



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

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

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

WHAT COLOR IS AN AVEIRAH?

אתם נצבים היום כלכם

“You are all standing today” (*Devarim* 29:9).

שמעו ישראל מאה קללות חסר שנים חוץ ממ"ט
שבתורת כהנים, הוריקו פניהם, ואמרו מי יוכל
לעמוד באלו, התחיל משה לפייסם

“Yisrael heard the [98 curses], aside from the 49 in [*Vayikra*], their faces turned green and they said, ‘Who can withstand these?’ Moshe began to comfort them” (*Rashi*, ad loc).



When Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponovezher Rav, founded Yeshivas Ponovezh in Bnei Brak, it was one of the first *yeshivos* opened after World War II. Many people thought the Torah world was dead and there would not be functioning *yeshivos* anymore.

When the Ponovezher Rav signed a contract to buy the famous hill on which the yeshivah is built, he did not even have five liras in his pocket to send a telegram to a potential donor. He needed enormous sums of money. He undertook to travel to the United States for six months, where he would travel from city to city and working to raise funds for the yeshivah that was still just a dream.

One Shabbos, the Ponovezher Rav found himself in a far-flung town in turmoil. The place did not have an official *rav*, and the community was considering whether it should continue to define itself as Orthodox and hire a *rav* or change to Conservative, *chalilah*. The Conservative movement was very strong and popular in those days, and Orthodox Judaism was struggling (today, *baruch Hashem*, that has changed).

The *kehillah* had scheduled a vote on the issue just before *Mussaf* on Shabbos. The president of the shul, who was campaigning for it to

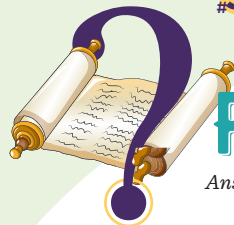


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נצבים - זילך

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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles will appear in next week's issue.

1

The *Krias HaTorah* on Monday and Thursday usually goes until *sheini* of the *parshah*. Which *parshiyos* go further? Till *shelishi*? Till *revi'i*?

2

Where is Purim referenced in this week's *parshah*?

3

It is well known that **לול** is spelled with the first letters of the words in *Shir Hashirim* **ל**י **ל**ודי **ל**ודי **ל**י. Which words in this week's *parshah* spell *Elul* in the same way? How many other places can you find *Elul* spelled out that way (there are 47 in *Tanach*. Can you find one in the *Megillah*)?

GEMATRIA

“You are all standing here today” (*Devarim* 29:9).

“After hearing all the curses, *Klal Yisrael* turned green and panicked. Moshe encouraged them, saying, ‘You are all standing here today...’” (*Rashi*, ad loc).

How does “you are all standing” encourage *Klal Yisrael* after hearing the curses?

The Chida says it refers to standing during *Shemoneh Esrei*, which protects us from the curses.

Times Hashem's Name is mentioned in the curses = 26
Times Hashem's Name is mentioned in *Shemoneh Esrei* = 26
Gematria of Hashem's Name = 26

Gematria of Hashem's Name 26 times = 676
Number of letters in all the curses = 676



CHOLENT STORY

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

NEW STORY!

T

he wind, snow, and ice of Siberia stick with a person for a long time. Avremele was a refusenik, a Jew stuck in the Soviet Union for many years. As punishment for trying to keep whatever mitzvos he knew about, which were not many, Avremele was sent to a prison camp in Siberia, the frozen tundra in northern Russia, deep in the Arctic Circle. Temperatures regularly reached 80 degrees below zero, and many of the prisoners had no coat and lived in unheated barracks.

But that wasn't the worst of it. The worst was that for the first five years of his imprisonment in a Siberian prison camp, Avremele did not see another Jewish face. There were no Jews for miles and miles around, certainly none in the camp. There was no one with whom to talk about Jewish ideas or topics and no one to remind him about Yom Tov and other important dates on the Jewish calendar. Avremele soon lost track of the days, never knowing when it was Yom Tov, Chanukah, Purim, Rosh Chodesh, and often, even Shabbos.

After five years in Siberian ice camps without another Jew, an announcement came: it was time to do a prisoner swap with another camp. That meant that the inmates of the two camps would meet in the flat, frozen tundra, several prisoners would be exchanged, and then everyone would head back to their camp.

There was no transportation, so the prisoners had to walk. It was a 15-day walk in each direction. Many prisoners did not survive the trek.

