

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### *No PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE REQUIRED*

**“And every man came whose heart was lifted up.” (35:21)**

Imagine turning up at a spotless hi-tech computer plant and offering your services to build computer chips.

Each chip is no more than a few millimeters square and yet it contains millions of transistors and is capable of making millions of calculations in the time it takes you to say “I’m looking for a job.”

They say to you: “Fine. What experience do you have?”

You say “None. But I know in my heart that I can build all the chips you need.”

“Yeah, look there’s a food factory down the block. Why don’t you try over there. Maybe you’d be better off frying their chips than ours...”

When the Children of Israel left Egypt, they had been slaves in Egypt for 210 years. The only skills that they had developed in those years of apprenticeship were how to stir mortar and *schlep* stones. Not exactly an ideal training ground for the extremely high degree of craftsmanship necessary for the building of the *Mishkan*.

Where was their training as carpenters, embroiderers, metal-smiths, sculptors, weavers?

And yet they came to Moshe and said “Whatever my lord commands, we will do it.” And they did it.

The *Mishkan* performed the incredibly complex task of uniting Heaven and Earth. But because it was a spiritual building, all it needed was the desire of its builders to serve Hashem, and then Hashem, as it

were, filled in the rest of their resumé.

When we want to serve Hashem, to be good Jews and good people, we should remember that no previous experience is required, just a heart that’s uplifted.

### *ROOM AT THE BOTTOM*

**“The Keruvim (Cherubs)...with their faces toward one another” (37:9)**

The *Mishkan* and later the *Beis Hamikdash* represented the ‘marriage’ of the Jewish People and

**“...more than an architect’s blueprint which is lifeless, the Torah is the dynamo, the source of the spiritual energy, that keeps the world turning.”**

Hashem. The *Keruvim* that were carved from the top of the cover of the Holy Ark were like a barometer which showed the state of this marriage.

When there was *shalom bayis* — ‘marital harmony’ — between the Creator and His people, the *Keruvim* faced towards each other, but when the Jewish People strayed and were unfaithful, the faces of the *Keruvim* were turned in opposite directions.

The Mishna in *Avos* tells us that on Yom Kippur when everyone stood in the courtyard of the *Beis Hamikdash*, it was jam-packed. You could hardly move an inch. But when time came

to prostrate themselves in prayer, there was plenty of room for all.

The same can be said about the marriage of a man and a woman: If a person ‘stands’ — if he stands on his dignity, if he stands only for himself, if he stands proud with his head high — then matrimony can be very crowding. You can’t move an inch.

But if a person lowers himself, prostrating his own interests beneath those of his spouse, then there is plenty of room for everyone.

### *HITTING THE MARK, OR MARKING THE HIT?*

**“...ten curtains of linen, twisted with turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool...” (36:8)**

Why is it that The Torah sometimes seems so repetitive?

In this week’s *Parsha* the Torah lists in extensive detail exactly the same description of the *Mishkan* and its furnishings as it did in *Parshas Terumah*.

Why the need for the repetition?

The Dubner Maggid was famous for his *meshalim* (parables) which always hit the bull’s eye. With a short story he could illuminate a Torah idea, lighting up the eyes and the minds of all who listened.

The Vilna Gaon once asked him how it was that he was able to tell such wonderfully telling parables that always seemed to hit the mark. The Dubner Magid replied with another *meshal*:

There once was a prince who desired greatly to become a master archer. One day while he was traveling he came to a small village. An archery contest was in progress. The prince noticed that one of the contestant’s accuracy was almost uncanny.

*continued on page four*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**M**oshe Rabbeinu exhorts the *Bnei Yisrael* to keep Shabbos, and requests donations for the materials for the construction of the *Mishkan* (tent of meeting). He collects gold, silver, precious stones, animal skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the *Menorah* and for anointing. The Princes of each of the twelve tribes bring the precious stones for the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate and *Ephod*. Hashem appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen for the building of the *Mishkan* and its vessels. The *Bnei Yisrael* contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were

designed to serve as the material for the *Mishkan's* roof and door. Gold-covered boards set in silver bases were connected and formed the walls of the *Mishkan*. Betzalel made the *Aron HaKodesh* (Ark), which contained the Tablets of the Covenant, from wood that was covered with gold on the inside and outside. On the cover of the Ark were two small figures facing each other with wings arching over the Ark. The *Menorah* and the *Shulchan*, the table with the showbreads were also made of gold. Two Altars were made: A smaller one for burning incense, made of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger Altar for the purpose of sacrifices that was made of wood that was covered with copper.

