

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA · FOR THE WEEK ENDING 14 SIVAN 5760 · JUNE 17, 2000 · VOL. 7 NO. 37

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Parshat Beha'alotcha is read this week June 17, 2000 / 14 Sivan 5760 in Israel  
and next week June 24, 2000 / 21 Sivan 5760 outside Israel.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

STAYING LIT

*"Aharon did so;" (8:3)*

*"This teaches the praise of*

*Aharon — that he did not change" (Sifri).*

You pick up your new car from the dealer, and settle yourself behind the ergonomic dash, the smell of "new car" wafting across your nostrils, more delectable than any French perfume. The engine purrs as you ease your way in to light traffic along the coast. "This car is great!" you think to yourself, "It's the most exciting thing in the world!"

Two months later, someone sees you and says, "Great new car!" You reply, "Yeah, I guess so. Actually it's not so new anymore..."

If familiarity doesn't exactly breed contempt, at least it fosters boredom and complacency. Yet at the end of his life, Aharon was still lighting the menorah with exactly the same degree of constancy and enthusiasm with which he lit it on his first day. *"This teaches the praise of Aharon — that he did not change."*

MAKE SPACE

*"And the man Moshe was more humble than anyone on the face of the earth." (12:3).*

The thinner the walls of a container, the less they intrude into the space inside the container, and

thus the greater its capacity. Moshe made himself like the skin of a garlic clove — virtually without substance — the absolute minimum for him to still exist in this world. Thus, he was almost completely a "containing space."

It is for this reason that he was able to receive and contain the Torah in its perfection. In truth, if there were anyone today who would reach his level of humility, that person too would receive the Torah in all its completeness, like Moshe.

CASHING IN

*"And the man Moshe was more humble than anyone on the face of the earth." (12:3)*

Our Sages warn against haughtiness, more than any other character defect. "Be very, very humble," they teach us. What makes haughtiness and status-seeking so mortally dangerous?

A person cannot receive the true reward for a mitzvah in this world; since a mitzvah is spiritual, it is impossible for its reward to be given in a world which is physical. However, if a person derives status and honor from doing a mitzvah, even though this honor is illusory, he has nevertheless received a kind of recompense, since status and honor are felt as "spiritual" entities. Thus, by deriving a surrogate benefit

from the counterfeit currency of honor in this world, a person can arrive at the First National Bank of *Olam Habah*, the World to Come, and find that he exchanged his priceless diamonds — the eternal reward for his mitzvot — for Monopoly money.

BLAZING THE TRAIL

*"Speak to Aharon and say to him that when he makes the flame of the menorah go up..." (8:2).*

There are two ways to light a candle. One can touch a flame directly to the wick, or one can hold the flame away from the wick until it spontaneously bursts into flames because of the extreme heat.

There are two ways to teach Torah and pass the tradition down to the next generation. We can force our children to study Torah and perform mitzvot, or we can let them see our passion for mitzvot and Torah. We can use every educational technique available to inspire them until their own personal interest in Torah and mitzvot is ignited. To symbolize this lesson Aharon is told specifically to light the menorah in the latter manner because the menorah symbolizes the Oral Torah — the personal transferal of Hashem's Word.

Sources:

- *Make Space* - Adapted from Ruach Chaim
- *Cashing In* - Based on the Chafetz Chaim
- *Blazing the Trail* - Rabbi Yerucham Uziel Milevsky

**A**haron is taught the method for kindling the *menorah*. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the *Mishkan*. They replace the firstborn, who were disqualified after sinning through the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the *Mishkan* from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, Hashem commands Moshe concerning the *korban Pesach*. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the *mitzvah of Pesach Sheini*, allowing a "second chance" to offer the *korban Pesach* one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the *Mishkan* signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the

Jewish People in the Exodus — some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. Hashem tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. Hashem sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. Hashem explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard). Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

## HAFTARAH

### ZACHARIA 2:14 - 4:17

**R**eflecting the opening theme of *Parshat Beha'alotcha*, the *haftara* describes a vision of the *menorah* lit by the *kohen gadol*, the high priest. The Prophet Zacharia assures the Jewish People that even during the Messianic era when the entire world will recognize Hashem and evil will be eliminated, the Jewish People will still play an important role.

