

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

A BETZALEL PRODUCTION

It always amazes me how many people it takes to make a movie. The end credits of a major production read like the telephone directory of a small town — hundreds of people all involved in bringing us a couple of hours of fantasy. And yet at the beginning of the film there is always one name by itself. “A Francis Ford Coppola Film” or “A Martin Scorsese Film” or “A Steven Spielberg Production.” In spite of the myriad of workers on a film, the film is still called after its director, for it is his vision that makes the film.

Everything in this world is a marriage of form and matter. Take a spoon for example. The matter of the spoon is the metal. Its form is its shape. The form of something always reveals its purpose. The form of a spoon is that it has a handle at one end to grasp it and a receptacle at the other to contain soup, sugar and the like. The form of something always reveals its purpose, and the purpose of something is its spiritual dimension. Even a spoon has a spiritual side! Everything in this world reveals a marriage of the physical and the spiritual, of matter and shape, of potential and purpose.

Just as the lowest physical object unifies these two entities, so does the highest of physical existences. The Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was one of the most spiritual physical objects that existed. It was the ‘house’ in which the Shechina, the Divine Presence would dwell.

The Mishkan was constructed by many people. Moshe called upon every G-d-fearing man and woman to assist by spinning and weaving tapestries and con-

structing the components of the walls of the Mishkan with their own hands. The special skill of the women was spinning goats’ hair for the tapestries. The hair was both fine and stiff which made it difficult to work with.

G-d gave all those who worked on the Mishkan a measure of special know-how. This supernal wisdom was not limited only to humans. Even the animals that transported the beams of the Mishkan knew which route to take and did not require guidance.

The two people in charge of building the Mishkan were Betzalel and Oholiav. G-d gave them a special degree of insight to help them fulfill their task of fashioning the vessels of the Mishkan and to form even the most delicate of patterns, all of which were necessary for the vessels to perform their allotted spiritual functions.

However, in the Torah, the only one who seems to receive credit for the building of the Mishkan is Betzalel. The verses in the Torah repeat over and over “...and he made it.”

The reason is that Betzalel not only exerted himself in the physical construction of the Mishkan; he labored more than anyone else to understand the spiritual depths in each of the mystical vessels of the Mishkan. Because of this effort, G-d rewarded him with the highest level of spiritual insight into the Mishkan and its implements.

Betzalel endowed the vessels of the Mishkan with lofty and holy thoughts. He was the spiritual maker of all that it contained and thus the Torah attributes the construction to Betzalel alone.

It was a “Betzalel Production.”

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

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.

ISRAEL Forever

THE SECRET OF UNITY

“Unity” is the catchword of Israeli politics today. Opponents of Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement plan protest that he is dividing the nation. The call from some extremists in the ranks of the protesters for soldiers to disobey orders to evacuate settlers is condemned by government and IDF heads as dividing the nation's army.

So everyone wants unity! Let's see what this week's Torah portion has to say on this subject.

Vayakhel, the title of this portion, means “he assembled them”. This was not a gathering of a part of the people for the purpose of protest or of a demonstration against the

protesters. This was an assembly of all the people who came to hear their leader Moshe, upon his descent from Heaven, communicate to them the commands of G-d.

Unity without every Jew subservient to Divine guidance is an illusion which becomes a temporary reality when faced by a common danger. Where man is guided only by his own intelligence and interests, the inevitable result is the conflict of interests which produces rival political movements, each claiming to be the champion of unity.

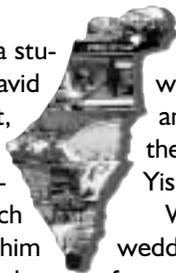
Only a common allegiance to Torah can create a lasting unity to hold Israel together forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

ANNIVERSARY OF A MODERN LEGEND

Most legends connected with Eretz Yisrael go back centuries or even millennia. But there are modern legends as well.

