



# CIRCLE TIME

## AT YOUR Shabbos Table

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

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

### THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1702

וַיֹּדֶר יַעֲקֹב נֹדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם יִהְיֶה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי וּשְׁמִרְנִי...  
וְכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן לִי עָשָׂר אֶעֱשְׂרֶנּוּ לְךָ, "And Yaakov made a promise and said, 'If Hashem will be with me and protect me...and I will give ma'aser from everything you give me'" (Bereishis 28:20).

**R**abbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, future author of the *Pnei Yehoshua*, was in the middle of giving a complex *shiur* on a *sugya* in the *masechta* he was learning. The year was 5463 and he lived in Lvov, Poland, in the home of his in-laws, Rav Shlomo Landa and his wife. The main room of the expansive house was filled with Rav Yehoshua's *talmidim*, sharp young *bachurim* from the yeshivah. *Rabbanim* from the city had come to listen to the *shiur* as well.

The date was 3 Kislev.

Rav Yehoshua expounded on the *gemara*, asking many pointed questions that seemed impossible to crack. After listing his *kushyos* and fielding a few suggestions from the crowd in attendance, he began building his approach to the *sugya*. The *talmidim* listened closely, all eyes on Rav Yehoshua as he spoke. Rav Yehoshua looked around as he shared his thoughts. Birds chirped outside while the *talmidei chachamim* listened aptly.

In the next room, his baby daughter, Gittel, played happily in her crib, and the aromas of cooking wafted from the kitchen, where his *rebbetzin*, Leah, was preparing a meal for the *talmidim*. His mother-in-law was

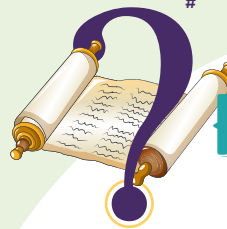


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## PARSHAH RIDDLES

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

- 1 Which three events in the *parshah* include stone(s)?
- 2 Where do Aramaic words appear in Chumash? Where is there a word in Chumash derived from Greek and Afrikaans? Which *sefer* in *Nach* is largely Aramaic?
- 3 Whom did Yaakov kiss (four people)? Which three people kissed Yaakov? Who else kissed whom in Chumash?
- 4 Which two consecutive *pesukim* contain two completely different words spelled exactly the same way?



## SERIAL >> CHAPTER 6

# CHOLENT STORY

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

Recap: The gang leader discovers Reb Beirish learning in his room, runs back to the prisoners, and orders his men to release them. When they delay, he draws his sword.

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Swinging his sword wildly like a baseball player, the leader of the gang advanced on the captives himself, a crazed look in his eyes. He approached Zanvil, raised his sword high over his head...and sliced through the ropes that bound the innkeeper. He then turned to the other captives and chopped their bindings into shreds as well.

He pivoted to his men, who stood watching him, openmouthed.

"Get out of here!" he roared.

"But, Boss..."

"Out!"

"How will you get back?"

"Forget about me! Get out! Out!"

With that, all 20 hoodlums hitched on their weapons belts, donned their heavy overcoats, and headed for the doorway. They stepped over the smashed door lying in the entrance and walked out into the freezing night and blowing snowstorm. None of them paused for a backwards glance, and in seconds they were gone as quickly as they had come, swallowed by the storm.

Only the gang leader and the innkeeper's family remained in the room. Zanvil picked himself up gingerly from the floor. His wife and children gathered themselves together and fled to their sleeping quarters in tears before the crazy leader could change his mind.

Zanvil turned to the leader. "Umm...thank you?" he ventured. It was more a question than a statement.

The leader did not respond. The look on his face was no longer one of anger, but of pain. He merely turned on his heel and headed back down the hall to the room in which Reb Beirish continued to learn *Zohar*, singing the words softly to himself. The leader stopped at the door

and watched him. He shook his head slowly, heavily, from side to side, and then entered the room. He sat next to Reb Beirish on the bed and looked at him closely for a long, long time.

"Beirish'l? Is that really you?" he said quietly.

Reb Beirish looked up. He took in the image of the gang leader—his hardened, battle-scarred face, his gangster clothing, and his weapons. Then he looked deeper. His eyes filled with wonder.

"Moishe Yudah?" he asked.

There was silence, but the gang leader's wide eyes said it all.

"Moishe Yudah! It *is* you!" Reb Beirish reached for the other man and hugged him tightly, as if he hadn't been planning on killing him just minutes earlier. "Moishe Yudah! My good friend from *cheder*! Moishe Yudah! How nice to see you after all these years!"

