

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### A Work of Craft

*"See, I have proclaimed by name Betzalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda. I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft ... to perform every craft of design." (31:2-3)*

In Hebrew, there is no word for Art.

There is a Hebrew word, "melacha," that means "craft," but no word meaning Art.

What's the difference between Art and craft?

An artist can think he is G-d.

He starts off with a blank piece of paper and creates a universe. Being an artist is the closest a person can get to creation *ex nihilo* – creation from nothing. The universe of the artist is entirely at the whim of its creator. He can draw and he can erase. He can form and he can fold. He can "create worlds" and he can "destroy them." The sky can be blue or gray. The next note could go up or down. And who says that all this has to be the way it is? Me, the artist.

For the past two and a half thousand years there has raged a global-historical conflict over the place of art in the world. The ancient Greeks, who invented Art with a capital "A", claimed that Art is a doorway to ultimate truth. This Weltanschauung says that through art and artifice you can reach the elemental truths of existence. Celebrating the surface, the way things look, claimed the ancient Greek, leads to the essence of things themselves.

The Jew says that the artifice and illusion leads only to greater illusion, unless that skill subordinates itself to the service of truth.

Art that is not for Art's sake is called craft. Craft knows it is the servant of another master.

The Talmud teaches that if you never saw the Second Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple), which Herod built, you never saw a beautiful building in your life. Its walls were constructed from blue/green marble and white Marmara marble. One layer was indented and the next protruded so that the plaster would adhere. Herod thought of covering the whole edifice with gold plate. The Rabbis told him to leave it as it was – without

plaster or gilding – since it looked better in its natural state with the different levels of green/blue and white resembling the waves of the sea.

*"See, I have proclaimed by name Betzalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda. I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft ... to perform every craft of design."*

Every talent has a place in Judaism. Every talent is a gift of G-dly spirit: A beautiful voice, a brilliant mind, the skill of an artist. Every talent is a gift and a responsibility.

*"By His breath the Heavens are spread (shifra)" (Iyov 26:13).*

G-d spreads aside the curtain of cloud to reveal that which is beyond. He disperses the clouds that conceal so we can see past the obstruction, past the surface. The word "spread," "shifra," has the same root as "shafir" which means "to beautify."

In Jewish thought, beauty means seeing past the surface to the essence. That which is beautiful is that which takes us beneath the surface, beyond the clouds, to reveal the endless blue heavens, to reveal the truth.

Similarly, the word for "ugly" and "opaque" in Hebrew are the same "achur." Something that conceals essence is ugly, however "beautiful" it might seem.

"Art for Art's sake" can never be a Jewish concept. For, if the definition of beauty is that which reveals, something that reveals nothing but itself can never be beautiful.

The true beauty of the Tabernacle and the Temples was in being the place of the greatest revelation in this world. It revealed that existence is not bounded by the physical constraints of space and time. It demonstrated that this world is connected to that which is beyond this world.

It was a Work of Craft.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Ki Tisa: Shabbat 2:8

### Self-Sacrifice

Rav Sheshet raised an objection: “Do we say that a person may do a transgression in order to benefit someone else?!”

This rhetorical statement on our *daf* is taught as a question on a suggestion in the *gemara*. At first, Rav Bibi bar Abayei posed a halachic question: If a person attaches dough to the wall of an oven on Shabbat, is it permitted to be removed from there on Shabbat (an act normally forbidden by Rabbinical decree) before the bread bakes and the person will be obligated to bring a sin-offering? The *gemara* rejects the possibility that this question is about a scenario in which the *same* person who put the dough there is the one who is removing it, since he would not be considered to be *shogeg* – forgetful of its being Shabbat or forgetful that baking on Shabbat is forbidden – *from beginning to end*. He would therefore *not* be obligated to bring a sin-offering even if he would leave the dough there to bake.

