

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Churchill and the Jews

*“These are the things...” (35:1)*

The relationship between Winston Churchill (1874-1965) arguably the greatest Englishman of the twentieth century, and the Jewish People is a subject of debate. Churchill opposed anti-Semitism (as in 1904, when he was fiercely critical of the proposed Aliens Bill severely restricting Jewish immigration from Czarist Russia). However, in "Zionism versus Bolshevism," an article written by Churchill in the Illustrated Sunday Herald in 1920, he makes a distinction between "national" Jews – who Churchill said supported Zionism – and "international" Jews – such as Karl Marx, Trotsky, Béla Kun, Rosa Luxemburg and Emma Goldman, who Churchill said supported a Bolshevik “world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilization and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence, and impossible equality.” The article was criticized by the Jewish Chronicle at the time, calling it "the most reckless and scandalous campaign in which even the most discredited politicians have ever engaged." The Chronicle said Churchill had adopted "the hoary tactics of hooligan anti-Semites" in his article.

However, Sir Martin Gilbert (1936-2015), himself a Jew and Churchill’s official biographer, argues in “Churchill and the Jews” that Churchill was overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Jews and Jewish causes: In that same 1920 article, Churchill writes,

“We owe to the Jews... a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all other wisdom and learning put together. On that system and by that faith there has been built out of the wreck of the Roman Empire the whole of our existing civilization.”

“*These are the things...*” In the Torah portion called Vayakhel, the mitzvahs of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, are preceded by yet another injunction to keep Shabbat. And from the juxtaposition of the work of the Mishkan to the next two verses that deal with Shabbat, our Rabbis derive the thirty-nine categories of creative labor that are forbidden on Shabbat.

One of the messages of this juxtaposition is that the same creative labors that build the material world are precisely those that are needed to create an abode for sanctity. If “a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all other wisdom and learning put together,” how much more when that system is connected to the spiritual world is it “incomparably the most precious possession of mankind.”

# Q & A

## Questions

1. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
2. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
3. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
4. What function did the "yitdot hamishkan" serve?
5. What function did the "bigdei hasrad" serve?
6. What was unusual about the way the women spun the goat's hair?
7. Why were the Nesi'im last to contribute to the building of the Mishkan? How does the Torah show dissatisfaction with their actions?
8. Who does the Torah identify as the primary builders of the Mishkan? From which tribes were they?
9. What time of day did the people bring their daily contributions for the construction of the Mishkan?
10. For what was the woven goat's hair used?
11. What image was woven into the parochet?
12. Why does the Torah attribute the building of the aron to Bezael?
13. Where were the sculptured cheruvim located?
14. How many lamps did the menorah have?
15. Of what materials was the mizbe'ach haketoret composed?
16. Of what material was the mizbe'ach ha'olah composed?
17. The kiyor was made from copper mirrors. What function did these mirrors serve in Egypt?
18. How did the kiyor promote peace?
19. The kiyor was made from the mirrors of the women who were crowding at the entrance to the Ohel Mo'ed. Why were the women crowding there?
20. Of what material were the "yitdot hamishkan" constructed?

## Answers

1. 35:1 - The day after Yom Kippur.
2. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the Mishkan doesn't supersede the laws of Shabbat.
3. 35:3 - There are two opinions: One opinion is to teach that igniting a fire on Shabbat is punishable by lashes as opposed to other "melachot" which are punishable by death. The other opinion is to teach that violation of numerous "melachot" at one time requires a separate atonement for each violation.
4. 35:18 - The edges of the curtains were fastened to them. These were inserted in the ground so the curtains would not move in the wind.
5. 35:19 - They covered the aron, the shulchan, the menorah, and the mizbachot when they were packed for transport.
6. 35:26 - It was spun directly from off the backs of the goats.
7. 35:27 - The Nesi'im reasoned that they would first let the people contribute materials needed for the Mishkan and then they would contribute what was lacking. The Torah shows its dissatisfaction by deleting a letter from their title.
8. 35:30, 35:34 - Bezael ben Uri from the tribe of Yehuda; Oholiav ben Achisamach from the tribe of Dan.
9. 36:3 - Morning.
10. 36:14 - It was made into curtains to be draped over the Mishkan.
11. 36:35 - Cherubim. (See Rashi 26:31)
12. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone else.
13. 37:7 - On the two extremities of the kaporet (cover of the aron).
14. 37:23 - Seven.
15. 37:25,26 - Wood overlaid with gold.
16. 38:1-2 - Wood overlaid with copper.
17. 38:8 - These mirrors aided in the proliferation of the Jewish People. The Jewish women in Egypt would look in the mirrors so as to awaken the affections of their husbands who were exhausted by their slave labor.
18. 38:8 - Its waters helped a woman accused of adultery to prove her innocence.
19. 38:8 - To donate to the Mishkan.
20. 38:20 - Copper.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Vayakhel (Shabbat Shekalim)

