

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHEMINI-PARAH · 22 ADAR II 5765 · APR. 2, 2005 · VOL. 12 NO. 26

PARSHA INSIGHTS

ONE SMALL STEP FOR A MAN

“Lest you become contaminated...” (11:43)

The road to holiness does not start with lofty ideals or sublime thoughts. It does not begin with a mind-expanding Revelation or a Close Encounter. It cannot be produced by psychotropic drugs, nor can it be experienced by climbing the Alps or the Andes.

True, gazing down from Mont Blanc or Everest may fill us with awe at the Creator’s handiwork. Nature can truly inspire closeness to G-d, but all this inspiration will vanish like a cloud of smoke if we lack the fundamental ingredients to concretize inspiration into actuality.

The road to holiness starts with a few small boring steps. Like being a decent moral person and controlling our emotions and appetites.

As Jews, we may not eat what we like when we like. On Pesach we may eat no bread. On Yom Tov we should eat meat. On Yom Kippur we may eat nothing. At all times, we may not eat the forbidden foods that are the subject of this week’s Torah portion.

“Lest you become contaminated...” In Hebrew this sentence is expressed as one word: *V’nitmay’hem*. The spelling of this word is unusual. It lacks an aleph and thus it can also

read as *V’nitumtem* – which means *“Lest you become dulled.”*

In our search for holiness and meaning in this world, one of our greatest assets and aids are the laws of *kashrut*. Kosher food is soul food. Food for the soul. Food that feeds our spirituality and sharpens our ability to receive holiness. Food that is not kosher does the reverse. It dulls our senses. It makes us less sensitive, less receptive to holiness. A Jew who tries to seek holiness sitting on top of some mountain in the Far East living on a diet of salted pork will find it impossible to achieve his goal. The view of Ganges or the Himalayas (or his navel) may titillate his spiritual senses, but he will find no growth or nourishment reaching his core.

The spiritual masters teach that if a person contaminates himself a little, he becomes contaminated a great deal. Spirituality is a delicate thing. It doesn’t take much to jam the broadcast from Upstairs. On the other hand, a little bit of holiness goes a long way. As the Torah teaches *“You shall sanctify yourselves and you shall become holy.”* (11:44) A little bit of sanctity generates a lot of holiness. If we sanctify ourselves down here in this lowly world with all its barriers to holiness, if we guard our mouths, our eyes and our ears, then the Torah promises us that we will be given help to lift us to lofty peaks of holiness.

It all starts with one small step.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that

they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

HOLY COW

A basic principle in correcting any situation is to go back to the source of the problem. This is especially true when it comes to the spiritual rehabilitation of atonement for sin.

In the special Torah reading this Shabbat of *Parshat Para*, which we will hear in the synagogue along with the regular weekly portion, we learn of the ritual connected with the red heifer. Our Sages saw in the slaughtering and burning of this animal not only a preparation of the ashes to be used in purifying a Jew from the spiritual contamination arising from contact with the dead, but also a form of sacrifice to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf.

They compare this to the situation of the little son of a royal maid who dirtied the palace of the king. The maid was commanded to clean up the mess her child made. In similar fashion the heifer is called upon to atone for the sin of the

calf.

The child who dirties the palace casts blame on a negligent mother. In correcting the mistake of the golden calf it was also necessary to go back to the source, biologically represented by its mother but ideologically expressed in a lack of self-control.

Much is being discussed in academic circles and in the media about the violence in Israel's schools and society. The solutions being proposed are hardly more than band-aids. *Parshat Para* should serve as a lesson in going back to the source of the problem. When there is a lack of discipline in regard to the laws given by G-d to the Jewish People, we can hardly expect a respect for the laws of the land and for the rights of others. Only by applying the lesson of the "Holy Cow" can we guarantee the physical and spiritual well-being of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

"ARAB" TO THE RESCUE

Rabbi Arye Levine was indeed "A Tzaddik in our Time", the title of a book written about this saintly man, father-in-law of today's leading halachic authority, Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv.

