

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIKRA-ZACHOR · 8 ADAR II 5768 · MAR. 15 2008 · VOL. 15 NO. 24

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE BIG A

“And He called...” (1:1)

**S**cene One. The bridge of the USS Lincoln, one stormy night off the coast of Newfoundland; a dim green blip suddenly appears on the radar screen.

*USS Lincoln* (to Canadian Naval authorities): Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

*Canadians*: Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

*USS Lincoln*: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

*Canadians*: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

*USS Lincoln*: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH, THAT'S ONE FIVE DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTER-MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP.

*Canadians*: This is a lighthouse. Your call...

A little humility goes a long way.

If you look at a Torah Scroll you will see that the first word of the Book of Vayikra (Leviticus) is written in an unusual fashion. The last letter of *Vayikra* — the *aleph* — is written much smaller than the rest of the word.

Why is the *aleph* small?

When G-d told Moshe to write the word *Vayikra* “And He called”, Moshe didn't want to write that last *aleph*. It seemed to Moshe that it gave him too much importance. How could he write that G-d called to him? Who was he, after all? A mere man. Moshe would have preferred to write *Vayikar* — “And He happened (upon him).” In other words G-d just “came across” Moshe, He didn't “go out of His way” to

appear to him.

In spite of Moshe's protestations, G-d told him to write *Vayikra* — “And He called”. Moshe put the *aleph* at the end of the word as G-d had commanded him — but he wrote it small.

What's in a small *aleph*?

The *aleph* is the letter that represents the will, the ego. It is the first letter of the word for “I” — ‘Ani’. When a person sees himself as the Big A, the Big *Aleph*, Number One, he is usurping the crown of He who is One.

When a person sees himself as no more than a small *aleph*, then he makes room for the Divine Presence to dwell in him. His head is not swollen with the cotton candy of self-regard.

Moshe was the humblest of all men. Moshe made himself so little that he was barely in this world at all. He didn't even want to be a small *aleph*. He, as no man before or since, saw that there is only one *aleph* in all of Creation, only one Number One — G-d.

Moshe made his own *aleph* — his ego — so small, that he merited that the Torah was given through him.

When Moshe had finished writing the Torah, some ink was left in his pen. As he passed the pen across his forehead the drops of ink became beams of light shining from his visage.

That extra ink that was left in Moshe's pen was the ink that should have gone to write the Big *Aleph*; instead it became a corona of shining light to adorn the humblest of men.

• Sources: *Ba'al Haturim*, *Midrash Tanchuma Ki Tisa 37*, *MiTa'amim in Iturei Torah*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* — the Laws of the Priests — deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called *korban olah*, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remaining part is eaten by the *kohanim*.

Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burnt on the altar and part eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats. The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

## ISRAEL Forever

### A NEED TO REMEMBER

“Remember – do not forget!” These are the dramatic words which Jews throughout the world will hear in their synagogues this Shabbat *Parshat Zachor* when the special additional reading of the Torah recounts the battle with Amalek and commands us to remember the evil of that enemy.

Although we are not in a position today to fulfill the command to wipe out Amalek we must still strive to

eliminate what Amalek represents — a total lack of fear of G-d.

This is something every Jew is capable of doing by reinforcing his own fear of G-d and his awareness that just as we have survived the attacks of all the Amaleks of history, we will merit to see the fulfillment of the Divine promise to wipe out the quintessential Amalek and secure Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### TIMNAT SERACH (CHERESS) – AMALEK'S CONQUEROR

On this Shabbat *Zachor* when Jews read in their synagogues about the first clash between our people and their Amalekite enemies, it is fitting to take note of the general who led our ancestors to victory.

