

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT BESHALACH-TU B'SHEVAT · 15 SHEVAT 5764 · FEB. 7, 2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 16

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### BURNING BRIDGES

*“G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, because it was near...” (13:17)*

It's very difficult to change things we don't like about ourselves. We are all creatures of habit. One of the hardest aspects of modifying negative behavior is breaking the patterns that we weave for ourselves. How long do our “New Year's resolutions” last? A day? A week? Not through lack of resolution, but because resolution is no match for habit.

Resolution is not the solution. To succeed, we must do something much more fundamental.

When G-d took the B'nei Yisrael out of Egypt, He did not take them the quickest and easiest and most direct route from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael: northeast along the coast of the Mediterranean through what is today Gaza. Rather, He took them a long, difficult, and tortuous path across a sea and through a major desert. Why?

As the saying goes, easy come, easy go. When the Jewish People left Egypt they had not entirely freed themselves from the clutches of the negative drive, the *yetzer hara*. If G-d had brought them the easy way, they would have been in danger of being lured back to the constricting but comfortable life of slavery in the fleshpots of Egypt. G-d, as it were, burned their bridges. He made it virtually impossible to return to Egypt. Which was just as well. For, as we see, when the going got tough in the wilderness, the Jewish People were more than willing to return to Egypt. Had that been an easy option, the history of the Jewish people might have been very different.

Ostensibly, then, when faced with trying to escape the clutches of our negative drive, we must burn our bridges. If we want to separate from bad company, we must be prepared to leave and move to a different neighborhood. If we have a serious weight problem, we must put a lock on the

fridge and entrust the key to our spouse (unless he's/she's trying to lose weight as well).

However, in Parshat Vaera (8:23), the Torah itself presents a contradiction to this logic. When Moshe tells Pharaoh that the Jewish People are leaving, he talks of “only a three-day journey.” Moshe knew full well that once they were out, they weren't coming back, so why did he tell Pharaoh it was for only three days?

Part of Moshe's intention was to appease the latent negative drive still lingering in the hearts of the Jewish People. Leaving for three days is a far less daunting prospect than leaving forever. The Jewish People thus felt they had a get-out clause, if they needed it, and were prepared to go along with Moshe. For three days at least. But was this bridge-burning?

The Exodus was effected then both though a bribe to the negative drive, the lure of a three-day round-trip ticket on the one hand, and on the other an iron-fisted scorched earth policy of no return.

When we wish to leave our own personal Egypts, our personal prisons that the negative drive constructs for us, which is the correct course to follow?

The answer is we need both. For someone who smokes 40 cigarettes a day, the idea of going cold turkey is pretty horrendous. But tell him that if after two weeks and he's not happy he can go back to smoking like a chimney, you'll see a different picture.

Seduction and bribery are our opening guns against the negative drive. Afterwards we have to follow up by burning our bridges. It was the lure of a round-ticket that got the Jewish People as far as the edge of the water, but it was only Nachson ben Amiadav who jumped headlong into the sea and showed that there was no turning back that made the waters divide.

• Based on Rabbi E. E. Dessler and Lekach Tov

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Pharaoh finally sends *B'nei Yisrael* out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward *Eretz Yisrael* on a circuitous route, avoiding the Pelishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks. After three days travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces

potable water. In Marah they receive certain *mitzvot*. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

### SOME LIKE IT CAUGHT

There's a strange thing about slavery – some people prefer it to freedom! This was true thousands of years ago in ancient Egypt and is true today in modern Israel.

In the opening passages of this week's Torah portion describing the Israelite exodus from Egypt there is a hint that not all of our ancestors were interested in leaving. The Midrash relates that all of those who refused to accept the Divine invitation to freedom from Egyptian bondage (eighty percent of the population!) perished during the plague of darkness visited upon the obstinate Pharaoh so that the Egyptians would not rejoice in seeing the Israelites suffering along with them.

Why would so many people turn their backs on an opportunity to gain freedom?

The answer lies in the nature of assimilation. Certainly there were Jews who steadfastly maintained their identity through their language, their names, and their clothes. But there were many who could not resist the temptation to

become enslaved to the corrupt culture of a prosperous superpower. Even the hard slave labor they paid as a price for this assimilation had already come to a halt with the beginning of the Ten Plagues. Why then, they asked themselves, should they abandon a country and a lifestyle in which they were born and raised to follow Moshe into the wilderness on the basis of some Divine promise that they would inherit some unknown land flowing with milk and honey?