Therefore, Rav Shila avers that the case in question is one where a person *other* than the one who put the dough there realizes the impending prohibition and penalty that the first person would incur if the dough bakes, and wants to remove it before it bakes in order to save the first person. Rav Shila says that is the question first posed by Rav Bibi bar Abayei: Did the Rabbis permit him to remove it or not?

At this point Rav Sheshet raises his objection to Rav Shila’s depiction of the scenario in question: “Do we say that a person may do a transgression in order to benefit someone else?!” Rashi explains this to mean: Do we say to a person to go out and transgress a “light” prohibition in order that your fellow person should not be obligated a serious punishment? Since this is obviously not permitted, it follows that Rav Bibi bar Abayei’s question must involve a different scenario, one which the *gemara* describes as it continues.

However, Tosefot and other Rishonim raise a number of questions from cases that appear to be contrary to this principle that one person may not transgress to benefit another person. Elsewhere there is indication that one may *indeed* transgress in order to benefit another. For example, we are taught in a *mishna* (Gittin 41a) that in the case of someone who is half-slave and half-free, his owner must free him completely. This is permitted despite the prohibition against freeing a Canaanite slave: Rav Yehuda said, “Whoever frees his slave transgresses a positive

mitzvah, as it states, *Forever they will serve you.*” (Gittin 48b) The *gemara* explains the rationale for permitting this act of freeing him: “Being fruitful and multiplying is different, since it is a great mitzvah.”

Another example noted by Tosefot is that when Rabbi Eliezer entered the Yeshiva and didn’t find a minyan for prayer, he freed his slave to complete the minyan – despite the known prohibition against freeing one’s Canaanite slave. In this case, the *gemara* states that “a mitzvah for the public is different” – and is sufficient reason to permit what would otherwise be considered as violating a positive commandment under ordinary circumstances. (The two reasons which justify permitting one person to transgress in order to benefit another are both found in Tosefot on our *daf*, in addition to our Tosefot teaching two other possible conditions that could serve as reason to be lenient. A fifth reason is taught in Tosefot in Masechet Gittin 41a and in the Chidushei HaRashba to Shabbat 4a. And a sixth reason is offered by Chidushei Anshei Shem, Shabbat 14:1. A complete and detailed treatment of this topic can be found in *Avosos Ahava – Kiruv Rechokim B’Halacha, chelek dalet, perek aleph.*)

This concept of not permitting one person to transgress in order to save another person from transgression is an important principle in halacha, one with potentially wide-ranging ramifications. For example, just as a person may transgress Shabbat in order to save another person’s physical life, may he transgress Shabbat in order to save another person’s spiritual life? One might argue that it is permitted based on the reasoning of *kal v’chomer*: One who causes another to transgress is worse than one who kills him (Sifri Devarim 23:8), and from here it may be learned that one who saves another from transgression is “greater” than one who saves him from death.

Consideration of these issues might lead to important practical applications in the event of trying to prevent a person from joining a cult or missionaries: What, if any, steps that are normally prohibited by halacha may be taken in order to intervene? This question, and other similar questions, are obviously extremely delicate and complex, and must always be carefully presented, with all details, to a *Posek*.

- *Shabbat 4a*

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. How many "geira" are in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called "malachim?"
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbat is a "sign." What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, G-d says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did G-d show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

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

## Answers

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'at* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between G-d and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2, 3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from G-d!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say "Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people."
16. 32:34 - Whenever G-d punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. G-d commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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Synonyms in the Hebrew Language  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Better Late Than .....

The Torah reports that after Moshe ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, he spent some time atop the mountain before returning to the Jewish People. In the meanwhile, the Jewish People grew impatient anticipating Moshe's return, "And the Nation saw that Moshe delayed (*boshesh*) in descending from the mountain..." (Ex. 32:1). The *Erev Rav*'s response to this delay was to fashion a Golden Calf to lead the Jewish People instead of Moshe. Rashi explains that the word *boshesh* is an expression of *ichur* ("delay"), but he does not explain the difference between the two terms. In this essay we seek to understand the difference between *boshesh/bosh* and *ichur/acheir*, and in doing so can come to a better appreciation of why the Torah uses the word *boshesh* in this story instead of *ichur*. We will also touch on how *boshesh* is related to *bushah* ("embarrassment"), which will bring us to a clearer understanding of that word's nuances.

