



# CIRCLE TIME

## AT YOUR Shabbos Table

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

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

### JEWISH WISDOM

וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל יוֹסֵף אַחֲרֵי הוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹקִים אוֹתָךְ, אֵת כָּל זֹאת אֵין נִבּוֹן וְחָכָם כְּמוֹךְ. "And Pharaoh said to Yosef, 'Since Hashem informed you all this, there is no one as insightful and wise as you'" (Bereishis 42:39).

וְאֵז תְּבִאנָה שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים זָנוֹת אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲמִדְנָה לְפָנָיו. "Then two... women came to King [Shlomo] and stood before him" (Melachim 3:16, from the haftarah).

**T**he wisdom of Jewish *rabbanim* and *dayanim* is legendary.

Two women once came before Rav Dov Ber Meisels, embroiled in a dispute.

"It's all mine!" one shouted.

"No, it's mine!" the other answered. "Shame on you! What will my family wear if you take the clothing off our backs?!"

Rav Dov Ber tried to calm the two disputants and inquire about the facts of the case, but the women immediately erupted in shouts again.

After asking several times, the Rav gleaned that the dispute was over a stolen load of laundry. Apparently, a washerwoman had died and left a large load of laundry, and each of the two women claimed it was hers.

The Rav sent for the children of washerwoman. A son and daughter arrived, confused but eager to help out.

The Rav spoke to them privately in his study. "What happened?" he asked.

"Our mother washed clothes for a living," the two said. "People would bring a large sack with all of their family's laundry and leave it with her. She would wash it, fold it, and repack it in the



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>

# פרשת מקץ

## CONTENTS

- 1 DVAR TORAH IN A STORY
- 1 PARSHAH RIDDLES
- 2 CHOLENT STORY
- 2 LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI
- 2 PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH
- 3 ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES
- 4 HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES
- 5 UP FOR DISCUSSION
- 6 GEMATRIA
- 7 THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY
- 7 HALACHAH
- 7 THE LAST WORD



## PARSHAH RIDDLES

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

- 1 Which person in this week's *parshah* was a *nazir*? When did his *nezirus* end?
- 2 About whom does it say that he was given the king's ring, got dressed in royal clothing, and rode on the king's steed (two people)?
- 3 On which day of the year did Pharaoh have his dreams? Which significant event in Pharaoh's life occurred three days later? What happened on that day of the year in *last week's parshah*?
- 4 Who and what are described in the Torah as יִפְתַּת תֶּאֱרָר?
- 5 Which two people offered to give up two children?
- 6 Where do we find the (*shoresh* of) כָּל יוֹם referring to the times of Mashiach?

# CHOLENT STORY

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

Moishe Yehudah tells Reb Beirish about the night the gangsters forced him to join them in a fight, threatening that he would be arrested if they were caught.



I closed the door to the apartment in which my wife and children slept peacefully and headed out into the cold night alongside the thug to go help the people who were now my comrades-in-arms,” Moishe Yehudah continued and heaved a deep sigh. “I jumped on the horse behind the bandit. He jerked it in a circle and then whipped it hard, and the horse raced to the scene of the fight. I was far from an expert horseman, and all I could do was hang on to avoid falling off. How was I going to fight, I wondered, if I could barely survive the trip?

“Very quickly, we arrived at the scene of the robbery gone wrong. A very opulent-looking carriage lay overturned in a ditch on the side of the road—apparently, the gangsters had edged it down the embankment to make Sir Frederick stop, and had jumped him there. They were all around the area, battling Sir Frederick and his men, who were fighting like tigers. We could see that a number of gangsters had already been wounded and the battle was quickly being lost.

“We jumped off the horse and came up behind Sir Frederick. If we could neutralize him, that would ‘cut off the head of the snake,’ and the other men would be able to scatter.

“Sir Frederick was facing off with two gangsters, and he was winning. The three swung swords wildly, clashing and banging in the night. We came up behind them, unnoticed.

“I’ll jump on his back and pin him down; you take care of business!” my bandit whispered to me.

“I was so numb, I couldn’t think. I just knew I didn’t want to get arrested.

“Quick as a cat, the bandit darted forward and leapt on the back and shoulders of Sir Frederick. The rich man lost his balance. The bandit hissed at me urgently. ‘Now! Do it, come on!’

