



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

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

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

THE MUD MADE THE SHIDDUCH

אמר רב משום רבי ראובן בן אצטרובלי מן התורה ומן הנביאים ומן הכתובים מה' אשה לאיש מן התורה דכתיב (בראשית

כד:נ) ויען לבן ובתואל ויאמרו מה' יצא הדבר,

"Said Rav in the name of Rabi Reuven ben Oztrobili: Chumash, Navi, and Kesuvim all say, Hashem decides [which] woman is [destined] for which man. Torah: And Lavan and Besuel answered and said, 'This thing came from Hashem...'" (Moed Katan 18b).

Yisrael Meir's mother had remarried after his father's passing, and he was happy for her that she was no longer alone. Her new husband was simple—unlike Yisrael Meir's father, who had been a major talmid chacham—and he was very poor, but he was loving and good to his mother.

Yisrael Meir settled into his seat on the train. He had spent a long *zman shteiging* at his yeshivah in Vilna, secure in the knowledge that his mother was cared for. He had never seen his new stepfather. His mother had moved to her new husband's hometown, and he had not seen her since. Now he was headed home for Yom Tov; it would be their first meeting.

As it turns out, Reb Shimon, Yisrael Meir's new stepfather, liked him as soon as he met him. In fact, the older man was absolutely struck by his 16-year-old stepson's character,



פרשת חיי שרה

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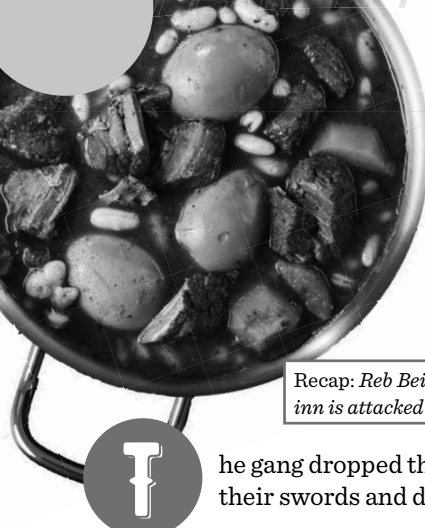
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PARSHAH RIDDLES

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

- 1 Which three people died at age 137? What happened when Avraham was 137?
- 2 When the Torah says Hashem blessed Avraham בכל, what does the word בכל mean? *Chazal* give five explanations.
- 3 Which two words in the Torah mean "maybe"? What is the difference between them?
- 4 Who was a *gilgul* (reincarnation) of Lavan?
- 5 What is the longest *perek* in *Sefer Bereishis*? Shortest? Which three *perakim* are over 50 *pesukim* long?



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: Reb Beirish survives the blizzard and makes it to the inn, but the inn is attacked by hoodlums in the middle of the night.

T

he gang dropped their coats and reached for the barrel of whiskey, their swords and daggers glinting and clanging all the while.

The whiskey in the barrel began to flow. Thousands of rubles' worth of the fiery liquid, which Zanvil sold to thirsty peasants every night, was passed around like water. Zanvil's stockpile of the valuable commodity, which was a significant contributor to his livelihood, began to shrink significantly.

The thugs drank and drank while Zanvil and his family could only watch. At last, the slurpfest ended. The men circled the room, smashing dinnerware, glasses, and chairs and throwing tables, pots, and pans at the windows.

Finally, the leader threw back his head and laughed, a cruel cackle. "Okay, fellas!" he shouted, "Tie up this lot!"

One man produced a coil of rope. The leader drew his sword, and in a blur of flashing, gleaming metal, cut the rope into neat lengths. Holding two daggers at arm's length, he kept Zanvil and his family at bay while the men tied up the poor women and children, followed by Zanvil and his sons, one at a time. At last, the entire family lay on the floor, bound and gagged. The men gloated over them, and each drew his long sword.

"Time for some target practice, boys!" the leader announced. "We'll do wha—"

The leader broke off in mid-sentence. A sound was coming from a side room. What was it? It sounded like someone chanting, repeating a mantra in a singsong. Like someone was casting a spell! The language made no sense—it sounded like ancient incantations. What was going on? Someone was here!

While all the drinking and rope tying and looting had been going on, Reb Beirish had been listening intently through the wall of his room. He had realized that the lives of the innkeeper and his family were in grave danger. And his own life was in danger as well; sooner or later the gang would search the rooms and discover that his was occupied.

