

# OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA · 12 SIVAN 5776 - JUN. 18, 2016 · VOL. 23 NO. 37

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS WEEK BEHA'ALOTCHA IS READ IN ISRAEL AND NASSO IS READ OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THUS

“...And Aharon did thus” (8:3)

At the beginning of time there shone a unique light called the “*Ohr Haganuz*”, the Hidden Light. With this light you could see from one end of the Creation to the other. It wasn't that the light was super bright, but you could see the connection between cause and effect.

We live in a world of darkness where events can sometimes seem random and cruel. This is because that light was *hidden*. Even though the Creator hid away the *Ohr Haganuz* after it had shone for thirty-six hours, there are times when you can still catch glimpses of its hidden glow...

On the first night of Chanukah we light one candle; on the second night two. Thus after two nights we have lit three candles. If you continue this calculation you will find that the total number of candles that we light on Chanukah is thirty-six. The thirty-six lights of Chanukah correspond to the thirty-six hours during which the *Ohr Haganuz* shined.

“...and Aharon did thus.”

Rashi comments: “This verse recounts the praise of Aharon, for he did not change.”

If you look at the Genesis account, the phrase “And it was thus” is appended to every creation that the Torah speaks of. Every creation, that is, except one. When the Torah says “Let there be light!” the phrase “And it was thus” is missing. The reason is because G-d hid away that original light.

It re-appears in the light of the Chanukah candles.

And it re-appears in the light of the Menorah.

When Aharon lit the Menorah, he caused a *tikkun* in the world, a spiritual repair that brought back the light to its original pristine state. Aharon's lighting brought forth a light that “did not change” from the radiance of the *Ohr Haganuz*.

When the Torah says, “And Aharon did thus,” the ‘thus’ is referring to Aharon returning the light to its state of “And it was thus.”

• Sources: Amodea Sheva; Malbim

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the Menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the first-born, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d commands Moshe concerning the *korban* Pesach. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, allowing a “second chance” to offer the *korban* Pesach one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in the Exodus — some people

complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. G-d tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. G-d sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. G-d explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

## BAVA KAMA 16 - 22

*“And all of the kingdom of Yehuda, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bestowed honor upon him when he passed from this world (Divrei Hayamim II 32:33) — This teaches that they established a Yeshiva at his gravesite.”*

The verse cited in this *beraita* on our *daf* refers to the passing of the righteous King Chizkiyahu, who was shown this great honor because he was extremely diligent and prolific in assuring the teaching Torah to the all of the people — men and women, adults and young children — who were part of his kingdom (Tosefot).

Rashi explains that the “establishment of a Yeshiva” means that the Torah students were gathered there to toil in Torah study. The *gemara* cites three opinions as to how long this Yeshiva remained at his graveside: three days, seven days and thirty days. Both Rashi and Tosefot note that the Torah study was not exactly adjacent to the grave, but was at a minimum distance of four *amot* away. This is because we are taught not to perform a mitzvah in close proximity to a person’s grave, as this would show a lack of sensitivity, since that person can no longer fulfill *mitzvot*. “One who mocks a poor man blasphemes the One Who made him” states the verse in Mishlei (17:5), which our Sages teach means to not “mock” one who has passed from this world (and is now “poor” in the sense that he can no longer fulfill any mitzvah here), by fulfilling a mitzvah at his burial site. (Berachot 18a)

This honor showed to King Chizkiyahu near his grave takes me back to a day more than 30 years ago. On that day a very dear student at a Yeshiva I was affiliated with in Israel was killed in battle during the First Lebanon War. The funeral was at Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, and was attended by thousands — including the entire Yeshiva where he was studying Torah until the war erupted, a large number of soldiers in uniform of all ranks from his IDF unit, in addition to a multitude of family members and friends. The head of the Yeshiva spoke at the funeral in English and Hebrew, and cited this *gemara* in Bava Kama about King Chizkiyahu, and implored that a Yeshiva be established near the grave in honor of our fallen “brother”. I clearly recall that after this eulogy nearly everyone remained at the cemetery, crying, and not certain how to deal with this great loss. But after a short while it became clear to many what should be done: to heed the words of the Rabbi who spoke, and begin learning Torah there as much as possible. And so it was that very many who attended the funeral joined in this act of showing “honor” to the beloved departed Torah student with Torah study then and there, with soldiers from all religious backgrounds studying together with the students from the Yeshiva.

• Bava Kama 16b

## PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

*“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”*

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the Menorah burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the Menorah made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *Levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*t'nufot*" (wavings) are in the parsha?
5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *Levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the Menorah and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this week's Questions!

