

OHR NET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE REST IS EASY

"And on the seventh day, a Shabbat of Shabbatot..." (31:15)

There are two kinds of rest. The first kind of rest is a rest from weariness, a chance to recharge our batteries, to enable us to continue to work. For no one can work indefinitely. Everyone needs a break.

The second kind of rest comes at the end of a project. The last brushstroke of a painting. The final sentence of a novel. The last brick in a new home. Then you take a step back and look at your work. You feel the satisfaction of completion. It's finished. It's done. A time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labor.

"You shall labor for six days and do all your work".

How can you do all you work in six days? Can you build an entire house in six days?

The Torah teaches us that when Shabbat comes, even though we're half-way through a project, we should think of it as though it was finished completely. In other words, on

Shabbat we should picture ourselves experiencing the rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done — not just taking a break. In a sense, this is what G-d did when the world was six days old. He looked at the Creation and saw that it was finished — the greatest building project ever. The Heavens and the earth were completed. Our rest on Shabbat is a commemoration of that rest.

This is the essential difference between our Shabbat and the secular idea of a 'day of rest'. The secular world understands the day of rest as a break so that you can return to the week revitalized and refreshed. It's a only a break.

Shabbat, on the other hand, is not just pushing the pause button on life. It's the creation of a feeling that everything in one's life is complete. There's nothing left to do — except sit back and enjoy the fruits of one's labor.

HEART AND STONE

"And the tablets are the work of G-d, and the writing, the writing of G-d." (32:16)

Next time you're in shul take a look at the depiction of the Ten Commandments above the Holy Ark. The tops of the two Tablets are curved. Why are the Ten Commandments this shape? The Talmud describes the Tablets as being cubes. There is not a single classical Jewish source which describes the Tablets in the form with which we are familiar today.

Where did this shape come from?

Another question. If the Children of Israel had already heard the Ten Commandments, why was it necessary for the Commandments to be engraved on Tablets? Wasn't the

overwhelming experience of hearing G-d speaking sufficient?

When the Ten Commandments were engraved on the Tablets, they were also being engraved on the hearts of the Jewish People for all time. Engraved in stone and engraved on the Tablet of the heart. The writing was the writing of G-d, Who indelibly engraved them on the heart of the Jewish People for all time.

Take another look at those Ten Commandments above the Holy Ark. Their rounded tops symbolize the shape of the heart, the heart of the Jewish People where they have been engraved for three thousand years.

Sources: 'Heart And Stone' - Sf'as Emes in Mayana shel Torah; Rabbi Moshe Shapiro

'The Rest is Easy' - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in L'Torah ul'Moadim

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation

from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

ISRAEL Forever

HAPPY JEWS EVERYWHERE

In last week's column we reported the results of a survey which showed that the religious population in Israel was more satisfied with its social-economic situation than all other sectors. The connection between religion and happiness received another confirmation from a survey conducted in the US by Gallup-Healthways among 554,066 American adults.

These people were asked questions relating to their emotional and physical health, work environment and healthy behavior. Of all groups surveyed Jews were ranked

Number One and the "very religious" scored the highest.

The researchers suggested that this was the result of "social aspects of attending religious institutions" and concluded that "the findings confirm the strong positive relationship between religiosity and well-being."

The lesson to be learned from the surveys in Israel and the US is that the Jew who is committed to Torah is a happier human being and possesses the strength to preserve the People of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

RABBI ZEIRA – NO TIME TO WAIT

Why don't you wait for the ferry?! This is the mocking outcry which the Talmudic sage Rabbi Zeira heard as he crossed the river separating him from Eretz Yisrael on a primitive bridge consisting of a log spanning the river with an overhead rope for support.

The heathen observer of this hasty, improvised crossing accused the Sage of following the same course of impulsive behavior shown by his ancestors who

accepted the Torah without even knowing what was written in it.

Rabbi Zeira's response to why he did not wait around for the next ferry and a more comfortable crossing to the land he had so long dreamed of making his home was:

A land which Moshe and Aharon did not merit to enter, who knows if I wait any longer that I will have the privilege of entering it!



PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many "geira" are in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called "malachim?"
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbat is a "sign." What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, G-d says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did G-d show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'at* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between G-d and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from G-d!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say "Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people."
16. 32:34 - Whenever G-d punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. G-d commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

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- The *kohen* and *kohen gadol* whose relative dies
- The status of an *onan* – a fresh mourner – in regard to the sacrificial service
- The dialogue between Moshe and Aharon following the death of the latter's sons
- When Pinchas became a *kohen*
- The quarantining and release of Miriam
- Respect for royalty
- The right of a *kohen* with a physical blemish to eat sacrificial meat
- Those who are forbidden to share in sacrificial meat
- When the *kohen* is entitled to the skin of an *olah* sacrifice
- The bullock and goat sacrifices burned outside the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Slaughtering and offering a sacrificial animal outside of the *Beit Hamikdash*

THE BELATED ANOINTMENT

After Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen, saved his people from the continuation of a plague by slaying the sinner Zimri, he received this promise from G-d:

“And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood.” (*Bamidbar* 25:13)

Although the priesthood had already been bestowed upon Aharon and his descendants, Rashi points out, Pinchas had not yet been anointed as a *kohen*. Neither was he entitled to that status as a descendant of Aharon, because that right of inheritance was reserved for those who were born after Aharon's appointment.

While Rabbi Elazar states in the name of Rabbi Chanina that Pinchas actually assumed the status of *kohen* after slaying Zimri, a different view is presented by Rabbi Ashi.

He refers us to the role played by Pinchas in averting a civil war as a result of an altar built by the tribes of Reuven, Gad and Menashe by the Yarden River. After making peace between the tribes he is referred to as Pinchas HaKohen (*Yehoshua* 22:30) rather than just the son of Elazar HaKohen as he is called everywhere else. This leads to the conclusion that only then, many years after the slaying of Zimri, did he achieve the status of *kohen*.

Rabbi Ashi explains the promise given after the Zimri slaying as a blessing from G-d. Tosefot points out that Pinchas could have assumed priesthood at that time by being anointed, but there was some opposition to this among the people because he had slain the head of a tribe. Only when he succeeded in making peace between the tribes did they consent to anointing him as *kohen*.

• *Zevachim* 101b

What the SAGES Say

“When greatness is bestowed on one by Heaven it is intended for all of his descendants. But if he becomes conceited G-d humbles him.”

• Rabbi Elazar in the name of Rabbi Chanina - *Zevachim* 102a

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AN OLD TUNE

From: Donny

*Dear Rabbi,
Growing up, I came from a very humble background. But I was always well-liked and seemed to get along with all different types of people. Because I became quite popular I was able to overcome a lot of the barriers to success that people from my background suffer. Over the years I have actually risen to somewhat of a prominent position. The problem is, I just found out recently that the people who work for me, who I thought liked and respected me, don't feel as "positively" about me as I thought. When this dawned on me I took it pretty hard. What I want to ask is, How could this happen? I've always made a point of treating everyone so nicely. How could they turn on me?*

Dear Donny,

It's quite common that people from humble beginnings get along well with others. The reason for this is that they are generally unassuming, modest, 'simple' (in the good sense), and appreciative. These are all traits which make them non-threatening and easy to get along with.

I'm assuming these are the types of traits you had while growing up, and, together with your own personal charm, they endeared you to others. I imagine that in this way you were "promoted" through society stage-by-stage, people being pleased by your presence and refreshing character.

While I can't know for sure what went wrong and when, perhaps at some point in your life you stopped being nice and easy to get along with because you were really like that, but rather in order to keep being promoted. This is a very subtle point, but, it's possible that while you continued to think you were still being the same old likeable you, the new you was impersonating your old self for the purpose of self-advancement.

If this is in any way true, it is not genuine, and people perceive and are repulsed by falsity. That would explain why, despite the fact that you think you're being just as nice and

friendly to folks as ever, they don't think very highly of you because they may see you as a fake.

Accordingly, what you have to do is spend a good long while thinking about who you really were, and getting back to basics. Stop pretending to be who you once were, and really genuinely and sincerely get back to caring for, and being interested in, people — for them and not for you. I'm sure you'll see a real change for the better.

A story is told regarding a certain Jewish shepherd who tended his flocks while pastorally playing his flute throughout the countryside. His charm was made known to the king, who employed him as his royal shepherd. Over time, because of his very pleasant ways, he was continually promoted until he became a chief minister to the king himself. Jealous of his advancement, others slandered him to the king, accusing him of taking advantage of the king's trust to steal the royal wealth.

