

OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI-HACHODESH · 27 ADAR 5764 · MAR. 20, 2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 22

PARSHA INSIGHTS

ENOUGH IS MORE THAN ENOUGH

“But the work had been enough for all the work to do it – and there was extra” (36:7)

The command to build the Mishkan brought forth from the Jewish People an unprecedented wave of generosity. They brought gold and silver and copper; turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool; linen, goat hair, red-dyed ram skins, *tachash* skins; acacia wood; together with all manner of precious gems, spices and oil.

The Torah teaches us that work of gathering all the materials produced “*enough for all the work to do it – and there was extra.*”

If there was enough, how could there be more than enough. How could there be extra?

The Ohr HaChaim teaches us that miraculously the Mishkan accommodated all that was brought for it. In order

that no one be embarrassed by the return of his or her contribution, all the “extra” became “enough.” The Mishkan miraculously incorporated every gift, without it or its vessels changing in any way.

If you think about it, it really couldn’t be any other way.

Back in Parshat Terumah it says, “Make Me a Mishkan (lit. a “dwelling”), and I will dwell in you.” The commentators are quick to point out that the verse is a non sequitur. It should have said, “Make Me a Mishkan and I will dwell in *it.*” Not “in you.”

Every Jew has the ability to make his heart a place where the Divine Presence may dwell in this world. The Mishkan is no more that a physical representation of the longing for G-dliness that lies in every Jew.

Thus, by definition, no gift could ever be superfluous, for the Mishkan was no more that the physical embodiment of this desire to give, the desire for holiness.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Vayakhel

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.

Pekudei

The Book of Shemot concludes with this Parsha. After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the Mishkan, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels, which had been fashioned. *Bnei Yisrael* bring everything to Moshe. He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to G-d’s specifications. Moshe blesses the people. Hashem speaks to Moshe and tells him that the Mishkan should be set up on the first day of the first month, i.e., Nissan. He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the Mishkan and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that G-d’s glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, *Bnei Yisrael* would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

WHAT IS A BAR MITZVAH?

What is a “bar mitzvah”? The answer you will get to this question will vary according to which youngster you ask.

The child from an observant family will proudly tell you that a “bar mitzvah” is a boy who reaches the age of thirteen and assumes the full responsibility of an adult in fulfilling the *mitzvot* commanded by G-d (bar = son, mitzvah = commandment). For him the celebration surrounding this event is an expression of the joy he and his family feel in having such a privilege.

The youngster growing up in a secular home will respond that this is an occasion for ending his hated after-school Hebrew lessons and bar mitzvah preparations which deserves a big party (that often has much more “bar” than “mitzvah” to it).

It is the lavish nature of many of these bar mitzvah bashes, some of them catered affairs including DJs and dancers, which has inspired the envy of the non-Jewish classmates of the bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah celebrants. A front-page article in the Wall Street Journal on January 14th reported

that these upscale gentile youngsters are pestering their parents to throw similar parties for them. Some Jews, notes the Journal, are concerned that these faux bar mitzvah celebrations featuring candle-lighting ceremonies for relatives are a mockery of Judaism.

This week, a special reading of Parshat Hachodesh is added to the regular portion. It deals with what may be viewed as the “bar mitzvah” of the Jewish People because it reports the first mitzvah given to them, the maintenance of the Jewish lunar calendar. This should serve as a reminder to the party-throwers that it is they who are guilty of making a mockery of Judaism by making the bar mitzvah of their sons the end of learning about Judaism rather than the beginning of responsibility.

Rather than throw parties that invite the envy of their gentile neighbors, these Jews should follow the example of those who have chosen the alternative of celebrating the bar mitzvah with a family trip to Israel and the Western Wall or making a donation to charity. Such bar mitzvah celebrations will mean so much more for Jewry and for Israel forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A PURIM TO REMEMBER

A letter received from the Sanhedria Children's Home in Jerusalem:

A former student of your institute, Mr. Yonatan Eisenberg, contacted us about two weeks ago. He offered to come with some Ohr Somayach students to our facility and to provide the children with an afternoon of fun and games, all in the spirit of Purim.

