



פרשת בחוקותי

CIRCLE TIME AT YOUR Shabbos Table

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

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

A dvar Torah with a story.

THE HURRICANE THAT WANTED HAVDALAH

ואם בחקתי תלכו (כ"ג)

And if you walk in My laws... (26:3)

What is meant by "walking" in Torah? The Ohr Hachaim presents no fewer than 42 explanations of this phrase. The story behind them is a classic that must be shared.

Rabbi Chaim Moshe ben Attar, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, lived in Sale, Morocco, before he moved to Eretz Yisrael. He had a custom of giving a special form of *tzedakah*: he would slaughter an animal before Shabbos and give out the meat to the *talmidei chachamim* of the town who could not afford to buy any for themselves.

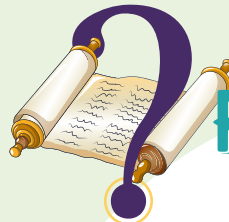
One week, a terrible illness struck all the animals in the area. Everyone's cows and sheep were sick and became halachically *treif*—except the animal that belonged to the Ohr Hachaim that he was planning to *shecht* and distribute. His animal was kosher, and he *shechted* it and proceeded to distribute the meat as usual.

A very wealthy man wanted to honor Shabbos with meat so he hurried to the Ohr Hachaim's home. He offered a fabulous amount of money for a piece of the Ohr Hachaim's meat, but the Ohr Hachaim refused. "All the meat is reserved for the poor *talmidei chachamim* of the town," he said. "You cannot buy some for any amount of money."

Just then, one of the *talmidei chachamim* arrived, and the Ohr Hachaim gave him a piece of meat. The rich man became very angry and began to shout. "You call this person a *talmid chacham*!?" he yelled. "What does he know already? He doesn't deserve the meat!" The Ohr Hachaim stood

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PARSHAH RIDDLES

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

- 1 Which people have the same *erech* listed in the *parshah*?
- 2 Where in Chumash is the number 10,000 mentioned? (6 places)
- 3 Which three *pesukim* in the *parshah* contain a word and its opposite?
- 4 Where in the *parshah* do you have three words in a row with the same *shoresh*? (2 places)
- 5 Which one of the *makkos* brought on Mitzrayim is mentioned in the *parshah*?



CHOLENT STORY

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

Recap: The men oversleep and race to get out of the forest before dark—but they are too late.

Night fell, and it was completely dark. The driver lit some lanterns and the coach proceeded, slowly now, hoping to escape the dangerous road without being stopped by criminals.

Reb Yitzchak trembled in his seat as he looked out the window. What would happen to them? Would they make it out of the forest alive? Would they be robbed of all the money they had brought to buy merchandise at the market? He whispered *Tehillim* as the coach rolled on. Reb Yitzchak looked at Reb Shimon's face, but his boss seemed serene, unconcerned. He did not understand how he could be so calm!

The coach moved slowly on the darkened, winding roads. The shaking lantern made the shadows of the tall trees jump and dance like wild horsemen. Finally, at long last, the trees began to thin out, and then the last tree was behind them. They had made it out of the forest and could see the lights of the next town on the road ahead! The coach moved faster now, and soon they were pulling up to a nice inn in the well-lit city.

Reb Yitzchak tumbled out of the coach and hurried inside, relief spread across his face. Reb Shimon followed calmly, and the group spent the night indoors.

The next morning, they continued on their way. They traveled for another week until they reached the big city where the market was held. The two merchants arrived at the market and viewed the many furniture displays, discussing the advantages and qualities of each one, deciding which to order. They told each merchant what they wanted to order and said they would be back to leave a deposit on their last day in town.

Finally, they made all their choices. They went to the coach to retrieve the box of money hidden in the fake table-bottom to give deposits.

Reb Yitzchak climbed into the coach to retrieve the box while Reb Shimon waited outside. After a few moments, Reb Yitzchak returned, his face white as a sheet.

“Reb Shimon!” he gasped. “Reb Shimon! We’ve been robbed! The money! The box of money! It’s ... it’s gone!”

At first, Reb Shimon looked a little startled. “Gone? But how ... who ... oh. I know where it is.”

“You do?!”

“Yes. I’m afraid we won’t see that money ever again, Reb Yitzchak. I left it in the forest, where I went to sleep.”