### A Shekel for a Sela

In the Torah portion of Shekalim we read that the Torah commands every Jewish man above the age of twenty years old to donate half a *shekel* to the Tabernacle/Temple (Ex. 30:11-16). Now, the word *shekel* clearly derives from the trilateral root SHIN-KUF-LAMMED (“to weigh/measure”), and refers to the fact that this currency was a metal coin that weighed a specific amount. However, there is another term for this exact sort of coinage. Targum Onkelos and Targum Jonathan consistently translate the word *shekel* in the aforementioned passage as *sila*, which is an Aramaicized form of the Hebrew word *sela*. Why are there two different words for the same coin? And what other terms refer to the half-*shekel*?

The word *sela* appears many times in the Mishna, but bears two fairly distinct meanings. Sometimes the word *sela* refers to a specific coin used as legal tender (*Peah* 8:7, *Terumot* 10:8, *Maaser Sheini* 2:6-10, 4:3, 4:6, 5:4, *Eruvin* 8:2, *Shekalim* 1:6, 2:4, *Ketuvot* 4:3, 5:9, 6:3-4, *Nedarim* 3:1, *Bava Kama* 4:5, 8:6, *Bava Metzia* 2:9, 4:3, 4:5, 5:1-2, *Bava Batra* 10:2, *Shavuot* 6:7, 7:5, *Eduyot* 1:9-10, 7:1, *Menachot* 13:8, *Chullin* 11:2, *Bechorot* 1:6, 8:2-8, *Erachin* 2:1, 3:1, 3:2-5, 7:1, 8:2, *Kritot* 5:2-3, 6:6, *Keilim* 12:7, 14:1, 17:11-12, *Negaim* 5:1, 5:4-5, 9:3). Yet, at other times the word *sela* retains its meaning from Biblical Hebrew as a “rock/bedrock” (*Kilayim* 2:8, 2:10, 7:1, *Sheviit* 3:3, 3:7, 3:10, *Terumot* 8:11, *Orlah* 1:3, *Shabbat* 6:6, 11:2, *Eruvin* 8:3, *Yoma* 6:6, *Nedarim* 4:8, *Bava Kama* 3:11, *Bava Metzia* 10:4, *Bava Batra* 2:1, 6:8, 7:1, *Zevachim* 13:3, *Keilim* 6:2, *Ohalot* 3:7, 8:2, *Negaim* 12:2, *Parah* 3:2, 5:7, *Mikvaot* 4:5, *Niddah* 9:5, *Machshirin* 3:4).

The Mishna itself already implies that the *sela* coin is the same thing that the Bible calls a *shekel*, because the Mishna uses the word *sela* in the same contexts that the Bible uses the word *shekel*. For example, the Torah stipulates that a Jewish firstborn son must be redeemed from a Kohen for five *shekel* (Num. 18:16); yet when the Mishna in *Bechorot* codifies this law and cites it, it always refers to five *selaim*. Similarly, the Torah stipulates that an animal brought as a guilt-offering must be valued at least two *shekel* (Lev. 5:15); yet when the Mishna in *Kritot* codifies this law and cites it, it refers to two *selaim*. The connection is a bit more explicit in Rava’s definition of the *sela d’orayta* (“the Biblical *sela*”), wherein he cites Exodus 30:13, which specifies that a *shekel* ought to weigh twenty *geira* (*Bechorot* 50a). Thus, Rava clearly understood that whatever the Torah calls a *shekel* is coterminous with what the Rabbis called a *sela*. This is even more explicit in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Kiddushin* 1:3), where Rabbi Chanina comments: “All *shekalim* written in the Torah are *selaim*.” (See also Babylonian Talmud in *Bechorot* 50a which cites Rabbi Chanina as saying, “All *kesef* – “silver” – that is said in the Torah unspecified is a *sela*.”)

Indeed, later authorities, like Rashi (to *Bechorot* 5a), Maimonides (Laws of *Erachin* 4:3, *Shekalim* 1:2), and *Sefer HaChinch* (Commandment #355) explicitly write that a *shekel* in Biblical Hebrew refers to what the Rabbis in the Mishna call a *sela*.

How did these two terms come to be related to each other? And why did the Rabbis stop using the Biblical Hebrew word *shekel* and instead use the word *sela* for what the Bible calls a *shekel*?