Yehoshua bin Nun, the devoted disciple and successor of Moshe, is buried in Timnat Serach,



which is on the Trans-Samaria Highway next to Ariel. The other name for this site — Cherness — is a reference to the image of the sun etched on the tombstone of this great leader who succeeded in having G-d stop the sun at Gibeon so that he could complete his military triumph over his Emorite enemies.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Who does the word “*eilav*” in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week’s Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an *olah* atone for?
4. Where was the *olah* slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-*kohen* perform?
6. Besides the fire the *kohanim* bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are *torim* (turtledoves) and *bonei yona* (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is *melika*?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a “satisfying aroma”?
11. Why is the term “*nefesh*” used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will *mincha* offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the *mincha*. What is meant by “honey”?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning *shelamim*, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the *kohen* may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the *mizbe'ach*. For which *korban* may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a *chatat*?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burnt while in the wilderness? Where were they burnt during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*?
19. What two things does a voluntary *mincha* have that a *minchat chatat* lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a *korban asham*?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2, 14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (*torim*), and doves (*bonei yona*).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the *Mishkan* Courtyard (*azarah*).
5. 1:55. - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bonei yona* are too old and *torim* are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one’s fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal’s food is provided by its owner, so its innards are “kosher.” Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with “theft.”
10. 1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, G-d regards it as if he had offered his *nefesh* (soul).
12. 2:1 - The *kometz* (fistful).
13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
14. 2:12 - On Shavuot.
15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the *alya* (fat tail). The lamb’s *alya* is burned on the altar but the goat’s is not.
16. 3:8 - The *chatat*.
17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the *karet* (excision) penalty.
18. 4:12 - a) Outside the three camps. b) Outside Jerusalem.
19. 5:11 - *Levona* and oil.
20. 5:15 - Two *shekalim*.

לע"נ

ר' דוד בן ר' אהרון ע"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Consecration of property that will be acquired in the future
- Errors made in regard to nature of wife's vow and in regard to rending garment in mourning
- Time lapse for separating two acts or statements
- Affirming or annulling a part of wife's vow
- Husband's failure to annul wife's vow because of ignorance of the law
- The blind involuntary killer
- The father who has vowed to forbid his son-in-law from benefiting from him but wishes to help his daughter
- The single adult woman who make a nazirite vow and marries before it takes effect
- Which women cannot have their vows annulled
- Failed effort of the would-be scholar
- Must vow take effect before it can be annulled
- Wife who confesses unfaithfulness or is suspected of such
- The sweetness of stolen waters

## MYSTERY OF A FAILED EFFORT

A fascinating example of the variety of approaches of commentaries on the Talmud is found in the mystery of a failed effort.

Our *gemara* relates the story of a fellow who was so determined to master the Talmud without being hindered by the responsibilities of family life that he made a vow that should he submit to marriage before achieving his goal he would be forbidden to benefit from anyone in this world. But try as he might he failed in his efforts and it took a clever tactic by one of the Sages to get him married and then annul his vow.

His efforts are described as "rushing with *gappa* and *tuvlia*," terms that lend themselves to various translations and interpretations.

Rashi and *Sefer Ha'aruch* translate these terms as the ladder and rope used in picking dates from the tree. While Rashi interprets this as an allegory to the strenuous effort made, the *Sefer Ha'aruch* explains that the fellow actually picked dates in the service of a Talmudic scholar who he hoped would teach him.

Rabbeinu Nissim (RaN) translates these terms as walking stick and backpack, which he also sees as an allegory to a strenuous effort. These approaches leave us with a mystery as to why such a great effort resulted in failure. We do find a solution, however, in the commentaries of Tosefot and Rabbeinu Osher (ROSH). They define the above-mentioned terms as vessels used for transporting fruit and suggest that this fellow was so preoccupied with his labors that he did not succeed in achieving his educational goal.

• *Nedarim 89b*

## What the SAGES Say

"Be careful to study Torah together with others (for no one can effectively explore something without the help of another – Rashi)."

• *Message from Sages in Eretz Yisrael to their colleagues in Babylon - Nedarim 81a*

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## HOOPS ON STUDS

From: Jake in Denver

Dear Rabbi,  
Why can't men wear earrings according to the Torah since we find that the Jewish men gave their earrings for the golden calf, and also the Torah says a Jewish slave should have his ear pierced? Don't these sources suggest that in Torah times men wore earrings?

