

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TISA · FOR THE WEEK ENDING 20 ADAR I 5760 · FEB. 26, 2000 · VOL. 7 NO. 21

PARSHA INSIGHTS

GETTING INCENSED

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Take yourself spices — stacte, onchya and galbanum...’” (30:34)

“The Orthodox look down on any Jew who isn’t as religious as they are,” runs an oft repeated canard. “If you aren’t a Torah Jew — you’re nothing,” is the jingle trumpeted from the media desks of certain political camps. While these statements serve crass and blatant political agendas, they simply aren’t true.

When I look at a secular Jew, I see a *yiddishe panim* — a Jewish face with a *neshama*, a soul, burning inside. A Jewish face that looks so much like mine; one that reminds me of all those faces staring into the eyes of Nazi photographers, in another black and white portrait cataloguing the destruction of a race.

Contrary to popular belief the phrase “Love your neighbor as yourself” isn’t a Christian concept. It’s a verse in our Torah, *Vayikra 19*, which preceeded Christianity by over 13 centuries.

Every Jew is commanded to love every other Jew — as himself.

I may totally disagree with my neighbor. I may think him misguided, misinformed and just plain gullible. I may even hate what he *stands for*. But *him?* Him I love. I may find his opinions offensive, even dangerous, but when I look at him, I see a fellow Jew. A *yiddishe panim*.

On *Kol Nidre*, at the beginning of the Holiest Day of the Year, the Cantor in his prayers requests permission from G-d for the congregation to pray with those Jews who don’t keep the Torah. Why?

The commandment of the Four Species that we perform on *Succot* symbolizes four kinds of Jew: The *Etrog* which has both taste and smell stands for the Jew who has both Torah and good deeds. The *Lulav* — the palm branch — symbolizes the Jew who has Torah but not good deeds. Like the date tree, he has taste (the dates) but no smell. The *Hadass* (myrtle) smells beautiful, but it has no edible fruit. It stands for the Jew who has good

deeds, but no Torah. And the *Arava* — the willow — has neither taste nor smell. It represents the Jew who has neither Torah nor good deeds. The *mitzva* of the four species can only be performed with all four. If any one is missing, the *mitzva* is lost.

In this week’s *parsha*, the Torah lists the eleven ingredients of the *ketoret* — the mixture of spices that was an essential part of the service of the Holy Temple. If the person who formulated the mixture omitted one of the ingredients, he was liable for the death penalty. Every ingredient was vital — without one of the ingredients there was no incense service. One of the spices in the *ketoret* was *chelbona* (galbanum). Its smell was unpleasant. Yet without it, the incense was invalid.

A *yid* is a *yid*. His ideas and his actions may not “smell” the way I would like, he may be as devoid of *mitzvot* and good deeds as a willow is devoid of taste and smell — but without him, it’s not *Kol Nidre*. Without him the Jewish People is incomplete.

• Sources: Rashi, Yalkut Shimoni

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

MOUNT GILBOA

This mountain in the Valley of Jezreel (*Emek Yizrael*) is where King Saul and his son Yonatan were slain in battle by the Philistines, leading a mournful David to lament “how the mighty have fallen” and to pronounce a curse that “no dew nor rain should descend



upon the hills of Gilboa.” (*Shmuel II 1:19-21*)

The mountain itself indeed remains bare, but not far away is a village and some kibbutzim whose prosperity accentuates the impact of David’s historical curse on Gilboa.

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 Hashem instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. Hashem 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 Hashem 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. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy

everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the orgy of idol-worship, he smashes the tablets, and he destroys the golden calf. The tribe of Levi volunteers to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and Hashem accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan, and Hashem's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks Hashem to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. Hashem 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.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

As the following true story illustrates, don't be too quick to judge your friend. Perhaps she has a secret that she keeps...

UNDER HER HAT

I would like to submit this story to "The Other Side of the Story." Though a year has already passed, I still get a tear in my eye when I recall this incident:

I used to work in a company with a lot of other young *frum* (observant) girls like myself. When one of the girls from the group got engaged, I wanted to do something special at the wedding. Being the creative type, I thought of a good *shtick* (trick):

Several years before, the company had given out caps and sweat-shirts with the company logo on them. I decided to collect the caps and sweatshirts from all the employees who still had them, give one to each girl from work at the wedding, and dance around the bride

wearing them.

