

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### East is East?

*“From every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My portion.” (25:7)*

As a '49er (1949 not 1849) I had the privilege of being able to visit Iran when I was a young man, and Eastern Europe in my middle age. By the time the Iron Curtain was being drawn back and you could visit Prague, Lodj, Kovno and Vilna, a similar curtain was being drawn across Iran.

At university I had a friend whose father worked for British Petroleum in Iran. They lived in the lap of luxury with many servants and two resident gardeners. When you undressed at night your clothes would vanish and before you awoke the following morning they would reappear, freshly laundered and pressed.

One day we went for a stroll around the *shuk*, the Persian market of Teheran. It was about as far from Hampstead Garden Suburb as you could get. We walked from one small shop to another, the scent of various spices wafting through the air. We walked into one shop and my eye was drawn to a beautiful *taar*, a traditional Persian string instrument with a sound board covered with vellum. The body was divided into two heart-shaped sections. The back was decorated with the most exquisite Persian miniatures of hunting scenes. Seeing that I was interested in this piece, the owner reached up, brought it down from the wall, and placed it in my hands. It was even more beautiful close up. I asked my friend to ask him in Farsi how much it was. He wanted a king's ransom. Being aware that in the Middle East nothing has a price tag, I countered with the closest thing to a reasonable offer that my American Express travel checks would allow.

He looked at me as though the cat had just brought me in, removing the *taar* from my hands and returning it to

the wall. I shrugged my shoulders, gave a small sigh and browsed around the shop. In a corner was a small ceramic plate with a Hebrew inscription on it. “Hey!” I said to my friend, “I can read this. It says: *Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad.*” Before I had finished the sentence, the owner of the shop had spun round and said to my friend in Farsi, “Are you Jewish?” “No,” he said pointing at me, “but *he is.*” “Shalom Aleichem!” he said, extending his hand to me. “Aleichem Hashalom!” I replied. And there we stood, our hands locked in an ancient kindred spirit, not being able to utter even one word in the language of the other. I looked at him and he looked at me. It seems to me that we stood that way for a long time. Finally he took down the *taar* and gave it to me for the price I offered. I thanked him profusely for his generosity, but he just nodded his head from side to side a bit.

Two Jews from the ends of the earth. I doubt that two Protestants, two Catholics, two Muslims or two Hindus would have had that atavistic moment of contact that I shared in Teheran with that storekeeper.

*“From every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My portion.”*

The Mishkan was the expression of the motivation of the heart of the Jewish People. “For G-d's portion is His People.” (Devarim 22:9) Part of that “portion” is the love that one Jew feels for another across the oceans, across cultures. That's the motivation of the heart that is the Jewish People.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Chullin 58-64

## The Humble Sun

*Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi raised an apparent contradiction: One verse states, “And G-d created two great luminaries,” while the same verse states immediately afterwards, “the great luminary to rule the day and the lesser luminary to rule the night.”*

**H**e answers that originally the sun and moon were created as equals. However, the moon objected to the creation of two “great luminaries” based on the claim, “Is it possible for two kings to share one crown?” G-d answered the moon, saying “Go and diminish yourself!” This teaching of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi is also brought in Rashi’s commentary on the Torah. (Gen. 1:16)

Rashi explains the apparent contradiction as follows: The first part of the verse “two great luminaries” implies that they were of equal size. The latter part of the verse, which speaks of the greater luminary and the lesser luminary, shows that they were of different size.

Although this question is brilliantly answered by Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, the Vilna Gaon indicates that the apparent contradiction should not be readily viewed as an apparent contradiction. He suggests that perhaps both of the luminaries were called “great” because they were both large compared to the other objects created – but one was created larger and the other was created smaller. Why, therefore, should Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi understand the phrase “two great luminaries” to mean that they were both of equal size, leading to an apparent contradiction that he needed to resolve?

