

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE FURNITURE WAS DIVINE

**“They shall make an Ark...” (25:10)**

In the desert kingdom of Mukhtar, things changed a lot after they discovered the oil.

The sheik, eager to benefit his people and to add to his own prestige, 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 sheik decided that he would go to America, for America was a country where there were solutions for people who didn't even know they had problems. So how much more must there be a solution for someone with a problem that he could easily identify!

The sheik stayed in the Waldorf Astoria for less than a week. When it was time to leave, he summoned the bell-hop to take down his luggage.

The bell-hop's jaw dropped when he opened the door to the sheik's suite.

There, sitting in the middle of the state-room, was an enormous sea-trunk. It was so improbably large that it looked almost like a stage prop. Realizing that he was easily out-manned by such an object, he retreated and returned with reinforcements.

It finally took six able-bodied porters and a truck to move the trunk out to Kennedy airport.

In an era of roll-on luggage, the sheik's cabin trunk looked like a total anachronism. And sure enough, it caught the eye of a 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 taps,

**“The Aron was the light of the Mishkan, for it contained the Holy Torah, which is the light of the world.”**

faucets of all kinds and shapes, stainless steel, copper, modern, antique. Nothing but faucets. Faucets and faucets and more faucets.

“You see officer, in my country, we have no water. On my first day in this country, I went into the kitchen and turned 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!”

Hashem told Moshe to go and tell Betzalel “Make Me a *Mishkan* (a Sanctuary), an *Aron* (holy ark) and *kelim* (the other furnishings of the Sanctuary).” When Moshe told Betzalel, he reversed the order and told him to build an *Aron*, *kelim* and a *Mishkan*.

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

### ROLLING HILLS

**“The staves shall remain in the rings of the ark; they may not be removed from it.” (25:15)**

The Torah is the portable homeland of the Jewish People. For most of their history, the Jews have been in exile. But whether that exile has been Babylon or Italy, Turkey or Maine, the Jew has always been able to roll up his homeland — the Torah — and take it with him.

It's not so much that the Jews have kept the Torah, than the Torah has kept *them*. When all the borders are closed to them, when no one will grant them a visa, the Torah welcomes them with open arms.

The staves of the *Aron* were never to be removed from the *Aron*. They were to remain in their place constantly. The first *Beis Hamikdash* stood for over 400 years. Throughout all those

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

**H**ashem commands Moshe to build a *Mishkan* (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. The Bnei Yisrael are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the *Mishkan's* outer courtyard is 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 Aaron.

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 which Hashem gave to the Jewish nation on Mt. Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the *Mishkan*, are described in extraordinary detail.

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## SING MY SOUL

INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIROIS

### ELIJAH HANAVI

### "ELIJAH THE PROPHET..."

*"He will soon come to us  
together with Mashiach,  
son of David"*

**W**ith the departure of Shabbos we mention the redeemers Hashem will hopefully soon send us.

We have already been

promised, say our Sages, that Eliyahu will not arrive as a harbinger of Mashiach on Erev Shabbos so that the excitement of his arrival will not get in the way of our preparations for Shabbos. Once Shabbos has ended and the way is clear for him to come we sing our prayer for his imminent arrival together with our redeemer, Mashiach.

*This issue is dedicated  
in honor of  
Naama & Shlomo  
Scholnick  
on the occasion of their marriage*

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many times does the word 'terumah' appear in the first verse of the *parsha*? Why?
2. Onkelos translates 'tachash' as 'sasgona.' Why?
3. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Mitzrayim?
4. Describe two uses of: a) oil; b) spices; c) precious stones.
5. The Aron was made with three boxes, one inside the other. How tall was the outer box exactly?
6. What does the crown on top of the Aron symbolize?
7. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?
8. What did the faces of the *keruvim* resemble?
9. What does the crown on top of the *shulchan* symbolize?
10. On what day of the week was the *lechem hapanim* baked?
11. What does *miksha* mean?
12. What was the purpose of the menorah's *gevi'im* (cups)?
13. In which direction did the flames of the menorah cast their light?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the menorah?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapestries of the *mishkan*?
16. How long was the *mishkan*?
17. How wide was the interior of the *mishkan*?
18. How high was the copper *mizbe'ach*?
19. What were the dimensions of the courtyard of the *mishkan*?
20. What function did the copper *yeseidos* serve?

