

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHIOT ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM · 8 IYAR 5769 · MAY 2, 2009 · VOL. 16 NO. 27

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### INSIDE OUT

*“And he (Aaron) will place the incense on the fire in front of G-d”. (16:13)*

Maimonides’ masterwork, the *Mishneh Torah*, details every detail of Jewish Life with great precision. As a work of halacha one would think that a story would be out of place. However, in the section that deals with the Yom Kippur service in the Beit Hamikdash, Maimonides seems to depart from the eternal exactness of halacha to describe a most moving scene.

Before the Kohen Gadol went out to do the Yom Kippur service, the elders of the Sanhedrin would make him swear to do the service exactly as instructed. Specifically, they would make him swear to burn the incense only inside the Holy of Holies as the Oral Torah mandates. The *Tzadukim* (Sadducees), who denied the authority of the Oral Torah, claimed that the incense should first be placed on a burning fire-pan outside the Holy of Holies, and only then the Kohen Gadol should carry it inside. The elders made the Kohen Gadol swear not to perform the service in the manner of the Sadducees.

And then both the Kohen Gadol and the elders would turn aside from each other and weep.

The Kohen Gadol would weep because they suspected him of being a Sadducee. The elders would weep because there was reason to suspect him.

But why did Maimonides choose to enshrine this tragically touching moment in a halachic work designed as a practical manual of halacha?

Let us understand how this ceremony came into being. It happened that one year the Sadducees proposed a

compromise. They suggested that for the sake of peace and unity the Kohen Gadol should light the incense outside and inside the Holy of Holies. What could be better than this? Everyone would be happy! You observe Judaism the way you want, and I’ll do it my way.

However the truth of the matter was far from this seemingly guileless suggestion. The Rabbis were in a no-win situation. To accept the offer would add a mitzvah to the Torah, which is expressly forbidden. To refuse would make them seem callously indifferent to Jewish unity.

In the event, the Rabbis had no option but to demur. But at what great cost, and with what heavy hearts, for they knew that they would seem inflexible and uncaring.

There are times when those who guard the Torah must make decisions which are a PR person’s nightmare; decisions which must seem like one’s worst nightmare come true. But the guardians of the Torah have no choice. They are protecting a priceless treasure. But with what heavy hearts and at what cost these decisions are made!

There are times when the guardians of the Torah have to stand up and say no, but they do it with tears in their eyes.

Maimonides included the ceremony of the Kohen Gadol and the elders weeping as a halacha for all time. In every generation the Jewish People will have their ‘Sadducees’. But in every generation the defenders of the Torah must weep at having to say no.

• Sources: Rabbi Aharon Soleveichik;  
Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### ACHAREI MOT

**G**-d instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the *Mishkan*. On Yom Kippur, the *Kohen Gadol* is to approach the holiest part of the *Mishkan* after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is “for G-d” and is offered in the Temple, while the other is “for *Azazel*” in the desert. The Torah states the individual’s obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations. Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman’s monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

### KEDOSHIM

**T**he nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught. *Prohibitions:* Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone’s property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one’s parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing. *Positive:* Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree’s fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe *kashrut*, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

## ISRAEL Forever

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MEDINAT YISRAEL

**A**s the State of Israel celebrates its 61st birthday it is only natural to reflect on what has been achieved since the founding of the state.

From a total Jewish population of 600,000 in 1948 there has been such an increase in the number of Jews living in their ancient homeland that Israel today can claim to have more Jewish residents than any other country in the world. Despite this exciting increase Israel still faces a serious demographic problem because of the higher birth rate of the Arab sector. The effort made by the government to balance

this growth by encouraging a massive aliya of Russian Jewry created a problem of a large number of non-Jews becoming part of Israeli society. Aliya in large numbers from other sources does not seem to be on the horizon, so that the only practical way to ensure a solid Jewish majority is to encourage Jews to have more children.

One way to achieve this is to restore the child allowance that was severely cut by a previous government. It is hoped that the new government will realize the importance of subsidizing large families and thus ensure a Jewish 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

### YERUSHALAYIM – ETERNAL CAPITAL OF ISRAEL

**W**hen the State of Israel was established 61 years ago this week it was decided that Yerushalayim would be its capital. Although it was not centrally located nor the home of the largest Jewish population, this city was chosen to be the capital of the modern Jewish state.

The reason for this was the role that Yerushalayim played in history as the capital of the Jewish kingdom



and the home of the Beit Hamikdash and the Sanhedrin.

No wonder then that one of the major political issues in the recent Knesset elections was that of giving the Arabs control of parts of the city. The victory of the right-wing nationalist camp in those elections gave new hope for the policy of preserving Yerushalayim as the “eternal and indivisible capital of Israel.”

## PARSHA Q&A?

### ACHAREI MOT

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshat Acharei Mot* was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?
2. How long did the first *Beit Hamikdash* stand?
3. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear when he entered the Holy of Holies?
4. How many times did the *Kohen Gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
5. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *azazel*. What is *azazel*?
6. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*?
7. What is the penalty of *karet*?
8. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
9. What is the difference between "*mishpat*" and "*chok*"?
10. May a man marry his wife's sister?

### KEDOSHIM

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the Jewish

People?

2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. The Torah obligates one to leave the "*leket*" for the poor. What is "*leket*"?
5. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands, "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal"?
6. In verse 19:13, the Torah commands, "Do not wrong your neighbor." To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
7. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
8. How does one fulfill the command "*v'hadarta p'nei zakein*"?
9. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
10. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which type of death penalty is it referring?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this week's Questions!

