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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

A Candle in the Dark

"Yet the chamberlain of the cup bearers did not remember Yosef, but forgot him." (40:23)

"Raiders of the Lost Ark" was one of the biggest box-office hits of all-time. As the title suggests, the story centers on the "Lost Ark," which is none other than the Holy Ark that Moshe constructed to house the original Torah and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. During the movie's climax, the villain garbs himself in the vestments of the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) as he battles with the movie's hero, Indiana Jones.

Truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction, for there seems to be a fascinating real-life connection between the Jewish People and Indiana Jones!

In 1911, Hiram Bingham III discovered the legendary Inca city of Macchu Picchu in Peru. Indiana Jones, the hero of "Raiders of the Lost Ark", was patterned after Hiram Bingham. Hiram had a son called, not very imaginatively, Hiram Bingham IV.

A number of years ago, the American Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a posthumous award for "constructive dissent" to Hiram (or Harry) Bingham IV. For more than fifty years the State Department had resisted any attempt to honor Bingham. To them, he was an insubordinate member of the US diplomatic service, a dangerous maverick who was eventually demoted. Yet now, after his death, he has been officially recognized as a hero.

In 1939, Bingham was posted to Marseille, France as American Vice-Consul. The USA was then neutral,

and, not wishing to annoy Marshal Petain's puppet Vichy regime, Roosevelt's government ordered its representatives in Marseille not to grant visas to any Jews. Bingham decided that this was immoral, and, putting his conscience before his career, did everything in his power to undermine the official US foreign policy.

In defiance of his bosses in Washington, he granted more than 2,500 US visas to Jewish and other refugees, including the artists Marc Chagall and Max Ernst, and the family of the writer Thomas Mann. He sheltered Jews in his Marseille home and obtained forged identity papers to help others in their dangerous journeys across Europe. He worked with the French underground to smuggle Jews out of France into Franco's Spain or across the Mediterranean. He even contributed to their expenses out of his own pocket.

By 1941, Washington had lost patience with Bingham. He was sent to Argentina. After the war, to the continued annoyance of his superiors, he reported on the movements of Nazi war criminals. Not unsurprisingly, eventually he was forced out of the American diplomatic service completely.

Bingham died almost penniless in 1988. Little was known of his extraordinary activities until his son found a series of letters in his father's belongings after his death.

Subsequently, many groups and organizations, including the United Nations and the State of Israel, honored Bingham.

Bingham is like a candle in the dark.

Many are the stories from the Spanish Inquisition onward of Jews who gave away their fortunes to sea captains for the promise of safety, only to find themselves robbed and betrayed by those they trusted. Change the year to 1940 and the same story could be repeated, with equally chilling results, in Nazi Europe.

"Yet the Chamberlain of the Cup bearers did not remember Yosef, but forgot him."

If the chamberlain *"did not remember"* Yosef, why did the Torah also write *"but forgot him"*? Rashi comments

that the chamberlain *"did not remember"* him *that same day*, and subsequently he also *"forgot him."*

One could perhaps forgive the chamberlain for forgetting Yosef on the day of his release. It is human nature to be so overjoyed at escaping the purgatory of prison that one might forget his benefactor. However, when the excitement had died down, why didn't the chamberlain keep his promise to Yosef?

This classic ingratitude echoes to us down the ages, in Spain, in Europe, in Russia and in Arab lands.

When we find a Hiram Bingham, we should proclaim his kindness to the hills.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim.

Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an

Egyptian overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey they discover the money, and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin, he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin to be his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Pesachim 30-36

“Double Jeopardy” Matzah

The mishna states, “A person fulfills the mitzvah of eating matzah (on the first night of Pesach – Rashi) with matzah made from wheat, barley... and Kohanim fulfill their mitzvah with matzah made from their terumah... but one does not fulfill the mitzvah with tevel (grain from which terumah and ma’aser had not yet been separated and is therefore still forbidden to eat).”

Why does a person not fulfill the mitzvah with a matzah made from grain that is still *tevel*? When learning Rashi in our *sugya* it seems that he offers two completely different reasons. In the *mishna* he explains in one manner, but in the *gemara* he says something different.

What exactly are these two reasons, and why does he write one reason in one place and a different reason in the other place? Both are explanations for the same halacha of why a person does not fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah if the matzah is made from grain that is *tevel*.

