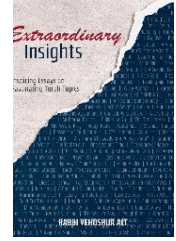
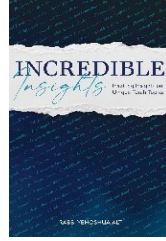
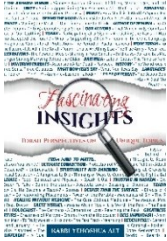


Fascinating INSIGHTS

יב' אייר תשפ"ב
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Fishy Fish

One of the food items that we are careful to eat on Shabbos is fish. What is the idea behind this?

On the fifth day of creation Hashem blessed the fish. On the sixth day He blessed man and on the seventh He blessed Shabbos.¹ On Shabbos, we eat fish and we therefore fuse the blessings of man, fish and Shabbos into a lasting bond as it says *והחוט המשלש לא במהרה ינתק*,² a three-ply cord is not easily severed.³

An allusion to this is found in the 23rd chapter of Tehillim, where Hashem is described as a shepherd who cares for His people and attends to their needs. *ה' רעי לא אחסר בנאות דשא ירביצני*, Hashem is my shepherd, I shall not lack. In lush meadows He lays me down.⁴ The word *דשא* is an acronym for *דגים, שבת, אדם*. We see Hashem's care which

he showers upon us in this world by unifying all three items that were blessed at creation.

Fallow Land, Fellow Jews

Many open miracles have happened to farmers that observed the laws of shemita. The Ridvaz documents how the first farmers to settle in Eretz Yisrael didn't observe the laws of shemita for four shemitos in a row. And so, from 1889 until 1917, in each year following the violated shemita year, great catastrophes occurred in the fields, to the extent that in 1918 one-third of the population had to leave Israel.⁵ However, in 1972, as is documented, there was a disproportionately higher growth of produce in the fields only of farmers who were preparing to keep shemita the next year, just as the Torah promises.⁶

¹ Breishis 1:22, 1:28, 2:3.

² Koheles 4:12.

³ Igra D'kallah, Parshas Breishis, 22, s.v. *od nireh li*.

⁴ Tehillim 23:1,2.

⁵ The Ridvaz (Introduction to the sefer Beis Ridvaz) lists the tragedies that befell the settlers in Eretz Yisrael during the post-shemita years and perceives them as a punishment for the violation of shemita. "Let it be known that after the shemita year of 1889 was violated, locusts devoured all the grain in the

following year. In the post-shemita year of 1897 Hashem sent throngs of mice which ruined all the crops... After violating the shemita year of 1910 all the granaries were consumed by fire..."

⁶ Vayikra 25:21, 22. Parenthetically, shemita is one of the mitzvos that demonstrates that there is Hashem, as no man would ever devise such a commandment. It must be that it is Divine. The fact that there are 613 mitzvos is also indicative of Hashem, as no man would formulate such an enormous amount of commandments.

R' Binyomin Mendelson (1904-1979), the Rav of Moshav Komemiyus, wrote of the many miracles the moshav farmers witnessed while observing shemita. Here is one of the poignant stories that he related: "It was in the year 1953 just after a shemita year and we didn't have wheat to sow. We didn't want to use wheat seeds from the shemita year, and the only seeds we could find from the sixth year were broken and inadequate for planting. The farmers asked me for advice and I told them that since they couldn't find other wheat they should believe in Hashem and plant as the Yerushalmi says. The villages around Komemiyus mocked the religious farmers for planting those seeds and told them that they would incur a huge loss. Nevertheless, they continued. In that eighth year there were no rains at the start of winter and all the seeds of those who had plowed the land during shemita and planted immediately at the end of shemita died in the dry land. But for the Komemiyus farmers, who began plowing only after Succos and planted in the first months of the winter, the rain came just on time. Miraculously, the damaged seeds grew into high-quality wheat." R' Mendelson concluded, "That was a sign that Hashem sends his blessings to those who observe shemita."