These questions are compounded by the fact that the Rabbis also used the word *shekel*, just not in the way we would expect. The most illustrative example of this is the Mishna *Shavuot* (6:7), in which two litigants argue over the value of a lost collateral vis-à-vis the total debt. The creditor claims, “I lent you a *sela* and it [the lost collateral] was worth a *shekel* [so the collateral that I lost does not cover your entire debt, ergo you still owe me money].” To this, the debtor responds, “No, you lent me a *sela* and it [the lost collateral] was worth a *sela* [so the collateral that you lost covers the entire debt, ergo I owe you nothing].” Their exchange of words presumes that the term *shekel* implies coinage that is worth less than a *sela*, for if *sela* and *shekel* were truly synonymous, there would be no conflict between the creditor and the debtor. Now it gets complicated: If the Mishnaic Hebrew word *sela* refers to what the Bible calls a *shekel*, why would the Mishnaic Hebrew word *shekel* refer to less than what the Bible calls a *shekel*?

Nachmanides (to Ex. 30:13) partially addresses these questions by admitting that while the term *sela* in Mishnaic Hebrew equals the *shekel* of Biblical Hebrew, the term *shekel* in Mishnaic Hebrew does not equal the *shekel* of Biblical Hebrew. He explains that because of the Torah’s commandment of an annual half-*shekel* donation, people began to use the term *shekel* for the half-*shekel* coin that they were supposed to donate. In time, the word *shekel* became so totally identified with this commandment that it lost its original meaning of a full *shekel* and was used to refer to a half-*shekel*. Because of this, in Rabbinic parlance (reflected by Mishnaic Hebrew) the word *shekel* actually means what the Bible calls a “half-*shekel*,” and a new term – *sela* – was applied to what the Bible calls a *shekel*. The same idea is found in the writings of Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano (1548-1620).

With this understanding in hand, the Mishna in *Shavuot* makes perfect sense: The creditor claimed that he lent the borrower one *sela*, and since the collateral that he lost was worth only one *shekel* (i.e., half of a *sela*), the borrower still owes him money. The borrower, on the other hand, agreed that the original loan consisted of one *sela*, but he claimed that since the collateral was also worth one *sela* (i.e. two *shekels*) –he owes the lender nothing.

Nonetheless, although Nachmanides and Rabbi Menachem Azariah have accounted for how the term *shekel* in Biblical Hebrew came to mean half-*shekel* in Mishnaic Hebrew, they have failed to explain how the term *sela* came to be associated in Mishnaic Hebrew with what Biblical Hebrew calls a *shekel*. I have not found any sources explicitly address this question. But Rabbi Asher Gvirer of Beitar Illit suggests that the Rabbis renamed the *shekel* as *sela* because the latter means “strong rock,” which shows that this term refers to a *stronger* (i.e. more valuable) coin than did the term *shekel* they commonly used. In an earlier essay (“Like a Rock,” Nov. 2018) I discussed how the term *sela* differs from other Hebrew words for “rock/stone.”

It would be interesting to consider whether the name Ashkelon for the Philistine coastal city is somehow related to the Hebrew word *shekel* or the trilateral root from whence it derives.

A *piyyut* ascribed to Rabbi Elazar HaKallir, which is customarily recited on *Shabbat Shekalim*, reads: “A *shekel* I will bear in the prepared and exalted house.” Said house clearly refers to the Holy Temple and refers to the yearly *shekel* donation. However, *prima facia*, this wording is somewhat inaccurate because the commandment entails donating a half-*shekel*, not a whole *shekel*. Barring the possibility of poetic license, we must account for why the *payytan* referred to donating “a *shekel*,” which implies a complete *shekel*, instead of a half-*shekel*.

Based on the sources cited above, Rabbi David Schlusel of Munkatch (1864-1940) answers that this *piyyut* used the term *shekel* in the Rabbinic sense, by which it actually refers to what the Bible calls a half-*shekel*. Similarly, Rabbi David Cohen of Gvul Yaavetz in Brooklyn uses this idea to explain why the tractate devoted to the rules of the half-*shekel* donation is called *Shekalim*, even though a full *shekel* was not required. Since in Rabbinic parlance the term *shekel* refers to what the Torah calls a half-*shekel*, it is appropriate to call the tractate devoted to discussion of the laws of giving a half-*shekel* Tractate *Shekalim*.

Rabbi Elazar Rokach of Amsterdam (1665–1742) offers a more esoteric understanding of the name of Tractate *Shekalim* and the enigmatic *piyyut* cited above. He explains that while originally the Torah commands a yearly donation of a half-*shekel*, in the Messianic Era that commandment will morph into a requirement to donate a full *shekel*. He explains that in the *at-bash* cipher, the Hebrew word *shekel* assumes a *gematria* of twenty-six, which equals the *gematria* value of the Tetragrammaton. Accordingly, he explains that because G-d's name remains incomplete until the eradication of Amalek (see Rashi to Ex. 17:16), the *shekel* given in His honor should likewise be halved, but in the Messianic Era when G-d's name will contain all four letters, then the *shekel* given should likewise be complete.