The Vilna Gaon offers an answer based on a *gemara* in *masechet Yoma* (62b), which teaches that it is unnecessary for the Torah to state the word “two” regarding something that is plural. A plural noun always implies two unless there is another word that teaches a larger quantity. This is so because the minimum of “plural” is “two”. Therefore, in the verse of the “two great luminaries” the word “luminaries” would have indicated that there were two, but of unknown size or sizes. It must be, reasons Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, that the “extra” word “two” in respect to the luminaries, is written in the Torah to teach that the “two great luminaries” were (originally) identical in size. Hence the apparent contradiction that he asked and answered.

There is an important behavioral lesson to be learned from the silence of the sun. A verse in *Sefer Shoftim* teaches that “people who love G-d will be as the sun when he goes forth in its might.” (5:31) Our Sages teach that this refers to “people who are insulted but do not insult back, hear themselves insulted but do not answer back.” (*Shabbat* 88b) The sun was silent when it heard its royalty and greatness being challenged by the moon, and was rewarded by G-d for staying silent and avoiding a dispute. This is an important character trait of the righteous. (See *Maharitz Chiyot* on this point, and more.)

• *Chullin 60b*

## Words That Really Sting

*“People say that a mosquito can carry 60 large measures of iron on its beak.” (Rashi describes the creature as a type of fly that bites like a wasp.)*

**W**hat is the message of this “folk statement” taught on our *daf*? The *Mahrasha* expounds that this is a parable from which we should learn to have greater awareness about the nature of *lashon hara* (negative speech) and its extreme seriousness. This insect bites with its mouth and, similarly, a person can cause great damage with the words that come out from his mouth. And although the insect is not aware of the enormous pain and damage its bite can cause, likewise a speaker of *lashon hara* is likely to think that he has not done any harm with his “mere words”. But nothing could be further from the truth, and his negative speech could be as powerful as the bite of this insect, resulting in damage of enormous magnitude.

the transgression of *lashon hara* is equivalent to the composite seriousness of idolatry, adultery and murder. The Torah considers these three sins especially grave, and one must forfeit his life rather than transgress any one of them. Yet, *lashon hara* is equivalent to all three of these cardinal sins, and one who is a habitual speaker of *lashon hara* also forfeits his place in the World-to-Come. He notes that the equivalency taught in *masechet Erchin* 15b is derived from the usage of the word for “large,” indicating the enormity of these transgressions. The *gemara* there teaches the importance of Torah study and learning humility in helping avoid *lashon hara*, and instead speaking only permitted and good words.

• *Chullin 58b*

The *Maharsha* concludes by reminding us what the *Yeshiva* of Rabbi *Yishmael* teaches elsewhere in *Shas*. The seriousness of

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# PARSHA Q & A

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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:
  - (a) oil
  - (b) spices
  - (c) 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 *kruvim* 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?

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## Answers

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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:
  - (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*.
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 G-d 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.

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# LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## Standing in the Gates of Jerusalem

**K**ing David was not only the author of *Tehillim* through Divine inspiration and the king of the Jewish nation. He was also a mighty warrior, from his youth when he slew the Philistine giant Goliath, to his role as general and commander-in-chief who won every war he waged.

In a Psalm (122:2) of his *Tehillim*, King David revealed the secret of the success of his military career. "Our feet stood in the gates of Jerusalem," sings King David and

our Talmudic Sages (*Mesechta Maccot 10a*) explain his words in the following way: "Who enabled our feet to stand triumphant in battle? The Gates of Jerusalem, where Torah was studied!"

This should serve as a timely reminder of the important role which *Yeshivot* in *Eretz Yisrael* and throughout the world are playing in guaranteeing the security of our people.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**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.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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*Synonyms in the Hebrew Language*  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Cherubic Children and Other Angels

The Torah commands that atop the Holy Ark in the Tabernacle they should make two *kruvim* (“cherubim”) facing each other. The Talmud explains that *kruvim* looked like young children. At the same time, *kruvim* are also the name of certain destructive angels said to protect the path to the Tree of Life (see Rashi to Gen. 3:24). In the following paragraphs we will explore *kruvim* and other words for angels that appear in the Bible, and try to show how their meanings differ from one another. For those interested, this essay also doubles as a primer on Jewish Angelology.

