



פרשת בא

CIRCLE TIME AT YOUR Shabbos Table

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

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

THE WORST BARGAIN!

את אשר התעללתי במצרים...

“That I toyed with Egypt...” (Shemos 10:2)

How did Hashem “toy” with Egypt?



he household of R' Yosi ben Kisma was in disarray. “They’re gone!” R' Yosi’s wife cried. “Gone! They just took them! *Hashem yeracheim!*”

R' Yosi calmed his wife, but inside he was just as upset. A high-ranking Roman officer had kidnapped his two children!

The two young men had been walking along the road near R' Yosi’s home, when the officer’s coach passed. Quick as a wink, the coach stopped, several men dismounted, grabbed them, tied them up, and threw them in the back of the coach. The vehicle beat a hasty escape along the road. R' Yosi was lucky someone had seen the whole thing, or he would never have known, *al pi derech hateva*, what had happened to his children.

But the outlook was bleak. The Roman officer was known for kidnapping *Yidden* from Eretz Yisrael. His rank and power meant no one could stop him, and he answered to no boss. Children he stole were usually whisked away to his plantation, where they worked as slaves in his fields. Few were ever retrieved.

Trusting in Hashem, R' Yosi decided he must do some *hishtadlus*. He collected all the funds for *pidyon shvuyim* that he could manage—totaling one hundred *maneh*—and traveled to the home of the thieving, high-powered Roman officer.

R' Yosi worked hard and got an audience with the officer. He pleaded for the return of his children, but the *rasha* would not listen. R' Yosi pulled out his hundred *maneh*. “Here, take this money,” he said, “and return my children. You will make a nice profit and not lose anything. Just give back my sons!”

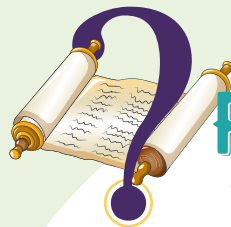
The officer looked at R' Yosi and sneered. “A hundred *maneh*! Are you kidding! I’ve never seen such a small amount of money in my life! I wouldn’t return your mouse for that money. Be gone!”

Chagrined, R' Yosi left the officer’s



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PARSHAH RIDDLES

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

Which three things were called a *nega*?

1

What are three meanings of the word נא?

2

Which two mitzvot did Hashem ask for using the word נא, instead of commanding? Why?

Which three times were gifts given against the will of the receiver?

3

Which three times are dogs mentioned in Chumash?

4

5

From the haftorah: Whose name is spelled differently than usual, here and in several other places? Extra credit: Why?



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 5

CHOLENT STORY

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

Recap: The night guard of the *poritz's* pits takes a liking to Reb Aharon and his wife and secretly feeds them.

Sometimes, a great *simchah* happens in the middle of the most painful situation. Reb Aharon and his wife had waited 20 years for a baby, but they did not expect it to finally be born in the bottom of a pit!

Hashem was clearly watching over them. Kept alive by the night guard, who sneaked food to them, Reb Aharon and his wife welcomed a healthy baby boy into a very odd world, and one night, the sound of a newborn's cries was heard in the field of pits. The parents' joy knew no bounds. They carefully counted off eight days, and Reb Aharon performed the *bris milah* with a *milah* knife he had brought with him in the little suitcase. Eliyahu Hanavi was the only guest in attendance at that *bris*, and he kept everyone healthy. The boy was named Efraim.

The night guard visited again the next evening and was surprised to find three people in the pit. He lowered a bit more food for the now-nursing mother.

The baby grew, the parents learned Torah, and time went on for the family of three in the pit. Several months passed.

One day, back at the *poritz's* mansion, a party was being held. The nobleman was hosting many of his friends in the nobility at a big birthday bash, and the wine and whiskey was flowing merrily. The *poritzes* all drank and boasted, and then drank and boasted some more. The conversation turned to the Jews each had under their rule. Some were fair and pleasant to the Jews, but many were nasty. Some complained that the Jews were too rich, others that they were too poor and didn't pay rent....

"Here in Lunchitz, we have a special solution for Jews, and for anyone else who doesn't pay rent!" the *poritz* of Lunchitz roared with delight. "We have our unique and highly effective field of pits. The Jews are terrified of being thrown in there, and they pay up, all right!"