There will be a need for Jewish leadership and education, and the Jews will be a light for all nations. The *menorah* symbolizes this role of spiritual illumination.

The Prophet conveys a message which those religions that are offshoots of Judaism have too often ignored: "Not by military force, and not by physical strength, but by My Spirit alone (4:6)..."

## WITH A FLOURISH

"Behold, I am bringing my servant, the Flourishing One." (3:8)

**W**hy is *mashiach* referred to as the "flourishing one?" Even though today it seems that all remnant of the majesty of the Royal House of David has been uprooted and has vanished into nothingness, nevertheless, the root is still living, hidden and dormant. At the appropriate moment, the *mashiach* will appear, like a majestic tree flourishing from barren ground, laden with fruit, revealed to all.

• Malbim

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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## HOSTING THE DIVINE PRESENCE

**T**he most sacred part of the *Beit Hamikdash* was located in the portion of *Eretz Israel* belonging to the Tribe of Binyamin (*Mesechta Yoma 12a*).

Why, ask our Sages (*Mechilta Yitro 4:18*), did Binyamin merit to be the host of the Divine Presence? Because only he, of all the sons of Yaakov, was born in *Eretz Israel*.



When his fellow Jews challenged Mordechai on his endangering their security by refusing to bow to Haman, he responded that it was below his dignity to bow to any mortal, even one as politically powerful as Haman, because of the royal status he enjoyed as the descendant of Binyamin who was born in *Eretz Israel*. (*Midrash Rabbah Esther 7:8*)

## SAVING THE MARRIAGE

An earlier *mishna* (72b) rules that if a man marries a woman on the condition that she is not bound by any vows, or that she suffers from no serious physical handicaps, and it turns out that she has such vows or handicaps, the marriage is considered null and void. What happens, however, if prior to his discovery she went to a sage and cancelled her vow, or to a physician and healed her handicap?

The *beraita* tells us that in the case of vows the marriage remains intact, but that in the case of the handicap it is annulled. The difference is that when a sage cancels the vow on the basis of her expressing regret at having made the vow, it is considered a retroactive nullification; while in the case of healing, the change in condition takes place only at the time of the treatment.

Tosefot explains that this is not merely a matter of semantics, but rather an analysis of male psychology. Even after his wife has been healed of her handicap, the husband, who made the marriage dependent of her being free of such a shortcoming, is resentful of the fact that she was married to him while she suffered from a handicap which he explicitly wished to avoid. She is therefore tarnished in his eyes and this is considered grounds for ruling that she did not fulfill the condition of the marriage, rendering their union null and void. In the case of a vow, had the nullification not been retroactive, he would also have been resentful, because of the punishment she risked for violating the vow during their marriage up until its cancellation. Since the vow is considered retroactively to have never taken place, there is no such punishment and no cause for resentment which could serve as grounds for annulment.

This is true, adds Tosefot, only when he discovered the existence of the vow *after* the sage's cancellation. Should he, however, become aware of it before she goes to the sage, the eventual cancellation will not save the marriage. This is so because when a man makes a condition that she has no vows, his intention is that should he discover she has a vow he has the option to annul the marriage. If this discovery comes before her visit to the sage, we assume that he wants to exercise this option for fear that the vow may be one that cannot be cancelled. If the discovery comes only after the vow has been cancelled, he no longer has any reason to be worried about the future or resentful about the past, and the marriage therefore remains intact.