A bit of background information. *Sanhedria* integrates young children at risk (boys aged 7-14) who have been removed from the parents' home by court order and are referred to us by Social Services. The children come from dysfunctional households, where there is often a history of alcoholism, physical and emotional abuse, in the backdrop of a lifestyle considerably below the poverty line. Our goal is to nurture the children in a Torah-true and trusting environ-

ment where they will interact with their peers and be able to communicate within a social framework.

With their high spirit and energy, Yonatan and his team shed light and happiness upon children who otherwise would not receive the very special attention that they thought to bestow on them. Additionally, Mrs. Eisenberg and her friend baked *hamentashen* and prepared goody bags for each and every child – what a treat!

We feel it is important for you to know from the outside, what a *Kiddush Hashem* these young men made with their *ma'asim tovim*. They are an asset to your organization, to the community and to *Am Israel*. We would be glad to welcome them any time – thanks to their warm souls and to their generosity, our boys had an afternoon that they will long remember.

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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 Vayakhel’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.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

BEERSHEBA – A SPRING AND AN OATH

Beer means a spring and *Sheva* means an oath, and the two combine to form the name of the city that is known as the capital of the Negev of modern Israel.

Ancient Beersheba is where the Patriarch Avraham discovered a spring and where he made a



covenant with the Philistines which he sealed with an oath. The well built on this spring was eventually stuffed up by the Philistines until the Patriarch Yitzchak restored it to use. Like his father he also made a covenant with the Philistines and reinstated the name given to it, which became the name of the city which grew around it.

A METROPOLIS WITH EVERYTHING

“A metropolis that has everything.” This is the praise of the Jewish people that Rabbi Meir states is contained in the Torah passage “He made you and firmly established you” (*Devarim 32:6*). This quality of being self-sufficient is expressed in the fact that its priests were from their own people in the form of Aharon and his descendants, its kings could not be imported from another nation (*ibid. 17:15*) and its prophets, like Moshe, would be from their own ranks (*ibid 18:15*).

To establish this history of self-sufficiency, points out Maharsha, there is no need to cite any further proofs than the Torah sources listed above. Rabbi Meir nevertheless cites a passage from the Prophet Zachariah (*10:4*) to show that being independent of any other nation for its religious and political leadership is a source of pride.

This passage, however, only makes mention of the fact that “from out of them shall come their cornerstone and their stake”, symbolic references to the king and the *kohen gadol*, and “out of them the battle bow”, signifying their lack of dependence on others to fight their wars. There is no allusion to the prophet in it. Perhaps there was no need for the prophet to stress this as well since it was Zachariah, a prophet from his own Jewish people, who was delivering this prophecy and thus serving as a living proof that prophets too did not have to be imported.

• *Chullin 56b*

BITTER FRUITS OF ANARCHY

“In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was proper in his eyes.” (*Shoftim 17:7*) This observation on the anarchy that existed in a

period of Jewish history is used in our *gemara* by Rabbi Acha, the son of the Sage Rava, as a challenge to the experiment made by Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta to scientifically verify King Solomon’s thesis that ants have no ruler. The latter had maneuvered a group of ants into suspecting one of their number as having deceived them. The fact that these ants immediately fell upon the suspected liar and killed him without receiving permission from their ruler convinced the Sage that ants have no ruler and he assumed that King Solomon had based his thesis on such an experiment.

One of the challenges posed to this proof in order to establish that Solomon’s thesis was based on Divine inspiration rather than human wisdom was that the above-mentioned experiment may have been conducted during an interregnum period before a new ruler was appointed to succeed the one who had passed away. In such a period anarchy reigns as we see in that period of Jewish history when there was no king.

The tragic result of that anarchy was the emergence of *Pessel Micha*, an idol that was worshipped by the Tribe of Dan for the centuries that the Mishkan Sanctuary stood in Shilo. Had there been a king in Israel he would certainly have taken action to prevent such an abomination from taking hold.