It wasn't so easy to collect all this, but by the time the wedding came, I managed to collect enough. Right before the dancing started, I eagerly handed them to each girl. I was surprised that one of the girls, who we will call Chanie, gave me a look of disdain and insisted on not wearing the hat. I took it to mean that she thought the whole idea was silly. I tried prodding her to put it on, but she vehemently refused. I felt somewhat insulted. I had worked so hard to collect them, and wanted everyone to be enthusiastic about it. I also felt that it was out of character for Chanie. She was usually very happy to go along with things. I felt hurt and angry towards her.

It was only months later that I understood the incident. Chanie had been out from work for a few weeks. We all assumed she had a virus or something. When she returned, we all complimented her on her nice haircut. Chanie kept up such a good front that for months most of the girls did not realize anything was wrong. It was only months later that I realized that she was suffering from cancer, and her "new haircut" was not a haircut at all. She had so much inner strength and did not want anyone to find out about her illness. She wanted everyone to treat her normally. I now look back at the incident and realize that by the wedding, she had just begun wearing a wig. She did not yet feel secure in it, and did not want it to slip. That is why she was not eager to put on the hat. Unfortunately, this story does not have a happy ending. Chanie passed away, and I miss her, and still think about her. I hope and pray that she forgives me for my feeling of hurt or anger towards her. She has certainly taught me a very strong lesson in giving others the benefit of the doubt.

• An Ohrnet reader

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I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"And they shall give (30:12)" The Hebrew word *V'natnu* — "and they shall give" — is a palindrome. That is, it is spelled the same backwards as forwards. This hints that giving charity is a two-way street. When a person gives charity he should realize that he or his offspring might one day need to be on the receiving end of charity. And then his good deed will come back to assist him.

• Vilna Gaon

THE MISSING LEVITES

Although the Torah awarded *maaser rishon* (the first tithe on agricultural produce) to the Levites, they lost their right to this important source of income because of a penalty imposed upon them by Ezra:

"I gathered them together," writes Ezra of the Jews whom he led from Babylon to *Eretz Yisrael* towards the end of their seventy-year exile, "and I found no Levites among them." (*Ezra 8:15*) Upset by the failure of the Levites to join in his effort to resettle *Eretz Yisrael*, Ezra penalized them that *maaser* should no longer be given to them. According to one opinion, *maaser* was to be given only to the poor. According to another opinion, it could also be given to *kohanim* during their state of impurity which prevented them from eating *terumah* and therefore rendered them impoverished.

The problem with this explanation, Tosefot points out, is that the *mishna* (*Kiddushin 69a*) clearly states that Levites were among the people who accompanied Ezra. This is also evident from the passage (*Ezra 1:5*) which lists the Levites among those who were inspired to follow Ezra on his mission to rebuild the *Beit Hamikdash* in Jerusalem.

Rashi (*Kiddushin 69a*) supplies the solution to this mystery. When the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar took the Jews into captivity, he ordered them to play for him the music they had played in the *Beit Hamikdash*. Their heroic response is recorded in *Tehillim* (137:2-4): "On the willow trees (along the rivers of Babylon) we hung our harps." They cut off their own thumbs to make themselves incapable of playing music and protested: "How can we play the songs of Hashem on foreign soil!"

Levites subsequently born in Babylon did have the ability to play their musical instruments in the *Beit Hamikdash*, but only the thumbless ones returned with Ezra. This was viewed by Ezra as a blatant lack of interest in rebuilding the *Beit Hamikdash* and restoring it to its former glory with the music of Levites, and he therefore penalized them regarding *maaser*.

• *Yevamot 86b*

THE MISSING HUSBAND

In order to marry another man, a woman may rely on the testimony of a single witness that her husband died. But if her husband later turns up, she is forbidden both to him and to the man she married in his absence.

If two witnesses, however, testify that he died, and she marries another on this basis, she does not have to leave her present husband, according to the opinion of Rabbi Shimon,

even if the former turns up. When this opinion was supported by the Sage Rav, he was sharply challenged by the Sages in *Eretz Yisrael*: "The missing husband stands before us and you say she does not have to leave the man she married on the mistaken assumption that he was dead!"

The *gemara* explains Rav's statement by describing a situation in which the court and the public do not recognize the man who claims to be her missing husband. There are, however, two witnesses who claim to know that he is her husband because they have been together with him from the time he left home until now. It is therefore their word against the word of the two who testify that her husband is dead. In such a standoff, if she is certain that this is not her husband, and she marries one of the witnesses testifying that he saw her husband die, we do not require her to leave her present husband.

