

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

IF YOU THINK YOU'RE COMPLETE, YOU'RE FINISHED

"The cherubim...their faces toward one another." (37:9)

Do you know where the word "Cherub" comes from? Cherub comes from the Hebrew *kruv*. The *kruvim* were solid gold statues extruded from the cover of the *Aron Hakodesh* (the Holy Ark) which contained the Torah and the Tablets of the Covenant. *Kruv* is related to the Aramaic word – *k'rvia* – which means "like a child." They were called *kruvim* because they both had the face of child.

Why?

A child is like a new immigrant. He learns with great rapidity the language of his new host country. Youth's greatest asset is the ability to change, to be flexible, to be open-minded. The essence of Torah is to remain as flexi-

ble and adaptable as we were as children.

If you ask someone to define a *talmid chacham*, he'll probably tell you it's someone who has a large and deep knowledge of the Torah.

True. However, literally, a *talmid chacham* translates as "a student of a sage."

In Judaism, the essence of being a sage is to always be a student. A *talmid chacham*, by definition, is someone who never stops learning, who never feels himself complete but is constantly growing in Torah, in character, and in his awareness of G-d. A person who does this makes himself a vehicle through which holiness descends to the world.

The biggest insult in the Yiddish vocabulary of a great sage of the previous generation was that someone was a "*fartig*" — literally "a finished one."

If you think you're complete – you're really finished.

Sources:

• *Chochma U'Mussar* 190

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts *Bnei Yisrael* 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*. G-d appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. *Bnei Yisrael* contribute so much 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. Betzalel 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 show-breads 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.

WHO NEEDS PROOF?

The recent excitement in Israel over the discovery of a stone tablet almost three thousand years old focused on the brazen claim of leading members of the Islamic Wakf who deny that the *Beit Hamikdash* ever stood on the Temple Mount.

The ten lines inscribed on this tablet in an ancient Phoenician script closely parallel the description of Temple “house repairs” which will be read this Shabbat *Parshat Shekalim* in the special *haftarah*. While experts in the Israel Geological Institute and the Israel Museum debate the authenticity of the stone found during Temple Mount

excavations over a year ago, the Jewish community is hardly holding its breath in anticipation of conclusive evidence to whom the Temple Mount really belongs. For Jews everywhere there is not a shred of doubt that this is where our holiest site once stood.

Parshat Shekalim, which recalls the practice during Temple times of all Jews donating a half shekel each year to finance the purchase of animals for communal sacrifices, is an outstanding proof that Jews have never forgotten the *Beit Hamikdash*, nor where it stood – and where it will once again stand with the arrival of *Moshiach*.

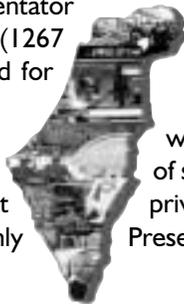
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

RABBI MOSHE BEN NACHMAN (RAMBAN – NACHMANIDES) — THE HISTORIC REPORT

When the great Torah and Talmud commentator came to *Eretz Yisrael* in the year 5027 (1267 CE), he found a desolate land and prayed for its restoration. This is what he wrote to his family:

“What can I tell you about the land other than it is barren and desolate? In general that which is most sacred is most desolate... *Yerushalayim* is most desolate of all... there are virtually no Jews in it, only



two brothers who are dyers who are joined by other Jews in the vicinity for a *minyan* on Shabbat.”

Despite this gloomy report Ramban concludes with the prayer that “He Who gave me the privilege of seeing *Yerushalayim* in its desolation will give me the privilege of seeing it in its restoration when the Divine Presence returns to it.”

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THE WOMAN AS WITNESS

A man asks two witnesses who witnessed an act which somehow affects him monetarily to testify for his benefit, and they swear that they do not know anything about the testimony he requires. When they subsequently repent their sin they must bring a sin offering of either an animal, fowl or flour according to their means (*Vayikra 5:1, 5:13*).

This atonement, which is the main topic of this entire fourth *perek*, applies only to those people whose testimony is valid in court. It does not apply to women, relatives of either of the litigants or to those disqualified as witnesses because of their dishonest behavior.

How about a single witness whose testimony cannot gain a judicial victory for the claimant but can compel the defendant to take an oath to prove his innocence?

Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, contends that this witness' ability to indirectly win the case for the claimant by placing the defendant in the position of paying in order to avoid swearing, renders his false oath one that caused a monetary loss, and he must therefore make the above-described atonement. Although the other Sages disagree with his position they do concede, says the Sage Abaye (*Shavuot 32a*), in cases where the Torah accepts the testimony of a single witness as conclusive. One such case is where this witness testifies that a man has died and he is believed to allow the wife to collect the *Ketubah* money due a widow and to marry someone else. Another is the case of a suspected adulteress who has not only been warned by her husband in front of witnesses to avoid a suspected paramour but has been seen by witnesses secluded with him. In order to maintain her marriage she must drink the special water described in *Bamidbar 5:11-31*. But if a single witness subsequently testifies that he saw her have adulterous relations with that suspect, he is believed and she is subject to divorce and loss of her *Ketubah* compensation. Since in both of these cases the single witness has the power to directly affect the *Ketubah* money, the oath he takes in denial of knowing testimony makes him liable for atonement.

An interesting point is raised by the commentaries. In both of the above-described cases in which a single witness testimony is effective, the rule is that a woman's testimony is also effective. Does this mean that a woman who takes an oath of denial in such cases will also be liable for atonement? Their conclusion is that the exclusion of women mentioned in the first *mishna* is without exception. The Torah stresses in the first passage that "if he is a witness" which limits this atonement to one who is a valid witness in all cases, not only in two exceptional ones.

• *Shavuot 30a*

THE LETTERS OF LYING

An oath is required by the Torah of a defendant in certain lawsuits: if the claimant has a single witness testifying on his behalf; if the defendant admits to a part of the claim; and if a *shomer* guard wishes to prove his claim that he is free of responsibility for the object entrusted to his safekeeping which he cannot return.

There are some exceptions to this rule. One of them is when real estate is the subject of the claim. The only opportunity the claimant has to impose an oath on the defendant – which means that if the defendant refuses to swear he is obligated to pay – is when he has another lawsuit with that defendant in which an oath is required. He can then demand, on the basis of *gilgul shavua*, to also swear even in regard to the real estate claim.

This can inspire two scenarios described by our *gemara*: 1) Reuven has a claim against Shimon for one hundred *zuz* in addition to a claim on real estate in which he cannot demand an oath. He therefore decides to claim 200 *zuz* in the money lawsuit so that Shimon will truthfully deny 100 *zuz* and be forced to take an oath on the rest, leaving himself open to a *gilgul shavua* on the real estate. 2) In the same scenario Shimon anticipates Reuven's strategy and decides to outwit him by making a total denial of his claim which will exempt him from taking an oath according to Torah law and will only truthfully admit his debt of 100 *zuz* out of court. In this manner he avoids being trapped into the *gilgul shavua* scheme of Reuven.

In both cases, rules the *gemara*, there is something improper. In the first case Reuven is guilty of violating the Torah command to "distance yourself from falsehood" (*Shmot 23:7*). In the second case it is Shimon who is the liar. Although in neither case is the lie being used to acquire someone else's money it is still condemned as a deviation from the truth.

Maharsha notes that the Hebrew word for falsehood – *sheker* – serves as a sort of acronym for the elements of the two above-mentioned cases. The first letter – *shin* – is an abbreviation of the Hebrew word for oath – *shavua*. The numerical value of the next two letters – *kuf* and *reish* – are 100 and 200 respectively. The *shavua* oath which is being pursued or avoided through collecting claims of 100 and 200 add up to the *sheker* – lie – in each case.

• *Shavuot 31a*

PARSHA Q&A?

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 Betzalel?
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?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

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 - Betzalel 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.

Dear Rabbi,

I am having a difference of opinion with a friend, and I hope you can help to clarify the matter.

I say that the Jewish tradition disdains valuing physical beauty (In men or women, but particularly women). I say that the Jewish tradition holds it as a deception and as superficiality. He disagrees, and cites Song of Solomon's obsession with physical beauty, and this: Tractate Ta'aniyoth of the Talmud (Babli) (Comments following Mishna 4:8)....on the 15th of the month of Ab and on Yom Kippur(!), the maidens of Jerusalem would go out to the vineyards and state to the young men: "look and see what you choose for yourself, for a woman is for naught save beauty"?

My response to that is (a) Jews don't take Song of Solomon literally, rather they interpret it as an allegory of love between Israel and G-d, and (b) one Talmudic citation doesn't outweigh all the others. Except I don't know all the others. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Dear E.,

Thanks for your inquiry. Judaism doesn't see physical beauty as a value in and of itself. As you said, it is disdained as a value in and of itself. King Solomon, besides the Song of

Songs, also wrote Proverbs, in which he states: "False is charm and vain is beauty, a woman who fears G-d, she shall be praised."