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## SING MY SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

### אליהו הנביא

### ELIJAH HANAVI "ELIJAH THE PROPHET..."

*"He will return the hearts of  
the fathers concerning  
their children"*

**E**liyahu Hanavi, our Sages tell us (*Bava Metziah* 84b), has the responsibility of regularly waking up the Patriarchs Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov for prayers and then putting them back to rest. One Rosh Chodesh he arrived late in the yeshiva of Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi, and explained that he had been delayed by the need to wake each one separately and wait for him to finish his prayers before waking

the others. "Why not wake all three together and save time?" he was asked. "Rosh Chodesh is a time particularly suited for praying for the arrival of Mashiach" he replied, "and if all three Avos would pray together, there would be a danger that they would bring the redeemer before the time had come." In our song about Eliyahu we express the confidence that when the time for redemption approaches, he will be given heavenly permission to "return the hearts of the fathers" by enabling them to pray together for the redemption of their children.

לע"נ

ר' חיים מנחם בן ר' ישראל ז"ל

*This issue is dedicated in memory of*  
**HERBERT MANUEL NEWMAN OBM**

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What three different words in this week's *Parsha* are spelled with the same four letters?
2. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
3. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbos written prior to the instruction for building the *Mishkan*?
4. Why does the Torah single out the prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbos?
5. What function did the "Yisdos Hamishkan" serve?
6. What function did the "Bigdei Hasrad" serve?
7. What was unusual about the way the women spun the goat's wool?
8. Why were the *Nesi'im* last to contribute to the *Mishkan*?
9. Who was Chur's mother?
10. Who were the primary *Mishkan*-builders?
11. Why did Hashem choose people specifically from the tribes of Dan and Yehuda to build the *Mishkan*?
12. For what was the woven goat's-hair used?
13. What image was woven on the 'Paroches'?
14. Why does the Torah credit Betzalel with the building of the *Aron*?
15. How many lamps did the *Menorah* have?
16. What was the *Mizbach Haketores* made of?
17. What was the *Mizbach Ha'olah* made of?
18. What does 'nevuv' mean?
19. The *Kiyor* was made from copper mirrors. What function did these mirrors serve in Egypt?
20. How did the *Kiyor* promote peace?

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### BONUS QUESTION?

**"All the women whose hearts motivated them spun the goats (35:26)." "This was a special art, that they spun the wool while it was still connected to the goats." (Rashi)** Why did the women spin the thread in this unusual way?

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### I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

**Moshe commanded: "Don't do any more work (melacha) for the sanctuary offering, and so the people stopped bringing." (36:6)**

This is the source for the *halacha* that carrying from a private domain to a public domain is a 'melacha' a forbidden act on Shabbos. Moshe said "Don't do any more 'melacha.' Therefore, 'the people stopped bringing' items from their private homes to the public site of the sanctuary.

• *Tosafos, Tractate Shabbos 96b*

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## HAFTORAH: MELACHIM II CH. I

In the months of Adar and Nissan, we read four special passages of the Torah. Each is accompanied by its own special Haftorah. The Torah portions are to help us prepare for Purim and ultimately for Pesach. The four passages are: **Parshas Shekalim** which deals with the collection of the compulsory half-shekel for offerings in the *Beis Hamikdash*; **Parshas Zachor**, to remember the mitzva of eradicating the memory of Amalek, who attacked the Jewish People after the Exodus from Egypt; **Parshas Parah**, which details the laws of how a person can purify himself from the spiritual impurity that results from contact with the dead; and finally, **Parshas HaChodesh**, the mitzva of the sanctification of the new moon.

### WHEN 1/2 IS GREATER THAN 10,000

The Midrash (*Eliyahu Rabba*) tells us that Hashem knew that in the month of Adar, Haman would offer Achashverosh, king of Persia, 10,000 *kikar*

of silver if he would agree to the genocide of the Jewish People.

Thus, in 'anticipation' of Haman's plan, Hashem gave the Jewish People the merit of the mitzvah of the half-shekel donation to the *Beis Hamikdash* a thousand years before Haman's plot.

It was this half-shekel, given in the service of the Creator, which outweighed all of Haman's 10,000 *kikar* of silver, and led to the salvation of the Jewish People in the time of Purim.

### WHEN 1/2 IS LESS THAN 100%

Why was it that specifically a half-shekel was given, and not a whole shekel?

A Jew must understand that alone he is only half the picture. Without his attachment to the community, he can never reach a state of completeness.

For Hashem has established His relationship between Himself and His *people*. A Jew has to look at himself as a 'half-shekel.' He only becomes whole when he links himself to the body of the Jewish People.