In regard to the challenge presented to Rav, an interesting question is raised by Tosefot. Since there are two witnesses who say they saw him die, what significance is there in the court and the general public recognizing the man who comes before us as being her husband? In light of the principle that "two witnesses are like a hundred witnesses," if two witnesses against two is considered a standoff, so, too, is two against a hundred.

Tosefot answers his question with an interesting insight into the power of testimony. Something which is obvious to us cannot be contradicted by even as powerful an evidence as the testimony of two witnesses. We may understand his point by comparing this situation with one in which two witnesses testify that it is now night, even though we see clearly that it is day. The testimony of witnesses is valid only to resolve doubts, but not to challenge obvious realities.

• *Yevamot 88a*

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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* used for?
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, Hashem 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 Hashem 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.
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 Hashem 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 those who have estranged themselves from the Torah are forbidden 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 Hashem!
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 Hashem 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. Hashem 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.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS “QUESTION”)

Even though the Torah generally calls a person by his name and the name of his father, the Torah refers to Betzalel using his grandfather's name as well (31:2). Can you think of a reason why?

Answer: Betzalel's grandfather was Chur, the son of Miriam and Kalev. Chur was killed when he protested the making of the golden calf. Since the Mishkan comes to atone for the sin of the golden calf, Chur, who gave his life trying to prevent that sin, is mentioned in connection with the Mishkan's master craftsman, Betzalel.

• *Da'at Zekainim*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

EN-GRAVED INVITATION

**From: Sheldon Mermelstein
in Teaneck, NJ <franshel@aol.com>**

Dear Rabbi,
Would you discuss the custom of visiting deceased relatives in the cemetery before getting married? Thanks very much.

Dear Sheldon Mermelstein,

There is a widespread custom that one visits deceased parents and grandparents before marriage. The reason is first that they should intercede in Heaven for the success of the marriage, and also to "invite" them to the wedding. It is traditionally known that their spirit comes to the wedding and partakes of their descendant's joy.

DOCTOR DO LITTLE

From: Tim <timswalz@juno.com>

Dear Rabbi,
In Exodus 15:26 it says "I am the Lord that heals you." How does this relate to us today? Is this a promise for us to take a hold of? I have some friends who are claiming this promise, and are refusing any kind of medical treatment. Is using a

doctor not trusting G-d? Are we trusting man instead?

Dear Tim,

I have a story for you: A man swept away by a flood sees two guys approach in a rowboat. "Hop in!" they shout. "No, thanks," he says, "G-d will save me." Next, a tugboat passes by. "Climb aboard," calls the captain. Again he refuses. "G-d will save me," he says. Then the Coast Guard sends a helicopter but he refuses to board, giving the same reason. Finally, he drowns.

Up in Heaven, an angel asks why he refused help. "I wanted to rely on G-d alone," he replies. "Idiot!" says the angel. "Who do you think sent you the rowboat, the tugboat and the helicopter?"

G-d acts through the guise of doctors and medicine, just as He acts through the guise of employers to provide us with a living. Would your friends refuse to take money from their bosses, saying they'll get it directly from G-d? I think not. Do they eat food, or do they wait for G-d to miraculously inject their bloodstream with nourishing vitamins, minerals, fats and carbohydrates?

The Torah (Bible) gives explicit permission to engage in healing: If one person strikes another person, the verse says that the attacker "shall pay for his unemployment and for his medical expenses." (Exodus 21:19)

Our task is to exert the effort and then to recognize that ultimately it is G-d who heals. While seeking proper medical attention, a sick person simultaneously engages in prayer, good deeds, and introspection. We don't accept prayer as "a last resort" — it's a "first resort," along with medicine and the doctor.

"G-D ON MY PALM-PILOT"

From: Email@Withheld

Dear Rabbi,
Can I have a *siddur* (prayer book) that's loaded into my Palm Pilot and be able to take it into the bathroom without any problems?

Dear Email@Withheld,

You can take the Palm Pilot into the bathroom, but I would suggest that it would be inappropriate to actually have the text displayed on the screen at the time.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week, Neil Parks, Beachwood, Ohio <nparks@torah.org> wrote:

I recently learned an interesting halacha from Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum of Cleveland's Jewish Learning Connection. He suggested it might make a good "Yiddle Riddle." When, regarding the laws of prayer, is it better to forget something than to remember it? Specifically, if you omit an addition to the *amida* for a specific occasion — an addition which is indeed appropriate for that occasion, you have fulfilled your obligation. But if you insert that same addition (which, as mentioned, is indeed appropriate for that occasion), you have invalidated your *shemona esrei* (silent *amida* prayer).