When the Torah later mentions the capital tax in question again, it says “a *beka* per skull, half a shekel in holy *shekels*” (Ex. 38:26). The word *beka* appears again when the Torah relates that the golden nose-ring that Eliezer brought Rebecca weighed a *beka* (Gen. 24:22). These are the only two times that *beka* appears in the Bible. Rashi (to Ex. 38:26), Rashbam (to Gen. 24:22), Ibn Ezra (to Ex. 38:26, Gen. 24:22), and Radak (*Sefer HaShorashim*) explain that the word *beka* refers to “half a shekel,” in line with the core meaning of the Hebrew root BET-KUF-AYIN, which means “to break” or “to split”). The phrase capital tax refers to what we would otherwise call a “head tax,” as the English word *capital* is actually cognate with the words *cap*, *hat*, and *head*. All these words are said to be ultimately derived from the Proto-Indo-European word *kaput*.

However, Targum Onkelos in both places (to Ex. 38:26, Gen. 24:22) translates the word *beka* as *tikla*. The word *tikla* is an Aramaicization of the Hebrew word *shekel*, with the Hebrew SHIN morphing into an Aramaic TAV, as often happens. This word notably appears in the Book of Daniel in the “handwriting on the wall,” which read *mene mene tekel u'farsin* – “count, count, weigh, and split” (Dan. 5:25). Similarly, the Mishna (*Shekalim* 6:5) uses the phrase *taklin chaditin* (“new *shekels*”) to refer to *shekels* that were donated for that year's tax. It seems to me that the term “New Israeli Shekel” for the currency currently used in Israel may have been coined as a play on words on this Mishnaic expression.

Rabbi Yaakov Zev Lev (1946-2018) in *Me'at Tzari* (to Gen. 24:22) clarifies that this does not mean that Onkelos disagreed with the commentaries above who understood that *beka* refers to half a *shekel* (as is explicit in Ex. 38:26). Rather, they were simply speaking a different language: When Onkelos wrote that a *beka* means a *shekel*, he used the word *shekel* in the Rabbinic Hebrew sense, which actually equaled half a *shekel* of Biblical Hebrew. But when Rashi, Rashbam, and Ibn Ezra wrote that *beka* refers to half a *shekel*, they used the word *shekel* in the Biblical Hebrew sense, which was double the *shekel* of Rabbinic Hebrew.

The Targum known as Targum Jonathan, in both locations renders the word *beka* as *darkemon*. It seems that this Targum used the word *darkemon* in a general sense of “coin,” even though the word *darkemon* elsewhere has a more specific meaning that does not actually line up with a *beka*. The word *darkemon* appears in the Bible four times (Ezra 2:69, Nech. 7:69-71) and is clearly the name of some sort of coin or currency. The similar word *adarchon* appears twice in the Bible (I Chron. 29:7, Ezra 8:27) and another similar word, *darkon*, appears once in the Mishna (*Shekalim* 2:1). The Modern Hebrew word *darkon*, “passport,” is derived from the classical Hebrew *derech* (“derech”), as it is documentation used to facilitate one's travel on the “road.” It seems to be unrelated to the Mishnaic word *darkon*.

Scholars are unsure about which specific coins these words refer to, but they typically associate these terms with the Persian *daric* and/or Greek *drachma*. The name of this latter coin was adopted into Arabic as the *dirham*, which continues to exist today (and may somehow be related to the surname of Rabbi David Abudraham). Either way, Maimonides (in his commentary to *Shekalim* 2:1) states that one *darkon* was worth two *selas*, so it does not make much sense to identify a *beka* as actually referring to the *darkemon* coin, which is four times more valuable than a half-*shekel*. That is why I presumed that the Targum known as Jonathan used the word *dakremon* only in a general sense.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts the Jewish People to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan. He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the Menorah and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the Kohen Gadol's breastplate and *ephod*. Hashem appoints Bezalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. The Children of Israel contribute so many resources that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Bezalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood, covered with gold. On the Ark's cover were two figures facing each other. The Menorah and the Table with the Showbreads were also of gold. Two Altars were made: a small incense Altar of wood, overlaid with gold, and a larger Altar for sacrifices, made of wood, covered with copper.

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## PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

### THE SONG OF THE DEW

The Dew says:

“I will be like dew for the Jewish people. They will sprout like a rose and they will strike roots like the cedars of Lebanon.” (Hoshea 14:6)

Dew is no less essential for the growth of plant-life than is rain. However, unlike rain, which is beneficial only in the correct season and amount, and even then, it is bothersome, dew is always a welcome blessing, and it is perpetual throughout the year. Another distinction between them is that dew forms without arousal from below, whereas rain falls only after vapor has risen and formed as clouds.