One of them is about a young Jerusalem yeshiva student who is a volunteer paramedic with Magen David Adom. Exactly two years ago, on Saturday night, March 9, 2002, Yishai found himself together with friends near the Moment Cafe in the Rechavia neighborhood of the capital. The powerful explosion which rocked the cafe and claimed many victims alarmed him to action. Although this was after Shabbat and he had no equipment with him and he was detached from the crew he usually worked with, Yishai felt an urgent need to do whatever he could to help. Arriving at the scene of the



bombing before the ambulances, he saw a woman with blood gushing from her leg. Without his usual tourniquet that he carries with him on weekdays, he ripped off his white shirt and removed his tzitzit garment which he tied around the wound. Minutes later the ambulance arrived and took the wounded woman to the hospital where the operating surgeon said that Yishai's quick thinking and action saved her life.

When Yishai and his bride Aderet celebrated their wedding recently, they received a Mazel Tov from afar from the woman he had saved. After a long and painful convalescence she has fulfilled her dream of studying in England, having won a competition for a prestigious scholarship.

לע"נ
מרת אסתר רבקה בת ר' בן ציון הלוי ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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 this Week’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 does not 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.

S I Y U M

Completion of the Eleventh Cycle of Daf Hayomi

RAISING THE I.Q.

“What should a man do to become wise in Torah?” asked the Jews of Alexandria of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanina. “Let him spend much time studying and little time in business,” was the Sage’s reply.

“But many have done so,” they persisted, “and have not succeeded.”

“Then let him pray to the One to whom wisdom belongs.”

Why, asks the Talmud, did he first mention the need for much study if, in the end, everything depends on prayer?

Rabbi Yehoshua taught the people of Alexandria that success in acquiring wisdom can only be achieved through a combination of study and prayer, and that one without the other is insufficient.

Maharsha points out that the wisdom referred to here is not the knowledge of Torah but the intelligence of the one studying Torah. The intelligence level of a person, say our Sages (*Niddah 16b*), is predetermined, for at the moment of conception an angel brings the seminal drop before G-d and asks whether a wise man or a fool will be formed from it. Is man forever limited to this degree of predestined intelligence, asked the Alexandrians, or is he capable of breaking the barriers of this Heavenly decree?

Rabbi Yehoshua’s response was that man can break the intelligence barrier by a combination of hard work and the Heavenly help gained through prayer and the merit of Torah study. One without the other will leave him with the level of intelligence decreed at conception. Together they can make him a more intelligent person.

• *Niddah 70b*

THE SIYUM

How appropriate it is that our concluding item in the “Weekly Daf” should deal with the subject of becoming wise in Torah. It is the joy of acquiring such wisdom which is the cause for tens of thousands of Jews throughout the world this week to celebrate the completion of the eleventh cycle of Daf Hayomi.

When one completes a single *mesechta*, let alone the entire Shas, he makes a *siyum* that is celebrated with a festive meal which the Shulchan Aruch (*Yoreh Deah 246:26*) defines as a “*seudat mitzvah*.” The source for this practice is the Sage Abaye (*Mesechta Shabbat 119a*) who declared that when he saw one of his disciples complete a *mesechta* he made a festive meal for all of his disciples.

One reason for this *simcha*, says the Gaon of Vilna, is the explanation given by the Sages (*Bava Batra 121b*) for the Fifteenth of Av being such a special day of joy. It was on that date that the cutting of wood for use on the Beit Hamidkash altar was completed for the year. Reaching the climax of a mitzvah is a cause for joy, and so is reaching the climax of a *mesechta*.

Maharsha, however, suggests another source. The Midrash states that we learn from the feast which King Solomon made for his entire court upon being blessed with the extraordinary wisdom he had requested in his nocturnal dialogue with G-d (*Melachim I 3:15*), that we should also make a feast when completing the study of the Torah. This is the source for our celebration on Simchat Torah when we complete the reading of the entire Torah, and for our celebration of the *siyum* of a *mesechta*. Just as Solomon understood that there could be no greater cause for joy than the gift of wisdom, so do we celebrate the acquisition of wisdom which comes from a year’s reading of weekly portions of the Torah and which results from the completion of a *mesechta*.

