



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

SILLY DUKE!

אָחַרֵי רַבִּים לְהַטָּה...

"Follow the majority" ((Shemos 23:2)

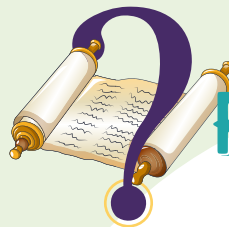
When Rav Yitzchok, the famous Ba'al Shem of Michelstaat, was just a child, he was well known for his sharp mind and wisdom. Word of the young genius spread around the city and reached the ears of the local duke.

The duke was a man who appreciated brains and very much wanted to meet the young prodigy. He invited the boy to come visit with him at his dukely palace, in the most upscale part of town. An invitation from the duke is not something one can refuse, and at the appointed date and time, a horse-drawn carriage was sent to collect young Yitzchok from his home in the Jewish quarter.

When Yitzchok arrived at the palace, he found it strangely deserted. He walked up the huge, imposing, winding driveway, but there was no sign of any butler, guard, footman, or any servant of any kind. Unsure where he was meant to go, he turned around to ask the coachman, but the carriage had already driven off.

Yitzchok walked through the high doorway into a large, stately foyer. There were hallways and corridors entering and leaving the lobby in all directions.

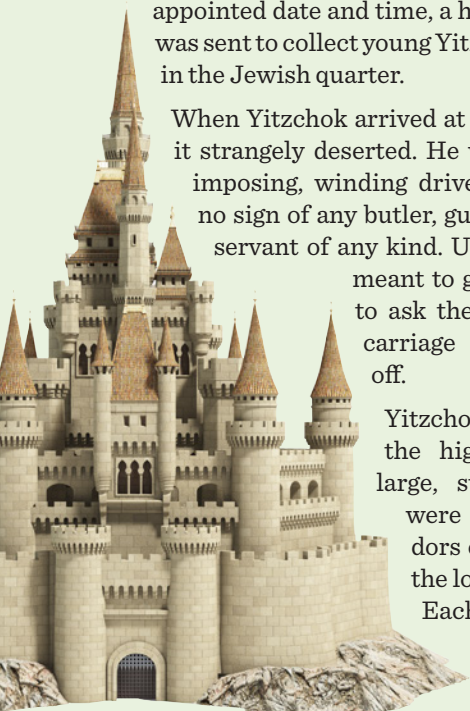
Each had numerous rooms, alcoves, and sub-hallways, but



PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 Which day of the year do we read from three different *sifrei Torah*? Which two other possible times are there to read from three *sifrei Torah* on one day?
- 2 Which other times do we switch *sifrei Torah* without saying Kaddish between the *Torahs*?
- 3 How many times did Klal Yisrael say כָּל אִשָּׁר דָּבַר ה' נִעְשָׂה וְנִשְׁמָע וְנִשְׁמָעָה? Where? Where did they add וְנִשְׁמָעָה? Where did they say just וְנִשְׁמָעָה?
- 4 Where does the Torah talk about the "end of the year"? Where does it say the same thing occurs at the beginning of the year? Extra credit: Can you resolve the contradiction?
- 5 Which 5 types of בעל are there in *Parshas Mishpatim*?



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 8

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: Efraim grows up to be an educated child in the home of the *poritz*, but before his 13th birthday, his father appears to him in a dream and tells him to run away.

W

ho am I? Am I your son?" Efraim cried to the *poritz* and his wife. "This man in my dreams keeps insisting that I am his son, and that I am a Jew!"

"It is nonsense!" the *poritz* was agitated. "Johann, it is a meaningless dream! Of course you are my son, and this is your mother. You are the farthest thing from a Jew there ever was. Think nothing of that silly dream and the nasty man who appeared to you. Don't you see how smart, cultured, and educated you are? You are a son of nobility, not some Jewish peasant!"

"But, Father, the dream won't stop! Night after night, that man appears to me in the dream and tells me to run away. Make it stop, Father!"