## WEEKLY DAF

### BECHOROS 53 -59

#### THE TITHE THAT WAS

The Torah commanded every Jew to tithe his cattle and to offer the tenth cow, sheep or goat as a sacrifice whose flesh is eaten by its owner. By Torah law this applies even when there is no *Beis Hamikdash* in which to offer a sacrifice, and the tithed animal cannot be consumed until it develops a blemish which disqualifies it as a sacrifice. Our Sages saw a need to forestall a problem which could arise from such a situation. While a Jew is waiting for a blemish to develop he might come to transgress the ban on shearing or working with such a sacred animal, or may even slaughter and eat its flesh before the blemish develops. They therefore decreed that tithing of cattle should be suspended, preferring a passive non-performance of a mitzvah, to an active violation of a ban.

This raises a question in regard to what the Talmud (*Shabbos* 54b) relates about the wealth of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, whose annual tithing of calves was 12,000. This sage was a minor when the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, so that this tithing had to take place only when there was no longer a place to bring sacrifices. How then did he practice cattle tithing in opposition to the aforementioned rabbinical

decrees?

Three resolutions of this problem are found in the commentary of Tosefos in this and other *masechtos*:

- The tithing took place while there was still a *Beis Hamikdash* and was performed by a guardian of the sage who was still a minor.
- The tithing referred to was not the performance of the mitzvah, but rather a payment of a ten percent tax to the government, and is mentioned only to illustrate the extensive wealth of the sage.
- The decree against cattle tithing did not come into being immediately with the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, only years later, so that in the days of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah it was still in practice.

• *Bechoros* 53b

#### THE MYSTERIOUS "KAREIACH"

"All the sages of Israel seem to be in comparison with me like garlic skin, except for this *kareiach*."

Thus declared the great sage Shimon ben Azai.

Who was this *kareiach* whose greatness was thus acknowledged, and how does this Hebrew word for "bald one" characterize him?

Rashi identifies him as Rabbi

Akiva, a contemporary of Ben Azai. He bases this on the fact that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha was actually the son of Rabbi Akiva, so that the father was also known by a nickname associated with baldness.

Tosefos finds difficulty with this approach because it is unlikely that Ben Azai would refer to Rabbi Akiva in such an uncomplimentary way rather than by name. Two alternative approaches are proposed:

- He was referring to Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah who was indeed bald and there was no denigration intended in this physical description.
- There was actually a sage named "*Kareiach*" and there is no relationship between the name and baldness.

In regard to the statement itself the commentaries point out that it should not be misconstrued as a boast by Ben Azai of his intellectual superiority. His intention was to inspire other scholars to apply themselves diligently to their studies by citing his own scholastic achievements which were not the result of his natural brilliance alone but of his extreme diligence.

(For another explanation of Ben Azai's remark see "Garlic-Skin Modesty" in the Weekly Daf (Vol. 4 No. 4) for week ending 20 Cheshvan, 5757, Nov. 2, '96.)

• *Bechoros* 58a

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

Each of his targets was pierced exactly in the center.

The prince asked this fellow how he was able to achieve such striking results. This was his reply: "Well first I aim at a tree. Then, once I hit the tree, I run up to it and paint circles around the arrow."

Said the Dubner Maggid to the Vilna Gaon: "I do the same. First of all I find an interesting story, then I look for a relevant verse or Torah thought to which to attach it."

In much the same way, this is what Hashem did when He brought the uni-

verse into being. First of all He 'wrote' the *mashal* — the Torah — and then He looked into it and created the world.

The Torah is the blueprint of the world. But more than an architect's blueprint which is lifeless, the Torah is the dynamo, the source of the spiritual energy, that keeps the world turning.

A fluorescent light may consume only a few watts, whereas an air-conditioning unit will need several thousand.

In the same way, the 'spiritual electricity' of one Torah verse alone was enough to sustain all the creatures of

the sea: "Let the waters teem with teeming living creatures..." (*Bereishis* 1:20)

However, the *Mishkan* which was Hashem's 'dwelling place' in this world, required the 'spiritual current' of a much higher order.

This is the reason there are so many verses in the Torah which refer to the *Mishkan*. Every verse in its description is like another volt, and watt.

Sources:

- "No Previous Experience Required" - Ramban; Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram
- "Room At The Bottom" - V.S.
- "Hitting The Mark, or Marking The Hit?" - Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

# ASK the RABBI

## SHAKESPRAYER

**Burt Falkenstein**  
<BNOHOW@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why is it when we pray to Hashem, many people “shuckle” back and forth while others do not? Isn't it disrespectful to sway back and forth when we are “talking” in our own way to Hashem? Please explain this (I think) “custom.” Is it truly disrespectful or is it something else? Thanks,

Dear Burt Falkenstein,

‘Shuckling’ — swaying back and forth during prayer and Torah study — is a legitimate custom. Several reasons are offered for this custom:

- The soul is akin to a flame. Just as a flame always flickers and strives upward, so too the soul is never still, constantly moving and striving to reach upward towards Hashem.
- Shaking allows you to pray with your whole body, as King David said “Let all my bones exclaim ‘Hashem, who is like You!’”
- When we stand before Hashem in prayer, we tremble in awe of the King of Kings.
- The book of the Kuzari gives a historical explanation for ‘shuckling.’ He explains that shuckling originated during a period when there was a book shortage, and several people needed to study from the same

book at the same time. To allow as many people as possible to study from one book, they would sway alternately back and forth. This allowed each person to look into the book and read a little bit, and when he swayed back, another person could sway forward and look into the book.