Thus, the dew sings of how, at the time of the future redemption, Hashem will take the first step to renew His relationship with His people, and He will nurture them everlastingly. Then, “they will sprout like a rose,” which is cone-shaped and uniquely receptive of dew, accepting Hashem’s invitation to return. “They will strike roots like the cedars of Lebanon,” repenting completely and sprouting in towering glory.

▪ Sources: *Ta’anit 4a*; *Radak*; *Kenaf Renanim*

*\*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*

# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## THE AMIDAH (PART 6) – *BIRKAT HA'AVOT*

“Prayer is not a miracle. It is a tool, man’s paintbrush in the art of life. Prayer is man’s weapon to defend himself in the struggle of life. It is a reality. A fact of life.”  
(Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer)

The third blessing reads: “You are holy and Your Name is holy, and holy ones praise You every day forever. Blessed are You, G-d, the holy G-d.”

The syntax of the three opening blessings is fascinating. The first blessing defines G-d as being the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. The second blessing describes, to some extent, G-d’s might. The final of the three introductory blessings of the *Amidah* refers to G-d’s holiness. Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Kahaneman (1886-1969) was the legendary founder of the illustrious Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, and one of the most influential spiritual mentors of his generation. He points out that it may seem to be more appropriate to *begin* the *Amidah* with a declaration of G-d’s holiness rather than wait until the end of the introductory blessings. However, the Men of the Great Assembly purposely composed the *Amidah* with G-d’s holiness following the forefathers and a description of His might. This is to teach us that although there are certain means to try to describe G-d, there is no way for us to portray the infinite extent of G-d’s holiness. Therefore, after somewhat describing other traits, we simply pronounce that G-d is holy and His Name is holy, without any descriptive detail at all.

Fascinatingly, the derivation of the word “*kadosh*” in Hebrew does not really mean holy, even though it is often translated as such. Rather *kadosh* means “separate.” In Vayikra 19:2, G-d commands us to emulate Him through being *kadosh*: “*Kedoshim tehiyu* – you should be *kedoshom*.” Rashi explains that being *kadosh* means to separate oneself from immoral

behavior. Nachmanides writes that *kedusha* is not only applicable to separating ourselves from immorality but is equally relevant to every dimension of our lives. Absolutely everything about us – our clothing, our speech, our deportment – is supposed to reflect the command to be *kadosh*. Even the days of the week reveal this concept. For example, on Friday night when we recite the *Kiddush* (which shares the same three-letter root as *kadosh*), we are sanctifying Shabbat by separating it from the rest of the week. We are turning it into a completely different day, one that bears no resemblance to the weekdays. And when G-d charges us with the mission of being *kadosh*, He is obliging us to live our lives in such a way that it is clear to all that we are the Chosen Nation.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter questions why G-d being *kadosh* should obligate us to be *kadosh*. He answers that we have been created in the image of G-d. (Bereishet 1:26-27) Imbued within us is our soul, which is a part of G-d. Therefore, we are already intrinsically *kadosh*, and “all” we need to do is to work on allowing our Divinity to shine forth. In his inimitable manner, Rabbi Salanter adds that we are being commanded to sanctify the physical. G-d is instructing us to elevate the mundane so that we can identify G-d’s Majesty within the physical world, and to leave the esoteric dimensions of holiness to G-d.

The Talmud (*Erchin* 24a) teaches, “*Hekdesh* (consecrated property) has only its place and time.” The Chofetz Chaim would explain this statement by saying that *kedusha* is at *this* time and in *this* place. A person should not imagine that if only he was in different circumstances, he would be more successful. Or, if it were another time, he would be able to focus on serving G-d in a more effective fashion. Rather, we must understand that wherever we find ourselves is the ideal place and time to become *kadosh*!

Rabbi Shimon Schwab explains that the blessing concludes with the name of G-d that represents His attribute of mercy because the most compassionate act that G-d can bestow upon us is to grant us the

potential to reach a level of being *kadosh*. Rabbi Schwab adds that the ability to tap into our inherent *kedusha* is always extant, regardless of how severely a person may have transgressed, because each person has been given the capacity to overcome their sinful nature and become *kadosh* in the Eyes of G-d.

In a charmingly sharp insight, the saintly Rabbi Yechiel Meir Lifschitz (1816-1888) from Gostynin, Poland related that as a child he absolutely refused to learn how to play chess. When he was asked why, he answered, “When I was told that it was forbidden to retract a wrong move, I realized that it was not for me. You see, I believe that repentance can undo any and every wrong move!”