"Sleep well, my son, sleep well. It will all end soon. Good night, go back to bed."

But the nighttime traumas continued for the boy trying to figure out if his name was really Johann. The man who called him Efraim, and called himself his father, grew increasingly agitated in the dreams. Until one night, when he said he had had enough.

"Efraim!" Reb Aharon said in the dream. "I am not going to wait any longer! I have waited long enough. We are out of time! Tomorrow is your 13th birthday. You will be bar mitzvah! You must put on *tefillin* tomorrow; there is no more time for delays and warnings. I'm taking you away tonight, Efraim. I will take you to the faraway city of Prague, and I will leave you at the front door of the shul. When the gabbai comes to open the building in the morning, tell him you must speak with the rabbi. Say nothing else, speak to no one else. Only the rabbi of Prague, the great Maharal—Rav Yehuda Leow—he will know what to do. He will give you *tefillin*, care for you, protect you, and raise you properly. Speak to no one else!"

With this ominous declaration and warning, the man in the dream grabbed a firm hold of Efraim/Johann's upper arm. Still in the dream, he pulled Efraim from his warm bed, and rushed him down the steps and to the door. Efraim dreamed that the two took off, leaping into the air and flying swiftly through the cold night, speeding to the distant city of Prague. It was near morning light when the two finally landed at the door of a large, imposing-looking white building, with a steeply sloping gabled black wooden roof.

Efraim dreamed that the man who called himself his true father hugged him tightly. "Be well, my son. Rav Leow will take good care for you. We are all so proud of you." he kissed Efraim on the forehead, waved once, and was gone. Efraim awoke with a start.

Early light was appearing in the dark morning sky. He shivered with cold, looked around him and cried out in panic! He was lying on the cold stone step of a white building with a black roof. He was still wearing his snuggly pajamas, but his bare feet were cold. His bed, room, home, and city were gone. He was surrounded by unfamiliar buildings—except the stately white shul, which was exactly the building he had seen in the dream.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2



DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a *dvar Torah*, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. These can be split between the three *seudos*.

וְאֵלֶּה הַחֻשְׁפֹּטִים אֲשֶׁר תָּשִׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם

"And these are the rules which you shall place before them" (Shemos 21:1)

What does the Torah mean by adding the phrase "which you shall place before them?"



ZICHRON MEIR (RAV MEIR RUBMAN):

The mitzvos have to be laid out for them, for each member of Klal Yisrael, individually. A *rebbe* must teach in the manner that is understandable for his particular *talmid/im*, just as Rav Preida taught his *talmid* 400 times.



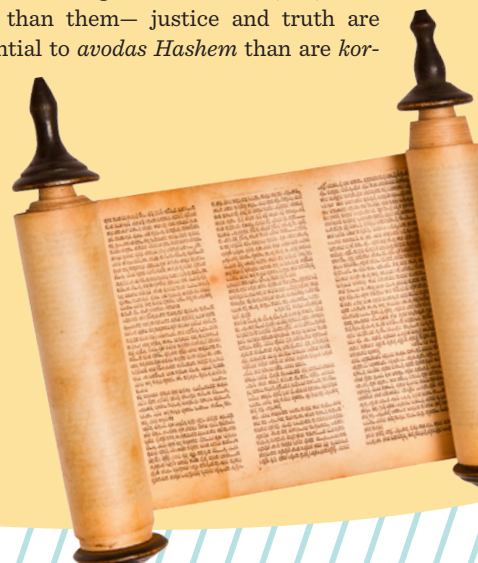
RAV SIMCHA BUNIM OF PESHISCHA:

Klal Yisrael must learn that the mitzvos are before them—as in, preceding them. The mitzvos make us into people; not vice versa. We give them priority over our own selves.



RAV CHAIM HAKOHEH OF ARAM SOBA:

Immediately preceding *Mishpatim*, the Torah taught some laws of the *mizbe'ach*. It is now saying that the following are before them, i.e., more important than them— justice and truth are more essential to *avodas Hashem* than are *korbanos*.