The other *poritzes* were interested. "Really? How does it work? You just dump them in and leave them?"

"Yup!" boasted the cruel *poritz* of Lunchitz. "In fact, I just threw in this couple a few months ago, they're probably a pile of bones by now!"

"Why, what did they do?"

"I gave them a three-year extension on the rent. Can you imagine? Three years! And all I heard was some babble about the rain and the weather, not a penny! Chucked 'em right in the pits!"

"Can we see?"

"Sure!" The whole party climbed into carriages and headed out to the field of pits on the outskirts of town. Shortly, they arrived, and asked the day guard which pit had the bones of Reb Aharon and his wife.

"Second from left, sire," the guard answered. "But ain't no bones in there."

"What? How is that possible?"

"Don't know, sire," the guard lied, "but they're alive! Maybe they eat rocks or something. And they have a baby, too!"

"Impossible!"

"No, no, 'Efraim' is what they call him."

The party hurried over to the pit. Lo and behold, Reb Aharon, his wife, and a gurgling, chubby baby smiled up at them!"

"How are you alive?!" the *poritz* shouted, red in the face with anger and alcohol.

"Well, I'm no scientist," Reb Aharon began, "but I think it works with—"

"Enough! Your G-d must be working some miracle here. But I see you have a baby!"

"Yes, his name is Efraim. Say hello to the nice *poritz*, Efraim!"

The *poritz* was scheming. He and his wife had also never had children, and they had long wished for a beautiful baby, just like this one, to call their own. He looked long and hard at the adorable baby in the bottom of the pit, and an idea formed in the evil *poritz's* mind.

He was going to get that baby....

TO BE CONTINUED...



DVAR TORAH >>

ŁITVAK, 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*.

דָּבָר נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וְיִשְׁאַלוּ... כְּלֵי כֶסֶף וְכֵלֵי זָהָב

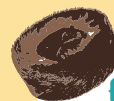
"Please speak in the ears of the people and [ask them to] borrow...silver and gold items..." (*Shemos* 11:2)

Why did Hashem tell Klal Yisrael to borrow riches from the Egyptians? We weren't planning on returning them? Shouldn't they have been given as a gift, or taken by force?



SIFSEI CHAIM:

The riches couldn't be a gift, because that would mean the Egyptians would have a *zechus*, and we would be indebted to them. Hashem also didn't want to take them by force, because He wanted to show Klal Yisrael that the feelings of the *goyim* toward us are controlled by Him—they can hate us even when we are behaving like them (as happened in the beginning of the slavery); and love us even when we are destroying their land!



CHIDDUSHEI HARIM:

Hashem didn't want Klal Yisrael to get used to being rich, or develop a love of money! He made sure the riches would be a loan, and never really ours, so we wouldn't feel wealthy at all—but like borrowers.



RABBEINU BACHYA:

The word *ישאלו* here does not mean "borrow." It means "ask"—ask for gifts, or payment of all the wages we were owed for our work. (Ran adds that Hashem wanted the Egyptians to view it as a loan, and would therefore chase us to the Yam Suf to get it back—and then drown there.)



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 Bo is the ultimate story of freedom and redemption from entrapment, the model and epitome of every escape from enemies, within ourselves as well as without. Mitzrayim is *meitzarim*—the narrow, restrictive straits.

Without deserving so, Klal Yisrael are rescued from the depths of *tumah* and despair a mere instant before it is too late. This is a free gift that will have to be earned later, a “borrowing,” as it were, from future merit. Klal Yisrael are also given their first mitzvos—a precursor to that body of merit they will soon earn.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. During this third week of *Shovavim*, we can take a free jump upward, a climb to a level we have not yet reached. Ordinarily, skipping steps in *avodas Hashem* is counterproductive, but doing so every now and then helps inspire us to realize the levels we can reach. During the coming week, rise completely above a specific area of challenges, committing to defeat the entire topic for this one week.

2. Apply this to *bein adam l'chaveiro* as well. For the coming week, give someone in your life with whom you have friction or competition a “free pass.” Let him be free of the battle for just this week, at least, and see what happens!

