

O H R N E T

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SPECIAL PURIM EDITION

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOELACES

“And raise up the ash...” (6:3)

At first sight, some things in Judaism look pretty weird. I remember someone who wasn't religious discovering the halacha that you should tie your left shoelace before your right. He said to me, “I find it hard to believe that G-d cares about which shoe I tie up first.”

I could have explained to him that we tie the left shoelace first as a gesture of respect to the leather strap of the tefillin, which is worn on the left arm. However, I decided that what was bothering him was something more fundamental.

Those of us who were born in the West have grown up in a world where religion is a weekend activity. The role of the clergy is, at best, to “hatch, match, and dispatch.” Religion is compartmentalized, and so too is G-d. The Western mindset is that if there is a G-d, He is limited to making guest appearances on the weekend. Any further intrusion into our lives is considered extremely irksome, as Lord Melbourne remarked in 1898 on hearing a sermon: “Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade the sphere of private life.”

Judaism, however, doesn't see religion as a weekend

leisure activity. It is not just one aspect of life. It is life itself.

Judaism views every single activity in life as an opportunity to bring ourselves closer to G-d. What we eat. What we think. What we say. What we do. What we don't do. Nothing in this world is devoid of the potential for spirituality. Nothing is neutral. If the whole purpose of the world is for us to recognize G-d, then everything in this world must be created to that end. The alternative would be that there are vast areas of this world which have no part in G-d's purpose, and that would be accusing the Master of the world of tremendous sloppiness in His creation. G-d forbid.

In the above verse, the word for “ash” is *deshen*. *Deshen* can be read as an acronym for *davar shelo nechshav* — ‘something without

importance.’ When the Torah says “And raise up the ash...”, it is telling us to take everything, even those things that seem to us like ash, insignificant and without value, and place them next to the altar. To raise up the little, unthought of parts of our lives and to use them to serve G-d. For there is nothing in this world which cannot be used to serve Him.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burnt on the altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon's sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering

and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

ISRAEL Forever

THE SHABBAT BETWEEN FAST AND FEAST

This coming Shabbat is two days after the Fast of Esther and a day before Purim (two days before Shushan Purim celebrated in Yerushalayim). It is thus the bridge between fast and feast.

When we reflect on the connection between fasting and feasting we gain a deeper understanding of what Purim should mean to us. That is why Ohr Somayach is offering a symposium on Fasting and Feasting on the afternoon of Ta'anit Esther, 11 Adar II this year, in which outstanding faculty members of the yeshiva will deliver talks on the

meaning of Purim then and now.

Our ancestors fasted on the day when they went to war against the Amalekites. Queen Esther fasted for three days before her crucial appearance before the king. Fasting would certainly seem to be a counterproductive measure in both cases. It demonstrated, however, that Jews rely more on the repentance and prayer that accompanies a fast than on the power of their arms or their physical gifts.

It is this faith in Heavenly help that will preserve 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

NIKANOR AND THE MIRACLE GATES

A fierce storm threatened to sink the ship on which Nikanor was bringing a pair of beautiful bronze gates for the *Beit Hamikdash* from the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Seeking to lighten the vessels load, the crew cast one of these heavy gates overboard.

Since this failed to calm the sea they intended to do the same with the other gate. Nikanor clasped the remaining gate to him and asked to be cast away together



with it. At this point the waves suddenly subsided, but left Nikanor distraught over the loss of the first gate.

When the ship arrived at the Port of Akko there was the missing gate! One version is that it had clung to the bottom of the ship. Another is that a sea monster swallowed it and regurgitated it on dry land. In any case, these gates were duly installed and were the only ones in the *Beit Hamikdash* not plated with gold, in order to recall the miracle that took place in connection with them.