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

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the Menorah was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *para aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show G-d's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the *avoda*; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumber, melon, leek, onion and garlic - these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

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# Abarbanel

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## ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

### Beha'alotcha

#### The “Complainers”

Chapter eleven in this Torah portion begins with a very enigmatic verse: “And the people were like complainers; evil in the ears of G-d. And G-d heard, and His wrath flared, and a fire of G-d burned them, and it consumed at the edge of the camp”. Curiously, they are not referred to simply as “complainers”. Rather, they are described as “*like* complainers”. Furthermore, we are not told what they were complaining about.

Abarbanel explains that despite the fact that Jewish People had spent an entire year at Mount Sinai where they had received the Torah with its teachings and Divine admonitions, they never really abandoned the heretical beliefs that they had absorbed in Egypt. Similarly, they had imitated the crass Egyptian character, especially in regard to eating and drinking. Here, at Mount Sinai, in a place where the Divine Torah should have straightened out their crooked beliefs and character, the Egyptian influence was not yet completely erased. Despite the fact that they were accompanied by the Ark of the Covenant, and led by the Clouds of Glory, the two episodes that begin this chapter illustrate the failure of belief and character which remained with them.

The Hebrew word that is usually translated as “complainers” actually means, in the context of our text, “those who sought a pretext to complain”. Abarbanel then transfigures the rest of the verse so that it reads as follows: “They sought pretexts to prove that G-d’s ears were bad”; that is to say, that G-d did not pay attention to the everyday words and actions of the people. This is similar to the verse in Psalms 94:7: “And they said that G-d will not see, G-d will not understand.” Their belief was that G-d was not aware of and

did not relate to the details of everyday, lowly, physical existence. They expressed this belief now because Moshe had just said in the previous verse (10:36): “Arise, G-d, and let Your foes be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You. And when it (the Ark) rested, he (Moshe) would say, ‘Reside tranquilly, O, G-d, among the myriad thousands of Israel.’”

The people were essentially mocking Moshe’s words. They didn’t believe that G-d really resided amongst them, that He was attuned to them. Yet they are still described as *like* those looking for a pretext because they were not *totally* denying the concept of Divine Providence. They understood that it applied to well-known and publicized miraculous interventions in nature. Rather, they were looking for a pretext to deny G-d’s providence in regard to the details of everyday life.

Since their transgression does involve an overtly public action, the Torah does not go into further detail. Rather, to counter their claim that G-d does not hear, the Torah says explicitly that G-d heard. To counter their claim that G-d was not personally involved on an individual basis, G-d made sure that they would recognize Him through the punishment of fire, which was directed miraculously and specifically against only those who were guilty. The fire burned only at the “edge” of the camp, indicating that it was a miraculous fire, not a natural one which would have normally spread further. The people cried out to Moshe, who then prayed to G-d. To further demonstrate the uniquely personal and providential nature of the fire, it was then immediately absorbed into the ground.

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## DAYS OR DEITIES

From: Alicia

Dear Rabbi,

I have a question about the Jewish notion of time. We reckon the days by number, 1 through 7, where 1 is Sunday and 7 is Saturday. But most of the world uses names to identify the days of the week. That makes more sense to me. For one, names are more personal than numbers. And secondly, the fact that each day has its own name suggests there's some unique quality about that day to connect to, which is missed by just calling it a number. Would you please explain this to me? Thanks.

Dear Alicia,

This is a fascinating question, and the answer revolves exactly around what unique quality the names of the week are intended to convey.

Let's start with the Jewish system for the days of the week.

Ascribing numbers to the days is based on the Torah's description of Creation, where, after enumerating what G-d created on any given day, the Torah concludes with the phrase, "And it was evening and it was morning day one" (or day 2, or day 3 and so on). Interestingly, the 7th day was not numbered, but rather described by G-d's desisting from creating — Shabbat.

What this means is that while Jewish sources discuss the unique quality of each day of the week based on its role in Creation and how we can connect to its unique energy, ultimately each day is secondary in importance to the count-up to Shabbat. This is because, while each weekday expresses the proliferation of multiplicity, Shabbat unifies all of Creation into a singular celebration of G-d's Oneness.

In complete contrast to the Jewish system, the non-Jewish names for the days of the week, insofar as they are based on idolatry, actually celebrate multiplicity, and thereby manifest denial of the Oneness of G-d.

How so?

Ancient astrology viewed 7 heavenly bodies as having an influence over Earth: Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. It was believed that their influence rotated through the 24 hours of a day in cycles of seven, one per hour, such that the first hour of each of the seven days of the week was governed by a different one of these 7 "planets". Since the ancients worshipped the stars in general, they deified these "planets" as well, and they honored each separate god by naming the days of the week after the god that "governed" it.