Reb Beirish had pulled out his *Tehillim* and tearfully recited a few chapters, begging Hashem to save them all in the merit of the holy tzaddik of Ruzhin. He had then reached for his well-worn copy of *Zohar* and begun to study. Soon he'd lost himself in the holy words, delving deeper and deeper, forgetting where he was and the great danger in which he found himself. As his joy in learning had grown, so had the volume of his voice. Pretty soon he was chanting the ancient Aramaic words in the classic Chassidic learning *niggun*. And this was the sound that had interrupted the gang's murderous plans.

Back in the main room of the inn, the gang leader lowered his weapon slowly.

"You all stay here, keep an eye on this lot. I'm going to see what witchcraft is going on in the next room. I'll deal with it! I'll teach these Jews a thing or two!"

He stomped off in the direction of the room in which Reb Beirish was learning so sweetly.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2

DVAR TORAH >>

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 הַנֶּעֱרָר אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלָיָה הֲטִי נָא כֶּדֶךָ וְאִשְׁתָּה וְאַמְרָה
שְׁתֵּה וְגַם גְּמִלִיךָ אֲשֶׁקָה אֹתָהּ הַכֹּחֵת לְעִבְדְּךָ לִיצְחָק,

"And the girl that I tell, 'Tip your jug that I may drink,' and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels,' you have demonstrated that she is the one for your servant, Yitzchak" (Bereishis 24:14).

Why did Eliezer devise this test?

BEISHALEVI (LITVISH):

Eliezer was testing to see whether she was smart, sensitive, and kind. What would she do with the water left in the jug after he drank from it? If she'd bring it home, that would not be smart, since he may be sick; if she'd pour it out, that would not be sensitive; and if she'd refuse to give him water in the first place, that would not be kind! Her only solution would be to give it to the camels. She went a step further, covering up the fact that she wanted to get rid of the water by drawing additional water for the camels, until they'd drunk enough.

REBBE SHLOMO EPHRAIM LUNTCHITZ (CHASSIDISH):

He was testing to see if she had *ruach hakodesh*. If she cared more about the camels than he did, she must know with *ruach hakodesh* that they would be hers one day!

CHIDA (SEPHARDI):

There was a *mesorah* in Avraham's family that Yitzchak would have two children, a tzaddik and a *rasha*. If Rivkah cared for both Eliezer (a tzaddik) and animals (animal soul—*rasha*) that showed she was intended to be the mother of a tzaddik and a *rasha*.

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 Chayei Sarah explores the challenge of establishing continuity.

Sarah has passed, Avraham is aged, and the time has come to ensure that the Great Project carries on. Eliezer also searches for continuity as he struggles to come to terms with his own destiny as an *arur* (one who is cursed), versus his dreams of a future in *Klal Yisrael* for his daughter. Avraham remarries and fathers more children, but he protects Yitzchak and his legacy, separate from them. Yishmael and Avraham pass on, and it is Hashem that completes the passage of continuity from Avraham to Yitzchak, by granting the *brachos* to Yitzchak. Avraham had not done so to avoid specifically excluding Yishmael.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. **Turning individual wins in the battle against the *yetzer hara* into new habits is an *avodah* and a challenge of its own. Hopefully, we have recorded many wins in the area we are working on, and now we can focus on making them streamlined, second nature, and a good habit.**
2. **At the beginning of every day, learn a short *mussar seder* or engage in self-talk with the message that today you will beat your challenges without too much effort and focus. You are into good habits and you don't need to listen to arguments against your good habits anymore.**
3. **When facing a battle, the message to yourself this week is along the lines of: "I am above this. I don't need to battle this; it is not me."**

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

1. How many *malachim* appear in this week's *parshah*? **Seven.** Where? **Three visiting Avraham, two sent to Sedom, one appearing to Hagar in the desert, and one at Akeidas Yitzchak.**
2. In which *zechus* did *Klal Yisrael* get the *mann*, *ananei hakavod*, and *be'er*? **In the merit of Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam.** In which other *zechus* as well? **The Midrash credits the *hachnasas orchim* Avraham did with food, shelter, and drink.**
3. Which three places are given names in this week's *parshah*? **Tzo'ar, Be'er Sheva, and Har Hamoriah (Hashem Yireh).**
4. How many *shalsheses* are there in the Torah? **Four.** How many in *Nach*? **Three.** Where are they? **Lot delaying (*Vayeira*), Eliezer speaking (*Chayei Sarah*), Yosef refusing Potifar's wife (*Vayeishev*), and Aharon slaughtering (*Tzav*). Also in *Yeshayah* 3:18, *Amos* 1:2, and *Ezra* 5:15.**

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

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

The haftorah relates the final arrangements made by Dovid Hamelech.