TO BE CONTINUED...



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MIDRASH

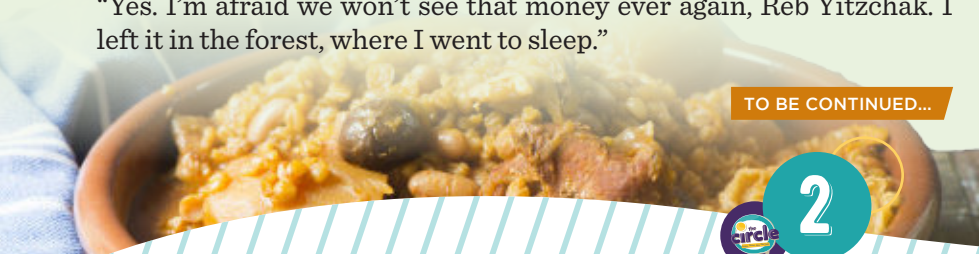
וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיּוֹ (כ״ד)

And the trees of the field shall give their fruit (26:4)

The *Sifra* teaches that the trees of the field will *become* fruit; that is, the trees themselves will be edible, like their fruit.

The *Toras Kohanim* sees this *pasuk* as a *brachah* that *all* trees will bear fruit—even barren ones, like cedar trees! There will be no more fruitless trees. The reason for this *brachah* is that Hashem did not create fruitless trees as part of *Ma'aseh Bereishis*. In *Parshas Bereishis*, the Torah only mentions the creation of fruit trees. Where did fruitless trees come from? They were part of the curse that was applied to the universe after the sin of the *Eitz Hada'as*. When that sin will be fixed, the curse will no longer apply, and even barren trees will bear fruit.

I wonder what fruit will grow on pine trees? Or oaks?



PARSHAH RHYME



Review the main points of the parshah with younger children, while challenging your family to complete the rhymes (use the "grammen" tune). Answers on the side!

- L
1. Wherever we go, one thing will always trail us,
2. And that's the Torah we learn with _____.
- L
3. If we keep the mitzvos and do them right,
4. Hashem promises we'll sleep well at _____.
- L
5. We'll have plenty to eat, we'll be safe and
6. Dangerous animals will leave the _____.
- H
7. If we do what we are supposed to do,
8. No one with a sword will try to even pass _____.

Chorus

- L
9. If, *chalilah*, our *shemiras hamitzvos* is not so good,
10. We may struggle to even find _____.
- L
11. If, *chas v'shalom*, it gets even worse,
12. I don't want to tell you about the terrible _____.
- L
13. But the door of *teshuvah* is always open wide,
14. Hashem is waiting for us to come _____.
- H
15. So instead of all this scary *tochachah*,
16. He can give us lots of _____.

Chorus

- L
17. Give money to *hekdesh*, it's a great thing to do.
18. How much to give? How about the value of _____?

- L
19. *Erech* is a value that depends on each person's stage,
20. Where is he holding in life, how old, what _____?
- L
21. A little kid, like you and me,
22. Five shekels for a boy, but a girl is just _____.
- H
23. An adult has a value that's really nifty,
24. A lady is thirty, and a man is _____.

- L
25. From age five till twenty years old,
26. The value for *erech*, but not to be _____.

- L
27. For a boy, the *erech* is twenty,
28. But for a girl, ten is _____.

- L
29. Age sixty and above, fifteen for the men,
30. But for your *bubby*, it's ten _____.

- H
31. These are the mitzvos we received at Har Sinai.
32. To keep them all, we're sure gonna _____.

Answers: 2. *omeilus* 4. night 6. land 8. through 10. food 12. curse 14. inside 16. *brachah* 18. you 20. age 22. three 24. fifty 26. sold 28. plenty 30. again 32. try