“I was frozen for a moment. I couldn’t move. But I shut off my brain, and almost as if in a trance, ran to Sir Frederick and...”

Moishe Yehudah began to weep again,

shoulders shaking, his whole body wracked by sobs. “Oy, Hashem,” he moaned, “what has become of me?”

Reb Beirish sat silently. He did not know what to make of the story, but he did know that this was a Jewish *neshamah*, under it all, who was desperately regretting his mistakes and looking for a way back.

After a few minutes, Moishe Yehudah finished his story. “After that night, I went downhill very quickly. I was trapped among the bandits now, because I could really go to jail for the rest of my life if I were caught. I couldn’t look at myself, couldn’t believe who I had become, and so I took it out on others. I quickly became the most ferocious gangster of them all. I guess I was looking for some way out of my own skin... Eventually, my family left me, all my friends were afraid to talk to me, and I was left with no one in the world except the bandits. I’m stuck...”

Reb Beirish spoke up. “Not true. There’s me. I’m not afraid of you, and I’m not leaving you. And there’s Hashem, Who still loves you more than anything.”

“I know. When I saw you, sitting here and learning, unafraid, I knew there was one person in the world who would not judge me, who might understand. I have done terrible things, but I never wanted this... I felt trapped every step of the way. Do you really think Hashem will accept my *teshuvah*?”

“Of course He will. He accepted the *teshuvah* of people who were far more depraved than you—He even accepted the evil King Menasheh’s *teshuvah*. But there is another person I would like you to meet, someone who will love you, not judge you, and help you find the road back. I’m actually on the way to him and plan to set out as soon as this storm is over.”

“Who? Where?”

“It’s the Rebbe of Ruzhin, Rav Yisrael Ruzhiner. I’m on the way to his *beis midrash* for Shabbos Chanukah. Come feel the light!”

**THE END**

(From the *sefer Torah V’Chaim* by Rav Chaim Tuito)

# 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.

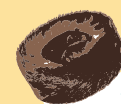
וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת אֶחָיו וַיִּכְרֹם וַיִּתְנַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם, “And Yosef saw his brothers and recognized them and acted like a stranger toward them” (*Bereishis* 42:7).

**Why did Yosef disguise himself and pretend not to know his brothers? Shouldn’t a tzaddik forgive and forget?**



**GRA:**

Yosef knew that his dreams were a *nevuah* and had to be fulfilled. In one dream, the brothers bowed to him. That meant that they had to bow to him at one point, recognizing him and willingly accepting him as king. But in the first dream, they bowed to his bundle of wheat. That meant that they had to bow to him *without* knowing who he was—unwillingly accepting him, just bowing to his power to provide food without knowing who was behind it.



**KEDUSHAS LEVI:**

Yosef did not want to make the brothers feel bad and “rub in their faces” the fact that he had won and was now in charge of them. While they were bowing and accepting him as king, he pretended to be a stranger. Only later, when they were not humbled by him, did he reveal himself.



**DON YITZCHAK ABARBANEL:**

1. Yosef wanted to make sure that the brothers got a *kapparah* for what they seemed to have done (what actually happened was not their fault—it was Hashem’s plan!), so he created a situation in which the same thing seemed to be happening to them (but it was all pretend). He accused them of being spies like they had accused him of telling tales about them; he put one of them in a pit and made Binyamin a slave like they had put him in a pit and sold him into slavery.

2. Yosef wanted to feed and support them without making the Egyptians suspicious that he was sending food to the enemy (Canaanites). So he needed to bring them to Mitzrayim, but he first had to test them to make sure they weren’t going to try to kill him again.

# 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.

The coming week frames the history of the descent of Klal Yisrael into the dominance of the Greco-Roman culture, under which we struggle until today.

The Torah was translated into Greek on 8 Teves, triggering three days of darkness. Ezra Hasofer (part of the group that sealed the Written Torah and ended prophecy) passed away, the founder of Christianity was born on 9 Teves, and Nevuchadnetzar surrounded Yerushalayim on 10 Teves.