When the *mishna* states that *Kohanim* fulfill the mitzvah with grain that is *terumah*, Rashi explains that this *excludes* a Yisrael from fulfilling the mitzvah with a *terumah* matzah. Why? The Torah states, “You will not eat chametz with it (the *Korban Pesach*), for seven days you will eat matzah with it, the bread of affliction – for in haste you went out from the land of Egypt, [and you will do this] in order that you will remember the day when you went out from the land of Egypt all the days of your life.” (*Devarim 16:3*) Rashi quotes the Chazal’s teaching (35b), who note that the beginning of this verse juxtaposes the mitzvah to eat matzah with the prohibition against eating chametz. From this we learn, “If the grain is forbidden to eat when it is leaven, *only* due to the prohibition of eating chametz on Pesach, it is fit for fulfilling the mitzvah of matzah; which excludes [from the mitzvah of eating matzah] that which is forbidden due to a different prohibition.” Rashi writes this to explain why a Yisrael would not fulfill the mitzvah with a *terumah* matzah, and this also serves as the reason why anyone would not fulfill the mitzvah to eat matzah if the matzah is made from *tevel*. This is the reason that Rashi gives in his commentary on the *mishna* (on 35a) for disqualifying matzah made from *tevel*.

In the *gemara*, however (35b), the case of *tevel* matzah being unfit is explained as being an issue of “*tevel d’Rabbanan*,” and is teaching about grain that was not grown directly in the ground, but rather in a pot with perforations. This grain is not considered to be *tevel* according to Torah law, but was decreed to be considered *tevel* by Rabbinic law. Why is it not suitable for the mitzvah of eating matzah? Rashi here explains that eating this matzah would not fulfill the mitzvah since it would be considered a “*mitzvah ha’aba b’aveira*” – literally, a mitzvah that comes with a transgression (i.e. eating grain that is deemed *tevel* according by Rabbinical decree).

A *mitzvah ha'ba b'aveira* is not a mitzvah, as elaborated upon elsewhere in *Shas* (perhaps most notably at the beginning on the third *perek* of *Masechet Succah*).

The commentaries address the need for the two different reasons that Rashi gives for a matzah of *tevel* not being suitable for fulfilling the mitzvah of eating matzah on Pesach. In the *mishna*, the grain of *tevel* is the “normal” case of grain that was grown in the ground. Therefore, it has the *tevel* status of being forbidden to eat according to Torah law. And since this prohibition of *tevel* existed even before the grain became chametz, the grain does not acquire an additional prohibition – i.e. that of “not eating chametz on Pesach.” This principle is known as “*ein issur chal al issur*” – a second prohibition cannot be attributed to something that is already prohibited. An example of this rule is Rabbi Simon bar Yochai’s teaching (36a) that “a person who eats neveilah (meat from an animal without kosher shechita) on Yom Kippur is exempt” (from bringing a *chatat* sin offering for eating *b'shogeg* on Yom Kippur – Rashi). Since the neveilah meat was already forbidden by the Torah before Yom Kippur, an additional prohibition is not accrued when eating it on Yom Kippur.

This is why Rashi explains in the *mishna* that the reason for the *tevel* matzah not being suitable is based on the special teaching of Chazal, which they derive from the verse juxtaposing the mitzvah of matzah with the prohibition of chametz (Devarim 16:3). Without the possibility of the matzah bearing a prohibition of chametz, since it is *tevel* and already forbidden by Torah law, it cannot serve as matzah for the mitzvah.

On the other hand, in the *gemara's* case, where the *tevel* is not a Torah prohibition since it grew in a perforated vessel instead of in a field, the Torah prohibition of it being chametz is a real possibility. Therefore, Rashi’s reason in the *mishna* does not apply to this *tevel d'Rabbanan*. So why is it not suitable for the mitzvah of matzah? Because, still being forbidden as *tevel* according to Rabbinic law, eating this *tevel* matzah would be a *mitzvah ha'ba b'aveira* – and not a mitzvah.