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. A woman age 60 and up and a woman age 5-20 both have an *erech* of ten shekels.
2. איכה ירדף אחד אלה וישנים יניסו רבבה (דברים לב: ל) ויברכו את רבקה ויאמרו לה אחתנו את היי לאלפי רבבה (בראשית כד: ט) וירדפו מכם חמשה מאה ומאה מכם רבבה ירדפו (ויקרא כו: ח) (דברים לג: ב) והם רבבות אפרים והם אלפי מנשה (דברים לג: ז) ובנחה יאמר שובה ה' רבבות אלפי ישראל (במדבר יל: ו)
3. ואכלתם ישן נושן וישן מפני חדש תוציאו (כו: י) ואם מן חמש שנים ועד בן עשרים שנה והיה ערכך הזכר עשרים שקלים ולנקבה עשרת שקלים (כו: ה) לא יחליפנו ולא ימיר אתו טוב ברע או רע בטוב (כו: י)
4. ואכלתם ישן נושן וישן מפני חדש תוציאו (כו: י) כל ימי השמה תשבת את אשר לא שבתה בשבתתכם בשבתתכם עליה (כו: ה)
5. ושלחת דבר (כו: כה)

You may be surprised to find something familiar in every haftorah.

HAFTORAH: YOU KNOW NAVI

SUMMARY

The haftorah relates how several of the predictions made in *Parshas Bechukosai* came to pass and reminds us of the proper perspective on all of them.

The haftorah describes the punishment of exile and the severity of the sins that caused it. Specifically, *shemittah* violations are mentioned. The underlying message is one of *bitachon*: We must trust that all the situations we endure, good and challenging, are part of Hashem's *hash-gachah*, in response to our behavior. The haftorah ends with a prayer for help and healing.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

The *parshah* describes the process of reward as a consequence of mitzvos and punishment as a consequence of sin. The haftorah shows us how this occurred and encourages us to keep this in mind. Both refer to *avodah zarah* and *shemittah* specifically. Both end on a positive and hopeful note.

YOU KNOW NAVI

The haftorah contains two very familiar phrases:

בְּרוּךְ הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בּוֹ וְהָיָה ה' מְבֹטָחוֹ

רַפְּאֵי ה' יִאֲרָפָא הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאֹנְשָׁעָה כִּי תִהְלֹתִי אִתָּה

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

by silently and waited until he finished shouting and left.

That Friday night, the Ohr Hachaim received a message in a dream. "You did wrong by not speaking up against the rich man," he was told. "You should have defended the honor of Torah."

"How can I correct the mistake?" the Ohr Hachaim asked.

"You must go into exile. Wander from town to town, never spending more than a week in one place. This will cause you to have shame and no *kavod*. When you are forgiven, you may return home."

"How will I know when that is?"

"You will know."

Immediately after Shabbos, the Ohr Hachaim set off, wandering and living like a beggar for nearly a year.

On Shabbos *Parshas Bechukosai*, as he was walking through the forest toward a town, thinking in Torah (as usual), he asked himself what the meaning of the phrase "walking in My laws" could be. *I'm doing one of the meanings right now*, he thought. *We must always think in Torah, even while we are busy traveling! Another explanation could be that we must always walk—move forward, onward and upward, growing in Torah!* The Ohr Hachaim continued walking and thinking and came up with forty-two explanations!

The custom in that town was that the *rav* spoke words of Torah at each *tefillah*. On Friday night, the entire *kehillah* gathered in the shul and the *rav* said, "This Shabbos, I will tell you forty-two explanations of the first *pasuk* in the *parshah*, fourteen at each *shiur*. All forty-two are being discussed in *Shamayim* and were composed by the great *talmid chacham*, Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar."

Upon hearing this title for himself, the Ohr Hachaim, who was running away from *kavod*, could not contain himself. "Chaim!" he shouted. "It's just Chaim ben Attar!" No one in the shul knew him and everyone looked at him strangely. What chutzpah!

After *Mussaf*, the rabbi gave another fourteen explanations. Again, he called the Ohr Hachaim by a very honorable title, and the stranger protested from the back of the shul. The people began to murmur and become upset.

After *Minchah*, the same scene repeated itself. This time, the *kehillah* had had enough. They grabbed the man, not knowing it was the Ohr Hachaim himself, and locked him in the shul prison!

After *Ma'ariv*, a great storm blew into the town. Like a wild hurricane, it flipped over wagons, knocked down trees, and smashed houses. The *rav* understood that this was no simple storm and decided to ask a *she'eilas chalom*. He wrote a question on a piece of paper, put it under his head, and went to sleep.

In his dream, he received an explanation for the storm. "During Shabbos, Gehinnom is turned off," he was told. "It is not restarted until the tzaddikim say Havdalah. One tzaddik has not said Havdalah, and the *sheidim* of Gehinnom are angry with the delay. They are causing the hurricane in your city!"

