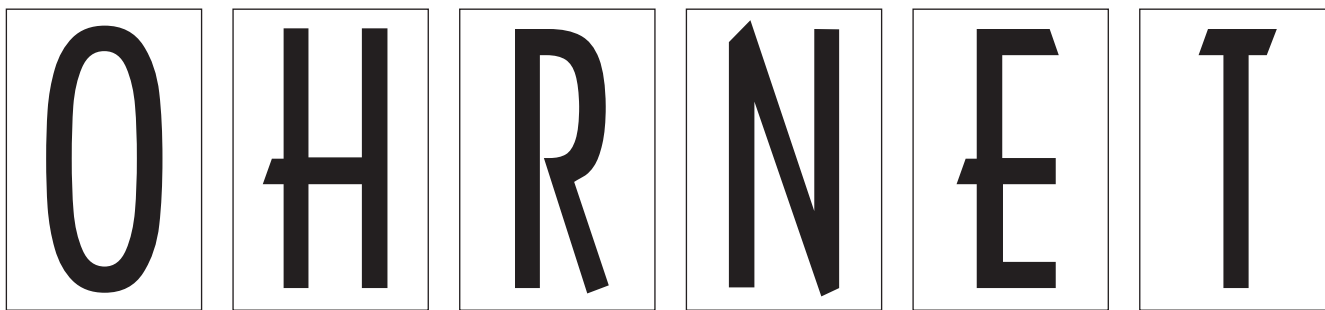




SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TISA · 15 ADAR I 5774 · FEB. 15, 2014 · VOL. 21 NO. 21

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE DANGER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

“...these are your ‘gods’, Yisrael” (32:4)

It’s difficult to imagine a world without photography. Everywhere we are bombarded with images: social media, billboards, in magazines and newspapers, on television. On average more than 250 million photos per day were uploaded to Facebook in the three months ended December 31, 2011. That’s equivalent to 7.5 billion photos a month or 10.4 million photos an hour; roughly 174,000 per minute, or almost 3,000 photos per second.

How does this mega-overload of images affect our view of the world?

Photography used to be expensive. A little more than a century ago, the first generation of photographers was likely to be comprised of the rich who could indulge their inquisitiveness in this newborn wonder. Fast forward to the 1960s when I started to photograph: 35 mm film, chemicals, and paper were much cheaper — but far from free; and anyway, almost every photographer who wanted to be taken seriously used film that was at least 2 1/4 inches square or 5 x 4 inches, or even 10 x 8 inches — and that meant serious money.

Apart from purely financial considerations, the cost of film and related materials provoked aesthetic ones as well. Before you trip the shutter to expose a piece of film that may cost you five dollars or more, you ask yourself, “Do I really want to photograph this? Is it worth it?”

Nowadays you can take a phone (who needs a camera anymore?) and make a photograph that costs virtually nothing. Nowadays, the last thing that enters your mind when you take a photograph is the cost.

We are awash in a gigantic ocean of photographic artifacts, almost beyond number. And each one declares itself to be a discrete existence; a stand-alone frozen moment of reality.

To create a verisimilitude of life in the days before the pho-

tograph required tremendous artistic skill. Before the photographic era the number of lifelike images and statues could be numbered in the thousands, maybe the tens of thousands, but no more. We live in an era littered with almost limitless artifacts of moments of reality.

How does this affect the way we see the world?

The Three Powers of Man

Man’s powers may be divided into three: thought, speech and action. The power of thought is the highest, the most ephemeral and the most removed from physicality. A thought exists only for as long as the thinker thinks it. It has no independent existence. It lives just as long as the thinker thinks the thought.

Speech has a less evanescent lifespan. While the speaker speaks, the words have life. Unlike a thought, speech is not grasped instantaneously at a flash and all in one, but rather incrementally like the unfurling of a scroll. You only understand the full meaning of the speaker when he reaches the end of his words. Thus, speech does have a certain expansion in time — unlike thought. However, it has no definitive concrete existence and no independence from the speaker. When the speaker ceases to speak, the words cease to exist.

The power of action, which relates to the world of “things”, is the most concrete of the powers of Man. When you create a thing it proclaims an independent existence of its own. A “thing” seems to say, “I am real, I am solid, I am immutable, I have a life of my own.” For only things can exist without the constant input of their creator. When you create a thing — a photograph for example — the photograph exists independently of its creator and may well outlast him.

continued on page two

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy

everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

MODI'IN – FORTRESS OF THE HASMONEANS

The modern city of Modi'in was founded in 1994, and the religious community of Modi'in Ilit (Kiryat Sefer) nearby recall one of the miracles of Chanuka that is celebrated by Jews throughout the world.

