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PARSHA INSIGHTS

ME AND MY SHADOW

“This is the law of the nazir: on the day his nazirut is complete, he shall bring ‘him’ to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.”(13:6)

I remember watching an episode of “I Love Lucy” about 250 years ago. Lucille is dressed as a clown, looking at herself in the mirror, adjusting her costume and fixing her makeup. In reality, the “mirror” doesn’t exist — another actor is pretending to be her reflection. Her “reflection” proceeds to mimic Lucille’s every movement. The synchronization of their movements is amazing and extremely funny.

Suspicious from the beginning, Lucille constantly attempts to fool her “reflection” into making a mistake, but her “reflection” manages to move in total harmony with her. In a last attempt to expose the prankster, Lucille drops a ball she is holding. Unbeknownst to her doppelganger, the ball is attached to a string and rebounds into her hand. The ball in her “reflection’s” hand, however, bounces all over the stage. Howls of laughter. Lucille chases her “reflection” all over the set. Fade Out.

“Oh wad some power the giftie gie us

To see oursels as others see us!” wrote Scotland’s national bard Robert “Rabbie” (not Rabbi) Burns (1759-1796).

It always amazes me how transparent we are. We think that nobody sees us, that we can conceal our char-

acter flaws and blemishes. Our body language, however, our choice of words, our tone of voice, our choice of car, everything we do, reveals who we really are.

If we could see ourselves through others’ eyes, most of us would turn various shades of puce.

“This is the law of the Nazir: on the day his nazirut is complete, he shall bring ‘him’ to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.”(13:6)

Rashi explains that the word ‘him’ in this verse means ‘himself’. The question remains though, why didn’t the Torah choose the normal reflexive pronoun?

A *nazir* is a man or a woman who adopts voluntary restrictions not to drink wine or any grape products, to refrain from trimming the hair of the head and face, and to avoid contact with a cadaver. What was the purpose of this self-imposed abstinence?

The process of *nazirut* was a kind of therapy to remove excesses, indulgence and self-centeredness. If this procedure was successful, the *nazir* was able to see himself exactly the way someone else would see him, without any of ego’s self-serving bribery.

Thus the verse tells us that if he ‘bring(s) him’ — if he sees himself the way the world would see him, then “his *nazirut* was complete” — the purpose of his abstinence had been successful. Who he is and who he thinks he is have become identical.

He and his shadow are now one.

• Based on the Meshech Chochma in Mayana shel Torah.

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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.

ISRAEL Forever

PROSPERITY AND SECURITY

While Jews outside of Eretz Yisrael are on this Shabbat celebrating the second day of the Festival of Shavuot and reading the special Torah section assigned to that day, their brothers in the Holy Land are reading *Parshat Naso*, the longest weekly parsha in the entire Torah.

If one looks for a connection between this holiday of the Giving of the Torah and the weekly portion read in Eretz Yisrael, he may find it in the first of the blessings which the *kohanim* bestow upon the congregation.

"May G-d bless you and protect you" is what the

descendants of Aharon are commanded to pray on behalf of their fellow Jews. When Jews are deserving of Heavenly blessing because they are faithful to the Torah given to them on Shavuot, they receive not only prosperity but also security against those who attempt to harm them.

This is an important message for Jews in Eretz Yisrael and throughout the world, whose prosperity is threatened by enemies. May this blessing of the *kohanim* be fulfilled for Jews everywhere so that they may enjoy security along with prosperity.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE SAGES

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

"ONE WHO LEARNS TORAH IN ORDER TO TEACH WILL BE GRANTED BY HEAVEN SUCCESS IN BOTH LEARNING AND TEACHING" — RABBI YISHMAEL SON OF RABBI YOCHANAN BEN BEROKAH (AVOT 4:5)

One who does his learning of Torah in a manner that includes the teaching of others is guaranteed success not only in his teaching but in his learning as well. Although he



sacrifices time from his own learning, he will not suffer any loss, because G-d will bless him with the wisdom he seeks.

• Midrash Shmuel quoted in Tosefot Yom Tov

חג שבועות שמח

Wishing our readers a happy and meaningful Shavuot

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 G-d 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 G-d bless you and guard you?"
19. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d 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.