"Who did not say Havdalah?"

"The Ohr Hachaim, because he is locked up in your shul!" The *rav* awoke with a start, rushed to the shul, freed the Ohr Hachaim, and apologized. Seeing that he could not escape *kavod* any longer, the Ohr Hachaim understood that his sin had been forgiven, and he went home.

There are 143 terrible predictions in the two *parshiyos* of *Tochachah* in the Torah. In this week's *parshah* there are 45, and there are another 98 in *Ki Savo*. This number hints at several things that counteract the *klalos*:

- The *parshah* that immediately follows the *Tochachah* this week is that of *erchin*, the value of a person concerning contributions to the Beis Hamikdash. All the *erchin* together total 143:

girl = 3; boy = 5; teenage girl = 10; teenage boy = 20; adult woman = 30; adult man = 50; elderly woman = 10; elderly man = 15. Total = 143

- The last letters of the names of the Avos: 142 = יעקב, יצחק, אברהם. Add 1 Hashem = 143
- Three names of Hashem are used in *Tehillim*:

$$26 = \text{ק-ו-ק}, 86 = \text{א-לקים}, 31 = \text{ל-ק} \\ = 143$$

TREATS FROM TARGUM

So much more than just translation — quick insights into Targum Onkelos!

וּפְנִיתִי אֵלֵיכֶם וְהִפְרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם (כו:ט)

And I will turn to you and I will make you fruitful... (26:9)

תְּרוּגֹם אֹנְקֵלוֹס: וְאֶתְפְּנִי בְּמִימְרֵי לְאוֹטָבָא לְכֹן וְאֶפְשׁ יִתְכֹן

And I will turn **with My word to do good** for you, and I will make you fruitful...

Why does Onkelos add the words, בְּמִימְרֵי לְאוֹטָבָא, “with my word to do good”? Onkelos always avoids translation that implies any kind of existence of a body of Hashem, *chalilah*. Had he translated the *pasuk* simply as “I will turn,” that would imply a physical movement, so he clarified that the meaning refers to a directing of Hashem’s word.

- A simple reading of the *pasuk* could make it sound like all one *brachah*: Hashem will turn to give us the *brachah* of fruitfulness. *Chazal* explain that *two* separate *brachos* are included— “turning to us” is itself a *brachah* (the opposite of the curse of *hester panim*, Hashem hiding Himself from us). Onkelos adds the word לְאוֹטָבָא, “to do good,” to make it a separate *brachah*.

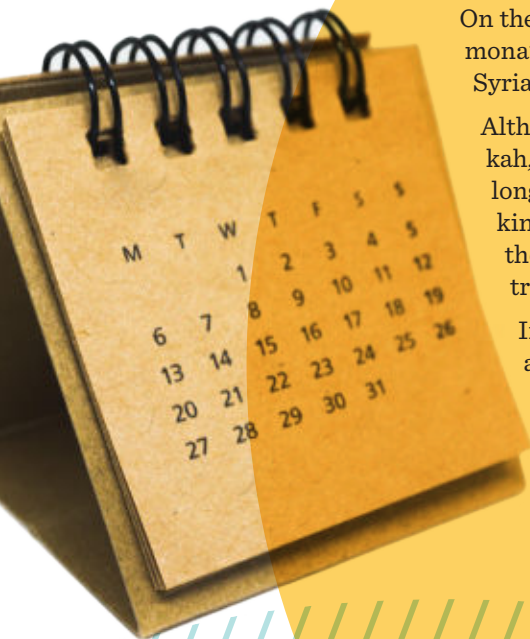
THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY

On the 27th of Iyar, 3617 (143 BCE), the Chashmona'im finally achieved independence from the Syrian-Greek Empire.

Although they captured the Beis Hamikdash and restarted the *avodah* at the time of Chanukah, the battles between the Chashmona'im and the Greeks and Hellenists continued for a long time afterward. On the 27th of Iyar, the Greek King Demetrius II (who reigned several kings after Antiochus of Chanukah) made a deal with Shimon Hamaccabi, who was leading the Chashmona'im at the time. He allowed the Jews most of the freedoms they wanted and transferred tax collection to the Chashmona'im.

