

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT TERUMA · 6 ADAR 5767 · FEB. 24, 2007 · VOL. 14 NO. 19

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

מזל טוב ליחיאל שמואל לכבוד הבר מצוה

MAZAL TOV TO YECHIEL SHMUEL ON THE OCCASION OF HIS BAR MITZVAH

### A LITTLE RAIN

“You shall make a table of acacia wood...” (25:23)

They say that into every life a little rain must fall. Sometimes, however, we feel that “little rain” is a full-blown downpour drowning us and leaving us reeling, searching for answers.

Sometimes we feel we’re sliding down the slippery slope to who-knows-where, that we are being engulfed by darkness and uncertainty.

For those of us who have visited those unattractive spiritual tourist attractions, we should know that however bleak and desolate our spiritual lives may seem, there is a little candle at the end of the tunnel that can never go out.

In Yiddish it’s called the *pintele Yid*. The Jewish Spark.

And a spark that can never go out never needs to be more than a spark. For the greatest blaze can be ignited with just one spark.

After the original creation of the world G-d creates nothing *ex nihilo*; rather every new creation has to have a pre-existing conduit from which it can flow.

In Hebrew, the word *beracha* (blessing) always connotes “increase.” A blessing always takes some pre-exist-

ing state and infuses it with expansion. G-d uses a pre-existing vessel and then injects blessing to swell and amplify what is already present.

In this week’s Torah portion the Torah describes the *shulchan*. The *shulchan*, which was an ornamental table, was the conduit through which material blessing flowed to the Jewish People.

And similarly, on our tables, when we say the blessings after a meal, Jewish Law requires us to leave the bread on the table so that it should be a vessel to receive G-d’s blessings from above.

Another example of this is when the prophet Elisha helped a penniless woman. He asked her what she had in her home and she replied that all she had was a small jug of oil. Elisha told her to borrow as many jugs and pots from her neighbors as she could. Then she was to start pouring from this tiny jug of oil into the first container. Miraculously, that little jug kept on pouring oil until all the borrowed vessels were full.

And in our own spiritual lives we should never despair, because there will always be that *pintele Yid*, that eternal spark that will re-ignite our hearts even when we are running on empty.

• Sources: Ramban, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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

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

## ISRAEL Forever

### BIBLE BELTING

“Let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them.” (*Shmot* 25:8) This Divine command to build a veritable house for G-d that we will hear read in the synagogue this Shabbat sheds a critical light on a new initiative of the Israeli Ministry of Education. A few weeks ago there took place the first meeting of the 39-member Public Committee for Bible Education whose announced purpose is “to give the study of the Bible a more central focus in the educational system”.

What is behind this initiative, of course, is the shocking ignorance of secular Israeli schoolchildren for whom the mandatory Bible studies from grades 1-12 provide only a

sparse acquaintance with the “Book of Books” which is quickly forgotten.

But just as a Sanctuary deserves that sacred name because of G-d's presence in it, so does the Bible deserve its name only if it is studied as the Word of G-d. This can hardly be expected when the chairman of the new committee is a former Supreme Court justice who is notorious for his anti-religious bias, and the committee has as one of its members the Education Minister who proclaims that “the beauty of the Bible is reflected in the values and moral dilemmas it raises”.

Only by putting G-d back into His Bible can we secure Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

### THE “ARMENIAN QUARTER” OF EAST JERUSALEM

How did this section of Jerusalem get such a name when only one sector of it is actually occupied by the Armenian compound?

The compound itself has a wall around its big cathedral and adjoining buildings, but what about the rest of the area that has no relation to the Armenians?

Since a name had to be given to an area that was



neither Jewish, Moslem nor Christian, it was decided to call it the Armenian Quarter for convenience's sake.