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Parshah summary

Parshas Mishpatim teaches the full terms of the treaty that Hashem made with Klal Yisrael. While *Parshas Yisro* relates the actual event of Har Sinai, and the rest of Torah teaches the details of the mitzvos, *Mishpatim* lays out the groundwork and sets up the framework. As part of that framework, it emphasizes that Hashem is also giving us the secrets to a healthy, functional society, and that these are an essential part of the treaty, and it specifies details (see Ibn Ezra).

In the latter part of the *parshah* (which preceded *Matan Torah*) Moshe relays the terms of the *bris* back and forth between Hashem and the people. Klal Yisrael accepts it: we will do and hear; we will carry the message of Hashem to the universe and apply the Torah's teachings to establish a perfect world. In turn, Hashem takes us as His own, will bring us to Eretz Yisrael safely, and will protect us there. We are to destroy *avodah zarah* and keep the rules of the land.

In the earlier part of the *parshah* (which occurred later), Moshe teaches the Torah's instructions for a functional society, and that they are as integral a part of Judaism and the treaty as are the Yamim Tovim and the destruction of *avodah zarah*. Among these instructions are dealing with those disadvantaged (slaves, the poor, widows, orphans, strangers) and justice (damages, finance, crime and punishment, and justice systems).

We also read *Parshas Shekalim* this week, to reenact the collection of half-shekel coins to buy *korbanos tzibbur* in the Beis Hamikdash. Those purchases were recalculated from Rosh Chodesh Nissan; the collections began a month earlier, on 1 Adar. The half-*shekalim* and *korbanos tzibbur* are also part of building a healthy society, with shared communal responsibility and atonement.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:

1. Tax season in the United States is ramping up, and many people are reviewing their finances. This is a good time to make a *cheshbon hanefesh* on our financial dealings for the year. Have we been completely honest? Is there any area of doubt—do we want to risk coming back to this world to pay off a few cents? Make full amends.

2. What about taxes and other areas of public responsibility, such as community and shul collections, *eruv* funds, etc. Have we paid our share? Even taxes are part of a functional society, whether or not we agree with how they are used. We must be honest—we are partners with all our countrymen. Make a fair accounting and pay up!



RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. We always read from three *sifrei Torah* (if the shul has them) on Simchas Torah. If Shabbos Chanukah falls on Rosh Chodesh, and if *Parshas Shekalim* falls on Rosh Chodesh, we also take out three.
2. Kaddish is recited to separate between regular, required *leining*, and *maftir*, which is only added so that the one who reads the haftorah shows deference to the Torah by reading from it as well. On Chol Hamoed Pesach, the fourth *aliyah* is read from a different Torah, but it is not *maftir*, so there is no Kaddish between the third and fourth *aliyah*. Whenever there are three *sifrei Torah*, there is no Kaddish between the first and second Torah, because *maftir* is read from the third Torah.
3. נְעֻשָׂה was said once in *Yisro* and twice in *Mishpatim*:
 - a) *Yisro*: וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֶשְׂרֵי דְבַר ה' נְעֻשָׂה (*Shemos* 19:8).
 - b) *Mishpatim*: וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נְעֻשָׂה (*Shemos* 24:3).
 - c) *Mishpatim*: וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֶשְׂרֵי דְבַר ה' נְעֻשָׂה (*Shemos* 24:7).
 - וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֶשְׂרֵי דְבַר ה' נְעֻשָׂה was said in *Parshas Mishpatim* (*Shemos* 24:7).
 - וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֵתָּה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה (*Shemos* 10:16).
4. The Torah (*Shemos* 23:16) says that Sukkos (*Chag Ha'asif*) is בַּצֵּאת הַשָּׁנָה. But in *Ki Sisa* (*Shemos* 34:22) it says that it is תְּקִיפַת הַשָּׁנָה, which Rashi defines as the beginning of the year. The midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni*) explains that Sukkos was supposed to be in Elul, but it was postponed because of the *aveiros* that caused 17 Tammuz and 9 Av.
5. בעל אשה, בהל השוור, בעל הבור, בעל הבית, בעל דברים