The commentaries place this period as the time following the passing of Yehoshua who ruled as a virtual king. The judges who followed this period of anarchy, beginning with Osniel ben Kenaz and ending with Eli Hakohen, lacked the power to eliminate this already established evil and it was left to the Prophet Shmuel to do so following the destruction of the Shiloh Sanctuary.

• *Chullin 57b*

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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NOAHIDE LAWS

From: Maggy Moens

Dear Rabbi,

I am a non-Jewish woman who loves to browse your website because there are pearls of wisdom in it. I have a problem. I read that the commands given to Noah must be obeyed by all of mankind. Jews are no missionaries. Who shall teach these commands, in the right way, to non-Jewish people who seek to live a life pleasant in the eyes of the Divine Architect? I know very well that your flock is enormous and that I am "stealing" your time. Thank you for answering me, if you have time.

Dear Maggy,

Thank you for your kind words. Consider yourself part of the flock, and it's a pleasure to answer your question, which interests others as well.

Before the giving of the Torah there was no specific legal definition of a Jew, because the law had not been given yet. This means that the people who came to Mt. Sinai were not Jews in a legal sense. In fact, the Revelation at Mt. Sinai can be viewed as a mass conversion to Judaism of millions of descendants of Abraham. In this sense, every Jew is descended from a convert; some go back to Sinai, and some later in history.

The idea of conversion after Mt. Sinai is mentioned in the Torah itself and we are exhorted more than thirty times to treat converts kindly. One example is, "When a convert lives

among you in your land, do not oppress him. The convert shall be like one of your citizens and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

However, in general we do not encourage conversion. Judaism does not consider those of other religions to be condemned to damnation. We believe that a person can be completely righteous and merit the World-to-Come without conversion, by adhering to the basic moral laws revealed to Noah. If a gentile keeps the seven Noahide laws, he merits a portion in the World-to-Come, and there is no imperative for him to become Jewish.

These Seven Universal Laws prohibit: 1] idolatry, 2] blasphemy and cursing the Name of G-d, 3] murder, 4] robbery and theft, 5] immorality and forbidden sexual relations, 6] removing and eating a limb from a live animal and 7] require the establishment of a justice system and courts of law to enforce the other six laws. Any non-Jew who keeps these laws in all their detail because G-d so commanded in the Torah as revealed through Moses, and not simply out of logic, is considered a righteous gentile deserving the World-to-Come.

Maimonides writes: "Moses was commanded from the mouth of G-d to convince all the inhabitants of the world to observe the commandments given to the Children of Noah" [Mishna Torah, Kings 8:10]. However, it may be that this is only so when the Jews are clearly recognized as the Chosen People of G-d and will be listened to. If that is not the case (as has been for well over two thousand years) there may no longer be an obligation to do so. Nevertheless, if non-Jews sincerely seek to learn and observe the Noahide laws from authoritative rabbis, they would certainly be accepted.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE TWO-HEADED CREATURE

Question: About half a year ago you dealt in this column with the issue of cell-phones. Can you offer some guidelines on how to properly use this very useful – and sometimes very disturbing – instrument?

Answer: No one can question the value of these instruments of communication for some people. But this instrument is a two-headed creature in more ways than one. In our last discussion on this subject we focused on the failure of people to turn off their cell-phones when they are in public places which insist on their doing so. We also discussed the insensitivity of people carrying on loud conversations that disturb fellow passengers on public vehicles. There are, however, other dangers in cell-phones which caring parents should be aware of.

Many cell-phones in use today provide access to so-called information and entertainment material which hardly any parent would wish his child to be exposed to. As a result the control which parents try to maintain in the home is lost.

Speaking of control it was once assumed that parents could somehow supervise with whom their son or daughter is in contact by knowing that phone calls made to them would be made to their home. There are, unfortunately, some unsavory people who exploit the cell-phone revolution for developing relationships unknown to parents and unwelcome to them.

