

# HOLY HEART

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

Dedicated to the Smagley Family, Nachman, Miriam, Yitzhak and Leah. Thank you for inspiring this week's parshah sheet, and may Hashem grant you the clarity and strength to go from level to higher level in Torah and mitzvos.

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*By the sweat of your brow will you eat bread . . . (Bereishis 3:19)*

Wrong parshah you say? What does this concept from the early chapters of Bereishis have to do with the early chapters of Bamidbar? Well, to begin with, while listening to a tape by Rabbi Shimshon Pincus, zt"l, on Lag B'Omer, I heard a very nice idea (actually many). The Talmud teaches that it is as difficult to make a zivug as it was to split the Red Sea (Sotah 2a). G-d does both, and nothing is difficult for Him, so there are many interpretations as to what the Talmud means.

One such interpretation is that, just as the sea was forced to act against its nature by standing up and making walls of water, so too is it against the nature of two strangers to marry one another and have peace. There are so many differences, and so many things that don't show up in the marriage until after the wedding, and yet they should act toward each other with familiarity and complete trust?

Logically, not necessarily, but in actuality, most marriages still seem to work out and many even excel. It doesn't happen overnight, but it happens, and when it does, it is something of a miracle. However, Rav Pincus provides a new insight into what the Talmud means here.

To begin with, as the Shem M'Shmuel explains, we were created to sing shirah to G-d. As the Talmud states, if you sing shirah in this world, then you will have the merit to sing shirah in the next world. Indeed, the only thing that stopped Chizkiah HaMelech from bringing Moshiach after the miraculous victory over Sancheriv's million-soldier plus army was his failure to sing shirah after it! (Sanhedrin 94a)

One of the most famous shiros ever sung, one which we repeat every day of the week as part of Pesukei d'Zimra, is the Shir Shel Yumm. It was the special praise of G-d that Moshe led the Jewish people to sing after they saw the Egyptians drowned in the very sea that had parted for them. So overwhelming was the miracle and the relief of salvation that the Jewish people were compelled to praise G-d. It was easy to sing shirah to G-d by the sea.

But how many people sing shirah to G-d about their spouses? Who could hear it anyhow over the

bickering, or the criticizing, or the complaining? A miracle? What miracle? That we didn't kill each other last week?

A little cynical, perhaps. But the divorce rate is quite high these days, even in the religious community, and the psychologists are booked solid solving marital difficulties.

And, when was the last time you opened the fridge and then opened your mouth in praise of G-d for what was inside? We've all heard the stories of life in the "Old Country," and how meat was an impossible dream, even for Shabbos. "Please," many children say today, "must I hear that story again?" as they roll their eyes in disbelief.

How many open the fridge or the pantry, which is stocked quite well, only to close it again and say in frustration, "There is nothing to eat in this house!" They don't even realize that in a food shortage, every item on the shelf would be worth plenty to them, and they would eat it with care and guarded delight.

Thus, the Talmud concludes:

A person's food is as difficult as the splitting of the sea. (Pesachim 118a)

That is, the simple miracle of food to eat goes largely unappreciated by the average person, unless a miracle happens with it on the scale of the splitting of the sea. Especially in a generation in which food is plentiful for many, and so accessible, the ease of gashmiut (materialism) has increased the difficulty of ruchniut (spirituality).

### **SHABBOS DAY:**

*G-d told Moshe to say, "Tell the Children of Israel, 'If a man's wife goes astray and acts deceitfully against him . . . ' " (Bamidbar 5:11-12)*

Which brings us to this week's parshah and the situation of the Sotah. Ironically, the Torah equates one's wife with one's bread:

He left all that he had in Yosef's hands, [and] paid no attention to anything except for the bread that he ate. (Bereishis 39:6)

EXCEPT FOR THE BREAD: This means his wife, but the Torah has used a euphemism. (Rashi)

Is there a reason for this?

And what makes this really interesting is that the punishment for eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was bread with difficulty:

By the sweat of your brow will you eat bread . . . (Bereishis 3:19)

And we think this is for having eaten from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But, if you recall, when Adam defended his actions by complaining to G-d:

"The woman You gave to be with me, she gave to me, and I ate."(Bereishis 3:12)

Rashi teaches:

Here he denied the good. (Rashi)

That is, when G-d created Chava and gave her to Adam as a wife, He meant it as not only a good thing, but a great thing. Not only did Adam not acknowledge this, he even rejected it by implicating G-d in the woman's involvement in the sin. Something is wrong here - VERY wrong, and apparently it has to do with the heart, something that apparently, Sefiros HaOmer was meant to correct.