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

BACKGROUND TO THE HAFTORAH

Queen Atalya (daughter of a king of Yisrael, and wife of a king of Yehudah) consolidated power in the land by murdering all descendants of Dovid Hamelech. Yehoyada, the *kohen gadol*, saved one last Davidic descendant from her clutches—her own grandson, Yehoash, who was merely an infant. Yehoash and his nanny were hidden in the attic of the *Kodesh Kadashim* for six years. On his seventh birthday, repairs needed to be made to the room and he could no longer be hidden. He was taken out and crowned king. The people rallied behind him and Atalya was put to death.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

Sephardim begin with the crowning of Yehoash and execution of Atalya. Ashkenazim begin with the new king's reforms: restoration of the *avodah* and repair of the Beis Hamikdash.

Atalya had stopped the *avodah* and filled the land with Ba'al worship. Yehoash destroyed all the *avodah zarah* (but missed the *bamos*—private altars and their priests) and restored the *avodah*. But the Beis Hamikdash had suffered greatly under Atalya and was in desperate need of repairs. The problem: how to finance it?

Yehoash first set up a system of forced donations, i.e., taxes. He made the *kohanim* personally liable to fund the repairs and told them to collect the money from the people. He also redirected the yearly half-shekel donations (and all other donations) to the repair funds. But the plan failed.

Twenty-three years later, the money had still not been raised and the repairs were not done. No one wanted to donate to the cause, because the *kohanim* were liable for it anyway. And the *kohanim* were not motivated to collect, because forced collections to the Beis Hamikdash were illegal. Yehoash had failed to consult with Yehoyada on that.

A second system was instituted, whereby a large *pushka* was set up in the Beis Hamikdash. Donations were completely voluntary, and the box was filled every day. The repairs were quickly completed.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

The haftorah discusses the collection of funds for the public interest of the Beis Hamikdash, which is what *Parshas Shekalim* is about. It also refers specifically to the collections of the *shekalim*.

Moreover, *Parshas Shekalim* and *Parshas Mishpatim* both describe the Torah's vision for a fair and functional society, with each individual accepting responsibility for the welfare of the community, and committing to fairness and justice. The haftorah details an incident in which an appeal to man's goodness and generosity worked better than forced contributions; you cannot force a society to work, it must be comprised of individual people of good character.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

There is much talk of restoring the function of American society through unity, peace, and understanding. Yet those in power continue to battle for their opinions and to ride roughshod over the dissent, and their view of a charitable society is one that taxes severely and redistributes wealth. The haftorah teaches that this does not work.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

there was no sign of anyone. He had orders to come straight to the duke's study, but with no one to ask, how was he to find it? He dared not go wandering down the hallways alone, nor could he open random doors. If he intruded on someone, or was caught appearing to snoop, the punishment could be severe!

Yitzchok quickly figured out that this must be a little test set up for him by the duke. The nobleman was testing to see if he could figure out which room was his study, without help. There must be some clue...

The nine-year-old boy surveyed the hallways, doors, and windows. Hmmm... There! That one. He was sure he had the right one. He confidently marched up to the door he had selected and knocked sharply on a window set in the door.

The duke opened the door with a wide smile on his face. "Well done, my boy, well done!" he beamed. "How did you find me?" He ushered Yitzchok into the study, an opulent room lined with bookcases and volumes on science and philosophy, and settled into a large leather desk chair.

"Simple!" Yitzchok replied. "All the windows and doors to the other rooms and hallways were somewhat open. Only this door was closed, with the curtains drawn. It was clear His Dukeliness was hiding in this room!"

