

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE BIGGEST BAR-B-Q IN THE WORLD

"When a man among you brings an offering..." (1:2)

Imagine you're an alien traveler flying over Jerusalem some two and a half thousand years ago. Your intergalactic GPS detects a beautiful building coming up on the horizon. Opening your "Earth on five dollars-a-day", you read about what you're seeing. "The Beit Hamikdash is the most spiritual place on earth." Something doesn't seem quite accurate about this description because everywhere you aim your scanner all you can see are very physical things.

For a start, animals are being slaughtered, dissected and burned on what looks like the world's biggest bar-b-q. Wine is being poured down two holes on top of a square monolith on which the meat is being burned. Nearby, bread is being baked. Oil is being mixed with flour and fried in open pans. There are animals in pens, along with birds. Everywhere there are all kinds of cooking utensils. Men are washing their hands and feet. There is a column of black smoke rising perpendicularly into the sky.

This is spirituality?

You make a mental note to write to the editors of "Earth

on five-dollars-a-day" that their description of this tourist spot is way off the mark.

Our intergalactic traveler could be forgiven for mistaking what he saw, for indeed the Beit Hamikdash ostensibly was a very physical place. Our fearless voyager, however, failed to notice a key item in the Beit Hamikdash — the Aron, the Holy Ark. Inside the Ark was the Torah. It was only through the Holy Torah that the Divine Presence rested on the Beit Hamikdash and turned the most physical of places into the most spiritual.

The Beit Hamikdash is a microcosm of the Universe, and a macrocosm of the body of a human. If you look at a person he seems to be a very physical thing. He consists of sinew and flesh, fluids and membrane. And yet, he is so much more.

Just as the Torah caused the Divine Presence to rest on the Beit Hamikdash and the Mishkan, so similarly the Torah turns flesh and blood into a dwelling place for the Most High.

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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.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

HOW THE KOTEL REMAINED

When the Roman Legions laid siege to the Temple Mount in Yerushalayim they divided their forces into four divisions. The officer in charge of each was instructed to destroy one of the four walls which surrounded the sacred mountain.

Three of them indeed carried out this order, but one left the wall entrusted to him intact. When the emperor reprimanded him for failing to follow his



orders, the officer explained:

Had I destroyed that wall as did the other officers, future rulers would not be able to appreciate what grandeur you succeeded in destroying. Now that I left this wall untouched, future generations will be able to marvel at the destruction you achieved!

Tradition has it that the wall he left alone was the Western Wall the Kotel.

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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 *bnei 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 (*bnei 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. 1:5 - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bnei 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. 2:2 - 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*.

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ERUVIN 9 - 15

"I was sharper in Torah study than my friends because I saw Rabbi Meir from behind, and had I seen him from the front I would have been even sharper, as the verse states 'And your eyes shall see your teachers' (Yeshayahu 30:20)."

Rebbe, who sat in a row behind Rabbi Meir while learning Torah from him, made this statement regarding the importance of seeing the Torah teacher when learning. Rebbe emphasizes the particular importance to see the front and face of the Torah teacher if possible, since the student can gain deeper understanding and insight from viewing his facial expressions and their intricacies (Maharsha).

• Eruvin 13b

Rabbi Abba said in the name of Shmuel, "For three years there were disputes between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, while Beit Shammai claimed 'The halacha is like us' and Beit Hillel claimed 'The halacha is like us'. Then a bat kol (voice from Heaven) declared, 'Both are the words of the living G-d, but the law is like Beit Hillel'. Since, however, both are the words of the living G-d, why did Beit Hillel merit that the halacha be established like them? Because they were they were kindly and patient, and they taught their own rulings and those of Beit Shammai, and, moreover, they positioned the teachings of Beit Shammai even before those of their own."

Tosefot in Bava Metzia (59b) points out that even though the "The Torah is not in Heaven (Deut. 30:12)" — and we would think to ignore the Heavenly voice — the announcement of this bat kol is nevertheless accepted since Beit Hillel constituted the majority view, which the Torah says to follow (Ex 23:2).

• Eruvin 13b

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students

written by Daniel Keebler

Chaviv Danesh Age: 25
Brooklyn, NY

Queens College – Major: Pre-Med and Psychology
Beit Midrash: Rabbi Reisman's Kollel

In just over three short years, Chaviv Danesh has risen from beginning level Talmud class in the Mechina program to the top of the Beit Midrash in Rabbi Reisman's kollel, stopping in almost every Talmud class along the way. Excellence is in his genes. Chaviv's father was climbing to the top in his job in Iran when he was suddenly fired because "they didn't want a Jew at such a high position," explains Chaviv.

