

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHIOT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI-HACHODESH · 25 ADAR 5769 · MAR. 21, 2009 · VOL. 16 NO. 22

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### WISDOM OF THE HEART

*“Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make everything that G-d has commanded ...” (35:10)*

There are two ways a religious person can look at an airplane flight. A series of tiring inconveniences punctuated by the occasional real bummer, or an opportunity to be an ambassador for the Jewish People and G-d.

Assuming that we all want to be in the latter category, here are some *Guidelines for the Ambassador*:

1. When you arrive at the check-in, make sure that you do not push in line. Better, offer to let someone who seems to be in a rush go in front of you. (It always amazes me how people want to jump ahead to get on the plane – but the plane leaves at the same time for everyone.)

2. Smile. You're on Candid Camera!

3. Make sure you say, “Have a nice day!” to people with whom you speak: the check-in person; the flight attendants; the security and the immigration personnel.

4. When you board the flight look for a short non-religious lady/gentleman (elderly is better) struggling to put his/her bag into the overhead locker. Bound over and say, “Excuse me, can I help?” You have sanctified the name of G-d in front of a couple of hundred people.

5. Before reclining your seat always make sure to ask the person behind if they mind.

6. Usually the “strictly kosher” food arrives before the

rest of the plane is served. Better to wait till everyone else is served before starting.

7. In the arrival hall try and help a lady or elderly person remove their heavy case from the carousel.

8. Say “Thanks for looking after us!” to the police who usually supervise the luggage carousel when flights come in from Israel.

9. Never smuggle anything.

When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem there was a revelation of the Divine Presence in the world that is impossible for us to imagine. It's like trying to describe a sunrise to someone who was born blind.

We live in a world of spiritual blindness where little light reaches our eyes. The Jewish People, however, still have the power to reveal the Divine in our midst. The verse says “And I will dwell in them.” G-d says that His Divine Presence will dwell eternally in the Jewish People even when the wood and stones of the Beit HaMikdash have lain in ruins for millennia.

Just as it took a wise-hearted person to build the Mishkan that revealed G-d's presence on Earth, so too each of us can reveal the Divine Name with a little wisdom of the heart.

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## 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. G-d 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.

## ISRAEL Forever

### CHAZAK, CHAZAK, VENITCHAZEK

Synagogues throughout the world will reverberate this Shabbat with the communal outcry of "Chazak, chazak, venitchazek" as the final words of *Chumash Shemot* are read.

This rallying cry to strengthen ourselves as we move from one Chumash to another is especially relevant to Jews living in Israel. Faced by the relentless terror from our enemies and the complacency of a world towards

those who wish to destroy the Jewish State, there is truly an urgent need to remain strong in spirit as well as in defensive capability.

But this strength must have its source in our Torah, which gives us an undeniable right to our Land. The more that Jews see that there is a direct relationship between loyalty to Torah and security there will be a strengthening of our ability to enjoy Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND- THE PLACES

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

### MOUNT SARTOVA – A ROSH CHODESH SIGNAL

This Shabbat there will be a special Torah reading called *Parshat Hachodesh* which recalls the first mitzvah given to the Jewish People – the sanctification of the new month.

Once the Sanhedrin in Yerushalayim determined, on the basis of testimony by witnesses who had sighted the new moon, that a particular day was to be Rosh Chodesh, it was necessary to communicate this information to the Jews living in Babylon. This was



achieved by waving large flaming torches on high places whose fire could be seen from one place to another until the message finally reached Babylon.

Mount Sartova, about 830 meters above sea level, was the second station after Mount of Olives where the first torch was waved. It was followed by another three stations, the last of which was Beit Baltin, from which the torch waver could see a part of Babylon lit up with fires, indicating that the message of the new moon had been received.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Vayakhel

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?

### Pekudei

11. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear between the *mitznefet* and the *tzitz*?
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 this week’s Questions!

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

### Vayakhel

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

### Pekudei

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.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

## TALMUDigest

## BAVA KAMA 86 - 92

- Payment for reversible physical damage
- Embarrassing a slave, a blind person, a minor, a naked person or someone sleeping
- Status of the blind regarding obligations and culpability
- Physical damage done to a minor or a slave
- Those who are ineligible as witnesses
- Selling or giving property of husband or father
- The decree of the Sanhedrin whose seat was in Usha
- Selling a promissory note or *ketuba*
- Various forms of embarrassment and how much must be paid
- Can a witness also serve as a judge
- When evaluation of weapon must be made to determine culpability of damager
- Payment for embarrassment relative to status of victim and offender
- Does a person have a right to inflict harm on himself
- Cutting down a fruit-bearing tree
- The need to ask forgiveness of victim in addition to paying him
- Biblical sources for folk wisdom

### THE ANONYMOUS BROTHERS

When Yosef introduced five of his brothers to the Egyptian king he selected those whose appearance made an impression of physical frailty so that Pharaoh would not be tempted to recruit any of his brothers as warriors.