Toward the end of his life, Dovid loses all body heat. Avishag HaShunamis is appointed to warm him, but he does not marry her and they have no further relationship.

Dovid's fourth son, Adoniyahu, declares himself the successor to the throne (his older brothers Ammon and Avshalom are dead, and Kilav is uninterested) although Dovid had privately promised the kingship to his younger son Shlomo. Adoniyahu gathers supporters who have grievances against Dovid and Shlomo, such as the chief general, Yoav, and the former *Kohen Gadol* Evyasar, and makes a large coronation ceremony for himself.

Nasan Hanavi plans together with Bassheva (Shlomo's mother) to inform Dovid about the events and to try to get the king to settle the question of succession. Bassheva goes to speak to the king first, and Nasan follows. Dovid reaffirms his promise to Bassheva and arranges a major anointing ceremony for Shlomo, establishing the 12-year-old boy as king during his lifetime.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

In the *parshah*, Avraham senses old age and prepares for the continuity of his work after his passing. Dovid does the same by anointing Shlomo. Unlike Dovid, Avraham remains vigorous and healthy until the end, remarrying and fathering six children.

There is also a parallel between Rivkah and Avishag. Both are described as pure, beautiful, and great *tzidkaniyos*.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

The passing of power from one administration to another is not simple, both in monarchies (even holy ones) and democracies. The outgoing ruler plays a tremendously important role in ensuring the confidence of the people in the next regime. He would serve his people well by using foresight to plan for such a takeover in advance.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

hasmadah, erudition, and refinement. So impressed was he, that he insisted that the boy marry his daughter (from a previous marriage).

Yisrael Meir's mother would have none of it. Her son marry her stepdaughter? True, the two had never met, but still... Besides, Reb Shimon was a poor man; he could hardly afford any support. Yisrael Meir was a star *talmid*—he could have the pick of the crowd when it came to *shidduchim*! He could get a father-in-law who would support him in learning his entire life!

The disagreement between Yisrael Meir's mother and stepfather over the *shidduch* intensified, and soon they were ready to go to *beis din* to end their own marriage. Until Yisrael Meir stepped forward.

"It's okay," he told his mother. "I'll marry her. Hashem will provide. Please don't ruin your *shlom bayis* over it!"

With Yisrael Meir's blessing and urging, the match was agreed upon, and a date was set for an engagement and signing of *tena'im*. Yisrael Meir made plans to head back to yeshivah in Vilna.

The story spread through the town like wildfire. Yisrael Meir was going to marry a poor, simple girl! Scandal! Tongues wagged and mouths blabbed. Everywhere the young man went, people told him he was crazy. His siblings said it was rash. His friends said it was silly. Poor Yisrael Meir ran away to yeshivah, hoping to hide from all the commotion in Vilna.

But it was not to be. No sooner had he dropped into his seat in the *beis midrash* than his *chavrusa* looked at him sharply.

"What is this about you getting engaged to a poor girl?" he demanded. "Have you lost your mind? How will you stay in learning? What will you eat? You will be at work within five years! What will happen to all the Torah you could have produced? *Klal Yisrael* needs you to be well-supported!"

And so it went, on and on. The young *chassan* finally cracked under the pressure and decided he would return home in a few weeks to break off the *shidduch*. He did, after all, so badly want to stay in learning.

Several weeks later, he stepped off the train in his new hometown, his speech

prepared. He would be kind and gentle but firm. There would be tears...but there was simply no choice.

Suddenly, he heard a commotion up ahead. A crowd had formed on the street. They were encircling something, but giving it a wide berth. What was going on? He approached the group and peered between the shoulders of onlookers. A man was lying on the ground, shaking violently. His head hammered the ground and his limbs spasmed. He was having an epileptic attack.

The crowd stood around and stared. No one knew what to do.

Then, just like that, the seizure ended. The man returned to himself and tried to get up, but like the streets of most little towns in Poland, this one was a sea of mud. He was caked in thick, gooey mud. His clothes were covered with it. Yisrael Meir quickly averted his gaze as the man looked around at all the onlookers, but not before catching a glimpse of the man's face. Shame burned on his cheeks. He was clearly experiencing agonizing embarrassment.

Yisrael Meir turned his eyes heavenward. *Hashem*, he thought, *the world is so filled with pain and suffering. The opportunities for embarrassment and agony are so many. It is You who should decide who must suffer from them, not I. How can I knowingly cause shame to an innocent Jewish girl? No! I shall not do it.*

He turned and raced back to the train station. He would not break the *shidduch*.

