

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT TERUMAH · 6 ADAR 5770 · FEB. 20, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 19

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE FURNITURE WAS DIVINE

“They shall make an Ark...” (25:10)

In the 1930’s, in the desert kingdom of Mukhtar, things changed a lot after they discovered oil. The sheikh was eager to benefit his people and to add to his own prestige. He built roads and hotels, palaces and airports. They had everything.

Everything, that is, except water.

The only liquid that was abundant in Mukhtar was black and viscous. It may have been black gold, but you still couldn’t drink it.

Short of towing an iceberg from the Antarctic (a idea which was under consideration), no one had yet found a solution.

The sheikh decided that he would go to America, since America was a country where they had solutions for problems that people didn’t even know they had. How much more, reasoned the sheikh, they must have a solution to a problem that was obvious.

The sheikh stayed in the Waldorf Astoria for two weeks. When it was time to leave he summoned the bellhop to take down his luggage.

The bellhop’s jaw dropped when he opened the door to the sheikh’s suite.

There, sitting in the middle of the stateroom, was an enormous sea-trunk. It was so improbably large that it looked like some kind of magician’s trick where scores of people would start to emerge from it one by one. Realizing that he was easily out-manned by such an object, the bellboy retreated to return with reinforcements.

It finally took six able-bodied porters and a truck to move the trunk out to the docks, where not unsurprisingly the sheikh’s cabin trunk caught the eye of watchful customs officer.

“Good morning, sir! May I ask you what you have in this trunk?”

“Oh it’s nothing officer, just a few presents for my people back home.”

“Yes sir. Would you mind opening it up, please?”

“Well, really, officer, this is most unnecessary. I will take this up at the highest levels.”

“That’s your privilege, sir, but I’m afraid you’ll still have to open this trunk.”

When the lid of the trunk opened, the officer’s eyes widened in disbelief.

The entire trunk was filled with faucets of all kinds and shapes. Stainless steel, copper, modern, antique. Nothing but faucets. Faucets and faucets and more faucets.

“Officer, this is an amazing country. On my first day here I went into the kitchen and turned on one of these things, and, miracle of miracles, water just started to pour out of it! So now I am taking home to my people this brilliant invention. You westerners know a thing or two I have to admit!”

G-d told Moshe to go and tell Bezalel “Make Me a Mishkan (a Sanctuary), an Ark, and *Kelim* (the other furnishings of the Sanctuary)”. When Moshe told Bezalel, he reversed the order and told him to build an Ark, *Kelim* and a Mishkan.

Bezalel said to Moshe, “*Moshe Rabbeinu*, the way of the world is that a person builds a house, and then afterwards furnishes it. You’re telling me to build the furnishings first. Where am I supposed to put them?”

Why *did* Moshe change the order?

Moshe wasn’t giving Bezalel building instructions. He wasn’t talking to him like an architect to a building contractor. Moshe was speaking conceptually, stressing what was the essence and purpose of the Mishkan.

The Ark was the centerpiece of the Mishkan. The word for Ark in the Torah is “*Aron*” and comes from the word in Hebrew for light — ‘Ohr’. The Ark was the light of the Mishkan for it contained the Holy Torah, which is the light of the world. Without the Ark, the Mishkan would have been merely a shell, merely a dry faucet — without the living waters of the Holy Torah.

• Sources: *Talmud Berachot 55a, Rabbeinu Bachya, and a story heard from Rabbi Uziel Milevsky, zatzal*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**G**-d commands Moshe to build a Mishkan (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. The Children of Israel are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the Mishkan's outer courtyard are an altar for the burnt offerings and a laver for washing. The Tent of Meeting is divided by a curtain into two chambers. The outer chamber is accessible only to the *kohanim*, the descendants of Aharon. This contains the table of

showbreads, the *menorah*, and the golden altar for incense. The innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, may be entered only by the *kohen gadol*, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur. Here is the Ark that held the Ten Commandments inscribed on the two tablets of stone that G-d gave to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the Mishkan, are described in great detail.

## ISRAEL Forever

### WHO DISAPPEARED FIRST?

**W**hen a new bill was introduced in the Israel Knesset to prohibit the sale of chametz on Pesach in order to replace the old one that only prohibited displaying a chametz product in public, it aroused the anger of a prominent opponent of religious legislation.

Knesset Member Ofer Paz-Pines of the Labor Party announced that he would present a counter-bill that would

annul the chametz law and permit the sale of bread on Pesach.

Before he ever got around to this provocation, Paz-Pines resigned from the Knesset and quit politics.

Which just goes to show that anti-religious politicians come and go, but the values of Israel are forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

### KEFAR HAMESUBIM

**A**t the Pesach Seder we recall in our Haggadah recital the Pesach Seder in which Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues in Bnei Brak spent the entire night relating the story of the Exodus from Egypt.



When a transit camp was established near Bnei Brak in 1950 to house newly arrived immigrants, it was named Kfar Hamesubim (Village of Those Who Sat) in honor of those Sages.

