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SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA · 11 SIVAN 5765 · JUNE 18, 2005 · VOL. 12 NO. 37

PARSHA INSIGHTS

GOING UP

“...In your lighting...” (8:2)

Once there was a rich nobleman who had a friend who was a simple laborer. The rich man told his friend that he would eat in his home. The laborer did not stint in preparing his home to the maximum of his ability. He cleaned and arranged his meager furnishings, set the table as lavishly as he could, and lit candles to welcome his friend. As it grew dark, the laborer went to the window and saw rising on the horizon a glow. At first, he thought it was the setting sun, but as the sky darkened, the glow continued to get brighter. Suddenly, his friend the nobleman appeared on the crest of the hill with a large group of servants all carrying torches. These torches were so bright that they lit up the night as though it were day. When the laborer saw this entourage approaching his cottage, he turned and looked at his room. The candles that he had arranged paled into insignificance in the glow of the torches that approached his home. Quickly, he extinguished the candles and hid the candlesticks in a drawer. The nobleman entered his cottage and saw the darkness and said, “Were you not expecting me tonight?” “Yes, I was,” said the laborer. “Why did you kindle no lights?” enquired the nobleman. “I did,” replied the other, “but when I saw the wonderful blaze of lights from the torches of your servants, I was ashamed and hid my candles away.”

On hearing this, the nobleman dismissed all his attendants and said, “Tonight, I will dine only by the light of your candles so you will see how dear they are to me.”

People often ask why G-d gave us so many commandments.

Altogether, there are 613. It’s true, however, that not all of them can be performed by everyone. For example, there are *mitzvot* that only *kohanim* can do. There are those that only *levi'im* can do, that only women can do, as well as *mitzvot* that can only be done when the Beit Hamikdash exists. Nevertheless, that still leaves a tremendous amount of *mitzvot*.

Why does G-d need me to do all these things? What possible benefit is there to the Creator of the World if I put on *tefillin*, or if I love my neighbor as myself? Whatever little light I can shine into this world is infinitesimal compared to His Light. How can the little light that my kindness generates compare with G-d’s eternal kindness in creating the world and giving me the opportunity to exist and create a relationship with Him? Isn’t my little light swamped completely by His light?

This is exactly how Moshe felt when he entered the Sanctuary. When Moshe went in there he found the Sanctuary bathed in radiance of the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence. Moshe wondered how the poor earthly lights of the menorah could radiate any light. He thought they would be overpowered by the brilliance of the *Shechina*.

What possible use could G-d have for the wicks and oils of mere mortals?

G-d spoke to Moshe using the first word of this week’s Torah portion, “*Beha’alotcha...*” This word is usually translated as “*When you light*”; however it can also mean “*In your elevation*”. G-d was telling Moshe that the *mitzvah* of the menorah would elevate him. And so it is with all the *mitzvot*. Every *mitzvah* is a chance to become spiritually elevated.

The Torah is 613 ways to become closer to G-d.

• Based on the Midrash

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

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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.

SACRIFICING FOR SHABBAT

Shabbat observance is so important to the destiny of our people that the Torah, in next week’s portion, devotes a chapter to reporting the first public violation of the sacred day of rest and the subsequent severe punishment.

If this message from the Torah does not suffice to alarm secular Jews in Israel and elsewhere to the danger of ignoring Shabbat, perhaps a shamefaced blush will come to their faces when they read about what some young Orthodox Jews in the U.S. are prepared to sacrifice for Shabbat.

When students of the Torah Academy of Bergen County in Teaneck, New Jersey won the State Mock Trial Championship and looked forward to the National Competition in Charlotte, North Carolina, they were disappointed to learn that they would not be able to compete. The reason – most of the competition would take place on Shabbat.

The students and their principal, Rabbi Yosef Adler, firm-

ly refused to compromise on their Shabbat observance and the National Mock Trial Organization heads just as firmly refused to make any accommodation. It took some strong intervention from the New Jersey State Bar Foundation to finally make them back down and change the schedule for the benefit of the Shabbat observers.

Another example of sacrificing for Shabbat was the refusal of students, of the Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit to participate in the State’s athletic playoff tournament because of games scheduled on Shabbat. The school is suing the Michigan High School Athletic Association for failing to accommodate its students and it will be interesting to see how that case turns out.

Shabbat should not be the concern of only youngsters wishing to compete in state and national competitions. It deserves to be recognized as the best guarantee of Israel forever.

Witty Advice for Circling Life

“One of the saddest experiences which can come to a human being is to awaken, gray-haired and wrinkled, near the close of an unproductive career, to the fact that all through the years he has been using only a small part of himself.”

• V.W. Burrows

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 battlefront.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, 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.