Several months later, Yisrael Meir married the young woman in the yard of their parents' home in Radin, at a wedding that featured no *seudah* other than moldy grains of wheat. The two raised the Kagan family in poverty and simplicity, but they were always happy. Yisrael Meir went on to become the great Chafetz Chaim and wrote many *sefarim* that *Klal Yisrael* desperately needed. He credited his wife's *middos* and *histapkus* for his ability to learn and write *sefarim*. His *chavrusa*, on the other hand, married a girl from a wealthy family and was in business within five years.

If not for that muddy day, what would have happened to *Klal Yisrael*?



UP FOR DISCUSSION

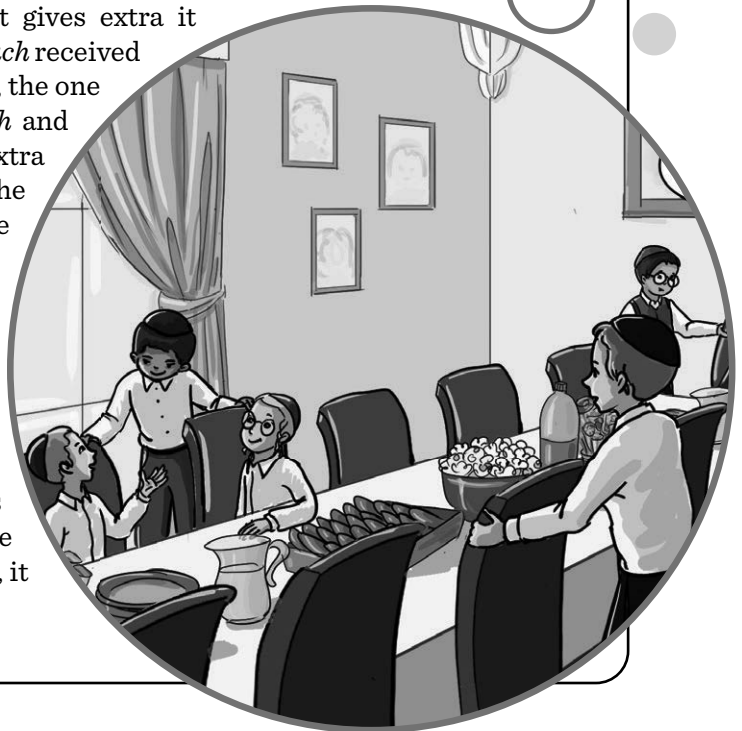
See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

Generally, when someone sends a *shaliach* (messenger) to purchase something and the merchant gives the *shaliach* extra, the *shaliach* must share the extra with the person who gave him money to make the purchase.

Therefore, they should split the extra doughnut.

EXPLANATION:

According to one approach, when a merchant gives extra it belongs to the *shaliach*. However, since the *shaliach* received the benefit because of someone else's money, i.e., the one who sent him, *Chazal* enacted that the *shaliach* and the one who gave the money should share the extra item. Others maintain that the halachah that the extra should be shared is due to the fact that we do not know whether the merchant intended to benefit the *shaliach* or the one who sent him, who is paying for the purchase. Since the matter is uncertain, they should share the benefit. A difference between these two approaches arises when the merchant says he wants the extra to go to the *shaliach*. According to the first explanation it must still be shared, whereas according to the second explanation, since we are no longer uncertain about the merchant's intent, it belongs exclusively to the *shaliach*.



אָרץ אַרְבַּע מֵאָת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מֵה הוּא... וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָהָם אֶל עֶפְרוֹן וַיִּשְׁקַל
אַבְרָהָם לְעֶפְרוֹן אֶת הַכֶּסֶף

“A land worth 400 shekels—between me and you, what is it worth?!’ And Avraham listened
to Efron, and Avraham weighed out to Efron the money” (*Bereishis* 23:15).

The middle letter of both names (i.e., “between me and you”) is the letter ר, with the
gematria 400 (*Baal Haturim*).