Dear Jake,

You ask a very piercing question.

But before answering, it's worth noting that when the people came to Aaron demanding an intermediary to replace Moses, Aaron told them to take the earrings from their wives and children (Ex. 32:1-2). Rashi explains that Aaron intended to stall, hoping that the women would not part with their jewelry, and that's in fact what happened. Lest you think the women were only interested in their gold, that's not the case, as later they donated it generously toward the Tabernacle. Faced with the women's spiritual opposition to the calf, the men therefore donated their own earrings.

But were these men in fact Israelites?

When the Jews left Egypt, a mixed multitude of peoples, the "eiruv rav", left with them (Ex. 12:38). Many of these peoples converted, but even so, most of them were not sincere converts but opportunists seeking to benefit from the Exodus-style "right of return". This mixed multitude is infamously referred to as "the people" — "haAm" — in contradistinction to the Israelites who are called "the children of Israel" — "B'nei Yisrael". In fact, usually, and particularly where the people is described as misbehaving,

the code word "haAm", referring to the mixed multitude, is used.

This is the case regarding the sin of the golden calf. The verses state: "When the people [haAm] saw that Moses was late in coming down from the mountain, the people [haAm] gathered against Aaron, and they said to him: "Make us gods that will go before us....And all the people [haAm] stripped themselves of the golden earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron". Later, many Israelites were enticed to honor or worship the calf in varying degrees, but the men who proffered their earrings for the calf were members of the mixed multitude. Originally non-Jews, these men may have had earrings, but that doesn't mean the Israelites normally did.

Regarding the piercing of the Jewish slave, the verses state: "Should you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall work six years, and in the seventh, he shall go free....But if the slave says, 'I love my master...I will not go free,' his master shall...bore his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him [until the Jubilee]" (Ex. 21:2-6). Note that this is not an indication that Jewish men of Torah times pierced. On the contrary, the fact that the Torah indicates ear-piercing specifically for a slave implies that other Jewish men did not have pierced ears. What's more, presumably, a free man who chose to pierce would conjure up associations of negativity and inferior status. Ultimately, the point is moot because while the verse mentions piercing a hole in the slave's ear, there's no mention of his wearing an earring.

In conclusion, I'm not saying Jewish men in Biblical times did not wear earrings — that requires more historical research. Nor am I commenting on Judaism's position on men's earrings nowadays — that might be the subject of an upcoming discussion. But what I am saying is that the particular sources you cite offer no indication that in Torah times Jewish men wore earrings. On the contrary, these sources suggest that they didn't.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

## SALT AND SYMPATHY

**Question:** As the dinner guest of a friend I was shocked to discover that the soup served me was extremely distasteful. What is the right thing to do in such a situation?

**Answer:** This is what happened to the Chafetz Chaim when he dined at the home of a certain rabbi. The maid had salted the soup as she always did, unaware that the hostess had already done so in her effort to personally cook for her honored guest.

The Chafetz Chaim drank the entire bowl of soup without batting an eyelash. His host, however, grimaced after the first spoonful. The guest grasped his host's hand and begged him to drink his soup without saying a word. If the hostess discovered the maid's error, he explained, she is likely to scold her and this could lead to a nasty quarrel. The Chafetz Chaim suggested instead that they keep the whole thing quiet and compliment the hostess on a very tasty soup.

## WORTH SUFFERING FOR

In his old age the founder of Yeshivat Ponevez in Bnei Brak, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, suffered from severe toothaches. When his dentist informed him that all of his teeth would have to be extracted and replaced with dentures he thus explained his reluctance. "I am a *kohen*. Mashiach may come any moment and

the *Beit Hamikdash* will be rebuilt. I will then be called upon to participate in the sacred service and the extraction of my teeth will disqualify me from doing so. I prefer to continue suffering the pain of aching teeth and not miss out on that great opportunity."

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