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THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

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THE ETERNAL FLAME

“Command the children of Israel ... to kindle a continual lamp.” 24:2

Go into any Synagogue when it's dark and you will see a small lamp shining above the holy ark. It is called the *Ner Tamid* - the eternal flame. That lamp is a memorial of the *Ner Ma'aravi* (western lamp) of the Menorah which the *Kohanim* lit in the *Beis Hamikdash*. The *Ner Ma'aravi* burned miraculously. It never went out. Every evening, when the *Kohen* came to kindle the flames he would find the *Ner Ma'aravi* still alight from the previous evening. He would remove the still-burning wick and oil, clean out its receptacle and then put back the burning wick and the oil. Then he would kindle all the other lamps with the western lamp.

But when the Romans came and destroyed the *Beis Hamikdash*, it seemed that the little solitary flame had been put out forever: In Rome, there stands a triumphal arch built by the Emperor Titus. One of its *bas-reliefs* depicts the Menorah being carried through the streets of Rome as part of the booty pillaged from the *Beis Hamikdash*. All its lamps are dark. It looks like some expensive antique, soon to languish under the dust of ages in some Vatican vault.

But did Titus really extinguish that eternal flame?

In his commentary on *Chumash*, the *Malbim* explains that the *Beis Hamikdash* is a macrocosm of the human body:

If you look at a plan of the *Heichal* (Sanctuary) in the *Beis Hamikdash*, you will notice that the placement of the various vessels - the altar, the table, the Menorah - corresponds to the location of the vital organs in the human body. In other words, each of the Temple's vessels represents a human organ. **The Menorah is the vessel that corresponds to the heart.**

The Menorah is the Jewish Heart. Why is it that so many young people today are choosing to return to the beliefs and practices that their parents had forgotten, and their grandparents despaired of

INSIGHTS

seeing continued? It is as though some mystical force is transmitted in the spiritual genes of every Jew. A light which burns away on the Menorah of the Jewish heart across the millennia. A light which can never be extinguished, which burns miraculously, even without replenishment of the oil or wicks of mitzvah observance.

So, in a mystical sense the light that Titus tried to put out, continues to burn in the Menorah of the Jewish heart. But even in the physical world, the light of the Menorah burns on ...

It would come as a great disappointment to Titus, but that Menorah which is collecting dust somewhere in the Vatican *is not the original Menorah*. It is a copy. The original Menorah was hidden away (together with the other vessels) in the caves and tunnels under the Temple Mount, so it would not be taken as booty.

Now, if, while the Temple was standing, the Western Lamp of the Menorah burned miraculously without human assistance, **so why shouldn't it go on burning even after it was buried?**

In fact, that Western Lamp continues to burn miraculously under the Temple Mount throughout the long dark night of exile. It continues to burn to this day. And it will continue to burn until *Mashiach* comes. Then, the light of the Menorah of the Jewish heart will be united with the light of the Menorah in the Holy *Beis Hamikdash*.

• Based on the *Sfas Emes*

DOING TIME

“You shall not desecrate My holy Name; rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel. I am Hashem Who sanctifies you.” (22:32)

Two Jews were traveling by train to work. One was religious, the other, to say the least, less so. “Look at this!” exclaimed the less religious of the two, tossing the newspaper to his religious com-

panion. There, on the front page, was a picture of a very religious-looking Jew, complete with a long flowing black beard. Underneath the picture the caption read: ARRESTED FOR TAX EVASION! “So much for a long black beard!” sneered the secular Jew. “The trouble was...” replied the other, “the trouble was that under the beard, he was unshaven...”

When a Jew puts on a Kippah, he becomes an ambassador for Hashem. His actions are scrutinized by all who see him: If he is crooked in business, no-one will call him a crook, they will call him a crooked Jew! But if he's straight, it is Hashem Who will take the credit.

The Midrash tells of an Arab who sold a donkey to Rabbi Shimon ben Shatach. Shortly after the purchase, Rabbi Shimon discovered a valuable stone under the donkey's saddle. “I paid for a donkey, not a gem” he said, and promptly returned the jewel to the Arab. When Rabbi Shimon handed the stone back to the Arab, the Arab exclaimed “Blessed is Hashem, the G-d of Shimon ben Shatach.”

