deeds."

• Rabbi Mahar"a Yitzchaki

# WEEKLY DAF

#### Krisos 4 - 10

#### SIGNING IN BLOOD

A non-Jew who wishes to convert to Judaism must follow the same pattern as that of the Jewish People when they entered their covenant with Hashem and received the Torah.

"So it is through all the generations," summarizes Rambam (Laws of Forbidden Relations I 3:4) "When a non-Jew wishes to enter the covenant and to take shelter beneath the wings of the Divine Presence, he must commit himself to the observance of Torah law and he is required to undergo circumcision, immersion in a mikveh and to offer a sacrifice."

Our Gemara points out that the inability of the conversion candidate to offer a sacrifice today, because we have no Beis Hamikdash, does not prevent him from being accepted as a full-fledged convert. This is based on the Torah passage (Bamidbar 15:14) which uses the term "In all your generations" when discussing the conversion process. There was a brief period in history when a convert was required to put aside funds for purchasing a pair of birds for sacrifices when the Beis Hamikdash would be rebuilt. This practice was, however, abolished by the court of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai because of the danger that these funds which had been designated for a sacred purpose might inadvertently be used for a secular one. Nevertheless, points out Rambam (ibid. 13:5), the convert will have to offer the required sacrifice when the Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt.

A careful reading of the Chumash (Shmos 24:5-8) reveals the immersion and

sacrifice which preceded the Giving of the Torah. There is no mention there, however, of circumcision. For this we are directed to the Prophets, where we read in Yehoshua (5:5) that "all of the people who went out of Egypt were circumcised," and in Yechezkel (16:6) that "in your bloods shall you live" which refers to the blood of circumcision and the blood of the Korban Pesach which served as merits for the Exodus from Egypt.

During the Egyptian exile, all of Jewry, except for the Tribe of Levi, abandoned the practice of circumcision. Their pre-Exodus circumcision therefore served as a preparation for receiving the Torah. But what about the Levites who had already been circumcised because of the command given to Avraham?

Tosefos explains that since their initial circumcision was for the purpose of entering the covenant with Hashem begun by Avraham, and to separate themselves from the nations, that earlier circumcision served as a valid preparation for their new, elevated status.

• Krisos 9a

#### THE YOM KIPPUR PARADOX

Yom Kippur atones for every sin a Jew has committed whether he repents or not, except for one who totally rejects any commitment to obey Torah law, one who mocks the Torah with sacrilegious interpretations and one who abrogates the covenant of the flesh by willfully avoiding circumcision. These three gain atonement on Yom Kippur only if they repent their sins.

An interesting problem is caused in regard to this ruling of the Sage Rebbie. What if a person commits a sin on Yom Kippur itself by eating or working — how is it possible that there is a punishment of kares (premature death) if Yom Kippur immediately provides atonement?

The Sage Rava contends that even though Rebbie's position is that Yom Kippur without repentance is sufficient for atonement, this does not apply to a sin committed on the day itself. But his reasoning is not accepted by the Gemara. Three alternative solutions are offered for how *kares* can apply to a Yom Kippur sin even if Yom Kippur itself does serve as an atonement for it:

- He choked on the food he ate, so that there was no atoning interval of Yom Kippur between his sin and the punishment
- While he was working, the tool he was using struck and killed him.
- He worked a moment before sunset, so that his sin was not followed by any part of Yom Kippur.

One of the Tosefists, Riva, cites the first of these solutions as a challenge to the opinion of Rashi that every case of *kares* includes the loss of children. Only the father, he points out, died instantly after his sin, while his children enjoyed the benefit of the ensuing moments of Yom Kippur serving as an atonement. Tosefos, however, rejects this by pointing out that once the parent's sin was not atoned for because no Yom Kippur moment followed it, the effect of that sin will indeed be suffered by his children if they are minors.

• Krisos 7a

continued from page one

Because Nadav and Avihu had in them the sparks of the soul of Adam, they too felt that they could act as 'Nelsons', devoid of their connection to the Jewish People.