*To be continued...*

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## LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

### Melech Machshevet

If Shabbat is meant to be a day of rest, then why are some of the most effortless activities prohibited? Turning off a light, one would think, would not be prohibited on this “day of rest,” and yet the act of flipping the switch is a Torah prohibition. And at the same time, strenuous activities may be permissible. Many Jewish thinkers have tried to formulate a conception of the Laws of Shabbat, and the explanation of Rav Hirsch stands out as the most satisfying to the modern mind.

Shabbat is a testimony to Hashem as the Creator of Heaven and Earth – after six days of creation, He rested on the seventh. We are instructed not to perform any work on Shabbat; it is a day for Hashem. By ceasing work on the seventh day we demonstrate that we are not masters of the world. When we cease creative activity we acknowledge that the world is not ours to change or improve. Every object and action, every single breath, moment, movement, skill, and even creative spark is from Hashem, and for Hashem. When He enjoins our work, we lay ourselves, and our mastery over the natural world, in homage at His feet.

On Shabbat, we cease all *melachah*. It is not *laborious* work that is prohibited. Rather it is *creative* work that is banned. The word *melachah* is related to *malach*, a messenger or agent. *Malach* means “angel” because an angel is primarily an agent or messenger of Hashem. *Melachah* denotes an action that is subservient to the will and bidding of intelligent man. The act of *melachah* is the agent of the mind – it endows the material or object with a new form, more fit for the purpose we assign to it. This creative, productive activity exercises our mastery over the natural world.

The nature of prohibited activity is seen clearly from the defining feature of *melachah*. *Melachah* always also takes into account the product, the outcome, and not just the general intention. For activity to be prohibited it must have an intelligent, creative purpose – only *melech machshevet*, intelligent work, is proscribed.



The concept of *melachah* applies only to constructive, not destructive acts. The same act, however strenuous, when performed with intent to destroy is not prohibited by the Torah. For example, if one were to knock down a house simply with the idea of destroying it, this is not *melachah*. (We discuss here Torah prohibitions to understand the nature of *melachah*; this sort of destruction is prohibited by rabbinic law.) If, however, one were to destroy a house with the constructive purpose of clearing the site for rebuilding, the act is prohibited *melachah*.

Similarly, to be considered *melachah*, the work must be intentional – i.e. a messenger of the productive will of man, not an unintended byproduct. Furthermore, if an act is performed in an unusual manner, it is not considered to be *melachah* – *melachah* requires the full application of human intelligence in the manner in which intelligent man will do something.

All of the thirty-nine categories of *melachah* are productive activities which engender productive change. Any act, however small or effortless, which demonstrates man's mastery of nature by exercise of his intelligent and creative skill, is prohibited. Striking a light, washing a garment, tying a knot, baking bread, plowing a field, and building a house are all marks of man's conquest of nature, regardless of the spectrum of energy and effort they may or may not require.

By complete renunciation of constructive, intelligent activity on Shabbat, man pays homage to his Creator. He affirms that the world does not belong to him but to He Who created man and the world, and it is only because of Hashem's dominion, and His endowment of creativity, that man achieves any mastery at all. The restraint from *melachah* on Shabbat infuses all of weekly creative activity with awareness of its true Source.

- Sources: Commentary, Shemot 35:1-2; 20:9-10; Collected Writings VIII, *The Jewish Sabbath*, p. 211; Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld, *The Sabbath: A Guide to Its Understanding and Observance*, Feldheim, 1959

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## TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

### Chagigah 2-8

#### To Appear and To Bring

*“Everyone is obligated in the mitzvah of re’iyah... except for a minor... Below what age is a minor is exempt?... Beit Shamai says the minimum cost of a re’iyah is two kesef... and Beit Hillel says it is one kesef.”*

**T**his *mishna*, the first in Masechet Chagigah, teaches about the mitzvah of *re’iyah* in the Courtyard of the Mishkan (or, later in time, in the Beit Hamikdash) on the three “pilgrimage” festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot. The first word that appears in the *mishna* is *hakol*, which means everyone, and teaches that even a minor is obligated in the mitzvah of *re’iyah* by Rabbinic law.

What exactly is the mitzvah of *re’iyah* that is taught at the beginning of our *mishna*? Rashi explains it as being fulfillment of the mitzvah to *appear* in the Courtyard of the Beit Hamikdash during the festival,

in accordance with the verse, “Three times during the year (Pesach, Shavuot, Succot), every male will appear in front of the Master, Hashem.” (Shemot 23:17) Due to this question, these commentaries explain that *re’iyah* refers to the *Korban Re’iyah* throughout the entire *mishna*.