THE PURIM HANDBOOK - FREE DOWNLOAD FROM

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What separated the *kohen's* skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the *mizbe'ach*? How often were they completely removed from the *mizbe'ach*?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the *mizbe'ach*, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the *mizbe'ach* may not be *chametz*. But is the *kohen's* portion allowed to be *chametz*?
5. When a *kohen* is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the *korban* of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a *minchat kohen* and a *minchat Yisrael*?
8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatat*?
9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an *asham* be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an *asham* differ from all other *korbanot*?
12. Unlike all other *korbanot*, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the *mizbe'ach*?
13. What three types of *kohanim* may not eat from the *asham*?
14. In which four instances is a *korban todah* brought?
15. Until when may a *todah* be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a *korban* become *pigul*?
17. Who may eat from a *shelamim*?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the *Ohel Moed*?
19. Other than *Yom Kippur*, what other service requires that the *kohen* separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of *korbanot* listed in this *Parsha*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -A) Every day. B) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A *korban mincha* — A tenth part of an *ephah* of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The *minchat kohen* is burnt completely. Only a handful of the *minchat Yisrael* is burnt, and the remainder is eaten by the *kohanim*.
8. 6:19 - If he is *tamei* (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
10. 7:1 - No.
11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
12. 7:3 - The tail.
13. 7:7 - A *t'vul yom* (a *tamei kohen* who immersed in a *mikveh* yet awaits sunset to become *tahor*); a *mechusar kipurim* (a *tamei* person who has gone to the *mikveh* but has yet to bring his required offering); an *onan* (a mourner on the day of death of a close relative).
14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. b) Until midnight.
16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the *parah adumah* (red heifer).
20. *Olah* (6:2); *mincha* (6:7); *chatat* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).

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- When the meal content of a mincha became reduced before *kemitzah* or the contents of the remainder after *kemitzah*
- Can the left-handed performance of *kemitzah* be repaired
- Why a Torah chapter is sometimes repeated
- When a foreign object enters the amount taken for *kemitzah*
- How *kemitzah* is performed
- Increasing the prescribed amount of oil in a mincha or decreasing it
- How much frankincense must remain for a mincha to be kosher
- *Pigul* in the case of improper thought regarding eating or offering the *kometz* or its remnants
- When someone who is not a valid *kohen* collects the frankincense
- *Pigul* in regard to the *lechem hapanim* showbreads
- The breads which accompany the thanksgiving sacrifices and the two sheep in the Shavuot offering
- *Pigul* in regard to the sacrifice and the wine libation accompanying it

ANIMALS AND BREADS

When a *korban todah* — a thanksgiving offering — is brought as a sacrifice, the Torah orders that it be accompanied with loaves of unleavened wafers and loaves of leavened bread, all referred to as *lachmei todah*. (*Vayikra* 7:11-13)

On Shavuot the Torah commanded that we bring two loaves of leavened bread as first offerings of wheat flour and instructed that they be accompanied by a sacrifice of two lambs in their first year as *shelamim* – feast peace offerings. (*Vayikra* 13:16-19)

What is the relationship between the animal sacrifices and the breads in both cases?

The *mishneh* rules that in both cases if the *kohen*, during the course of the service, had in mind to eat the bread beyond the proscribed time, he would render the bread *pigul*, but the meat of the animal would be unaffected. But if he had such an improper thought in regard to the animal meat, both it and the accompanying bread would be rendered *pigul*.

The reason given in the *gemara* is that in both cases the bread comes as an adjunct to the animal and not vice versa. The proof of this is that the breads can only be consumed after the animals have been sacrificed, thus indicating that they are subservient to the animal and cannot impact their status.

• *Menachot* 15a

What the SAGES Say

“Any chapter in the Torah which is written and repeated is repeated only because it has some additional information.”

• *The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael - Menachot* 10a

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PURIM FEAST

From: Scott

*Dear Rabbi,
I understand why we are to drink wine on Purim, but why is it important to eat a special meal?*

Dear Scott,

One reason is that the decree of Achashverosh and Haman was directed against the “body” of the Jewish people. There was no interest or attempt to uproot the Jews from Judaism and keep them alive; rather the intention was to annihilate the entire Jewish people – men, women and children. Therefore, the mitzvah commemorating the salvation is through feasting in order to affirm the continuation of the Jewish People’s physical existence. This is in contradistinction to Chanukah where the Jews were in danger of spiritual annihilation, and therefore we light the menorah to affirm our spiritual continuation.

Another reason is that feasting bears witness that the transgression of partaking of the forbidden feast in the days of Haman has been expiated. Otherwise, bodily affliction would have been prescribed rather than bodily pleasure. The Purim meal shows that we are free of sin regarding that feast, thus we are permitted to feast in order to commemorate the miracle of our salvation.

