

PHILOTORAH

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו וא'להי אבותינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים,
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפצועי המלחמה, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות
בישראל ובכל מקום שהם - עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

**May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima
to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel;
may He facilitate the return of the last hostage body; may He end this war
with success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.**

ניסן

אייר
סיון
תמוז
אב
אלול
תשרי
מרחשון
כסלו
טבת
שבט
אדר



YERUSHALAYIM in/out times for **BO**

January 23-24 '26 • ו' שבט ה'תשפ"ו

 **4:30PM** PLAG **4:00PM** •  **5:45PM** R' Tam **6:18PM**

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

PhiloTorah (289bo) - 1 - all at once file



Kiddush L'vana

The molad of Sh'vat was Sunday afternoon. Three full days after the molad is Wednesday afternoon. So...

First opportunity for KL - according to Minhag Yerushalayim - this month is Wednesday night.

For those who say KL only after seven days following the molad, the first op is Sunday night, January 25th.

Those who say KL regularly on a Motza'ei Shabbat, have their op on Motza"Sh Parshat Bo.

It is highly recommended - unless you are a strict after 7-days person, that you take the earliest opportunity, weather-permitting. And that is the crucial term: Weather-permitting. Because we are still in the rainy season, it is smart to take an opportunity when it presents itself.

Sh'vat Review

Sh'vat has 30 days. Tevet had 29 days. The 59 dates in these two months are different from the other dates of the year, in that each date of these 59 can fall on five different days of the week and each has two days of the week on which they cannot fall. This is in the fixed calendar that we use while we have

no Sanhedrin. This will not necessarily so when we will have a Sanhedrin.

Specifically, the 1st, 8th, 15th (TU), 22nd, and 29th of Sh'vat cannot fall on a Friday or a Sunday.

The 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th cannot fall on Monday or Shabbat.

The 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th cannot fall on a Sunday or a Tuesday.

The 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th cannot fall on a Monday or a Wednesday.

The 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th cannot fall on a Tuesday or a Thursday.

The 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th cannot fall on a Wednesday or a Friday.

The 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th cannot fall on a Thursday or on Shabbat.

If you have been counting - that's it. All 30 dates in Sh'vat are covered.

Remember that there are 385 dates all tolled. 295 of them (don't worry - I'm not going to list all the possibilities) belong to the LO ADU pattern.

Kislev 1 through 29 have their own pattern.

$295 + 29 + 59 = 383$. Two more dates to go.

The 30th of Marcheshvan is on its own. And so is the 30th of Kislev.

That's the whole year.

Why tell you this week? Because in this week's sedra is the mitzva of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

BO

15th of 54 sedras;
3rd of 11 in Sh'mot



Written on 205.67 lines; ranks 24th

14 parshiot; 8 open, 6 closed

106 p'sukim - rank: 29th (7th in Sh'm)
tied with To-l'dot & Vayigash; but
larger than each one, otherwise

1655 words - ranks 21st (5th in Sh'm)

6149 letters - ranks 20th (6th in Sh'm)

Rise in rankings results from BO's
p'sukim being much longer than
average for the Torah (longest in
Sh'mot).

MITZVOT

20 mitzvot; 9 positive, 11 prohibitions

This ends an 18-sedra run (1/3 of the
54 sedras) of hardly any mitzvot. Last
four sedras of D'varim, all of B'reishit
(12 sedras), Sh'mot & Va'eira have a
total of 5 mitzvot (0.8% of the 613).
The other 36 sedras (2/3 of the Torah)
have the other 608! (99.2%)

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start
of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is
Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the
parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in
the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the
Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI;
L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek &
pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 10:1-11

[P> 10:1 (11)] G-d once again
(previously with Frogs and Dever)
sends Moshe to Par'o (in his palace) to
warn about the Locust.

SDT: The signature of this week's
sedra - BO EL PAR'O is a phrase that
occurs three times, each time as an
introduction to one of the Plagues.
Specifically, G-d said to Moshe to
"come before Par'o" for the middle
plague of each 3-plague set - FROGS,
DEVER (animal disease), and
LOCUST. Baal HaTurim points out
that when G-d sends Moshe to the
royal palace, He uses the term BO
(come). When He sends him to the
river to find Par'o there, He uses the
term LEICH (go). One could suggest
that BO means, I'll be with you, as
with 'Come with Me.'

This time, however, it is with the
additional statement that G-d has
hardened Par'o's heart so that His
wonders will be evident to all, and that
all will know Him. Moshe and Aharon
warn Par'o of the potential devastation
(the description of which is noticeably
longer than for other plagues). Par'o's
servants (advisors?) pressure Par'o into

agreeing to release the People. Par'o offers Moshe the adults. Moshe's reply (something which becomes a Jewish hallmark for the ages - pun intended) is that our religious experiences must include ALL Jews, young and old. (Judaism places a premium on Chinuch and on the transmission of knowledge and values from one generation to the next.) Par'o rejects this and chases Moshe and Aharon from his presence.

On the topic of G-d hardening Par'o's heart, there is a famous and obvious question.

What happens to Free Will when G-d hardens Par'o's heart?

One opinion says, Par'o no longer had Free Will at this point. Usually, a person loses his Free Will when he dies, or is in some way incapacitated. In Par'o's case, he had ample opportunity to exercise his Free Will until the 6th plague. He chose to refuse to let the Israelites leave, each time. From the 6th plague and on, G-d's hardening his heart, forced him to continue refusing in order for the whole course of the Plagues to play out.

Interesting, the other opinion is that it was necessary (so to speak) for G-d to harden his heart in order for Par'o to continue exercising his Free Will. Without G-d's strengthening Par'o, Par'o would give in - not because he wanted to, but because the beatings

wore him down. By G-d's making Par'o stronger, Par'o was able to continue using his Free Will - which he did by refusing Moshe's demands - until after Makat B'chorot.

Locust were sent by G-d to punish Egypt by devouring the produce of the land. This was "measure for measure" punishment for the excessive field and planting work that Par'o imposed on the People of Israel in order to demoralize them and to prevent them from having a normal family life.

The excessive cruelty of the Egyptians is partially responsible, so to speak, for G-d's switching to His Midat HaRachamim in judging the people, from the Midat HaDin which might have kept us in Egypt longer. The original prophecy to Avraham Avinu called for 400 years. Actual time spent in Egypt (not even in slavery) was "only" 210 years. The inclusion of the years from Yitzchak's birth is (can be seen as) G-d's reaction (so to speak) to the excessive harshness of the Egyptian experience.

Levi - Second Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 10:12-23

[S> 10:12 (9)] G-d tells Moshe to raise his hands over the land. Moshe raises his staff (notice: his staff, not his hands - why?) and the locust come. So overwhelming is this plague, that Par'o "hurries" to call for Moshe and Aharon,

admits to them that he has sinned, and asks them to pray for the removal of this terrible plague. Moshe does so, and a "reverse" wind causes the locust to totally disappear. G-d once again hardens Par'o's heart and Par'o again refuses to let the Israelites go.

[P> 10:21 (9)] Plague #9 - Darkness (just like #3 Lice and #6 Boils) is brought sans-warning.

The thrice-repeated pattern is (1) find Par'o at the Nile and deliver the warning, (2) go to his palace and bring the warning "closer to home", and (3) twice-warned is sufficient; he won't let the People go, bring the next plague without additional warning. The 10th plague stands alone: Par'o was warned of it "up front" and it is mentioned more than once as the "ultimate" punishment for Egypt.

Darkness, an unusual, unnatural, tangible darkness (not merely the absence of light), descends upon the Egyptians for a paralyzing 3 days (Rashi says that it was for 6 days). In the Jewish neighborhoods, there is light.

SDT: "Man did not see his fellow, nor did a person rise from his place..." Chidushei HaRim writes that this is a description of the worse kind of darkness in human life, when a person does not see the suffering of his fellow. Not only does he not extend his hand to help the other, but the ultimate result is the inability of the individual to even help himself.

The People of Israel had light throughout their dwellings. May we always be able to see the plight of our fellow Jews and respond with acts of Chesed worthy of our Heritage.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 10:24-11:3

Par'o calls for Moshe and tells him to go, even with the children, but to leave the livestock behind. Moshe insists that ALL will leave.

Par'o once again refuses, and this time he threatens death (he had Moshe's in mind - G-d "applied it" differently) if he sees Moshe again. He thus inadvertently prophesies his own death. This is part of the "topsy turvy" aspects of the Exodus.

[P> 11:1 (3)] G-d "reminds" Moshe that there is one more plague (the "real" one; the one that was presented up front, the one mentioned before all of the others) and then Par'o will send the people on their way.

G-d tells Moshe to tell the people to "borrow" (or ask for) things from their neighbors. He says that the Egyptians will miraculously feel kindly towards the Jews (even though the Jews are responsible, in the eyes of the Egyptians, for their recent suffering). G-d even implanted in the eyes of the Egyptians an admiration and respect for Moshe.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 27 p'sukim - 11:4-12:20

[S> 11:4 (5)] Moshe says, in G-d's name, that He (G-d) will kill ALL Egyptian firstborns, that the screaming from the deaths will be unprecedented, and that in total contrast, utter tranquility will reign in the Jewish area.

[S> 11:9 (2)] G-d says that Par'o will once again refuse even this threat, so that the full course of wonders and miracles will benefit the People of Israel.

SDT: One commentator says that Moshe was distraught by the extent to which Par'o went in his refusal to let the People go. Such dedication to wickedness in the face of such devastating punishment was truly disheartening to Moshe. How can the power of evil be so strong? How can someone fight against it and hope to win? G-d's answer was that it was He Who hardened and strengthened Par'o's heart. Left on his own, Par'o would have given in long before. Theoretically, G-d could do this to punish us, but in this case it was for our benefit.

[S> 12:1 (20)] G-d commands the setting up of the Jewish calendar [4, A153 12:2] (even before we left Egypt).

Shabbat was sanctified by G-d as His final act of Creation. That is our first exposure to the concept of Sanctity of Time.

Here is the next step. It comes in the form of the first mitzva commanded to Bnei Yisrael, even before we left Egypt.

The words in the Written Torah are HACHODESH HAZE LACHEM... and we are taught that this is the mitzva to set up the Jewish Calendar.

The two major components of this mitzva are the sanctification of each Rosh Chodesh - from which follows the sanctity, K'DUSHA, of the holy days that fall within a given month.

The other aspect of the Calendar is the intercalation (love that word; rarely get to use it) of a month into the year so that Pesach (and Sukkot) will fall in their proper seasons.

G-d gave this second act of K'DUSHAT Z'MAN - making the Calendar - to the Jewish People to perform. Basically, He said, I want you to be pro-active in this act of Sanctification of Time. You do it, and the first of the month will be holy, and so will all the holy days of the calendar.

If you don't sanctify the first of Nisan, (hypothetical only) then the 15th of Nisan will not be Pesach. It will be a regular day. No prohibition of Melacha, no Seder, no mitzva to eat matza, no prohibition of Chametz - just a regular day. You (meaning us) are in charge of this level of K'dushat Z'man.

G-d commands us as to when the holy days are to be, but it is Bnei Yisrael that declares them and sanctifies them.