As a result of such shortsightedness they were willing to take the risk of being returned to slave labor once the plagues were over and preferred being culturally enslaved in an alien land to facing the challenge and opportunity of freedom.

The historical conclusion is that some people like to be caught in the bear-hug of an alien world rather than assume the responsibilities of Divine guidance that guarantees true freedom. Today's Jewish assimilationists in Israel and elsewhere must learn this lesson and choose freedom for Israel forever.

### LIFESAVING BRIT MILAH

“My baby is acting very strangely”, the distraught new mother complained to her doctor. “He cries so much and I can't seem to calm him down.”

The initial response of the doctor was to dismiss the complaint as maternal post-partum jitters. But when she came back a second time he decided to trust her maternal intuition and sent her to a hospital for a thorough examination of the infant. What the test showed vindicated her fears. A serious infection, probably beginning in the urinary tract, threatened to spread to the kidneys and spine, which could have the most serious implications. Antibiotics were administered and additional tests were made in a struggle to save the

baby's life.

Then came the big surprise! The physician in charge recommended to the parents that they have the child circumcised in order to facilitate his recovery. As assimilated Jews the parents had refused to give their son a brit milah despite the pressure from their traditional families to do so. Now it became a matter of lifesaving urgency and they went through with a proper brit. To their amazement there was a dramatic improvement in the child's condition following this sacred surgery. Now that he had finally “entered the Covenant of our Patriarch Avraham” he became a perfectly normal child whose experience will hopefully inspire his parents to fulfill even more *mitzvot*.

## PARSHA Q&A?

1. What percentage of the Jewish people died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish people "took hold of their fathers' craft" (*tafsu umnut avotam*)?
6. How did G-d cause the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to fall off?
7. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea?
8. To what future time is the verse hinting when it uses the future tense of "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing"?
9. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw?
10. The princes of Edom and Moav had nothing to fear from the Jewish People. Why, then, were they "confused and gripped with trembling?"
11. Moshe foretold that he would not enter the Land of Israel. Which word in the Parsha indicates this?
12. Why is Miriam referred to as "Aharon's sister" and not as "Moshe's sister"?
13. The Jewish women trusted that G-d would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we see this?
14. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at Marah?
15. When did *Bnei Yisrael* run out of food?
16. What lesson in *derech erez* concerning the eating of meat is taught in this week's Parsha?
17. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna?
18. The Prophet Yirmiyahu showed the Jewish People a jar of manna prepared in the time of Moshe. Why?
19. Which verse in this week's Parsha alludes to the plague of blood?
20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.
6. 14:25 - He melted them with fire.
7. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit.
8. 15:1 - Resurrection of the dead during the time of *mashiach*.
9. 15:5 - The wickedest ones floated like straw, dying slowly. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately.
10. 15:14 - They felt horrible seeing Israel in a state of glory.
11. 15:17 - "T'vi-aimo..." — "Bring them" (and not "bring us").
12. 15:20 - Aharon put himself at risk for her when she was struck with *tzara'at*. (See *Bamidbar 12:12*)
13. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous victory celebration.
14. 15:25 - Shabbat, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws.
15. 16:1 - 15th of Iyar.
16. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation.
17. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals tasted manna.
18. 16:32 - The people claimed they couldn't study Torah because they were too busy earning a livelihood. Yirmiyahu showed them the manna saying: "If you study Torah, G-d will provide for you just as he provided for your ancestors in the desert."
19. 17:5 - "And your staff with which you smote the river..."
20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle.

## SHOWING THE SHECHITA KNIFE

After their victory over their Philistine enemies the soldiers in King Shaul's army consecrated the animals they had taken as spoils to be sacrificed to G-d. In their haste to eat the meat of these sacrifices, however, they began dining on this meat before the blood was applied to the altar. When the king heard of this sinfulness he ordered a large stone to be brought to him which would serve as an altar, something which was permissible during the period that the Mishkan was in its temporary location in Nob. He then had an order announced to all of his men to bring their animals to him and "slaughter them thus" (*Shmuel I 14:32-34*).