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. Pharaoh's punishment for taking Sarah was called *nega*; *Makkas Bechoros* was called *nega*; and of course, *tzara'as* is called *nega*.
2. אַךְ can mean “raw,” as in אַךְ תֹּאכְלוּ מִתְּנֵנוּ (Shemos 12:9); it can mean “please,” as in וְדַבֵּר נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם (Shemos 11:2, see Rashi); and it can mean “now,” as in וְשָׁמְעוּ נָא הַמִּצְוֹת (Bamidbar 20:10).
The *Akeidah* and collecting of riches from Egypt were both asked, not commanded, by Hashem; the *Akeidah* so that Avraham's greatness would be clear, and the riches so that Hashem would keep his promise to Avraham that his children would leave with great wealth.
3. Eisav protested that he did not want the gifts from Yaakov; the *Shevatim* did not want their money back from Yosef; and Klal Yisrael did not want all the gifts that the Egyptians pressed upon them.
4. וְלֹכֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִחָרֵץ כָּלֵב לְשָׁנוֹ (Shemos 11:7).
וּבְשֹׁר בְּשֹׁדֵה טְרֵפָה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ לְכָלֵב תִּשְׁלַכְנוּ אֹתוֹ (Shemos 22:30).
לֹא תָבִיא אֶתְנֵן זֹנָה וּמַחִיר כָּלֵב בֵּית ה' (Devarim 23:19).
5. Nevuchadnetzar is sometimes spelled Nevuchadretzar. While I could not find a clear source to explain the difference, a bit of research shows that his real name is Nevuchadretzar, which is an Akkadian phrase that means “G-d protect my firstborn.” Nevuchadretzar, in Akkadian, means “G-d protect my donkey,” and is probably meant to be insulting to the *rasha*.

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

A small Jewish community, led by Gedaliah ben Achikam, was left in Eretz Yisrael after the exile at the hands of Nevuchadnetzar, and a Babylonian garrison was stationed there to protect them. But a jealous descendant of kings, named Yishmael ben Netanya, killed the garrison and murdered Gedaliah. Fearing retribution from Bavel, the Jewish community considered fleeing to Egypt. They consulted the *navi* Yirmiyahu, who strongly advised against the move; but they did not heed his warning, and moved to Tahapanes.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

Yirmiyahu predicts Egypt's failure to stand up to Bavel and its duplicity in pretending to protect the Jews who fled there. He describes the destruction of Egypt, including the Jewish community in Tahapanes, which indeed took place four years later. The haftorah ends with the prediction of Klal Yisrael's ultimate salvation.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

Both *Va'eira* and *Bo*, and their respective haftorahs, discuss the punishment and destruction of Egypt. This haftorah is chosen for *Bo* because it mentions locusts, which feature in the *parshah*, and ends with the redemption of Klal Yisrael, as does the *parshah*. It also refers to the destruction of Pharaoh's idols, which occurred during *Makkas Bechoros* as well. Also, in the *parshah*, Pharaoh's underlings "get it" better than he does; that theme is included in the haftorah.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

With changing US administrations comes worry regarding American support for Israel. The *navi* reminds us: Rely only on Hashem.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

mansion and rented a room at a nearby hotel. He turned his eyes heavenward and began to pray. "Hashem," he cried, "I have done all I can. It's up to you! Only you can return my children, please bring back my precious boys!" R' Yosi davened with all his strength for days, fasting and doing *teshuvah* as well.

The *tefillos* pierced the heavens and brought *rachamim*. Hashem dispatched the *malach* Michael on a mission to the Roman officer. The *malach* struck him in the stomach, and the officer doubled over with severe stomach pains. He screamed in agony throughout the night, rolling on the floor and clutching his stomach in pain. He sent for all the doctors and surgeons available, but no one could find anything physically wrong with him.

It was obvious that this was a spiritual illness, and one of the servants soon suggested it might have something to do with the Jew who had been in the house that day, trying to redeem the two newest slaves.

The officer quickly sent a messenger to search for R' Yosi ben Kisma and call him back to the mansion. When R' Yosi arrived, the stomach pains immediately stopped!

"I have decided to accept your offer," the Roman announced to R' Yosi, with great feigned kindness. "Hand over the hundred *maneh* and I'll return your sons."

"I am sorry, sir, but I only have eighty of the hundred *maneh* left!" R' Yosi said, sadly.