The Midrash (*Ber. Rabbah* 18:6) interprets the word *boshesh* as a portmanteau of the phrase *bau shesh shaot* ("six hours have arrived"), explaining that the Jews decided that Moshe was late since it was already six hours into the day on which they expected him to return, and yet Moshe was nowhere to be seen. Rabbi Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok (d. 1867) in *Eitz Yosef* explains that the basis for this exegesis is the atypical appearance of the word *boshesh* in lieu of the expected *ichur*. To him, the fact that the Torah uses the word *boshesh* instead of *ichur* screams for further interpretation, and the Midrash fills in that lacuna.

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Shapira-Frankfurter (1743-1826), writes in *HaRechasim LeVikah* that *ichur* refers to something acceptably late (colloquially, "fashionably late"), while *boshesh* refers to an excessive delay, hours upon hours. Similarly, Malbim explains that *ichur* means anything "past" a pre-determined point of time, while *boshesh* refers to an excessive lateness that is even later than that. Based on the supposition that *boshesh* denotes excessive lateness, Rabbi Shapira-Frankfurter suggests that perhaps the appearance of this word led the rabbis to assume that the Jews thought that Moshe was late by many hours. In other words, they thought that he wasn't just *late* – he was *very late*.

Rabbi Shapira-Frankfurter also discusses a third term for "delaying" or "lateness": *hitmahmah*. In his view, that word refers to a delay caused by moving slower than the expected speed. It is used when somebody is supposed to do

something quickly, but instead is dilly-dallying. For example, when Lot delayed his escape from Sodom (Gen. 19:16), or when King David delayed his escape from Avshalom in order to hear back from Achimaatz (II Sam. 15:28), cognates of this word are employed.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) looks at the relationship between the three words in question differently. He explains that *ichur* is a neutral type of delay or lateness that is simply related to the word *achar* ("after"), to denote that a certain point of time has already passed. *Ichur* does not imply being tardy for excusable or inexcusable reasons. It is neither good nor bad. It just is. By contrast, the other two words for lateness carry with them a value judgement: *hitmahmah* is a positive type of delay which is not only expected but is the right thing to do under certain circumstances, while *bosh/boshesh* is a negative type of delay for which one should be embarrassed (*bushah*).

Interestingly, Rabbi Pappenheim connects the word *hitmahmah* to the biliteral root MEM-HEY (*mah*), which means "what" and is an expression of doubt and uncertainty. He explains that a person who is *hitmahmah* is essentially "waiting around" and not doing anything specific, because he is asking himself "what" he should be doing.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) quotes an elaborate discussion about these words from the writings of R. Naftali Hertz (Wessely) Weisel (1725-1805) – a figure often maligned as a *maskil*, but whose rabbinic bona fides are also attested to. He explains that *ichur* connotes a person who is willingly and deliberately late. On the other hand, *bosh/boshesh* refers to somebody who is delayed by forces beyond his control. In short, he argues that by using the word *boshesh*, the Torah conveys the idea that the Jews thought that Moshe was delayed from descending the mountain by circumstances beyond his control, namely, he had either fallen ill or died. Because of this, they were open to accepting a new leader (i.e. the Golden Calf) in his stead. But, in reality, Moshe's delay is better characterized as an *ichur* because Moshe was enjoying and basking in the study of Torah atop the mountain, and he therefore purposely stayed there longer than the Jews may have expected him to.