After 15 days of trudging through the frozen snow and ice, the two camps finally met. The groups were held separately and circled each other around a fence. Guards armed with machine guns patrolled the area. No one was allowed to talk; all communication was forbidden. Anyone caught talking would be shot on the spot.

Avremele was trudging through the snow, trying to keep putting one foot in front of the other, when suddenly he heard a low voice behind him. It was a non-Jewish prisoner, one who had connections in many places and was often able to arrange things for his fellow prisoners.

"Don't move; don't turn around; don't say a word," the man said. "Keep going as if you don't hear me, or we'll both get shot.

"There is a Jewish prisoner in the other camp. He sends you a message that he must speak to you, even at the risk of getting killed. He will jump over the fence and slip into line behind you when the guards are not looking. Just keep walking."

Avremele was shocked. A Jew! He hadn't seen a Jew in so long! And what could be so important to discuss that he would risk getting shot?

TO BE CONTINUED...



LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

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

וְהָיָה בְשִׁמְעוֹ אֶת דְּבָרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת וְהִתְבָּרַךְ בְּלִבּוֹ
לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם יְהוָה לִי כִּי בִשְׂרָרוֹת לְבִי אֶלֶךְ... לֹא
יֵאבֶה ה' סִלְחֵם לוֹ

"And when he will hear these curses, he will feel blessed in his heart and say, 'I'll be fine! I'll follow my heart!'...Hashem will not want to forgive him" (Devarim 29:18).

Why would someone hear all the terrible curses and think "I'll be fine"?!

KSAV SOFER:

He thinks the curses are only meant for someone who rebels against Hashem and does *aveiros* out of spite, but since he is just "following his heart," i.e., following his *ta'avos*, desires, the curses don't apply to him. For that, the Torah says Hashem will not want to forgive him.

ATERES SHLOMO:

He thinks it is enough to just be a "Jew at heart," to be a "good person" with good feelings for Judaism and Jews and Jewish ideas, but that he doesn't need to learn Torah or do mitzvos. He feels "blessed in his heart" and says, "I don't need to worry, because my heart is Jewish enough."

CHIDA:

This man's *yetzer hara* convinces him that he will be a bigger tzaddik if he does *aveiros*. Chazal say that when someone does *teshuvah* out of love, his *aveiros* turn into mitzvos. So he plans to do many *aveiros* and turn them into mitzvos by doing *teshuvah* later! About that it says, "Hashem will not want to forgive him," because someone who does *aveiros* while depending on doing *teshuvah* has broken *teshuvah* and made it part of his *aveirah*, and he is not given the chance to do *teshuvah*.

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

Parshiyos Nitzavim and Vayeilech describe Moshe's encouragement to the people and his appointment of Yehoshua.

After hearing nearly a hundred curses, the people lose hope. Moshe gathers them on the final day of his life to give a message of encouragement and hope and to pass the leadership to Yehoshua.

Moshe reaffirms that Hashem always loves *Klal Yisrael* and will never abandon them, though He may hide His face. He relates that he knows they will sin and stray—Hashem told him so—but there is always a way back. They can, and will, do *teshuvah*, and although they may suffer, Hashem will accept their *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* and Torah are not that difficult; they can be done!

Moshe officially appoints Yehoshua to lead the people after his death. He writes the complete Torah and gives it to *Kohanim* along with instructions for its use and pleads to the people to stick to it. The mitzvah of *Hakhel*, reminding everyone of all Moshe has said, is also taught.

AVODAH FOR THIS WEEK:

It is a week to Rosh Hashanah. Ashkenazim begin *Selichos* tonight. The Yamim Nora'im have officially begun.

The cycle of Jewish history, unfortunately, has mirrored the time in which we find ourselves, Av through Elul and Tishrei—a transition from times of sin to reconciliation, *teshuvah*, and love. The repeated message of the *parshah* is that change is possible; love is possible; we can get back together with Hashem. And we can avoid repeating the cycle every year, climbing instead to higher levels.

1. Rosh Hashanah is a time of great awe and love for Hashem and *teshuvah* based on love. We need to prepare for that during Elul. Choose something that inspires you with those feelings—vastness of space, Niagara Falls, perfection of creation...whatever works—and ponder the greatness of Hashem, Who loves you.