Ancient Greek culture is the predecessor of today's Western culture. The focus on superficial human beauty and athleticism, the disregard of all things spiritual, and the endless race for technological study and advancement are the legacy of ancient Greece. In our unfortunate *galus*, we are forced to deal with and handle the Greece-ified world. But there is much potential for meeting points between that world and ours: יִפְתָּ אֱלֹקִים לִיפְתּוֹ וַיִּשְׁכֵּן בְּאַהֲלֵי שָׁם (ibid. 9:27). For example, the Torah may be translated into Greek and even has *kedushah* in that form. There is a manner in which the technology and science of the Greco/Western culture is invaluable to the Torah world.

## Parshah summary

Yosef successfully handles the challenges of Egyptian culture. He lives within it and uses it while remaining Yosef Hatzaddik, the purest expression of *tikkun haYesod*. Yosef himself did have a tendency (on his level) to externals; he is described by the Torah as *na'ar* and *mesalsel b'se'aro*. But he learned to navigate and handle that challenge, and he bequeathed that strength to us.

## AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. Technology presents an ever-increasing challenge to our way of life. Most of us cannot avoid some aspect of dangerous devices forever; we must learn to manage and handle them responsibly. Now is a good time to have the filters and spiritual security on any and all of our devices updated and checked for strength. After all, *Shovavim* is around the corner.
2. Do a weekly *cheshbon hanefesh* on technology time. Management of time with devices is a vital skill. Track how much time was spent on technology, and at the end of the week, calculate how much was necessary and how much was avoidable.

## RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. From the time he left Eretz Yisrael, Yosef was a *nazir* (see *Shabbos* 139a). When Pharaoh's men shaved his hair, that may have signaled the end of the *nezirus*. He drank wine with the brothers later in the *parshah*.
2. Yosef and Mordechai.
3. Pharaoh's dreams took place on the night of Rosh Hashanah. Pharaoh's birthday was three days later; two years previously to the day, Yosef had interpreted the dreams of the *sar hamashkim* and *sar ha'ofim*.
4. Rochel and Esther are called יִפְתָּ תֹאֵר, and so are the cows in Pharaoh's description of his dream and the captive women in *Parshas Ki Seitzei*.
5. Reuven and Lot.
6. Yehudah: וְחִטָּאתִי לָךְ כָּל הַיָּמִים (*Bereishis* 43:9).  
In the Haggadah: כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ - לְהַבְיֵא לִימֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ



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

Reading the haftorah for *Parshas Miketz* is a rare treat since *Parshas Miketz* usually falls on Shabbos Chanukah, and the haftorah for Chanukah is read.

The haftorah describes the wisdom of Shlomo Hamelech and relates the famous story of the case of two women arguing over a baby.

Just prior to the haftorah, Shlomo became king at the young age of 12. Many Jews doubted his ability to lead the nation. Hashem spoke to him in a dream and offered him a choice of honor, riches, or wisdom. Shlomo chose wisdom and was granted all three. He learned through all of Torah, made a grand *siyum*, and began to judge the people alongside Sanhedrin.

Hashem created a particular case in order to show Shlomo's wisdom to the people. Two women came before him, both having given birth in the same house without their husbands. *Chazal* understand that they may have been *sheidim* and the case was not real. They also may have been women whose husbands had recently died and needed the child to avoid *yibum*.

One of the women had lost her child, smothering him in her sleep, and they both claimed the living child. Shlomo knew who was the rightful mother through *ruach hakodesh* but needed to find proof. He ordered the child cut neatly in half and one half given to each woman. One mother agreed, saying it was better that neither of the women would have him, while the other preferred to lose the case and save the child—and Shlomo awarded the child to her.

The haftorah concludes with all of Klal Yisrael recognizing Shlomo's wisdom and accepting his rule.

## CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

Both the *parshah* and haftorah describe a king awakening from a prophetic dream. They both emphasize the wisdom of Jewish leaders and their ability to solve problems creatively. Like Shlomo, Yosef showed great wisdom, was respected by the people for it, and provided effective leadership. Also like Shlomo, Yosef did not claim credit for his wisdom; he humbly identified it all as assistance from Hashem.

## RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

The dark, virus-ridden winter in which we find ourselves leaves us in dire need of wise leadership. Such leadership is not easy to find, but those who have the humility to receive the gift of wisdom from Hashem may succeed.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sack, and the people would come to pick it up. But she passed away a week ago, and there is a large sack of laundry in the shop. We don't know whose it is."