Maimonides (Laws of *Yesodei HaTorah* 2:7) writes that there are ten classes of angels. The highest class of angels – above which only G-d stands – are the *chayot*, or *chayot hakodesh*. Then come the *ophanim*, *erelim*, *chashmalim*, *seraphim*, *malachim*, *elohim*, *bnei elohim*, *cherubim*, and finally, the *ishim*.

When the *Orchot Chaim* (Seder *Tefillat Shabbat Shacharit* §2) and *Kolbo* (§37) cite this tradition, they write that there are nine types of angels. They differ from Maimonides in that they omit *malachim*, *elohim*, *bnei elohim*, and *ishim* and instead list *galgalim*, *irin*, and *kadishin*. A Kabbalistic tract known as *Masechet Atzilut* has a different list of the ten categories of angels, which mirrors Maimonides’ list but replaces *chayot* and *elohim* with *shananim* and *tarshishim*. Besides all of this, Rabbi Moshe ibn Chaviv (1654-1696) points out that angels are also called *abirim* (see Ps. 75:25). [Rabbi Dovid Luria (1798-1855), in his glosses to *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer* (ch. 4), understands that that Midrash maintains that *ophanim* and *galgalim* are synonyms, and *kruvim* and *chayot* are also synonyms.]

What are the meanings of each of these words, and how does each class of angels differ from the others?

The anonymous commentator to Maimonides writes that some explain that the *chayot* are called so because they appeared to the prophet Yechezkel in the form of “wild animals” (*chayot*). In This World, animals are not the highest forms of creation. Rather, the human stands at the pinnacle of creation. Consequently, the highest form of angels appeared to Yechezkel as animals in order to teach the prophet that even the highest creature in the

Upper Realms is still like an animal compared to G-d – the pinnacle of all existence. The *chayot* are not the highest of *all entities*, but only the highest of all *created* entities in the Upper Realms. Alternatively, the *chayot* are called so because they are used to provide the life-force (*chiyut*) to all lower creations.

The word *ophan* refers to an angel of the second class, and also means “wheel”. If G-d’s glory is likened to a chariot (as it is in Yechezkel’s visions), then the *ophan* is the wheel which brings that vehicle to other places. In several works ascribed to the school of Rabbi Elazar Rokeach of Worms it is stated that the *ophan* refers to “the inside of a wheel,” while *galgal* refers to “the outside of a wheel” (i.e. its spokes).

This anonymous commentator further writes that an *erel* (Isaiah 33:7) – an angel of the third class – refers to something “strong” or “important,” just like the Holy Temple and its Altar are called *Ariel* and *Harel* (Ezek. 43:15). The School of Rokeach teaches that *erelim* tell the other angels about G-d’s Divine decrees. Bar Kapara, a student of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, is said to have announced his master’s death by proclaiming: “*Erelin* and the afflicted [i.e. the human righteous] both grabbed onto the Holy Ark [i.e. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi]; the *erelim* overpowered the afflicted, and the Holy Ark was captured [i.e. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died, and was taken away by the *erelim*, who are charged with carrying out G-d’s decrees, much to the dismay of the righteous humans who now lost their venerated leader.]” (*Ketubot* 104a)

The fourth class of angels, *chashmalim*, reveal themselves to prophets through fiery flashes of light. The Talmud (*Chagiga* 13b) explains that the name of this class of angels is comprised of the two words *chash* (“quiet”) and *mal* (“speak”), because they sometimes speak of G-d’s glory and they sometimes remain quiet. The School of the Rokeach interprets the word *chashmal* as a portmanteau of *chashuv* (“important” on account of their proximity to G-d’s glory) and *mal* (“speak” because they speak of G-d’s holiness). In Modern Hebrew, the word *chashmal* refers to “electricity.”