The simple meaning of this phrase is that Shaul wanted them to slaughter the sacrifices next to his makeshift altar so that their blood could immediately be applied to that altar, following which it would be permissible to eat the meat. Rabbi Chisda, however, saw in this phrase not only an instruction where to carry out the slaughtering but also guidance in regard to the instrument used for the slaughter. "Slaughter them with *this*" is what Shaul included in his instructions as he handed the slaughterers a knife he had inspected to ascertain its halachic eligibility for slaughtering. This, concludes the Sage, is a Torah source for the rule that a *shochet* must show his slaughtering knife to a halachic authority before performing the *shechita*.

His revelation is modified, however, because of the statement of Rabbi Yochanan in an earlier *gemara* (*Chullin 10b*), that by Torah law there is no need for a rabbinical inspection of the *shechita* knife because the *shochet* himself is believed to certify that the knife was without any disqualifying flaw. It was only to give honor to the halachic authority that the Sages instituted the need for the *shochet* to seek his approval of the knife's eligibility. The account of Shaul's inspection of the knives he handed over to his people for *shechita* serves

as a hint from a Torah source for instituting this practice.

• *Chullin 17b*

## THE TRAGIC FALL

If the nape of the neck of a man is broken along with most of the flesh attached to it he is considered as dead, rendering anyone under the same roof ritually impure.

This determination by Rabbi Yehuda in the name of the Sage Shmuel that the status of death in this case depends on the severance of the flesh as well is challenged by the description we find of the death of the *Kohen Gadol* Eli. He was 98 years old and blind after 40 years of leading his people when war broke out with the Philistines. A refugee from the rout suffered by the Israelites on the battlefield delivered to him the terrible news of the losses suffered, including the death of Eli's two sons. When he climaxed his alarming report with the news that the Holy Ark had been captured by the enemy, Eli was so overcome with grief that he fell backwards from his seat, broke his nape, and died (*Shmuel I 4:15-18*). Since all that is mentioned is the breaking of the nape it seems that death can be caused even without the severing of the flesh attached to it, counter to Shmuel's ruling.

The response to this challenge is a reference to the advanced age of Eli mentioned in the above-cited passages. Since he was so old his death came about with the mere breaking of his nape even though the flesh attached remained intact. The simple understanding given by the commentaries of these passages' stress on Eli's age and the heaviness of his body is that these factors prevented him from breaking his fall. The *gemara* nevertheless also saw in his advanced age a contributing cause to an accident which would not have proved fatal to a younger man.

• *Chullin 21a*

# The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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## TU B'SHEVAT

**From: Michael in Chicago**

Dear Rabbi,

I saw an ad on campus about a Tu B'Shevat celebration.

What is Tu B'Shevat and what is its significance? Thank you.

Dear Michael

"Tu" is the word formed by the Hebrew letters "tet" and "vav". Since in the mystical tradition each Hebrew letter also has a numerical value, the combination of these two letters equals fifteen. "Shevat" is the name of the month that, in the Jewish calendar, occurs towards the end of the winter. Tu B'Shevat, then, refers to the 15th day of the month of Shevat.

The day is significant because by this time most of the winter rains have fallen in the Land of Israel, promising a summer of luscious, delicious fruits for which Israel is praised. For this reason, Tu B'Shevat is also considered Rosh Hashanah (the New Year) for fruit trees regarding certain laws of agriculture such as *orlah*, the first three years during which fruits are forbidden; *ma'aser* tithes; and *shemita* fruits of the sabbatical year.

The Torah likens man to a tree, "For Man is a tree of the field" (Deut. 20:19). Man is like a tree in that his head is rooted in the Heavens, nestled in the spiritual soils of the Eternal, and nourished by his connection to his Creator. His arms and legs are like branches, through which he accrues good deeds, and upon which the "fruits" of his labor are laden. Therefore on Tu B'Shevat, one must revitalize his connection to G-d, and rejuvenate his commitment to keep the *mitzvot* (Midrash Shemuel on Pirkei Avot 3:24).

It is the custom on Tu B'Shevat to eat from the seven

species for which G-d praised the land of Israel: "...a land of wheat and barley and [grape] vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and [date] honey" (Deut. 8). According to the Kabbalists, the custom in the Land of Israel is to eat fifteen different types of fruits, corresponding to the 15th of Shevat. By increasing the blessings we pronounce over G-d's produce, we become more aware of His providential role in creation. Not by our toil alone does the land bear fruit. Without G-d's providing rain and sustenance, the farmer's efforts would be worthless.