• Heard from Rabbi Nota Schiller

CONCRETE TIME

“And you shall count to yourselves from the day after the Shabbos [i.e., the day after Pesach] from the day of your bringing the Omer offering which is waved, seven Shabbosos - complete and perfect they must be.” (23:15)

“When are they perfect? When they do the will of The Omnipresent.” (*Midrash*)

Nothing in this world lasts forever. Everything has its time and then passes. Even the heavens and the earth will pass into nothingness. Nevertheless, everything that comes into the world has a certain period of existence, however short or long. However, there is one thing in the world for which the concept of ‘span of existence’ has no meaning whatsoever. It is no sooner present, than it has already changed, passed and is no longer. That thing is Time itself. Every second as it emerges into Creation, in the blink of an eye, it is gone.

continued on back page

The *Kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They are permitted to attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The *Kohen Gadol* may not attend the funeral even of his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *Kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *Kohanim*. The physical defects that invalidate a *Kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *Kohanim*, may be eaten only by *Kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old and is free from any physi-

cal defects. The nation is commanded to “sanctify Hashem” (*Kiddush Hashem*), by insuring that one's behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender one's life rather than murder, engage in licentious relations, or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain *Melacha* — creative work — during them. New grain (“*Chadash*”) may not be used until after the second day of Pesach, when the *Omer* of barley is offered when there is a Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the Menorah and baking the *Lechem HaPanim* (the showbread) in the Temple. A man blasphemes Hashem and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

OVERVIEW



צמאה נפש
 "MY SOUL THIRSTS..."

"If those who have withdrawn (from the ways of Torah) wish to return from their ways, let them do so before they lie in the grave - the house designated for all living."

This stanza in Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra's classic is based on a passage in Iyov (30:23) in which man's mortality finds epic expression: "For I am aware that You will bring me to death, and to the house designated for all living." The great Biblical commentator and poet cries out in song that "my soul thirsts for G-d, the living G-d; my heart and flesh sing to the living G-d," the refrain which is sung at the end of each stanza. What greater expression of longing could there be than that of man's desire - and opportunity - to unite with his Creator while his heart and flesh can still sing His praises, before they reach the inevitable destination of all mortals. One is capable of even singing about death when he reflects at the Shabbos table on the precious opportunities of life and return.



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KATZ IN HATS

Nachum from Jerusalem wrote:

We were planning to buy our children pet hamsters. Is there anything wrong with having/playing with an unkosher animal? Is there anything wrong with buying/wearing pigskin gloves or having a pigskin attaché case? (Should one prefer cowhide instead?) The Chassidic 'Streimal' is rumored that it is made from beaver tails. Wouldn't touching one or wearing one make someone 'tameh' [ritually defiled]? It seems strange to me that a considerable number of Jews wear these 'tameh' skins while they daven [pray]. I would be most grateful if you can clarify this issue.

Dear Nachum,

First let's talk about pets in general. By caring for pets, children can learn to be responsible and caring. A pet can cheer up a lonely person. Dogs can guard against intruders. You can even learn good character traits from animals — e.g., modesty from a cat and industriousness from an ant.

But causing pain to animals is a Torah prohibition. If your pets are hungry, you must feed them before you yourself eat. Causing them pain or delaying their food — even once — is a serious transgression. For this reason, Rabbi Eliezar Pupo (b.1785 Sarajevo) advises against raising birds, and the same can be said of hamsters and other pets. So you must be extremely careful to treat your pet with kindness, especially pets like hamsters which are cooped up in a cage all the time.

A dog can keep away intruders. But does the dog always know who is an intruder? I know a family whose German Shepherd growls menacingly at new visitors, while the owners smile and say "Sweet dog ... He

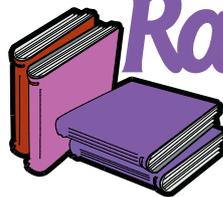
won't bite!" A truly Jewish home is open and friendly, a place of warmth for guests and visitors.

You must make sure your animal doesn't cause damage. For this reason, the Sages looked unfavorably on raising certain animals, such as dogs, unless you live in a dangerous area where you need one for protection. Sadly, most places nowadays probably fit this description.

If your pet gets loose on Shabbat, trapping it is forbidden in certain cases. Even handling an animal can be forbidden, due to the prohibition of *muktza*. Another consideration: It's a Torah prohibition to have your pet sterilized.

Ask the Rabbi

As far as having/playing with a non-kosher animal, there is in fact a Kabbalistic idea that one shouldn't stare at an unkosher animal.



What about 'unkosher' hats and gloves? It's permitted to touch an animal carcass, even though it imparts *tumah* — ritual defilement. Furthermore, once the hide is processed it no longer imparts *tumah*.