2. Ponder the love that Hashem, the Infinite, has for little you, caring and involving Himself in your life. Use that to inspire regret for past mistakes and commitment to do better.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

1. The *pesukim* of the *Mikra Bikkurim*, which Yidden said when bringing *bikkurim*, should sound familiar too us. We still say them at least once a year. When? **At the Pesach Seder. Much of Maggid is drashos on those pesukim.**
2. How many curses (and blessings) were said by the Shevatim on Har Eival (and Har Gerizim)? Count them and see *Rashi*. Why does Rashi give a different number than the *pasuk*? **There are 12, as there are 12 Shevatim. Rashi says there are 11, and 11 Shevatim. Rashi is not counting Shevet Shimon and the last curse of "not keeping Torah." Shimon did not get a direct curse because he didn't get a direct bracha in *V'zos Habracha*. The last curse is general, and Shimon also got a general bracha that is included in others, so it doesn't get counted separately.**
3. Where does the phrase אָרְךָ יְצַבֵּת הַלֵּב וְדַבַּשׁ appear three times in one *parshah*? **Beginning of *Ki Savo*, in *Mikra Bikkurim*, *Vidduy Maasros*, and on Har Eival.** Where does it appear in two consecutive *pesukim*? **Beginning of *Parshas Korach*, when Dasan and Aviram are speaking.** Where does it appear *not* referring to Eretz Yisrael? **Dasan and Aviram referred to Mitzrayim with those words.**
4. How does the Gemara (*Shabbos* 55b) prove from this week's *parshah* that Reuven did not really do an *aveirah* with Bilhah? **The curse that corresponds to Reuven, in the order of curses and Shevatim listed in the *parshah*, is for one who "marries his father's wife." If Reuven had done that, there is no way the Torah would embarrass his Shevet by making them say that curse.**

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

This week's *haftorah* is the seventh and final Haftorah of Consolation.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

The haftorah describes the glorious moment of the arrival of Mashiach and the pinnacle of all Jewish hopes throughout the generations—the peak of love and joy between the Jewish people and Hashem as we return together after centuries of apparent separation.

The haftorah uses the theme of marriage to represent our love and joy, comparing the reunion of Hashem and *Klal Yisrael* to the marriage of a young couple. Hashem rejoices together with us, and we with Him.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH:

The *parshah* also describes the ingathering of the Jewish people and our return, through love, to Hashem. It refers to the time we will stray, the troubles we will suffer, and our ultimate return. All this is encapsulated in the seven haftaros we are now concluding and of which we are reaching the ultimate conclusion: the joyous reunification. The *parshah* also uses the theme of love and joy, reporting that Hashem will “rejoice over you as he rejoiced over your fathers.”

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES:

Many shuls around the country and world that have remained closed or limited during the coronavirus pandemic are allowing for a reunification of prayers and pray-ers within their walls in honor of Rosh Hashanah. While we are not out of the woods yet, the return is a taste of the future!

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

remain Orthodox, was given a few minutes to try to convince the *kehillah* to vote his way. The Ponovezher Rav listened as the man spoke about tradition, community, and Jewish continuity. Most of the crowd seemed bored by his lecture.

Then the leader of the local Conservative establishment got up. It was his turn to try to convince the *kehillah* to vote his way. He searched the crowd, and his gaze came to rest on the president who had spoken minutes earlier.

“You!” He pointed at the president. “Stand up!”

The president rose obediently.

“Come up here, please.”

The president returned to the front of the shul.

“Do you consider yourself Orthodox?”

“Yes, of course.”

“So you keep all the mitzvos, do everything the Torah says?”

“Well, I...yes, sort of.” The president blushed.

“You never do anything wrong?”

The president turned redder and began to squirm. “I, er...umm, I don’t know about anythi—”

“Have you ever spoken *lashon hara*?”

The poor president was positively sweating now. “Well, yes, but—”

“Aha!” The Conservative leader turned to the crowd. “So you see, ladies and gentlemen, your Orthodox president also doesn’t keep all the mitzvos, just like members of the Conservative movement! He picks and chooses, just like we do! Do you know what the difference between us really is? We Conservatives are honest about it, and the Orthodox are pretending!”

The man sat down with a flourish while the crowd began to murmur excitedly. It was clear that he had made his point well, and the vote seemed to be headed in the Conservative direction.

The *gabbai* prepared to call the assembled to order so the voting could begin.

“Wait!” came a voice from a bench in the back. It was the Ponovezher Rav. “I would like to say something.”

A hush fell over the crowd as the distinguished-looking stranger strode to the front.

The Ponovezher Rav scanned the crowd, much as the Conservative leader had done. His gaze settled on the Conservative leader. “You!” he said firmly. “Stand up! Come to the front!”

The man rose and approached.