### BONUS QUESTION?

**"... And they shall take for Me terumah." (25:2)** Why does the Torah say 'take' *terumah* and not 'give' *terumah*?

### I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

**"Make a shittim-wood Aron: Two and a half amos long, one and a half amos wide and one and a half amos high.... Make a shittim-wood table, two amos long and one amah wide... (25:10,23)**

The Aron represents Torah. Its fractional dimensions hint that we delve only a fraction into the Torah's limitless depth, and that our spiritual efforts are never done. The table represents worldly success. Its whole dimensions hint that we should feel 'whole' and content with our physical possessions.

• *Kli Yakar (25:10)*

## HAFTORAH: MELACHIM I 5:26 - 6:13

### BUILT TO LAST

**"This Temple that you build; if you follow My decrees, perform My statutes, and observe all My commandments."**

(6:12)

Just as in this week's *Parsha* the Torah speaks of the construction of the *Mishkan*, the Divine 'residence' in the desert, so too the *Haftorah* describes the first *Beis Hamikdash* which was built by Shlomo *Hamelech* (King Solomon) 480 years after the Exodus.

Even though the physical statistics of Shlomo *Hamelech*'s construction are staggering, what is important to Hashem is that the real construction should be built from the giving heart.

This is what Hashem is saying to Shlomo *Hamelech* in the above verse: Don't think that the construction of My house is by mere material means; by the lavishing of silver and gold. All these are mere illusions, not the real *Beis Hamikdash*. Rather, "If you follow My decrees, and perform My statutes..." **this** is what the *Beis Hamikdash* is really built of.

And since the 'materials' of its construction are really spiritual, so the *Beis Hamikdash*, even after its physical destruction, even after its material components have disintegrated, continues to exist: "I will dwell within the Bnei Yisrael, and I will not forsake My people Yisrael."

• *Kochav MiYaakov*

## WEEKLY DAF

### BECHOROS 32 - 38

## A DELAYED - ACTION KICK

**A** *bechor* — the male first born animal — may not be slaughtered in regular fashion outside of the *Beis Hamikdash* unless it has a physical blemish which disqualifies it from being a sacrifice. If this blemish has, however, been intentionally inflicted upon the animal in violation of Torah Law, then the owner is penalized and prohibited from slaughtering the animal.

What happens when a *bechor* goes wild and chases its owner who then kicks it in self defense and inflicts a blemish?

The Mishna states that there is no penalty in this case, because the blemish was not inflicted intentionally for the purpose of disqualifying it as a sacrifice, but only in self defense.

What if the pursued owner only kicks it after he has succeeded in escaping from his pursuer?

There are two versions of what Rabbi Papa ruled in such a case. One is that there will be a penalty, since there was no longer a motive of self defense. The other version is that there will be no penalty here, since the owner is merely reacting to the anxiety caused by the chase.

The halachic authorities rule according to the second, more

lenient version. The question arises, that since there are two opinions on this issue in the Gemara and we are left with a doubt as to the halacha, aren't we required to be stringent rather than lenient, as in every matter of Torah Law where there is a doubt?

Rabbeinu Asher explains that although it is forbidden by Torah Law to inflict a blemish upon a sacred *bechor*, the penalty of not slaughtering this animal as a non-sacrifice based on this blemish is only of rabbinic origin, and when a doubt arises in matters of Rabbinic Law we are lenient rather than stringent.

• *Bechoros 35a*

## THE AUDACIOUS ONE

**A** *kohen* who receives a *bechor* and wishes to slaughter it in regular fashion outside of the *Beis Hamikdash* due to its having a disqualifying blemish, is believed if he claims that at the time he received this animal from an Israelite it already had this blemish. (Otherwise *kohanim* are suspect of themselves illegally inflicting a blemish, and must produce evidence that they did not do so to an unblemished *bechor* received by them.)

The reason for this is that we do not suspect a man of lying in a matter which is very vulnerable to eventual

exposure — in this case, the original owner could contradict the *kohen's* claim.