Initially, the king refused to believe these tales of his beloved servant, but eventually ordered a search of the minister's mansion. They went from room to room in search of evidence. After an exhaustive search, they finally came to one last unlocked door. The king demanded it be opened. The advisor demurred, saying he's never let anyone enter that room. At the king's insistence, the door was opened and inside the bare and simple room, there was nothing but a chair upon which rested shepherd's clothing and a flute.

Perplexed, the king asked, "What's the meaning of this?" The advisor humbly replied, "Master, in your mercy I have been elevated from a simple shepherd to your chief minister. As you promoted me, in order to avoid arrogance and ingratitude, I promised to myself that I would always remember my humble beginnings. Every day I enter this room for an hour of solitude when I remove my official garb, wear this simple tunic, and play pastoral melodies that remind me of who I really am. And all this, dear king, is in order to be able to serve you better."

Although this beautiful and touching story is an analogy of the relationship between the Jewish people and G-d — our humble beginnings and His elevating us; and our observance of ancient practices and holidays recalling our inception as a nation — it nevertheless offers a very pertinent lesson for all of us how to conduct ourselves as we progress through life.

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PLAYING WITH FIRE (CRACKERS)

QUESTION: Around Purim time my son and many of his friends get into the “holiday spirit” by purchasing little firecrackers and exploding them. I have heard that many rabbis have come out very strongly against this and I would like to know if I have to take action to discourage this sort of fun which the kids think is a big mitzvah?

ANSWER: You should definitely prohibit your son from any contact with firecrackers. The “holiday spirit” you describe is a perversion of a nice Jewish custom to make noise on Purim when Haman’s name is mentioned in the reading of the Megillah. (This custom also evolved from the original idea of children writing Haman’s name or drawing his picture on a pieces of wood or stones and banging them together to literally wipe out his name in symbolic fulfillment of the Divine command to “wipe out the name of Amalek.”)

It is bad enough that some parents fail to control their children during the Megillah reading and allow them to disturb the congregation with various kinds of non-stop noisemakers. But

what purpose is there in allowing them to go wild with pyrotechnics before Purim, which is not only meaningless but dangerous as well, to others and to themselves?

Our Sages prohibited a Jew to raise a menacing dog except for security purposes because of the threat it posed to a pregnant woman who might suffer a miscarriage as the result of fright from the dogs barking. There are older people with heart conditions in the vicinity of these young firecracker fans, and the sudden noise they hear can severely affect them. This is virtually true for nearly everyone nowadays in a time when even a mini-explosion is feared to be a terrorist act!

The danger to the youngsters from playing with firecrackers is real. There have been tragedies of children suffering severe burns or even losing fingers as a result of careless handling of these dangerous toys. There are laws against selling these things to youth, but they somehow manage to get them. So it is up to you and other parents to guide your children in how to enjoy the “holiday spirit” in a safe and meaningful way.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

SILVER LINING TO THE CLOUD OF TERROR

Can some good come from terror? Perhaps this story, which appears in the new work “*Aleinu Leshabeach*” of Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, provides some sort of silver lining for the cloud of terror which darkens the lives of Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

Two Jews were in the final stage of a business deal conducted in the lobby of a hotel. To conclude the deal the prospective buyer had placed a large wad of dollar bills on the table to be handed over as soon as an agreement was signed. Then came an announcement on the P.A. system that the hotel must be evacuated immediately because of the discovery of an object suspected of being a terrorist bomb. In his haste to run for his life this fellow left the money on the table. When he returned it was gone and all the attempts of the police to find the thief were of no avail.

A day later another Jew who had heard of the incident visited the lobby of that hotel and noticed a large flowerpot standing in

a slightly tilted position. When he walked over to investigate he saw a dollar bill sticking out, and when he came even closer he discovered that this was the place where the thief had concealed the stolen money.

After tracking down the victim of this theft and informing him of the good news he was surprised to hear from him that he had already despaired of recovering the money and it was therefore the property of the finder. The finder stubbornly insisted that the money belonged to its original owner and hit on an idea how to break this bizarre impasse.

“Do you have a son?” he asked. “Yes,” answered the other, “and he is waiting for me in the car below.” Well,” continued the finder, “I have a daughter, so how about introducing them!”

This brilliant solution eventually led to a successful *shidduch*, with the disputed money given to the young couple to help establish their home.

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