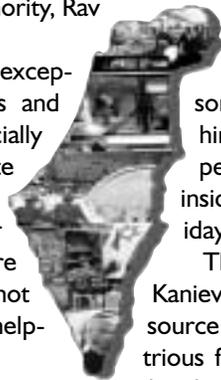
In addition to all his legendary virtues he was exceptional in his concern for the widows, orphans and impoverished families of Jerusalem. He was especially busy before Pesach, collecting money to distribute to those who would otherwise lack the basic necessities for celebrating the holiday. One year during the Second World War, when times were tough even for the prosperous, Reb Aryeh did not manage to put together the sum he needed for helping all the families who depended on him.

What did a *tzaddik* like Reb Aryeh do in such a situa-

tion?

He went to the Kotel to pour out his heart in prayer to Heaven. After a long period of tearfully appealing to G-d to help him provide for the needy families he left the Kotel. He was suddenly approached by someone in Arab dress who, without a word, handed him a package wrapped in a newspaper and disappeared. When Reb Aryeh opened the package he found inside the exact amount of money he needed for his holiday distribution.

The great Torah giant of Bnei Brak, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, whose wife is Reb Aryeh's granddaughter, is the source of this story and insists that it is believed in that illustrious family that the one who handed the money to Reb Aryeh was the Prophet Eliyahu.



לענין

ר' אברהם יצחק בן ר' יעקב ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

OHRNET magazine is published by Ohr Somayach Tanenbaum College

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What date was “*yom hashemini*”?
2. Which of Aharon’s *korbanot* atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What *korbanot* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatat* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkat kohanim*?
6. Why did Moshe go into the *Ohel Mo’ed* with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three *chatat* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.
11. Which he-goat *chatat* did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the *chatat*. Why?
14. Why did Hashem choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar, and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrut*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only one sign of *kashrut*? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called *chasida* in Hebrew?
19. The *chagav* is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 9:1 - First of *Nissan*.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a *korban chatat*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatat*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *mincha*.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a *chatat* offered on the courtyard *mizbe’ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanot*, before descending from the *mizbe’ach*.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the *Shechina* to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the *Mishkan* after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a *halachic* ruling. Also, a *kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, approach the *mizbe’ach*, or perform the *avoda*.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of *Rosh Chodesh*, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.
11. 10:16 - The *Rosh Chodesh chatat*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninut* (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the *kohanim* eat the *chatat* are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4,5,6,7 - Four: Camel, *shafan*, hare, and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with *chesed* (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher *chagav*.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern).

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them.

TALMUDigest

BERACHOT 30 - 36

- The traveler's prayer •Prayer in emergency situations
- Direction of prayer •Musaf for the individual
- Preparation for prayer and concentration •Windows in the synagogue •Number of daily prayers •Lessons from the prayer of Chana •Prayers of Moshe following sin of Golden Calf and for entry into Eretz Yisrael •Power of prayer •Need for reinforcement *When prayer may be interrupted •Prayer for rain and *havdalah* •Improper prayers •Leading the prayer service •Bowing in prayer •Status of the Ba'al Teshuva •Prayer of a *tzaddik* •Blessings on food

WOE TO THE SERPENT

One of the many wonders connected with the great *tzaddik* Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa began when he was informed about a place where a serpent was attacking people. He asked to be shown the hole where the serpent hid and then placed his heel on top of it. As expected, the serpent bit him. But as unexpected, it was the serpent that died. Rabbi Chanina then carried the dead serpent on his shoulders, entered the *Beit Midrash* and announced to those studying there: "See, my sons, it is not the serpent which kills, but sin."

It was then that people said: "Woe to the man who encounters a serpent and woe to the serpent who encounters Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa."

The question raised by the commentaries is how was it permissible for this Sage to place himself in a situation of danger to life while relying on a miracle?