In addition, the Purim feast is especially significant in that it elevates the soul as it provides pleasure to the body. It is thus stated in the Zohar that on Purim one may accomplish the spiritual purification and elevation through feasting that he can accomplish on Yom Kippur through fasting.

The Purim meal is also reminiscent of the feast Esther

held in order to expose the wicked Haman and thwart his evil decree. The Gaon of Vilna notes that for this reason the feast is held toward evening: The Megilla describes that Esther proclaimed a three day fast for the Jewish people to atone for their sins and to stir Divine favor for her plan of exposing Haman. However, Esther did not fast the full third day but rather ended early in order to start the feast she prepared for Achashverosh and Haman. This is alluded to in the verse, “And I and my maidens will also fast *thus*”, where the Hebrew word for “thus” is “ken” (caf, nun), which has the numerical value of 70. This indicates that while the Jews fasted a full 72 hours, Esther fasted only 70, after which time she commenced the feast toward evening which ours commemorates.

Although it is a mitzvah to have an elaborate meal for this occasion, the expense of the meal should not be in place of distributing charity to the needy. However, one can fulfill both *mitzvot* simultaneously: The meal is considered all the richer if one hosts at his table the poor, the orphaned, the widowed and those who have no one to share the meal with. One who rejoices the hearts of these unfortunates is praised for walking in the way of G-d, of Whom it is written, “He raises the spirits of the lowly, and restores the heart of the downtrodden”.

It is also very important to engage in Torah study and discussion prior to and during the meal as it is written in the Megilla, “Unto the Jews there was light and joy”. Upon this verse the Sages commented that ‘light’ refers to Torah and ‘joy’ refers to the pleasure of the meal. Let there be the light of Torah where there is the joy of the Purim feast.

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CROSS ON THE GREEN – NOT IN BETWEEN

Question: As a “professional pedestrian” who must contend with a large number of traffic lights along the route I walk to and from work, there are always occasions when I face a red light although the street before me is completely free of oncoming cars. Is there anything wrong with ignoring the light and dashing across to save precious time?

Answer: This question, equally relevant to motorists, invites a takeoff on an old Ogden Nash verse about an epitaph for a driver and his rights:

*Here lies the body of Jumpy Jimmy Dean
Who couldn't wait for the light to turn green
He felt right, dead right, as he dashed along
But he's just as dead as if he would've been wrong.*

Laws for public safety are intended not only for the individual situation but also as methods of educating people to exercise caution for their protection and the protection of others. When one develops a respect for the warning of a

red light, even when he sees no reason for it at the moment, he is less likely to take the risk of crossing when he thinks he can beat the oncoming car and ends up instead like the “hero” of our verse. The large number of pedestrian deaths each year as a result of jaywalking or crossing against the light tragically testifies to how many times a gamble to save a little time ends up with an irreplaceable loss.

The Torah exhorts every person to be extremely careful in guarding the life entrusted to him by his Creator. Just as in regard to religious law each performance of a Divine command develops a person spiritually, so too does each exercise of patience and restraint in waiting for the light to change develop in him a greater regard for life.

Add to this the bad example you would show for those watching you, people younger or less careful than you, who will extend your defiant attitude to truly dangerous situations. The conclusion must be “Cross on the green, not in between”.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

DON'T PUSH!

Every time another Holocaust denier rears his ugly head our thoughts turn to those Jews who survived that great tragedy and lived to tell the true story of what happened.

While we mourn the death of millions of our brothers and sisters in the Holocaust we continue to be inspired by the tales of those who survived. Only G-d knows why some were chosen to be survivors while others perished. The story of each survivor is therefore one of miraculous Divine intervention.

One such survivor was a young girl at the time that she was taken to a death camp together with her family and neighbors.

After days of sweating and thirsting in a sealed cattle car they were all anxious for a shower and a drink. When their deceitful captors led them to the disguised gas chambers they told them that they were being given an opportunity to shower. The women in this girls group desperately began pushing to get ahead in the line headed for the “showers”. But she remembered being taught by her mother never to push others and time after time she remained at the end of the line. Finally the remaining women were sent off to a work camp and she survived the war.

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HALACHIC ENGINEERING

BY RABBI NOTA SCHILLER

The first Mishna in Tractate Megilla describes that the Megilla is to be read by different communities on different days. These days are stipulated to be the 11th through the 15th of Adar. However, the nature of these additional days is not like that of the second, additional day of Yom Tov.