עֶפְרוֹן = 400 = רע עין

(עֶפְרוֹן בֶּן צֹחַר = 756 = הַכֶּסֶף יַעֲנֶה אֶת הַכֹּל (קהלת י:יט

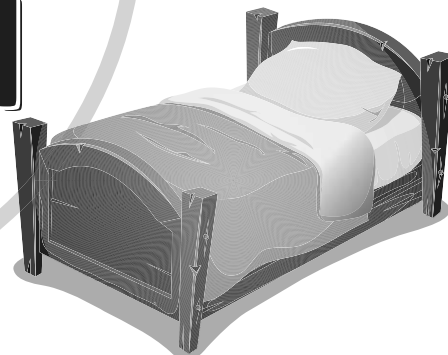
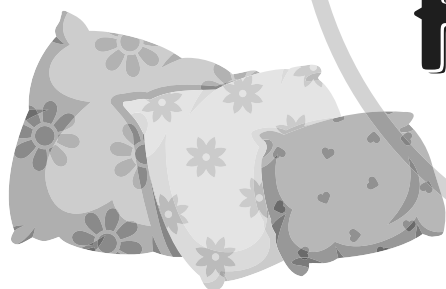
THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



27 Cheshvan is the day the waters of the *Mabul* finally dried up, as stated explicitly in *Parshas Noach* (*Bereishis* 8:14) (according to Rav Elazar). The entire episode, from the first rains until the drying, took 365 days, or one solar calendar year, in the year 1657.

This day is also listed in *Megillas Taanis* as a Yom Tov in which it is forbidden to fast. It is called the Day of Flour to publicize that a *Korban Minchah* is brought from flour, not from animals, as the Tzedukim insist.

HALACHAH



Busy Afternoons

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׂוּחַ בְּשָׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב, “And Yitzchak went out to speak in the field toward evening” (*Bereishis* 24:63).

היינו שיצחק תקן תפלת המנחה, “This means to say that Yitzchak established the Minchah prayer” (*Baal Haturim*).

NAPS

The *Shulchan Aruch* says that one should not sleep for too long during the day. One is permitted to take a nap if he needs strength to be able to learn or function, but not longer than the snooze of a horse—60 breaths. How long is that? The *Mishnah Berurah* quotes three opinions: three minutes, 30 minutes, or three hours. He recommends that one should rule as strictly as he can. *Mishnah Berurah* also clarifies that the halachah regarding naps during the day also depends on the person, his strength, and his work.

One who naps during the day does not recite Shema, but the Acharonim note that some have the *minhag* to say ויהי נועם or יושב בסתר before lying down, as a *shemirah* (protection). The *Levush* indicates that this is not the prevailing custom. After arising, one need not recite אלקי נשמה again.

HEICHA KEDUSHAH

For situations in which there is not enough time to complete Minchah before the *zman*, halachah provides a shortened version. This should not be used for other, less idealistic reasons, like when someone or some group is in a rush.

If there is time, the Minchah should be shortened by reversing the order of the silent *Shemonah Esrei* and *Chazaras Hashatz*; this will allow *Chazaras Hashatz* to be completed before the *zman* ends, and everyone can recite the silent *Shemoneh Esrei* at their own pace. This practice is uncommon today, but we do find the next option, which is for the chazzan to recite only the first three *brachos* of *Chazaras Hashatz* (also before the silent *Shemoneh Esrei*), and everyone says *Shemoneh Esrei* afterward, from the beginning. This should not be done if there are people in shul who do not know how to *daven*. An even shorter option is for the congregation to say *Shemoneh Esrei* along with the chazzan. If this is done, each individual must recite, word for word with the chazzan, each word of the first three *brachos*, including all of *Kedushah* and the *bracha* that follows (varies per *nusach*; all must follow the *nusach* of

the chazzan). Some rule that this should continue through *Modim*, but the Chazon Ish writes that it is not necessary, and today the custom is that the chazzan stops *davening* out loud after *Attah Kadosh*. At least one person should be saying amen to the chazzan's *brachos*; preferably, it should be someone who *davened* earlier.

If there is really almost no time before the *zman*, the *tzibbur* may recite a single, all-inclusive *bracha* called *Havinenu* in lieu of *Shemoneh Esrei*. This is rarely done today, and one may never use this option for improper reasons, such as being distracted or in a rush. Today, it is common for *yeshivos* to do *Heicha Kedushah* every day. This is because *bnei Torah* are always pressed for time—to get back to their learning—and the original enactment of *Chazaras Hashatz* was not made for *yeshivos*; it was made for places in which people may not know how to *daven*. Rav Aharon Kotler and Rav Yechezkel Sarna pointed out that even in places where *Heicha Kedushah* is normally said, it should not be done on Chanukah, because the *avodah* of Chanukah is public appreciation for the miracle, and reciting *Al Hanissim* out loud is a great expression of that gratitude.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“BEING A PARENT OR TEACHER OF YIDDISHE KINDERLACH IS LIKE BEING A GARDENER IN THE GARDEN OF HASHEM”

—Rav Kalonymus Kalman of Piaseczna



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