As we say in the special prayer of that day, "It was in the days of Matityahu, son of Yochanan the *Kohen Gadol*,



the Hasmonean, and his sons" that the miracle of "the mighty and numerous Greek forces" bent on forcing assimilation were overcome by "the weak and few".

Mount Modi'in was the place where the Hasmoneans rallied their outnumbered forces and with the help of Heaven achieved victory over their oppressors.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

continued from page one

Three Worlds

In the mystical sources, these three powers of Man: thought, speech and action parallel three "worlds". They are in descending order: the world of *briah* - "creation", *yetzira* - "formation", and this lowest of worlds in which we exist, *asiya* - "action".

In the highest of these three worlds, the world of *briah*, it is impossible to think that anything has any independent existence. The angels ('spiritual messengers' would be a better term) in the world of *briah* are called *Seraphim*, from the Hebrew word meaning 'to burn' (*l'srof*). Anyone looking at a fire knows that the flame he is seeing now is not the flame that he saw a moment ago. That flame is already gone. What you are looking at now is a new reality, and then it is gone, and so on and so on. A thought is like a flame; its existence is for a second and then it is replaced with another, and another and another.

In the World of *bria*, the world of thought, every second is a separate unsustainable split-second of reality passing through the 'Mind' of the Creator.

But here in this world of *asiya*, the world of objects, it's all too easy to think that things have an independent existence. All objects, all things, are no more than the continuous creations of the Creator, and if the Creator withdrew His Will for that exis-

tence for the smallest fraction of a second, it would cease to exist.

In the Holy Tongue, the word for a thing, *davar*, has the same three letter root as *dibbur*, meaning 'a word.' "Things" are no more than the continual "speech" of The Creator constantly giving them existence.

When Yaakov came before his blind father Yitzchak to take the blessings of the firstborn, Yitzchak said, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Two worlds: the world of the voice (the world of Speech) and the world of the hands (the world of action). The Midrash (Midrash Rabba Shemot 21:1) explains how the power of speech - the *kol* - is given to Yaakov. The power to bridge the worlds of thought and action is the province of the Jewish People.

We live in Esav's world. A world of things. A world that proclaims the independence of physical objects. The root of all idol worship is the belief that anything can have an existence independent of the Creator.

When the Jewish People made a golden calf to worship they were divesting themselves of their chosen role in existence: to proclaim the evanescence of all physical creations.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many "geira" are in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called "*malachim*?"
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbat is a "sign." What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, G-d says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did G-d show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

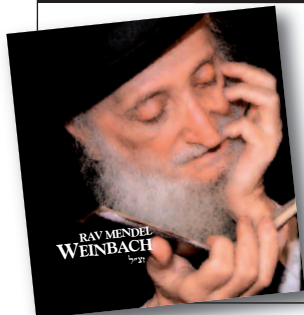
PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'at* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between G-d and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from G-d!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say "Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people."
16. 32:34 - Whenever G-d punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. G-d commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

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Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT KI TISA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

The sin of the golden calf: What did the people want? What actually was the golden calf? What was Aharon's role? In order to understand the sin of the golden calf, it is important to realize that the people who left Egypt, especially the mixed multitude of Egyptians who joined the children of Israel, were still steeped in the idolatry and superstitions of Egyptian society. They never completely connected to the concept of an intangible G-d who delivered them from slavery miraculously. Rather, they were much more connected to Moshe as their leader. Seeing that 40 days had passed since Moshe ascended Mt. Sinai, and fearing the worst, they looked for a new symbol of leadership. The logical choice would have been to turn to Aharon to take Moshe's place, but they were afraid that, as a mortal human being, the same fate would befall him. Instead, they sought to rely on a talisman, an amulet — a physical object that was considered to have the magical power to serve as an intermediary to bring about the miraculous interventions in nature that they had been experiencing. They assumed that Moshe himself had had access to such items and they wanted to replace them as soon as possible. They also wanted the amulet to be in the shape of a calf since the constellation of Taurus the Bull precedes the constellation of Aries the Ram, which was the symbol of Egyptian idolatry. Since Taurus precedes Aries in the astronomical sense, they considered it superior. Either they assumed that this was the symbol that Moshe had relied upon, or that Aharon would choose it as the most appropriate symbol.

It is likely that they had been pressuring Aharon for a number of days as they had become increasingly concerned over Moshe's failure to return. At this point Aharon employed every delaying tactic possible, knowing that Moshe's return was imminent. He first asked for the women's gold jewelry, knowing that they would not easily relinquish them. However, the men, in their eagerness, took their jewelry from them immediately. Aharon then threw the gold into the fire and after it melted, he carefully formed it into a small calf. He did not pour the gold into a calf-shaped mold. Rather, he took a long time to craft the object, with two intentions in mind. Firstly, it would be another delaying tactic. And secondly, he wanted to make a perfect amulet. This way, when it would be shown to be powerless, they could not claim that it was hastily and imperfectly manufactured.