Today, between Sanhedrins, we use a fixed calendar, the Rosh Chodesh of every month having been sanctified by a Sanhedrin of long ago.

When we have a sitting Sanhedrin - past and IYH the near future - the process of declaring Rosh Chodesh relies on eye-witness testimony to the first visibility of the lunar crescent.

He then commands the taking of a lamb or goat for each household (or so). The animal was to be taken on the 10th of Nissan (this rule was for "Pesach Mitzrayim" only, and not for future Pesachs; therefore it is not counted among the 613 mitzvot of the Torah) and held for the 14th of the month, when it was to be slaughtered in the afternoon [5, A55 12:6]. Its blood was to be smeared on the doorposts and lintel (only that first Pesach). The sacrifice is to be eaten on the night of the 15th of Nissan [6, A56 12:8], having been roasted, it is to be eaten with matza and maror (this being part of the mitzva "for the generations", but not counted separately among Taryag); that is, neither cooked nor partially done [7, L125 12:9], but roasted whole. No part was to be left over until morning [8, L117 12:10]; any leftovers were to be burned [143, A91 this mitzva is counted in Parshat Tzav,

not in Bo]. It was to be eaten with "belt tied", in haste, ready to leave (these last details are for the Egyptian Pesach only).

MITZVAnotes

Korban Pesach is an example of a piece of text in the Torah that mixes episode with mitzva. Much more often, we find either/or. It is a bit confusing to distinguish between the details of the mitzva of KP for all generations and those elements of the story of the Exodus which were meant only for that first Pesach. In fact, it is not just confusing; it is impossible to accurately differentiate between the two categories of details... WITHOUT the Oral Law. The Talmud informs us as to what constitutes the mitzva of KP. The Written Word is not complete. Our Torah consists of two inseparable parts - the Written Word and the Oral Law (embodied in the Talmud and many other sources). This is a fact that is reinforced over and over again throughout the Torah. If one attempts to understand the Written Word without the Oral Law and Tradition, there will be confusion at best and distortion and perversion of G-d's Word, at worst.

Then G-d will "pass through" Egypt on that night, kill the Egyptian firstborns, and "pass-over" the Jewish homes with the blood-marks. This shall become a

holiday for all generations. Matzot are to be eaten for seven days and on Erev Pesach, Chametz is to be eliminated from our homes [9, A156 12:15]. (Intentionally and spitefully eating Chametz on Pesach is a rejection of membership in Klal Yisrael, hence the punishment of KAREIT, excision.)

The basis of Yom Tov is set down in 12:16 - specifically that Melacha is prohibited, as on Shabbat, except for "that which is needed for food".

MITZVAnotes

Without too much detail, what seems to be a 'simple' matter of 'needed for food', is not simple at all. Our Sages explain that permission to do certain Melacha on Yom Tov includes not just pertaining to food, but for other needs of Yom Tov, as well. You can boil water on Yom Tov for a glass of tea (OCHEL NEFESH) - and you can boil up water to wash your face (TZORECH YOM TOV). You can handle a lit candle to light the gas in order to cook - and you can also handle a candle and light others, in order to read by.

That we shall say is an expansion of the Written Torah's directive. On the other hand, the categories of Melacha permitted for OCHEL NEFESH (to feed us) are limited by the Oral Law. One example, you can't pick an apple off a tree on Yom Tov, to eat it.

The source of "sh'mura" matza is in 12:17.

MITZVAnotes

SH'MURA, as far as matza is concerned is more than just making sure the matza is totally non-chameitz. Regular Pesach Matza is guarded from becoming chameitz from the time of the grinding of the flour until the matzot are completely baked. SH'MURA MATZA has additional guarding - specifically, from the time the wheat is cut from the ground. Furthermore, SH'MURA MATZA is baked with specific intention for the fulfillment of the mitzva to eat matza - not just to provide us with Kosher L'Pesach matza to eat.

The mitzva of eating matza on seder night [10, A158 12:18] is followed by the prohibition of owning of chametz during all of Pesach [11, L200 12:19]. Foods containing chametz are forbidden [12, L198 12:20].

MITZVAnotes

Because the prohibition of chametz and the mitzva of matza are linked to each other in the same pasuk, we do not view Matza as a purely positive time-related mitzva. Hence, women are not exempt. In fact, women are obligated to perform other Seder mitzvot as a package deal with matza. Specifically, women are obligated on

the mitzva of Hagada - they should not be silent observers at the Seder, but should participate in transmission of the story and details to their children and guests. Women are also obligated (for a different reason) to drink four cups of wine, which is a Rabbinic command.

Chamishi 5th Aliya - 8 p'sukim - 12:21-28

[P> 12:21 (8)] Moshe gathers the elders of the People and relays G-d's instructions. He also tells them that when the People get to Eretz Yisrael, they will continue to commemorate the events of the Exodus, with questions and answers from one generation to the next. The People do as commanded.

Note well that getting to Eretz Yisrael was always part of the Plan; it was stated as such when G-d spoke to Moshe at the burning bush and when G-d sent Moshe to tell Him of G-d's Plan - V'HOTZEITI... V'HEIVEITI.

Moshe tells the people that which G-d had previously commanded him to tell them. Here it says: Take a bundle of hyssop (EIZOV - guess what it is called in Arabic - the word we use in Hebrew - ZAHTAR), dip it in the blood of the Korban Pesach, and daub it on the lintel and the two doorposts.

Notice: Not only is going into Eretz Yisrael part of the Promises of Redemption, but in the laws of

Korban Pesach there is reference to "WHEN you will come to the Land..." (not, if)

SDT: The Torah tells us that when G-d will pass through Egypt smiting their firstborns, and He will see blood on the doorposts and lintels of the Jewish homes, He will not let the "Destructive Force" (HAMASHCHIT, MAL'ACH HAMAVET, Angel of Death) to come to your homes... What was the MASHCHIT doing in Egypt on that night, when the Hagada states that it was G-d Himself who smote the Egyptian firstborns? Some explain that the MASHCHIT was in charge of "regularly scheduled deaths", so to speak. G-d did not allow him to enter a Jewish home that night so the contrast with Egypt would be total. Meaning that those who were "scheduled" to die that night were given an extension in order to highlight the contrast between Egypt and Israel.

Remember, something similar occurred at the beginning of the enslavement, when the midwives were ordered to not allow the baby boys to live. According to our Tradition, the midwives not only defied Par'o, but prayed that no boys would be stillborn, lest people think that they followed Par'o's orders.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 23 p'sukim - 12:29-51

[S> 12:29 (8)] It comes to pass at exactly midnight that the Egyptian firstborns are smitten, and that the Egyptians shower the Jews with gifts, and hurry them on their way.

[P> 12:37 (6)] And so the People of Israel leave Egypt. The People leave in such haste that they take quick-baked breads with them without taking the time to let the dough rise. Approx. 600,000 men, plus women and children leave Egypt, together with many Egyptians who are smart enough to flee with them. Thus ends a 430 year period of exile (according to some opinions, this is the time from the B'rit bein HaB'tarim to the Exodus - this is another way of explaining when the enslavement began - the mere prophecy of it). That night shall be a special night for all of Israel through the generations.

[P> 12:43 (8)] The Torah now shifts from relating the story of the Exodus back to the rules for the Korban Pesach. Jews who have "left Judaism" and embraced another religion [13, L128 12:43], non-Jews, even those who are committed to the Seven Noahide Laws [14, L126 12:45] may not eat Korban Pesach. The Korban must be eaten in one place; removing it from its place is forbidden [15, L123 12:46], as is breaking a bone in it [16, L121 12:46]. Only Jews participate. An

uncircumcised Jew may not eat of the KP [17, L127 12:48]. A true convert to Judaism is equal to a born-Jew. The People did as commanded.

[S> 12:51 (1)] On this very day, the multitude left Egypt.

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya - 16 p'sukim - 13:1-16

[P> 13:1 (10)] As a commemoration of the Exodus (specifically plague #10), we are to sanctify firstborns (human, kosher farm animals, and donkey. Each type of "b'chor" is treated differently) [18, A79 13:2]. The Torah sets down the yearly observance of Pesach, even after entry into Israel.

Chametz may not be eaten [19, L197 13:3] nor even owned [20, L201 13:7] on Pesach. It is a mitzva to relate the story of what happened [21, A157 13:8] at the Seder. T'filin also serve as a reminder of the Exodus. Pesach must be in the spring, the time of renewal of nature.

[P> 13:11 (6)] A firstborn-male donkey must be redeemed [22, A81 13:13] (by giving a sheep or its value to a kohen) or destroyed (if the owner refuses to redeem it [23, A82 13:13] (officially, a mitzva, but definitely not preferred).

The Torah reiterates the significance of the younger generation asking and receiving answers about the origin of the Nation. T'filin is/are also repeated.

The two final portions of BO (all of

Sh'vi'i) join the two first portions of the Sh'ma as the four passages of the Torah contained in each of the two T'filin. In the SHEL YAD, the four parshiot are written on one piece of parchment. In the SHEL ROSH, they are each written on separate pieces of KLAf and inserted into four separate compartments.

Haftara 16 p'sukim - Yirmiyahu 46:13-28

Parallel to the sedra, Egypt's downfall (at the hands of Bavel) is prophesied. (It is rare that a prophecy to another nation is used as a Haftara.) Israel, however, shall not fear; G-d is with us! The pasuk that assures us about the Ultimate Redemption mentions that it might happen in the distant future. Nonetheless, we shall not despair.

This can be seen in context of the well-known notion that Mashiach will either come in his appointed time, or sooner.

It depends on us.

If we improve our commitment to G-d and His Torah and Land - in numbers and quality, and if we do the 'leg work' (so to speak) of Melech HaMashi'ach in Ingathering ourselves and our fellow Jews - to the best of our ability, leaving the rest of Kibutz Galuyot to Mashiach, but doing a good job on our own, and if we prepare psychologically, emotionally, educationally, and practically for the third Beit HaMik-

dash - then we can hasten the Geula Sh'leima. And, it will be a smooth transition because of our preparation and readiness.

If not, chas v'shalom, then the Geula will happen at its time (which we do not know) and will be preceded by many difficulties.

The Babylonian army is compared with the countless nature of swarms of locust. Thus Egypt falls to locust again - and there is another connection to the sedra.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

Two Parashot; Two Goals; Two Haftarot

BO - 16 p'sukim - Yirmiyahu 46:13-28

Although the two parashot of Va'eira and Bo recount the story of the ten plagues for us, Chazal separated the narrative by including the first seven plagues in Parashat Va'eira and leaving the details of the final three punishments for Parashat Bo. As a youngster, I always felt a bit "frustrated" to have the culmination of the exciting "adventure", the depiction of Israel's release from

slavery, delayed until the following Shabbat. Understandably, I assumed (at that time), that such a division would create a far-too-lengthy parasha or one that was far-too-concise. Not surprisingly, I was wrong.

In actuality, each of these two Torah portions, though similar, have separate goals, for, although they are both centered around the plagues, the purpose of each separate set of makot differ from each other. As I mentioned in last week's column, Parashat Va'eira includes those plagues whose primary objective was to impress upon Par'o and his nation God's absolute sovereignty and unequalled power - clearly reflected in the repetitive phrase that accompanies the plagues: "so that they know that I am G-d".

