



# CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR  
Shabbos Table

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

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TELL ME A TALE >  
A dvar Torah with a story.

### PAYING THE PAID DEBT

לא יחל דברו ככל היצא מפיו יעשה (ג:ל)

He shall not violate his word, everything that comes out of his mouth, he shall do. (30:3)

**Why does the Torah use a repetitive phrase? The Ben Ish Chai explains that the second "He" refers to Hashem! It is saying that if someone is very careful to keep his word, Hashem will make sure that everything that comes out of his mouth comes true!**

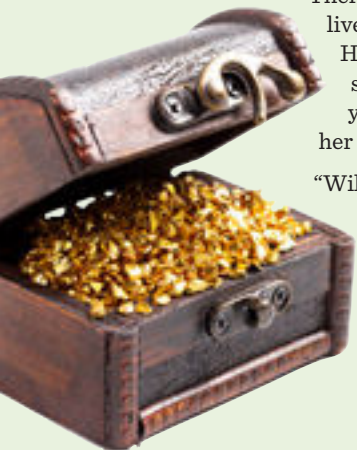
**T**he *talmidim* couldn't go on like this any longer. The yeshivah was struggling and had no money. Now, all yeshivos struggle and have no money, but this yeshivah *literally* had nothing. There was not a crumb to be had. The *talmidim* had no choice but to ask their esteemed *rebbe*, the *Tanna* Rabi Akiva, for help.

Rabi Akiva understood and resolved to get some money for them. He decided to borrow a large sum to support the *talmidim* until donations could be raised. But where would he get such a big loan?

There was a wealthy Roman lady who lived near the sea. She trusted in Hashem and Rabi Akiva thought she would be willing to give the yeshivah a loan. He went to visit her and told her how much he needed.

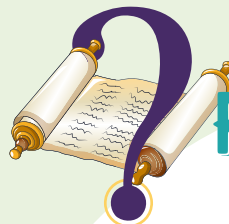
"Will you agree to lend this money to the yeshivah?" he asked.

The lady thought a while before she spoke. "That is a lot of gold and silver," she finally said. "You know I have the funds, and I might even be willing to lend it.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>

# פרשת מטות - מסעי



## PARSHAH RIDDLES

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

- 1 Which three non-Jewish kings in Chumash had names that also belonged to Jews?
- 2 In which two places did someone in the Torah make a *neder* (not a *shevuah*)?
- 3 Can you find a *pasuk* in this week's *parshiyos* that has:
  - Nine cities
  - Six metals
  - Five types of jewelry
- 4 Where is the name **לחַוָּוֶה** mentioned in the Torah? Where is it mentioned with two letters reversed?
- 5 Whose *yahrtzeit* is written explicitly in the Torah? When is it?

# CHOLENT STORY

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

Recap: The men secretly follow Reb Shimon to his dinner meeting with Reb Yitzchak.

**R**eb Shimon disappeared through the doorway of the well-kept house. The two paupers rose out of the bushes and met in the street.

“You see, he’s cheating!” one whispered angrily. “Let’s go tell the others!”

“Wait, not so fast. We don’t have proof.”

“What do you mean, we don’t have proof? Do you see the size of that house?”

“We don’t know what he is doing in there. Who says the rich man is giving him extra money?”

“What else is he doing, *farhering* him on the *parshah*?”

“No, come on. You know the rules. If he’s just inviting Shimon over for dinner, he doesn’t have to share the food. He only has to share money. If we go back now and confront him tomorrow, he’ll just say that he didn’t get any money.”

“True, but then how are we going to *ever* prove it? He can always hide the extra money or spend it when we aren’t looking.”

“That’s the point. We’ll have to keep following him till we catch him!”

“Are you serious? What if we *never* catch him?!”

“Then he must not be doing anything wrong. Come on, Yankel, you really dislike the guy. What did he ever do to you?”

“Nothing... never mind. Listen, it’s Friday tomorrow. He’ll probably spend whatever he got before Shabbos. We’ll follow him and catch him then!”

Meanwhile, inside Reb Yitzchak’s house, the two men — one rich, one poor — were deep in a Torah discussion. The table was set with all manner of delicious foods and light filled the room. Reb Shimon was feeling better than he had in... forever!

Eventually, the two wrapped up their discussion and the meal drew to a close. It was time to say good night. “Wait,” Reb Yitzchak said. “I have a gift for you.” He presented Reb Shimon with a wrapped package. “Open it!”