Zanvil the innkeeper had followed the gang leader down the hall and now stood in the doorway. He couldn't believe his ears. Reb Beirish knew this thug, this murderer! And he was hugging him like a brother! And he didn't seem to mind that the man was dressed like the lowest of lowlives and that he was drunk! And weirdest of all, he called him Moishe Yudah!

"Beirish!" Moishe Yudah, the gang leader, said. "How have you been all these years? What has been going on with you? It has been ages since we were *chavrusas* in *cheder*!"

Reb Beirish related about his life, his home and family, and what had happened over the last 30 years. When he was done, he looked questioningly at Moishe Yudah.

Moishe Yudah sighed deeply. "And now, Beirish'l, let me tell you what has happened to me all this time."

TO BE CONTINUED...

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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.

יְהוָה אֲנִי עִמָּךְ וְשָׁמְרְתִּיךְ.

"[Hashem said] 'I will be with you and protect you'"

(ibid. 28:15).

וַיְדַר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם יִהְיֶה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי וְשָׁמְרָנִי... וְכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן לִי עֲשֵׂר אֶעֱשֶׂרְנוּ לָךְ.

"And Yaakov made a promise and said, 'If Hashem will be with me and protect me...and I will give ma'aser from everything You give me'" (ibid. 28:20).

Why did Yaakov need to make a deal with Hashem and daven for protection? Hashem had just told him that He would do so!

## RAV YISRAEL SALANTER:

There are two ways in which Hashem may intervene and protect someone: with the *chessed* of direct intervention and through *yissurim* (troubles) which push and steer them to the place they need to be. Hashem had appeared in the dream to be "standing on him," which sounds like *yissurim*. Yaakov asked for עִמָּדִי, "with me," i.e., guidance through kindness. ☺

## BEIS YISRAEL OF GUR:

Yaakov was asking for help remembering that Hashem is with him even in the darkest times. He asked to feel and know Hashem's presence עִמָּדִי even during the worst troubles. When someone can do that, everything becomes bearable. ☺

## ABARBANEL:

Yaakov was afraid he would do *aveiros* and they would cause him to lose the promise of Hashem's guidance and protection. He wasn't as concerned about Hashem protecting him as he was about Hashem's promise regarding his children. He didn't make a "deal," he just said that if Hashem does protect him in the end, he can rest assured that he didn't do too many *aveiros* and He will care for his children. ☺



# 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 Vayeitzei* is the story of simplicity vs. arrogance, honesty vs. fraud, and serenity vs. avarice.

Chased by one killer and headed into the uneasy embrace of another, Yaakov's prayer in the beginning of the *parshah* is for minimalist survival. He doesn't seek riches and glory. His interactions with Lavan are defined by honesty, hard work, and simplicity—he is willing to work 14 years for a wife, a commodity that shouldn't cost anything. He aspires for no luxuries, puts in 100 percent effort every day, and can leave 20 years later saying with a clear conscience that he never touched a thing that wasn't his.

Lavan, on the other hand, is all cynicism and cheating. His fiscal hunger is insatiable, and his principles are bottomless.

Who wins? In the end, Hashem cares for the simple, honest, and trustworthy. It may take a while, but ultimately, nice guys finish first.

## AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. **Examine your financial interactions of the past 10 days. Look for any shred of dishonesty, any lack of perfect straightness (for example, sales tax should be paid for all services). Find what needs fixing, correct it, and resolve to ensure it does not reoccur.**
2. **Review your purchases of the last 10 days. Were they in the proper spirit of simplicity that a Jew in *galus* should have? Or were they somewhat extravagant? Take corrective action next week if necessary.**

## RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. The stones around Yaakov's head, the stone he rolled off the well, and the stones that were collected to make the *Gal Eid* monument at the end of the *parshah*.
2. The words *יִגְר שְׁהָדוּתָא* in *Bereishis* 31:47 are Aramaic (see *Rashi*, ad loc. and in *Megillah* 8b). The word *לִטְטוּת* it is a combination of Greek and an African dialect. (*Sanhedrin* 4b). *Sefer Daniel* is largely written in Aramaic.
3. Yaakov kissed Yitzchak (*Bereishis* 27:27), Rochel (ibid. 29:11), and Ephraim and Menasheh (ibid. 48:10). Lavan, Eisav, and Yosef all kissed Yaakov (ibid. 29:13, 33:4, 50:1). Lavan kissed all of Yaakov's children (ibid. 32:1). Yosef kissed his brothers (ibid. 45:15). Moshe kissed Aharon and Yisro (*Shemos* 4:27, 18:7).
4. *וַיִּשְׁק אֶת צֹאן לָבָן אֲחֵי אִמּוֹ*, "And he gave to drink to the sheep of Lavan, the brother of his mother" (*Bereishis* 29:10); *וַיִּשְׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל*, "And Yaakov kissed Rochel" (ibid. 29:11).

