

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

I REPEAT

Don't be alarmed and think that the publisher of your Chumash got stuck. Indeed the Chumash says the same thing twelve times in a row at the end of this week's Parsha. "One silver bowl filled with flour, one silver basin filled with flour" etc.... The twelve Nasi'im (heads of tribe) brought the same exact offering to celebrate the completion of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Each offering is written out in full because each Nasi had different *kavanot* (intentions) while doing the exact same action. It was this difference that gave each offering a

unique inner quality.

Okay, so it's not a typo in the Chumash, but couldn't the second or third Nasi have been a little more original? In fact each one was. People come up with the strangest ways of expressing their individuality. Very often they resort to some eye-popping extreme. This week's Parsha teaches us that distinctiveness is just as much about what's inside your heart and mind as it is about what you do. So don't feel bad if you're not the world's greatest underwater-diver-while-standing-on-your-head-knife-juggler. True individuality is inside a person.

• Source: *Midrash Rabba*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a spe-

cial ink that was used for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to Hashem for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nisan* in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

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ANOTHER PIECE OF PEACE

The search for peace with our hostile neighbors is a prime concern of everyone in Eretz Yisrael. There is another piece of peace which is missing in the lives of so many of us which can be learned from a short chapter in the Torah portion which will be read this week in synagogues everywhere.

Aaron and his descendants were commanded to bestow three blessings on the Children of Israel. The first of these is a blessing for material prosperity. The second, calling for "G-d shining His countenance upon you", is a blessing for spiritual elevation. The third is a blessing for peace, which means harmony between the material and spiritual dimensions of our

existence.

In their haste to develop a modern state with a strong military and a solid economy many Israelis have lost this balance between the material and the spiritual. This is evident in many aspects of our society, from the school system to the political one.

Perhaps the time has come for a nation so anxious for peace with its neighbors to do some soul-searching about that other piece of peace, the harmony that must exist between matter and spirit. Once that peace has been achieved we can look forward to Divine help in achieving that other peace for Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

LAND OF THE PERFECT MATCH

The *midrash* thus extols the perfect match between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel. "Sometimes there is a man who has a pleasant appearance but his garments are repulsive. Sometimes there are pleasant garments on a repulsive person. The People of Israel and the Land of



Israel, however, form a perfect match for both are so pleasant."

The People of Israel were given *mitzvot* by G-d, and the Land of Israel is a place to which G-d gives special attention and in which more *mitzvot* can be performed than anywhere else – a perfect match!

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's *Parsha*?
2. Besides transporting the *Mishkan*, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is referred to in this *Parsha*?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *teme'im* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnot kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnot kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the name of Hashem is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people "with a full heart." What word in the *Parsha* conveys this idea of "a full heart?"
18. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem bless you and guard you?"
19. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May Hashem lift up His countenance upon you?"
20. The tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
4. 5:2 - The camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the camp of Levi which was surrounded by the camp of *Yisrael*.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the camp of the *Shechina*.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of Hashem is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shelamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - "*Amor.*"
18. 6:24 - "May Hashem bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissachar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

BONUS QUESTION ?

Question: Why was the honorable duty of taking care of the *Aron* given to Kehat son of Levi (*Bamidbar* 4:4-6) instead of to Levi's firstborn, Gershon (*Bamidbar* 4:24-26)?

BONUS ANSWER !

Answer: If the duty of taking care of the *Aron* — the prime representation of Torah — were given to Levi's firstborn, people might think that Torah is received as an "inheritance," as is the Crown of Royalty and the Crown of *Kehuna*. The Crown of Torah, however, is available to anyone who toils in the study of Torah.

• Kli Yakar

NOTHING FLESH AND NOTHING HEALERS

“For all the gods of the nations are *elilim*” is what we say in our daily morning prayers as we contrast the insignificance of all the idols worshipped by man with “G-d who created the heavens.”

The term *elilim* is a combination of the two Hebrew words for “no” (*al* and *lo*). It appears in our *gemara* in the discussion of the term *elil*, which is mentioned in the *mishna* as a part of an animal which is considered food, in regard to the laws of *tumah* (ritual impurity). Rabbi Yochanan defines this *elil* as *martka*, which is beyond recovery once removed from the animal. Whether this means the spinal and neck sinew as explained by Rashi, or dead flesh according to Tosefot, the concept common to both is that this is a substance which has no potential for life.

Rabbi Yochanan cites as a source for his definition a passage in *Iyov* (13:4) in which this suffering righteous man rebukes the friends who have come to comfort him in his grief that “they are all *elil* (nothing) healers” for suggesting that his suffering was the result of his sins. Although his friends had the best of intentions and presented some powerful theological expositions, *Iyov* was disappointed in his dialogue with them, dismissing their healing efforts as nothing, and turning to G-d Himself for a dialogue as to why so righteous a man should be inflicted with so much suffering.

• *Chullin 121a*

CHANGING THE SUBJECT

A challenging question in halacha was put before the Sage Rabba bar Rav Huna and his response was a mysterious one. “Look at the raven flying above,” he said

to Rabbi Avia Saba who had presented the problem. It was apparent that he wished to dismiss discussion of that problem and to go on to another subject.