Reb Shimon unwrapped the thin package. Inside was a brand-new suit, a luxury Reb Shimon had not had in years. But his heart plummeted when he saw it. He knew he could not get away with wearing it without getting in trouble with the other collectors. “Thank you so much, sir! It is beautiful!” he said. “But I’m afraid I cannot accept it.”

“Why not?” Reb Yitzchak was crestfallen.

“You see, I collect for a living,” Reb Shimon explained, not untruthfully. “No one will give me anything if I am dressed like the mayor of the city!”

“I see.” Reb Yitzchak’s eyes narrowed. He suspected that there was another reason behind his friend’s refusal. Had Reb Shimon figured out who he was? Was he just pretending not to realize that he was his old friend, Reb Yitzchak? “Well, in any case, you must join me for the Shabbos *seudah* tomorrow night. I *daven* at the shul on Tenth Street. I will meet you there and we can go home together.”

“That sounds wonderful, thank you! But I must ask, where is there a *mikvah* in town? I always try to get to the *mikvah* to purify myself before Shabbos.”

“Certainly. I will tell you how to get there. It is not far.” Reb Yitzchak proceeded to explain to the other man how to get to the *mikvah* and the shul and then showed him to the door. Reb Shimon stepped into the night and headed home.

Behind him, two shapes rose from the bushes and followed.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MIDRASH

## The Buried Cauldron

It is well known that Bilam flew away from Bnei Yisrael using *kishuf* and Pinchas knocked him down with the *Tzitz*. Bilam was killed with all four forms of *misas beis din* and his body turned to snakes. Why did he deserve such a terrible punishment?

- Aside from trying to curse Klal Yisrael and get them to sin, Bilam tried to spread his evil across the world. The *Zohar* (*Parshas Balak* 198b) says that Bilam collected all kinds of magical herbs, put them in a cauldron with snake heads, and made a potion out of them. He took the cauldron to the site on which the Beis Hamikdash would be built. On the spot where the *Mizbe'ach* would stand, he dug a hole 1,500 *amos* deep and buried it. In this way, he was hoping that his *kishuf* would contaminate the *kedushah* and outward flow of the Beis Hamikdash, spreading his evil to the entire world!
- When Dovid Hamelech dug the foundations for the Beis Hamikdash, he reopened the same hole when digging a channel for the wine poured on the *Mizbe'ach* to enter the depths of the earth. At 1,500 *amos*, he encountered Bilam’s cauldron! He was able to neutralize it by reciting the 15 chapters of *Tehillim* that begin with *Shir Ha-ma'alos*.





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

# HAFTORAH: YOU KNOW NAVI

## SECOND HAFTORAH OF TRAGEDY

This week's *haftorah* is the one designated for *Parshas Massei*. It is the second of the three warning *haftaros* that precede Tishah B'Av. It picks up right at the end of last week's *haftorah*.

## SUMMARY

Yirmiyahu blasts Klal Yisrael for abandoning Hashem and serving idols. He lists several of Hashem's kindnesses to us and contrasts it with our ingratitude, our pretense that Hashem doesn't exist, and our allegiance to other "gods" despite their foolishness.

The *navi* says we have acted worse than the other nations and that we are defiling our noble lineage with our actions. He decries our foolishness and describes the consequences of our actions. The *haftorah* also sets out the path for *teshuvah*. Rabbeinu Yonah's classic *sefer, Sha'arei Teshuvah*, draws many of the steps of the *teshuvah* process from the *pesukim* in this *haftorah*.

## CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

The primary message of the *haftorah* relates to the Three Weeks. It also contrasts sharply with the *parshah*. In the *parshah*, we look back at our previous actions to learn from our mistakes and resolve to do better. The *haftorah* decries our willingness to ignore the past, Hashem's *chessed*, and the uselessness of stone idols and our insistence on doing wrong despite the clear consequences. It makes the same point as the *parshah* by underlining the tragic results of failing to learn from the past.

## YOU KNOW NAVI

Many *pesukim* in the *haftorah* appear in classic *mussar sefarim* and in *teshuvah*-related *tefillos*, such as:

אֲתִי עָזְבוּ מְקוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים לְחַצֵּב לָהֶם בְּאֵרוֹת בְּאֵרֵי נִשְׁבְּרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכְלוּ הַמַּיִם

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

I trust in your G-d. However, I don't trust *you*! How do I know I will get it back?"