"Brilliant! You truly are wise," the duke exclaimed, rubbing his hands together. "But tell me, boy, had I not sent away all the servants, you would have asked them where my study was. They may have given you different, confusing answers. What would you have done then? Whose advice would you follow?"

"Our Torah tells us, follow the majority!" Yitzchok replied.

"Yes, yes, very wise. But tell me, then, why you are Jewish?" the duke leaned forward, ready to spring his trap. "Most people in the world are Christians. Jews are the fewest of all. You should follow the majority and worship as we do!"

Little Yitzchok didn't hesitate for a second. "Now that I know which room is your study, would I listen to a majority—or even all of your servants—if they told me a different room? Of course not! I wouldn't follow even all of them if I see the truth right before me. The Torah only tells us to follow the majority when there is a situation of doubt. But the truth of our religion is as clear as you sitting here in this room!"



BUY TWO, GET ONE DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

BUY TWO, GET ONE

Although *Shulchan Aruch* (C.M. 232:19) rules that selling a rotten egg is a *mekach taus*, the custom is that the merchant does not have to repay the customer for the rotten egg. However, R' Elyashiv rules that the custom is limited to merchants, but there is no such custom when a person sells an egg that he would have used for himself. Thus Yosef is only obligated to repay 1 egg.



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אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך

“If you will lend money to My nation, the poor among you...” (*Shemos 22:24*)

• Wealth is given to the rich in order to be distributed to the poor. The letters of the word in *Lashon Hakodesh* meaning money, **ק,ס,כ**, are preceded in the alphabet by the letters **י,נ**, which mean “poor.”

This teaches that the money was only granted to the rich as a solution for the poor (*Shach*). The letters before **קסכ** also spell **עין**, which hints that when the Torah says **עין תחת עין**, it refers to money, because **קסכ** is “under” (i.e., after) **עין**.

• **קסכ** with its “inner letters”—**א"פ"ח"ס"ך"נ"ך**—has the *gematria* 301 = **שא**. This teaches that if the person who has wealth does not give or lend support, it may be destroyed (*Shach*).

• **קסכ** with its “inner letters” can be spelled **ח"פ"ח"ס"ך"נ"ך**, which has the *gematria* 305 = **נפרה** and = **שה**, to teach that the *tzedakah* brings atonement like a *korban* (*Chida*).

• **עץ** = 160 = **קסכ**, to teach that money can be a tree of strength, but only for those who use it to fulfill the mitzvah of *tzedakah*! (*Chida*)



THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



The first of Adar is celebrated by the descendants of **Rav Yom Tov Lipman Heller**, the Tosafos Yom Tov, as the day he was released from persecution, imprisonment, and a death sentence from the imperial court of the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand.

The Tosafos Yom Tov was the *rav* of the city of Prague when he was arrested in the summer of 1629, accused of insulting Christianity. He was imprisoned in Vienna and put on trial. He defended himself wisely but was sentenced to death anyway.

The trouble had begun when the local Bohemian government realized it did not have enough money to pay for the long war it was fighting, called the Thirty Years' War. The government decided to impose a tax on the local Jewish communities to help finance the war. The *kehillah* of Prague was ordered to pay 40,000 thalers per year—an enormous sum. As the chief rabbi of the city, Rabbi Heller formed a commission to figure out how to finance the tax. The commission set an amount for each Jewish family to pay toward the tax, based on the wealth of each family and how much it could afford. A union of rich merchants was upset at how much they were expected to contribute, even though they could easily afford it. They complained, and Rav Heller and the commission reexamined the issue but concluded that the decision was fair. The merchants then decided to go to Emperor Ferdinand, filing a petition against the *rav*, in which they accused him of being an enemy of Christianity. Their proof: “His writings are filled with allegations against the religion of the country.”

