

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYAKHEL · 22 ADAR I 5771 · FEB. 26, 2011 · VOL. 18 NO. 22

PARSHA INSIGHTS

IF YOU THINK YOU'RE COMPLETE — YOU'RE FINISHED

"The cherubim...their faces toward one another." (37:9)

Do you know where the word "cherub" comes from? Cherub comes from the Hebrew *kruv*. The *kruvim* were solid gold statues extruded from the cover of the *Aron Hakodesh* (the Holy Ark), which contained the Torah and the Tablets of the Covenant. *Kruv* comes from the Aramaic – *k'ravia* – which means "like a child." They were called *kruvim* because they both had the face of child.

Why?

A child is like a new immigrant. He learns with great rapidity the language of his new host country. Youth's greatest asset is the ability to change, to be flexible, to be open-minded. The essence of Torah is to remain as flexible and adaptable as we were as children.

If you ask someone to define a *talmid chacham*, he'll probably tell you it's someone who has a large and deep

knowledge of the Torah.

True. However, literally, a *talmid chacham* translates as "a student of a sage."

In Judaism, the essence of being a sage is to always be a student. A *talmid chacham*, by definition, is someone who never stops learning, who never feels himself complete, but is constantly growing in his knowledge of Torah, in character, and in his awareness of G-d. A person who does this makes himself a vehicle through which holiness descends to the world.

The biggest insult in the vocabulary of a great sage of the previous generation was that someone was a "*fartige*" – literally "a finished one."

If you think you're complete – you're really finished.

• Source: *Chochma u'Mussar* 190

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts *Bnei Yisrael* to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan. He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the *menorah* and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate and *ephod*. G-d appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. *Bnei Yisrael* contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers

were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Betzalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood covered with gold. On the Ark's cover were two figures facing each other. The menorah and the table with the showbreads were also of gold. Two altars were made: A small incense altar of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger altar for sacrifices made of wood covered with copper.

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ENOUGH AND NOT ENOUGH

Did you ever hear of a synagogue, yeshiva or charitable organization tell the public to stop giving because they have enough?

Well, that is what happened during the construction of the Mishkan Sanctuary, as we read in this week's Torah portion:

"All the wise people came... and they said to Moshe 'The people are bringing more than enough for the labor of the work that G-d has commanded to perform'." (*Shmot* 35:4-5)

The enthusiasm of our ancestors for building the Mishkan

was so great that Moshe had to actually command them to stop bringing gifts.

In a time when religious institutions are struggling for economic survival, it would be nice if we could see people giving so much that they would have to be told "Enough!"

Perhaps the shortage of funds from which these institutions suffer is a failure to appreciate that the places of Torah study and public prayer are the Sanctuaries of our day and their maintenance is what will 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

PARVEH – NOT SO NEUTRAL

We are accustomed to refer to neutral food that is neither meat nor dairy as being "Parveh". But there was actually a man in Jewish history by that name and an office in the *Beit Hamikdash* courtyard as well.

Parveh was a sorcerer who was determined to observe the very secret services of the *Kohen Gadol* in