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein enlightens us by revealing how, upon reading the last maka of Parashat Va'eira (the plague of BARAD, hail), we sense a change in Par'o's attitude. For the first time, Par'o reacts to a plague with the words: CHATATI HAPA'AM - "I have sinned this time," HASHEM HATZADIK, VA'ANI V'AMI HAR'SHA-IM, "G-d is the righteous One, while I and my nation are the guilty ones." And this change in attitude leads to Hashem's 'adjustment' to the purpose of the plagues in Parashat Bo, which were meant to punish the

Egyptians for their cruelty to B'nei Yisrael.

As the two parashot differ in their ultimate goals, so too, the two haftarot readings, though reacting to the very same historical event in their time, differ in the prophecies of the two contemporary nevi'im, Yechezkel and Yirmiyahu. Yechezkel's nevu'a that follows Parashat Va'eira, centers on G-d's anger toward the Pharaoh and his boast of being a god and the creator of the Nile, the life-source of Egypt. His denial of the omnipotence of the One Creator and the One Sovereign reflected the very sin of Par'o that we read in the parasha. For that reason, the punishment prophesied by Yechezkel includes the removal of Egypt's life-source, predicting a serious impact on the population through Hashem's strike upon the Nile itself and their eventual banishment from the Nile and into the wilderness.

Rav Lichtenstein explains that Yirmiyahu's nevu'a that we read in the haftara of Parashat Bo [perek 46], echoes the purpose of the three final plagues depicted in the parasha, i.e. to punish Mitzrayim for the heartless behavior of Par'o and his nation. Reflecting the theme of the parsha, Yirmiyahu prophesies of punishments for the inhumanity of Egypt - not for her denial of G-d. Just as their behavior toward the Israelites in

Egypt was deplorable, so too, was their behavior toward the Jews in Judea in the time of Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel. The treachery of the Pharaoh in abandoning his alliance with Yehuda in order to avoid his defeat in the hands of Bavel, would be punished by the weakening of his empire and the eventual fall to the Babylonian Empire. Yirmiyahu prophesies of an invasion of Mitzrayim from the North in which the enemy would drive out the Egyptian military, lay waste to her land and put Egypt to shame (see p'sukim 20-24).

Two haftarot sharing two nevu'ot from two nevi'im. Yet, each one echoes a divine message for past, present and future. ★



The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

VA'EIRA

<> and two word Unexplaineds

missed it by 16 days

The haftara of Va'eira states that HaShem's call to Yechezkeil was in the tenth month (Tevet) on the 12th of the month. This year, we read that haftara on the 28th of Tevet - 16 days later.

cow's sound and gender

Moo-she, Mushi is a son of M'rori, son of Levi.

BO



The word BO is not just the name of the sedra, but also the number (BO = 2+1 = 3) of MAKOT in the sedra. <> Furthermore, MFZL adds that the letters actually tell us which makot. BET is for B'CHOROT and ALEF is for ARBEH. So where is CHOSHECH, you ask? It's there but you can't see it because it is dark <> BOW (as in bow of ribbon) <> BOW (as in bow and arrow) <> American actress Clara Bow who appeared in 46 silent films and 11 talkies <> Beau Brummel <> Chinese

cymbals, known as BO <> Monopoly card for the B&O railroad <> Beau Bridges <> Bo Bear <> Bow of the cello <> Little Bo Peep <> Bolivian flag - country code for Bolivia is BO <> Bo on the Go (Canadian kids' TV show) <> Bo Derek. <> ARBEH (locust) <>

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ad of using black to represent CHOSHECH, here darkness is shown by its contrast - and for B'nei Yisrael there was like - a picture of the Jerusalem light show <> Egyptian sword for MAKAT B'CHOROT - the killing of the first borns and/or the killing BY the firstborns of others in anger over Par'o's repeated refusal to yield to the threat made by Moshe (in G-d's name) against the firstborns <> clock reads almost midnight. That's what Moshe said to describe G-d's intention of Makat B'chorot at exactly midnight. Commentaries say that he used that wording so that the people wouldn't question G-d if they thought the timing was off (like if their watches were a little slow or fast) <> Lamb and goat are the choices for Korban Pesach <> dog wearing a non-barking muzzle for the Jewish areas, not a dog barked its tongue <> In Hebrew, canned goods are called SHIMURIM, with a night scene background, as in LEIL

SHIMURIM. Note the full Moon in the Leil Shimurim pic, which is how the Moon is on Leil HaSeder <> Yo-yo represents Par'o's erratic behavior - get Moshe & Aharon; get them out of my sight; bring them back, etc. <> Bone for the ISUR of breaking a bone in Korban Pesach. <> It is also for the word that appears a few times: B'ETZEM HAYOM HAZE... <> wind-sock is for the strong easterly wind, that brought the locust <> T'filin are t'filin. Two of the four parshiyot inside T'filin come from the end of BO <> the single T'fila (BAYIT) represents the requirement that Korban Pesach be eaten by its chabura in one house, not two <> Pidyon HaBen coin - obvious <> goat and donkey stand for the other two types of B'chor <> Axes (and the sword) are mentioned in the haftara <> As is the EGLA YEFEI-FIYA, represented as a prize-winning calf <> bundle of hyssop, EIZOV <> Two mezuzot are on what the blood of the KP was applied, but not these kind of mezuzot. In the context of the sedra, mezuzot are doorposts, not what we put on the right-hand one <> The dove with a sword is the haftara's CHEREV HAYONA, lit. (but not the way the Navi meant) <> Fred and Barney from the Flintstones are neighbors, sharing KP <> KAZEH R'EI V'KADEISH <> KOLAH KANACHASH YEILEICH - Its voice shall go like [that of] the snake (Yirmiyahu 46:22 in the haftara). That's the snake with the bottle of

Coca Cola <> The ballot with a GIMMEL and the date 17 May 1977, 9th Knesset - In recent years, GIMMEL is the symbol for the United Torah Judaism party. Back then, it was the letter for the Aguda Party. AGUDA in the sedra was the bundle of EIZOV, hyssop, zahtar that was used to apply blood of the Korban Pesach on the doorposts and lintel of the Jewish homes on the night of MAKAT B'CHOROT <> and two Unexplaineds

לע"נ

הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

Freedom's Defence

BO

And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.'

It was the moment for which they had been waiting for more than two hundred years. The Israelites, slaves in Egypt, were about to go free. Ten plagues had struck the country. The people were the first to understand; Par'o was the last. God was on the side of freedom and human dignity. You cannot build a nation, however strong your police and army, by enslaving some for the benefit of others. History will turn against you, as it has against every tyranny known

to humankind.

And now the time had arrived. The Israelites were on the brink of their release. Moshe, their leader, gathered them together and prepared to address them. What would he speak about at this fateful juncture, the birth of a people? He could have spoken about many things. He might have talked about liberty, the breaking of their chains, and the end of slavery. He might have talked about the destination to which they were about to travel, the "land flowing with milk and honey". Or he might have chosen a more sombre theme: the journey that lay ahead, the dangers they would face: what Nelson Mandela called "the long walk to freedom". Any one of these would have been the speech of a great leader sensing an historic moment in the destiny of Israel.

Moshe did none of these things. Instead he spoke about children, and the distant future, and the duty to pass on memory to generations yet unborn. Three times in this week's sedra he turns to the theme:

And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?' you shall say... (Sh'mot 12:26-27)

And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.' (13:8)

And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?' you shall answer... (13:14)

About to gain their freedom, the Israelites were told that they had to become a nation of educators. That is what made Moshe not just a great leader, but a unique one. What the Torah is teaching is that freedom is won not on the battlefield, nor in the political arena, nor in the courts, national or international, but in the human imagination and will. To defend a country, you need an army. But to defend a free society, you need schools. You need families and an educational system in which ideals are passed on from one generation to the next, and never lost, or despaired of, or obscured. So Jews became the people whose passion was education, whose citadels were schools and whose heroes were teachers.

The result was that by the time the Second Temple was destroyed, Jews had constructed the world's first system of universal compulsory education, paid for by public funds:

Remember for good the man Yehoshua ben Gamla, because were it not for him the Torah would have been forgotten from Israel. At first a child was taught by a father, and as a result orphans were left uneducated. It was then resolved that teachers of children should be appointed in Jerusalem, and a father (who lived

outside the city) would bring his child there and have him taught, but the orphan was still left without tuition. Then it was resolved to appoint teachers in each district, and boys of the age of sixteen and seventeen were placed under them; but whenever the teacher was angry with a pupil, he would rebel and leave. Finally, Yehoshua ben Gamla came and instituted that teachers be appointed in every province and every city, and children from the age of six or seven were placed under their charge. (Bava Batra 21a)

By contrast, England did not institute universal compulsory education until 1870. The seriousness the Sages attached to education can be measured by the following two passages:

If a city has made no provision for the education of the young, its inhabitants are placed under a ban, until teachers have been engaged. If they persistently neglect this duty, the city is excommunicated, for the world only survives by the merit of the breath of schoolchildren. (Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 2:1)

Rabi Yehuda HaNasi sent Rabi Chiya and R. Issi and R. Ami on a mission through the towns of Israel to establish teachers in every place. They came to a town where there were no teachers. They said to the inhabitants, "Bring us the defenders of the town." They brought them the

military guard. The rabbis said, "These are not the protectors of the town but its destroyers." "Who then are the protectors?" asked the inhabitants. They answered, "The teachers." (Yerushalmi Chagiga 1:6)

No other faith has attached a higher value to study. None has given it a higher position in the scale of communal priorities. From the very outset, Israel knew that freedom cannot be created by legislation, nor can it be sustained by political structures alone. As the American justice Judge Learned Hand put it: "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it." That is the truth epitomised in a remarkable exegesis given by the Sages. They based it on the following verse about the Tablets that Moshe received at Sinai:

The Tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the Tablets. (Sh'mot 32:16)

They reinterpreted it as follows:

Read not CHARUT, engraved, but CHEIRUT, freedom, for there is none so free as one who occupies himself with the study of Torah. (Avot 6:2)

What they meant was that if the law is engraved on the hearts of the people, it does not need to be enforced by police. True freedom -

CHEIRUT - is the ability to control oneself without having to be controlled by others. Without voluntarily accepting a code of moral and ethical restraints, liberty becomes license and society itself a battle-ground of warring instincts and desires.

This idea, fateful in its implications, was first articulated by Moshe in this week's sedra, in his words to the assembled Israelites. He was telling them that freedom is more than a moment of political triumph. It is a constant endeavour, throughout the ages, to teach those who come after us the battles our ancestors fought, and why; so that my freedom is never sacrificed to yours, or purchased at the cost of someone else's. That is why, to this day, on Pesach we eat matza, the unleavened bread of affliction, and taste maror, the bitter herbs of slavery, to remember the sharp taste of affliction and never be tempted to afflict others.