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## PARSHA Q&A?

1. How many types of items were the Jews to donate?
2. The donation of silver for the Mishkan differed from the donation of the other items. How?
3. What property do *techelet* and *argaman* share that *orot eilim m'adamim* do not share?
4. What property do the above three share that *shesh* and *orot techashim* do not share?
5. Onkelos translates "*tachash*" as "*sasgona*." Why?
6. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Egypt?
7. Describe two uses of: 1) oil, 2) spices, 3) jewels.
8. The *aron* was made with three boxes, one inside the other. Exactly how tall was the outer box?
9. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?
10. What did the faces of the *keruvim* resemble?
11. On what day of the week was the *lechem hapanim* baked?
12. What does *miksha* mean?
13. What was the purpose of the *menorah's gevi'im* (cups)?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the *menorah*?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapestries of the Mishkan?
16. What is meant by "standing wood"?
17. How long was the Mishkan?
18. How wide was the interior of the Mishkan?
19. Why was the altar coated with *nechoshet*?
20. Which function did the copper *yeteidot* serve?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 25:2 - 13.
2. 25:3 - No fixed amount of the other items was required. The silver was given as a fixed amount: a half-shekel.
3. 25:4,5 - They are wool; *orot eilim* are not.
4. 25:4,5 - They are dyed; *shesh* and *orot techashim* are not.
5. 25:5 - The *tachash* delights (*sas*) in its multi-colors (*g'vanim*).
6. 25:5 - *Arazim* — cedars.
7. 25:6-7: 1) The oil was lit in the *menorah* and used for anointing. 2) The spices were used in the anointing oil and for the incense. 3) The precious stones were for the *ephod* and the *choshen*.
8. 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half *amot* plus a *tefach* plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the *kaporet*. (The *kaporet* was a *tefach* thick — see 25:17).
9. 25:16 - It testifies that Hashem commanded us to keep the *mitzvot*.
10. 25:18 - The faces of children.
11. 25:29 - Friday.
12. 25:31 - Hammered.
13. 25:31 - Purely ornamental.
14. 25:40 - G-d showed Moshe a *menorah* of fire.
15. 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
16. 26:15 - The wooden beams were to be upright and not stacked one upon the other.
17. 26:16 - 30 *amot*.
18. 26:23 - 10 *amot*.
19. 27:2 - To atone for brazenness.
20. 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.

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- The *semicha* of sacrifices and of rabbinic ordination
- Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava's heroic effort to preserve *semicha*
- Difference between Eretz Yisrael and Bavel regarding *semicha*
- How many judges needed for ritual of calf beheading in case of unsolved murder
- Evaluation of items requiring redemption
- Number of judges needed to condemn animal to death

## PRICE AND POWER OF FAME

Receiving rabbinical ordination was considered a great honor and yet Rabbi Zeira tried to avoid it. His reason was based on a statement by Rabbi Elazar urging one to keep a low profile in order to survive. It was only when he heard another statement of this Sage that no one achieves greatness unless all of his sins are forgiven that he finally sought ordination.

In his commentary on this transition of Rabbi Zeira, Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Chayot offers this explanation. As long as one is

not renowned he is not subject to criticism. The moment he achieves fame, however, people began examining his shortcomings. He is thus rendered incapable of reproving others since they challenge him to first correct his own faults.

This was Rabbi Zeira's concern regarding accepting ordination, and the honor and responsibility that would go along with it. But when he realized that accepting such greatness he would be absolved of sin, he felt that this would make his reproof effective and he therefore consented to ordination.

• *Sanhedrin 14a*

## What the SAGES Say

"No one achieves greatness unless all of his sins are forgiven."

• *Rabbi Elazar - Sanhedrin 14a*

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## VIVIENNE'S VISITATION

**From: Jeremy**

Dear Rabbi,

*I had a distant, elderly relative from my father's side who I met once as a child and then once again as a young adult. The last time I remember thinking about her was when my father told me she passed away which was many years ago. Recently, I had two sequential joyous occasions in my own family, including a birth. Right after that, I had a dream, which didn't seem like an ordinary dream at all, where this Vivienne appeared out of the darkness, her face illuminated by light, and she asked me, "What's new with the family?" In the dream, I had the distinct feeling that she was trying to establish contact with me in order to maintain a connection with what happens in my own family. And when I awoke, I had this special type of tingling feeling as if I had really been visited from another world.*

*Now this whole episode is very strange to me for several reasons: For one, I had little contact whatsoever with this relative and don't remember even thinking about her at all over the years. Two, she and her husband never had any children – and here she appeared to me precisely on occasions regarding my own children. Three, because I'm aware of there being significance in Judaism regarding the day of a person's passing, I did some research and found that she passed away in December of 2002, but the "visitation" took place recently in January which is not the month in which she passed away.*

*Can you help me make sense of all this?*

Dear Jeremy,

Judaism fully accepts the idea that the deceased, particularly relatives, can visit a person in a dream. The visitation occurs during sleep for two reasons: the conscious mind is quieted from the external stimuli of daily activity and the soul is loosened from the body enabling it to interact more freely with the non-physical, spiritual world. The mind/soul combination is therefore in a better "state" and "place" to interact with the souls of the departed, whose communication takes place through the venue of a dream. Since Vivienne was not part of your conscious mind, it's more likely this was a real visitation and not something you merely dreamed of because you were thinking about it.