This is no mention in the Torah who those five brothers were. While there is a midrash that they were Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yissachar and Binyamin – the ones whose names were not mentioned twice by Moshe when he blessed all of the tribes before his death – our *gemara* states

that they were Gad, Naftali, Dan, Zevulun and Asher – the ones whose names were repeated by Moshe in order to endow them with strength.

The question arises as to why the names of these weaker brothers are not explicitly mentioned in the Torah.

Maharsha suggests that the deletion of their names was intended as a hint to their lack of the prowess of the other brothers.

It may be added that they were compensated for this omission of their names by having Moshe mention them twice.

### What the SAGES Say

“One may not commit suicide for the Torah states (*Bereishet* 9:5) ‘But I shall demand the blood of your lives’ which means that one who sheds his own blood will be held responsible.”

• Rabbi Elazar - Bava Kama 91b

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## HERE COMES THE SUN

From: Mark in Rockville, MD

Dear Rabbi,

At the local JCC there was a note reminding people to say the "blessing on the sun". I never heard of this before, so forgive me for saying this, but it sounds like idol worship to me. What is this? Thanks.

Dear Mark,

This is a brilliant question, though I assure you, the blessing on the sun is not idolatry but rather a tribute and testimony to the wonder and glory of G-d's creation. Its intention is to commemorate the return of the sun to its original position in the sky (relative to the earth) as at the time of Creation. If you're still in the dark, allow me to shed more light on the topic.

The Torah describes that the sun was fixed in the firmament in the first hour of the evening of the fourth day of Creation, which was Tuesday night going on Wednesday (recall that the Jewish day starts at night). Therefore, according to the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua in the Talmud that Creation took place in the spring month of Nisan, the sun began its course (relative to the earth) on the spring equinox on Tuesday night. The sun then rose over the Land of Israel twelve hours later in the first hour of the morning of the fourth day (Wednesday).

The blessing over the sun, or *birkat hachama*, is thus recited when the sun rises in the same position relative to the earth as during Creation, specifically on a Wednesday. This doesn't happen every year, but rather only once in twenty-eight years. Here's why:

Although generally the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, its exact position changes slightly day by day, drifting northward in summer and southward in winter, such that its location varies significantly through the seasons of the year. On the summer solstice, the rising and setting of the sun is at its northernmost point. The sun then rises and sets further to the south each day until on the winter solstice the rising and setting of the sun is at its southernmost point. The midpoints of this north-south movement of the sun, when it rises and sets due east and west, are the autumn and spring equinoxes.

The time it takes for the sun to complete this cycle, for example from spring equinox to spring equinox, is a solar year. However, for a few reasons, the solar year rarely begins on the same day as last. For one, the solar year is more than 365 days. It's actually quite close to  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days. Also, the 52 weeks of the year equal only 364 days. This means that the calendar year lags behind the solar year by  $1\frac{1}{4}$  days. So, for example, if the spring equinox of a particular year is at noon on Sunday, then the next year it will be  $1\frac{1}{4}$  days later at 6 P.M. on Monday, then at midnight on Tues./Wed. and so on. Only after 28 years, when the equinox will have advanced exactly 35 days ( $28 \times 1.25 = 35$ , which is divisible by 7 yielding 5 whole weeks) will the equinox return to the same day and hour as in the first year.

Thus, this blessing marks the 28-year cycle of the sun's return to its position on the first hour of the fourth day of Creation. This is the explanation behind what the Sages taught,

"One who sees the sun at the beginning of its cycle...recites: 'Blessed is the One Who made the Creation'. And when is this? Abaye said, "Every 28 years" (Berachot 59b). Rambam elaborates further, "When the sun is at its 'tekufah in Nisan' [the spring equinox], at the beginning of the cycle of 28 years, on Tuesday evening, then one who sees the sun on Wednesday morning should recite the blessing: 'Blessed are You, G-d our Lord, King of the Universe, Who makes the works of Creation'" (Hilchot Berachot 10, see also Shulchan Aruch 229). Over time, an elaborate prayer service has evolved which accompanies this blessing, including verses of praise to G-d and various supplications. This is not found in a standard prayer book, but is printed and distributed especially for the occasion.