To all participating in this great *Siyum Hashas* of Daf Hayomi we wish a hearty “*Mazal Tov*” with best wishes to complete the cycle again and again.



INTRODUCTION

For over a decade Ohrnet has each week offered the public the insights of Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Rosh Hayeshiva of Ohr Somayach, on the seven pages of the Talmud covered that week. These weekly columns on the past two cycles were titled “The Weekly Daf” and later “Weekly DAFootnotes”. These consisted of insights focusing on the halachic and ideological subjects found in those seven pages or on the passages of Tanach mentioned in them.

This project was launched when the Website of Ohr Somayach — Ohr.edu — decided to offer subscribers and surfers a unique addition to the Torah educational materials it offers them each week. For over three decades, Ohr Somayach has succeeded in introducing countless thousands of young adult Jews from all over the world to the beauty of Talmudic learning as a gateway to their return to their people’s rich heritage and raising them to the level of Torah scholars and teachers. It was only natural, then, to include in its Website menu a taste of Talmud for the broader public, which can serve as an appetizer for the

newcomer and a delicious dessert for the veteran.

The format chosen for this project was based on the *daf yomi* concept initiated almost eighty years ago at a convention of Agudath Israel by the famed rabbi of the Polish community of Lublin, the founder of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, Rabbi Meir Shapiro, *zt”l*. In an effort to unite Jews throughout the world in a Torah undertaking, he proposed that all Jews study the same *daf* – page of the Talmud – each day and thus complete the entire Talmud in a period of seven and a half years.

Since that time, tens of thousands of Jews have participated in eleven such cycles of *daf yomi* study. There is hardly a Jewish community of any size which does not have a daily *shiur* in *daf yomi* available, and those whose circumstances do not allow for participation in such study groups are able to hear *shiurim* on cassettes or on telephone recordings.

With the beginning of the twelfth cycle of Daf Yomi, Ohrnet is proud to present a new feature for those who wish to identify with the worldwide study of the same *daf* – page of the Talmud – each day.

TALMUDIGEST will continue to offer an insight on the weekly seven but will add a listing of the subjects covered in them. We hope that this will enrich the study of those who learn a *daf* a day, connect those who are unable to do so with a worldwide Jewish effort, and serve as a tantalizing gateway to the incomparable wealth of intellect and guidance contained in the Talmud.

BERACHOT 2-8

- Time frame for recital of Shma in the evening
- Importance of Amain Yehei Shmei Rabbah
- Mystery of midnight
- Piety of King David
- Evening prayer
- Ashrei
- Recital of Shma before retiring
- Suffering as expression of love and as atonement
- Evil spirits
- Prayer in synagogue and communal prayer
- Prayer and Tefillin of G-d
- Bringing joy to a *chatan*
- Anger of G-d
- Requests of Moshe
- Meaning of some Biblical names
- David’s rebellious son
- What every pious Jew should pray for
- Individual reading of weekly Torah portion
- Eating in preparation for Yom Kippur
- Practical tips from the Sages
- Rabbi Papa and the Aramite woman
- Two recitals of Shma in one night or in one day

“HEAVY IS THE HEAD THAT WEARS THE CROWN”

“Protect me,” appealed King David to G-d, “for I am a righteous man.” (*Tehillim* 86:2) David, explain our Sages, was not asking G-d for a reward for his righteousness. He was rather asking for the Divine protection he needed as a result of conducting himself in a manner so radically different from “all the kings of east and west who sit with their royal courts in splendor” while he was involved in ruling on halachic matters of family purity.

The accounts we are familiar with of the great feasts and other pleasures in which kings of old indulged are often understood in a narrow way as the exercise of royal privilege of indulgence. The commentator *Iyun Yaakov*, however, points out that such indulgence was necessary to relieve the stress of kingly responsibility and thus protect the monarch against depression. Since David spurned such indulgence and spent his time in dispensing halachic rulings, he appealed to G-d to protect him against the dangerous consequences of stress which he did not relieve in the manner of other kings because of his righteousness.