"What! Eighty *maneh*! No deal! Get lost!" Chased away again, R' Yosi returned to his hotel for another night.

But as soon as R' Yosi left the building, the Roman officer's stomach pains returned again! This time, they were twice as bad! The officer felt like he was going to snap in half around his belly button. Quickly, he called for R' Yosi. Again, the pain stopped as soon as the Jew appeared. "Okay!" gasped the officer. "Eighty it is! Kids for the dough, let's trade!"

"Sorry, sir," said R' Yosi, "But there is only fifty *maneh* left from my original stash. Hotels cost money!"

"What! Fifty! Nerve of you! Out!"

Again, R' Yosi left the mansion, and again, the stomach pains struck the officer, again twice as painful as before. This cycle repeated itself a few more times, until the officer was finally ready to do anything to get the cramps to leave his stomach. "What do you want?" He gasped at R' Yosi.

"I want my children back," R' Yosi answered. "Free. No bribe."

"Fine!" wheezed the officer. "Take them and go!" But R' Yosi wasn't done.

"Plus," he continued, "full wages for all the work they did in your house. After all, they aren't your slaves!"

"Okay, how much?"

"Oh, about...eighty *maneh*."

"Eighty *maneh*?! That's so much money! Oh...okay. I guess I have no choice. I just need these cramps to end!"

The officer coughed up the eighty *maneh* to R' Yosi, and returned the two young men. "You see," said R' Yosi, "You are just like Pharaoh. You could have gotten out of this with a gain of a hundred *maneh*. Instead, you decided to be stubborn and stingy and now you had to pay eighty. Your stubbornness didn't earn you anything, it just made you lose more!"

This was the "game" played on Pharaoh. He could have let the Jews go right away, with zero or one *makkah*. But he insisted on trying to hold on to them forever; and ended up with nothing to show for it other than ten more *makkos*!



UP FOR DISCUSSION

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

THE MISTAKEN MECHILA

Halacha rules (C.M. 12:8) that forgiveness of a debt does not require any legal act (*kinyan*). The question in this case is whether one must honor a decision to forgive a loan even if it was only made mentally and never articulated.

Generally, halacha follows the principle of *devarim she'b'lev einam devarim* – mental, unspoken decisions are not binding. We do not find in halacha that mental decisions should take effect. Major Poskim follow this principle, and in their opinion, a mental decision to forgive a loan should follow the general halacha and should not be binding (Ketzos 12:1 and Nesivos 12:5). Although there is a minority view that maintains that a mental decision to forgive a loan is binding (Maharshal to Semag M.A. 48), in this case since you never decided to forgive the loan, you merely considered whether it would be appropriate to do so, all opinions maintain that you may collect the loan.



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Nevi'im (see *Michah* 7:15) and Chazal draw many comparisons between the *geulah* from Mitzrayim and the future *geulah* from the current *galus*.

1. החדש הזה לכם = 424 = משיח בן דוד

2. The “inner letters” (letters that spell out the rest of the name of each of the letters) of Pharaoh, total 376:

5 = פה

310 = ריש

60 = עין

1 = הא

Total = 376

The name עשו, the current *galus*, also equals 376. This is hinted in the *pasuk*, לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתֵּי אֱלֹהֵי בְּקֶרְבוֹ, “In order that I place my signs in him”—בְּקֶרְבוֹ—in the middle letters of Pharaoh, which is “עשו.”

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



The tenth of Shevat is the *yahrzeit* of Rav Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, the sixth rebbe of Lubavitch. It is also the *yahrzeit* of the Maharam Padwa; Rav Shalom Sharabi (one of the *chachamim* called Rashash); Rav Aizik Sher, Rosh Yeshivah of Slabodka; and Rav Yosef Salant, the Be'er Yosef.

When Rav Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn was only 15, he was appointed as his father's personal secretary and represented the Russian Jewish community at major conferences in Kovno and Vilna. He became Rosh Yeshivah of the Tomchei Temimim yeshivah network at age 18.

In his early twenties, he campaigned before the Czarist authorities and Western European governments, especially Germany and the Netherlands, for the rights of Jews to keep Torah. He was arrested by the Czar four times between 1902 and 1911, and was also arrested as a child, when he saved a Jewish child from being beaten by a policeman.