The latter part of the *mishna* teaches about the minimum amount of money one should spend for the *Korban Re’iyah* and the *Korban Chagigah*. There, too, the *mishna* speaks about the mitzvah of *re’iyah*. However, here the *re’iyah* is clearly a reference to the *Korban Re’iyah* brought for the festival, and not the mitzvah to appear in the Beit Hamikdash. A number

of commentaries, including Tosefot here, point to an apparent inconsistency in Rashi's explanations for the word *re'iyah* in our *mishna*. Why does Rashi choose to define *re'iyah* as "appearing" at the beginning of the *mishna*, when he needs to explain it in a different manner at the end of the *mishna* – the *Korban Re'iyah*?

One approach to explain Rashi's view is to focus on the obligation or exemption of a minor to bring a *korban*. The middle part of the *mishna* cites a dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel regarding the type of minor that the *mishna* explicitly states is exempt from the mitzvah of *re'iyah*. Beit Shammai says that only a minor who is not able to ride on his father's shoulders from Jerusalem to *Har Habayit* (the place of the Beit Hamikdash) is exempt from this mitzvah. Beit Hillel is more lenient, as is usually the case, saying that a minor is exempt from the mitzvah only if he is too young to hold his father's hand and ascend from Jerusalem to *Har Habayit*. However, according to both views a minor is obligated in the mitzvah of *re'iyah* while still a minor. Rashi explains that this is a result of the Rabbis' obligating the child's mother and father to educate their child as a minor in mitzvah performance, so that the child will be well prepared to fulfill the mitzvah as an adult.

However, this rabbinical obligation can refer only to the appearance in the Beit Hamikdash and not to bringing a *korban*. A minor is not able to consecrate an animal to be brought as a *korban*, and a *korban* brought by a minor would be a serious issue of what is known as *chullin b'azarah*. Therefore, Rashi refuses to learn the first obligation in the *mishna* as being *korban* related. It must be teaching about the mitzvah of *re'iyah* to appear in the Courtyard. This is despite the latter part of the *mishna* teaching the mitzvah of *re'iyah* to bring a *korban*. This is the mitzvah for an *adult* to bring a *korban* when appearing in the Beit

Hamikdash, in accordance with the verse, "And they will not appear before Me with empty hands." (Shemot 23:15) This is an approach for understanding why Rashi defines the first mitzvah of *re'iyah* as "appearing," while the later *re'iyah* clearly refers to the burnt-offering *re'iyah korban*. (Rabbeinu Tam explains the *mishna* differently, with even the first part being a reference to the *Korban Re'iyah*.)

The Sefer HaChinuch, as is his way with all of the mitzvahs, explains the concept to bring offerings when ascending to Jerusalem for these festivals (*Aliyah La'Regel*.) He states that it would be a sign of disrespect to appear before Hashem at these special times with empty hands. Appearing in the Beit Hamikdash is good, but not enough. A person must appear with an offering or offerings. However, he makes clear that we must be careful not to think that Hashem needs or benefits from our offerings. Hashem lacks nothing. Hashem is the source for the sustenance of all of existence and it would be absurd for us to even entertain the notion that He would need us to provide anything for Him!

Rather, whenever Hashem commands us to bring offerings, it is for our benefit. The Beit Hamikdash is a sacred place on a sacred site. It is a unique place for the Jewish People to earn Hashem's blessings with heartfelt prayers and generous actions. Therefore, it is correct to bring offerings to the Beit Hamikdash, and, G-d willing, merit receiving Hashem's countless blessings. And although we hope to be deserving of great blessings from Above, our primary intent in bringing offerings is to draw ourselves closer to Hashem.

- *Chagigah 2a*

— The Students, Alumni, Staff and Events of Ohr Somayach  
by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

**Binyamin Tzvi S. (36)**

**Born: Cleveland, Ohio**

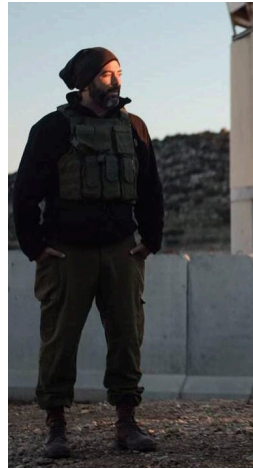
**Raised: Jerusalem**

**Lives in Efrat, Israel**

**Ohr Somayach Yeshiva**

**Ohr Lagolah Program**

**Independent Businessman**



***“Mishenichnas Adar Marbim B’simcha” (Ta’anis 29)***

**H**ow many of us have had a near-death experience? Hopefully, not many. Binyamin Tzvi did, and he survived, thanks to the great kindness of Hashem Yisborach.

He was doing his *miluim*, a yearly military obligation lasting anywhere from a few days to a month. Because he is a paratrooper, when on active duty, his *miluim* is not spent peeling potatoes or sitting in an office going over paperwork. It’s spent in the field on patrol.