The Sage Rafram of Pumpedisa gave an unblemished *bechor* to a *kohen* who then illegally inflicted a blemish on it. This *kohen* was interested in gaining a rabbinical sanction for slaughtering the *bechor* on the basis of the blemish, but realized that he could not produce evidence that he had not inflicted the blemish. He decided to make a claim that the blemish was already there when he received it. He therefore waited until one day when Rafram was suffering from an eye ailment. Certain that the sage's poor vision would prevent him from recognizing him, this audacious *kohen* approached the sage with the *bechor* and claimed he had received it with the blemish already there.

Rafram made a strenuous effort to fully open his eyes, and he recognized the *kohen* as the one to whom he had given an unblemished *bechor*.

Despite this experience which seemed to challenge the principle of a man hesitating to lie when there is a high probability of exposure, Rafram did not jump to any conclusion about this rule of credibility. Just because one *kohen* is so audacious, he reasoned, there is no cause for assuming that all *kohanim* will be the same.

• *Bechoros 36b*

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

hundreds of years, the staves remained in their place; the Torah was ready to move at a moment's notice.

This was a constant symbol that the Torah is not tied to one place. Wherever the Jews go, willingly or perforce, they roll up their portable homeland and take it with them.

## SOUL FOOD

**"... From every man whose heart will give, you shall take My portion."  
(25:2)**

He looked just like the other pauper. His eyes were dull from lack of food; his garments sullied. He knocked on Rabbi Chiyah's door.

"My master gave bread to that other fellow. My master had mercy on him. Will not my

master then have mercy on me? I am also poor. I am the angel of death."

The angel of death showed Rabbi Chiyah a rod of fire.

Then Rabbi Chiyah gave him his soul.

This event, which the Talmud records (*Mo'ed Katan 28a*) is very difficult to understand. After all, there's an enormous difference between giving someone a piece of bread and giving up your life?

How could the angel of death make such a comparison in the first place?

The angel of death knew Rabbi Chiyah well. He saw through to the depths of his heart. When Rabbi Chiyah gave bread to a pauper, he gave with such generosity of heart that he was really giving a piece of himself.

The angel of death was really saying to Rabbi Chiyah, "You didn't really give that pau-

per bread. That was just the **way** you gave to him. **What you gave was your soul wrapped up in a piece of bread.**"

"So just like you gave him from your soul, give to me too your soul."

Similarly, the whole essence of the *Mishkan* that the Jewish People built in the desert had to be with a giving heart and soul. For only in this way could metal and wood be transformed into a spiritual space. And only in this way would it be fit for Hashem to dwell in it.

### Sources:

- "The Furniture Was Divine" - *Talmud-Berachos 55a; Rabbeinu Bachya; Rabbi Uziel Milevsky zt"l*
- "Rolling Hills" - *Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch*
- "Soul Food" - *Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, Rabbi CJ Senter*

# ASK the RABBI

## SHOOT ME OR I'LL KILL MYSELF

Surie Fleischman  
<sally@post.tau.ac.il>

*If a Jew were to hold a gun to his own head and threaten to kill himself unless you ate pig for example, what should you do? Please answer as soon as possible (just kidding!). Thank you.*

Dear Surie Fleischman,  
In general, you must do anything in your power to save a life. Except for murder, idol worship or forbidden relations, you must even perform Torah prohibitions in order to save a life.

However, it's forbidden to transgress the Torah to save the life of someone who, with forethought and malice, is trying to cause another person to sin. So, theoretically, in the hypothetical case you asked about, you would not be allowed to eat the unkosher meat.

But in reality, anyone who would do such a thing is probably emotionally disturbed and not fully responsible for his actions. In such a case, you would eat non-kosher food — you would even break Shabbat — to save the person.

**Sources:**

- Yoreh Deah 158:2
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 329:1

## HARD HEART

David T. Subar  
<dsubar@interna.com> wrote:

*The Parsha refers to Hashem hardening Pharaoh's heart, and therefore not letting our people free. This hardening*

*caused further plagues, including slaying of the first born. Therefore, Hashem's action (hardening of Pharaoh's heart) led to unnecessary suffering, since Pharaoh was of the mind to free the Jews. How is this explained by the Sages?*

Dear David T. Subar,

Great question! Here are two answers:

The extra plagues weren't a punishment for Pharaoh's stubbornness; rather, they were punishment for previous actions, such as oppressing innocent people, throwing babies in the river and attempted genocide. All these actions were done with free will.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was merely a pretext, so to speak, for the timing of Egypt's punishment. It was timed so as to impress indelibly and historically upon the collective consciousness of the Jewish People that Hashem controls everything. But Pharaoh and company got only what they deserved, based on their previous bad deeds.