One of the great Chassidic leaders, Rabbi Zvi Elimelech of Dinov, in his classic work "Bnei Yissachar" notes that our sources refer to Tu B'Shevat as the "New Year of the Tree", in the singular. This suggests that while Tu B'Shevat is the New Year of all trees, we are to focus on one tree in particular, the one that provides the *etrog* for the mitzvah of taking the four species on Succot. There is a tradition, he notes, to pray on this day to have the privilege of acquiring not only a kosher *etrog*, but a beautiful one as well. Another beautiful custom is to preserve the *etrog* from Succot in a jam, and to eat it for the first time on Tu B'Shevat.

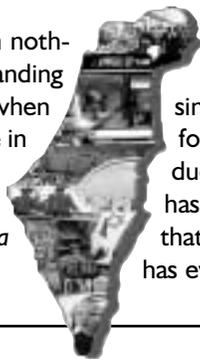
The Kabbalists also made a sort of "Seder Night" on Tu B'Shevat, over four cups of wine. The first cup is of white wine, symbolizing the pale slumber of winter. For the second cup, red wine is added to the white, symbolizing Creation's stirring from winter's slumber. The third is of more red wine than white, heralding the gentle warmth of spring. The fourth cup is completely red, representing the strength of the coming summer's sun. On a personal level, this expresses our desire to rekindle our spirituality. It also represents the transition between this world of relative spiritual darkness and the world to come of great spiritual light. On a collective level, it represents the cold darkness of exile that contains within it the seed of redemption and the blossom of Mashiach.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

## THE LAND THAT HAS EVERYTHING

Eretz Yisrael is described as a land "in which nothing is missing" (*Devarim* 8:9). This outstanding feature of Eretz Yisrael is hinted at again when the Torah prohibits the eating of the fruit of a tree in the first three years of its life. This rule, we are told, applies to "every food-producing tree whose fruit must be shunned as *orlah*" (*Vayirka* 19:23).



There seems to be a redundancy here, notes the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Meir (*Mesechta Brachot* 36b), since mentioning fruit once obviously identifies it as a food-producing tree. His conclusion is that "food-producing" is a reference to the kind of tree whose wood has the same taste as its fruit and is intended to teach us that even such a rare tree is to be found in the land that has everything.

## TO TAKE OR NOT TO TAKE

**Question:** When I stay in a hotel during a business or vacation trip I am always tempted to take the unused soap and shampoo packets left in my room. I am aware that it is a common practice for people to take such items to either bring home as souvenirs or to contribute to charitable organizations, but I would like to know if it is proper to do so.

**Answer:** There is no uniform policy of hotels in regard to this issue. While some expect guests to leave behind what they don't use, others are either resigned to their being

taken or even welcome such behavior as a promotion of the hotel. If you are really interested in taking some of these things with you it would be best to inquire at the checkout desk if you have the hotel's permission to do so.

The failure to even consider that there may be something dishonest about taking soap without permission has led to the practice of taking towels and other portable items that the hotel certainly is not prepared to part with. Even if the intention of the taker is to help a charitable cause there is no justification for fulfilling a mitzvah through sin.

## PUBLIC DOMAIN \_\_\_\_\_

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

**Re: Numbers Game (Israel Forever in Ohrnet Shmot)**

As a regular reader and admirer of your "Israel Forever" feature I was particularly impressed by your Parshat Shmot piece about the demographic problem facing Israel and its parallel in Jewish history.

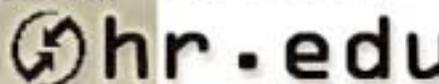
May I add an observation in regard to all the current talk about bringing peace to the Middle East by creating in Israel "one state for two people"? When Pharaoh presented his own demographic problem to his people he said, "Behold, the people of the Children of Israel are multiplying faster than us." Why, asked Rabbi Ephraim of Lonshitz in his commentary *Klei Yakar* some 400 years ago, was it necessary for the Egyptian ruler to refer to the Children of Israel as a people? His answer is that Pharaoh wished to warn his people against the danger of the Israelite's growth because they were a people just as the Egyptians were a people and it is impossible for two so distinctly different peoples to coexist

in one country.