In summary, if the grain is already prohibited by Torah law, it cannot be prohibited as chametz as well, and is therefore not fit for the mitzvah of eating matzah. But, if the grain is prohibited “only” by Rabbinic law and not by Torah law, it is still a candidate to be considered banned as chametz according to Torah law, and therefore fit for the mitzvah of eating it as matzah on Pesach if not for the issue of *mitzvah ha'ba b'aveira*. (Maharsha)

• *Pesachim 35a*

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Q & A

MIKEITZ

Questions

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "*Tsafnat Panayach*" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "*redu*" – "descend" (and not "*lechu*" – "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved"?
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

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

Answers

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "*redu*" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.
11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said, "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said, "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Miketz: To Be a Wise Guy (Part 2 of 2)

While the previous essay (Part 1) focused on highlighting the difference between *chochmah* and *tevunah/binah*, this week's essay adds the concept of *daat* into the fray and looks at all three terms comparatively. If we were to rank the three Hebrew words for "knowledge," *chochmah* would be placed at the bottom as the most basic form of wisdom. Everyone agrees that *binah* and *daat* denote greater forms of "knowledge" than *chochmah* does (see *Shemot Rabbah* 41:3 and Rashi to *Shabbat* 31a), but the exact relationship between *binah* and *daat* is subject to dispute.

The Mishna (*Avot* 3:17) teaches that *daat* depends on *binah*, and, conversely, *binah* depends on *daat*. For the purposes of understanding that Mishna, Rashi and Rabbi Ovadia Bartenuira (1445-1515) explain that while *binah* refers to the ability to derive a new idea from a previous lesson, *daat* refers to the ability to understand the reasoning behind a given lesson (see also *Rashbatz*). Accordingly, the Mishna means that if one cannot figure out the rationale behind the first lesson, then one cannot extrapolate from that lesson anything further. And, likewise, if one lacks the ability to extrapolate new ideas from a given lesson, then certainly one cannot deduce the rationale for that lesson. At face value, then, it seems that *binah* and *daat* go hand in hand. That said, some sources assert that *daat* is higher than *binah* (see *Maharsha* to *Ketuvot* 5a), while the Maharal (in *Chiddushei Aggadot* to *Kiddushin* 30a, *Avodah Zarah* 19b and in *Tiferet Yisrael* ch. 56) teaches that *binah* is higher than *daat*.

The Torah reports that when Betzalel was charged with constructing the Tabernacle, G-d bestowed upon him *chochmah*, *tevunah*, and *daat* (Ex. 31:3). In that context, Rashi explains that *chochmah* refers

to wisdom which one hears (i.e. learns) from others, *tevunah* refers to the ability to understand something new based on information he has already acquired, and *daat* refers to receiving knowledge through Holy Inspiration (*Ruach Hakodesh*, i.e. a lower form of prophecy). Rashi's source for the difference between *chochmah* and *tevunah* is a conversation between Rabbi Yosi and Arius (see *Sifrei* to Deut. 1:13), and he cites the same explanation elsewhere in his commentaries (see Rashi to Deut. 1:13 and Prov. 1:5, and Radak to I Kings 3:12).

The Talmud (*Chagigah* 12a) teaches that G-d created the world using ten different qualities, the first three of which are *chochmah*, *tevunah* and *daat*. Rashi (there) repeats his approach to the difference between *chochmah* and *tevunah*, but explains *daat* in this context as "reconciliation." Why in this case does Rashi define *daat* differently than in the case of Betzalel?

Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Burnstein (1946-2017) resolves this issue by explaining that, when taken together, both passages teach one lesson. He explains that the term *daat* denotes a form of "connection", thus "knowing" in the Biblical sense is a euphemism for conjugal intimacy (Gen. 4:1) or familial connection (Ruth 2:1). Accordingly, *daat* consists of connecting all the pieces together and coming out with a final resolution in which everything jibes. In this way, *daat* refers to "reconciliation," while at the same time it also denotes knowledge, which one had attained through Divine Inspiration, because that is also a form of connection. Divine Inspiration essentially stems from a person "connecting" himself to G-d, and thereby becoming privy to details that are not visible to the naked eye. Through Divine

Inspiration one can see the bigger picture and have access to all the pieces that need to be reconciled. (See *Nefesh HaChaim* 1:6, who explains that the word *daat* in the term *Eitz HaDaaat Tov V'Ra*, “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” refers to the forbidden fruit’s ability to bring about the interconnectivity of good and evil. The Vilna Gaon (to Prov. 2:5) similarly explains that *daat* refers to the dialectic reconciliation of contradictory ideas.)

If *daat* refers to the ability to connect two separate things, then it also presumes the mechanism by which separation can occur. Indeed, the ritual “separation” between the Sabbath and the work-week (*Havdalah*) is recited in the prayer for knowledge, as the Rabbis quipped (Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 5:2): “If there is no *daat*, from where can there be *havdalah* (‘separation’)?”