The anonymous commentator to Maimonides writes that *seraphim* are called so on account of their appearance, which is so awesome that one who glares upon them will be automatically burned up (*saruf*).

He also explains that *malachim* refers to all classes of angels in general, and is also a more specific term that refers to the sixth class of angels. He likens this to *Taharot*, which is both the name of one of the Six Orders of the Mishna, and the name of a tractate within the Order of *Taharot*. The Rokeach's school understands that *malachim* refers specifically to angels which were sent to Earth for special missions.

The seventh class of angels is called *elohim*, a term which refers to any entity in a position of power or authority. It is used variously to refer to an angel, a judge, a prophet, and even G-d Himself. A closely-related term is used for the eighth class of angels, the *bnei elohim* (literally, "sons of *elohim*"), who are called so because they are secondary to the *elohim*.

As mentioned above, *kruvim* ("Cherubim") are the ninth class of angels. Many commentators explain that the word *kruv* ("Cherub") is derived from the Aramaic word *ravia* ("lad") found in the Targum to Gen. 21:17 and many other places. The letter *KAF* at the beginning of the word means "like" or otherwise denotes a simile. This etymology is the basis for the Talmudic assertion (*Chagiga* 13b and *Succa* 5b) that *kruvim* looked like children. (Whether the *cherubim* atop the Holy Ark were two boys or a boy and girl is subject to dispute.) Other sources say that *kruvim* were in the shape of birds, or some sort of child-bird hybrid.

The *ishim* are the lowest members of Maimonides' angelic hierarchy. They are the angels which communicate directly with human prophets. They are called *ishim* (literally, "men") because their level is similar to that of the human prophets with whom they speak. Alternatively, Rabbi Mordechai Shlomo Movshovitz (d. 1983) explains that they are called *ishim* because they sometimes act like humans, such as when three angels came to visit Avraham (Gen. 18) they looked like people and acted like people.

Although not on Maimonides' list of angels, the School of the Rokeach explains the meanings of two more classes of angels: *kadishin* are angels which are "holy" (*kadosh*) and "separate" from the others, in that they do not carry out Divine commands, but rather tell other angels what to do. And *irin* are sent to Earthly cities (*ir* in Hebrew means "city") to observe the deeds of mankind, and to give people specific dreams. Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that the name *irin* is derived from the word *eir* (*AYIN-REISH*), which means "awake," because these angels are always "awake" and paying attention to what people do.

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch*  
by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

## Messages from the Ark

The materials used in the construction of the Mishkan have symbolic value and convey a great deal about our relationship to G-d and the manner in which we are to consecrate our lives. Of all the holy vessels, the Ark which housed the Tablets is entrusted for its construction to the entire Jewish community. This is evidenced by the plural imperative form instruction to build the Ark.

The Ark was made out of cedar wood, and the wooden frame was inserted into a gold encasing. A similar insert made out of gold was placed inside the frame, such that the Ark had the appearance of being a wooden frame, covered with a layer of pure gold. The wooden component symbolizes the vitality and steady progress of the tree. Israel receives the Torah with its (Israel's) capacity for self-development, progress and refinement. The Tablets – the Torah – is placed in the wooden Ark; it is not the Torah that is subject to development and refinement, rather it is the people –the receptacle of Torah – who are compared to the ever-growing tree.

But the wooden Ark is covered with gold. Receptivity and the capacity for development must be combined with the steadfastness of metal and the purity of gold – with the perseverance and constancy required for all noble achievement. This steadfastness must present itself

both on the outside and the inside: there was one inner and one outer receptacle of gold, and one wooden receptacle in between. A life of truth, resistant to corrosion – these are the golden limits within which a noble life is to unfold, growing by stages, like a tree, from within the Torah.

