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This week's Parasha is sponsored Lirfuat Rav Yona Ben Chava Betch Shaar Cholei Yisrael

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



HONEYBEE

The world in which we live is a very round place.

A chicken's egg, the human eye, the spawn of tadpoles, an oyster, a grain of sand, the stem of a flower, the suction pad of a squid, the rings of a tree trunk, the moon and the sun - the world itself.

There is no square in creation. The natural world is built on endless permutations of the circle.

Why?

Why is the circle the ideal form of creation?

When G-d created the world, He brought into existence a single point, an infinitesimal dot, and from there He drew forth the entire Universe (*Talmud Bavli - Yuma 54b*)

If you take a dot and expand it equally in all directions, you will get a circle.

The circle is the ideal natural form because it expresses creation itself.

The square, on the other hand, the rectangle, and the other rectilinear shapes are the hallmarks of man.

The easiest way for man to build is with straight lines, anything curved is more demanding technically and more expensive.

Why is it more difficult for man to build a circular object than a square one? If the natural world is patterned on the circle, surely the circle should be the natural shape of man's works as well; the circle should be his paradigm and not the square.

The Talmud (*Menachot 29b*) tells us that G-d created this world with the letter *Heh* -



If you look at the letter *Heh*, you will see that it is, in fact, a combination of two other letters, *Dalet* -



and an inverted *Yud* -



The *Dalet* consists of two lines at right angles to each other which point to the four cardinal directions of the compass:



The numerical value of *Dalet* is four. The lines of the *Dalet* represent expansion away from that primeval point of existence.

The *Dalet* is an archetypal rectilinear shape. Man's creations are based on the straight line because they flow from the *Dalet* that is their source.

However, this world was not created with the *Dalet* alone; it was created with the *Yud* as well, and the *Yud* had another role in creation. With the *Yud*, G-d created the Future World. The *Yud* is really no more than the tiniest dot.

The ideal dot has no direction and occupies no space. In order for us to write a *Yud*, we have to give it some dimension otherwise it would be invisible. However, the ideal dot cannot be drawn in this world. A point that occupies no space is something that can only exist in a world that is above space - the Future World.

When this world focuses on the world beyond, it fulfils its purpose; when the *Dalet* focuses on the *Yud*, when rectilinear dimension focuses on a ►

Tichri 28th 5780

SHABBAT BEGINS: 5:29 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 6:36 PM



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Today's accomplishments were yesterday's impossibilities"

> UPCOMING EVENTS

- ▶ 13th NOV Caffeine for the Soul Ladies program
- ▶ 14th NOV Challah Bake
- ▶ 15th NOV Young Professional Friday Night Dinner

For our upcoming events check our website www.torahactionlife.com



DVAR TORAH

Honeybee
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

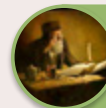
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point that has no dimension - this world reaches its perfection.

When man sublimates his creations to that higher plane, when the dimensionality of the *Dalet* aspires to the transcendence of the *Yud*, earth touches heaven.

Then the letter *heh*, is complete.

Even though the pre-eminent shape of nature is the circle, there exists a natural phenomenon that seems to defy this axiom.

Throughout recorded history, observers have marvelled at the hexagonal pattern of the honeybee's elaborate storage system. More than 2,000 years ago, Greek scholars commented on how bees apparently possess "a certain geometrical forethought" in achieving just the right type of enclosure to hold honey efficiently. In the 19th century, Charles Darwin described the honeycomb as a masterpiece of engineering that is "absolutely perfect in economizing labor and wax." (Needless to say, from the Jewish perspective, no bee will be getting the Nobel Prize for engineering this year. The bee's incredible engineering feat bespeaks not the wisdom of the bee, but one tiny aspect of the wisdom of He who brought this amazing world into being.)

The honeycomb is a hexagon - a six-sided circle,

if you like. Why does the honeycomb seem to depart from the natural roundness of the creation and lean towards the linearity of man? Why is the honeycomb a synthesis of the circle and the square?

The answer is that the hexagon represents an ideal synthesis of form and function.

If the honeycomb were round there would be a lot of wasted space between the cells and the entire structure would be less strong.