A few weeks ago, on Rosh Chodesh Adar, Binyamin Tzvi was on patrol in an Arab village in the center of the country. Because Palestinian elections for local councils are due to be held in March 2022, campaigning is in full swing. Hamas is a major contender in the elections. Fatah (PLO) is held in great contempt by the majority of Palestinians in the West Bank because of its anti-democratic rule, its pervasive corruption and because of its cooperation with the Israeli government. Hamas, on the other hand, while even more antidemocratic than the PLO, is not regarded by “West Bankers” as corrupt as Fatah, although their compatriots in the Gaza Strip might argue with their assessment, and few would argue that they are in league with Israel. Instead of holding large rallies with long-winded speeches and campaign slogans, campaigning for Hamas consists largely of rock throwing

at Israeli military and civilian vehicles, hoping to kill Israeli soldiers and civilians, which greatly endears them to much of the Arab population. Their hope is also to provoke the Israeli Army to react, thereby making “martyrs” of hothead rock throwers. With each death of a “martyr”, Hamas strengthens its chances of winning, by being seen as the party with the will to stand up to the Israelis.

At three am on that moonless night, Binyamin Tzvi and his partner were patrolling a narrow roadway in the village, close to the main road leading to Karnei Shomron, a nearby Jewish town, on the lookout for rock throwers. All of sudden, they saw a car that stopped about 30 meters in front of them. Out jumped three terrorists, who ran towards them, showering them with heavy stones. Binyamin Tzvi, who was carrying a tear gas gun, which when fired shoots a gas grenade and a flare, shot three times at the terrorists. They disappeared down another alley.

Five minutes later, as they were making their report on the incident, another car appeared in the distance. Binyamin Tzvi waved his arms wildly and yelled to it in Arabic for the driver to stop. He didn’t, but kept driving towards them. Binyamin Tzvi shot a flaring grenade in front of the car to signal for it to stop. But, instead of

stopping, the car sped up. It was now bearing down on the two of them.

The road was so narrow that there was no room on the sides for the soldiers to squeeze into and avoid being hit. In fact, the car was aiming right at them.

Now, Binyamin Tzvi fired a grenade at the car. The tear gas grenade bounced off the windshield and back at Binyamin Tzvi and his partner. They were now enveloped in a cloud of tear gas and without gas masks. Through the smoke, the headlights of the car came closer and closer. Binyamin Tzvi thought that he was going to die, and yelled out to his partner, who had an assault rifle, to shoot to kill. The partner did so, letting loose two bullets that flew wide of their mark – and then the gun jammed.

Miraculously, as they were backtracking down the alley, they saw a small curve in the road. They both squeezed into it, the speeding car missing them by a millimeter.

Further down the road was a large Israeli Army jeep with ten soldiers standing nearby. Seeing that he could not avoid the jeep and the soldiers, who were now all pointing their rifles at him, the driver stopped his car and put his hands up. The officer in charge ordered him out of the car and arrested him.

In the meantime, Binyamin Tzvi dashed to his car, grabbed his rifle and ran to where the alleged terrorist was being hustled into a vehicle for transport to an Army base, where the *Shabak*, the Israeli domestic intelligence service, would question him.

“I wanted to kill him,” Binyamin Tzvi told me when relating the story. “He tried to kill me. But, when confronting him again, I realized that it wasn’t the right

thing to do. The Arab said that because it was dark and the road unlit; he didn’t know that we were Israeli soldiers. He said that he had just come from his father’s house in the village and was driving back to the village where he lived. He was totally surprised by the yelling, and then disoriented by the flare, and had no intention to harm us. Just to get away. Murders between Arabs in the Arab towns are quite frequent.

“Had I shot him then”, said Benyamin Tzvi, “there would have been an inquiry and possibly a trial, and who knows what would have happened to me? And, then, if I had killed an innocent man, I don’t know how I could have lived with myself for the rest of my life.

“I was very fortunate. I was given leave for a few hours and drove to Karnei Shomron and went to the shul. I davened with the early minyan and *benched gomel*. I thanked Hashem for saving my life and then went back to our base and resumed my duties.

“The first person I called to tell the story was your daughter, my sister Yocheved, who had survived a terrorist attack at the Shimon HaTzaddik station on the Light Rail in Jerusalem a few years ago. That attack killed a number of soldiers, when an Arab drove his car into them as they alighted the train and stepped into the roadbed. Yocheved ran and hid behind a wall in Arzei Habira, until she heard the sirens and the police.”

Binyamin Tzvi lives with his wife Miri and their four children in the Pitom Haketores neighborhood of Efrat, where they are active members in the shul of Rabbi Shlomo Katz and mainstays of their community. We are looking forward to sharing a very festive *seudat ho'daah* with the whole family

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