The Ark was fashioned with rings which held carrying poles. These poles were never to be removed from the Ark, even when the Ark was at its final destination. These poles symbolize the destiny and mission of carrying the Ark and its contents beyond the precincts of its present standing place, if this becomes necessary. The command that the poles must never be removed from the Ark establishes from the outset and for all time the truth that this Torah and its mission are not confined to the soil on which the Temple once stood. The constant presence of the poles testifies that the Torah is not bound to or dependent on a particular place. The other vessels have no similar injunction – the Table and the Menorah, for example, are not permanently attached to poles. The Table, representing abundant material life, and the Menorah, representing spiritual flourishing, are bound to the soil of the Holy Land. But Torah is not.

▪ Sources: *Commentary, Shemot 25:3-15*

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# MEZUZAH MAVEN

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by Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines

## Mezuzah Covers

*Q: My son became religious and took off a year to learn in a Yeshiva in Israel. He will be coming home in a couple of weeks, so I went to buy a mezuzah for our doors. I was totally confused by the variety of covers. Some had backs, and some didn't; some were clear plastic, and some were opaque; and some were tubes that opened from the bottom. More importantly, some were reasonably priced, but some were very expensive! Can you help me buy the right ones?*

A: Firstly, let me express my respect for the sensitivity you are showing toward your son's chosen path. I hope that the steps you are taking to accommodate him will be meaningful for you as well.

Let me give you a little background to help you choose the right cover for the right situation:

**Need for a Cover** - Because it is customary to touch *mezuzot* as one passes by them, the cover ensures that the letters of the Divine Name written on the back of the scroll are not wiped away over time.

Some authorities add that the cover serves to protect the mezuzah from contact with hands that have not been ritually washed. Additionally, the cover secures the mezuzah in place and keeps it from unrolling.

**Protective Back:** A mezuzah cover serves to protect the scroll from damage due to moisture or other factors. Consequently, a cover with a protective back is preferable for most doorways.

**Tube:** A tube cover, which opens from the bottom, would be the ideal choice for a mezuzah that will be exposed to the rain.

**Clear or Opaque:** A cover that shows the Divine Name on the outside of the scroll is generally preferable. However, opaque covers are appropriate in rooms where the mezuzah may be exposed to filth or immodesty. An opaque cover will also protect the mezuzah from damage due to exposure to the sun.

**Expensive:** The Sages teach that we are enjoined to beautify the *mitzvot*. They base this on the verse: "This is my G-d and I will glorify Him" (*Shemot* 15:2).

However, the halacha states that a person is required to add only a third onto the cost of the mitzvah to achieve this. For example, if the mezuzah scroll itself costs \$36, one would not be obligated to spend more than \$12 to beautify it. However, this "beautification" applies to buying a beautifully and carefully written scroll even more than to investing money in a beautiful cover. The \$12 top-up would apply to the total obligation.

All this is in regard to your basic obligation. You can certainly choose to invest more money in purchasing choice mezuzah scrolls and decorative covers according to your means and personal taste. Our Sages teach that one who "splurges" on a mitzvah, is, in a sense, spending G-d's money, as the expense will ultimately be repaid by Heaven in his lifetime. Although you didn't mention the purchase of the scroll, I'd like to point out how important it is to purchase it from a reliable scribe or from a bookshop that is known to stock only properly kosher scrolls and *tefillin*. Tragically, there are some shops that sell substandard scrolls and even some that practice outright fraud. It's very nice to have a beautiful cover, but only if it adorns a kosher mezuzah!

- Sources: *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 286:5; *Rema* O.C. 147:1; *Agur B'ohalecha* 9:1:2; *Mezuzos Beisaecha* 289:1; *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 656:1; *Agur B'ohalecha* 9:13

Got a mezuzah question or story? Email [rabbi@ohrsandton.com](mailto:rabbi@ohrsandton.com) or submit on my website [mymezuzahstory.com](http://mymezuzahstory.com). Free "Mezuzah Maven" book for every question or story submitted (when published in the near future!)