"Did your mother have a system to keep records of who dropped off what?"

"No, she did it all from memory. She was very smart, and she never mixed up anyone's laundry. She knew exactly which clothes belonged to which customer. But she was the only one who knew that information, and now she is gone."

Rav Dov Ber stroked his beard. There was no information to go on. And it wouldn't make sense to compromise and split the load—it definitely belonged to one of the women, not both!

The *dayan* thought deeply and prayed for *siyata d'Shmaya* until Hashem sent him an idea.

"Please go home," he told the brother and sister, "and take a few articles of clothing from your own drawer or from the lost and found which I'm sure your mother had in the shop. Add them to the sack of laundry, and bring it all back here to my study."

The siblings were confused. What would it help for them to give away their own socks to two angry housewives? But the Rav offered no explanation and left for home.

Shortly thereafter, the siblings were back, lugging a heavy sack of clothes between them. The Rav was sitting with the two women, who were still arguing.

"Let's make sure," the Rav interrupted them. "I'm sure you are both fine, well-meaning people. I want to check again and make sure you each recognize all the articles of clothing in the pile of laundry. The children of the washerwoman have brought the load to my study, and it is waiting there for you. One at a time, please go check through it and make sure everything there is yours."

One of the women went into the Rav's study. She returned a few minutes later with a triumphant look on her face. "Yes!" she said. "Every single thing in that bag is mine. From my Yanky's socks to Shprintzy's tights, it is our stuff in there!"

The Rav nodded to the second woman. "Please, go have a look."

The woman entered the Rav's study and spent quite a while sifting through the clothes. When she returned, she looked visibly upset.

"Most of it is mine," she said. "But some other load must have gotten mixed into this. It's strange—the washerwoman never mixed up loads, but these two socks and this pair of pants are not my family's."

The first woman leapt to her feet. "Aha! You see, she was lying all along! Now, I'll take my things and be off! Those are my socks and Zanzil's pants, and everything else in that load belongs to my family as well!"

"Not so fast." The Rav signaled for the children of the washerwoman to enter the room. "Do you recognize these?" he asked, holding out the socks and pants.

"Yes, those are our own articles of clothing that we added to the pile on our way here, as the Rav requested."

The Rav turned to the first woman, whose face was bright red. "Hashem runs the world," he admonished gently. "He decides who gets food and who must struggle. No good can come from cheating."



# SET UP FOR DISCUSSION

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

There is a mitzvah of *shomrim*, watchmen, in the Torah. Someone who accepts upon himself to watch an object belonging to someone else is responsible for damages caused by their not being careful. However, there is a dispute among the *poskim* if they have to take the object into their possession through a *kinyan*, for example, by picking it up, in order to be responsible. In our story, Alexander never took the menorah into his possession. Therefore, Mordechai cannot make him pay.

**Therefore, Alexander does not have to pay for the menorah, but he should speak to his *rav* about paying Mordechai something, since he did not keep his promise.**

## EXPLANATION:

Becoming a *shomer* is a big responsibility and carries with it financial liability. There are situations that arise that potentially require a *shomer* to reimburse the owner if an object in their care is damaged, lost, or stolen. As such, there are *poskim* that maintain that we need definitive proof that the potential *shomer* accepted upon themselves not only responsibility but the liability if something happens to the object. A *kinyan* accomplishes that goal. Since the necessity of a *kinyan* is subject to debate, Alexander cannot be forced to pay for the missing menorah since he can claim "*Kim li*" (lit. "I hold"; that halachah follows the opinion that contends that *shomer* responsibilities do not begin in the absence of a *kinyan*).



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## GEMATRIA

At the end of *Parshas Miketz*, the following note appears:

קמ"ו יחזקיהו, אמציה, יחיה לי עבד סימן, ותיבות אלפיים כ"ה 146 [*pesukim*], the *gematria* of *Yechizkiyahu*, and *Amatzyah*, and *Yichyeh li eved*. And the [number of] words is 2,025.

Every *parshah* has a notation and mnemonic listing the number of *pesukim* at its end. But only *Miketz* has the number of words. Why?