An American Christian scholar made a study in the previous century of the divisions of Jerusalem and called the area “Hart el Yahud” (“The Jewish Section of the Armenian Quarter”), an admission from a non-Jew that the “Armenian Quarter” had a heavy concentration of Jews.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

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

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

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

לע"נ

מרת יוטא רחל בת ר' יוסף חיים ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Stages of Haman's downfall
- The royal garments of Mordechai and their source
- Yosef and his brothers in reconciliation
- Some rules regarding writing and binding of a Megilah
- Mordechai's status and the history of Yaakov
- Reading the Megilah in proper sequence and the *Shema* audibly and in *Lashon Kodesh*
- The order of the blessings of the *Shmoneh Esrei* prayer
- When silence is preferable
- The Megilah and other sacred scrolls in other languages
- Things which the Sages learned from Rebbie's maid
- Reading the Megilah with breaks in between
- Writing sacred scrolls from memory
- Writing materials required for a proper Megilah
- Residents of walled and unwalled cities and villages regarding the date of reading the Megilah
- How much of the Megilah must be read
- Who is eligible as a reader for the public
- *Mitzvot* that must be done during day and when day begins
- *Mitzvot* done at night and which all night long
- Reading Megilah or Torah sitting or standing
- When Torah was learned while standing
- Hearing Megilah from two readers and the blessings on the reading
- How many people are called up to the Torah on different days
- Why the Sage Rav did not prostrate himself

## A NUMBERS MYSTERY

When the wicked Haman heard from Mordechai's disciples that they had been studying the laws of a sinner achieving atonement through the offering of a handful of grain on the *Beit Hamikdash* altar, he exclaimed:

"Your handful of grain has overcome my ten thousand talents (a large measure) of silver!"

This was a reference to the payment that Haman gave to the king for the right to carry out his genocidal plot. *Tosefot* writes that he heard that ten thousand talents equals the total amount of half-shekel coins given by the 600,000 adult males who went out of Egypt, and Haman told the king that he was thus giving him "their entire redemption".

*Tosefot* leaves us with a puzzling problem in mathe-

matics. In the Torah calculation (*Shmot* 38:26-26) of how much 600,000 half-shekel coins equal, we find that the total is only 100 talents of silver!

Of the solutions proposed for this problem we offer this one from Rabbi Yaakov Etlinger in his *Responsa Binyan Zion*:

When a Jew vows to donate his monetary value to the *Beit Hamikdash*, the value assigned by the Torah for a male aged 20-60 is 50 *shekalim*. The amount Jews were ordered to donate for the *Mishkan* Sanctuary sockets and every succeeding year for purchases of animals for communal sacrifices was one percent of that sum — a half-shekel. Haman magnanimously offered the king "their entire redemption" — the full 50 *shekalim* for each, which would mean  $600,000 \times 50 =$  ten thousand talents.

• *Megilah* 16a

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Haman's advisors warned him of the fate he faced in threatening Mordechai and his people by telling him 'for fall, you shall certainly fall before him' (*Megilat Esther* 6:13). The double expression of falling was to communicate that the Jewish nation is compared to the dust and to the stars. When their fortune declines they fall all the way to the dust. But when they rise they reach all the way to the stars."

• *Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilouï - Megilah* 16a

## BEAUTY IS IN THE “I” OF THE BEHELD

**From: Anonymous**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*I know that this is going to sound strange, but it is a question that I feel I have to ask. I get the impression that according to Judaism, spiritual beauty and physical beauty go together. I mean that an attractive physical appearance seems to reflect a certain degree of spiritual perfection. Now, I know that I am not physically attractive. Does that mean I am somehow lacking or inferior in an internal, spiritual sense?*

Dear Anonymous,

First, let me commend you on your candidness and courage to ask this question. Of course you are probably being overly self-critical, and it goes without saying that physical beauty is subjective. In addition to your having the internal beauty innate in every person, I'm sure you're physically more attractive than you think. Still, I'll try to take your question at face value.

