

Fascinating INSIGHTS

כה' אייר תשפ"ה
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פרשת בהר-בחקתי
13th year, edition 577

I am excited to announce that the newly released book "Astounding Torah Insights about the Human Body" is now available (as a paperback, hardcover and digitized version) for purchase and delivery on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0F6TRBKF1> or by sending a WhatsApp to +972 54 849 5217. Alternatively, you can call 054 849 5217 (Israel) or 917 732 2371 (United States) or send an email to yalt3285@gmail.com.

Some of the questions discussed in this book are the following.

What is the significance of the lashon hakodesh names for various body parts?

Where does the Torah hint to different ways of breathing?

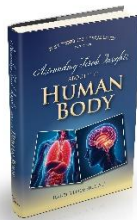
What is the spiritual connection of the esophagus and trachea located in the neck?

Where in the Torah do we find handshakes mentioned?

What is the Torah's perspective on healthy eating and exercise?

This insightful book explores these questions and many more, offering profound insights. More than 70 meticulously crafted essays are included, illuminating the Torah's approach to the human body. With this indispensable guide, readers are empowered to achieve a richer understanding of these essential topics.

It makes a great gift for parents, siblings, friends, relatives, neighbors, business associates, acquaintances and learning partners. Purchase it at <https://amzn.to/3eyh5xP>. And please spread the word about it!



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Please feel free to print some copies of this publication and distribute them in your local shul(s) for the public, thereby having a hand in spreading Torah and changing the lives of others.

Chess, Gemara, and an Army General

Chess, the famous game. Fascinatingly, it is mentioned in the gemara where it says ונדרשיר, one who plays chess.¹

Chess is also mentioned by R' Yehuda Halevi in the Kuzari at the end of the fifth essay:² "For this reason, the weak-minded person is unable to beat the strong-minded person in chess. One cannot argue that good or bad luck

¹ Kesubos 61b.

² Kuzari 5:20:52.

are factors in the war of chess. This is because all the causes for a victory in chess are within the individual. The wise player will therefore win..."

The son-in-law of R' Yehuda Halevi, R' Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167), a fervent chess player, wrote several poems about chess. In one of his poems, he describes the rules of the game and the movement options for each piece in the game. Certain rules in modern chess are based on the writings of the Ibn Ezra.

R' Chaim Benveniste (1603-1673) in his *Knesses Hagdola*³ writes that he heard that when his rebbe, the Maharit, saw two people playing chess, he would teach them what moves to make. He adds that he also heard that the Mahari Bassan himself also plays chess.⁴



There is a sefer called *Maadanei Melech* that teaches the rules of chess. This sefer was published in the year 1726 in Frankfurt by the tremendous Torah scholar R' Asher Anshel Worms⁵ (1695-1759). In the introduction to the sefer he writes that he published this sefer because he was desperate for money.⁶

What is the origin of the game of chess? R' Dovid Chaim Korinaldi (1700-1770) in his sefer *Beis Dovid*⁷ cites a source stating that the game of chess was discovered in the possession of an army general who lived before the era of the sages of the mishna. He concludes that it is therefore not surprising that chess is mentioned in the gemara.

Higher Havdalah

When the Ben Ish Chai was a young child, his father once asked him, just before Havdalah: "Why is the order of the brachos—first on wine, then spices, and finally on fire—set that way?"

The young Ben Ish Chai explained that this progression holds a deeper message. We begin with wine, which we taste with our mouth; then we move to spices, which we smell with our nose; and finally to the flame, which we see with

our eyes. Each moves from a lower part on the face to a higher one, from the mouth to the nose and then the eyes which is placed the highest of these three.

As we transition from the holy Shabbos into the week, this order reminds us that we



must not descend spiritually, but continue to ascend. Shabbos may be ending, but we still must grow and elevate

our lives throughout the coming days.

Horse Hero

Señor Raphael Picciotto (רפאל די פֿיגיוטו)⁸ owned a beautiful white horse that he greatly enjoyed riding during excursions outside the city. When the horse fell ill and died, he was heartbroken, feeling as though he had lost a beloved companion.

Many rabbis tried to console him, but none succeeded—until R' Mordechai Attiah offered words of comfort drawn from Tehillim:⁹ I will not take a bull from your house, nor from your pens any goats. R' Attiah interpreted the phrase מִבֵּיתְךָ in the following way. He read פר as an acronym for רבקה פֿיגיוטו, identifying Raphael's wife, Rivka Picciotto. In this creative reading, the verse became a divine message: "I will not take from you, Rivka Picciotto, but rather, as a kappara, atonement,¹⁰ I will take from your stables—a horse." Understanding the loss of his horse as taking the place of his wife leaving this world offered great comfort to Raphael Picciotto, easing his grief.

One can look at setbacks and suffering in one's life as a kindness from Hashem as it could have been much worse.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years and received semichah from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written thousands of Torah articles on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of ten books including the recently released "Astounding Torah Insights about the Human Body." His writings, many 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. His shiurim can be found on various websites including Kol Halashon's. Rabbi Alt lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, lectures, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

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passed away ten years later. In Tevarya, he purchased a property that became known as Beis Picciotto, upon which he established a yeshiva.

⁹ Tehillim 50:9.

¹⁰ Kappara is used for the animal sacrifice to redeem the sins of a person. See the context of the pasuk in Tehillim 50:9.

³ Choshen Mishpat, 370:4.

⁴ See the Chida in Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim, 338.

⁵ He wrote on many subjects including a book he wrote in his youth on Algebra.

⁶ Otzar Hayedios, Volume 3, p. 186.

⁷ Shabbos, Chapter 23, Second Mishna.

⁸ Raphael Picciotto, a respected scholar and philanthropist, was born in Aleppo and moved to Tevarya in 1817, where he