#### A SECOND CHANCE

On Wednesday of this week, exactly one month after Pesach, we will celebrate *Pesach Sheni*, the 'second Pesach.'

In the time of the Beis Hamikdash, anyone who was in a state of spiritual impurity due to contact with a corpse was disqualified from bringing the Pesach offering. However, they had a second chance to bring the offering one month later on the 14th of lyar.

As the Torah says: "We are contaminated through a corpse (lit. 'the soul of Adam'); why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem's offering at the appointed time..?" (Bamidbar 9:6)

#### Parsha Insights

Interestingly, the people speaking in this verse were those who carried the corpses of Nadav and Avihu. That's what they meant when they said: "We are contaminated by the soul of Adam," the soul of Adam in the body of Nadav and Avihu. They assumed that their impurity came not merely from contact with a corpse but from the taint of Nadav and Avihu's sin.

However, they protested against this exclusion: They surmised that, as Nadav and Avihu had acted altruistically, they had paid for their crime and their sin had been expunged. In other words, Nadav and Avihu had paid for their 'Nelson's Touch,' so why couldn't those who carried their bodies bring the Pesach offering?

In fact, they were wrong. Their contamination resulted merely from their contact with a corpse, not the taint of the 'The Nelson Touch.'

But why should a human corpse have such a power to defile?

Man is a Divine agglomeration of body and soul, of the elevated and the lowly. When the lofty soul separates from its mortal coil, a spiritual vacuum results, allowing a 'power of division' to rule in its place. This 'power of division' which separates the holy parts of a person also causes separation and division in Yisrael.

It was for this reason that they couldn't bring the Korban Pesach, not because of the 'Nelson Touch' of Naday and Avihu.

Sources:

- A Happy Lot Rabbi Zev Leff, Outlooks and Insights
- **Higher Than Everest** Kometz Hamincha in Mayana shel Torah
- The Nelson Touch Shem MiShmuel

# ASK the RABBI

#### BEING GOOD

#### Odyssey007@aol.com wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am interested in the relative status of the teachings of the Prophet Micha who is credited with saying something like the following: "All God asks is that you do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God."

Is this passage considered of significance in the Jewish religion? Is compliance with it sufficient to make you a good person? a good Jew? a good practicing Jew? Is there a difference? In other words, if I am not Orthodox and do not fulfill all of the rituals demanded by Orthodoxy, can I still be a good Jew following the words of Micha? Thanks for your help.

#### Dear Odyssey007,

Micha is certainly an authoritative source. He was a Prophet, and his book is part of the *Kitvei Hakodesh*, the Holy Books.

Is fulfilling Micha's statement enough to make you into a good Jew? Yes and no. Let me give you an analogy:

Let's say NASA were to offer a twenty-year program teaching people how to design space ships that will be able to bring people to and from distant galaxies. On the first day of class, the professor gets up and says to the class, "We have only one demand of our graduates, and everything you learn here over the next twenty years is based on this very simple idea: 'Bring 'em back alive.'" Can the stu-

dents now graduate, knowing this phrase? Or do they need to learn all the detailed specifications required to build a ship that will 'bring 'em back alive?'

The Talmud explains that Micha was offering an underlying principle to aid in the performance of the 613 commandments of the Torah. "Doing justice and loving kindness" are the underlying goals of all the commandments concerning the way you treat other people, while "walking privately with God" is the underlying goal of all the commandments concerning your relationship with God.

Micha is addressing people who seemed so caught up in performing the sacrifices at the Temple that they had forgotten the essence of Judaism. They did not pursue justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God as much as they should have. Micha is telling the Jewish people not to lose sight of the goals of the commandments.

So it's a mistake to think that Micha advocated non-observance of the *mitzvot*, or meant to minimize their importance in any way. Micha himself observed the Shabbat, ate kosher food, and kept the rest of the Torah and Rabbinic laws. He urged the people to remember Moses, Aharon and Miriam as the leaders who taught them the Torah, and he prophesied about the day when the Temple will be rebuilt and "Torah will go forth from Zion."