In return, Shimon agreed to support Demetrius in his struggle for control of the Syrian-Greek Empire. Demetrius had been kicked out of the Greek capital by a Greek general named Diodotus, who rebelled against him. Diodotus had made an agreement with Yonasan Hamaccabi, but he later broke it and took Yonasan prisoner. Shimon took over the leadership of the Chashmona'im and made a deal with Demetrius.

Under Shimon, independent of Demetrius, the country had relative peace for a while.



HALACHAH



Learning Torah

Who is obligated to learn Torah?

The *mitzvah d'Oraisa* to learn Torah is given to adult men. Women are not obligated directly, and neither are children. Women are obligated to know all the *halachos* that apply to them (a well-known *gadol* once said, "When they finish learning all that, we'll talk..."). Children don't have any *mitzvos d'Oraisa*, but a father has a *mitzvah d'Oraisa* to make sure his son learns, even when he is a child.

From the age at which a child can talk, his education begins with "*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe.*"

Every Jewish man is obligated to study Torah, whether he is rich or poor, healthy or sick, young or old. Even a poor man who lives off charity and begs for food, even if he is a husband and father, must set a fixed time for Torah study by day and night.

Of course, the unparalleled *sechar* of *limud ha-Torah* applies to all.

Can a father hire a teacher for his sons?

Teaching one's own children takes precedence over teaching others. From age six or seven, education should be given over to an expert teacher.

The father must pay for his son's education. When he can read all of *Torah shebichsav*, he may exempt himself from paying. In a town in which it is customary to pay someone to teach, it is permitted to take money for teaching *Torah*

shebichsav, but not *Torah sheb'al peh*. However, the practice is to pay *rabbeim* for the many other parts of the responsibility of teaching. Additionally, if there is no other way for a teacher to make a *parnassah*, it is permissible to accept wages for Torah instruction. Even if the teacher can make a living without these wages, he can charge money for *sechar batalah* (payment for the amount he could have earned if he had been working at another job instead of teaching).

Teachers of young children should be appointed in every nation, state and city. If a town does not have children studying Torah, the residents are forced to hire teachers. If they don't hire teachers, the town doesn't deserve to exist because the world only endures in the merit of children who study Torah.

What should one learn?

Although *Chazal* have a specific guide for what to learn and when, the practical application of those principles can vary widely between people, times, and places. One must consult his *rebbe* for personal guidance. To illustrate this concept, it is worthwhile to quote Rav Yisrael Salanter: "Today, after the sealing of the Talmud, since we cannot learn Tanach the way *Chazal* did, we must define the terms *Mikrah*, *Mishnah* and *Gemara* differently. *Mikrah* today means to learn *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*. *Mishnah* means to learn *Tosafos* and the *sefarim* of the great *Poskim*—*Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. *Gemara* means proper *iyun* in all that

you learn and to be able to *pashen* halachah from your learning.

When should one learn?

A man is obligated to learn whenever he is able. Minimally, he must set aside a rigid schedule to learn at least once every day at a specific time. The rest of his schedule should be built around his learning times, not the other way around. There is a special quality to learning done at night.

What should one NOT learn?

It's forbidden for someone to learn Kabbalah unless he has learned seriously all of *Gemara* and *Poskim*, and he is a *talmid chacham* ingrained with *yiras Shamayim*. One should protest if someone is teaching Kabbalah to the public, especially if the teacher himself isn't fitting to learn it. Certain *halachos* are forbidden to learn alone or in small groups. One should not learn *Ma'aseh Merkavah* alone.

There are restrictions on what one may learn on Tishah B'Av or when in *aveilus*.

Where/when should one NOT learn?

One may not learn in an unclean place, or if he needs to use the bathroom and cannot wait seventy-two minutes. He may not learn out loud in front of an improperly dressed woman (including a married woman with uncovered hair) or while hearing a woman sing. He may think in Torah during that time.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"BE READY TO GIVE UP ALL YOUR TOMORROWS FOR ONE TODAY, SO THAT YOU DON'T END UP WASTING ALL YOUR TODAYS ON ONE TOMORROW."

—The Alter of Novaradok



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"AT YOUR SHABBOS TABLE" IS COMPILED BY RABBI YITZCHOK LANDA. COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS: CIRCLETIME@CIRCMAG.COM

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