A day of Yom Tov was originally taught by the Torah to be one day. The Rabbis declared the second day of Yom Tov, because of *doubt* in the proclaiming of the new moon. The different days for reading the Megilla, however, were established at the *outset* for the separate needs of individual communities.

Perhaps we find in that the expression of how the Oral Law will guide Klal Yisrael throughout the *galut*.

Different communities of Klal Yisrael will have different needs and their *batei din* courts will have to make the necessary decrees (*takanot* and *gezerot*) for each community's needs. Of course, there are criteria of authority and range: only a Sanhedrin can legislate for the entire federated body of Klal Yisrael. Likewise, each local *beit din* along the *galut* history will be limited in their range, and must qualify by authority.

The genius of the Torah Jew as expressed in the Oral Law has been that “we change enough to remain the same”. This change is always within the boundaries of our “one-ness” as a People. The individuality of the *galut* required certain responses for certain communities. Change has come from within, yet can never tamper with essentials. Therefore, unique customs can develop, while yet keeping Klal Yisrael

halachically on the “same page”.

Authority has meant that only the *Talmidei Chachamim* endorsed by the previous generation of recognized scholars have the mandate to walk this delicate line. Only they are enfranchised to make such new decrees. While there is a democracy of opportunity for one to be eligible for such Torah greatness, there is also an “aristocracy of opinion”. Only those scholars so enfranchised can make the decisions.

The following analogy has been quoted in the name of Harav Y.B. Soloveitchik, *zatzal*. Imagine that you were out on a nature tour and came across a beautiful ravine that was traversed by an unusual looking bridge, and upon inquiry were informed that this bridge was put together by a poet who had taken it on as a hobby, collected the materials over many years and actually executed the bridge. Surely it was worth witnessing such a feat and accomplishment. Yet, you would probably be reluctant to cross that bridge in a vehicle with your family. How could you be sure that if this poet-cum-amateur engineer was not trained to factor in the concerns of stress and the deterioration of elements — perhaps it had not been expedited safely.

Similarly, to bridge between Torah generations one must be trained as a halachic engineer factoring in that which is negotiable and that which is non-negotiable.

Only somebody certified by other known experts can be relied upon.

MEGILAH A&Q

We give you the answers! You give us the questions!

PLEASE READ THIS: You have to ask questions from Megillas Esther which aptly fit the following answers.
(For example, if we tell you the answer is "127," you must tell us that the question is
"How many countries did Achashverosh rule over?" Got it? Good.)

A!

1. Woe!
 2. 180 degrees
 3. Arzei Habira
 4. Remove both of his shins
 5. "Here's mud in your eye!"
 6. Vashti Dishes
 7. Shushan Buoy
 8. Quiche
 9. Esther
 10. Dodo
 11. Lots of Luck
 12. History is Boring
 13. Dangling Modifiers
 14. Doll Phone
 15. Hummin'
 16. Because
-

Q?

1. How do Yemenite Jews pronounce the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet (which happens to be the first letter in the Megillah)?
 2. What would you get if every single day of Achashverosh's feast you graduated college? (1:4)
 3. From where did they get the cedar trees (*arzei*) to build Shushan Habira?
 4. How could you make Achashverosh be called Achavayro?
 5. Which "toast" did the Medians say to one another before drinking which eventually became the source for the name of their country "Mud-Eye"? (1:3)
 6. What did the Persian queen serve at her party? What didn't she do after the party?
 7. What Persian flotation device causes lots of confusion when you ask someone at the airport where you can find one?
 8. What egg-based luncheon pie sounds like Mordechai's great-grandfather?
 9. Who's the only person in the Megillah with an English name?
 10. What word defines Esther's father's relationship to Mordechai? (2:7)
 11. What objects did Haman use to determine a date for his plan?
 12. When he couldn't sleep, why did Achashverosh ask for the Book of Remembrances?
 13. What kind of adjectives best describe Haman and sons?
 14. What toy did Haman buy to go with his second son's Barbie collection? (9:7)
 15. What joyous vocal expression is appropriate when our idolatrous enemies hang?
 16. Why aren't there 20 questions this week?
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