• *Ketubot 74b*

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## THE ANCIENT "LAW OF RETURN"

What is the criterion for being a citizen of Zion? Way before the Israeli Law of Return was even dreamed of, this issue was discussed in our *gemara*. "Of Zion it shall be said," writes the psalmist (*Tehillim* 87:5), "this person and that person was born in her, and the One Above shall reestablish her." Rabbi Maisha, the grandson of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, interpreted this as meaning that both the Jew born in *Eretz Yisrael* and the one who looks forward to the restoration of its glory will be considered as having been born there.

Maharsha explains the interpretation of the passage in the context of the passages which precede and follow it. The psalmist opens his tribute to the love of Hashem for the gates of Zion by declaring that "glorious things are spoken of the 'City of the L-rd.'" He then draws the contrast between the citizens of other lands and those of Zion. All others are referred to by the land of their origin and are called Babylonians or Philistines because of where they were born. In regard to Zion, however, not only does the one born there qualify to be called a citizen but also the one who anxiously, but confidently, looks forward to the One Above reestablishing her. Summing up this contrast, the psalmist says that "Hashem will record when He registers the peoples" — identifying each according to his place of birth. "This one" — the Jew born outside *Eretz Yisrael* but looking forward to its restoration by Hashem — "will be considered as having been born there."

The double reference to the one born in Zion which is the basis of the above interpretation was also seen by the Sage Abaye as a hint to the superior Torah wisdom of sages in *Eretz Yisrael* which makes each of them the equivalent of two sages in Babylon. Rava, however, cites from the experience of one of their colleagues that once a sage from Babylon made it to *Eretz Yisrael* he became twice as wise as the Sages there.

• *Ketubot 75a*

### I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The *menorah* in the Temple had 7 stems, 9 flowers, 11 pomegranates, and 22 cups. Its height was, according to one opinion, 17 handbreadths. These numbers correspond to the number of words in the first verse of each Book of the Torah: The first verse of Bereishet has 7 words; the first verse of Shemot has 11 words; Vayikra 9 words, Bamidbar 17 words; Devarim 22 words.

This idea is hinted in the verse "The beginning of Your words will give light" (*Tehillim* 119).

• *Vilna Gaon*

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the *menorah* burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the *menorah* made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*tnufot*" (wavings) are in the Parsha?
5. Why did Hashem claim the firstborn of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "*Bnei Yisrael*" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini* not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the way the *menorah* and the trumpets were made?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which *aron* is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the Parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the *menorah* was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was hammered out from one solid piece of gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *parah aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show Hashem's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the *Mishkan* and *Beit Hamikdash*; singing during the *avoda*; loading the wagons to transport the *Mishkan*.
8. 9:7 - So the people who asked about it could be rewarded by being the catalyst for its teaching.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of *Bnei Yisrael*, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the *Mishkan*.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The *aron* which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, which was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The *Pesach* sacrifice, and the traveling of the *aron*.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic — these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - Jews who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on *Bnei Yisrael* at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

## KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

Saul Cohen from Worcester, MA  
<[scohen@cwix.com](mailto:scohen@cwix.com)> asked:

In *Parshat Beha'alotcha* (12:1-13), both Miriam and Aharon are specifically said to be talking together about Moshe separating from Zipporah, yet only Miriam is punished with *tzara'at*. Why is only Miriam punished? Is

Aharon also punished in some way that does not appear in the Parsha?

Dear Saul Cohen,

Note that the verse mentions Miriam first, indicating that she was the primary actor. Furthermore, only Miriam actually spoke, as can be seen from the Hebrew grammar of the

verse, which literally reads, "She spoke (*vatedabair*), Miriam and Aharon, about Moshe...." Aharon is included because he listened in silence, or showed agreement. (*Ibn Ezra*)

The Midrash (*Sifri cited by Ohr Hachaim*) states that indeed Aharon was also stricken with *tzara'at* but was healed immediately.

Do you have a KASHA? Write to [kasha@ohr.org.il](mailto:kasha@ohr.org.il) with your questions on any Parsha!