• *Berachot* 4a

RENEWING 'SEMICHA'

From: Matt in San Diego

Dear Rabbi,

I recently read in passing about how "semicha", the ancient practice of ordaining rabbis, is no longer in effect. Why is that, and can't it be re-established?

Dear Matt,

The term 'semicha' literally means 'to place upon' since it initially involved the master's placing his hands on the head of the recipient while conferring authority to him. The first person to receive *semicha* was Joshua, who was ordained by Moses: "He laid his hands upon him and commanded him, in accordance with what the Lord had spoken" (Num. 27:22). Moses also ordained 70 elders in order to help him guide and lead the people: "And I will increase the spirit that is upon you and bestow it upon them. Then they will bear the burden of the people with you so that you need not bear it alone" (Num. 11:16).

Once the Jews entered the Land of Israel, *semicha* was performed only there (Rambam, Sanhedrin 4:6). That is why in the Talmud, Sages living in Israel are referred to by the title 'Rabi' whereas those in Babylon are called only 'Rav'. After the Bar Kochba revolt, the Roman ruler Hadrian prohibited *semicha*, enforcing the death penalty against anyone who conferred, received or even lived in the town in which *semicha* was performed. In fact, the Talmud relates that Rabbi Yehuda ben Baba was executed for conferring *semicha* (Sanhedrin 14a).

In the year 1538, there was an attempt in Tzefat to re-establish *semicha*. The background of the story was as follows: During the Inquisition, many Jews fled Spain rather

than endure forced conversion to Christianity. Among them was a special ten year-old boy, Yaakov Beirav, who fled with his family, became the chief rabbi of Fez at the age of eighteen, later became a member of the Rabbinical Court in Cairo, and eventually settled and opened a yeshiva in Tzefat.

Of those Jews who remained in Spain, some eventually regretted their public acceptance of Christianity, and many of them came to settle in Tzefat. According to Jewish law they could only attain complete atonement through the auspices of a court whose rabbis had the authority of formal *semicha*. Rabbi Yaakov Beirav, out of deep compassion for his fellow Jews, whose predicament he understood only too well, sought to help.

Regarding re-establishing 'semicha', Rambam wrote, "It seems that if all [meaning, a majority of] Sages in the Land of Israel agree to appoint judges and confer upon them *semicha*, it would be re-established" (San. 4:11). Based on this, Rabbi Beirav ceremoniously gathered all the rabbis of Tzefat, who were the majority in those days, and received *semicha* from them. He then conferred it upon Rabbi Yosef Karo, Rabbi Moshe Terani (Mabit), Rabbi Moshe Galanti and Rabbi Moshe Cordovero.

Rabbi Beirav then sent an honorary envoy to confer *semicha* upon the Rabbi of Jerusalem, the great Rabbi Levi ben Chaviv (Ralbach). However, he refused to accept it and rejected the validity of the entire cycle of events. A prolonged disagreement among the great rabbis of that time ensued, without the matter being resolved. In the meantime, Rabbi Yosef Karo gave *semicha* to Rabbi Moshe Alsheich, who eventually gave *semicha* to the main disciple of the Arizal, Rabbi Chaim Vital. Because of the protracted debate, over several generations traditional *semicha* was gradually discontinued. So ended another episode of yearning in the long history of Jewish exile.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO? _____

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

HUMAN AND ANIMAL SURVIVAL

Question: In regard to the tsunami tragedy, the media reported that animals in the stricken areas were hardly affected as a result of their instinctive sensing of danger which prompted them to flee. What is the right thing to do in learning a lesson for our own behavior?

Answer: The answer to this question was supplied centuries ago by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in his classic ethical work "Mesillat Yesharim" (Path of the Just).

In his chapter on the Trait of Watchfulness, he calls attention to the necessity of man to exercise caution in all his actions and not to abandon his soul to the danger of destruction.