Were the honeycomb octagonal, which would be even closer to the ideal circle, the modules would not interlock; there would still be some space in between each cell in the honeycomb.

Thus, the hexagon is the perfect blend of the circle and the square, the ideal synthesis of form and function, of this world and the world beyond this world.

Why was it, though, that G-d chose the honeybee of all creatures to express this synthesis?

The bee is a unique creature. It itself is not a kosher creature, but its produce - honey - is. The honeybee represents the transformation of that which *ossur*, prohibited, into that which is *mutar*, permitted. In fact, *ossur* is better translated as "bound". What makes something prohibited is our inability to reach the inner spark of holiness

that gives it existence in this world. It is bound up, tied, and inaccessible. We cannot connect to it, and it connects only to itself. It is trapped, bound, *ossur*.

G-d has given the Jewish People the job of connecting this world to the one beyond it. Left to himself, man degenerates into an obsession with form, with physicality, with the way things look. He constructs monoliths to scrape the skies, vaunting geometry.

That which connects only to itself is inherently *tameh*.

Tuma results from the failed potential for connection: *Loshon Hara*, words that divide people, is inherently *tameh* and in Biblical times caused visible lesions on the skin. The monthly cycle of the body's reproductive capacity causes *tuma* when it does not lead to the beginning of new life - the un-actualized potential for the renewal of life brings *tuma* because it expresses a failure to connect to what is beyond it.

The honeybee symbolizes the subservience of form to function, the sublimation of *tuma* into *tahara*.

The honeybee takes the square and makes it into a six-sided circle.

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YEHOANATAN SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA



BE FRUITFUL

Our Torah contains 613 commandments, mitzvot. There are 248 positive ones that we must "do," and 365 negative ones that we must be careful "not to do." These 613 are the key mitzvot, from

which thousands of other mitzvot branch off. When we learn our holy Torah and delve into its mitzvot, we consequently become more accustomed with them and capable of fulfilling them properly. The first mitzvah is mentioned in this parashah, as the Torah states (Bereshit 1:28), "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the world." It is written at the beginning of the Torah because of its primary importance for the continuation of our nation. What are the requirements of this mitzvah? It is incumbent upon a man to marry a woman, and to bear a boy and a girl (this is the minimum requirement). The Rambam (Hilchot Ishut 15:16) writes that even after having achieved this, there is still a rabbinical mitzvah

to continue having more children. The reason for this is that bringing a soul down to this world is tantamount to building an entire world. Moreover, we do not know which children G-d is waiting to award us with. There are some very special neshamot waiting to be born, and we may merit being the emissaries to bring them into this world. What are the reasons for this mitzvah? The main reason for the Torah commanding us to be fruitful is because G-d created the world Delving Within 13 The 613 Mitzvot to be perpetuated. Thus, by busying ourselves in populating the world, we are fulfilling G-d's Will in Creation. There is an additional reason, though, as follows: When G-d created this world, it was for the neshamot, souls, to be able to descend to this world to earn their reward. The souls would eventually return to Heaven corrected, complete and able to reap eternal reward. After all these neshamot have achieved their ultimate perfection, Mashiach, who we have long-awaited, will come. Hence, every child that is born hastensthe arrival of Mashiach. This mitzvah is essential to the continuation of the world, as it will enable more people to practise the mitzvot as well. The learning of Torah and performance of its mitzvot was given to man and not to angels. Without the reproduction of man the world would revert to emptiness and void, as there would be no one to practice Torah and

mitzvot. Our Sages tell us that one may not sell a sefer Torah, except in two urgent circumstances. One is when it is required to ensure the continued learning of Torah, as without its study, the mitzvot cannot be fulfilled and the world cannot exist. The second is when it is required so that one will be able to get married. Without marriage, there can be no continuity, and the purpose of the world will not be fulfilled; hence, this justifies even selling a sefer Torah. One of the six cardinal questions that we will be asked on our "Day of Reckoning" is if we made efforts to get married and have children. Interestingly, this question refers not only to our doing so, but also, to helping others do so. There are so many people out there who lack the connections or the knowhow to go about it, and desperately need someone to empathize and help them out. Let us act responsibly and make a list all of the "singles" we know, and try to help find suitable shidduchim, partners in marriage for them, thereby ensuring the continuation of the world.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

PROPHET OF THE KABBALAH: RABBI YITZHAK LURIA ASHKENAZI, THE ARI Z"l

Rabbi Yitzhak Halevi Luria, forerunner of the Kabbalah and, more particularly, the school of thought that bears his name, became widely known throughout the Jewish world under the name of the Ari, a name formed by his initials.