## JEWES AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

**From: Michael Sultan, Alexandria, VA**  
<perchik@compuserve.com>

Dear Rabbi,  
In the Book of Numbers (2:9) the total census for the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun is given as 186,400. It is said that this group will “set forth first.” I’m sure that someone somewhere has pointed out that 186,400 is approximately the speed of light in miles per second.

This almost makes too much sense. The Torah speaks of us being a “light unto the nations.” In a way, it makes sense for the lead tribes to be likened to “light.” I’m not sure what my question to you would then be. I suppose I should simply ask, “Well? What’s up with this?”

Dear Michael Sultan,

It was certainly bright of you to notice this. (It’s no wonder your parents called you “sun.”)

Allow me to add to your brilliant comment: The Torah says that this group be positioned “mizracha,” eastward. Literally, *mizracha* means “in the direction of the rising sun,” from the root “*zorayach*” meaning “shine” and “give light.”

Your comment brings to mind a thought I once had: Light from the sun takes eight minutes to reach us. When you look at the sun, you’re not really seeing it; rather, you see light that left the sun eight minutes ago. So when you look at the setting sun, the actual sun has already sunk below the horizon, and you continue to see its light for eight minutes.

Now, here’s my thought: The last eight verses of the Torah describe Moshe’s death. Who wrote these verses? The Talmud gives two opin-

ions: Moshe wrote them, in tears, or Joshua wrote them. So (poetically speaking) just as the sun shines for eight minutes after it sets, similarly, the “Five Books of Moses” enlighten us for eight verses after Moshe dies.

The above all having been said, my feeling is that — although G-d is “multi-lingual” — He “prefers” Hebrew, both in language as well as regarding weights and measures. If He wanted to “jockey” history to make the number of this group reflect (no pun intended) the speed of light, He would have done so in terms of “*amot per rega*,” or something like that.

## GRADUATED OBSERVANCE

**From: Mike Epstein in Greenville, SC**  
<mepstein@carol.net>

Dear Rabbi,  
I belong to a Conservative shul, the most traditional shul within a hundred miles. I have kept kosher for the past year and try to observe the mitzvot. I drive to shul on Shabbos and holidays but do not work. This is my question. I am supposed to work this coming Saturday (the last day of school for teachers) and then attend graduation. I have explained to the school why I can’t work and this is no problem. I am wondering if I can justify going to graduation? If I were fully observant, I know that the answer would be “no” because I would have to drive. But since I drive to shul anyway, would attending the graduation be wrong in itself? Thank you for any advice you can give.

Dear Mike Epstein,

First, I’d like to tell you that I admire your efforts to observe the mitzvot in Greenville, and I think you should be applauded and encouraged. I bet it’s not always easy to keep up your level of observance.

Your question is an interesting one. The truth is that the actual ceremony might not involve any Shabbat violation, but sitting through such a ceremony isn’t really in the Shabbat spirit.

And, as you know, Jewish law forbids driving to synagogue, or anywhere else, on Shabbat. Going to synagogue is certainly a good thing, but not at the expense of one of the Ten Commandments!

Each time you refrain from driving on Shabbat is a meritorious act in itself. The fact that you do sometimes drive to shul doesn’t take away from the merit of the other times when you don’t drive.

Also, it seems to me that you’ve gone to lengths to explain to your teachers and colleagues why you don’t work on Shabbat. Now, even if technically the graduation won’t be problematic, you might get some very dubious looks from your fellow teachers. They might not understand whatever subtle differences there may be here, and they may view you as a hypocrite.

A story: Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky and a friend were walking one Shabbat morning when a car pulled up to ask for directions. “Good Shabbos,” said the driver, thus identifying himself as Jewish. “Good Shabbos to you,” they answered. The driver then asked for help finding his destination, to which Rabbi Kaminetsky gave very clear and detailed directions. The driver said thank you and drove off.