- Who hid the Holy Ark and what else was concealed
- How the sacred anointment oil was prepared
- Anointment of king and *kohen gadol*
- What the Holy Ark contained and what was written on the Tablets
- The bowing done in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- The waters which will flow from *Beit Hamikdash* of the future
- Returning the keys and jumping from the roof
- The tables and the menorahs in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- The 13 shofar-shaped collection boxes – for what purposes
- How much was required of one who made a pledge with no sum
- How many collection boxes did the king make
- Coins found between the shofar-shaped collection boxes
- Money or meat found and no certainty of its status
- The Sage Rav and the meat lost and found
- A lost animal or slaughtering knife found in the environs of Yerushalayim
- The special flour-offering of the *kohen gadol* and what happens when he dies
- If saliva found in Yerushalayim must be suspected of coming from a ritually impure source
- The status of blood from carcasses of animals who did not die through proper slaughter
- The *parochet* curtain, how it was made and how it was immersed for ritual purification
- Which sacrifice takes priority, that of Shabbat or Rosh Chodesh
- The problem of sanctifying objects when there is no *Beit Hamikdash*

FAILED “RAIDER” OF THE LOST ARK

One of the boldest decisions in Jewish history was made by King Yoshiahu in the waning year of the first *Beit Hamikdash*. Upon the opening and reading of a long-lost Sefer Torah the message that struck him was the grim warning that because of Israel’s sins “G-d will take you and the king you have appointed to a nation who you and your ancestors never knew” (*Devarim* 28:36). He then turned to the Levites and instructed them to store the Holy Ark in a secret subterranean chamber so that it would not fall into the hands of the enemy who would eventually destroy the *Beit Hamikdash* and take the people into exile.

The *Mishna* relates that the hiding place of the lost Ark was almost discovered during the period of the second *Beit Hamikdash*, which functioned without a Holy Ark. A *kohen* who was relaxing from his labors noticed that one of the marble slabs on the floor in his area was not exactly even with the rest. He rushed to share this discovery

with a colleague but died before he could finish his story. It was assumed by all that the variation he alone had noticed marked the site where the Holy Ark was concealed. Another discovery was made in the area where *kohanim* disqualified from sacrificial service because of some physical flaw were busy chopping wood for the altar and removing the worms from the logs. The ax of one of them fell to the floor and was immediately consumed by a fire that came up from under the floor. The conclusion was that this marked the site of the hidden Ark.

It is interesting to note that despite these discoveries no effort was made to conduct an archeological excavation to retrieve the Ark. This was probably because prophecy had revealed to them that the Ark, along with four other sacred elements, would not be present in the second *Beit Hamikdash* so that the failed “raiding” of the Holy Ark was submission to the will of G-d.

• *Shekalim* 16a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The Torah that G-d gave to Moshe was white fire into which black fire was etched, fire blended with fire, fire extracted from fire and given in fire.”

• *Rabbi Pinchas quoting Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - Shekalim* 16b

WRITING ON THE WALL

From: Mordechai Housman

Dear Rabbi,

What is the source for the custom of putting notes into the Western Wall. I understand that it sort of “prays” for us while we are away, but if this is correct, what’s the source? Thank you.

Dear Mordechai Housman,

Putting notes of prayer between the ancient stones of the Western Wall is a very old custom, and it’s not clear exactly when and why this custom began. It has to do with the idea that although G-d listens to heartfelt prayer from anywhere, some places are more auspicious for the prayer to be received and granted.

For example, when Joshua entered the Land of Israel with the other spies to help prepare the Jewish people’s entry into the Land, we find that he went out of his way to go to Hebron to pray at the burial site of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs for success. We find a similar phenomenon regarding prayer at Rachel’s tomb, and at the burial sites of other righteous and holy people such as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron.

This is all the more so regarding the remnants of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the focal point of the Jewish people’s prayers from around the globe on their way through the Heavenly Gates. It is clear from the Talmud (Nedarim 23a) that even after the destruction of the Temple, Jews would visit the Temple Mount to pray. Ancient sources also state that the Divine Presence will never cease from the Western Wall, which was the closest to the Holy of Holies (Midrash

Rabba: Exodus 2:2, Song of Songs 2:4). For these reasons, Jews have prayed at the Wall in all ages if they were able to do so.