נר (250) x 8 (nights of Chanukah) = 2,000

Chanukah begins on the 25th of the month. So 2,000 begins on 25 = 2,025.

Also, the letters נר ח נא (which hints at 2,000 = 8 x נר) is *gematria* 261, which equals ויהי מקץ.

(*Bnei Yissaschar*)

## THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



4 Teves is the *yahrtzeit* of the Radziner Rebbe, Rav Gershon Henoch Leiner. Rav Leiner passed away in 1890, three years after he renewed the world's interest in identifying the *chilazon*, from which *techeiles* is made. In 1887, the Radziner Rebbe researched the identity of the *chilazon* and found the species known as *Sepia officinalis* (common cuttlefish) to be a good candidate. Many Radziner chassidim began wearing *techeiles* made from the cuttlefish about a year later.

Other *techeiles* researchers, led by Israel's Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Herzog, rejected the cuttlefish as the *chilazon*. The blood of the cuttlefish has to react with chemicals to make a blue dye. Rav Herzog had chemists analyze the dye, and they claimed that any blood, even ox blood, would produce blue dye when reacted with the same chemicals. Rav Herzog said that had Rav Leiner known that, he would not have said that the cuttlefish was *techeiles*. Today's *techeiles* candidate is usually the murex snail; the cuttlefish is not used much.





# HALACHAH

## Halachos of a Siyum

The haftorah tells about a grand *siyum* celebration made by Shlomo Hamelech. This is one of the sources for the practice of celebrating *siyumim*.

### IS A SIYUM A SEUDAS MITZVAH?

The Gemara relates that Abaye would make a “holiday for the rabbis” when someone finished a *masechta*. The Maharshel links a *siyum* with the joy of the 15th of Av, when the collection of wood for the *Mizbe'ach* was completed. The essence of a *siyum* is joy and gratitude brought on by the completion of a mitzvah that took time and effort to fulfill. The Rema (*Yoreh De'ah* 246:26) writes that the celebratory meal at a *siyum* is considered a *seudas mitzvah* (a meal that is a mitzvah). The Taz (246:9) adds that even people who have not completed the material have a mitzvah to celebrate with the person making the *siyum*. Some recite and explain part of the *limmud* so that all in attendance can take part in the *limmud*, but they have a mitzvah to celebrate even if they do not understand it.

### WHAT VOLUME OF LEARNING QUALIFIES FOR A SIYUM?

Any amount of learning should be celebrated, and any amount that took time and effort is cause for a *siyum*. To qualify as a *seudas mitzvah* to allow eating meat during the Nine Days and to cancel the fast of the *bechorim* on Erev Pesach, one should learn a significant amount. One makes a *siyum* upon completing the following:

**GEMARA:** A *masechta* of Gemara (*Horayos*, 13 *blatt*, would be the smallest. Rav Chaim Kanievsky is doubtful that the four *blatt* of *Kinim* count.)

**CHUMASH:** Learning the entire *Chumash* only warrants a *siyum* if done with a commentary.

**NACH:** Several Acharonim allow a *siyum* on a book of *Nach* unless it was learned as an excuse for a *siyum*. Rav Moshe Sternbuch allows a *siyum* on a book of *Nach* with *Rashi*.

**TEHILLIM:** The learning of *Tehillim* (with a *pirush*) is cause for a *siyum*, not the saying of *Tehillim*.

**MISHNAYOS:** Opinions range from allowing a *siyum* on Mishnayos for even one *perek* to not allowing it at all. The common custom is that a *sefer* with a *pirush* triggers a *siyum*.

**SHULCHAN ARUCH:** Some allow a *siyum* on a *chelek* of *Shulchan Aruch* with practical halachos learned.

### HOW WELL DO I HAVE TO KNOW THE MATERIAL?

No minimum amount of retained knowledge is needed to allow a *siyum* (though we should note the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch Harav that forgetting any part of Torah is an *issur d'Oraysa*), but there is a minimum amount of effort that must be invested. Someone who learned an English (or other-language) translation of a *masechta* may only make a *siyum* if he worked through it, not if he read it like a newspaper.

## THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“OUR SILENCE [FROM NOT TALKING] IN SHUL SPEAKS TO HASHEM MORE LOUDLY THAN ANYTHING ELSE.”

—Rav Shimon Schwab



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