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 for *Vayeitzei* comes from *Hoshe'a*. The Navi delivers a stinging rebuke to the Ten Tribes of *Malchus Yisrael*. He blames Yeravam ben Nevat for leading them down a path of idol worship. Economic prosperity made the people overconfident, and riches misled and blinded their leaders. Yeravam himself came to power because he called Shlomo Hamelech to task for two apparent mistakes (on his level) caused by riches: Shlomo had imposed heavy tolls on people entering Yerushalayim in order to raise funds to pay for his palaces, and he closed up some entrances to the city and built a palace for Paraoh's daughter in their place. Yeravam criticized Shlomo for blocking access to the Beis Hamikdash, but he did it publicly, which was not appropriate. Later, Yeravam himself would turn to idol worship and block travelers to Yerushalayim.

The Navi blasts the people for being convinced that their money will save them, ignoring Hashem. He predicts dire punishment but then urges them to repent, teaching about the great miracle of *teshuvah*.

## CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

The first *pasuk* in the haftorah summarizes the events in *Parshas Vayetzei*. The Navi relates how Yaakov came to Lavan penniless and suffering and Hashem led him away with great riches. Through it all, Yaakov stayed faithful. The theme of *Vayeitzei* is Hashem's help for those who are humble and not blinded by riches, and His turning away from the unscrupulous. The Navi contrasts Yaakov's actions with the actions of the Ten Tribes, who have been acting more like Lavan.

## RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

Why do our faith and our begging Hashem for Mashiach and help depend so much on the economy and, recently, what COVID-19 does to it? If we would *daven* sincerely for Mashiach even when things are going perfectly perhaps we could skip the next disaster.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

resting comfortably upstairs. All was peaceful.

As he reached the climax of his *chiddush*, Rav Yehoshua pounded on the table, which shook from the impact. Or *was* it from the impact? Rav Yehoshua stared at the table. It was still shaking. The bookshelves lining the walls began to shake as well. Several *sefarim* trembled on the top shelves and fell to the floor. Either *Shamayim* really liked his *pshat*, or they were in the middle of an earthquake!

The walls of the home began to sway. Even the floor was moving. Rav Yehoshua leaped to his feet.

"*Baruch Attah Hashem*," he shouted "... *oseh ma'aseh bereishis*!"

The floor heaved and quivered. The *talmidim* scattered, running for cover. Cracks appeared in the ceiling and in the walls. A tremendous roar could be heard in the distance. The floor pitched and swayed, and Rav Yehoshua found himself thrown to the floor.

He struggled to his feet. *Gittel!* She was in the crib! He had to reach her before the building caved in! Already the walls were crumbling at the top, and sand was pouring all over the table.

He shouted for his *rebbetzin*. "Leah! Can you get to Gittel?"

But the roar of the earthquake was too loud; he couldn't even hear his own voice.

He tried to walk, but the floor pitched and heaved like a ship at sea. Rav Yehoshua fell again, holding onto the wildly swaying floor for dear life. He began to *daven* for his family, for his child, wife, and in-laws upstairs.

Suddenly, he heard an enormous *boom*, a massive roar 10 times louder than the earthquake. A shrill ringing started in his ears, and he could hear nothing else. What had happened?

Then he remembered. The *goy* two houses down was a weapons dealer, and he kept several kegs of gunpowder in his house! One of them must have blown up! What if the others would go, as well?

There was another deafening roar, louder than before.

The walls of the house caved and snapped

like twigs. The ceiling crashed all around him, timbers and beams falling in all directions, furniture from upstairs piling on top of him. Rav Yehoshua was pinned under the rubble!

At last, the noise stopped. All was quiet.

Lying under broken beams and boards, Rav Yehoshua took stock of the situation. From his vantage point, he could see that the kitchen was completely crushed. With a sickening feeling of horror, he realized that there was no way Leah had made it to safety. Neither had Gittel, and his in-laws had probably perished as well.

But this was no time to mourn. Rav Yehoshua was stuck under beams and rubble. It could be weeks before someone found him.

And then a smell reached Rav Yehoshua's nose. Smoke! Something was burning! Apparently, the exploding powder keg had set fire to the wooden houses! He had to get out before the pile of rubble that was once a house became a giant bonfire!