One solution to this problem refers us to an earlier *gemara* (17b) which states that each day a voice comes forth from Heaven announcing that the entire world is nourished in the merit of Chanina. Aware of his Divinely-appointed role as protector of the world, he was absolutely confident that he would not be harmed in coming to the rescue of the endangered public.

Another approach to which a footnote of Rabbi Akiva Eiger refers us is that since Rabbi Chanina's intention was to sanctify the Name of G-d by demonstrating that a sinless man will not be harmed, it was permissible for him to endanger himself.

Yet another solution is based on a *gemara* (*Mesechta Shabbat 151b*) which states that a wild beast can only overcome a man when he appears to it like an animal as the result of his sins. Completely confident that he was free of sin, Rabbi Chanina had no cause to fear the serpent and was not even in need of a miracle.

• *Berachot 33a*

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"The Jewish People committed the sin of the Gold Calf as a result of being enriched with too much gold. Their situation at that time was comparable to that of a man who washed and fed his son, hung a bag of gold coins around his neck, and placed him at the entrance to a house of ill fame. Can you expect that the son will not sin?!"

• RABBI YOCHANAN - BERACHOT 32A

OHR BITS

Witty Advice for Circling Life

"No one is indispensable and no one is expendable. Climb your own Everest not because it is there but because you are here."

• RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

AN ANGLE ON ANGELS

From: Jonathan in Johannesburg

Dear Rabbi,
Who is on a higher level, man or the angels?

Dear Jonathan,

It depends from what angle.

Certainly angels are higher than man in respect to their level of comprehension of spiritual matters, their inherent greatness and their degree of holiness. Regarding their comprehension, the Zohar states: "The comprehension of angels is very great...which is not the case of those below them on the second level....The comprehension of those on the third level which is founded on the earth is the lowest, that is the level of comprehension of people" (Zohar Chadash, Bereshet, Midrash Ne'elam, on the verse 'G-d called the light day'). Regarding their greatness it says, "The angels are closest and first to receive the power and influence from [G-d] on high, and from them it flows down into the physical universe and all it contains, and from there down to man" (ibid. 16b). Finally, regarding their holiness, the Zohar claims, "the angels are holier than we are" (Teruma 129b).

However, man has one overwhelming advantage over the angels. That is his soul. The human soul is what G-d breathed of His own eternal life-force into man, such that the soul itself is considered a part of G-d on High. While the lowest level of soul is bound in the body of man, its higher levels reach up through all of the worlds until its fifth and highest level is of, and within, G-d Himself (see our article on **Soul**). Since man's soul originates from within G-d Himself and infuses all the worlds on its way down into the physical body, it serves as a type of soul for every level of reality that

it permeates. Therefore, just as the soul animates the human body, its being an extension of the Divine enables it to animate all the worlds through which it descends as well.

Since each of the 613 mitzvot correspond to 613 different parts of the body, which in turn are connected to the soul, a person who exercises his free will to perform the Will of G-d actually corrects, perfects and illuminates the upper worlds through which the soul reaches. Every thought, word or deed, then, has great potential to elevate, connect and unify the entire creation in harmonious recognition of G-d. This is something that the angels could never do. The Kabbalists explain that an angel is only one specific force in the array of the universe, with no free will, fixed and static (*Eitz Chaim, Penimiut and Chitzoniut, derush yud*). That is why angels are referred to as "standing seraphim" (Is. 6) or "these standing ones" (Zech. 3), since they operate in only one plane, have no independent power to effect anything and have no free will. In contrast, man in relation to the angels is called a mover among the stationary (ibid.).

In fact, since through free will, man's thoughts, speech and actions have such a profound influence on all levels of reality, from the lowest physical plane to the highest spiritual one, and since angels are fixed within these different realms, humans actually determine, together with G-d, the very status of the angels. This expresses a deeper meaning behind Jacob's vision of the ladder whose 'legs' rested on the earth, whose 'head' reached into heaven and upon which angels ascended and descended. It symbolizes man's essence — Simultaneously fixed in the physical world but linked through the different levels of the soul, like rungs in a ladder, to the loftiest spiritual spheres. In this way, man can actually elevate or, G-d forbid, corrupt, the entire creation, including angels.