The oldest and most tragic phenomenon in history is that empires, which once bestrode the narrow world like a colossus, eventually decline and disappear. Freedom becomes individualism ("each doing what was right in his own eyes", Sho-f'tim 21:25), individualism becomes chaos, chaos becomes the search for order, and the search for order becomes a new tyranny imposing its will with the use of force. What, thanks to Torah, Jews

never forgot is that freedom is a never-ending effort of education in which parents, teachers, homes, and schools are all partners in the dialogue between the generations.

Learning - Talmud Torah - is the very foundation of Judaism, the guardian of our heritage and hope. That is why, when tradition conferred on Moshe the greatest honour, it did not call him 'our hero', 'our prophet' or 'our king'. It called him, simply, Moshe Rabeinu, Moshe our teacher. For it is in the arena of education that the battle for the good society is lost or won.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) **What do we mean when we say that freedom must be taught, not just achieved?**
- (2) **How can forgetting the past lead to the loss of freedom?**
- (3) **What is the difference between freedom and 'doing whatever you want'?**

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Haftara

Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

President and Rosh HalYeshiva

Ohr Torah Stone Institutions

Collective Responsibility

BO

The first plagues focused on the personal confrontation between Moshe, Aharon and Par'o. As the plagues advance, they gradually grow to encompass the entire Egyptian people. This expansion is also seen in the haftara of Parshat Bo, which is read from Yirmiyahu 46. Here, the prophet Yirmiyahu highlights the Egyptian people and their fate as a consequence of the destruction of their state. "Go up to Gilad and take balm, virgin daughter Egypt. For naught will you apply many remedies; there is no cure for you. The nations have heard of your disgrace, and your screams have filled the earth" (vv. 11-12). These descriptions of the plagues as striking the Egyptian populace – rather than just the rulers – helps shed light on our understanding of justice in the world.

The Sages were the first to explicitly confront the question of why the masses of Egyptian people had to suffer for what seems like the crime of Par'o and his inner circle. They explain that guilt for the subjugation

and humiliation of the Israelites did not rest with Par'o alone, but extended to the common people as well, who were punished for their activities: "Because the Egyptians planned to stone the Israelites, the Holy One, blessed be He, pelted them with hail. Because they forced the Hebrews to tend their vineyards, the Holy One, blessed be He, dispatched locusts to devour their trees" (Tanchuma, Bo 5).

Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein, quoting his grandfather, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, illustrated how this phenomenon has continued to play out through the ages. Rabbi Soloveitchik asked: Why is it that God killed all the firstborns in Egypt and didn't suffice with simply killing Par'o's firstborn son? This, it seems, was the extent of what God threatened in Parshat Sh'mot (4:23). The Rav answered: "As a child in Russia who suffered from constant anti-Semitism, from whom did I suffer? When I ran home from those who wished to hit and humiliate me, from whom was I running? Not from the Czar, but from the neighborhood bully."

In other words, both the haftara and the parsha describe plagues inflicted on the entire population because they, on a day-to-day basis, were the main persecutors of Israel – even if the oppression originated in the ideas of their superiors. The people were

part of the problem: They bought into Pharaoh's rhetoric; they absorbed his anti-Semitism; and instead of rebelling and resisting the atrocities of their ruler, they carried out his vision. Hence the people of Egypt deserved punishment alongside their masters, and they were stricken together with them.

These ideas have great contemporary importance, and offer a lens through which to understand when there should be a differentiation between the actions of governments and their populations. Throughout the world, we find evil and corrupt governments and states. In some, like the Islamic Republic of Iran, the regime enacts barbaric and genocidal ideals and policies, but these are not shared by the great mass of the people. In fact, the people of Iran have a deep and shared history of friendship with the Jewish people, going back to the deeds of the ancient Persian Emperors Cyrus and Xerxes. As recently as the 1970s, the modern state of Israel had warm diplomatic relations with Iran. When the reckoning comes for Iran's cruel theocrats, justice will be served by their paying the price of their crimes personally. Their subjects, who suffer under their yoke no less than the rest of the world, deserve freedom and a better future.

In other parts of the world, however, hatred and barbarism sadly do not

end at the thresholds of the halls of government. One of the greatest horrors of October 7th was the realization that atrocities were being carried out not only by agents of Hamas, the ruling party in Gaza, but by thousands of ordinary Gazans who had completely bought into the genocidal ideology and propaganda of their leaders. Such people - including young adults with no official connection to any terror group - kidnapped, abused, tortured, and murdered hundreds of innocent people throughout southern Israel. This terrifying impression has been subsequently borne out by rigorous opinion polling, in which moral remorse for the horrors of October 7th is almost entirely absent among Gazans.

The way we view those who have hurt and hate us also matters. At the Pesach Seder, when we recall the deserved plagues on the Egyptian populace, we do so with a recognition that our persecutors' pain is not something in which we revel. Removing drops of wine from our Seder cup for each plague is a reminder that there must be compassion in our hearts as well. The Sages take great care to teach us that God's ways are just, and that in some cases, punishment on a society as a whole is deserved. But we do not celebrate their suffering. As our fallen courageous alum Eitan Oster

z"l once stated: "A true warrior fights not because of his hatred for those who stand in front of him, but because of his love for what stands behind him." 🕍



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Plan A; Plan B

The title might be a bit confusing, because last week's PTDT was entitled: The Whole Plan. Let's just say, this week we are talking about a different pair of plans.

It will come as no surprise that this PTDT for Parshat Bo is going to be about the Jewish Calendar.

Let me start by asking is you can complete the following line:

Thirty days hath...

If you said September, April, June, and November - you'd be correct.

And you probably know the number of days in each of the months of the - let's call it the general calendar - solar calendar would be a better name. Probably even the February numbers and when it has 28 days and when it has 29 days.

How many days were there in February of 1900? If you said 28, you'd be right and you'd know that

calendar well. 1900 was not leap year - even though 1900 divides evenly by four.

Whether you knew that or not, is not the point of this PTDT. The point is, that we have a Jewish Calendar.

And it was commanded to our nation while we were still in Egypt, two weeks before we were taken out.

And it is not just a mitzva - it is HaShem's taking us to be His junior partners in creating K'DUSHAT Z'MAN - the Sanctity of Time.

And it represents freedom from Egyptian oppression and slavery, because slaves do not have their own time - only free people have that capability.

Rambam clearly states that the mitzva, which is worded in the Torah as HACHODESH HAZE LACHEM... This month shall be to you the head of the months; to you it shall be the first of the months of the year - means that our calendar is lunar as far as months are concerned and solar, with the periodic addition of a 13th month to keep Pesach in the springtime (and Sukkot in the fall).

Ramban says that HACHODESH HAZE does indeed command our months to confirm with the Moon's cycle of phases, but the adding of the extra month is commanded in a separate mitzva to preserve the Spring Month and bring the Korban

Pesach.

Rambam is adamant about the Calendar being a single mitzva that consists of both components.

In Rambam's Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh, he writes that there is a mitzva for Sanhedrin (a committee therefrom) to study the heavenly bodies and to be able to determine exactly if the Moon will be visible on the evening following the 29th of a month, or not. Further, they must know location in the sky of the first visibility of the lunar crescent (the L'VANA B'CHIDUSHA) in full detail. This is necessary for them to be able to question witnesses and determine if they actually saw the Moon or not.

Realize that with all other kinds of testimony, it is the witnesses that provide the judges with information they (the judges) lack. With the witnesses for Rosh Chodesh, the judges have all the facts and the witnesses might be unsure as to what they saw in the sky.

Long introduction; let's get to Plan A and Plan B.

Plan A is that we, the Jewish People via our leaders - Moshe and Aharon then and the Sanhedrin subsequently - and eye-witnesses to the L'VANA B'CHIDUSHA, be active participants with HKBH in sanctifying time. We become His junior partners in this special activity (as mentioned earlier).

From the beginning, the human factor was "problematic". When HaShem commanded Moshe and Aharon to create the Jewish Calendar, there was a technical problem. G-d had taught that the month was to begin at New Moon. The problem is that we cannot see the Moon at New Moon - it is invisible to us on Earth.

(The terms New Moon, as well as the term MOLAD, birth of the Moon, are misleading. British Royal Astronomer, Patrick Moore explained that New Moon is really No Moon. Hundreds of years earlier, the Avudraham stated that Molad is a misnomer, because we cannot see the Moon at the moment of the molad.)

When Moshe expressed his problem with not being able to see the Moon at the moment of Molad, thus being unable to proclaim Rosh Chodesh, HaShem showed Moshe the form of the Moon when it first becomes visible and said to him - KAZEH R'EI V'KADEISH, see it like this and sanctify (the month).

What this means is that HaShem delayed the beginning of each month from His command, to accommodate us, since He wants us to be active in the process.

And then there are the problems at certain times of the year when the weather does not cooperate with witnesses being able to see the Moon.

And then there is the possibility of Sanhedrin declaring Rosh Chodesh in error. It could be because witnesses answered all the questions correctly and the Sanhedrin committee accepted the testimony erroneously.

To this last point, Rambam writes that when Beit Din makes a mistake and sanctifies the wrong day as Rosh Chodesh, HaShem, so to speak, changes His calendar to match ours.

This is how much HaShem wants our participation in the process of Kid-dush HaChodesh.

But, when there is no Sanhedrin, we are not authorized to undertake the process of sanctification of the month - which means the sanctification of the holidays in a particular month.

Our months could not be Kodesh; our holidays would not be holy. If - chas v'shalom, Rosh Chodesh Nissan would not be sanctified, then on the 15th day of the month it would not be Yom Tov, chametz would not be prohibited, matza would not be required.

Comes Plan B and saves the day (saves the months and the holidays).

The Sanhedrin of the later Hillel (not his great-great... grandfather, the Hillel of Hillel & Shammai fame) either devised or revealed (there are two ways of looking at it) a Jewish Calendar based on mathematical

calculation, that can determine every Rosh Chodesh for as long as needed - until we again have a Sanhedrin

- AND -

that Sanhedrin of about 1700 years ago, sanctified all Rosh Chodeshes of the fixed calendar in advance.

This Plan B gives us a flawless calendar which is not messed up by human error, nor be clouds that would prevent the Moon from being seen.

Under Plan A, if you invited family or friends to your Purim Seuda, the specific date might not be known until the month of Adar began, and even during that month, it would be possible for a declaration of the committee of Sanhedrin for IBUR HA-SHANA (different committee than the one for declaring Rosh Chodesh) that the month following this month of Adar will be Adar again, thus postponing your Seuda by a month.

That won't happen with Plan B.

Plan B is neat and works perfectly. Plan A is not as neat and has potential problems.

But Plan A is what HaShem wants for us. It involves our active participation - not just observer status we have with Plan B.

The key is the word twice stated in Sh'mot 12:2 - LACHEM, LACHEM. For you. It is yours. G-d can say that we

should have Pesach from the 15th to the 21st of Nissan - but it won't happen unless we sanctify the calendar.

Our calendars (both Plan A and Plan B) are amazing gifts from HKBH. **PTDT**



Here's a Hebrew word to learn for an English word you might not know either.

TAT-RANUT is ANOSMIA in Hebrew.

They both mean the loss of the sense of smell, either partial or total, temporary or permanent.

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



BO

This is Your Month!