Answer:

The *ma'ariv amida* on Saturday night includes an extra paragraph for *havdala* (the "*atah chonantanu*" paragraph), but if you omit it, the *amida* is still valid and need not be repeated.

If you oversleep on Shabbat afternoon and miss the time for *mincha* (afternoon service), then you say an extra *amida* at *ma'ariv*. But the first *amida* must be the one for *ma'ariv*, and the second must be the one to make up for *mincha*. If you don't say *havdala* in either the first *amida* or the second *amidah*, both are valid. However, if you omit *havdala* in the first *amida*, and remember to say it in the second one, then the second *amida* becomes the one for *ma'ariv*, and the first *amida* becomes invalid retroactively. You now have to say a third one for *mincha*.

Re: Canopies Made From Can O’ Peas (Ohrnet Terumah):

My wife and I made our *chuppah* (wedding canopy). It was very simple and elegant. We went to the hardware stores and bought four poles and four hooks. We screwed the hooks into the tops of the poles and then attached a large *tallit* using the existing holes in the corner. If you do this, make sure that the poles are long enough that they can touch the ground while people stand under them (seven feet or more). We thought this much better than renting one.

• *Larry Weinberg in Maryville, MO*
<edlawlarry@geocities.com>

I read with interest the recent issue about couples decorating their own *chuppah*. The questions took me back to my wedding. My wife and I asked our friends to decorate a one foot square piece of 100% cotton cloth with any memories, thoughts, words, pictures, whatever they thought. My bride-to-be took the squares to a seamstress who put them all together onto an old family heirloom square about eight foot by eight foot. A grommet for each pole was placed on each corner and some additional material placed around to

drape down.

We lost my mother last year, but her *chuppah* square remains as a lasting memory of her. We have hung our *chuppah* on our wall so we can see it every day. Someday, perhaps, our children will get married under the family *chuppah*.

• *Marc P. Cardinalli in Las Vegas, Nevada*
<mcardinal@ccmail.nevada.edu>

Ohrnet wrote that “The only real “requirement” is that the *chuppah* be big enough for the bride and groom to stand under and that there be room for the bride to circle the groom.” I really don’t mean to shock you, but I must confess that I am of “pure” German-Jewish descent (a real “yekke” — and proud of it) and it is not our custom for the bride to circle the groom. I want you to know that this is how I was married, the officiating rabbi having been Rav Yosef Breuer, *zatzal*, in the presence of Rav Shulman, *zatzal* (of Slobodka). The *ketubah* was read by Rav Shimon Schwab, *zatzal*. I hope that you do not feel that the marriage was not valid! In many respects these customs are still followed, especially here in Washington Heights, New York.

• *Raphael N. Levi in Washington Heights, NY*
<rnlevi@Earthlink.net>

HAFTARAH

MELACHIM I 18:1 - 39

At Yom Kippur’s end we repeat the closing words from this week’s Haftarah:
“Hashem; He is G-d.”

Like this week’s Parsha, which depicts Israel wavering on the brink of idol worship, the Haftarah tells of one of the worst kings to rule Israel, Achav, and his idolatrous queen Izavel. She was a non-Jew who worshipped idols, murdered

righteous prophets and filled the palace with idols.

At risk to his life, the prophet Eliyahu successfully challenged Achav and Izavel. Eliyahu did this by challenging the idolatrous prophets of *ba’al* to a demonstration on Mount Carmel to expose their fraudulent god. When a miracle happened and Israel saw the truth, they shouted in unison “Hashem; He is G-d.”

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

30:13	RAMBAN <i>Lashon Hakodesh</i>	34:28	The Second Tablets	30:12	The Concept of Counting People
30:19	Washing Hands			31:2	The Name Betzalel
31:2	Betzalel	28:5	Trustworthy Treasurers	31:13	A Taste of the World-to-Come
32:1-4	The Golden Calf	28:30	The <i>Urim V’Tumim</i>		SEFER HACHINUCH
32:18	Sounds	29:9	Donning of the <i>Kohen’s</i> Garments	105	Equality in Sacrifices
33:11	Yehoshua’s Age	30:1	The Incense-Altar	107-8	Anointing
34:27	A Renewed Covenant				