the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. Towards this end he dug a tunnel that would lead him there. The place where he was discovered and taken for execution was subsequently named the "Parveh Office" to warn any potential peeping toms what fate awaited them for showing such great disrespect for the holy site.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
2. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
3. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
4. What function did the “*yitdot hamishkan*” serve?
5. What function did the “*bigdei hasrad*” serve?
6. What was unusual about the way the women spun the goat’s hair?
7. Why were the *Nesi'im* last to contribute to the building of the Mishkan? How does the Torah show dissatisfaction with their actions?
8. Who does the Torah identify as the primary builders of the Mishkan? From which tribes were they?
9. What time of day did the people bring their daily contributions for the construction of the Mishkan?
10. For what was the woven goat’s hair used?
11. What image was woven into the *parochet*?
12. Why does the Torah attribute the building of the *aron* to Betzalel?
13. Where were the sculptured *keruvim* located?
14. How many lamps did the *menorah* have?
15. Of what materials was the *mizbe'ach haketoret* composed?
16. Of what material was the *mizbe'ach ha'olah* composed?
17. The *kiyor* was made from copper mirrors. What function did these mirrors serve in Egypt?
18. How did the *kiyor* promote peace?
19. The *kiyor* was made from the mirrors of the women who were crowding at the entrance to the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Why were the women crowding there?
20. Of what material were the “*yitdot hamishkan*” constructed?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 35:1 - The day after *Yom Kippur*.
2. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the Mishkan doesn't supersede the laws of Shabbat.
3. 35:3 - There are two opinions: One opinion is to teach that igniting a fire on Shabbat is punishable by lashes as opposed to other “*melachot*” which are punishable by death. The other opinion is to teach that violation of numerous “*melachot*” at one time requires a separate atonement for each violation.
4. 35:18 - The edges of the curtains were fastened to them. These were inserted in the ground so the curtains would not move in the wind.
5. 35:19 - They covered the *aron*, the *shulchan*, the *menorah*, and the *mizbachot* when they were packed for transport.
6. 35:26 - It was spun directly from off the backs of the goats.
7. 35:27 - The *Nesi'im* reasoned that they would first let the people contribute materials needed for the Mishkan and then they would contribute what was lacking. The Torah shows its dissatisfaction by deleting a letter from their title.
8. 35:30, 35:34 - Betzalel ben Uri from the tribe of Yehuda; Oholiav ben Achisamach from the tribe of Dan.
9. 36:3 - Morning.
10. 36:14 - It was made into curtains to be draped over the Mishkan.
11. 36:35 - *Cherubim*. (See Rashi 26:31)
12. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone else.
13. 37:7 - On the two extremities of the *kaporet* (cover of the *aron*).
14. 37:23 - Seven.
15. 37:25,26 - Wood overlaid with gold.
16. 38:1-2 - Wood overlaid with copper.
17. 38:8 - These mirrors aided in the proliferation of the Jewish People. The Jewish women in Egypt would look in the mirrors so as to awaken the affections of their husbands who were exhausted by their slave labor.
18. 38:8 - Its waters helped a woman accused of adultery to prove her innocence.
19. 38:8 - To donate to the Mishkan.
20. 38:20 - Copper.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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- Which sacrificial offerings outside *Beit Hamikdash* are punishable by *karet*
- If such sacrifices are not offered on an altar
- When such a sacrifice is a joint effort of two
- If the animal sacrificed outside was already disqualified for sacrifice in *Beit Hamikdash*
- When only a part of a sacrificial animal is offered
- Meal offerings outside the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Blood application and water libation outside *Beit Hamikdash*
- Source for water libation on Succot
- Slaughtering a sacrificial bird and offering it outside
- The lost sin offering
- The history of the Sanctuaries
- The impact of the Great Deluge

A TALE OF TWO ALTARS

The Torah prohibited offering sacrifices outside the *Beit Hamikdash* and one who does so is punished with *karet* – extirpation.

Must the platform upon which such a sacrifice is offered be built specifically for an altar or can it be any simple rock for one to be guilty of this serious sin?

Rabbi Yossi contends that it must be built as an altar and bases his opinion on what is written about Noah following the deluge:

“And Noah built an altar to G-d... and offered burned sacrifices on the altar.” (*Bereishet* 8:20)

This indicates that even outside the Sanctuary an offering is considered a sacrifice only if an altar was built for it.

Rabbi Shimon, on the other hand, contends that even a rock is enough and he bases himself on the offering made by Manoach, the father of Shimshon:

“And Manoach took the kid goat and the meal offering and offered it upon the rock.” (*Shoftim* 13:19)

His source is, however, rejected by Rabbi Yossi who argues that Manoach was acting in extra-halachic fashion, which was mandated for that occasion.

Our *gemara* does not elucidate as to who gave Manoach permission to act in this way. A look at the chapter dealing with Manoach’s sacrifice reveals that the angel who appeared to him and his wife rejected his offer of a meal from a kid goat and instructed him instead to offer it as a sacrifice to G-d. (*Ibid.* 13:16)

• *Zevachim* 108b

What the SAGES Say

“The flood waters of the great Deluge did not come to Eretz Yisrael.”

Rabbi Yochanan - *Zevachim* 113b

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VEGETARIANISM

From: Joy

*Dear Rabbi,
I'd like to know if and why vegetarianism may be a positive ethical choice for an observant Jew. Even if eating meat is permitted, could it be morally better to abstain?*

Dear Joy,

G-d initially intended that people be vegetarians: "Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit to you for food" (Gen. 1:29). Rashi (1040-1105), citing the Sages who noted, "[Initially] Adam was not permitted to eat meat", explains that G-d "did not permit Adam and his wife to kill a creature and to eat flesh. Only every green herb shall they all eat together".

Ramban (1195-1270) offers a reason for this initial dietary law: "Living creatures that possess a 'moving' soul have a certain spiritual superiority in which they are similar to [humans] who possess an 'intellect' soul — they pursue their welfare and food, and they flee from pain and death". According to Rabbi Joseph Albo (1380-1440), the prohibition to eat meat was because, "In the killing of animals there is cruelty, rage, and the accustoming of oneself to the bad habit of shedding innocent blood".