However, there were those from the mixed multitude who didn't wait to see if it had any particular spiritual power. They immediately bowed down to it in an idolatrous fashion, seeing it as a replication of the item that Moshe had used to bring down G-d's influence from above. Because this group was from the Egyptian multitude, they referred to the amulet as "your g-d", meaning the intermediary which Moshe relied upon to bring 'you', the children of Israel out of Egypt. The word "g-d" is expressed in plural form

to indicate that they were not denying that G-d was One, but rather that He employed numerous spiritual forces.

This explains why Aharon did not have to give up his life rather than create an idol, since the amulet was not an actual idol. Aharon then volunteered to build an altar for sacrifices and a celebration to take place the next day. He was careful to point out that this would be a festival in honor of G-d, not the amulet. Aharon rejected their offers of assistance and built the altar himself, which of course took longer. He claimed that it would be disrespectful to the altar if anyone other than he, the High Priest, participated in the construction. This of course was another delaying tactic. He also assumed that G-d would inform Moshe of what was going on and that Moshe would then immediately return. However, when the people saw the next morning that Aharon did not immediately offer the sacrifices they took matters into their own hands. They offered sacrifices themselves and proceeded to engage in idolatrous behavior. Clearly, Aharon did not participate in any actual idol worship and did everything possible to prevent the people from obtaining or worshipping the amulet.

However, after Moshe descends and destroys the golden calf, he criticizes Aharon and asks him, "What did the people do to you that you brought a grievous sin upon them?" What Moshe meant was what did they do to you that forced you to fashion the amulet in the first place? Moshe recognized that Aharon was not responsible for manufacturing an actual idol; it was the people who turned it into an object of worship. Aharon's response was that the people always were in doubt whether G-d was truly with them, yet they didn't ask for an actual idol. They only asked for a symbol of leadership to bring down the Divine influences which Moshe had possessed. He told Moshe that he did everything he could to delay since he was certain that Moshe's return was imminent. He tells Moshe, "I asked the people to donate the gold jewelry according to each individual's ability and means. I hoped that arguments would ensue as to who should give more and who should give less and this would cause a further delay. However, they acted immediately and did not even look for other materials that would normally be needed to fashion such an object. I had no idea that it would end up as an object of idolatry."

In this Torah portion Aharon receives no punishment. However, in Devarim (Chapter 20) Moshe tells the people, in recalling this incident, that G-d became very angry with Aharon to the point of almost destroying him if not for Moshe's entreaties on his behalf. When all is said and done, the tragedy did come about, at least indirectly, through his actions. The incident of the golden calf, in combination with the behavior of Moshe and Aharon in regard to the incident of the striking of the rock later on, result in Aharon being denied entry into the Land of Israel.

KOSHER CONSULTING

From: Ari

Dear Rabbi,

With all due respect, is it necessary or encouraged to consult with a rabbi for everything? Can't a person have some independence and make decisions for himself? And even if he ends up making the wrong decisions, he'd learn from his mistakes and at least develop the ability to make the right decisions in the future, rather than always relying on a rabbi.

Dear Ari,

I appreciate the points you make. The answer is that, as in all spheres of life, it is not always necessary to seek guidance and advice, but it is usually advisable.

It is also relevant to distinguish between questions having to do directly with Torah teachings of right or wrong, permitted or forbidden, kosher or not kosher etc., as opposed to questions of advice, where the wisdom of the Torah may be pertinent, but not imperative.

In the first category, if a person knows the Torah teaching or law himself, of course there's no need to consult. But if the topic is not necessarily well-known, or accessible, or if the person has some doubt, or otherwise some bias which may prevent him from making the right decision, he should certainly consult an expert.

In these cases it's not relevant to suggest learning from mistakes, because in the meantime he's likely to transgress

the Torah when he could have consulted a rabbi and avoided doing wrong.

In the second category, that of advice, while one could assert his right to make wrong decisions, wouldn't it be better to exercise his privilege to make right ones? Why reinvent the wheel through a series of wrong tries? Assuming the rabbi is intelligent, older, experienced, and possesses the insights of Torah, why not seek his advice on any matter?

Think about it logically: If, after working through an issue thoroughly and coming to your own conclusion, you consult a rabbi and he agrees, you've done well. And if he presents considerations you didn't think about, reaching a different conclusion with which you agree, you're even better off since you've been spared the mistake. And if after discussing it you remain of different opinions, you're entitled to make your own decision.

But making mistakes is not the only way to learn. In fact it's probably the worst way to learn. Seeking advice before you make decisions is actually the best way to learn how to make the right decisions on your own in the future. In the meantime, discussing decisions with people like rabbis will give you the insight and experience needed to simultaneously penetrate an issue while considering all its facets in order to make decisions that are consistent with the wisdom of the Torah.