What about those who were unable to make the difficult, often dangerous, pilgrimage of prayer? They would ask those who were going to Jerusalem to pray on their behalf. It is very likely that rather than burden the traveler by having him remember so many individual prayers, people wrote their requests in notes for him to read at the Wall once he arrived. Over time, perhaps because of the restrictions the non-Jewish rulers placed on how many Jews could visit the Wall and for how long, it became very difficult for the few visitors to read the many notes of all of the members of their respective communities. For lack of a better choice, they placed the notes in the wall, relying on G-d “to read the notes Himself”.

Still, there is an indication that one may intentionally have a note placed between the stones with no intention that any person read them. A story is told of the “Ohr HaChaim”, Rabbi Chaim ben Atar (1696-1743), who had a beloved disciple who was very poor. The rabbi wrote a note on parchment and told his student to place it between the stones of the Western Wall. On his way to the Wall, a great wind blew his hat off his head. However, he refused to fetch it, for fear of dropping the parchment. Then the wind blew off his kippah. Having no choice but to fetch it, as he stretched for the kippah, the wind blew the note from his hand. When he told the rabbi what happened, the Ohr HaChaim took it as a sign of Heavenly decree and decided not to write another note. Later, a rolled parchment was found blowing through the streets of Jerusalem, addressing the Divine Presence on behalf of a poor Torah scholar, and signed Chaim ben Atar (Ta’amei HaMinhagim, p. 270).

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

SAVED FROM DEATH

The chances for survival for a victim of another one of those horrific traffic accidents which plague life in Israel appeared to be very slim. The fellow next to him in the vehicle involved in a frightful accident was dead, and he was pinned down up to his neck. It took rescue workers an hour and a half to pull him out of the wrecked vehicle, and when he arrived at the hospital the doctors were skeptical about his chances for survival.

But survive he did, and the secret of his miraculous survival was revealed by the paramedic who was the first to treat him. Only when his grease-covered body was extracted from the wreck did 32-year old Effie Stern, the head of Magen David Adom and Zaka organization in the Orthodox community of Elad, recognize the severely wounded man as

a friend from his town.

“I have no doubt as to what saved him,” this extraordinary volunteer told Leah Kedem of “Hashavua in Jerusalem”. “It was certainly the mitzvah of *chesed* that he does with all his might. The night before the accident I ran into him at 2 am distributing chickens to needy families in his role as one of the Elad welfare committee. On the night of the accident he left Elad to bring a trailer for food distribution and took his little children with him in the back seat of his car. On the way he met another committee member who offered to take the children into his own car and return them later. It was thus that the children were saved from certain death and their father survived a deadly accident in the merit of his mitzvah.

THE LOUD WORSHIPPER

Question: There is a pious member of the synagogue in which I pray who is in the habit of saying the silent *Amida* prayer in a loud voice which disturbs me and others who are trying to concentrate on our prayers. Must we tolerate his effort for greater concentration at the expense of our own? What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Although the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 101:2) rules that if one is unable to concentrate on his prayers while saying them silently it is permissible for him to raise his voice, this is limited to doing so in the privacy of his home. To pray loudly when praying together with others is forbidden because it prevents them from concentrating.

The issue then is not whether that member is acting properly but rather how to solve the problem he creates, to the satisfaction of all.

The solution suggested by one of the halachic authorities

(*Prisha* on the *Tur*) of directing that member to pray in his home is rejected by a later authority (*Pri Megadim*), because it may set a dangerous precedent for others to avoid praying in the synagogue despite their ability to do so. Only if that loud worshipper is respected as a truly outstanding Jewish leader, whose every action is directed towards serving G-d, is it proper for taking this option of private prayer for the purpose of greater concentration.

Keep in mind that the worshipper to whom you refer may be ignorant of the fact that he is actually disturbing you, or of the halachic ruling that forbids him to do so. Your only recourse then is to gently inform him that he is indeed disturbing you, and to show him the halachic ruling regarding his behavior. A Jew who prays aloud with the intention of better serving G-d will most likely react in a positive manner and you will have succeeded in restoring silence while also preserving the peace.

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