Here's another answer: Really, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart wasn't taking away his free will. Just the opposite! The plagues had taken away Pharaoh's free will (in the opposite direction) by making Hashem's existence too obvious. By hardening his heart, Hashem was merely restoring Pharaoh's free will to the point it had been prior to the plagues.

That is, Hashem didn't force Pharaoh to say "No." He simply gave Pharaoh the opportunity to do so. Nothing but his own stubbornness stopped Pharaoh from repenting.

**Sources:**

- Ramban, Exodus 7:3
- Sforno, Exodus 7:3

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

**Last week we asked:**

Halachically, what do the following days have in common?

- 1) 22 Cheshvan
- 2) 3 January
- 3) 14 Iyar

**Answer:**

They are the days outside Israel after which you no longer have to repeat *Shmoneh Esrei* prayer if you forgot whether or not you:

- 1) Said "*Mashiv Haruach u'Morid Hageshem*"
- 2) Said "*Tal U'Matar*"
- 3) Omitted the above

The silent prayer contains seasonal additions for rain. On Simchat Torah we begin **praising** Hashem for rain by saying *Mashiv Haruach u'Morid Hageshem*. Starting the night of December 4th we add a prayer — *V'ten tal u'matar Livracha* — **asking** for rain. On the first day of Pesach, we stop saying both of these.

If you forgot whether you correctly added the seasonal addition (or in the proper season omitted it), during the first thirty days you are assumed to have erred due to force of habit. Therefore you must repeat the prayer correctly.

The dates listed above are, respectively, thirty days after the beginning of saying *Mashiv Haruach u'Morid Hageshem* (Simchat Torah), "*Tal U'Matar*" (December 5th), and omitting them both on the first day of Pesach (15 Nissan).

**Sources:**

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 114,117

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# PARSHA Q&A!

## Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

- 25:2 - It appears three times, alluding to three different types of *terumah* offered.
- 25:5 - The *tachash* delights (*sas*) in its multi-colors (*govanim*).
- 25:5 - *Arazim* — cedars.
- 25:6-7 - a) The oil was lit in the menorah and used for anointing. b) The spices were used in the anointing oil and for the incense. c) The precious stones were for the *ephod* and the *choshen*.
- 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half *amos* plus a *tefach* plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the *kapores*. [The *kapores* was a *tefach* thick (see 25:17).]
- 25:11 - It symbolizes the crown of Torah.
- 25:16 - It testifies that Hashem commanded us to keep the *mitzvos*.
- 25:18 - The faces of children.
- 25:24 - It symbolizes the crown of royalty.
- 25:29 - Friday.
- 25:31 - Hammered.
- 25:31 - Purely ornamental.
- 25:37 - Towards the middle flame.
- 25:40 - Hashem showed Moshe a menorah of fire.
- 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
- 26:16 - 30 *amos*.
- 26:23 - 10 *amos*.
- 27:1 - There are two opinions. Rabbi Yehuda says it was three *amos* high. Rabbi Yosi says it was 10 *amos* high.
- 27:18 - 100 *amos* by 50 *amos*.
- 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.

## BONUS ANSWER!

If the Torah had said 'give' *terumah*, each individual would have been **duty-bound** to give. But for the *mishkan* Hashem wanted only heartfelt donations, not dutiful ones. Therefore, the Torah commanded that collectors be appointed to 'take' *terumah* only from willing donors. No one, however, was required to give.

• Malbim

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

- 25:1 The *Mishkan*, a "Portable Sinai"  
25:10 Universal Torah Involvement  
26:33 Making and Placing

### IBN EZRA

- 25:3 The Need for Silver  
**OHR HACHAIM HAKADOSH**  
25:8 The *Shechina* Within Jewry

### SEFER HACHINUCH

- 95 Our Need for a *Mishkan*  
96 Utility and Form  
97 Blessings and Benefit

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