This surprised his son Rava who assumed that his father had changed the subject because he felt that the question did not even deserve discussion. “But is the one who asked the question not the Sage Avia Saba from Pumpedisa for whom you have such high regard?” he asked his father.

“*Samchuni beashishot* today” replied the father, referring to a passage in *Shir Hashirim* (2:5), “and the problem he presented required more thought than I am capable of.”

Two different interpretations of his response are offered by the commentaries based on two different meanings of the word *semicha*. Rashi’s approach is that the use of that word was in its meaning as support. This Sage was exhausted from delivering the public Torah lecture that traditionally took place on the Shabbat during one of the Festivals. He therefore quoted King Solomon’s call for “supporting me with dainty cakes” as a way of expressing his need for physical support which prevented him from properly dealing with the problem presented to him.

Rabbi Natan of Rome, in his *Sefer Ha’Aruch*, bases his interpretation on a different meaning of *semicha*. This is a term used for ordaining a scholar in Talmudic times with special authority as a rabbinical judge or as head of a *yeshiva*. (Today the term is used for ordaining one as a rabbi.) On the day the problem was presented to Rabba bar Rav Huna, he had been appointed head of the *yeshiva* and the excitement of this new responsibility left him unable to concentrate sufficiently to deal with the question.

• *Chullin 124b*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

TESTING AND FASTING?

Law students taking the State Bar examinations in California will not be compelled to take the test on July 27 if it interferes with their religious practice.

The date set for this examination is the Hebrew date of 9 Av when Jews fast in mourning for the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*. After an eight-month lobbying effort by Jewish students and organizations, the bar examination committee reversed an earlier decision and allowed observant Jews to have the same privilege as their counterparts in New York,

New Jersey, Illinois and Missouri of postponing the test to a more convenient date.

It all started with an appeal from test candidate Baruch Cohen who sent a letter to the state bar’s admissions office in which he explained the nature of the day and its restrictions on eating and washing.

“The California bar examination is challenging enough as it is,” he wrote. “It must be hard to imagine what it must be like to take this grueling exam while fasting and not showering.”

WIGS AND IDOLATRY

From: T. R. in Belgium

Dear Rabbi,

Could you please enlighten me on the controversy surrounding wearing wigs made of human hair from India, and also is it permissible to continue wearing one. Thank you in advance, T. R.

Dear T.R.

The Rabbis who oppose the use of Indian-hair wigs are not just splitting hairs. The root of the problem is that the hair from India comes from idolatrous ceremonies. Worshipers grow their hair in honor of a certain god, pledging to cut the hair at the temple of the god as a sacrificial thank-offering when their prayer is answered. Of the 20 million annual pilgrims to the Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh, millions offer their hair. Six hundred barbers are employed by the temple to shave the pilgrims' hair 24 hours a day. Inside the "tonsuring" room, devotees sit cross-legged on the floor, and bend their head forward to let a temple barber shave their scalp with a straight razor blade. Attendants collect the bundles of hair in dustpans and deposit them in large bins.

The hair is then auctioned to wigmakers, earning the temple a hair-raising 5.6 million dollars. Although India is a small part of the global hair business compared to China, Indian temple hair heads the industry in price. Indian hair is generally finer than Chinese and more similar to European and American hair. After being processed, Tirupati hair longer than 16 inches sells for as much as \$165 a kilogram (2.2 pounds). Shorter hair goes for about \$100 a kilogram. Some strands bought at auction are made into hair extensions that are sold to Western women for as much as \$3,000 for a full head of hair.

The problem is that the Torah not only forbids idolatry itself, but also prohibits deriving benefit from any accessory, decoration or sacrifice to idol worship. Primarily, such a sacrifice is forbidden only when it is similar to the Jewish Temple offerings of meat, flour, oil, wine and water. However, when this object of idolatrous sacrifice (*tikrovet avoda zara*) is what's normally offered, and is cut or broken in honor of the god, it is also forbidden to derive benefit from it in any way. Furthermore, the sacrificed object can never be nullified, even if it's been changed or altered by some process, and even if it's been indiscernibly mixed with some other permitted material.

According to this, the Indian woman who tilts her head to have her hair cut, as well as the idolatrous barber who cuts it, are both actively offering a sacrifice to the god, prohibiting the hair from being used in any way, even if it's eventual-

ly processed and mixed with other, permitted hair. [In fact, L-Cysteine, a certain food ingredient that can be produced from human hair, would also prohibit an entire food if the source is hair from India, for the above reason that anything which is sacrificed to idolatry can never be nullified.] This means that any wig with human hair would be forbidden to wear unless it could be ascertained for certain that none of the hair originated in India.