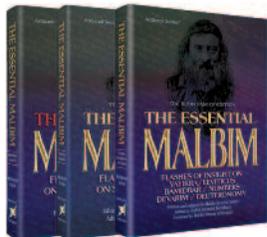
Thus, the names of the days of the week in Latin prefixed by *dies* (day) became: Solis (Sun), Lunae (Moon), Martis (Mars), Mercurii (Mercury), Jovis (Jupiter), Veneris (Venus) and Saturni (Saturn) — which form the basis for the names of the week in the various Romance languages. While English also uses this convention for "Sun's day", "Moon's day" and "Saturn's day", the English names for the other days of the week are based on the Norse equivalents of the Latin gods: Mars-Tew — "Tew's day"; Mercury-Wodin — "Wodin's day"; Jupiter-Thor — "Thor's day" and Venus-Frigga — "Frigga's day".

Now that you know the "unique qualities" intended by the non-Jewish, idolatrous names for the days of the week, hopefully you'll reconsider your interest in cultivating a personal connection with them, and, instead, celebrate the unique contribution each day of Creation makes within the count-up toward the proclamation of G-d's universal unity — Shabbat.

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## THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

**R**abbi Moshe of Terani (“Mabit”), in his monumental work *Beit Elokim*, raises a fundamental question about the structure of prayer.

The three basic parts of prayer are praise, requests and thanksgiving (*Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer 1:2*). Whenever one approaches G-d he should follow this structure. The *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer, the central prayer of the Jewish People, also follows this structure, as we see from a passage from the Talmud:

Rabbi Chanina said: In the first three blessings one is likened to a servant who offers praise before his master. In the middle blessings he is like a servant requesting an allotment from his master. In the last three blessings he is like a servant who has received his allotment from his master (i.e., expressing thanks and gratitude and then departing) (*Berachot 34a*).

In the above three levels, the third one seems to raise a question. Surely the worshiper has not yet received his request, having made it only moments before. How then can he be compared to a servant who has *already received* his allotment from his master? What exactly is he thanking G-d

for? We cannot answer that the worshiper is thanking G-d for deciding to grant his request, since he does not know what G-d has decided.

Rather, we must say that the one who prays must walk away as if his request had already been granted. Yet this too needs clarification since what if the person never receives what he asked for? Would his words of thanks have been uttered in vein?

The answer is that when one prays, he is meant to display hope that his request will be granted, but if it is not, he must accept this as well, without regret. He should be grateful for having had the opportunity to approach G-d in prayer, and knowing that G-d’s denial of his request is for the best.

Prayer is not a guaranteed method of “getting what you want”, since many times we don’t get what we want. Rather, prayer is about approaching G-d, displaying our total dependency and trust in Him to take care of our needs. Accordingly, we thank G-d, both for giving us the opportunity to approach Him, and for the love and concern we receive from Him — regardless of whether we receive our actual request.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### THE WINDLESS WINDMILL

**O**ne of Jerusalem’s most famous historical sites is the large windmill in the Yemin Moshe neighborhood. This windmill was sent to Jerusalem from London by Sir Moses Montefiore to enable the Jews of Batei Yehuda Touro to grind their own wheat and to earn a livelihood by serving other Jews who would no longer be dependent on the Arab monopoly on wheat grinding.



Despite the good intentions behind its establishment, the windmill had a very short lifespan. It soon became evident that there was not enough of a steady wind where it stood and it could therefore not live up to the expectations of those who saw it as the first attempt to introduce economic self-sufficiency into a Jerusalem neighborhood.

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## ALEX DOMBERG

Age 22 - Albany, NY - SUNY Albany, BA in Political Science  
Center Program at Ohr Somayach

**B**ravely crossing land, ocean and culture, Alex moved at the age of three from his hometown of Odessa, Ukraine (a major seaport and cultural center on the Black Sea) to the States. His grandfather, who sensed a deteriorating economy and security situation in the Ukraine, and who was also concerned about the dangers awaiting Alex in the notoriously anti-Semitic Ukrainian army, decided to lead the family to their new home in Albany, NY. Growing up in a new culture, and learning English as a second language, was no small feat for young Alex, but he succeeded in overcoming these barriers. He acclimatized to America and did well socially, as well as in his school career. “Growing up, I lived the average secular lifestyle; playing basketball with friends, going to movies and enjoying fishing trips”, he recounts.

Alex has always treasured close family bonds, and tries hard, even when abroad, to stay connected. He fondly describes his brother Nicholas, 14, as “genuine, compassionate and spiritually inclined”. From “Grandfather”, a skilled carpenter and mechanic, he learned the value of hard work and living, along with strong ethics. “He taught me the importance of being true to myself; of living according to what I now describe as the “emes” (truth). This made me who I am, and it’s one of the reasons I’m here today.”

At SUNY Albany, Alex majored in Political Science and minored in Business. He was one of a few thousand Jewish students in the university, but, like most of them, he had little affiliation with Jewish life on campus. “My grandmother made sure we knew we were Jewish. Her own grandparents had been very religious, and she held onto some Jewish traditions, such as lighting candles on Chanukah and hosting a family dinner on Pesach — complete with matzah balls. But overall, my knowledge of Judaism was almost nil, and I have no recollection of coming into contact with religious Jews growing up.”