As the surname Ashkenazi indicates, the family of Rabbi Yitzhak Luria came from Germany. They then immigrated to the Holy Land and settled in Jerusalem. Born there was a man that was destined to play a defining role in the spiritual development of his generation, an influence that makes itself felt unto today.

Becoming fatherless from his early childhood, the future Rabbi Yitzhak went to Cairo with his mother to meet his uncle, Rabbi Mordechai Parnass. Being a wealthy, learned and generous man, he immediately saw to raising him and lavishing him with the best Jewish education possible. The child was enrolled in the Cairo yeshiva, and had as his teacher the illustrious Rabbi David ben Zimra, better known by his initials, the Ridbaz. As the Chief Rabbi of Egypt, the Ridbaz had already gained great renown from his book of responsa. He made his young and brilliant student one of his protégés, and helped him to arrive at the summit of sacred knowledge.

It was in this way that Rabbi Yitzhak, while still a young man, managed to write a brilliant commentary on the tractate Zebachim (Sacrifices).

Aware of having an unusually great sage in the person of his nephew, Rabbi Mordechai Parnass gave him his daughter in marriage and undertook to free him of all material concerns. Yet Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, whose soul was noticeably at the highest-level possible, did not want to limit himself to the study of Talmud and Halachah. Kabbalah, the science of truth, acquired by the most extensive analysis possible of Torah, exerted an irresistible attraction on him. He therefore decided to devote his life to study and develop it. It was thus that, from his earliest years, he began to isolate himself by the shores of the Nile. Later he withdrew completely from social life to devote himself totally to the key work of Kabbalah, in this case the Zohar of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

This period of isolation lasted seven years, during which time Rabbi Yitzhak would come home but once a week to spend Shabbat with his family.

The lofty soul that was his allowed him not only to understand the secrets of the Zohar, but also (and especially) to become familiar with the universe in all its mysteries. Nothing dealing with the ways of nature, of life, or of the world were unfamiliar to him. To arrive at such knowledge, knowledge that was sometimes inaccessible to even the greatest sages of his era, Rabbi Yitzhak didn't hesitate to impose on himself entire days of fasting, of prayer, and of study.

His tireless efforts to penetrate to the depths of Torah allowed him to discover the true meanings of the Jewish faith in all its different aspects. Henceforth was born a new school of Kabbalistic thought that carried the name of the Ari.

This G-d-inspired man set himself the goal of purifying the world by replacing its faulty foundations. In 1569, he left Egypt with his entire family to go to the Holy Land. After a stay in Jerusalem, he left for Sefat with firm intention of making it an important center for the study of Kabbalah.

It wasn't long before the small town in the Galilee became the center of attraction for scholars who wished to drink of the hidden secrets of the Torah. His students didn't stop rushing to be close to the Ari in order to listen to his Kabbalistic interpretations, not only of Torah, but also of every event, large and small, that shook the world, especially in the Holy Land and Sefat.

The students of the Ari, who were becoming ever more numerous, joyfully accepted the way of life of their revered teacher. This was a life of holiness, but also one of mortification, and was the only way to make them malleable to the spiritually elevating knowledge of Kabbalah. Under the influence of the Ari, the smallest gesture, the least word, the slightest thought would from that moment take on a completely different dimension; all the more would public prayer. In fact, what the Ari had discovered and transmitted was the deepest, most authentic and spiritual sense of every word – even every letter – of the Torah.