- Moving a lamp on Shabbat and other aspects of *muktzah*
- Annulment of vows on Shabbat
- Moving a base for *muktzah*
- Placing a vessel to catch the sparks of a lamp
- Keeping a pot hot through external insulation
- “Wings of a dove” and other insulators
- The source for the Number 49 in Shabbat labors
- Moving the woolen insulators
- The sanctity of body cleanliness

ELISHA OF THE WINGS

“Elisha of the Wings” was the grand title of a Jew who was held up by our Talmudic Sages as the model for maintaining ideal control of body functions while wearing *tefillin*.

How did he gain such an unusual title?

The Romans once decreed that any Jew caught wearing *tefillin* on his head would have his head smashed. Elisha defied this decree and went out into the street with his *tefillin* on. A Roman officer ran after him but by the time he caught up with him Elisha had removed the *tefillin* from his head and held them in his closed hand. When asked what he held in his hand, Elisha replied, “Wings of a dove.” When he

opened his hand to reveal its contents, there were indeed wings of a dove in place of the *tefillin*.

Tosefot points out that the fact that such a miracle took place for Elisha was an indication for the Sages that he must have been extremely careful in regard to cleanliness of his body while wearing *tefillin*.

Two questions still remain. What about the *tefillin* on the arm of Elisha? Furthermore, why was he not prepared to sacrifice his life in order to do the mitzvah?

In regard to the first question Maharsha (*Shabbat 130a*) explains that the Roman decree was only concerning the *tefillin* worn on the head which is visible to all and not concerning the *tefillin* worn on the arm in concealed fashion.

As regards sacrifice of life, even though martyrdom is required in connection with *all* Torah prohibitions when there is an enemy decree compelling Jews to sin, this is true only when they force a Jew to actively sin. When they decree to refrain from actively fulfilling a mitzvah like *tefillin*, there is no point in martyrdom because the enemy can achieve his purpose by incapacitating the victim of his oppression through imprisonment or other means. Aware of this principle, Elisha decided to avoid a confrontation which would have endangered his life, and Heaven helped him to survive through a miracle.

• *Shabbat 49a*

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“When King David wrote (*Tehillim 68:14*) about ‘wings of a dove coated with silver’, he was comparing the Jewish People to a dove. Just as a dove’s wings protect it (against the cold and those who threaten it by striking with its wings – Rashi) so too do the *mitzvot* of Israel protect it.”

• *Shabbat 49a*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A REWARDED EFFORT

In the observant community of Rechasim in the north of Israel, it is not uncommon for people to gather on Shabbat eve in the home of one of their neighbors for a *Shalom Zachar* to celebrate the birth of a son. But when that is also the eve of Simchat Torah it is not a simple matter for men to arrive after they are exhausted from dancing in the synagogue in honor of the Torah.

It was therefore not too surprising that when this happened some years ago only six neighbors made the very special effort of showing up. Their effort to bring joy to their neighbor and bless him regarding the forthcoming Brit Milah of his son was well rewarded. In that year sons were born to all six of them, to two of them who had waited years for children and to one who previously had eight daughters.

MITZVAH DREAMS

From: Josh in NY

Dear Rabbi,

If a person does a mitzvah in a dream, does he get the reward? Can the gemara statement about being excommunicated in a dream have anything to do with this? Are there any other sources you can recommend?

Thank you for this great service.

Dear Josh,

The gemara you mention and Shulchan Aruch (*Nedarim 8a*, Y.D. 334:35) indeed say that one who dreams he is ex-communicated needs *hatarat nidui*, a nullification. Even if others dreamed his ex-communication (*He'emek She'ela, sheilta 29:16*), and even if he or others also dreamt the nullification, he still needs *hatara*. This is because every dream has both some truth and falsehood, such that the ex-communication may be the true part and the nullification the false part. Since there are prohibitions involved and since the situation can be corrected fairly simply through proper nullification, that is what's done.

However, this is different than doing a mitzvah in a dream since the ex-communication is being revealed from Above, which may be a reason to take the dream more seriously. Still, perhaps your question can be compared to another case discussed in connection with ex-communication, namely whether a vow made in a dream is binding.

Rashba says that one who vows in a dream needs *hatarat neder*, a nullification of the vow (*in B.Y., Tur 210*). This is because he "made" the vow, and it easily can be corrected. Chatam Sofer (Y.D. 222) explains that the fact the he dreamt the vow reveals that he must have had such intention while awake. Also, as above, it doesn't

help if he dreamt the nullification since that may be the false part of the dream (*Shach 4*).