Rabbi Avraham Saba (1440-1508) in *Tzror HaMor* writes that the Torah uses the word *boshesh* instead of *ichur* as a means of alluding to the argument that the *Erev Rav* made

to convince the masses to worship the Golden Calf. He explains that the word *boshesh* is related to the Aramaic word *bshash*, which refers to tasteless food that is without spices or seasoning. Thus, the *Erev Rav* convinced the masses to worship the Golden Calf by arguing that since Moshe's teachings have no "taste" or "seasoning" to them, they ought to be rejected. As an allusion to this argument, the Torah specifically uses the word *boshesh* instead of the usual *ichur*.

Rabbi Saba mentions two places where we see the word *bshash* in the sense of something tasteless. One context in which this word appears is when Iyov responds to one of his friends' diatribes by dismissing his friend's words and sarcastically asking, "Is bland food eaten without salt?" (Iyov 6:6). By calling his friend's rhetoric "bland Food," Iyov meant that what he said is unpalatable and unacceptable. In that context, the Targum renders "bland food" as *bshash*. The second example is when the Talmud (*Berachos* 40a) refers to a certain type of tasty bread as something which "does not require *bshash*." The commentators explain that *bshash* in this context means "delay," meaning that bread which is tasty on its own can be eaten straight away and one need not be "delayed" until the arrival of other condiments or relishes. (Interestingly, *Piskei HaRosh* and *Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah* cite Ex. 32:1 to prove that *bshash* is related to "delaying," while Rashi chooses to cite Judges 5:28 to that effect. *Maadanei Yom Tov* asks why Rashi chose to cite the verse in Judges instead of the verse in Exodus.)

Earlier in this essay we cited Rabbi Pappenheim's understanding of the connection between *boshesh* and *bushah* ("embarrassment"), which essentially argued that *boshesh* is the type of delay or lateness from which one ought to be embarrassed. However, other rabbis offer other ways of explaining the connection between *boshesh* and *bushah*:

1. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) explains that the core meaning of the root of these words is "disappointment." He explains that "embarrassment" is the feeling of disappointment in oneself after realizing one's own shortcomings, while *boshesh* refers to a sort of "delay" which has caused the matter to be so late that those waiting are "disappointed" in whomever they are waiting for and just give up on him.

2. Rabbi Dovid Golumb (1861-1935) in *Targumna* explains the connection differently. When a person is "embarrassed" (*bushah*), he is so belittled and ashamed that nobody views him as important. The ramifications of this are that such a humiliated person is no longer deemed worthy of waiting for when he is delayed (*boshesh*).

3. Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) explains that the root BET-SHIN primarily refers to something being delayed or withheld. Two corollaries of this meaning include the concept of "lateness," which is obviously associated with being "delayed," and the concept of "embarrassment," whereby one's face turns white, as his blood is "withheld" from travelling in its normal way.

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**M**oshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments.

The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy

everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the Tablets and he destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men.

Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's clouds of glory return. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new Tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of Tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman*

## Written in Stone

The Torah describes the miraculous nature of the writing on the first set of Tablets in a series of phrases: *They were inscribed on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were inscribed... the writing was G-d's writing, "charut" [cut right] through the Tablets.* The content of the *luchot* has already been conveyed, but here the Torah sees fit to convey the *presentation* as well.

Our Sages give an even more vivid picture, based on these verses. First, they teach that the writing went right through both sides of the stone and not was engraved merely to a certain depth. Second, despite this, the writing was readable from both sides of the stone. The words appeared in proper sequence and were not reversed, as one would expect if they had been bored through the entire stone. The insides of the letters that form complete circles – the *samech* and the *mem* that appear at the end of a word – stood suspended in the air. They could stay in place only by a miracle – the handwriting of G-d.

Not only was the *content* the word of G-d, but the *luchot* themselves – the stone and the manner in which the words were written – were intended to be *eidut*, testimony to the Divine origins of the Torah. More, the manner of writing communicated the manner in which the Jew was to relate to Torah.