"We will make a guarantor, someone who will take responsibility to make sure you are paid back."

"Who will guarantee the loan?"

"Whom do you trust? It can be whomever you want."

Again, the noblewoman thought at length. "I trust your G-d and I trust the ocean," she said. "I want them to guarantee that I will get paid back when the loan is due, and not a second later!"

"Okay," Rabi Akiva replied. "The Master of the World and the ocean will guarantee the loan on time, not a second late."

The woman gave him a basket of silver and gold. Rabi Akiva used it to support the *talmidim* while working hard to collect enough money to pay back the loan.

Payday came and Rabi Akiva had the money -- but he was sick! He could not get out of bed or even move. He was very upset because he never broke his word, but he was clearly an *ones*. There was nothing he could do about it.

At her beachfront property, the rich noblewoman waited for Rabi Akiva. Why wasn't he returning the money? At last, someone came, but it was not the rabbi. "I have a message for you," a boy came to tell her. "Rabi Akiva is sick. He will come to return the money as soon as he is physically able."

Hearing this, the lady went down to the water's edge. She had been promised the money back on time and not a second later! She raised her eyes to Heaven. "Master of the World!" she cried. "You guaranteed this money on time! Please pay back the loan!"

She looked toward the ocean. There, floating toward her, was a large chest! She waited until the box floated to a stop at her feet. Taking it into her home, she opened it. You guessed it -- it was full of diamonds, gold, silver, and jewels. The total worth was far more than she had been owed!

How did the box get to her? Across the sea, the princess of the Roman Caesar had gone crazy! The young woman was struck with madness that caused her to fill a treasure chest with all her gold and jewelry and toss it into the ocean. That box floated to the noblewoman, delivered by her two guarantors -- Hashem and the ocean.

A few days later, Rabi Akiva came to the woman's house. "I had all the money on time," he said, "but I became sick. I came as soon as I could."

"No worries!" the woman said. "Keep your money. The debt has been paid!"

"It has??"

The woman told Rabi Akiva the whole story. "...So you see," she concluded, "your guarantors paid in full and you don't owe anything. As a matter of fact, you get change!" She escorted Rabi Akiva to her treasure house, where she gave him riches of gold and jewels -- enough to support the yeshivah for a long time!

*Rabi Akiva was always careful to keep his word, so Hashem made sure he could continue to do so -- even using the ocean as a guarantor, just as Rabi Akiva had said!*

וְלֹאֲרָץ לֹא יִכְפֹּר לְדָם אֲשֶׁר שִׁפָּךְ בָּהּ כִּי אִם בְּדָם שִׁפְכוּ לָהּ: *The ground will not atone for the blood that was spilled on it, other than with the blood of he that spilled it. (35:33)*

- The Gemara (*Gittin* 57b) tells us that the Roman general Nevuzradan found the blood of the *navi* Zechariah Hakohen boiling on the ground in the Beis Hamikdash. He vowed to avenge it and first killed two small Sanhedrins (23 tzaddikim each). The blood did not stop boiling, so he then murdered the large Sanhedrin of 71 people.
- Two small Sanhedrins =  $2 \times 23 = 46 =$  gematria of בְּדָם
  - Full Sanhedrin = 71 = gematria of כִּי אִם
  - The pasuk reads: *The land will not atone for the blood that was spilled on it* אִם כִּי (Sanhedrin of 71) בְּדָם (two small Sanhedrins of 46).

# THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Av, 5050 (1290), King Edward I of England issued a proclamation to expel all Jews in the country — just for tax purposes. After returning from his Crusade, Edward was deeply in debt. He called his knights and told them that he planned on collecting a huge tax. He knew it would be unpopular with the citizen of his country, so he offered them a treat to sweeten the deal — he would also expel all the Jews! The heavy tax was passed because the expulsion order was very popular. It was met with little resistance and was quickly carried out. It was not reversed until 1656.

# TREATS FROM TARGUM

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

עָטְרוֹת וְדִיבֵן וַיַּעֲזֵר וְנִמְרָה וְחֶשְׁבוֹן וְאֵלְעֵלָה וְשִׁבְם וְנִבּוֹ וְבַעַן (לב:ג)

Ataros and Divon and Yaazer and Nimrah and Cheshbon and **Elalei** and Svam and **Nevo** and Be'on.