However, others (*Rav Sherira Gaon, HaRosh in B.Y. ibid.*) are of the opinion that one who makes a vow in a dream does not need *hatara*. They maintain that a vow which one dreams on his own is unlike ex-communication in a dream, which may be from Heaven. Also, they argue, a vow is binding only if one is fully conscious and actually verbalizes the words — here he has neither. This is also the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 210:2). According to this, dreaming of non-action *mitzvot* (such as belief, love and awe of G-d) might count, but dreaming of *mitzvot* that require action would not.

Or would they? Our Sages taught: "A good intention is considered as deed, as in 'Then the G-d-fearing men spoke to one another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the Lord and for those who valued His name' (*Malachi 3:16*). What is meant by 'those who valued His name'? Rabbi Asi said, "Even if a person intended to do a mitzvah but was unable to, G-d considers it as if he had done it" (*Kiddushin 40a*). Still, this is not conclusive since a person's lack of action in a dream, no matter how great his intention, is not comparable to one who consciously and actively tried to perform a mitzvah and was unable to for reasons beyond his control.

That being said, a person's dreaming of doing a mitzvah, insofar as its being an expression of one's spiritual orientation and inner desires, is a very great thing which, if not deserving reward for actually doing the mitzvah, is nevertheless deserving of its own reward. Furthermore, such a dream may also be a revelation from Above. Thus our Sages taught regarding mitzvah dreams, "One who prays in a dream is a good sign...One who wears *tefillin* should anticipate greatness...One who reads the *Shema* is fitting for the Divine Presence to rest upon him...One who answers *y'hei shemei rabba* is promised the World to Come" (*Berachot 55-57*).



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GOING TO THE DOGS

Question: A fellow in my office, who belongs to some temple practicing what they call “Liberal Judaism”, recently invited me to attend a “Bark Mitzvah” which he is making for his pet dog at their temple. He promises me that it will be a “truly religious ceremony” as is customary in that community, complete with a *tallit* and *kipah* for the dog, a sermon and appropriate gifts. I know this sounds absolutely ridiculous but what is the right thing for me to do in this case?

Answer: With all respect to dogs and other animals, you are faced with a challenge to redeem a fellow Jew from his association with a brand of “modernization” which is letting Judaism “go to the dogs”. But because such behavior is, as you put it, “absolutely ridiculous”, it provides you with an opportunity to enlighten your inviter as to the folly of his spiritual values and thus open his eyes to true Judaism.

The Midrash teaches us how the Patriarch Avraham used satire to discourage people from idol worship. A customer

entered his father’s idol shop one day while he was minding the store and ordered a shiny new model. “How old are you?” asked the young Hebrew iconoclast. When the client responded that he was sixty, Avraham challenged him as to how a man of sixty was prepared to bow down before an idol only a few days old.

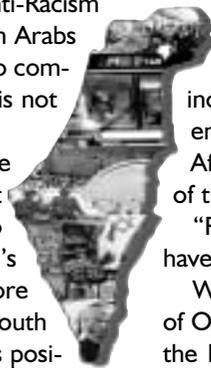
Just as that customer walked out of the shop with a humiliating sense of the absurdity of idol worship, perhaps a similar effort on your part in regard to the “Bark Mitzvah” will cause your friend to abandon such a farce and the movement that sanctions it. But perhaps your best approach will be to inform your friend that you cannot attend a ceremony which is an insult to your own idea and ideal of what a Bar Mitzvah means in the life of a Jew. You may also assure him that his pet dog will not be insulted if he cancels the event and walks out with his tail between his legs because that animal has more sense than the humans who wish to honor him by disgracing themselves.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

REPLACING HATE WITH LOVE

The experience of the 2001 Durban Anti-Racism Conference held in South Africa, in which Arabs and their sympathizers did their utmost to communicate a lying legend of a demonized Israel, is not likely to be uprooted soon in that country.

This was one of the messages delivered by the new chief rabbi of South Africa at his recent inauguration. Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein, who served as the spiritual leader of Ohr Somayach’s Sunny Road Synagogue in Johannesburg before being appointed as the fifth chief rabbi of South Africa, is not only the youngest (33) to hold this position of leadership of the 800,000-strong Jewish com-



munity, but also the first to be born in that country. Reflecting on his own experience and that of Ohr Somayach, Rabbi Goldstein told an audience, which included South African President Thabo Mbeki, that he envisions “a conceptual framework of Jewish unity on an African framework that ultimately derives from the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.”

“Proportionately,” he added in a press interview, “we have the strongest *ba'al teshuva* movement in the world.”

With the leadership of the new chief rabbi and the efforts of Ohr Somayach, there is real hope that a legend of love of the Land of Israel will replace the hatred demonstrated at Durban.

לע"נ
 ר' דוד בן ר' אהרון ז"ל
 ומרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.