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander (1923-1986) writes that the “connection” alluded to in *daat* represents the nexus of the intellectual and the emotional. He explains that it refers to “connecting” one’s intellectual knowledge with one’s emotions, thus totally internalizing that which he knows. Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (a 13th century scholar) also writes that *daat* is associated with emotions and feelings.

Interestingly, Rabbeinu Yonah (to *Avot* 3:17) writes that *daat* refers to the ability to independently think of new ideas. Perhaps he understands that the “connections” denoted by the term *daat* refer to forging new connections between neurological synapses in the brain, which serve as the biological basis for acquiring new knowledge.

Kabbalists (see *Eitz Chaim*, *Shaar Ha’Amidah* ch. 11) have long noted that these three forms of knowledge (*chochmah*, *binah* and *daat*, often abbreviated as *ChaBaD*), correspond to the first three *Sefirot* used to describe the ways we perceive G-d’s influence in the world: *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet*. *Chesed* refers to G-d’s kindness in bestowing upon us an unlimited influx of energy, *gevurah* denotes our perception of Him sometimes limiting His influence in the world based on our actions, and *tiferet* refers to the happy medium achieved

when He creates a balance between *chesed* and *gevurah*.

By this model, *chochmah* refers to receiving knowledge from others, in accordance with what we have seen throughout this study. *Binah*, on the other hand, refers to intuiting knowledge based on what one already knows, with only limited input from outside. *Daat*, then, refers to the balancing act of harmonizing received knowledge with intuited knowledge. It represents the final product that results from taking raw *chochmah* and processing it through *binah*. As Rabbi Shaul Levi Mortera (1596-1660) so succinctly writes, *chochmah* is acquired, *binah* is natural, and *daat* is a synthesis of those two possibilities.

Interestingly, Dr. Michael G. Samet (a brother of Ohr Somayach’s *Mashgiach* Rav Yehuda Samet) told me that he once pointed out to Yale professor Robert J. Sternberg that his Triarchic Theory of Intelligence closely resembles the three types of intelligence we have been discussing, and the latter was quite taken aback by this finding.

In many cases, the Torah refers to all three levels of wisdom/knowledge in tandem (e.g., Ex. 31:3). However, in one particular instance, the absence of *daat* is quite conspicuous. When Moses warns the Jewish People to adhere to the Torah’s laws and precepts, he says: “And you shall guard them and you shall do them, for it is your wisdom (*chochmah*) and your insightfulness (*binah*) in the eyes of the nations, who will hear about all these statutes, and they will say, ‘This great nation is naught but a wise and insightful nation’” (Deut. 4:6). Why does Moses mention *chochmah* and *binah* in this passage, but not *daat*?

Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer accounts for the absence of the word *daat* in this context by submitting that the non-Jews who are not privy to the contours of the Torah cannot achieve the level of wisdom/knowledge known as *daat*. They can reach only the levels of *chochmah* and *binah*, but they are not able to reach *daat*. However, his brother, Rabbi Eliyahu Tzion Sofer, infers that even *binah* cannot be found among the gentiles, as

the Midrash in *Eicha Rabbah* 2:48 teaches: "If somebody tells you there is *chochmah* among the gentiles, believe him," implying that if one said there either is *binah* or *daat* among them, he should not be believed.

Rabbi Y. C. Sofer explains that it is for this reason that when Joseph told Pharaoh to appoint a wise man to oversee storing excess produce for the future years of famine, he said: "And now Pharaoh should see an insightful (*navon*) and wise (*chacham*) man and appoint him over the Land of Egypt" (Gen. 41:33). Indeed, Pharaoh appointed Joseph

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to precisely that position, saying to him, "There is none insightful (*navon*) and wise (*chacham*) like you" (Gen. 41:39). In both of these verses, only cognates of *chochmah* and *binah* appear, but *daat* is completely absent. Rabbi Sofer explains that this points to Pharaoh's inability to reach the level known as *daat*. Because *daat* was something beyond Pharaoh's grasp, Joseph left out that word, and, likewise, Pharaoh's detachment from *daat* hindered his ability to see that Joseph was not just a *chacham* and a *navon* but also a *yodea*.