There was also a major anti-Semitic campaign in the works at the time. Bohemia (modern-day Czech Republic) was ruled by a royal family called the Court of Habsburg. They were anti-Semites and, encouraged by the pope, were targeting the Jews. The Habsburgs also hated, and were political enemies, of a *gvir* named Yaakov Bassevi, who was close to Rav Heller. They were only too happy to believe a story about him. (The entire Habsburg family was later wiped out and no longer exists.)

Askanim managed to get his sentence reduced from the death penalty to a 12,000-thaler fine—a huge amount of money. After some negotiations, it was reduced to 10,000 thalers, but Rav Heller spent a month in prison and was banned from serving as a rabbi anywhere in the empire. He spent two years paying off the fine, and then moved to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where he was appointed *rav* of the city of Krakow on Adar 1. He wrote a narrative of the story and called it *Megillas Eivah*, or “Scroll of Hatred,” which still exists today. He set the day he was re-appointed *rav* as a day for *hoda'ah* for his salvation, and his descendants still mark it today.

The first of Adar is also the day *beis din* sent messengers around Eretz Yisrael, reminding people to bring their half-*shekalim* coins for the collection to buy *korbanos tziibur*. We read *Parshas Shekalim* today to reenact this.

HALACHAH



Going to the Doctor

יִרְפָּא יִרְפָּא
(Shemos 21:19)

Is one allowed to be a doctor?

The Gemara (*Bava Kama* 85a) derives from the words יִרְפָּא יִרְפָּא that doctors are permitted to practice medicine. *Tosafos* explain that without a source, one would consider it heretical to try to undo Hashem's decree of illness by applying medicine. The Rambam adds that once it is permitted, it is a mitzvah of *hashavas aveidah* to treat someone, because you are returning his lost health/body. One who can help may not refuse to do so out of fear of making a mistake, because it is included in רִיטֵךְ עַל דָּם רִיטֵךְ. It may be problematic for a *kohen* to be a doctor; a *posek* must be consulted. One cannot be obligated to take up the career of medicine—the Gemara does say that the best of doctors falls to Gehinnom—it is certainly a risky pursuit. A doctor is not supposed to take money for his service, just for his time and effort.

Is one allowed/obligated to go to the doctor?

The Ramban writes that when Klal Yisrael is fulfilling the will of Hashem, we have no need or right to consult doctors, because He cares for all our needs. This may still apply to very lofty *tzaddikim*. However, when we aren't doing so well, He leaves our fate in the control of happenstance, and we must consult doctors as a fulfillment of לִנְפִשׁוֹתֵיכֶם וְשִׁמְרָתֶם. We also are obligated to follow the doctor's expert advice. It is forbidden to rely on a miracle. Chazal say it is forbidden for a *talmid chacham* to live in a city without a doctor.

Is there ever a time one should not listen to a doctor?

If a doctor tells someone he does not need to be *mechallel Shabbos* or eat on Yom Kippur; but the patient feels that he does, the patient is trusted, because a person knows himself best (this does not necessarily apply vice versa). Also, when a doctor asserts that he cannot heal the patient but can prolong his life briefly or manage the symptoms, the patient

is not obligated to follow his instructions, because a doctor is permitted to heal, not to diagnose hopelessness. This does not minimize the importance of saving any moment or second of life. The issues of doctors themselves withholding treatment to hasten death, at patient requests, are complex, and a *posek* must be consulted for each.

Regarding any situation that may present a *sakanah* to others, such as coronavirus, one must follow doctors' orders, and one who does not do so risks causing the death of others by reckless manslaughter.

Are psychologists considered doctors in this regard?

Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote that one should not consult a mental "health" practitioner who applies heretical ideas to treat patients. One who is affected by any number of mental health conditions that can be life threatening, including depression, psychosis, and eating disorders must seek psychiatric treatment and medication, if necessary.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"THERE IS NOTHING IN THE WORLD AS DIFFICULT AS BEING UNDER THE DOMINION OF YOUR PEERS."

—R. Avraham ibn Ezra, beginning of *Parshas Mishpatim*



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