*The writing... was "charut" on the Tablets.* This root – *charut* – appears no other place in Tanach. The writing was not merely engraved, it cut through the *luchot*. The root *chor* –

means hole, or opening, in the sense of the stone being bored through. It is also the root of the word *chenut*, meaning "freedom." In this sense, it would mean "freedom over the Tablets" – i.e. the writing had free mastery over the Tablets, as evidenced by the *mem* and *samech* standing midair. The Tablets did not bear the writing, as is the case in ordinary engraving, but the writing supported the Tablets. This had symbolic import for how to the Jew is to relate to Torah: his material life (the stone) is subordinate to the Torah (the words), and the Torah supports the material. The writing raises the material above nature, which governs all matter. The same applies to human beings in whom the spirit of this writing has taken hold: they make themselves the bearers of this spirit, and the spirit uplifts them, and supports them above the forces of blind compulsion. In other words, they become free.

There is yet another message in the complete chiseling of the letters through the entire stone, and their legibility from both sides. The word of G-d must not grip us only superficially and one-sidedly. It must penetrate us through and through, and set its stamp on every part of our being. Whichever way we are turned, whatever circumstances we face, with whomever we interact with, the writing of G-d is to be visible on us, clearly and legibly for all to see. The Jew is to bear this Divine stamp in the home and in the office, in private quarters and in the street, in his interactions with his superiors and with his spouse – just like the Tablets, the word of G-d is to be imprinted on him through and through.

- Sources: *Shemot 32:15-16; Collected Writings I, pp. 281-28*

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# ASK!

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## Jewish Superheroes

Joey from LA asked:

*Are there any teachings about “superheroes” in the Torah or in Jewish literature?*

Dear Joey,

What a super-question!

Judaism doesn't idolize movie stars and athletic achievers as “superheroes.” Rather, a person who stops to help someone needing help to cross a busy street is a superhero. A person who says a kind word to someone having a bad day is a superhero.

In this sense, I am certain that each of us knows a superhero. Hopefully, not far away. Hopefully, in one's own home.

As you probably know, a number of personalities in the Torah were endowed with “super-powers.” Moses was on Mount Sinai to receive the Torah for forty days and forty nights – without food or water! And, of course, he played a key role in the ten plagues and the splitting of the Red Sea. Samson had superhuman strength. David slew Goliath.

King Solomon had super-intelligence. These special qualities were given to these people by God to enable them to further the eternal destiny of the Jewish People.

What about the rest of us?

Our Sages teach in Ethics of the Fathers that the Jewish definition of true strength is someone who overcomes his desire to do what is wrong. This is a message of immense value. “Super” anything can be implemented by utilizing the ethical, moral and legal teachings found in the Torah. Internalizing the wisdom of the Torah enhances and augments within us strengths that we never knew we had.

For example, our Sages teach that a person who is not blessed with a high IQ is not restricted in the ability to understand Torah. A person who has a true, pure love for Torah may be granted the ability to understand its depths, sometimes even beyond others who have been blessed with a much more natural intellect.

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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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### Food for Thought

In the debate among the Talmudic Sages (*Sanhedrin* 70b) as to what exactly was the food of the Tree of Knowledge from which Adam ate, it is the position of Rabbi Yehuda that it was wheat. This is a sharp departure from the positions of his colleagues, who identify that tree as one that bore grapes or figs.

The basis for Rabbi Yehuda's stand to identify this sinful food as wheat, despite the obvious difficulty of connecting wheat with a tree, is the fact that this tree is described by the Torah as one whose fruit imparts knowledge. A baby, he points out, does not have the

understanding to say the words “father” and “mother” until it eats wheat. It is logical, therefore, to assume that only food which imparts such understanding in a child could be considered the food which gave man the knowledge to distinguish good from evil.

Wheat was the principal ingredient of the flour offerings in the Beit Hamikdash. It, and its subspecies spelt, are mentioned (*Pesachim* 35a) as ingredients which qualify for use in the matzah we eat on Pesach to fulfill our mitzvah.



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