@ OHR –The students alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

An Introduction to "The History of the Teshuva Movement" – a new podcast
with Rav Nota Schiller, Rosh HaYeshiva

Ohr Somayach is proud to announce a new series on the Ohr Somayach Podcast Network: "The History of the Baal Teshuva Movement" as told by Rabbi Nota Schiller, founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Somayach.

From the Brooklyn streets of Brownsville and East Flatbush in the 1940's, a 10-year-old public school boy immersed in stickball, basketball and with dreams of becoming a shortstop for his beloved Brooklyn Dodgers, enters a fledgling *yeshiva katana* eager for new students. While his generation is leaving Orthodoxy in droves, his loving *rebbeim* ignite a spark within him that grows in intensity as he progresses in his learning at Yeshivas Chaim Berlin under the tutelage of HaRav Yitzchok Hutner, and in Ner Yisroel Yeshiva under his *rebbe*, HaRav Yaakov Weinberg.

After his marriage, the young Rabbi Nota Schiller moves to Eretz Yisrael to continue his learning in Rav Mordechai Elefant's *Itri Yeshiva* in Jerusalem. After an encounter with two secular, very bright young brothers (one a student at Harvard the other at Columbia), who are in Israel for a year on a secular Zionist study

program, he and his *chavrusa*, Rabbi Noach Weinberg, make a decision that will change the history of the Jewish People. They will start a yeshiva for young Jewish men with limited or no background in traditional Jewish learning.

Despite a promising start and the strong encouragement of the *Posek Hador*, HaRav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv - they suffer a number of financial setbacks from a skeptical Orthodox Jewish society that has almost given up hope for a revival of *halachic* Jewry. This forces them to temporarily close. However, after a few years of indefatigable fundraising efforts they manage to convince a few visionary philanthropists to share their dream and initially fund their new enterprise.

With just a handful of eager students and a passionate, stellar rabbinic staff, they launch what will become the forerunner of Baalei Teshuva Yeshivot – which will sweep the Jewish World and change it forever.

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COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

COMING BACK TO LIFE EVERY DAY – PART 3

“My G-d, the soul You placed within me is pure. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me, You safeguard it within me, and eventually You will take it from me, and restore it to me in Time to Come. As long as the soul is within me, I gratefully thank You, Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my forefathers, Master of all works, L-rd of all souls. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who restores souls to dead bodies.”

If our existence is defined only by our physical surroundings, then the thought of passing away can be truly terrifying. But the continuation of the blessing adds a whole new dimension to our understanding, as well as an intriguing glimpse into one of the most esoteric dimensions of our existence: In the future, G-d will return our souls to our bodies. This is what is known as *Techiat HaMeitim* – the Resurrection of the Dead. There will be a moment when G-d, after having first returned the decomposed body back to its former state, will reintroduce the soul into a renewed and purified body. Although this concept is not one that is easily understood, it is, nevertheless, very uplifting. It teaches us that we need not fear passing from this world. However, this is true only if we remain aware of the fact that there is a new existence awaiting us after our time in this world.

The text of our current blessing informs us that there is an entirely new reality that awaits us once we have lived out our physical lives in this world. It is a spiritual existence that is fashioned from our actions here in the physical realms. Paradoxically, it is our physical and intellectual accomplishments that will serve as the “building blocks” in the spiritual spheres. And it is those achievements that we should be focusing on as we work our way through life in this physical world. As Rabbi Aryeh Leib HaKohen

Heller (1745-1812) writes in the introduction to his brilliantly any erudite work *Shev Shematata*, the World to Come can be achieved only through one thing – Torah. Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (1902-1979), the revered head of the illustrious Mir Yeshiva, would point out that a truly spiritual person recognizes that their real place is in the World to Come, and that is why our Sages describe such a person as being a “*Ben Olam Haba*” – “a person of the World to Come.” This phrase is an exact description of who they are.

Towards its end, the blessing teaches us yet another facet of Jewish belief. As the blessing so eloquently states, it is only the fact that our souls reside within us that gives us the wherewithal to be able to acknowledge and appreciate everything that G-d does for us.

And that is truly a cause for celebration! On each new day there is a “Divine deposit.” Our exquisite and flawless soul is returned to us in all its pristine glory. Being grateful and aware of this fact, we celebrate our ability to discern the myriad of spiritual opportunities that lay before us. These are opportunities that will allow us to turn the mundane into something absolutely brilliant, glowing with otherworldly luster, creating the most sublime reality of all – the World to Come.

*Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet on
The Morning Blessings
by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
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LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Power and Superstition

When the brothers are caught with Yosef's goblet, the messenger relays Yosef's message to them: *Why did you repay good with evil? This is the [goblet] from which my master drinks, and he has a presentiment about it...* When they are brought back to Yosef, Yosef confronts them with a similar accusation: *What is this deed that you have done? Did you not know that a man like me believes in presentiments?*

Yosef here speaks not as the son of Yaakov, but as an Egyptian lord. It is the sort of behavior that would be expected of an Egyptian nobleman who has experienced a meteoric rise to power. The higher a person's rank, the more marvelous his fortune, the more superstitious he will become, explains Rav Hirsch, citing Napoleon's example.

The word used here for presentiment is *nacheish*. This same word is the subject of a prohibition in Vayikra 19:26: *Do not consult with omens*. Rav Hirsch comments on the linguistic aspect of the root *nachash* in terms of its relation to the root *nachatz*, citing several examples of word pairs where the smooth /sh/ sound denotes a smoothly performed activity, and where the counterpart word with a hard, forced /tz/ sound describes the same activity as it is performed in difficult circumstances. *Nachatz* means to press or urge against impediments, to strive toward a goal, overcoming all the obstacles along the way. *Nachash* means to strive towards a goal without having to overcome the natural intermediate links. Thus, the omen-manipulator seeks to either bring something about or come to know the future without recourse to the natural intermediate links of cause and effect. By seeing meaning in an unrelated

omen he disregards the lack of intermediate links between two remote things.

It is ludicrous to suggest that there exists a causal connection between, for example, a black cat, or a piece of bread that falls and the success or failure of a venture or the good or bad future of a person. Superstition is laughable madness that is counter to all sane thought. It also denies the world order and presents a harmful influence on man's free and moral activity. Man was given the two gifts of Torah and knowledge – goals are to be set by Torah, and intelligence teaches what is possible to do within nature. By resorting to omens, man denies G-d's providence and places human moral action under unfounded foreign influences. Once we believe we can promote our own good fortune by means other than doing what is right and good, and that we have other things to fear besides doing evil, we are in real danger of corrupting our actions.

A superbly successful individual is more prone to superstition because he himself is surprised at his own good fortune. An ordinary person credits himself and natural causes with his success. But when a person reaches the point where he cannot owe his good fortune to his own merit, he can easily come to ascribe to it supernatural causes. Indeed, one *should* see G-d's beneficence as the source of this success – just as Yosef, when he is not putting on the Egyptian-nobleman show for his brothers – does. (“It is not I! It is G-d...” in Bereishet 41:16.)

- Sources: *Commentary Bereishet 44:5; Vayikra 19:26; Collected Writings VIII, p. 42*

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THE RARE CALENDAR PHENOMENA OF 5781

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

(Part 7 of a new mini-series)

5781 is a year that is chock-full of rare calendar phenomena that we will *iyH* be witnessing, or, more accurately, taking an active part in. Let us continue exploring what is in store for us.

Part 6 discussed several “Unknown Days” that annually occur in the month of Iyar, including minor holiday of Pesach Sheini and the “Days of *Tefilla*” of *BeHa”B*. But what happens when there is a convergence of *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B*? You see, during this exceptional year, 5781, the third and final day of the Chodesh Iyar *BeHa”B* falls out on *Pesach Sheini*. So what does Klal Yisrael do? Which holiday do we observe? The joyous *Pesach Sheini* or the official fast of *BeHa”B*?

Pesach Sheini vs. BeHa”B

As with many topics in halacha or custom, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. There is a debate, seemingly based on *Megillas Taanis*, regarding the teaching (see *Chullin* 129b) that *Pesach Sheini* is a day when one may not eulogize (implying it is a full-fledged holiday), and hence it is certainly a day when one may not fast. Some authorities rule that this is the halacha nowadays. However, others counter that *Megillas Taanis* is no longer considered authoritative or binding (see *Rosh Hashana* 18b), and since *Pesach Sheini* is essentially a make-up holiday for those who were unable to offer the *Korban Pesach* on Erev Pesach, it cannot be considered more stringent than Erev Pesach itself. And Erev Pesach is known for its *Taanis Bechorim*, the Fast of the Firstborn. Therefore, perhaps fasting is not only permitted on *Pesach Sheini*, but is actually mandated when it coincides with *BeHa”B*. So, what do we do?