By the way, Hassidim aren't the only ones who wear fur hats: The Lithuanian-style 'Borsalino' is made from a hare/wild-rabbit fur blend.

Which reminds me: A balding gentleman goes to a dermatologist, who tells him to buy a rabbit and put it on his head.

"A rabbit?" asked the man. "How will that help?"

"Well, from a distance it looks like hare," the doctor said.

Sources:

- *Pele Yoetz, Ba'alei Chaim*
- *Beit Yosef, Yoreh Deah 107*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 409:1,3*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer 5:11,14*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 316:12, MB 54,57*
- *Shmirat Haguf V'hanefesh 237:2*
- *Rambam Hilchot Avot Hatumah 1:9*

Yiddle Riddle

Last issue we asked:

Which two tractates in the Talmud begin with the same Mishnah?

Answer: Tractate **Nidah** and Tractate **Eduyot**. Tractate **Eduyot** does not have as its focus any one subject. Rather, it contains a variety of topics, and repeats some concepts mentioned in other tractates.

Thanks to **Avi Steinhart, Jerusalem**

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SACRIFICE OF THE SOUTH

Korbanos - the offer of sacrifices - was not a Jewish monopoly, for non-Jews - “*Bnei Noach*” - offered sacrifices as well.

But what sort of sacrifices did they offer?

This point was disputed between Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Yossi bar Chanina.

One view was that they were also able to offer *Shlamim* sacrifices in which only some fatty parts of the animal were burned on the altar while the flesh was consumed by the owner of the sacrificial animal. The other view contends that the non-Jew was limited to the *Olah* sacrifice which is burned in its entirety.

The latter view bases his position on a passage in *Shir Hashirim* (4:16): “Let the north be aroused and the south enter,” which he interprets in this fashion: “Let those whose service is in the north (the non-Jews who can offer only an *Olah* whose slaughter took place only in the north part of the Sanctuary) be removed from their prominence in favor of those whose service is in the south (the Jewish nation who may also offer *Shlamim* which may be slaughtered even in the southern part.)” This transfer of importance from the nations of the world to the Jewish nation,

Rashi points out, refers to the welcoming of the *Mashiach* as redeemer.

What is the significance of this distinction between *Olah* and *Shlamim*?

The *Olah* represents a total offering of an earthly possession to Heaven, a universal concept which even those without Torah are capable of appreciating. *Shlamim*, however, comes from the word “*Shalom*” - peace - because its offering effects peace between the altar, the *Kohanim* and the owner who all share in its parts. This sublime con-

divided between the Tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin. The eastern part, which contained the entrance from the Temple Mount and the courtyards leading up to the altar belonged to Yehuda. The western part, containing the Sanctuary itself, belonged to Binyamin. In regard to the altar itself it stood on Binyamin’s territory but a narrow corridor extended from Yehuda’s territory to encompass the eastern wall of the altar.

The saintly Binyamin saw in a divine revelation that he would not have the entire altar in his share and felt deep anguish that he could not absorb that corridor so that he should have the privilege of the entire sacrificial service being performed in his area. As a reward for such a sacred longing he was given the honor of hosting the Divine Presence which rested in the western part of the *Beis Hamikdash* which was indeed in his area.

This teaches us, points out Rabbi Yaakov bar Shlomo Ibn Chovav, the author of *Ein Yaakov*, that when someone has an ambition to personally complete a *mitzvah* with his own efforts and resources, his ambition is not to be condemned as an expression of self-centered craving for honor but is rather a demonstration of a will to serve Hashem which is deserving of praise and reward.

• *Zevachim 118b*



Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

cept that even through his eating of sacrificial flesh a man participates in the service of his Creator is limited to the nation whose multitude of Torah commandments trains it to comprehend such a challenge and opportunity.

• *Zevachim 116a*

WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

The site upon which the *Beis Hamikdash* stood, says Rabbi Chama bar Chanina, was

1. Which *Kohanim* are bound by the laws of *Tumah*?
2. In general, a *Kohen* is forbidden to come into contact with the *Tumah* of a *Mes* (corpse) unless the dead person is a close relative. What is the exception to this rule?
3. Is a person permitted to cut his beard with scissors?
4. How does one honor a *Kohen*?
5. How does the Torah restrict the *Kohen Gadol* with regard to mourning?
6. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *Tumah* is penalized with *Kares* (excision). What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
7. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *Tumah*?
8. Who in the household of a *Kohen* may eat *Terumah*?
9. If the daughter of a *Kohen* marries a “*Zar*” she may no longer eat *Terumah*. What is a *Zar*?