Indeed, last week, a student directed me towards an article titled, "The Heart of the Matter," written by Rabbi Noson Weisz

([http://www.aish.com/torahportion/mayanot/The\\_Heart\\_of\\_the\\_Matter.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/mayanot/The_Heart_of_the_Matter.asp)). In his article, Rabbi Weisz points out an interesting fact, namely that there are THIRTY-TWO words in advance of the first appearance of the word tov - good, in the Torah. In Hebrew, the number 32 is written Lamed-Bais, which spells the word heart. Thus, Rabbi Weisz concluded:

"The 33rd word in the Torah is the Hebrew word tov, meaning 'good.' It refers to the light that was G-d's first creation: G-d saw that the light was good (Genesis 1:4). The 32 previous words of creation, equaling the numerical value of lev - heart, serve to generate this good light. G-d's light to the world is his Torah, which points the way to man's purpose and renders him a creature worthy of respect. Between the 33rd day of the Omer and the 50th day, Shavuot - the day the Torah enters the world, there are 17 days, equal to the numerical value of the word tov. If we divide the days we count between the first 32 and the last 17, we get lev tov, the 'good heart' - the heart that knows what to value and that distributes its kavod, (worth 32) with its entire essence (also 32) to the proper recipient, the Torah scholar."

Thus, Rabbi Akiva's students, who acted towards one another with bad hearts, ceased dying on Lag B'Omer. And thus, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai revealed the Zohar to the Jewish people, an act of a good heart and made possible because of a good heart. For, it is only through a good heart that the light of Torah, especially that which G-d made Creation and gave Torah, can flow to the world.

Thus, the Name of G-d - Elokim. appears 32 times in the Creation story, an allusion to the "32 Paths of Wisdom" with which the world was made, the spiritual conduits through which the light of G-d traveled on its way down from the sefirah of Chochmah which corresponds to man, -and to the sefirah of Binah which corresponds to woman. And it is certainly no coincidence that the base of the Temple altar was 32 amos square, or that the Tefillin Shel Yad, which is shaped like the altar, sits on the left arm opposite the heart. Or, that we have 32 teeth. (We break some of the Evil Son's teeth at the Seder.)

In fact, listen to what the Nefesh HaChaim has written about the heart:

There is also another notion that the heart of every man belonging to the holy nation should tremble:

included in him are all of the countless forces and worlds . . . These powers and worlds comprise the Heavenly Temple. The heart of man, found in the middle of the body and which incorporates everything, corresponds to the Holy of Holies, which is considered to be in the center of the world . . . It includes all the sources and roots of holiness, just like the Holy of Holies. This idea is alluded to in the chapter [in Tractate Brochos], "The Morning Prayers," where it teaches, "Direct your heart toward the Holy of Holies." In the Zohar it says: Come and see how The Holy One, Blessed is He, when He made man and perfected him according to the Supernal plan, and imbued him with power and strength in the center of his body, because that is where his heart is situated. The Holy One, Blessed is He, set up the world in a similar fashion, as a single body. For, just as the heart is in the middle of the body and controls everything, and everything is dependent upon it . . . so too did the Courtyard envelope the Holy of Holies where the Divine Presence dwelled, as well as the ark cover (Kappores), the cherubim, and the Ark. It is considered the heart of the entire land and world, and from here the entire world is nourished (Shlach 161:1) . . . If so, then, when a person pursues impure thoughts of his heart, (we should be protected from such things), it is comparable to . . . [committing a terrible profanity] . . . in the awesome Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Temple; he strengthens the forces of impurity and the Sitra Achra . . . Every sin a Jew considers in his heart is a "strange fire," whether it is a feeling of anger or an evil longing. It is to this that the verse literally refers, "Our holy house and our glory which . . . was burned in fire. . . (Yeshayahu 64:10) - the Merciful One should save us. (Nefesh HaChaim 1:4)

That is, the fire is a reference to the passions of the heart of each Jew of the generations of the Temple. It was their illicit passions that led to the actual fire that burned down the Temple, and thus it was the fires of the heart that caused the destruction of the Temple. All of spirituality comes down to the heart, which is why the Final Redemption is defined in terms of the circumcision of the hearts of the Jewish people.

### **SEUDOS SHLISHIS:**

*I heard Him addressing Himself to me from the Temple; and there was a man standing next to me. (Yechezkel 43:6)*

And this is what G-d told Yechezkel, which was a prophecy concerning the Final Redemption:

"Son of Man, [this is] the place of My throne and the place of My footstool, where I will dwell amid the Children of Israel forever. The House of Israel will no longer defile My holy Name, they and their kings with their promiscuous idolatry, and with the corpses of their kings, and with their high places, by their placing their threshold near My threshold and their door post next to My door post, with but a wall between Me and them, whereby they defiled My holy Name with the abominations they committed, so that I consumed them in My anger. Now they will distance their promiscuous idolatry and the corpses of their kings from Me, that I may dwell among them forever." (Yechezkel 43:7-9)

In other words, and as Rashi explains, several kings had been buried on the grounds of the royal

residence, adjacent to the Temple. For the Divine Presence to return to the Temple, that situated had to first be remedied. However, that was a technical problem that had a technical solution. The more difficult part to be solved will be that of the heart of the people at the time of the redemption: the removal of the promiscuous idolatry that will have infiltrated the hearts of the Jewish people.