Although he received a Jewish day school

education once his family moved to New York, Chaviv came to Ohr Somayach to "learn how to learn."

The yeshiva's skillful balance between transformational *hashkafa* (life wisdom) and "the meat and potatoes of learning [Talmud]" are at the top of Chaviv's praises for Ohr Somayach. The irony of his success, says Chaviv, is that "I no longer need to use the ArtScroll translation [of the Talmud]," even though just before coming to Ohr Somayach he received the entire ArtScroll Talmud Bavli set as a wedding gift. For Chaviv, each Talmud class revealed a new and inspiring layer to the Torah's infinite depth. He enjoys tutoring students and is currently training in Ohr Lagolah with the goal of sharing the Torah's inspiration with others.



SHABBAT SYMPHONY

From: Melissa

Dear Rabbi,

I keep Shabbat but I feel that the nitty-gritty halachot take away the beauty of Shabbat in that they make people more worried about how to open a can on Shabbat than to actually truly observe it. I have seen people actually embarrass others by calling them out on little halachik issues. I understand that on the one hand halacha is faith-based, and even though some things seem pointless I feel like I understand the bigger picture. However, I am sometimes also struck with this dilemma and wanted to know what you thought, and maybe points I could consider in order to clear things up for myself.

Dear Melissa,

It is true that in addition to the “letter of the law” of Shabbat, there is also the “spirit of the law”, and many people naturally connect to that spirit more than to the nitty-gritty of the law. Yet by the same token, many people connect to the letter of the law aspect, and try their best to honor the Shabbat in that way.

Unfortunately, certain people can become too concerned only about what you call the nitty-gritty. This can result in losing focus on the spirit of Shabbat, and even dampening that spirit by reprimanding others in an insensitive and embarrassing way, which is obviously wrong.

But in truth, a proper balance should be the objective of everyone: knowing the laws and upholding them in all their details, while retaining the spirit of Shabbat that these laws intend to induce. G-d certainly wants us to observe and honor Shabbat, which also honors Him, through keeping these laws. That’s why they’re commanded in the Torah.

One who abides by these rules for observing Shabbat shows that he takes G-d, the Torah and Shabbat seriously. It’s not only about how I connect to the spirit of Shabbat, because in an extreme example (which I know you’re not advocating), a person can come to desecrate the Shabbat many times over in the name of celebrating what he considers to be its spirit.

Rather, the laws of Shabbat define a certain framework within which we celebrate its spirit. Like any important and successful event, there’s a protocol, a schedule of events, a theme and an agenda — to which much attention on detail is placed in order that each phase of the event is a success on its own, while simultaneously contributing to the overall purpose of the occasion. Anything else would result in a chaotic free-for-all.

But even the laws themselves go beyond the technicalities of can-opening. For example, there’s a whole set of laws governing what one may and may not speak about on Shabbat. Business, news, politics or any other mundane topic should be avoided on Shabbat. One is encouraged to use more refined language on Shabbat, and there were many who endeavored to speak only the Holy Tongue on Shabbat even though they spoke more fluently in some other language. This is all in order to create and preserve a spirit of sanctity and holiness on Shabbat.

So the fine details of Shabbat observance are actually an integral facet of its spirit. You might compare it to a beautiful symphony. Certainly the harmony is beautiful to listen to and readily enjoyed. But think about how much extreme detail and attention to technicality there is behind that beauty, from the painstaking transcription of notes by the composer, to the exacting effort made by each musician in every note they play. Yet it is that intense focus on detail which, when orchestrated properly, renders such a beautiful, inspiring and moving experience. This is the Shabbat Symphony, when performed properly.

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TELLING THE PATIENT

Question:

A neighbor of mine recently told me that her doctor diagnosed her as having a particular illness. Because of my own medical background she asked me if I thought the illness would pass. The truth is that I had no real idea whether she would get over it but I wanted to make her feel good. What is the right thing to do in such a case?

Answer:

A similar question was put to Rabbi Yitzhak Zilberstein, rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak. His response was that it is proper in such a case to deviate from the truth and to assure her that, from a medical point of

view, the illness will pass. If the halacha permits a eulogizer to exaggerate somewhat in his *hesped* in order to honor the deceased, it is certainly proper to exaggerate in order to spare a living person from anxiety.

Rabbi Zilberstein added an anecdote about a follower of a Chassidic leader whose son was mortally ill. When the rebbe promised him that his son would live, the other Chassidim wondered how he could thus go out on a limb. His reply was that all he could fear if he was proven wrong was that his followers would lose faith in him and abandon him.