What's more, I think you'll be tingled to know the following: The significance you're aware of regarding a Jewish person's date of passing (in Yiddish this is called "yahrzeit" – literally "year's time"; in Hebrew, "Yom haPetira" – "day of passing over") applies specifically to the Hebrew date and not the date of the Gregorian calendar and the two calendars do not coincide. What's interesting is that I checked the

Jewish calendar and found that December of 2002 corresponded to the Hebrew month Tevet, which this year (2010) occurred in January. That means she in fact did appear in the month of her *yahrzeit*, Tevet, and if you know the day in December of her death, you might actually find that your dream was on or near the *yahrzeit* itself!

The way to make sense of this is by understanding why departed souls seek this communication in the first place. According to Jewish sources it can be to benefit the living by revealing something to, or inspiring the person in some way. This usually happens by a very close and loving, or righteous relative. It can also be in order for the departed soul to receive some benefit from the living. This is often by a relative who's lacking in the spiritual world, even if the relationship during life wasn't particularly close. Of course, it can also be a combination of the two, namely for the mutual benefit of both the departed and the living.

It seems to me that Vivienne appeared to you primarily to beseech you to help her. Having died childless, she has no continuation in this world. This is not just a matter of genealogy. According to Judaism, a departed soul is directly and significantly benefited by the lives and deeds of its descendants in this world. Even though a departed soul can no longer improve its status in the spiritual realm, acts performed on its behalf by living relatives confer on the soul great progress and pleasure. This is so much so that the Talmud refers to these descendants as the departed soul's legs that continue to do its footwork in this world.

So, at the risk of sounding eerie and giving you the heebie-jeebies, I think Vivienne is looking to you and your family as a way of maintaining a connection in this world in order to benefit and elevate her status in the next.

What can you do to help her?

First, she may have had no one saying Kaddish for her. If this is something you can do for her at the appropriate times it would be of tremendous spiritual benefit for her. If you can't do it yourself you can make arrangements for someone else to recite Kaddish for her. Second, consider donating charity to a worthy Jewish cause or contributing some item or service on her behalf and in her memory. The former might include donating a sum of money to help support Torah study or needy Torah families; the latter might include contributing books, religious items or electricity etc. to a shul or helping to maintain some community service like the mikveh or Shabbat hospitality. Last, you can "include" her more in your family by sharing good memories of her with your children from time to time, recalling her at family gatherings and joyous occasions, and by observing her *yahrzeit* in the traditional way by lighting a memorial candle, giving charity, and praying for her benefit.

This is referred to as "*chesed shel emet*" – true giving – since you're benefiting the departed with no expectation of receiving in return. But then again, Vivienne may be in a position to help you in ways you're not even aware of...

## TEFILLIN ON THE PLANE

**Question:** I am planning to fly in the near future and am taking along my tefillin in my handbag so that I can use them while praying on the plane. After what recently happened on a New York-Louisville flight, which was interrupted because a young flight attendant mistook the tefillin of a young passenger for a terrorist bomb, I am concerned that the same mistake could happen again. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Rabbi Yehiel Kalish, Agudath Israel's national

director of government affairs, recommends that individuals inform their seatmates and the airline staff on the plane of what they are about to do before starting to pray.

Just to make things easier for you, Agudath Israel released a statement that it has worked closely with the Transportation Security Administration, an arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to sensitize the agency to religious objects and practices of Orthodox Jews, in addition to reaching out to U.S. and foreign airlines.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

### MYSTERY OF THE STOLEN CAR

**W**hen a shiny new car driven by an Arab pulled up at the Erez checkpoint on its way to Gaza, the soldiers on duty made their routine inspection to determine that it was not a stolen vehicle. The driver produced the proper documents and the soldiers were about to let him drive into Gaza when they suddenly heard the checkpoint commander order them to wait.

Coming from behind the car the commander approached the Arab and demanded to know whether the vehicle was his. When the suspect insisted on the validity of his documents, he was warned by the com-

mander that if he did not immediately admit to theft his punishment would be more severe. His self-confidence thus shattered, the Arab confessed that he had stolen the car and its documents in Ma'aleh Adumim.

"What are you, sir", asked the surprised soldiers of their commander, "some kind of prophet?"

"I'm no prophet," he replied, "but come here behind the car and look at the bumper sticker."

What they saw were three Hebrew words that explained everything:

*"Ein od milvado"* (There is no one else but Him.)

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