In this week's Torah reading we read the Mitzva to set up the Jewish calendar through sanctifying the months: This month shall be for you the first of all months (Sh'mot 12:2). This week we also celebrated the Rosh Chodesh for our antipenultimate month; Sh'vat. Before we talk about Sh'vat, let's discuss the importance of the Mitzva of Kiddush HaChodesh, or the injunction to set

up a Jewish calendar.

Rashi's first comment in his well-loved commentary on the Torah is: The Torah should have begun with 'This month shall be to you...', which is the first Mitzva given to Yisrael. So, there's clearly something exceptional about this Mitzva. But what is it?

Well, being the first Mitzva is significant, because the Mitzvot do establish our national unity and character, while simultaneously cementing our relationship with God. So, the first precept to do this is significant.

This demand that we have our calendar sets us apart from other nations, especially Egypt. The Egyptians had a solar calendar based upon the annual cycles of the Nile. We would depart from our former taskmasters by having our own lunar calendar, based upon the cycles of the Moon.

The S'forno points out an even more significant idea expressed in the idea of a national calendar: From now on these months will be yours, to do with as you like. This is by way of contrast to the years when you were enslaved when you had no control over your time at all. While you were enslaved, your days, hours, minutes, were always at the beck and call of your taskmasters.

I am only free when my time is mine to control. One of the greatest advan-

tages of freedom is the power over the clock and calendar. Certain, more Kabbalistic and Chassidic, authorities add another significant concept, that of 'newness' or renewal. The S'fat Emet explains:

This idea is for the redemption from Egypt. Because in exile, this ability to renew ourselves is missing... And at the time of redemption, which is when it was made clear that everything derives from the life force of Hashem. And from this comes renewal. Because the life force of Hashem has constant renewal, as it says, "renews every day, constantly" (Morning Prayers)... But the aspect of 'month' (CHODESH also means 'new') is by way of faith. And sometimes it has to be by way of faith in order to awaken this renewal.

However, that's only the first clause of our very famous verse. It continues: It (this month) shall be to you the RISHON of the months of the year. The Netziv explains that this first month, which has been called Nissan since the Babylonian Exile, is ROSH and RISHON. These terms which mean 'head' and 'first', respectively, really are a declaration that: This month is the 'best' for 'you', as opposed to the rest of the world for whom Tishrei is the best month, because that's when the world was created... However, in Nissan the special nature (SEGULA) of Yisrael was created, therefore this month is

critical for developing our worship of God through the retelling of the Exodus which develops our belief and faith.

Some commentaries point out that this month is LACHEM ('for you' as opposed to others) the first of months. The use of the term LACHEM is significant, because it has the letters of the word MELECH. In other words, this month is the 'King of Months'.

So, we're also being taught by God through this declaration that not all months are created equally. Some months are more significant than others. The mystics or Kabbalists amongst us express this idea a bit differently. They claim that each month has its own character and that character is expressed through certain symbols which help us to better understand the true nature of each month.

This week we begin the month of Sh'vat. So, what is the special significance of this new month? The great mystical work Sefer Yetzira (traditionally attributed to Avraham Avinu) claims that the letter TZADI rules over the month of Sh'vat. Sefer Yetzira further claims that the constellation D'LI (bucket, also called Aquarius) reigns over the month. Even though we say that no MAZAL (Zodiac sign) rules over Yisrael (Shabbat 156a), most mystics believe

that these 'signs' do have influence.

The significant influence of the D'LI is that it is meant to draw water, and 'there is no water other than Torah' (Bava Kama 17a). So, the month of Sh'vat has a special place in the study and 'serving' of Torah.

However, there's another significant mystical idea connected to Sh'vat. The letter TZADI is connected to eating and digestion. The month of Sh'vat is understood to be a special time for rectifying our eating habits. This is truly significant because the original human sin was, of course, the illicit eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In Sh'vat we endeavor to rectify that initial sin.

How do we repent for a sin committed by someone else and so very long ago? First of all, we do have traditions that offspring can help rectify behavior of ancestors (the source for reciting Kaddish). Adam and Eve are our primordial parents.

And, that's what Tu BiShvat is about! We eat fruit with KEDUSHA (holiness) and TAHARA (purity) on our Rosh HaShana LA-ILANOT (New Year for Trees)! There are many customs to help us in this endeavor, like eating 15 fruits or conducting a Tu BiShvat Seder. But the biggest factor is awareness and care in our eating of fruit.

While we're at it, why don't we just eat more mindfully overall? If the first sin was performed through eating, then can't eating be a dangerous endeavor if not done well? I would think that's a big YES! Let's use this month to eat with more KEDUSHA and care! Bon Appetit! 🍴

Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison
www.ravkooktorah.com

Draining Egypt

“The Israelites did as Moshe had said. They requested silver and gold articles and clothing from the Egyptians. God made the Egyptians respect the people, and they granted their request. The Israelites thus drained Egypt of its wealth” (Sh'mot 12:35-36).

God's command that the Hebrew slaves request gold and silver from the Egyptians is commonly explained as reparations for hundreds of years of slave labor. But why was it necessary to completely drain Egypt of its wealth?

The Talmud (B'rachot 9b) describes this 'draining' of Egypt with two different metaphors:

“Rav Ami said: they made Egypt like a trap without bait.

Resh Lakish said: they made Egypt like a net without fish.”

What do these metaphors mean? What is the difference between a “trap without bait” and a “net without fish”?

Trap without Bait

We find that the Torah prohibits returning to Egypt in order to prevent the Jews from falling once again under the spell of the idolatrous Egyptian culture. The Canaanites also worshiped idols, yet Egypt posed a bigger threat to the spiritual purity of the nation. Having lived there for centuries, the Jewish people were comfortable with all aspects of Egyptian life, including their idolatrous practices.

In order to neutralize the attraction of Egypt, it was necessary to impoverish the country. One of the principal reasons for migrating to another land is the possibility of increasing personal wealth. But without its gold and silver, the Egyptian economy was in shambles. It was like a “trap without bait” – the country held no real incentive to lure back Jews seeking to do business there.

Net without Fish

There could be, however, a second factor in the decision of certain individuals to return to Egypt. The

local culture and arts, the Egyptian lifestyle, so familiar to the newly freed slaves, could also serve as a lure to draw back nostalgic former residents. Resh Lakish therefore compared Egypt to a “net without fish”. Fish swim together, and are more likely to be drawn to a net that has already caught other fish. By draining Egypt of its wealth, not only was the country devastated economically, but it also suffered from a dramatically lower standard of living and poverty of culture. The final memories of the departing Israelites would be of an impoverished land whose remaining inhabitants struggled to eke out a living. It would be a “net without fish”, holding little enticement for them to return.

Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 108-109.

Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 45

Rav Kook on T'hilim

*This is a new PhiloTorah column from an unpublished work by **Rabbi Chanan Morrison**. Here is the fifth installment -*

Wakening Love and Awe

How can we awaken within ourselves the feelings of AHAVA and YIR'A, love and awe of God?

The House and the Inner Sanctuary

We begin the morning prayers with a verse that describes our place of prayer as a BAYIT, a house, as well as a HEICHAL, a sanctuary:

“As for me, in Your abundant loving-kindness I will enter Your house. I will prostrate myself toward Your holy sanctuary, in awe of You” (T'hilim 5:8)

What is the difference between “Your house” and “Your holy sanctuary”? What is the significance of these two images as we prepare to pray?

Our BAYIT is our domain, our private castle where we are in control. “Whatever the homeowner says, [the guest should] obey” (Pesachim 86b). When we speak of “God’s house”, we are reflecting on God as the One who governs and rules over the universe.

The inner sanctum of a HEICHAL, on the other hand, implies much more than just rule and control. The word HEICHAL suggests majestic splendor and honor, as befits a royal personage.

Given this understanding of these two terms, one would assume that the mental image of God’s house will generate a sense of YIR'A, as we recognize and submit to God’s reign over the world.

The beautiful splendor of the sanctuary, on the other hand, should inspire AHAVA, our love and yearning

to be near to God.

But in fact, the verse says the exact opposite. The psalmist says that he approached God's house with an awareness of God's abundant loving-kindness; and he is overwhelmed with feelings of awe and reverence when encountering His sanctuary. Why is that?

Elevated Yir'a

For lofty individuals, the traits AHAVA and YIR'A are revealed differently.

These great souls recognize the great measure of chesed that is revealed in God's providence in the world. They are able to perceive God's reign as a rule that is purely for the sake of giving and loving-kindness. The image of the world as God's BAYIT reflects a recognition of God's infinite kindnesses in governing the world. This awakens a deep love and appreciation for this overwhelming trait of chesed.

On the foundation of this awareness of boundless kindness, we arrive at a higher awareness of sublime majesty, as we advance from the Holy to the Holy of Holies, from the House to the Inner Sanctuary – the HEICHAL. This awareness elevates us from the trait of chesed (and its resultant outpouring of love) to feelings of awe and reverence. This is not the ordinary level of YIR'A, which is acceptance of God's ultimate control and dominion;

this is a higher YIR'A, an awe that has been refined by inner wisdom and insight.

Now we may fully understand the two stages described in the verse.

“In Your abundant loving-kindness, I enter Your house.” I approach God filled with a deep love, aware of the abundant measure of Divine chesed in the world. This AHAVA is based on a preliminary level of YIR'A, a reverence that recognizes God's control and dominion over His house/world.

This love leads to a higher state of awe. “I will prostrate myself toward Your holy sanctuary, in awe of You.” This elevated reverence is the result of my awareness of the HEICHAL, the Divine splendor and noble perfection revealed in God's inner sanctum. I am overcome by a profound sense of YIR'A, an elevated awe that is permeated with an inner kernel of love.

(Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 43-44)

The Daily Portion

- Sivan Rahav Meir

Five Sh'vat Points

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

1) Earlier this week was Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat, the fifth month of the year.

2) There are many laws and customs observed on Rosh Chodesh: a special Torah reading, the addition of the passage YA'ALEH V'YAVO to the Amida and Birkat HaMazon, and the festive recitation of Hallel. Rosh Chodesh is a day of joy and renewal.

3) Tu BiShvat, which we will celebrate in two weeks (in the middle of the month), is considered a special day. It is known as “the New Year of the Trees”, and it is a day to affirm our deep connection to the land of Israel and its fruit.

4) HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook expressed a beautiful thought about the month of Sh'vat: “The planting of fruit trees on holy ground will sprout hope for many generations.” We have become accustomed to seeing the land of Israel in full bloom. But it is important to remember that throughout thousands of years of exile, our ancestors longed to see the land of Israel blossoming again. When we see the gorgeous trees and flowers that surround us in the Land of Israel, we

must not take this miracle for granted. It is the realization of the dream of generations – a dream that continues to develop and grow.

5) Pay attention to the rhythm of the Jewish calendar: Monday was Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat, in two weeks it will be Tu BiShvat, two weeks later – Rosh Chodesh Adar, two weeks later – Purim, two weeks later – Rosh Chodesh Nissan, and two weeks after that we will arrive at Seder night. The Torah readings of this time of year also depict the process of redemption, the release from servitude to freedom. If only we could truly feel the abundance of all that we experience in nature and in the yearly cycle during this season.