What does a Jew do? Rav Yehoshua's thoughts turned to the *parshah*, *Vayeitzei*. When Yaakov was in danger, he told Hashem he would build a *beis Elokim* and give *ma'aser* if He would save him. Rav Yehoshua turned his heart heavenward. "Hashem!" he shouted. "If You save me from this, I will devote the rest of my life to nonstop learning! I will spend days and nights in the *beis midrash*, learning, teaching, writing, and spreading Torah with all my might!"

No sooner had he finished speaking than a beam suddenly shifted. Another one slipped, and a third tumbled and rolled off Rav Yehoshua! He climbed gingerly to his feet. None of his bones seemed to be broken. He looked around at the rubble. A clear path had opened, leading out of the house! Moments later, Rav Yehoshua Falk walked out of the collapsed, burning house without a scratch.

Rav Yehoshua made good on his promise. He lived in the *beis midrash* almost endlessly. He wrote his famous *pirush* on *Shas*, *Pnei Yehoshua*, after learning through all of *Shas* no less than 36 times, and composed other *sefarim* as well.

(Based on the Pnei Yehoshua's introduction to *Seder Nashim*)



# UP FOR DISCUSSION

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

The Torah teaches us a halachah about a “bor”. A bor is a hole in the ground in a place where people walk. The person who dug it is responsible for all damages caused by the hole. This includes any obstacle that doesn’t move, and a person is damaged by moving into it. A freshly painted wall is considered a bor, since it doesn’t move, and a person gets damaged by touching it. However, the creator of the bor is only responsible for damages to a person or animal. The Torah teaches us that he is not responsible for moveable objects. Chani’s sweatshirt is a moveable object.

**Therefore, according to the letter of the law, Shani does not have to pay for Chani’s sweatshirt. However, proper *midos* instructs Shani to compensation for the damaged sweatshirt.**

Although the Torah exempts one from damage to *keilim* (movable objects) caused by a *bor* (Choshen Mishpat 410:21), *Poskim* debate whether one has a moral obligation to pay nonetheless, *latzeis yidei shamayim* (See Chazon Ish B.K. 2:7). *Menschlichkeit*, however, dictates that one should go beyond the letter of the law, *lifnim mishuras hadin*, and a person who has proper *midos* will endeavor to behave in a manner that demonstrates good character. Therefore, although Shani cannot be forced to pay for Chani’s sweatshirt, she should feel compelled to negotiate a settlement so that Chani won’t have a grievance against her anymore.



וְהָיָה סֵלֶם מֵצֵב אֶרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מֵגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהָיָה מִלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֲלֵים וִירְדִים בּוֹ  
 “And behold there was a ladder standing on the ground, and its head reached the heavens,  
 and angels of Hashem were going up and down on it” (ibid. 28:12).

סולם = זה נסא הכבוד: The ladder reached the highest point.

קול = סולם: Voice, *tefillah*, is the ladder by which angels go up and down.

סולם = ממון = עוני: Money and poverty raise and lower a person, like a ladder.

וקץ = וְהָיָה סֵלֶם: Yaakov was shown the *geulah*.

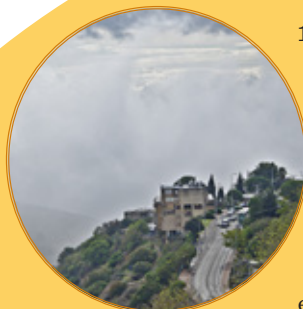
סיני = סולם: Yaakov was shown *Ma'amad Har Sinai*.

מרכבו = סולם מוצב: The ladder was Hashem's “chariot.”

הכבש = סולם מוצב: The ladder was like the ramp to the *Mizbe'ach*.

וְהָיָה סֵלֶם = וְהָיָה סֵלֶם: The ladder reached the top of the *Mizbe'ach*. (*Ba'al Haturim*)

# THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



12 Kislev is a special day in some Chassidic circles. It is the *yahrtzeit* of the Bas Ayin, Rav Avraham Dov Auerbach of Avritch.

Rav Avraham Dov was a *talmid* of Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev and two Chernobylers Rebbes. He succeeded his father as Rebbe in Avritch and later served in the big city of Zhitomir. After 40 years as Rebbe in the Ukraine, he moved to Tzefas in 1830, at age 65. The *sefer Bas Ayin* was written in the Ukraine, but he did not publish it until he edited it in the air of Eretz Yisrael.

The Bas Ayin found life in Eretz Yisrael to be very difficult. He met with the philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore and convinced him to fund the establishment of a Jewish agricultural settlement in Eretz Yisrael, providing income for the local Yidden and easing their hardship. In a letter dated 13 Tammuz 5598/1838, Dr. A. Loewy, Sir Montefiore's secretary, wrote about Rabbi Avraham Dov: “This man is one of the most learned and esteemed people I have ever seen. It is a simple matter for him to serve the community without receiving any recompense from the communal funds. He distributes everything that he has to the poor of his people.”