"This is demanded by one's intelligence. For considering the fact that a man possesses the knowledge and the power of reason to save himself by fleeing from destruction of his soul, is it conceivable that he should willingly blind himself to his own salvation? There is certainly no degradation and folly worse than this. One who does this is lower than beasts and wild animals whose nature is to protect themselves, to flee and to run away from anything that seems to endanger them."

(Animal survival of the tsunami teaches us another lesson as well about Israel's concern for the human survivors. Many children in Sri Lanka were attacked by roving dogs in the affected areas and were treated in a field clinic established by members of the Magen David Adom sent to that country.)

Daf Yomi Comments and Suggestion

As one who greatly enjoys the Weekly DAFootnotes, I would like to call your attention to recent news item about a woman in Iasi, Romania who gave birth to twin sons two months apart.

This is not a world-shaking event for those who have been learning Daf Yomi. In *Mesechta Niddah* (27a and 40a) mention is made of two great Sages, Yehuda and Chizkiyah, the twin sons of Rabbi Chiya, who were born almost three months apart.

May I also suggest that for the new cycle of Daf Yomi you include a digest or overview of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages just as you do for the weekly Torah portion.

• Michael Vine

Ohrnet replies: *Thank you very much for your interesting observation about the twins and your wonderful suggestion regarding a weekly overview for the Daf Yomi which we have implemented already in the current issue of Ohrnet.*

A Kuti Kohen?

Your "Weekly DAFootnotes" has inspired me to join the countless thousands learning Daf Yomi. Could you help me with a mystery I encountered the other week in *Mesechta Niddah* 57a where the *gemara* mentions a *kuti* who a *kohen*. In an Ohrnet publication of a couple of months ago you explained that the *Kutim* were converts to Judaism. How can there be a *kohen* among them if they are not descendants of Aharon?

By the way, is there going to be any public celebration of

the completion of the Talmud in the Daf Yomi cycle?

• Menachem Geffen

Ohrnet replies: *Tosefot Yom Tov, in his commentary on the mishna to which that gemara refers, suggests that the kohen mentioned there was a descendant of the kohen who was brought back by the Assyrian king from the place to where he had exiled the Ten Tribes in order to teach the Kutim how to fear G-d and thus be safe from the lions who were slaying them (Melachim II 17:25-28).*

As regards the celebration, there are many "Siyum Hashas" celebrations being held in a number of languages throughout the world. Consult your local rabbi as to how you can participate in one of them.

Yiddle Riddle and Wedding Article Reprint Requests

Hello. I go to Bais Yaakov in LA and was wondering if I could have permission to print some of your riddles in my school newspaper. Thank you! Have a great day!

• Ahava P

Dear Ohrnet Editor,

I am the editor of a Jewish newspaper in Cincinnati, Ohio. In two weeks, we are doing a wedding section and I was wondering if we could reprint your lovely article, giving you full credit? Thank you.

• Iris P

Ohrnet replies: *Dear Ahava P. and Iris P., Please feel free to reprint with credit attributed to our Website — Ohr.edu — and Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem.*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

DERECH TO THE RESCUE

Not every boy without a family enjoys a Bar Mitzvah celebration like the one which took place recently in Jerusalem's Sanhedria Children's Home, an orphanage and rehabilitation center which provides a residence for children at risk.

Yossi Burstein, a student in the Derech Program of Ohr Somayach, came to the celebration with some of his peers. This is how Miriam Braun of Sanhedria describes what happened in a letter she sent to the director of Derech, Rabbi Nachy Brickman:

"From the moment the Derech boys walked in, the

atmosphere was filled with *ruach*, with fun and good will. Yossi & Co. contributed greatly to making the evening one that the children will long remember. They danced, sang, lifted the *Chatan Bar Mitzvah* on their shoulders and made him feel like king for the day."

In her concluding thanks to the head of Derech, Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, and his staff, she offers a blessing to which every one of our readers will certainly say *Amen*:

"With the help of G-d you will continue to have wonderful *nachat* from your pupils."