May we merit to grow and blossom in all aspects of our lives and on all levels.

Chodesh tov!

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: tiny.cc/DailyPortion



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l
BO

In One Voice

Because Moshe was conscious of his speech defects, Aharon acted as his

spokesman before Par'o. However, when it came to the Israelite people themselves, Moshe was the speaker.

The two brothers worked well together and consulted one another about what to say and how to say it.

When God said, in the plural, "Speak to all the congregation of Israel..." (Sh'mot 12:3), they were both on the same spiritual wavelength and it appeared that they were both speaking (Rashi, quoting M'chilta).

This is real brotherliness, real collegiality, without jealousy, rivalry or jockeying for position - a rare blessing. Rabbinic sources apply T'hilim 85:11 to Moshe and Aharon - "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed one another."

Brotherly love, understanding and co-operation is also the ideal for international relations, when nations can say, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" (Malachi 2:10).

At present, the most that nations are usually prepared to do is to co-operate for reasons of expediency, when it is in their joint interest to do so. That's already an achievement, but in Messianic times they will rise to a higher level and kiss one another in righteousness and peace.

On your hand, between your eyes

One of the sources of the command of T'fillin is the final section of this week's sidra.

God's deliverance of the Israelites with "a strong hand and an out-stretched arm" is to be recalled by means of "a sign on your hand and a reminder between your eyes" (Sh'mot 13:9).

The T'fillin are attached to the person of a male Jew to indicate that he is bound to God, to the Divine commandments and to Jewish history.

The T'fillin are obligatory upon every Jewish male, hopefully for all three reasons. But there are different categories of Jews.

Some live a Jewish life because of belief; for them the T'fillin are a symbol of love for the Almighty.

Some whose faith is not so strong live a Jewish life because Jewish observance is a mark of Jewish identity; for them the T'fillin are a symbol of the pattern of commandments and practices that make Jews distinctive.

Some are strong neither in faith nor in practice but they still have a bond with Jewish peoplehood; for them the T'fillin are a connecting link with national history.

Every Jew is precious, every Jew is crucial, every Jew is an asset. Even if some are not (yet) ready for full spiritual commitment, whatever they do as Jews and for Judaism is valuable to them and valuable to the Jewish heritage. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

BO

In the future, years after Yetzi'at Mitzrayim...

When you come to the Land that G-d will give you, as He said, you shall observe this service. And it shall be when your children say: "What is this service to you?" You shall say: "It is the Pesach sacrifice for G-d, who passed over the Israelite homes in Egypt, when He plagued the Egyptians, and saved our households. And the people bowed and prostrated themselves" (12:25-27).

The Pesach Haggada identifies "What is the meaning of this service to you?" as the question of the rasha, the wicked child. "To you" means "to you, but not to me". Unlike the Israelites who "bowed and prostrated themselves" in recognition and with due respect for the Hand of G-d that intervened in their favour, the rasha's

words imply that he has no desire whatsoever to associate with the experiences and teachings of his people. The Haggada tells the father to give him a sharp and irrefutable answer (literally "blunt his teeth") "...G-d did this for me when I came out of Egypt" (13:8). "For me" and not "for you". "Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed".

This text in the Haggada invites two questions. Firstly, the reply that the Torah gives, but the Haggada does not quote is "This is the Pesach service for G-d". This response appears to be an explanation. It is hardly a means of teaching the rasha to show more respect for the ways of his father and his ancestors. Secondly, the pasuk that the Haggada does quote as a response to the wicked son is not the one that the Torah gives to that person and within that context.

As an approach, the Ha'amek Davar pays close attention to the reply that the Torah gives: "You shall say it is a Pesach sacrifice for G-d..." Unlike the responses to the other three sons: the chacham, the tam, and the sheino yodei'a lishol, it does not say "You shall tell your son" or "You shall say to him", but simply "You shall say it is a Pesach sacrifices for G-d." No mention of the son. The Ha'amek Davar derives that the son, the rasha, is missed out for a purpose. He is unworthy of the Torah's reply. The

Torah's reply is for the other people who are sitting at the table who are committed or at the very minimum, show *derech eretz*, show respect. They are to be reminded of the importance of this practice and not be influenced by the negative arrogance of the wicked son.

So, for the *rasha* himself, the Torah does not give an answer. But the Haggada fills the gap. Respond in a sharp and irrefutable manner, addressing his attitude, not his question. Get to the subtext of his question and retort accordingly: "...G-d did this for me when I came out of Egypt" (13:8), implying: "For me" and not "for you". "Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed".

The Haggada is effectively giving an insight into the nature of a person who asks: "What is this service to you?" - of a person who asks such a question in that way. It tells the respondent to look not at the text of the question, but at the implication of the question: at the subtext of the question. Here, the *rasha*'s question implies his agenda, which is to undermine the annual Pesach ceremony. So remind the rest of the gathering how significant those proceedings are in order that they will stay focused and not be swayed by the *rasha*'s attitude. That is what the Torah tells us. But at the same time, get right at

the subtext by recognizing the agenda of the *rasha* for what it is. That is what the Haggada tells us. Give him a personally-directed irrefutable answer that will put him in his place and allow the others to continue the Seder proceedings: "...G-d did this for me when I came out of Egypt" (13:8). "For me" and not "for you". "Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed".

This explanation illustrates a valuable principle in handling questions that other people ask in life generally. Look not just at the text, but consider the sub-text. Think for a moment: why is that person asking the question? Is he or she genuinely interested? Or wants to stand out in a crowd? Or trying to undermine? Then respond accordingly if a response indeed needs to be given... 🌿📖



Reprinted from Living the Halachic Process by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

Torah Knowledge for the Non-Observant

Question: I was raised as a secular Jew. One branch of my family is Charedi, and I enjoy spending time

and learning with them. I do my best to observe mitzvot when I am with them, but at home I act the way my family does. One of my cousins voiced a concern that if I continue studying, I will lose my “protected” status as a TINOK SHENISHBA¹ and become a RASHA,² as I will then be failing to fulfill obligations that I know about. Another cousin said that studying Talmud cannot make you a RASHA. I am not sure that the answer to this disagreement will affect my behavior, but it means a lot to people I care about, so I would appreciate your insight.

Answer: Your question is very thoughtful, and the open communication with your cousins is fascinating.

We must distinguish between issues. The broad use of the term TINOK SHENISHBA is perhaps most famously used by the Rambam,³ who distinguishes between people who themselves left traditional Judaism and their children, who were brought up with their parents’ viewpoints, even if they are aware of the traditional system. The Rambam posits that sanctions against those who undermine the accepted religious system do not apply to the second generation. In addition to not being penalized, he writes that the

children should be engaged peacefully to enable their possible return to traditional Judaism. Although the Rambam does not assume that a successful outreach is ensured, he does not raise qualms that the outreach process, which must include elements of learning and Jewish inspiration, suspends the TINOK SHENISHBA status. This is the standard approach in our times as well.

The more important question, which your cousins probably have in mind, is how HaShem views the individual who was largely not to blame for his religious shortcomings, due to lack of knowledge, and then begins to learn. However, employing the concept of TINOK SHENISHBA in framing their dilemma is mistaken on at least two counts.

On the one hand, to a significant degree, the question is coming too late. You already know that there is what to learn and what to observe, and you have a good idea how you could go about learning much more. Just because you do not know all the details does not make you immune from responsibility for your actions, from a Jewish perspective. There is a famous non-Jewish legal principle that ignorance of the law is not an excuse (*ignorantia juris non excusat*),

¹ Literally, one who was kidnapped as a child. In context, the term refers to one who is primarily not responsible for his religious shortcomings because of the lack of education and home background.

² An evil person.

³ *Mamrim* 3:3.

and a major part of the rationale is that one has the ability to find out. To decide not to learn the specifics and use it as an excuse to HaShem is like telling a policeman, “I did not know the speed limit because when I approached the signs, I looked away.”

On the other hand, we must not minimize the extent to which HaShem factors in the difficulty for one who is from a “secular” background to embrace observance. Sometimes, he is not philosophically convinced of the need to observe Judaism the way Orthodox Jews do. In addition, it is challenging, on various planes, to be significantly more observant than one’s family and surroundings, and the change rarely happens overnight. These problems exist even if he learns Torah.

Realize that the idea that more education will increase divine expectations is not just for a TINOK SHENISHBA. “Observant Jews” always have room to improve, and further education and inspiration can help. If it were true that it pays to reduce Torah knowledge and inspiration in order to minimize culpability, Orthodox Jews should not provide their children with a top-notch education! Rather, we are expected to be realistically optimistic and give everyone the best chance at improving, no matter his starting point.

If one is aware that an individual is sinning unknowingly and will not take steps in the right direction if corrected, it is better that he not to tell him.⁴ However, this is only in regard to limited details of observance and when it can be assumed that the knowledge will not help him. Not to give a person the opportunity to increase his connection to HaShem through Torah unfairly deprives one who lacked a fair chance to accomplish this goal. (Only someone who uses his studies to mock or fight against the Torah should be excluded.⁵)

Choosing the “Torah curriculum” should be done logically. For example, it makes sense to put more emphasis on philosophical ideas and practical laws that do not conflict with practice at home or can be implemented at least partially in the short term. Note that the Torah is very broad and includes not just highly ritual matters, but issues of basic law and ethics.

We wish you many opportunities to study HaShem’s Torah and maximize its wide variety of benefits. May your cousins be wise teachers, and may you enjoy being an active participant.

⁴ *Beitza* 30a.

⁵ *Ta’anit* 7a and *Tosafot* ad loc.

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

BO

Twice in this week's parsha, the mitzvah of Tefillin is linked to the Exodus from Egypt.

First the Torah says "It shall be for you a sign upon your arm and a remembrance between your eyes... that G-d took you out of Egypt. (13:9)

Then it says: It shall be for you a sign upon your arm and a frontlet between you eyes that with a strong hand did G-d take you out of Egypt. (13:16)

What could the putting on Tefillin possibly have to do with the Exodus from Egypt?

Rashi points out that writing these passages and binding them upon our heads and arms should serve as a daily reminder of G-d's role in our Exodus from Egypt. This message must be reinforced constantly as if it were written on our hands and hearts.

To really understand the connection between Tefillin and the Exodus, we must analyze the meaning and symbolism of these two concepts. The Exodus initiated the process that led to the eternal bond between G-d and the Jewish people.

These miraculous events during the Exodus were a sign to the world that G-d had chosen the Israelites and his special people. Therefore, remembering the Exodus is basically remembering the origins of our connection to G-d.

Similarly, the Tefillin also remind us of this special connection between G-d and His people. The Talmud in Eruvin (96a) points out that the Tefillin are the physical manifestation of the Israelites' bond with G-d. "Man always needs a sign of his bond to G-d... this sign is Tefillin."

R' Aryeh Kaplan in his book on Tefillin, explains that the winding around the middle finger symbolizes the bond of love between G-d and Israel like a wedding ring. Through the Tefillin, we can see and feel this bond.