By the time of Noah, humanity had degenerated greatly: "And G-d saw the earth and behold it was corrupted, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12). As a concession to people's weakness, G-d permitted meat: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; as the green herb have I given you all" (Gen. 9:3). Rabbi Albo explains that eating meat was permitted to emphasize humans' higher moral level and degree of responsibility.

The permission given to Noah was not unconditional — eating blood was immediately prohibited: "But flesh with life in it, which is its blood, do not eat" (Gen. 9:4). Additional

laws also teach us sensitivity when taking life for food. Ritual slaughter with an absolutely smooth blade is designed to minimize pain. It is forbidden to kill a cow and her calf on the same day (Leviticus 22:28); likewise one must send away a mother bird before taking her young (Deut. 22:7). Indeed, our Sages taught that eating meat is justified only when we demonstrate respect for life, and pursue holy and spiritual lives — then it is likened to sacrifice on the altar.

This being said, there are many reasons offered for refraining from eating meat. They include health reasons, unacceptable living conditions for animals, alleviating world hunger, and preserving the environment and natural resources. While Judaism places great importance on health, kindness to animals, helping the needy and preserving the environment, it is beyond our scope to explore the effect of vegetarianism on these factors. If after thorough research one becomes convinced of these claims, any of them could be a valid reason for refraining from eating meat.

Another valid reason is if one feels refraining from meat helps one's own spiritual improvement either by increasing self-control or sensitivity, as expressed by Rabbi Solomon Efraim Lushitz (Prague, 1550-1619) author of *Kli Yakar*: "What was the necessity for the entire procedure of ritual slaughter? For the sake of self-discipline. It is far more appropriate for man **not** to eat meat". However, it is important to realize that refraining for humane reasons doesn't necessarily make one more kind. While the Nazis passed laws protecting animals, they were murdering millions of human beings.

Sources:

- *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, Richard H. Schwartz
- *Sanhedrin* 59b
- Ramban, *Genesis* 1:29
- Rabbi Joseph Albo, *Sefer Ha-Ikkarim*, Vol. III, ch. 15 *Pesachim* 59b, also see *Tanya* ch. 7
- *Kli Yakar*, quoted in *The Commandments and Their Rationale*, Abraham Chill, p. 400

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THE LIMITS OF PRIVACY

Question: I am aware that there is a *cherem* (ban) instituted about a millennium ago by Rabbeinu Gershom against reading someone else's mail. But I have reason to believe that a neighbor of mine is planning to send a letter whose contents may unjustly harm me. Under such circumstances is it permissible for me to open that letter to see if it poses a danger to me?

Answer: Rabbeinu Gershom also instituted a *cherem* on polygamy and a funny story is connected to these two bans. At a military academy which had some married students living away from home on its campus, a Jewish secretary had instructions to open and screen the letters for reasons of national security. Upon opening one such letter he rushed to share its contents with its recipient.

"Mazal tov," he excitedly informed him, "Your wife had a boy!"

"Which one of my wives?" he asked.

"You mean to say that you violated the *cherem* of Rabbeinu Gershom by taking more than one wife?" was the incredulous response.

"And did you not violate the *cherem* on reading another's mail?"

From an ethical point of view it is reasonable to assume that the *cherem* against reading another's mail was never intended to protect the privacy of someone who intends to exploit it in order to unjustly harm another. Legally speaking, writes one of the great halachic authorities, the ban against reading another's mail is based on the principle that borrowing the property of another without his permission is tantamount to theft. It follows then that just as someone may enter another's property without his permission in order to recover an item which belongs to him, he may also invade the privacy of a letter which may cause him damage.

• Based on a ruling of Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein,
Rabbi of the Ramat Elchanan Community in Bnei Brak

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE T-SHIRT DID IT

Every student at Ohr Somayach has his own special story of how Divine Providence led him back to his roots. The story of J. G. revolves around a T-shirt with some Yiddish letters on it.

It all goes back to a Jew in Massachusetts who watched with pain as refugees who had arrived in the U.S. after World War II daily threw away Yiddish newspapers and books as they stopped speaking and reading Yiddish in order to assimilate into the American culture. Appalled by this abandonment of Jewish culture he began collecting the material left on the curb by his neighbors, and eventually established the International Yiddish Book Library in Boston.

J. G.'s parents had little knowledge of Orthodox Judaism

but were curious to see what went on at the book fair hosted by this library. For their toddler they bought a souvenir size 8 T-shirt, with the library's name and logo imprinted on it in Yiddish.

Years later, he begrudgingly attended a Sunday morning class in a Conservative Hebrew School in the southern community to which they had moved. The class was taught by the wife of the rabbi of the local Orthodox synagogue, whose curiosity about the reason for his wearing such a T-shirt led to a relationship with the family, which eventually resulted in the entire family becoming observant and sending their son to Ohr Somayach.

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