Following the takeover of Russia by the Communists, he battled the anti-religious Yevseksiya, and the atheistic Communists' attempts to destroy religion in the country. He set up secret yeshivos in Buchara, Warsaw, and throughout the Soviet Union, and supported *shochtim*, *melamdin*, and *mikvaos*. He was under continual surveillance by the Cheka secret police and agents of the NKVD, who forced him to move to Leningrad.

In 1927, he was accused of counterrevolutionary activities, arrested, and sentenced to death. A worldwide protest forced the Russians to cancel the sentence, sending him to prison instead and later to Latvia. He lived there until 1934, and in Warsaw until 1940, where he helped many Jews escape the Nazis, refusing to leave himself. Eventually he did leave, with the help of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris (head of the Abwehr, or Nazi spy agency).

He was the first major rebbe to move to America and was immediately told that his projects would not work there because “America is different.” He declared the famous words by which Chabad chassidim live until today: “America is no different!” and opened a yeshivah the following day.

HALACHAH



Owning a Dog

ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ קלב לשנו
(Shemos 11:7)

Is it permitted to own a dog?

The Gemara tells us several times that it is forbidden to own or raise a “bad dog in one’s house,” explaining that it may bite or injure people, cause a woman to miscarry with its frightening barking, keep away the poor, and minimize one’s *yiras Shamayim* (by “replacing” the mezuzah as a guard for the home). In *Bava Kama* 79b, the Mishnah rules that one may keep a dog only if it is chained. *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat* 409:3) rules this way, i.e., that one may keep a dog chained with metal, and this will avoid biting and prevent miscarriages, which are attributed to fear. One who lives in a border city, which is considered dangerous, may release the dog at night for protection. The Rama adds that all cities among the *goyim* are considered dangerous, but nevertheless, it is forbidden to keep a “bad” dog. Yaavetz says that all dogs are treated equally, and one should be *machmir* about the *sakanah* of owning dogs.

What about specialized dogs?

The *poskim* say that one should definitely not own more dogs than needed—one is enough for security; two or more would only be needed for a farmer or the like, who uses them to

control livestock. The Yaavetz explicitly forbids “expensive short-haired dogs,” which are commonly show dogs and the like. He considers it *moshav leitzim* and *maaseh areilim* to be busy with such sport and breeding. It is permitted to own a Seeing Eye dog, and even to bring it to shul, but it should be left in a place where it will not disturb people.

What are the halachos of feeding one’s dog?

While one must feed his farm animals before eating himself, this likely does not apply to a dog—but it is good to be *machmir*. A dog may be fed *tarfus* but not *issur hana’ah*.

What halachos apply on Shabbos?

All living creatures are *muktzah* on Shabbos. This includes dogs, and includes ruffling the dog’s hair or moving it. The *Mishnah Berurah* and *Elya Rabbah* dispute whether that *issur* may be violated to rescue an animal from a situation of *tza’ar ba’alei chaim*. There is a common misconception that one’s own dog is not *muktzah* to him. This error perhaps derives from the halachah that one may feed his own dog, but not stray dogs.

One may walk a dog on Shabbos without an

eiruv and may hold the leash. The leash may not hang to within a *tefach* of the ground, nor may more than a *tefach* hang out of the back of his hand. When tying the leash on, avoid a forbidden knot, and make sure not to lean on the dog, because that would be under the prohibition of riding an animal on Shabbos.

What halachos apply to mad dogs?

A dog acting oddly may have rabies, which is a deadly disease. Such dogs may be killed or captured on Shabbos because of *sakanah*. A stray dog that bit someone may be captured on Shabbos to test for rabies.

May a dog do melachah?

A Jew must ensure that his animals “keep” Shabbos. A dog may not carry for you or wear name tags or decorations that are not clothing in the street without an *eiruv*. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank was asked about a dog that was trained to turn a light on and off at a signal from the owner, and he forbade doing so on Shabbos.

May a dog be spayed?

It is forbidden to spay or neuter male or female dogs.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“HASHEM MADE SO MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPUTE IN THE WORLD, AND YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT HIM BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH PARNASSAH?”

—Rav Chaim Brim, responding to a *talmid chacham* worried about being able to earn enough money. If we had Rav Chaim’s *hasagos* of “luxury,” perhaps we wouldn’t be worried, either!



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