And, believe me, the people you seem to be reluctant to consult certainly spent decades consulting their own rabbis before being in a position to advise others. And thus back to Moshe at Sinai. But if you connect yourself to this system properly with humility, eventually, not only may you not always need the help of a rabbi, you may become a rabbi who helps others!

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

SUCCAH 13 - 18

"These are really named 'maror' but are called 'maror of the marsh' because they commonly grow in a marsh."

This is how the Sage Rava explains why "*mararita d'agma*" is acceptable for the mitzvah of eating *maror* on Pesach despite it having an "accompanying name" of "marsh" instead of just being called plain "*maror*" as is written in the Torah. Although the Sage Abaye states a different reason on our *daf* to allow it, Tosefot points out that he also agrees with Rava's explanation.

• *Succah 13a*

Rabbi Elazar said, "Why are the prayers of the tzaddikim compared to a pitchfork? To teach you that just as this pitchfork turns over the produce in the granary from place to place, likewise the prayers of the tzaddikim overturns the 'mindset' of G-d from the trait of severity to the trait of mercy."
(See Ber. 25:21 and Rashi on our *daf* regarding Yitzchak's prayer for children being offered and accepted).

• *Succah 14a*

PRAYER FUNDAMENTALS - PART 3

I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed is His name, listens to the prayers, and requests of His people. (Thirteen Principles of Faith)

For a person to truly turn to G-d in prayer, he must not only accept the fact that G-d exists, but that G-d also listens to the prayers and requests of his heart.

Unfortunately, for many, prayer is looked at as an obligation. People are always saying, "I have to bench (recite the grace after meals)". I need to say Mincha (the afternoon service). Although rabbinically a person is obligated to recite several prayers a day, one must remember that those prayers represent a dialogue with G-d. Racing through all of the required words without realizing that one is talking to G-d hardly constitutes a proper prayer. If someone really believed that G-d was listening to his prayers, would he pray this way?

Words from the Heart, Enter the Heart

G-d doesn't need anything from us, especially our empty words, but in His kindness He accepts our prayers when they are from the heart as the Sages teach, "The Merciful One desires the heart (of man)". Accordingly, the Sages call prayer "the service of the heart".

Let us compare to a man who has just been told by his mar-

ital counselor or rabbi that he needs to spend more time with his wife; making sure to listen to her more.

What are the chances of his succeeding in rekindling the affection he and his wife once shared for each other if he simply goes through the motions without putting any heart into it? If his attitude towards his counselor's instructions is one of obligation it will be felt by his wife. If he is not sincere with his actions, then they will not render the result he wants. In fact, it can make things worse. No one wants to be a burden. If a woman feels that her husband doesn't love her and doesn't want to give of himself, she will eventually grow to resent whatever her husband does for her, closing herself off from him entirely.

When, however, his actions are from the heart, then even if he isn't the best romancer or the funniest guy, his wife will be touched by the effort, and certainly reciprocate her genuine feelings of care and concern.

The same is true with our relationship with G-d. When our words are sincere, then G-d will respond accordingly. When we turn to Him in prayer, we must realize that we are fulfilling our part of the relationship which G-d fashioned between us. He in His infinite kindness and patience is always there for us, ready to listen. One should, however, ask oneself, "Am I ready to do the talking."

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Staff, Alumni and Students

Jeremy Lerner - Age 23 - Phoenix, AZ PhD Candidate in Applied Mathematics, NY Shoresh and Center Alumnus

Jeremy Lerner, 23, is currently working for his PhD in Applied Mathematics at Stony Brook University in New York. Jeremy grew up in Phoenix, Arizona and graduated from the University of Arizona in Tucson with a B.A. in Mathematics. He describes his studies: "I am finding the PhD program in Mathematics very rewarding although it does have one downside. People always expect me to be able to do all kinds of mathematical gymnastics in my head. But when it comes to mental math, I always tell them — Hey, I'm a mathematician, not a calculator!"

He was first introduced to Judaism through two Jewish studies programs at the University

of Arizona. Given his cerebral and scientific inclinations he was immediately attracted to the open and analytical conversations about G-d and the Torah. After graduation he decided to spend a year studying at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem. Four months in the Shoresh Program and eight months in the Center Program. He especially enjoyed the academic and intellectual rigor of both the philosophical discussions and the Talmud study.



The Talmud has often been described as a branch of mathematics set to music — logical analysis and dialogue with its own unique cadence and rhythm. At Ohr Somayach Jeremy discovered a way to synthesize his quest for Jewish knowledge with his interest in mathematics. That partnership continues today as, along with the challenges of his graduate studies, Jeremy continues to make Talmud study an integral part of his schedule.