Another riveting story that R' Mendelson penned was the following. "In the early months of the shemita year of 1959, this is what took place. Animal feeds were growing in our fields from seeds that were planted before shemita. One Friday swarms of locusts arrived and began devouring the nearby fields. Some of our farmers approached me expressing their fear about our crops. I told them that we would see Hashem's salvation in the shemita year. The swarms of locusts moved nearer to us but turned back just as they reached our fields. Our crops were fully intact and not even one locust remained in sight. When I related this incident to the Brisker Rav, he said that it was a miracle that must be publicized."

Bed, Table, Lamp

The gemara⁷ highlights three tasks to be done upon the entry of Shabbos: מטה מוצעת, שלחן ערוך, גר דלוק, a lamp burning, the table set and the bed made. Why are these three highlighted?

The three mitzvos that have a special connection to women are נדה, חלה, and הדלקת נרות,⁸ laws of nida, challah and lighting Shabbos candles.⁹ The three mitzvos endowed to women correspond with the three the gemara mentions: גר דלוק is synonymous with הדלקת נרות.

⁷ Shabbos 119b.

⁸ We know that women light Shabbos candles. But it is proper that the husband prepare it (Mishna Brura 263:12). R' Akiva Eiger shows us how this is hinted to in the language of the mishna (Mishnayos Shabbos 2:6) which says ובהדלקת הנר. Why doesn't it say ובנר just like it says בבנה? Why does it say ובהדלקת הנר? This is telling us that women are not commanded on the preparation of the candles rather only on the lighting.

⁹ Mishnayos Shabbos 2:6. See Breishis 24:67, Rashi.

matches up with מטה מוצעת, as Shabbos is the time of relations.¹⁰ Finally, חלה is aligned with שלחן ערוך.¹¹

The first letters of הדלקת נרות, נדה, חלה spell חנה.¹² This is because Chana was a reincarnation of Chava,¹³ who sinned in these three areas.

How did she sin in these three areas? The Yerushalmi¹⁴ explains why these three are connected to women: Chava caused the death of Adam who is called the blood of the world (corresponding to nida), the pure challah of the world (corresponding to the mitzvah of challah) and the light of the world (corresponding to lighting candles). In fact, the Chida¹⁵ tells us חנה is an acronym for (נר) הדלקה וסת, חלה, וסת.¹⁶

The sin of Adam took place on Friday and the three mitzvos of women correspond to a different three that take place on Friday (namely, a lamp burning, the table set and the bed being made), thereby serving as a rectification for the sin of Adam.

Sublime Synopsis

In Shemoneh Esrei, we say Havdala in the bracha of בינה, insight (אתה חוננתנו). There are four brachos that we recite at Havdala: יין, בשמים, נר, הבדלה, wine, spices, flame and the separation between holy and secular. The Seder Hayom points out that these four are alluded to in the word בינה as it is an acronym for יין, נר, הבדלה, בשמים.

The initials of these four—יין, בשמים, נר, הבדלה—also spell the word יבנה. This refers to שבת ה' שבת יבנה, לירושלים ברחמים ביתי יבנה בה, therefore thus said Hashem: I have returned to Yerushalayim in mercy; My Temple will be rebuilt in it.¹⁷

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Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of three books including the recently released Extraordinary Insights, in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹⁰ See Kesubos 62b, Orach Chaim 280:1. Indeed, the first letters of ביאה, (Shemos 31:16-7) בני ישראל אות היא and בני ישראל את השבת, relations.

¹¹ In light of this, we can understand why אשת חיל is said upon the entry of Shabbos, after she did these three.

¹² see Maom Loaz, Shmuel 1, 1:8.

¹³ Rema Mipano, Gilgulai Neshamos, footnote 161.

¹⁴ Shabbos 2:6.

¹⁵ Mesachta Geirim, 1:4, s.v. b'nida.

¹⁶ Literally, cycle. It refers to nida.

¹⁷ Zecharya 1:16.