Rabbi Kaminetsky’s friend was a bit surprised: “Surely we must help others whenever we can,” he said. “But are we allowed to help a fellow Jew to violate Shabbat?”

“On the contrary, I helped him avoid violating Shabbat. If he gets lost, he will drive around looking for his destination, thus violating Shabbat much more. By giving clear directions, not only did I help him get straight to his destination, but I helped him do so with less Shabbat desecration.”

**Re: Humor, In a Sense:**

Your TOP 10 LISTS!!! <http://www.ohr.org.il/judaism/humor/top10/topten.htm>

Anybody who thinks we Jews have no sense of humor needs to read these little gems!!!

• Linda L. Tilley <llt316@wcsonline.net>

**Re: Mechitza at Kotel Before 1967:**

I enjoyed your response to the reader who asked about the *mechitzah*-partition separating men and women worshippers at the Kotel (Western Wall). Isn't it true, though, that prior to the '67 war there was no *mechitzah* at the Kotel and therefore not at all prior to that year? I remember seeing photos after the war of the soldiers at the Kotel just as it had been reclaimed; they were kissing the Wall and there definitely was not a division. Please respond.

• Mrs. Sandy Wasserman <SFWwiz@aol.com>

Dear Mrs. Sandy Wasserman,

For approximately the last 1900 years, up until 1967, the Kotel was not under Jewish rule. So I don't think we can make any inferences regarding Jewish practice based on that period.

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

**WHO KNOWS 18?**

In the song at the end of the Pesach Seder we describe the significance of the numbers from one to 13 as they relate to Jewish life and thought: "Three are the fathers, Four are the Mothers... 12 are the Tribes of Israel..." What about the next 13 numbers? And after those? What significance do they have in Jewish tradition?

This week, we challenge you: "Who knows 18?" Write to [info@ohr.org.il](mailto:info@ohr.org.il)

\* \* \*

\* Here are some reader responses regarding previous numbers:

During the Passover Seder we spill 16 drops of wine. This corresponds to the 16 sided sword of HKB"H (see *Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim 31:717*), which corresponds to the 16 *aliyot*

(Torah sections read) during the week. Shemot 15:3 begins with a *yud* and ends with a *vav* (*yud* and *vav* equalling 16) and describes Hashem as a warrior. This quoted by Eliezer ben Moshe HaDarshan as an allusion to the sword.

• Lucy and Eliezer Langer  
<e\_langer@netvision.net.il>

Sixteen is the number of animals the *kohen gadol* sacrifices on Yom Kippur.

• Yossi Klein  
<jklein@newsalert.com>

In *Emes Veyatziv* (the prayer after *Shema*) including the word "emes," there are 16 adjectives describing "Ha'davar Ha'zeh — This Thing." This "Thing" refers to the 16 verses of the first two paragraphs of the *Shema* (including "Baruch Shem").

• Jacob Floran <jflorans@trebnet.com>

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

## Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

*Few, if any, escape being misjudged at one time or another. Everyone seems to get a turn to be wrongly blamed. In the following story, it was..*

## A TURN FOR THE NURSE

**M**y mother was hospitalized here in Jerusalem with a broken hip. She only spoke English and was hard of hearing. Her hands trembled and she was disoriented. I explained her situation to the nurses, explaining that she needed assistance eating. I asked them to please feed her breakfast until I could arrive the next morning.

At 11 the next morning I arrived to find her breakfast tray on her nightstand, untouched. Didn't they understand the message I had so clearly detailed, that she needed assistance eating?

Not wanting to antagonize the nurses, I walked slowly towards the desk trying to decide how to best broach the issue.

Just then, one of the nurses came towards me, saying: "Your mother came up a half hour ago from a procedure. We were waiting for her to calm down before feeding her." And she ran ahead, into the room to warm up the farina.

• Submitted by an Ohrnet reader in Jerusalem