Although several *Poskim* maintain to fast only until *Chatzot* on that day as a sort of compromise solution, or even not to fast at all and rather push *BeHa”B* observance off until the next day (Tuesday) or several days later to that Thursday, it is feasible that this is only regarding actual fasting – which a significant portion of the public does not currently do anyway. The *Chazon Ish*, who generally holds of no special matters for *Pesach Sheini*, held that one may fast as usual. In fact, in *Orchos Rabbeinu* it cites that this is what he and his brother-in-law, the Steipler Gaon did – i.e. reciting *Selichot* and *Tachanun* as usual.

Indeed, there is little mention of this issue in any early source, as it seems that there truly is no real discrepancy. As pointed out by Rav Sroya Debilitzky, *zt”l*, Sefardim generally did not recite *Tachanun* on *Pesach Sheini*, whereas Ashkenazim did, until the ‘not saying’ *minhag* crept out and spread to Ashkenazic circles via *Minhag Eretz Yisrael*. On the other hand, only Ashkenazim classically observed *BeHa”B* fasting and prayers. Hence, in the classic sense, “ne’er the twain” actually met! – and whenever a convergence occurred, Sefardim would observe the ‘no *Tachanun*’ of *Pesach Sheini*, whereas Ashkenazim would keep the *Selichot* of *BeHa”B*.

Yet, now that most of the world does not say *Tachanun* on *Pesach Sheini*, the *minhag* of many is to just do a somewhat abbreviated version of *BeHa”B Selichot*, such as other times when *Selichot* and ‘no *Tachanun*’ coincide, for example when a *Bris Milah* occurs on a fast day (as per *Orach Chaim* 131:5). This halachic ruling, to recite *Selichot* (and fast when applicable) when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincide, was taught by many *Poskim*, including Rav Yaakov Emden, the *Chasam Sofer*, the Maharam Ash, the Maharsham, and the *Eishel Avraham* (Butchatch) as the proper *minhag*.

Practically speaking, since most shuls in the world (unfortunately) do not “do BeHa”B” nowadays, this debate is essentially a moot point, and *Pesach Sheini* would trump. As Rav Yisroel Reisman wryly remarked in his introduction to the book “*Tachanun*,” non-Jews cannot possibly comprehend the *simcha* and elation (and perhaps sigh of relief) felt when a congregation skips *Tachanun*.

Indeed, there is strong basis for this in our case, as Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer both ruled to skip a whole day of *BeHa”B* for *Pesach Sheini*, following the main Yerushalmi *minhag* per the Tukachinsky *Luach* and the *Aderes* – as apparently this is indeed ‘Old *Minhag Eretz Yisrael*,’ that *Pesach Sheini* entirely trumps and displaces the third and last *BeHa”B* in this instance.

This first seems to be cited in Rav Shalom Schwadron’s *Hagahos* on his grandfather’s *Shu”t Maharsham* (vol. 6:32), who maintains that one should fast when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincide, arguing on Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson’s *Yad Shaul V’Yosef Daas*, who held not to fast, with Rav Schwadron adding that *Minhag Yerushalayim*, as cited in the ledger of Rav Shmuel Salant’s *Beis Din* in the Churva Shul in 5663/1903 (a year when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincided), is specifically not to fast or recite *Selichot* on that day.

Yet, there are those who nowadays argue that the source Rav Schwadron was quoting was recently printed, and it stated that *Pesach Sheini* trumps only that specific day, but *BeHa”B* observance should nonetheless still be kept by pushing it off to that upcoming Thursday, creating a rare *BeHa”H* (Monday, Thursday, Thursday).

There is a recent *sefer* titled *Pischa Zeira* which discusses various subtopics related to *Pesach Sheini*. It devotes an entire chapter to this topic and debate. He posits a possible differentiation.

Regarding a *Bris* on a *Taanis*, it is still a day meant for fasting, and hence *Selichot* are still recited, and just not *Tachanun*. However many hold that *Pesach Sheini*, as it is a minor holiday and mentioned in the Torah, cannot be overruled as a day intended for fasting.

So, we see there is no clear-cut contemporary consensus to the observance of this rare convergence, and each *Kehillah* should – and I’m certain will – follow its own *minhag*. But it is quite fascinating that this “coincidence” will occur in our exceptional year.

To be continued...

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