“You, sir, do you consider yourself Orthodox?” the Ponovezher Rav asked, echoing the man’s own question from moments earlier.

“What? Me? Of course not!” The man puffed out his belly and guffawed loudly.

“Do you keep all the mitzvos?”

“No way!”

“Did you ever speak *lashon hara*?”

“Yes, all the time!”

“Thank you, sir. Please be seated.” The Ponovezher Rav turned to the crowd. “This, my friends, is the difference between Orthodox and Conservative. We all make mistakes. We are all human. G-d doesn’t demand perfection. But the Orthodox president stammered and turned red and green when he had to admit to his mistakes. We make mistakes, and we are embarrassed about them. And that’s okay, for as long as we are pained by our mistakes, we will eventually fix them and come out stronger; that is what G-d wants.

“But the Conservatives are not embarrassed. They think mistakes are something to be proud about. And that is the worst problem of all, because it is unfixable.”

The vote was held quickly and decisively. The shul members voted overwhelmingly to remain committed to Orthodoxy.

Moshe consoled the people: As long as you are still turning green and red, you are on the right track; you will be fine.

HALACHAH

יום תְּרוּעָה יִהְיֶה לְכֶם

“A day of *teruah* it shall be for you” (*Bamidbar* 19:1).



What are some halachos of *tekias shofar* on Rosh Hashanah?

THE MITZVAH

The Torah never tells us specifically to blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah, it just calls it a “day of *teruah*.” We need *Torah Sheb'al Peh* to teach us the obligation to blow shofar three times, nine times, even 30 times, and finally the current *minhag* of 100 times.

The Gemara teaches us that “*teruah*” means shofar blowing. The word “*teruah*” is used regarding Tishrei three times, so we need to blow three *teruos*. Each one has to be sandwiched between *tekios*, for a total of nine blasts. *Teruah* may mean the sound we call “*teruah*” today, or the one we call *shevarim*, or a combination of both. We blow each of those (three times), for a total of two sets of nine and one of 12, 30 all together. This is the basic mitzvah. The *minhag* has expanded to include blowing both before *Mussaf* and during the recitation of *Malchios*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros*, and after Kaddish, to get to 100.

WOMEN

Shofar blowing is a time-bound positive mitzvah (*mitzvas aseh shehazman grama*), from which women are normally exempt. Nevertheless, generations of women have been careful to hear shofar blowing. Many *poskim* rule that since women have assumed responsibility to hear shofar blowing, they are now required to do so. However, a woman does not need to hear more than 30 shofar sounds, although it is meritorious for her to hear the sounds blown during the repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

The Rishonim dispute whether one may recite a *bracha* on a mitzvah that one is not commanded to perform. Some contend that a woman listening to *tekios* alone should not recite the *bracha* because she cannot say “*v'tzivanu*—and He commanded us.” Sephardim follow this opinion, and therefore Sephardic women do not recite a *bracha* on mitzvos such as shofar and *lulav*. Ashkenazim rule that one may recite *v'tzivanu* even if they are not personally obligated, since *Klal Yisrael* collectively observes the mitzvos. Ashkenazic women who did not hear the *bracha* and first set of sounds should recite the *bracha* before the shofar blowing during the repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei* or at the end of *davening*.

EATING BEFORE HEARING THE SHOFAR

It is clear in the Gemara that it is forbidden to eat before doing a mitzvah whose time has come, including *mitzvos d'rabbanan* such as hearing the *Megillah* and taking *lulav* and *esrog* (even after the first day). This should apply to shofar as well. The *Mishnah Berurah* allows one to have just a snack, not a meal, before taking *lulav* if they are in a situation of great need, such as if one is feeling ill or weak and must eat. Some *poskim* apply this *heter* to eating before shofar, but that would be limited to a small snack and only to people who are feeling weak. Others say that since *davening* has become very long, everyone would be considered weak if they had to wait until after *Mussaf*.

The Tzitz Eliezer allows eating before shofar for a different reason. The problem with eating before a mitzvah is that one might become involved in their eating and forget to do the mitzvah. But shofar blowing has a set time in shul, and people will not allow themselves to miss it. Based on this, some *poskim* allow a *kiddush* in the shul itself, after which everyone will go straight back to their place for shofar blowing and will not miss it, but these *poskim* still forbid going home for *kiddush*.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“BEFORE ROSH HASHANAH, FEEL LIKE A RICH MAN! THIS IS THE GREATEST LOOT ONE CAN GAIN!”

—Rav Meilich Biderman

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