To sum it up, this physical representation is a constant reminder to each one of us of this unique relationship with G-d. It encourages us to perform every mitzva, to strengthen that tremendous bond. It is for this reason we can appreciate both the Exodus and the Tefillin. They represent the love and enthusiasm we have as being the Chosen People. 🏰

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

BO 5785

With our Parsha, the Torah climactically recounts the spectacular redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. That this event is a seminal experience in our religious heritage is attested to by the fact that it is referenced, in one way or another, over 100 times in the Torah and innumerable times in our classical rabbinic sources. It therefore behooves us to examine the primary the conceptual/experiential difference between slavery and freedom as it should be clear that these terms are much more than an ancient juridic economic institution. Modern man, notwithstanding his many physical freedoms, can function with a slave mentality no less than his ancestors.

In his substantive essay on this subject and elsewhere, Rav Soloveitchik presents an analysis which ought to give the contemporary traveler pause as he so often rushes headlong into a lifestyle that, while offering many delectable pleasures, is utterly devoid of any sense of meaningful accomplishment and fulfillment.

Let us begin with this question: The Talmud states (B'rachot 4b) that prayer and redemption are two inseparable ideas. Halacha requires

that there be no break between the bracha of GA'AL YISRAEL and the Amida. (O.C., 69:1, Rama ad loc.) Why should this be so?

The Rav begins by making an unusual equation between slavery and pain on the one hand, and freedom and suffering on the other. That slavery and pain have much in common is clear. The Rav, however, analyzes this commonality a bit deeper. Pain, as sensation, is something man has in common with the beast. Whether physically injured from without or physiologically menaced from within, both react with pain. But man can become inured to pain and manage to survive. He submits to his agonizing condition and the hurt habituates. How else to explain the astounding ability of the human being to tolerate through horrible deprivations and yet emerge to rehabilitate and move on. Just as pain can crush a person and render him submissive and vulnerable, so too the man-slave, brought low by the bondage, eventually becomes desensitized to his servile state and submissively accepts his fate without a whimper. Thus, the life of a slave is an unreflective existence, ducking away from any confrontation, and blindly obeying his master. The slave, the Rav declaims, "lives in silence".

When modern man slavishly adopts current fashions - be they intellectual or aesthetic - and unthinkingly buys

into a crowd mentality that promotes the self-serving pursuits of pleasure, honor and power, he is then not much different than the slave of old, a docile and unquestioning follower notwithstanding his ego-filled bluster to the contrary.

However, how are we to understand the Rav's equating freedom with suffering. Generally, we naturally associate suffering with pain and negativity. In the Rav's view though, if we redefine suffering as distress and tension, if we can look upon suffering as an experience and not simply a sensation, then it can become a positive vector and impel a person to unimaginable heights of achievement. In other words, suffering, viewed as the stuff of challenge and impetus, as the energy of push and test, is what actually enables man to be free!

In the Rav's words, "Human existence exhausts itself in the experience of crisis, in the continual discovery of oneself in distress." This distress - for the Rav "suffering" - is a consequence of man's yearnings and aspirations, to be more than he is. The distress finds expression in man's experiencing the "need", that emptiness in his personality that seeks actualization and fulfillment. And it is this longing that the Rav denominates as man's quest for redemption. For the Rav, redemption is that movement whereby man

moves from the periphery of life to the center. From a place where he stands as an outlier - an observer, uncommitted and uninvolved - to the very "center" of his life, actively engaging in the thick of life's challenges - all in order to achieve and realize the "why" and purpose of his existence.

This pursuit for redemption, as understood by the Rav, precipitates the "need awareness", and because man is always in need, he feels an inner distress, and hence, he prays! What is prayer in the Silent Devotion if not man's requesting of HaShem to satisfy his desires, his needs. In the weekday Amida, these desires are categorized in 13 broad areas of essentialities - human and spiritual - which together comprise all that man could ever or should ever want.

This equating of freedom with redemption explains why the Rav identified "suffering man" with the free-man. No one ever said that the experience of freedom would not be without its stresses, trials and challenges. In fact, true freedom obligates - it's a M'CHAYEIV, that is, an obligatory burden, a state of being that carries with it responsibilities and assignments. The question that freedom asks is: Now that you're free and your options are wide open, what will you do with that freedom?! A "couch potato" existence may seem like nirvana, but freedom, as a moral

norm, it is not! And it is only when freedom is properly engaged and exercised that the ecstatic thrill of redemption is granted.

With this insight of freedom as the ultimate challenge and prerequisite for redemption, the Rav adds this critical ingredient. Chazal speak of davening as AVODA SHE'BALEIV. Typically, this translates as the "service of the heart", namely prayer. However, the Rav understands this expression differently. For him, it means the sacrifice of the heart, with avoda referring to the sacrificial service on the Temple which prayer attempts to replicate. The implication for freedom is clear. Enjoying the gift of freedom and actualizing its enormous potential requires sacrifice on the part of the eager freedom participant.

We can now understand why immediately after we acknowledge that HaShem is GA'AL YISRAEL, our Redeemer, we turn to Gd and plaintively ask him to fulfill our needs so that we can indeed become all that we were meant to be. In doing so, we accept - and are prepared to act upon - the truth that sacrifice will be asked of us. The redemptive promise of discovering our true mission ("what we were meant to be") is thus realized when in the Amida, we both have clarity as to our needs and declare our willingness to make the necessary sacrifices to satisfy them.

No wonder then that every day, when we pray, we are reminded of the confidence HaShem has in each of us to employ our freedom in the great task - and it can be an exciting adventure - of fulfilling our unique destiny. Which may explain, among other reasons, why the Jew has always demonstrated this incredible ability to move forward - notwithstanding the many hardships and stresses - never giving up, forever seeking new horizons, and thus accomplishing more than he ever imagine he could do in one lifetime. 🙌

Afterthoughts

- Yocheved Bienenfeld

SHIRA

I don't know why, but quite a few years ago (maybe even 25?) I heard about Perek Shira. Not only did I hear about it and subsequently start saying it daily, but I found out that many people were doing the same. This "obscure" piece of work is actually found in the back of many siddurim and I had never noticed. I don't remember where I read it, but I was informed that as the time for ge'ula approached, people would be saying Perek Shira. I can't prove this, I just remembered thinking to myself that since so many people are now saying it, the time for ge'ula must be near.

Perek Shira contains verses from the Tanach that are "said" by 85 different creations: animate and inanimate. The authorship of this work is debated. It is at least 1000 years old, but exactly when, and who wrote it, isn't agreed upon. Some suggest that it was written by Dovid HaMelech, others that it was his son Shlomo, some say both wrote it together. There is also an opinion that it was written by Rav Yehuda HaNasi. Regardless, what is the purpose of this work? "At a simple level, it is a key to understanding the universe as a guide to life" (R. Nosson Slifkin, Nature's Song, p.39). The verses that are attributed to the different components of the universe, teach a lesson which we are to learn and put into action.

Since there is no rhyme or rhythm to be found within these verses, why is it referred to as a "song"? We could ask the same question about Parshat Ha'azinu. That parsha is clearly not a song by any stretch of the imagination. It contains the future trials and troubles of Israel. And yet, it is called a song: HASHIRA HAZOT (D'varim 31:30, Parshat Vayeilech). Apparently, the message of the "song" of Ha'azinu and that of Perek Shira is the same.

The Maharal explains that true SHIRA is attained when we fulfill Gd's will. And in so doing, our actions are

demonstrating that we are aware of Gd's involvement in every aspect of our lives and in the running of the world and therefore have complete faith in Him. For why else would we choose to fulfill Gd's will? This realization occurred in the clearest way at Yam Suf. There, the people reached their highest level of faith in and awe of Gd. The plagues preceding this event didn't have the same effect, as evidenced by the large number of Jews who did not want to leave Egypt despite all they had been witnessing. And, indeed, this was the first SHIRA recorded in the Tanach. Maybe that is why it is referred to as SHIRA CHADASHA... [with a new song the redeemed ones praised Your name at the seashore.]

Similarly, the concept of SHIRA as it relates to Ha'azinu is that after all is said and done, the Jews now understood and clearly saw that all the future events, all future history, was under Gd's control.

Why did I suddenly become reminded of PEREK SHIRA? Because, as usual, I finally paid more attention to the words I was saying while davening and something struck me for the first time in BARUCH SHE'AMAR. We say UVSHIREI DAVID... with the songs of Your servant Dovid, we will praise you... This is certainly an appropriate introduction to P'sukei d'Zimra since most of what we will be saying is from the words of T'hilim, written by David

HaMelech. But I saw a possible additional meaning, a deeper one in these words. If I choose to understand SHIR here as the Maharal defines it, then this is not merely referring to the words, the 'songs' composed by Dovid. The SHIR represents the acts, his - David's - behavior, the deeds that fulfilled the will of Gd. The creatures in PEREK SHIRA create SHIRA by carrying out their assigned tasks and this obedience to Gd is His praise, a song. When we truly recognize Gd and perform His service, this elevates creation and thus, indeed, we create a song to Him. If we act in the way David acted (SHIREI DAVID), accepting and fulfilling Gd's will in all circumstances; if we can commune with Gd, as David did, through our behavior, we sing our song and so create praise for HaShem. UVSHIREI DAVID... N'HALELCHA - if we behave as David did, we will create praise for HaShem.

Do we not say ASHIRA LASHEM B'CHAYAI (T'hilim 104) - I will sing to HaShem as long as I live? Why should I not "... create song for HaShem by fulfilling His will and show my complete faith in Him; B'CHAYAI - through the way I live my life? It sounds like a reasonable meaning to me.

If this is a valid interpretation of the concept of shira in this context, it

helps me understand why so much of P'sukei d'Zimra talks about how the angels "sing" and praise Gd. We know this is not because Gd "needs" it. He doesn't. But the singing they do simply means they have fulfilled the task that Gd set before them, thus creating praise for Him.

SHIRU LASHEM SHIR CHADASH - sing a new song to HaShem (T'hilim 149) - may we be zocheh to do so. 🌸



BO

GM There are differences between Shabbat and Chagim, halachic differences, and different origins. But there are more things that connect Shabbat and Chag. Yom Tov is called SHABBATON, a Shabbat with some permitted melacha. A Shabbat with a lesser punishment for violation. The major concept that unites Shabbat with Yom Tov is the concept of K'DUSHAT Z'MAN - the sanctity of time. The mitzva of ZACHOR ET YOM HASHABBAT L'KAD'SHO, extends to and includes Yom Tov in several ways. Just one example: the mitzvot of Kiddush and Havdala come from

this pasuk, and apply to both Shabbat and Yom Tov. The concluding pasuk of our introduction to Shabbat after the Six Days of Creation, is B'reishit 2:3 -

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי
בּוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל-מְלָאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים
לַעֲשׂוֹת:

"God blessed the seventh day, and He declared it to be holy, for it was on this day that God ceased from all the work that He had been creating [so that it would continue] to function."

And the pasuk that first introduces us to Yom Tov is Sh'mot 12:16 (in Parshat BO) -

וּבַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקָּרָא-קֹדֶשׁ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
מִקָּרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלָאכָה לֹא-יַעֲשֶׂה
בָּהֶם אָדָם אֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל לֶכְלֵל-נֶפֶשׁ הִוא לִבְדּוֹ
יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם:

The first day shall be a sacred holiday, and the seventh day shall [also] be a sacred holiday. No work may be done on these [days]. The only [work] that you may do is that which is needed so that everyone will be able to eat.