A leading Torah authority, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, asserts that there are other problems than just wearing such a wig. Rambam writes that the prohibition against deriving benefit from offerings to idol worship is from the verse, "Nor shall you bring an abhorrence into your house" (Deut. 7:26). Accordingly, he writes, it should be forbidden to keep such a wig in the home even without wearing it. Also, since the actual money received for objects sacrificed in idol worship becomes forbidden, one must be careful not to receive money from one who sells or otherwise works with such wigs. He suggests that one who buys a synthetic wig or other permitted item from a person who profits from such wigs should pay the exact price in cash, or with a check or credit card, in order to avoid receiving change from money that may have been paid for them.

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv has also been in the center of this controversy and has also recently prohibited Indian wigs. After sending a representative to India to witness the Tirupati temple ceremony firsthand, he ruled as follows: Regarding human hair wigs in Israel, since most are from Indian hair, all are forbidden unless the origin is known. Regarding wigs in other countries, if the majority of wigs are from a permitted source, all wigs are technically permitted, but one must clarify the source of each specific wig. Regarding wigs made from synthetic hair, if they contain human hair as well (which is often the case), they must be treated as other human hair wigs as above. In a case of doubt whether they contain human hair, they are permitted. Rabbi Elyashiv concludes that since objects associated with idol worship are to be burnt in fire, wigs from hair generally known to originate in India *should* be burned, while wigs specifically known to be from the Tirupati temple *must* be burned.

Sources:

- *Avoda Zara 50a,b*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 139:1,2,3*
- *Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, Da'at v'Halacha; Teshuvot v'Hanhagot 2:414; Public letter of Iyar 5764*
- *Rabbi Mordechai Gross, in Teshuvot M'Beit Levi (regarding L-Cysteine)*
- *Rambam, Avoda Zara 7:2, also see Rashi, Avoda Zara 64a, s.v. "Rabbanan"*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 133:1*
- *Public letter of Rabbi Joseph Efrati in the name of Rabbi Elyashiv, 22 Iyar 5764*

ANOTHER SORT OF ADDICTION

Question: This past Pesach I was a guest at a friend's Seder and was the "victim" of the traditional stealing of my *afikomen* by one of my host's children. In order to get it back I had to promise the youngster a gift. Am I really obligated to keep this promise or is this a mere ritual?

Answer: Rabbi Zeira (*Mesechta Succa 46b*) warned that a person should never make a promise of a gift to a child and fail to keep his promise. Doing so, he pointed out, trains the youngster that it is proper to lie.

The same passage from the Prophet Yirmiyahu that he cites as a warning that lying can be addictive was quoted by the Sage Rav (*Mesechta Yevamot 63a*), when he praised and

scolded his son Chiya for lying with good intentions. Rav had a difficult wife who would always prepare a meal for him completely opposite to what he had requested. Chiya served as a go-between and when he grew old enough to realize what was happening he switched the instructions given to him by his father. When Rav arrived home to surprisingly find the meal he really wanted, he asked his son whether his mother had suddenly changed her contrary ways. Upon hearing Chiya's explanation of the switch, Rav complimented him on his cleverness but warned him not to ever lie in that fashion again lest he become addicted to deviating from the truth.

Go ahead and give the child the gift you promised.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Re: Israel Forever - Can a Holiday be Any Day? (Ohrnet Emor)

Ohrnet wrote that "Even in Israel we saw last month how the 5th of Iyar Independence Day was moved to a day later." I ask: "Wasn't this done as an adjustment to prevent Chillul Shabbat (derived from the original law), one of the times this has been done by an Israeli government? They should be praised for it!"

• Ira

Ohrnet wholehearted agrees.

Waiting Between Meat and Milk (Ohrnet Emor)

I refer to page 4 in Ohr Somayach's weekly and extremely educational and interesting Ohrnet magazine in the DAFootnote section for Chullin 100-106 about your writing about a six hour wait between meat and milk.

It seems you have inadvertently relegated all less than six-hour waiters to second class status by not mentioning the "length of time [between eating meat and milk] according to varying customs" until the very last paragraph of a fairly lengthy note. Could you please publish a definitive brief note on this? It has sparked some controversy in my household at least. Thank you kindly,

• S. L.

Ohrnet replies: Yes, you are correct, and six hours was emphasized merely since it is the prevalent custom.

Omer Reminders on Cell-Phones

To the Ohrnet reader in the Public Domain feature who was suggested in a recent edition of Ohrnet magazine that perhaps Ohr Somayach could provide an Omer reminder service via cellphones. For the last five years I have sent around 500,000 SMS (text) messages reminding people to count the Omer. Every night around 1000 cellphones in 13 countries beep, and when their owners look at the phone they will see a small message "Hayom shnaim veesrim (22) yom...".

If you want to receive the reminder next year then sign up for the service already this year. There are three simple ways to register. In Israel send SMS with text OMER ON to the number 1315. In Israel the service is 0.5nis per reminder charged on the monthly bill. Outside Israel send SMS to +972544688321 With text OMER <homecity> <mobile-operator> Or by email to myomer@uku.co.uk with mobile number (including international dialing code 1 for US/Canada) homecity and mobileoperator in the body of the text. Message in Israel is in Hebrew, outside Israel written with Latin letters. To stop the service send SMS OMER OFF to the above numbers.

• David