While we are on the subject of history repeating itself, I might also mention the observation made almost three centuries ago by Rabbi Chaim ben Atar in his commentary *Ohr Hachaim* about the Egyptian connection to Jewish control of Eretz Israel. Why was Pharaoh so concerned, he asks, about Jews increasing in number and leaving his land? The answer is that the Egyptians, like their Canaanite brothers (Mitzraim and Canaan were both sons of Cham), had a historical tradition that the descendants of Yaakov would eventually conquer the land of Canaan and overcome its inhabitants. (See the commentary of Rashi on *Bereishet* 34:30.) He was therefore determined to take drastic measures in order to prevent the Children of Israel from leaving Egypt to infringe on his Canaanite brothers and turning the land of Canaan into the Land of Israel.

• Michael Vine

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# SHEVAT

## SWARMING TOWARDS PERFECTION

BY RABBI RELIVEN LAUFFER

**A** while ago a close friend told me a fabulous idea that he had seen in Rav Tzadok HaKohen's sefer *Pri Tzadik*. It centered on how each of the Ten Plagues correlated to a different month of the year. I was so intrigued that I searched around until I found it. The month of Shevat – being two months away from Nissan (did you start cleaning for Pesach yet?) – corresponds to the Plague of Locusts. But what is the connection?

Rav Tzadok explains that before we, the Jewish People, were able to prepare ourselves for the exodus from Egypt, we had to detach ourselves from any misdirected physical desires and cravings. In Tevet G-d sent the Plague of Hailstones. It was so devastating that, with the exception of the wheat and the spelt crops, the entire food supply in Egypt was destroyed. According to our Sages the Egyptians were sure that they were all going to die of starvation. However, once they saw that some shoots had been spared the onslaught, they began to believe that everything was going to be all right. I remember reading in autobiographies of Holocaust survivors that in the ghettos one of the first reactions of Jews who emerged after having been hidden underground for extended lengths of time was to touch the grass. They could not believe that amidst the death and the destruction there was still potential for anything to grow. That small bit of knowledge was a source of great comfort for many of them. For the Egyptians too the small shoots symbolized hope for the future. The very fact that something could grow in the midst of all the devastation was enough to fill them with optimism.

And then G-d sent the locusts.

As the Egyptians watched the last traces of food disappear, devoured by the swarms of locusts that covered the country, their hopes and aspirations for the future disappeared as well. As the Jewish People watched they came to the realization that everything in the world, regardless of whether spiritual or physical, belongs to G-d. And that, writes Rav Tzadok, is the beginning of the sanctification of the physical and our becoming more spiritual.

Rav Tzadok explains that understanding the significance of Shevat in this way is a prerequisite for compre-

hending why Adar — the symbol of uprooting Amalek — follows Shevat. Adar can only be a meaningful continuation by fully understanding that Shevat has been given to us as a means of cleansing our physical desires and raising them to a spiritual plane.

There's a famous story of the Chasid who went to speak with his Rebbe. As they were talking the Rebbe asked him to wait a moment while he made a bracha over a piece of fruit. As the Rebbe did so and took his first bite the Chasid began to think to himself, "You know, I eat fruit just like the Rebbe. I wonder if there is any real difference between us. After all he's only a human being just like me. Maybe I'm wasting my time here. What can he offer me that I can't get elsewhere?" The Rebbe looked at his Chasid (who hadn't said a word) and said to him, "Do you want me to tell you the real difference between us? I eat in order to be able to make *brachot* – you make *brachot* in order to eat!"

The beauty and the depth of the story is clear. Unlike his Chasid, the Rebbe had managed to elevate the mundane and turn it into something very special. Eating a piece of fruit was an intensely spiritual and "nourishing" experience. And that, says Rav Tzadok, is the meaning of Tu B'Shevat. Shevat on the face of it is a pretty bleak month. It comes in the winter, it's cold and wet, the daylight is short and the darkness is long, but it is also a time of incredible potential. Underneath the surface things are beginning to move. Come spring time, they will begin to sprout and blossom and reveal their wondrous splendor for all who care to look. All that beauty, all that magnificence, is being nourished from the month of Shevat. Tu B'Shevat is the time to elevate the fruit from its physical properties to something that is intensely spiritual.

In the Mishna, Tu B'Shevat has the same classification as Rosh Hashana. It is the "New Year for the Trees". The same way that Rosh Hashana is "stock-taking" time, a moment to stop and evaluate one's relationship with G-d, likewise Tu B'Shevat offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on the wonders of G-d's Creation and to ponder if we really utilize the incredible gifts that G-d has given us through His "natural" world to get closer to Him.

And if we do that we are destined for a truly special year.