"All of that doesn't matter," concluded this *tzaddik*, "if I can bring a little comfort to a sick Jew and his family."

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A "CHANCE" MEETING

It isn't every day that a Jew who asks a question from a rabbi thousands of miles away online gets a chance to meet that rabbi face to face. But that is exactly what happened some years ago to Rabbi Mordechai Becher who had spent considerable time answering questions presented to Ohr Somayach's "Ask the Rabbi" service. On a lecture tour in South Africa, Rabbi Becher took some time to enjoy a barbecue picnic together with the late Rabbi Gavriel Klatzko of Ohr Somayach's Johannesburg branch. Passing by their pic-

nic site was a group of college-age trekkers who were invited to join the feast.

"My only connection to my Jewish faith," confided one of the young men, "was the question I occasionally asked a rabbi by email." When they both realized that the rabbi he had turned to was standing right in front of him, a bond was formed. The young backpacker eventually became observant, and Rabbi Becher, today a world famous lecturer for "Gateways", attended his wedding.

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE CONCEPT OF SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS

Based on Maimonides and Abarbanel

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

The chapters in the Torah which detail the practice of animal sacrifice in the Temple are some of the most difficult for a 21st century individual to understand. As such practices have completely disappeared from civilized society we tend to view them as cruel, primitive and superstitious. They seem incompatible with other humane and progressive commandments of the Torah, which were revolutionary when the Torah was first given and today form the basis for not only a vibrant Judaism but for the moral and ethical standards of most of the rest of the world as well.

Writing in the early 16th century and incorporating the words of Maimonides, who preceded him by several hundred years, Abarbanel provides a perspective on sacrifices that we can appreciate today. The primary reason for the necessity of these rituals was to assist the nascent Jewish nation in believing in the existence and oneness of G-d and to draw closer to Him by following His directives. Human perfection can be more effectively realized by attaining knowledge and faith through prayer, enlightenment and adherence to the Torah's other precepts than by burning animals on an altar. However, the Jewish People were commanded to devote themselves to the worship of G-d, and the prevailing form of worship at that time was through animal sacrifice in specially-designated temples. G-d determined that the Jewish People would not be able to easily abandon such a well-established universal custom. By shifting the mode of worship from polytheistic paganism to the worship of one G-d, idolatry could be eliminated without radically interfering with practices already familiar to the people. In fact, the enormous amount of detail and the many differences between the various offerings symbolize many of the fundamental precepts of man's responsibilities to himself and his Creator.

The first type of animal offering is the *Olah*, or Elevation Offering, which is completely consumed on the altar. This represents the uniting of the soul with G-d. Just as the animal's body is united with the flames, so too is man's eternal soul united with G-d after death. This offering demonstrates that our sole purpose is to devote ourselves completely to the service of G-d. Since it symbolizes man's Divinely-creat-

ed non-physical soul, material man has no share in it and cannot partake of it.

The second type of offering is the Sin Offering (*Chatat* and *Asham*). This offering functions as one aspect of the atonement process that is required of one who transgresses Torah commandments unintentionally. It encourages the transgressor to be more vigilant and to consider the consequences of his actions. It functions as a monetary fine as well, since the transgressor must provide the animal. Even if one is unsure whether he transgressed at all he still must bring an offering. The procedures of the offering differ for unintentional transgressions committed by the High Court or the High Priest, as their positions involve greater responsibility.

The third type of offering is the Peace Offering (*Shelamim* and *Todah*), which is brought by people who are thanking G-d for His numerous favors — for granting us the Land of Israel and for other acts of miraculous Divine intervention. It can represent gratitude for a past favor or act as a way of beseeching G-d to help us in the future. A festive meal is part of the offering. The one who brings the animal and the priests who conduct the rituals are allowed to consume part of the offering as they all join in thanking G-d for His blessings. The internal organs are burned on the altar, as they are symbols of man's internal thoughts. It is as if the owner is saying that he is pouring out his inner soul before G-d.

All of these offerings always consist of the most expensive animals: cattle, sheep and goats. They are also accompanied by the finest wheat flour, oils and wines. Here the Torah is emphasizing that the finest products of Israel depend on G-d's blessing.

In summary, the Elevation Offering is ideological in nature. It symbolizes the immortality of the soul and its intimate connection with G-d. The Sin Offerings teach the importance of personal vigilance and accountability, the just reward for those who fear and worship God and the punishment for those who defy Him. At the same time, it is essential for that person to understand that his sins can be pardoned. Otherwise, there is the possibility that he will lapse even more. Finally, the Peace Offerings illustrate our faith in Divine Providence, in our recognition that G-d is the ultimate source of our material blessings.