So how did he end up here in Israel, in Ohr Somayach, studying Talmud and Jewish Ethics at a high level, and discov-

ering how meaningful a true Jewish lifestyle can be? How did he find his way back to the heritage of his ancestors, to the Jewish values they had cherished for so many generations back in the Ukraine?

He shares the roots of his spiritual journey: “I always had in the background these questions about the meaning of life. I used to explore different forms of spirituality, such as Eastern meditation and yoga. I guess I always felt that something bigger was going on, that behind all those events that happened in my life but didn’t seem to make sense, there must be a *reason*, some kind of ‘guiding hand’. Looking back, I’m here today as a result of those things.” But it wasn’t until his third year of university studies that Alex received his “tap on the shoulder from G-d”, in the form of a surprise introduction to the campus rabbi, Rabbi Gavriel Horan. “He approached me and asked if I was



Jewish. Confused, I told him ‘Yes’, and shortly after that first meeting we began sitting down and discussing major Jewish topics: what it means to be a Jew and about G-d’s plan in the world. His answers clicked right away with me. It just felt right, and I knew I had found the answers to my deepest questions!”

Over the year Alex began thinking more about G-d, connecting more with fellow Jews and tasted the delight of his rabbi’s Shabbat table. “I really enjoyed the happy atmosphere and lively singing, accompanied by meaningful conversation. I realized that, contrary to modern belief, I didn’t need to get intoxicated to have fun and connect with the people around me. Seeing how a religious family interacts, so respectful and attentive to one another, also made me very curious about Jewish family dynamics.”

Balancing commitment to his college courses, internship at the NY State Assembly and a part-time job, Alex began his journey in his religious education by enrolling in the Maimonides learning program. It wasn’t until the Winter break of 2015 that he joined JLE trip, which was his first visit to Israel. The JLE trip, based at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem,

*continued on page eight*

Alex Domberg... continued from page seven

involved a stimulating mix of interactive study and touring around the country, and proved to be a rewarding and pivotal experience. “Suddenly I was together with a group of guys from all over the world, of different ages, all coming from a similar ‘place’ in order to learn more about what it means to be Jewish. After meeting the rabbis leading the trip, my predispositions were shattered. They just didn’t fit the stereotype! They were educated in secular realms, athletic and had also started their successful lives similar to where we had begun ours – on the secular side of the spectrum. In short, they were *regular people*! I saw that Judaism isn’t something consigned to history. It’s not archaic. In fact, it’s very much alive and livable!” He also recalls deep discussions on life and relationships, which opened up an exciting new perspective for him. “I went home to complete my final semester,” he recounts, “but I already knew I wanted to come back to learn more.”

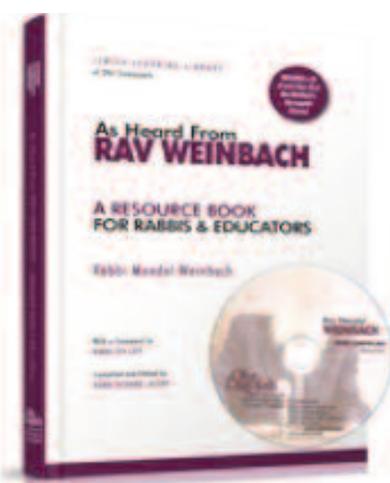
And come back he did. Since September 2015 Alex has been an enthusiastic and motivated student in the Center Program of Ohr Somayach, a high-level program for college graduates from around the world — Europe, South Africa, and yes, even Albany, NY.

“I feel so fortunate to have this opportunity to study Torah and grow as a person. I’m learning about topics and

finding answers to questions that I think puzzle many people out there: about G-d, life and the purpose of Creation. I’ve become a more appreciative person, more comfortable with myself, more caring for others and their feelings. I’m more conscious of how I spend my time. And a lot is due to the wonderful role models I have in the rabbis here who have such knowledge, yet stay real, genuine and grounded. They actually care about me, about my success in life. They want to help me. I never had this kind of relationship with my college professors. I also found here a fantastic group of fellow students, guys who are growing together, enjoying themselves, but with maturity and meaning. We look out for each other. It’s so much deeper than what I was used to!”

“My whole lifestyle after coming to Yeshiva has become more purposeful. My relationships with family, with friends — everything has more meaning. That’s why it’s so important to me to share my story here. All Jews, young and old, should know that you don’t have to be a ‘religious fanatic’ in order to come to Israel and explore your Judaism. I hope my story shows how coming to yeshiva can be a normal and highly rewarding experience!”

*We are proud to have Alex in our Ohr Somayach family and we wish him great success in the future.*



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