Parents who give their children a cell-phone so that they can always "be close to home" should take the necessary precautions to prevent this two-headed creature from pulling them away from home.

PARSHA Q&A?

1. Why is the word Mishkan stated twice in verse 38:21?
2. Why is the Mishkan called the "Mishkan of Testimony"?
3. Who was appointed to carry the vessels of the Mishkan in the *midbar*?
4. Who was the officer in charge of the *levi'im*?
5. What is the meaning of the name Betzalel?
6. How many people contributed a half-shekel to the Mishkan? Who contributed?
7. Which material used in the *bigdei kehuna* was not used in the coverings of the sacred vessels?
8. How were the gold threads made?
9. What was inscribed on the stones on the shoulders of the *ephod*?
10. What was on the hem of the *me'il*?
11. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear between the *mitznefet* and the *tzitzit*?
12. What role did Moshe play in the construction of the Mishkan?
13. Which date was the first time that the Mishkan was erected and not dismantled?
14. What was the "tent" which Moshe spread over the Mishkan (40:19)?
15. What "testimony" did Moshe place in the *aron*?
16. What function did the *parochet* serve?
17. Where was the *shulchan* placed in the Mishkan?
18. Where was the *menorah* placed in the Mishkan?
19. Who offered the communal sacrifices during the eight days of the dedication of the Mishkan?
20. On which day did both Moshe and Aharon serve as *kohanim*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Pekudei's Questions!

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

1. 38:21 - To allude to the *Beit Hamikdash* that would twice be taken as a "*mashkon*" (pledge) for the sins of the Jewish People until the nation repents.
2. 38:21 - It was testimony for the Jewish People that G-d forgave them for the golden calf and allowed His *Shechina* to dwell among them.
3. 38:21 - The *levi'im*.
4. 38:21 - Itamar ben Aharon.
5. 38:22 - "In the shadow of G-d."
6. 38:26 - 603,550. Every man age twenty and over (except the *levi'im*).
7. 39:1 - Linen (See *Rashi 31:10*).
8. 39:3 - The gold was beaten into thin plates from which threads were cut. (See *Rashi 28:6*).
9. 39:6, 39:7 - The names of the tribes.
10. 39:24,25 - Woven pomegranates and golden bells.
11. 39:31 - *Tefillin*.
12. 39:33 - He stood it up.
13. 40:17 - *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* of the second year in the desert. For seven days before this, during the consecration of Aharon and his sons, Moshe erected and dismantled the Mishkan. (*Rashi 39:29*)
14. 40:19 - The curtain of goatskin.
15. 40:20 - The *Luchot Habrit*.
16. 40:21 - It served as a partition for the *aron*.
17. 40:22 - On the northern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed*, outside the *parochet*.
18. 40:24 - On the southern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed* opposite the *shulchan*.
19. 40:29 - Moshe.
20. 40:31 - On the eighth day of the consecration of the Mishkan

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

"The Other Side of the Story" on Ohr.edu

Not an inquiry, merely a comment: I was delighted by your collection of "Other Side of the Story" items. I like to consider myself an extremely open-minded, tolerant, non-judgmental person, but when I stop to think about it I am constantly making snap judgments. If I am angry at someone, or feel disapproval, I try to remember to remind myself: "This is a good person. Perhaps I don't understand his action. Or perhaps I am right to disapprove of the action, but surely it is not deliberate. Before I condemn one misstep, have I praised every act of kindness he's done?"

I think it's helpful to refrain from rushing to judge *anything*, not just people. Once we have judged something (even when

the judgment is positive), all too often we turn off our curiosity and our senses. Some people feel like they need to have an opinion on everything (even things they don't know about; they'll condemn a book or movie without having read or seen it). And look how I am now making judgments! Judging is not merely unfair to others; it's unfair to ourselves, it closes our minds and stops us from having dynamic, lively encounters with the world around us!

Anyway, this column serves a very useful function (particularly in the increasingly self-righteous, intolerant, you're-with-us-or-you're-against-us climate of contemporary America).

Thank you!

• P. G.