# FRAGRANCES IN TWO WORLDS

## The importance of saying blessings on fragrances

BY RABBI HANOCH SLATIN

### THIS WORLD

Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna explains that when Adam ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil he lost a certain degree of the senses of sight and hearing. Accordingly, we do not find any blessings relating to these senses. Eating and smelling remained, but only the sense of taste kept its full measure. Smell is very ephemeral. Smell does have one advantage, however. It can be enjoyed from a distance. Eating corresponds to the earth, being heavy and concrete, while fragrance corresponds to the heavens, light and distant.

We find this attribute of fragrance when the Torah first mentions the verb smelled. The Creator accepted Noach's offering after he left the ark: "And He smelled the pleasant smell," (Genesis 8:21) meaning that He accepted the sacrifice. Here fragrance symbolizes the relationship of two distant parties.

The next time the Torah uses the verb "smelled" is when Yitzchak recognized the fragrance of Yaakov: "Look, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of the field which G-d blessed." The Midrash explains that Yitzchak smelled the Garden of Eden; smell connected him with a world in another dimension.

### THE NEXT WORLD

The physiognomy of the human face alludes to ascending levels or dimensions of existence. The mouth, which represents the sense of taste, the least spiritual of our senses, is in the lowest position. The nose, representing the more spiritual sense of smell, comes above the mouth, and the eyes take the highest position as the sense of sight is considered the most spiritual of the senses.

Rabbi Yoseph Chayim of Bagdad goes into the conceptual or spiritual implications of this as well. He quotes the verse, "You shall therefore safeguard the commandment (mitzvah), the statutes (chukim) and the laws (mishpatim) which I am teaching you today, to do them" (Deut. 7:11), and says:

The 613 commandments are traditionally divided into three categories: 1) chukim (statutes or decrees) such as not mixing or cross-breeding certain species when planting, or not eating pork, etc., 2) mitzvot (commandments or testimonies) such as wearing tefillin or keeping the Sabbath and other commemorative festivals, and 3) mishpatim (laws or judgments) such as not killing, not stealing, etc.

These three levels of commandments can be said to correspond to three types of pleasures. In ascending order, these are taste, smell, and sight. Though all of these exist here in this physical world, the lowest of the three, namely

taste (eating/drinking), is most appropriate for the level of reality in which we live.

When a person dies, this lower level of pleasure ceases to exist. His nefesh-soul ascends to the Lower Garden of Eden and receives its sustenance through the sense of smell. This is because a certain type of subtle body exists there in the Lower Garden of Eden. It is just that that body is of such a refined nature [energy form] that it does not require physical food and drink. It is rather said to subsist through the [higher] sense of smell.

Afterwards, the soul ascends further to the Upper Garden of Eden [corresponding to neshamah]. There, the soul is sustained by the radiance of the Divine Presence manifest there. Alluding to this, the Sages said, "In the World Beyond, there is no eating, or drinking. Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads, delighting in the radiance of the Divine Presence". This refers to the pleasure derived from seeing.

Now that we see the significant position that fragrance maintains we surely want to understand how to properly treat it. The Gemara teaches us how to appreciate our gifts.

Rabbi Levi points out a contradiction. [Is the earth G-d's or man's?] It is written, "The earth and everything in it is G-d's," and it is written, "The Heavens are to G-d and the earth He gave to man." There is no contradiction! Here [the first verse is referring to] before a blessing, here [the second verse is referring to] after a blessing.

The contradiction is resolved by qualifying the first verse. True, the earth belongs only to G-d who created it, and we have no claim to the pleasures of the world, but this is only true before a blessing has been said. By saying blessings, we are given the right to enjoy the pleasures of the world.

Pirkei Avos (6:14) spells out: "Everything that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created in His world, He created only for His honor." It follows that we have no right to use anything in this world for any other purpose. Therefore the Gemara above asserts that one who derives pleasure from this world without a blessing is like one who steals from the Creator: he has no right to use the world in this manner. Through saying a blessing a person is transferring the pleasure of the material world into an instrument of honoring G-d. This is exactly the intended purpose. For this the world was created. The importance of saying the proper blessing on fragrance is now understood.

*Taken from the introduction to Rei'ach HaSadeh by Rabbi Hanoach Slatin. Rei'ach HaSadeh is a comprehensive guide to the laws of blessings on fragrances. More chapters from the book will be published on the Ohr Yosef website and the book can be purchased online from Feldheim.com*