תַּרְגוּם אוֹנֵקֶלוֹס (גִּירְסָה שֶׁבְּחֻמְשֵׁי הַיּוֹם): וּמְכַלְלֵתָּ וּמְלַבְשֵׁתָּ וְכוּמְרִין וְכִי נִמְרִין וְכִי חוֹשְׁבָנָא וְכִי דְבָבָא וְכִי קְבוּרָתָא דְמֹשֶׁה וְכִי עוֹן

Machlela and Malbeshta and Kumrin and the **house** of Nimrin and the **house** of Chushbana and **the arguers** and Sima and the **burial place of Moshe** and Be'on.

- The Gemara (*Brachos* 8a) says that one must read all of Targum, even “Ataros and Divon.” What does this mean?
- Rashi and *Tosafos* say it refers to this pasuk, which has no Targum Onkelos; instead, the names of the cities are just repeated exactly as they are in the pasuk. This is clearly not our version of Onkelos. Later commentaries say that the version we have is not Onkelos; it was taken from Targum Yerushalmi (*Yonasan*) and inserted into Onkelos. Two of the places, Elalei and Nevo, are translated; the others are just identified by their Canaanite names.
- Rabbeinu Bacheye had our version of Onkelos, and he explains the Gemara differently. He says that the names of the cities in the pasuk are the Jewish names given after they were conquered. Onkelos is giving the original, Canaanite names, which are all names of *avodah zarah*. The Gemara is telling us to read the Targum even though it is ordinarily forbidden to say the names of *avodah zarah*. The Rambam *paskens* (*Avodah Zarah* 5:11) that it is permitted to say any name of *avodah zarah* that is found in Torah. Onkelos adds the phrase “house of” for two places because that is how Chazal refer to *avodah zarah* temples.

# HALACHAH

## Remembering the *Churban*



***We mourn for the Beis Hamikdash and Yerushalayim all year, not just during the Three Weeks and Nine Days. There are many halachos that apply all the time zecher l'Churban.***

### ***Should we say Al Naharos Bavel before bentching?***

On all days that *Tachanun* is said, we should say the paragraph of *Al Naharos Bavel*. In fact, *Shir Hama'alos* is recited as a substitute for *Al Naharos Bavel* when it is not said (because *Tachanun* is not said). Somehow, the custom is widespread to say *Shir Hama'alos* but not *Al Naharos Bavel* — except during the Nine Days. This is likely an error and *Al Naharos Bavel* should be said every regular day.

### ***Why doesn't my house have an unfinished square?***

As a *zecher l'Churban*, someone building or refinishing a house should leave a square *amah* unfinished across from the entrance. If one bought a finished house from a non-Jew, he does not have to strip away a piece. If he later rebuilds from the bare walls, he should leave it at that time. The *amah* should be an even

square and should not be decorated, framed, or made fancy in any way. The wall should simply look incomplete. It should not be blocked by a curtain or picture. It is not appropriate to hang a picture of Yerushalayim or paint a square *amah* a different color in lieu of keeping this halachah properly.

### ***Does this apply to other buildings?***

A shul, yeshivah, *beis midrash*, bungalow, or investment property does not require a *zecher l'Churban* square. A wedding hall does.

### ***What should be done to remember the Churban at a wedding?***

At a wedding, we break a plate at the *tena'im* and a glass at the *chuppah* and put ashes on the *chassan's* head all *zecher l'Churban*. Some *poskim* decry the *minhag* to shout *mazal tov* immediately after breaking the glass and say we must instead wait a moment to remember the *Churban*. Certainly, the custom to shout *mazal tov* every time a dish breaks is a bit suspicious. There is a new custom to sing *Im Eshkacheich* before breaking the glass. Although we generally

frown on new *minhagim*, once it becomes significantly widespread, it is okay to follow.

### ***What other things should be limited because of the Churban?***

A woman should refrain from wearing all her jewelry at once in memory of the *Churban*. A meal should have something left out of it, also because of the *Churban* — this applies to a *seudas mitzvah*, but not to a Shabbos or Yom Tov meal.

### ***Are there restrictions on music all year round?***

It is forbidden to have music at a meal all year round. This does not apply to a *seudas mitzvah*, like a wedding. There are many differing opinions as to the parameters of this *issur*. Does it apply to meals without wine? Does it apply to singing? Recorded music? Instrumental music? *Shiros u'sishbachos* to Hashem? One should consult his own *rav* for his *minhag*.

***As Chazal say, one who mourns Yerushalayim will merit seeing it rebuilt. May it be so, speedily in our days.***

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