Interesting how, in this week's parshah, the Torah juxtaposes the law of giving sacred offerings to the kohanim and the law of the Sotah, the suspected adulteress. In fact, Rashi finds a direct connection between the two:

IF A MAN'S WIFE GOES ASTRAY: What is stated before this section? "If you retain the gifts due to the priest" [as if to say,] by your life, you will have to come to him in order to bring him your faithless wife. (Rashi)

In other words, if you do not act with a good heart toward the kohanim by giving their due "bread," then your wife, G-d forbid, symbolized by bread will not act with a good heart toward you. If a kohen and a wife have anything in common, it is that both work behind the scenes to increase the blessing of one's house. For, as the Talmud states, the blessing of the house comes through the wife (Bava Metzia 59a), and on the same page the Talmud talks about one's sustenance.

For, a good heart means seeing everything in a life as a gift and not as a given. This, in turn, generates a sense of gratitude and appreciation that results in the kind of generosity that leads one to graciously share his bounty with those who have not, such as the kohen. And, it leads one to the type of spousal appreciation that results in a peaceful marriage, even if the workload is not split 50-50. Not all marriages have what it takes to survive and promote mutual growth, but many that end in divorce or emotional stalemate often do once a *leiv tov* is developed.

And this, of course, is all just representative of one's relationship with G-d. Appreciation of one's livelihood, be it with one's food or one's spouse, is to appreciate G-d and all that He does for us. The more we are able to feel and express that gratitude, ESPECIALLY for the small things in life that most of us take for granted, the greater our love of G-d appears before him. In a generation immersed in affluence, this is no small feat, and this type of *shirah* Rav Pincus, zt"l, referred to as *Shirah Shel Moshiach* - the *Shirah* of Moshiach.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*The kohen shall present the woman before G-d and put in disorder the woman's hair . . . (Bamidbar 5:18)*

Two weeks ago (last week as of the writing of this article), another very interesting and bizarre related issue happened out of the blue in the Torah world, and even made the front page of the New York Times. Applying the well-known principle of:

This is from G-d, that which is wondrous in our eyes. (Tehillim 118:23)

We have to assume it happened for a special reason, and therefore worth mentioning. The following

sums up the problem:

A recent investigation has found that women in India whose hair is used for sheitels (wigs) are donating them as a religious sacrifice - a form of Avodah Zara (idol worship). Jews are not allowed to benefit from idol worship or things donated to it.

The e-mail went on to convey the status of the situation at the time, and how to deal with it. And, there are many opinions flying around, some serious and some humorous as to why this crisis sprung up at this time. However, side-stepping all of that, I just wanted to point out that it is from the Sotah that we learn that a married woman must cover her hair (Kesuvos 72a). For, as an act of reprimand for becoming suspected of adultery, her hair was uncovered by the officiating priest. Thus, the timing of the issue is rather uncanny.

You can be sure that the women of Temple times did not wear wigs, and you can be sure that the ones worn by women at the turn of the previous century did not look anything like the ones worn by women at the turn of this century, or cost nearly as much. However, hair was not a multi- billion dollar industry back then either and made into such an item of beauty. The halachah of a married woman covering her hair never changed, but the emotional difficulty in doing so has certainly increased.

I'm sure many are now addressing and re-addressing the pros and cons of wearing sheitels. I just want to point out that according to tradition, the unfaithful woman is also a symbol of the unfaithful nation that has gone astray after other ways of life, other than that of Torah. Megillas Eichah, which we read on Tisha B'Av, is filled with such allusions of the Jewish people who devoted their hearts to false ideas, imbuing them with value and strength they did not have, only to fail because of them.

The Hebrew word for hair is sa'ar - Sin-Ayin-Raish, which has the same letters as gate - sha'ar, spelled Shin-Ayin-Raish, because hair is like a gateway to the siechel, a person's mind. It is also the root of se'ir - Sin-Ayin-Yud-Raish, the goat through which atonement on Yom Kippur was also achieved. The word barley - se'orah, which was the offering the Sotah brought for atonement, is a similar word.

According to Kabbalah, these letters are associated with din - judgment. Maybe the sheitel issue is a message to the entire nation in a more general sense, for we know that at the End of Days, it will be a time of judgment and therefore a time to use judgment. Life is a process of birrur - separation, and all the crisis Jews undergo are to force us to decide where we stand with the issues of Torah.

As I write there are many kosher sheitels available, and you can be sure that within a short time many more will be, and the entire issue will quickly become a distant memory. But it has happened for a reason and at this time to catch our attention, to urge us to contemplate where our loyalties lie, each in his or her own way, each on his or her own level.

The gematria of lev tov is 49, after which comes 50, the symbol of the supernatural existence of the

Jewish people. A lev tov is the prerequisite to unite with G-d, to become one with Him, so that He can share His Torah with us. NOT to achieve this is to remain in the realm of 49, the realm of the mundane and physical, and to be burdened by all the issues that weigh down the person who builds his or her abode there.

The cites, dates and details of Rabbi Winston's upcoming speaking trip are posted at [www.thirtysix.org](http://www.thirtysix.org).

Have a great Shabbos,  
PW Text

Copyright © by [Rabbi Pinchas Winston](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! [www.thirtysix.org](http://www.thirtysix.org)