Sources:

- Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, *Nefesh HaChaim, Part 1 ch 1-10*

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

BUG IN THE BOTTLE

Question: A fellow shopping in a supermarket noticed a bug crawling in a bottle of drink on one of the shelves. He took down the bottle, paid for it at the counter, and wrote a letter to the company which produced the drink expecting that he would be compensated with two cartons of the beverage. Before sending the letter he had second thoughts about profiting in this manner. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: On the one hand he would be doing a public service by reporting this to the company and thus causing it to be more careful in its production. But this should be his only motivation, not the desire to win some free drinks for him-

self.

The advice given by a rabbi to the fellow who found the bug was to indeed send that letter to the company in order to benefit the public, but to donate the bottles he receives to some charitable organization. This will prove that his motive is truly an altruistic one and not exploitation for personal gain.

It should be noted that this advice was given in regard to someone who purchased the bottle only for the purpose of reporting the company's oversight. In the case of someone's unsuspectingly purchasing a product only to find it defective, it may very well be that whatever gesture is made by the company is coming to him as compensation for his anxiety.

YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

In his wonderfully inspirational and entertaining new book "A Collector's Collection", Rabbi Chaim Orange tells the following heartwarming story:

Jake was desperately looking for a place to spend the night while traveling to New York from the Midwest. After unsuccessful attempts at a couple of gas stations to locate a motel in the remote area where he found himself, an attendant at a third gas station suggested he try an old-age home up the road.

He succeeded in persuading the staff on duty to let him spend the night there. The next morning he asked the manager if he knew of any Jewish synagogues in the area. The reply he received was negative with a surprising addition: "In fact, the only other Jew I have ever known was a resident

here in our facility, and he died just this morning."

Realizing that he had been directed there by Providence to care for a *meit mitzvah* (a Jew who has no one to take care of burying him), Jake quickly arranged to have the body transferred to New York for burial. Upon arrival at the first cemetery he was asked to provide \$3,000 for a burial plot. The same thing happened at a second cemetery but Jake kept on trying. At the third cemetery he was welcomed and informed that someone had once donated several thousand dollars to cover just such an emergency.

Out of curiosity they checked their records to see who that donor was. It turned out that the Jew who had made that foresighted contribution was the very one who was now awaiting burial.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

I run a non-profit involved with Russian olim (kiruv, chesed, education, etc.). We are working to launch a family newsletter in Russian with divrei Torah and articles about shalom bayis and chinuch (parenting) in Russian (mostly for the chareidi and dati). We will be distributing for free. I would like to include a section with stories that relate to one of these two topics. I just read the public domain story Barry Shalom (Ohrnet Pekudei). Can I have permission to translate this and other stories I might find into Russian and to print them in our newsletter (citing the writer and Ohrnet, of course)?

• Shmuel

I am teaching a class on the basics of Judaism. May I use information from your website Ohr.edu in my handouts? I have been putting together sheets that give information about the *chagim* (holidays) and would like to use pieces from your holiday websites on the sheets. Please let me know if that is permitted or if that violates a copyright.

• Melissa

Ohrnet replies to Shmuel and Melissa: *You may take whatever material will help further Jewish education and of course give credit to the source as Ohr.edu and Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem.*

Half of a Daf Yomi

I noticed that you have a weekly daf haYomi related list. The shul I belong to will now be starting an "amud yomi" shiur also.

Perhaps you could offer the daf haYomi list in an amud yomi format also, for those attending such shiurim? One way to do this would be to send out the same e-mails, but every two weeks instead of every week.

I just thought that I would suggest the idea.

• David Jacob,
Toronto, Canada

Ohrnet replies: *Thank you for the suggestion David, but due to budgetary restrictions we suggest you follow your own idea of mailing once every two weeks.*

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