These two p'sukim are gimatriya matches at 4928.

And, there is only one other pasuk in the Torah that also has a numeric value of 4928, also from Parshat Bo - Sh'mot 11:1 -

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עוֹד נִגַּע אֶחָד אֲבִיָּא
עַל-פָּרְעֹה וְעַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲחֵרֵי-כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְּכֶם
מִצֵּי כְשִׁלּוֹ כִּי כָלָה גִּרְשׁ יִגְרַשׁ אֶתְּכֶם מִן-הָאָרֶץ:

HaShem said to Moshe, "I will bring one more plague upon Par'o and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here.

When he lets you out, he will completely drive you out of here.

This pasuk links the events in Mitzrayim to the Chag whose observance is a direct result of the Egyptian experience and the Exodus therefrom.

GM Yaakov and family went down to Mitzrayim and remained there for 210 years, many generations. Somewhere (make that somewhen) during those 210 years, the growing pre-nation of Israel sunk to the 49th level of Tum'a. This included assimilating into Egyptian society, got involved in idolatry, and basically blurred the difference between Bnei Yisrael and their oppressors. But HKBH maintained the difference, to which we still had to rise.

4533 is the gimatriya of only two p'sukim in Tanach - both in the Chumash. And each pasuk highlighting the difference - the vast difference - between Par'o and his nation on the one extreme and the emerging Nation of Israel, on the other. I should add, the Nation of Israel the way we should be - as described in the second pasuk below - not necessarily the way we were back then, the way

we have been at many periods of Jewish History... and sadly, the way many of us are today. But, we continue to be challenged and encouraged to become the kingdom of kohanim and the holy nation we are supposed to be.

Sh'mot 11:5 (in Parshat Bo) -

וּבְמֵת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר
פַּרְעֹה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל־כִּסְאוֹ
עַד בְּכוֹר הַשְּׁפֹחָה אֲשֶׁר אֲחֵר
הָרוּגִים וְכָל בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה:

*And every firstborn in the land of
Egypt will die, from the firstborn of
Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the
firstborn of the slave woman who is
behind the millstones, and every
firstborn animal.*

And then we have D'varim 11:1 (in Parshat Eikev) -

וְאַהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
וְשִׁמְרַתָּ בְּשִׁבְרָתוֹ וּבְזִקְתּוֹ וּבְשִׁפְטָיו
וּבְמִצְוֹתָיו כָּל־הַיָּמִים:

*[Therefore] you shall love HaShem,
your God, keep His charge, His
statutes,
His ordinances, and His
commandments, all the days.*

When we can accomplish that - as individuals and as Klal Yisrael, we will have earned being taken out of Egypt in the first place.

Side point, totally unrelated: The year

4533 from Creation, found us in the middle of the period of the Geonim (after the Talmudic era and before the period of the Rishonim).

Meanwhile, in Europe, at the same time (773ce), Charlemagne was embarking on his Italian Campaign to conquer Northern Italy.

RED ALERT!

BO

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
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DIVREI TORAH

- The Plague of Darkness is described as quite severe and devastating to the Egyptian people. It was such a dense darkness that it paralyzed all its victims. They could not stand or eat for at least three days. The Midrash stated that the Jews would easily enter Egyptian homes in order to see where they stored their gold and silver. But, if that were true, they could easily have left Egypt and have taken all their possessions and even many Egyptian things with them. The Egyptians were incapable of stopping them or even knowing that Bnei Yisrael left. But Bnei Yisrael were not able to leave because they were under the complete command of Hashem, and He wasn't finished with His plan of punishing the Egyptians and educating the Jews.

- Hashem asked Bnei Yisrael to take Egyptian gold and silver with them. After years of slavery, Bnei Yisrael were not interested in wealth. They were interested only in their freedom. Hashem made it clear to the Jewish people that they were leaving Egypt and headed out into the desert. The people never asked about food or water. Just freedom. At this juncture in the story Hashem was interested in fulfilling His promise to Avraham that his offspring were to leave their oppressive slavery as very wealthy people. Hence Hashem had to ASK the people to take this wealth with them. At this point the Jewish people were pawns in a divine script. They had no say in the matter. Just listen and do what you are told. The slavery had cleansed the people of any jealousy or strife among them. They were fully prepared for their divine mission, to be Hashem's people!

- In chapter 12, Hashem introduces Rosh Chodesh to the people. Hashem really introduces a great deal more. He unveils the lunar calendar as a means to create a new nation. The world celebrated the New Year in Tishrei. Here the Torah creates a new Rosh HaShana just for us, in Nissan, the anniversary of the creation of the new nation, Am Yisrael. This was to become the beginning of the Torah world. Immediately after the Exodus will be the Revelation of the Divine

world, a spiritual (with a physical component) existence, just for the Jewish people. Seven weeks after the Exodus will be the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. The Torah bonds Pesach with Shavuot. Shavuot has no calendar date in the Torah. It is defined as seven weeks after Pesach. Along with the Exodus are new Torah laws to better comprehend what Pesach really means to us eternally.

- Our Jewish calendar is primarily Lunar, but it does possess a Solar component as well. It is on the 15th day of the lunar month of Nissan, but it is also to be exclusively a springtime holiday, thereby combining the lunar date within a solar part in being in the spring. This law will keep us unique in the world. The world is primarily solar. The Moslem world is lunar. Jews are in the middle. We synthesize the two into a blended calendar. Hashem is interested in creating a nation that is both lunar and solar, able to relate to both worlds. Keeping us connected but at the same time unique. The rest of the world rejects us because we are unable to assimilate within their society. It bothers them greatly, but this is what Hashem wanted to create.

- I had a college friend who could eat meat, but was emotionally bothered by the sight of chicken. Eating chicken requires you to visualize the

concept that what you are eating was once a live entity. When he eats meat, he does not visualize that it comes from a cow. (This never bothered me at all.) When the Torah tells us how they prepared the Pesach sacrifice, it specifically tells us that we're to roast it with its head, its legs, with its innards (12:9). The form of the lamb was preserved until eaten. (Oznayim LaTorah). This was to make sure that they knew that they were eating a lamb. In Egypt, Hashem wanted them to know that they were consuming an Egyptian deity. This was important for not only were they to know this, but that the Egyptians would know this too. This meant that there was a risk for the Jews to do this. It would anger the Egyptians as well as instruct the Jews.

- The placing of the blood of the sacrifice on the doors of their (Jewish) homes was essential. They would take hyssop and dip it in the blood of the sacrifice and smear the blood on the lintel and doorposts. In the movie The Ten Commandments, the blood was smeared on the outside of the house. This was incorrect. It was smeared on the inside of the house. It was for the Jews to see. And for the Angel of Death to see. They had to bend low in order to get the hyssop and then reach up high to smear the lintel. Bending low means to humble oneself. Reaching high was elevating oneself spiritually. Our

Patriarch Avraham humbled himself when he referred to himself as “dust and ashes” (B'reishit 18:27) and then was able to elevate himself spiritually. By applying himself in this way in Egypt, the Jew was able to identify himself with his illustrious Patriarch.

- During the Killing of the Firstborn, Jews were not permitted to leave their homes (12:22). This was to protect them from the divine Destroyer. I add an additional idea. No'ach and his family were (possibly) prohibited from seeing their neighbors dying outside from the Ark during the Flood. Mrs. Lot was instructed (along with her family) not to look back and view the destruction of the people of S'dom. Both were situations where the survivors were not that much better spiritually from the ones killed by the Almighty. Possibly here too, those surviving this final Plague were not that much holier than those being killed. Therefore, they were not permitted to view their misfortune. Hashem mercifully saved them. They needed to realize their good fortune was decreed by Hashem.

- MIDRASH. When Moshe announced the final Plague, he said it would come at around midnight. He did not say at exactly midnight, for fear that the Egyptian magicians would miscalculate the moment and accuse Moshe of lying. (Rashi, quoting the Midrash).

The Midrash continued to say that doubters of Hashem's existence would pounce on a minor error to claim that they are right not to believe in Hashem.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. Name the last three Plagues. (chapter 10...)
2. What was the first Mitzva given to Bnei Yisrael as a nation? (12:2)
3. What is the first month of the year when counting the months? (12:2)
4. When was the Pesach sacrifice offered (and slaughtered), and when was it eaten? (chapter 12)
5. How long was the Pesach holiday observed in Egypt?

From Rashi

6. What two things were accomplished during the Plague of Darkness? (10:22)
7. Why did Hashem kill the firstborn of the lowly Egyptian maidservants? (11:5)
8. For how many days must we eat Matza? (12:15)
9. How many times did Bnei Yisrael observe the Pesach holiday in the desert? (12:25)
10. Where in our prayers do we

remember the Exodus from Egypt? (13:3)

From the Rabbis

11. With the Plague of the Locusts, Par'o was ready to let the people go to celebrate with Hashem. How did he guarantee that Bnei Yisrael would return to Egypt? (Or HaChayim)
12. Why did Hashem give the Mitzva of Rosh Chodesh to Bnei Yisrael at the time of the Exodus? (Rav Soloveitchik)
13. Why do we call the holiday Pesach and the Torah calls it the holiday of the Matzot? (Hirsch)

Midrash

14. How was the Plague of Locusts an act of "measure for measure" against the Egyptians?

Haftara - Yirmiyahu

15. Hashem will punish Bnei Yisrael, but what will He not do?

Relationships

- a) Pinchas - Aharon
- b) Gershom - Gershon
- c) Yefet - Yavan
- d) Zilpa - Asher
- e) Kehat - Amram

ANSWERS

1. Locusts, Darkness, and the Killing of the Firstborn

2. Rosh Chodesh

3. Nissan

4. Slaughter on the 14th of Nissan, Erev Pesach; eat it at the Seder, the 15th of Nissan.

5. One night.

6.

1) Hashem killed the many Jews who were assimilated within Egyptian culture and didn't want to leave Egypt.

And 2) to allow Bnei Yisrael to see where the gold and silver were.

7. Because they too enjoyed seeing the Jews suffer.

8. For only one night. But we still had to be rid of Chametz.

9. Only once, during the second year in the desert.

10. Every day in the third passage of the Sh'ma.

11. Par'o would keep the women and children as hostages.

12. A slave has no control of the time. His master has total control of the time. With freedom, the Jewish people now have control over their time, reflected by their ability to proclaim Rosh Chodesh.

13. We compliment Hashem to having the Angel of Death skip over our houses, hence the name Pesach. And the Torah compliments us for eating Matza.

14. The Egyptians forced the Jewish slaves to grow crops, and the locusts devoured the crops.

15. He will not destroy us completely.

Relationships

a) Grandson & Grandfather

b) Great Uncle & Great Nephew

(Note: In Divrei HaYamim Alef, the text called Gershon with the name Gershom. The Radak wrote that the two names are interchangeable.)

c) Father & Son

d) Mother & Son

e) Father & Son