On a certain level, physical and spiritual beauty go together. There are many examples of this. The subliminal beauty of the natural world of creation certainly reflects the beauty and harmony of the Creator. Similarly, G-d instructed the Jews to construct a beautiful Tabernacle made of the most precious materials befitting His Divine Presence. The same applies for the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, regarding which our Sages declared that one who never saw the Temple never saw a beautiful building (Succah 51b). Indeed, we are commanded to beatify all *mitzvot* in honor of their spiritual significance. This is not only on the macroscopic scale of Creation, or the relatively microscopic scale of man-made objects, but even on the physical plane of man such that a strong physical constitution is enumerated among the prerequisites for prophecy (Shabbat 92a).

However, external physical beauty doesn't necessarily express a predisposition for spiritual beauty. Solomon, the wisest of men, compared a person with an attractive exterior but an ugly interior to a swine wearing a golden nose ring (Proverbs 11:22). No degree of external beauty can mask a repulsive personality. Conversely, an unattractive appearance does not preclude a beautiful and spiritual interior. In fact, insofar as humility is a prerequisite for spiritual sensitivity and the acquisition of Torah, an attractive person is more likely to be arrogant and thereby distracted from this higher calling, whereas a less attractive person is more likely to heed the call.

Thus our Sages remarked that Torah is compared to water, wine and milk in order to teach us that just as these liquids are preserved only in vessels made of simple materials like pottery and wood and not in vessels of silver and gold, so too the Torah is preserved only in people who are simple and don't make much of themselves (Ta'anit 6a). The Talmud then records an event that illustrates this point:

The daughter of the Caesar once said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiyah: "Alas, such beautiful wisdom in such an ugly vessel!" He replied: "My daughter, in what type of vessels does your father keep his wine?" She answered: "In earthen vessels." He rejoined: "Then what is the difference between your father and the common people?" She asked: "In what, then, shall it be kept?" And he said: "People who are as important as you should keep their wine in golden and silver vessels!" She then had her father's wine transferred to vessels of gold and silver. The wine turned sour. When the Caesar was informed of this, he asked his daughter: "Who told you to do this?" He sent for the rabbi and asked for the reason of his advice. Rabbi Yehoshua replied, "I simply offered her the advice that she offered me." The Talmud then questions, "But are there not men who are handsome and also scholarly?" To which the Talmud concludes, "If they would be less handsome, their wisdom would be greater still."

## WHO BUYS KOSHER?

**D**oes the yearly increase of 10-15% in sales of kosher products in the U.S. indicate a sharp rise in the number of Jews keeping kosher?

This is what was hoped when Cannondale Associates released the results of a survey that showed that this growth in kosher popularity had brought the dollar value of the American kosher food market to the whopping sum of \$10 billion.

It turns out, however, that this optimism must be tempered. Only 21% of Americans who buy kosher foods, says the report, do so for religious reasons. Non-Jews buy kosher food products because they assume that they are healthier than others. This may explain why 70% of the 10.5 million kosher food consumers in the U.S. are in the health-conscious 18-35 age bracket.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

## IMPOSING ON THE HOST

**Question:** I have a medical problem regarding the intake of salt in my system. An invitation from a friend to join his family for a meal at their home has put me in somewhat of a predicament. I am reluctant to impose on my hosts the need to prepare special food for me, but also do not wish to endanger my health. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** In a eulogy for his late wife delivered at Yeshivat Ohr Somayach where he teaches, the noted Torah scholar and historian Rabbi Berel Wein told of the time he

invited a young man for a Shabbat meal. This fellow told his wife that he ate only peanut butter. Not missing a beat, this magnanimous hostess asked "Creamy or crunchy?"

Not everyone will respond with the generosity of a Rebbetzin Wein, but you can safely assume that if you inform your hosts in advance they will be glad to prepare your food without salt or with some safe substitute. But please don't wait till the last minute to pass on your request – and enjoy your meal.

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