In 1838, Rav Avraham Dov was kidnapped by a group of Druze who were rioting in Tzefas. They ordered him to write a ransom note to his community, but he refused. The Druze then put him in a sack and began to beat him, but they fled when they imagined that they heard the sound of hoofbeats of approaching Egyptian soldiers.

On 24 Teves 5597 (January 1, 1837), a deadly earthquake struck Tzefas while everyone was in shul. All the shuls in the city collapsed except two, and 5,000 people were killed. Just before the earthquake began, the Bas Ayin shouted for everyone to come stand near him by the *Aron Kodesh*. He then fell to the ground, crying and praying to Hashem to save the people. The shul collapsed seconds later, and only the dome over the *Aron* remained strong, saving the people under it. The dome remains standing in the rebuilt shul today.

The remaining community wanted to flee Tzefas, but Rav Avraham Dov promised that there would not be another earthquake, and indeed, there has not been one.

In 1840, a terrible epidemic struck Tzefas, and many people were dying. When Rav Avraham Dov took ill, he told the people that he was going to die from the illness but his death would be a *kapparah* and the plague would stop afterward—his would be the last death. And so it was. On 12 Kislev he passed away, and the plague stopped.





# HALACHAH

## Giving *ma'aser*

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן לִי עֶשֶׂר אֶעֱשֶׂרנִי לָךְ,  
“And everything you give me I will  
tithe to you” (ibid. 28:22).



### IS MA'ASER KESAFIM (TITHING ONE'S INCOME) A MITZVAH?

According to *Tosafos* (*Ta'anis* 9a, see *Da'as Zekeinim* on our *parshah*) there is a *mitzvah d'Oraysa* to give at least a 10th of one's profits to *tzedakah*. The *Taz* holds it is an obligation but not a *d'Oraysa*, but many other *poskim* hold it is just a *minhag* (custom) (the *Rishonim* bring sources in *pesukim* as an *asmachta*).

### IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH ONE MAY GIVE?

*Shulchan Aruch* rules that one may give as much as he wants to, if he can afford it. The “preferable” amount is one fifth of one's income. Giving a 10th is considered average, and one who gives less is called stingy.

### DOES THE MITZVAH APPLY ONLY TO MONEY?

Rav Moshe Sternbuch notes that Yaakov said he would give a 10th of everything, not just money. One should share at least a 10th of his time and wisdom with those less fortunate, as well.

### HOW SHOULD ONE CALCULATE MA'ASER?

The *Chafetz Chaim* provides a system for calculating *ma'aser*. One should take a 10th of all profits and set it aside immediately upon receiving it. He can give freely throughout the year (whether or not he set aside an amount) and make an accounting of his income and charitable giving minimally once or twice per year. He should then immediately give any *ma'aser* he owes. The *poskim* discuss whether one may count any extra he has given against next year's profits.

### WHAT COUNTS AS INCOME?

Any profits or wages and any other type of income (not repayment of loans, unless he gave up hope of collecting) counts as income. Rav Chaim Kanievsky notes that one must give *ma'aser* even from money that he has found. One should give *ma'aser* from gifts even if the giver already *ma'asered* his profits, unless the giver is specifically giving the gift with intent that the receiver not take *ma'aser*.

### WHAT IS DEDUCTIBLE FROM THE PROFIT

### CALCULATION?

Any losses or reasonable business expenses can be deducted from profits (not actual *ma'aser* owed). Rav Moshe Feinstein allows one to deduct depreciation due to inflation, as well as income tax. The *Minchas Yitzchak* says that one who is struggling financially may deduct all taxes paid.

### WHAT CAN MA'ASER FUNDS BE USED FOR?

*Ma'aser* must be given to another person. One cannot use it for his own *ma'aser*-worthy expenses. Some allow it to be used on children, preferably adult children no longer living with their parents. *Ma'aser* should preferably be used for the poor or to support Torah scholars. It may be used to purchase *aliyos* (if the money will go to the poor). *Ma'aser* cannot be used for *chinuch* expenses for one's sons or any other expense he is obligated to pay, like the minimum amount of *machatzis hashekel*, *matanos l'evyonim*, and *ma'os chittim*. Some allow *ma'aser* to be used for tuition for a daughter because there is technically no obligation to pay for her education.

## THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“BOTH THE PERSON WHO SAYS THE GLASS IS HALF EMPTY AND THE ONE WHO SAYS IT IS HALF FULL ARE MISSING THE POINT... THE GLASS IS REFILLABLE!”

—Chazkeinu



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