A valid alternative to shuckling is to stand completely still, like a soldier standing at attention in front of the king.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *zatzal*, one of the foremost halachic authorities of our generation, was known to stand stock still during the silent prayer. He explained that, while living in Russia, he was once arrested for teaching Torah. One form of torture he experienced during his imprisonment was being forced to stand completely still facing a wall. The threat was that if he were to move he would be shot. It was on one of these occasions that Rabbi Feinstein was struck with the realization that if he could stand with such intense concentration for the sake of his captors, then he should afford at least the same respect when standing in front of Hashem.

Deciding whether to ‘shuckle’ or stand still depends on which one helps you concentrate better. In any case, a person shouldn't move his body or contort his face in any way that will make him look weird.

**Sources:**

- *Mishna Berurah* 95:5,7

## SCRIPTURAL CORRECTNESS

**Father Gant in Belize, Central America** wrote:

Dear Rabbi:

*I am a Catholic priest serving in Belize/Guatemala. I studied ten years in Rome and while there, a priest from the Biblicum (the Bible school for the Jesuits in Rome) told me that they only know about 30 percent of the words in Hebrew for the scriptures.*

*I can't believe that a living language that has been handed down orally for all these centuries, can have only 30 percent accuracy. Any ideas?*

Dear Father Gant,

I agree with your disbelief. We have traditions going back 3,500 years regarding the meaning of Hebrew words in the Bible. The Mishnah and many post-Biblical Jewish works are written in Hebrew, it has been used in our prayers for more than 2,000 years and is now used in everyday life in Israel. We have 99.44% knowledge of Biblical Hebrew words, extensive literature and a rich oral tradition on the subject.

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

The name of which Parsha has the same *gematria* — numerical value — as the number of its verses?

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# PARSHA Q&A!

## Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 36:35, 37:6, 19 - *Paroches, Kapores and Kaftor.*
2. 35:1 - The day after *Yom Kippur.*
3. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the *Mishkan* doesn't supersede the laws of *Shabbos*.
4. 35:3 - There are two different opinions: a) To teach that igniting a fire on *Shabbos* is less severe than the other '*melachos*.' b) To teach that each *melacha* is a separate violation, requiring its own separate atonement.
5. 35:18 - They kept the curtains from blowing in the wind.
6. 35:19 - They covered the *Aron, Shulchan, Menorah*, and the *Mizbeachos* during transport.
7. 35:26 - It was spun directly from off of the backs of the goats.
8. 35:27 - The *Nesi'im* wanted to let the people contribute first, so they could then contribute whatever was missing.
9. 35:30 - *Miriam*.
10. 35:30, 35:34 - *Betzalel ben Uri* from the tribe of *Yehuda*; *Oholiav ben Achisamach* from the tribe of *Dan*.
11. 35:34 - *Hashem* picked from the tribe of *Dan*, an undistinguished tribe in relation to the tribe of *Yehuda*, to show that all are equal in front of *Hashem*.
12. 36:14 - It was made into curtains to be draped over the *Mishkan*.
13. 36:35 - *Keruvim*. (See *Rashi* 26:31).
14. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone else.
15. 37:23 - Seven.
16. 37:25,26 - Wood covered with gold.
17. 38:1,2 - Wood covered with copper.
18. 38:7 - Hollow.
19. 38:8 - The righteous women used the mirrors to arouse the affections of their husbands who were weary from slave labor. This was responsible for the growth of the Jewish people.
20. 38:8 - Its waters allowed someone accused of adultery to prove her innocence.

## BONUS ANSWER!

All the vessels and garments of the *Mishkan* needed to be guarded against ritual impurity. While still attached to the goat, however, the thread was immune to ritual impurity. This is because living animals can not contract ritual impurity. As a special precaution, the women spun the thread while it was still connected to the goats. That way, if the woman discovered that the thread accidentally contacted something impure, it will remain pure nevertheless, because it is still part of a live animal.

• Heard from Rabbi *Betzalel Rudinsky*

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

35:1	<b>RAMBAN</b> Date of the Assembly	38:8	Mirrors of Virtue		<b>SEFER HACHINUCH</b>
35:21	Generosity and Inspiration	35:27	<b>IBN EZRA</b> Gifts of the Princes	114	Recess from Judgment
35:22	Female Leadership	35:34	Learning and Teaching		
		38:8	Mirrors of Devotion		

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