Some practical laws regarding this blessing are as follows: It is recited when the sun has fully risen and its whole disk can be seen, rather than when it first appears over the horizon. It should be recited ideally by the third hour of the day, but if it was impossible to do so by then, for example on an overcast day, the blessing may be recited until noon. If one was delayed until after midday, the blessing is recited without pronouncing G-d's name. It should ideally be recited together with as many people as possible. But if this is not possible, or if doing so would result in losing the sun in clouds or passing the appointed time, one may recite it individually. Women are exempt from making this blessing as with other time-bound *mitzvot*.

Some additional interesting information on this blessing: 1] The beginning of the solar cycle as reckoned above always occurs in the month of Nisan, and always on Tuesday night (as explained above). However, it does not always occur on the same day of the month. This is because the Jewish months are entirely lunar based while the sun determines hours, days and years. Thus the cycle is regulated by the sun's return its position at Creation on the day of the week and hour of the day, but not the day of the month. Only once in 532 years does the cycle begin on the same day of the month as it did at Creation. 2] The total number of 28-year cycles is short one year of the years since Creation. For example, this year, Nisan 5769 will mark the completion of 206 solar cycles, which when multiplied by 28, equals only 5768. Our Sages attribute the discrepancy to the fact that the natural order of the world was suspended during the year of the Flood.

A very interesting aspect of the conclusion of the current 28-year cycle is that this year is one of the few years that *birkat hachama* occurs on the special day of Erev Pesach. One of the great Chassidic Masters, Rabbi Meir Yechiel HaLevi of Ostrovtza (1852-1928), noted the significance of such an occurrence by comparing it to two other such instances: Passover and Purim. On Erev Pesach of the Exodus, on the day the Jews were preparing for redemption and G-d was preparing the overthrow of their enemies, the solar cycle of Creation was renewed. Similarly, in the Purim story, the 13th, 14th and 15th of Nisan, when the Jews were fasting, repenting and making themselves worthy of redemption and G-d was orchestrating the turnabout, was also a year in which the cycle was renewed on Erev Pesach. So too, he wrote long ago, when in the future *birkat hachama* occurs on the Eve of Passover, the complete and final redemption of Israel is not long to follow (Me'ir Einei Chachamim, p. 52).

## RELYING ON A PROMISE

**Question:** An observant Jew was driving from one city to another on Friday afternoon when his car stalled. It was only 1:30 and Shabbat was hours away so he called a towing company to bring his vehicle to his home. He insisted that since he was a Shabbat observer he wanted to be sure that the car would arrive at his home before Shabbat. He was assured that his request would be honored and he got a cab to take him home. What was the right thing to do?

**Answer:** As most people facing situations in which they are promised prompt service only to be disappointed by delay, this fellow should have realized that he could not

rely on the towing company's promise. This actually happened to a lawyer who was terribly embarrassed when his towed car arrived at ten o'clock on Shabbat eve at his home located in a neighborhood in which both observant and secular Jews live. He came to a rabbi to pour out his heart, regretting his having relied on the promise given him rather than leaving his car on the side of the road till after Shabbat.

The rabbi suggested that in order to atone for his mistake that caused a public desecration of the holy day, he should write letters to the editors of the religious newspapers cautioning others to avoid making the same mistake.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

### HALF A CUP BETTER THAN A WHOLE

Everyone who participated in the Torah lecture given in the synagogue in Ohr Yehuda appreciated the cup of hot tea that Rabbi Tzion voluntarily brought to them. But they failed to understand why he always served only half a cup and suspected him of stinginess.

The secret of his strange behavior became known when he failed to come to the learning session on time and his son filled in for him. When Rabbi Tzion belatedly arrived and saw that his son had filled the cups to the top, he quickly emptied half of each. Asked to explain this very

unusual action, he asked his son if he was familiar with a couple of the regular participants whose names he mentioned. When the son acknowledged that he knew them, Rabbi Tzion pointed out that the hands of these elderly Jews shook, and if their cups were full there was a danger that the tea would spill and cause some burns or dirty their clothes and cause them embarrassment. He therefore decided that in this case half a cup was better than a whole one.

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