However, when beauty is used in the service of G-d, then it, like any gift, becomes elevated. It's similar to health or wealth. These are good things when used the right way.

There's even a beracha that one says, according to the Talmud, when seeing a beautiful person. We don't say this blessing today since we're uncertain how to define "beauty" according to halacha. It's told that Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, who was in Frankfurt, asked to make a special trip to view the Swiss Alps to experience the beautiful Creation, since G-d created its beauty for Man's benefit.

Although Song of Songs is an analogy, I don't think the analogue, physical beauty and attraction, can be denied. Note that the Torah points out that the Matriarchs Sarah, Rivka, and Rachel were beautiful. The Vilna Gaon says that as the 248 main "limbs" and 365 major "sinews" of the human body correspond to the 248 positive commandments and the 365 negative commandments of the Torah, so too the women who were to be the mothers of the Jewish people were to have a physical perfection reflecting the perfection of the Torah.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

FOR WHOM WE STAND

Question: An older person gets on an intercity bus whose seats have been filled by passengers who got on at the first stop on the route. Is there any obligation on the younger passenger to give up his seat, even if it means standing during a long trip, or is it the responsibility of the older person to make an effort to get on at the first stop or to at least clarify whether there is sitting room before boarding the bus?

Answer: This is not the sort of issue which will ever come before a rabbinical court but rather one which presents an ethical challenge to both parties involved.

The older person should be reminded that although the Torah demands respect be shown to the elderly and to Torah scholars, it is improper for such individuals to impose on the public by intentionally walking past them

to require standing up for them (*Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 244:6*). Boarding a crowded bus and compelling another passenger to stand throughout the journey is tantamount to such an imposition, and it would therefore be proper for the older passenger to board the bus at its first stop or seek an alternative form of transportation.

Once such a person has already boarded the bus, however, it is only proper that he be offered a seat, at least for a part of the trip. Not only is this considered by a number of authorities as an extension of the halachic obligation to rise in respect, but should also be viewed as a matter of lifesaving, since prolonged standing may pose a serious threat to the health of an older passenger. This latter consideration is also relevant to pregnant women.

• Based on the response of Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, Rabbi of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak

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THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE PIGGIES THAT WIGGLED AWAY

Jews understandably have an aversion to pigs. But what happens when Israel's biggest importer of quality wooden toys discovers that the "Country Life" toy farms he has imported from Toys 'R' Us includes three little wooden piggies?

The importer, in this case, was an Orthodox Jew who believed that these pieces offended Jewish sensitivities and therefore replaced them with three lime-green geese. His ingenious solution might never have been

noticed except that one customer complained that the geese did not match the picture of the pigs on the box he purchased and that the included pig sty hardly seemed to be the proper home for the geese.

Subsequent pressure from secular purchasers forced the importer to replace the pigs. But at least some Jewish children were spared the negative impact of "three little piggies went to market."

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Re: Nissan Beck Synagogue (Ohrnet Yitro)

printout. Thank you so much.

• Carol Rivie Sirken, M.D.

Gentlemen:

I am thrilled that you featured this synagogue and the story that goes with it. One of the pillars of our synagogue, The Young Israel of the Main Line, is Shmuel Back, a direct descendant of Nissan Beck. A few years ago when he and his wife were honored, our Rabbi found two pictures of the Nissan Beck Synagogue, one in the skyline of Jerusalem, and one a close-up of the building before it was destroyed in the war in 1948 and gave both to them.

They are not online, but I shall send this to them via

Re: Jewish IQ Test (Ohr.edu)

Re: the question on the meaning of the word yarmulke (you say it means yarei malka – fear of the King) This is a Jewish Urban Legend. The work "yarmulke" actually comes to Yiddish through Russian; it is similar to the Russian "yermolka," which was a small cap worn for hunting. Yermolka can be found in Russian literature from the mid-1800s.

• Yair

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...when Ohr Somayach was founded over thirty years ago it was first called "Shma Yisrael" but this name was relinquished out of consideration for the criticism that it was too sacred a phrase to be attached to just one institution and belonged to the entire Jewish People.

...Yeshivat Ohr Somayach in Monsey was founded as the American branch of Ohr Somayach Jerusalem in Yonkers, New York, and was an integral part of the yeshiva until it became an independent institution still proudly bearing the name.

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