Hillel did the same thing when he was asked to sum up the entire Torah while 'standing on one foot.' He said, "Whatever you don't like, don't do to others. The rest of the Torah is the explanation of this statement. Go study it."

Was Hillel condoning non-observance of the commandments? Hillel himself was a Torah observant Jew, and the Talmud is replete with his halachic teachings, including laws about Temple sacrifice and the prohibition of work on Shabbat and festivals. Rather, Hillel was offering a principle which serves as a guiding focus for the observance of all the commandments.

In short, one can't be a "good Jew" with only law and rituals and no ethical dimension. But by the same token, the ethical dimension can't be accessed without the Torah guidelines found in Jewish law. Micha was talking to people who were all action and no thought; nowadays many people are all thought and no action. We need both to be good Jews.

#### Sources:

- Micha 6:8 and Malbim
- Micha 4:1-2. 6:4
- Tractate Makkot 24a

#### YIDDLE RIDDLE

#### jerry@abcworks.co.uk wrote:

Hi, This may interest you as a Yiddle Riddle:

When can a person be called to the Torah for 3 successive *aliyot* (called up to make blessings at the public Torah reading) on the same day?

Answer next week.

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#### PARSHA Q&A!

#### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

- 1. 25:1 To teach us that just as shemitah was taught in detail on Har Sinai, so too, all the mitzvos were taught in detail on Har Sinai.
- 2. 25:7 Remove it from his property and declare it ownerless.
- 25:10 At the beginning of the year the Beis Din declares, "This year is kadosh (sanctified)."
- 4. 25:10 The return of the land to its original owner, and the "return" (freedom) of the slave from slavery.
- 5. 25:10 From the sounding of the shofar. A ram's horn is called a yovel.
- 6. 25:17 One may not intentionally hurt people's feelings, nor give bad advice while secretly intending to reap benefit.

- 7. 25:18 Exile.
- 8. 25:21,22 From Nissan of the sixth year until Succos of the ninth year.
- 25:25 Only if one becomes impoverished.
- 10. 25:24 Anytime after two years following the sale until yovel. At the beginning of yovel it returns to the family automatically.
- 11. 25:29 Only within the first year after the sale. Afterwards, even in yovel, it does not return.
- 12. 25:29 The days of an entire year.
- 25:29 A city that has been surrounded by a wall since the time of Yehoshua.
- 14. 25:35 A non-Jew who lives in Eretz Yisrael and accepts upon himself not to worship idols.
- 15. 25:38 To one who worships idols.

- 16. 25:38 The prohibition against taking interest is accompanied by the phrase, "I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Egypt." Rashi explains that just as Hashem discerned in Egypt between those who were first-born and those who were not, so too will Hashem discern and punish those who lend with interest, pretending they are acting on behalf of others.
- 17. 25:39-43 a) Do not make him perform humiliating tasks; b) Do not sell him publicly; c) Do not make him perform unnecessary jobs.
- 18. 25:41 His master.
- 19. 25:54 No. If he is not redeemed with money, he must wait until the yovel to go free.
- 20. 26:1 In the Mikdash.

#### BONUS ANSWER!

If the Jewish People have trust in Hashem and don't say "What will we eat in the seventh year?" then the food grown in the sixth year will have extraordinary nutritional value. People will need to eat only a tiny bit in order to feel fully satisfied.

Sforno

#### RECOMMENDED READING LIST

	RAMBAN	25:36	Two Kinds of Usury	337	Unfair Profit
25:3	First Six Years	26:1	Commitment in Hostile	342	National Land
25:9	Two Kinds of "Shofar"		Environment	343	Usury
25:10	The Word "Yovel"	SEFER HACHINUCH			
25:20	Three Year Blessing	330	Counting until Yovel		SFORNO
25:23	Ban on Perpetual Sale	331	Call of the Shofar	25:4 "A SI	nabbos to Hashem"

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