We therefore have no problem imagining the atmosphere of inspiration, holiness, and fervor that surrounded the services in the Ari's synagogue. It was the same for every Shabbat meal, strewn with words of Kabbalah and sacred songs, many of which came from the pen of the Ari himself. Such Shabbat meals took on the semblance of veritable sacrifices to G-d. As for the Melaveh Malka meal, at the end of Shabbat, those who partook of it were left with an indelible impression that lasted the entire week.

Expanding beyond the borders of the Holy Land, the Ari's Kabbalistic teachings spread across the entire world and became a unique point of reference for all Jewish communities, within whom the world of reality and prayer had forever been changed.

The moment has come to make mention of one of the principle students of the Rabbi, a person to whom we owe the credit for spreading his teachings around the world. This person was Rabbi Haim Vital, who alone had the privilege and the authorization of putting the Ari's thoughts into writing. Who is not familiar with his monumental work Etz Chaim ("The Tree of Life"), of which new editions have not ceased since the invention of the printing press?

As for Rabbi Israel Saruk, he was another eminent student of the Ari.

A veritable prophet of Kabbalah, the Ari passed away when he was only 39 years old. The entire Jewish people began to mourn this giant of Torah and Kabbalah, a man who in many ways revolutionized the Jewish nation's daily and long-term way of life. Innumerable are the communities that have adopted the Ari's customs, and who, during Chassidic get-togethers, sing songs and melodies created by our revered teacher.

We can thus affirm, without exaggerating, that the teachings of the Ari served as a veritable shield for European Jewish communities that were confronted with the Reform movement, a movement that attacked Judaism during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Hilloula of the Ari z"l is Av 5. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE BERACHA OVER COOKED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

As a general rule, fruits or vegetables that are commonly eaten either raw or cooked require the same Beracha regardless of the form in which they are eaten. Yalkut Yosef gives the example of quinces, which people sometimes eat raw and sometimes first cook them. The Beracha would thus be "Haetz" regardless of whether it is eaten raw or cooked. Another example is the chestnut, which in some places, is eaten even raw. Hacham Ovadia Yosef thus rules that in such places, one recites "Haetz" over a chestnut regardless of how it is eaten. If, however, an item is commonly eaten only cooked, and not raw like the chestnut in most places then if it is eaten raw, its Beracha is "downgraded" to "Shehakol," since it is eaten in an unusual manner. Conversely, if a fruit is normally eaten raw, then the Beracha is "Haetz" only if it is eaten raw; if it is cooked, then its Beracha is "Shehakol." One example is citrus fruits, such as oranges. Since oranges are normally eaten raw, one who cooks an orange and eats it recites "Shehakol."

Yalkut Yosef makes an important exception to this rule, based on the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in Parashat Pinhas (7). Namely, if a fruit or vegetable is normally eaten raw, but it can be enhanced by boiling it in water together with another item such as sugar, or meat then it maintains its original Beracha even after it is cooked. Since cooking in this manner has the effect of enhancing the food, the Beracha is not "downgraded" to "Shehakol," despite the fact that it is normally eaten raw. An example is nuts which are normally eaten raw, but can be boiled with a glaze of honey or sugar. The Beracha over such an item would be "Haetz," despite the fact that the nut is more commonly eaten raw.

Summary: If a fruit or vegetable is normally eaten raw, then one who eats it after it is cooked recites "Shehakol," instead of the normal Beracha of "Haetz" or Haadama. A common example is citrus fruits. Conversely, if a food is normally eaten cooked, then one who eats it raw recites "Shehakol," and "Haetz" or "Haadama" would be recited only if it is eaten cooked. An example would be a chestnut (except in places where it is eaten raw). A food which is eaten either cooked or raw such as a quince requires the same Beracha in either state. If a nut is normally eaten raw, but it can be enhanced by being cooked with sugar, honey or some other food, then it requires "Haetz" even after it is cooked. ■

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- ❶ Hashem blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
- ❷ In whose likeness was man fashioned?
- ❸ What kind of food did Adam eat?
- ❹ Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
- ❺ At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?

Five Books of the Torah. ❶ 2:2 - Rest. ❷ 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter hey, which has a numerical value of five. Hashem created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the blessing. ❸ 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels. ❹ 1:30 - Vegetation. ❺ 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a

Answer

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