10. What is the difference between a *Neder* (vow) and a *Nedavah* (free-will offering)?
11. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
 12. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of Hashem?
 13. How big is an *Omer*?
 14. On what day do we begin to count the “*Omer*”?
 15. Why do we begin “counting the *Omer*” at night?
 16. How does the *Omer* differ from other *Minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the *Shofar* on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*Zichron Teruah*” (‘sound of remembrance’). For what is it a ‘reminder’?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *Esrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?



I Didn't Know That!

“You shall afflict your souls on the ninth day of the month in the evening” (23:32)

If one eats and drinks on the ninth of Tishrei, the Torah views it as if he has fasted both on the ninth and the tenth of Tishrei.

Berachos 8b

Bonus Question ?

These are My appointed festivals. Six days work may be done. The seventh day is a “*Shabbos Shabbason*” (day of solemn rest.)” (23:2-3)

Why does the Torah interject a statement about **Shabbos** when it is discussing the **Festivals**?

Answers on back page

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

- 21:1 - All male *Kohanim*, even those who are disqualified from service in the *Beis Hamikdash* because of physical defects.
- 21:1 - A *Mes Mitzvah* (a person who has no one else to bury him).
- 21:5 - Yes, the Torah only forbids cutting one's beard with a razor.
- 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *Kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead in saying blessings before and after meals.
- 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
- 22:3 - Eats.
- 22:5 - A *K'zayis* (olive's size).

- 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters, and his non-Jewish slaves.
- 22:12 - A non-*Kohen*.



- 22:18 - A *Neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *Nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
- 22:28 - Yes. The prohibition is against slaughtering an animal and its *mother* on the same day.
- 22:32 - Willfully transgressing His

commandments.

- 23:10 - One tenth of an *Eipha*.
- 23:15 - On the 16th of *Nissan*.
- 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be *complete*.
- 23:16 - It was made from barley.
- 23:24 - The "*Akeidas* (binding of) *Yitzchak*."
- 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
- 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemos* 2:12).
- 24:21 - Death by strangulation.

Recommended Reading List

RAMBAN

21:6	Holiness
22:32	Sanctifying G-d
23:17	Leavened Bread
23:27	Judgment and Repentance
23:40	The <i>Esrog</i>

SEFER HACHINUCH

291	Perfection of Creation
294	Divine Providence
296	Purpose of Creation
306	Counting the <i>Omer</i>
313	Yom Kippur
324	The <i>Lulav</i>
325	The <i>Succah</i>

Bonus Answer!

The six days to which the Torah is referring are the Festival days of *Succos*, *Shemini Atzeres*, the first and last days of *Pesach*, *Shavuos*, and *Rosh Hashanah*. On these days *Melacha* connected with food preparation may be performed. The "seventh" day corresponds to the "*Shabbos Shabbason*" of *Yom Kippur*, on which even *Melacha* connected with food preparation may not be performed.

• *Shem MiShimon, attributed to the Vilna Gaon*

HAFTORAH: Yechezkel 44:15-31

The literal meaning of the word '*Kohen*' includes both the idea of *basis* and *direction*. Even when the masses are infatuated by heathen concepts, and immorality is rife amongst the powerful, the *Kohen* must guard the sanctuary of

the Torah, re-affirming both the *basis* and the *direction* of Jewish life. However, the priests did not always live up to their calling - and their name - and Hashem proclaimed that they were to be barred from the priestly functions of bringing the offer-

ings. However in contrast to these people, the Haftorah depicts those priests who, revering their ancestor *Zadok*, showed a brilliant contrast and kept the true spirit of the tribe of *Levi*.

• *Adapted from Rabbi Mendel Hirsch*

INSIGHTS...continued from page one

Time passed is no longer, and every second becomes immediately and at once, the past.

Man, however, through his actions in Time can Give Time itself a substance that makes it eternal. An action gives the time in which that action is being done the substance and the character of the action itself. So if time is used to do a *mitzvah*, to do a kindness,

or to learn Torah, then because these things are eternal in themselves, they in turn eternalize Man's time. This is what the Midrash means when it says "When are they (the weeks) perfect? When they do the will of the Omnipresent." The Counting of the Omer is a paradigm for the years of the life of Man - the "Seven Shabbosos" allude to "The days of

our years have in them 70 years." (*Tehillim*) The *mitzvah* of Counting The Omer demands that "complete and perfect they must be." When those hours do the will of Hashem, then Time itself stays eternally concrete and substantial.

• *Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin*

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