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

### ACHAREI MOT

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the Holy of Holies except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:3 - 410 years.
3. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *kohen*.
4. 16:4 - Five times.
5. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
6. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
7. 17:9 - The person's life is shortened and his offspring die.
8. 17:13 - Non-domestic kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
9. 18:4 - A "*mishpat*" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "*chok*" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as G-d's decree.
10. 18:18 - Not during his wife's lifetime.

### KEDOSHIM

1. 19:2 - Because it contains the fundamental teachings of the Torah.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain that are accidentally dropped while harvesting.
5. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
6. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
7. 19:17 - Causing embarrassment.
8. 19:32 - By not sitting in their seat nor contradicting them.
9. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — the entire Jewish People will never be "cut off."
10. 20:10 - "*Chenek*" (strangulation).

S U B S C R I B E !

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- Gaining possession of a lost or sold animal
- Acquiring something for another at the expense of others
- Taking possession of lost object through falling upon it
- Requisition by virtue of proximity or through object being in one's home or field
- No agency for sinning
- The forgotten crops awarded to the poor

- Rabban Gamliel and other Sages on a ship
- Who owns the objects found by his children, slaves or wife
- The power of a minor to acquire possession
- How to deal with a lost debt document
- The lien on the borrower's property
- When it turns out that one sold a field which was not his
- When one buys a field knowing that it is not the seller's

## MINDING SOMEBODY'S BUSINESS

Reuven sold a field to Shimon which in turn was about to be confiscated by Levi in payment of a debt which he claims Reuven owes him. When Reuven comes to court to contest this claim so that the field will remain in Shimon's possession, Levi tries to disqualify him as a litigant because he is not directly affected by the confiscation procedure.

The Sage Abaye rules that Reuven is entitled to be a litigant. If he guaranteed the sale to Shimon he is certainly affected because Shimon will turn to him for compensation if he loses the field. But even if there was no such guarantee, Reuven can intercede as an affected party because he wishes to avoid having Shimon complain to him that he deceived

him by selling a field he did not own.

*Tosefot* raises the question as to what advantage there is for Reuven to enter the picture. If he is intent on claiming that the debt was paid, this argument could be presented by Shimon as well.

One answer is that Shimon has already admitted in court that he has no witnesses to prove that Reuven paid his debt to Levi. Even if he eventually comes up with witnesses their testimony will not be accepted (see *Mesechta Sanhedrin* 31a), while Reuven is still able to bring them.

Another is that if it is indeed true that Reuven paid the debt it is more likely that Levi will lack the audacity to confront him with a denial since Reuven knows the truth, whereas he will not hesitate to do so to Shimon who only has Reuven's word for it.

• *Bava Metzia 14a*

## What the SAGES Say

"When one seizes money from a debtor on behalf of a particular creditor his collection is not valid because it is at the expense of the other creditors."

• *Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Chisda - Bava Metzia 10a*

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## LIFE-LENGTHENING KADDISH

**From: Manny in Denver**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*I have recently started saying kaddish for my father, of blessed memory, who passed away a short time ago. Since I have only a rudimentary Jewish background, I am finding it very difficult to recite the kaddish and pronounce it properly. Not only is this embarrassing, I feel awkward about delaying the minyan as I painstakingly try to say it the best I can. What's more, since I don't do such a great job as it is, I wonder how beneficial my kaddish is for my father anyway. Given all these drawbacks, wouldn't it perhaps be better that someone else say kaddish for him instead of me?*

Dear Manny,

First, accept my condolences on the loss of your father. The fact that you are so earnest about honoring him with your reciting the kaddish is itself a testimony to his being a special person and your having shared a special relationship. And so, you should know that you are doing the right thing and there's no one else who could do as good a job on this as you.

The Midrash relates an amazing account that is actually the source for a mourner's leading prayer services and saying *kaddish*. The great Rabbi Akiva once perceived the departed soul of a wicked person who was suffering and groaning. He asked him, "What have you done?" He replied, "There wasn't a sin I didn't transgress, and now there are watchmen over me and they don't let me rest." Rabbi Akiva asked him, "Did you leave behind a son?" He replied, "I left behind a pregnant wife." Rabbi Akiva went to the home of the pregnant woman and waited until she gave birth to a son. He circumcised the boy and when he grew older he taught him to read and set him up in the synagogue to lead the prayers for the congregation. Some time later Rabbi Akiva went to the place where he had originally seen the soul. The deceased appeared to him and said, "May your mind always be at ease for you have put my mind at ease" (*Kala Rabati*, ch. 2).

The question is, if this soul was so wicked, wouldn't it have been better for the great Rabbi Akiva to have prayed on its behalf himself, rather than relying on the deceased's otherwise illiterate son? Yet Rabbi Akiva sought out the

widow, waited for her birth, himself taught the child how to read, and all this so that the deceased's son should be the one to pray on his departed father's behalf. If Rabbi Akiva chose to go to such lengths rather than just praying for the soul himself, it's because he appreciated how much more beneficial the son's kaddish would be for the father's soul than even his own.

The following true story should also inspire you to appreciate just how beneficial your kaddish is for your own father:

There was a young man from a non-religious background who came to Ohr Somayach. Although he held several higher degrees in his secular studies, he had a particular learning disability that made reading and learning Hebrew very difficult. He became observant, progressed in his learning and eventually got married, but continued to have significant difficulty in reading and prayer.

At some point his father passed away and he was the only one who could say kaddish for him. Needless to say, he felt and experienced exactly what you feel and experience: embarrassment about not pronouncing properly, awkwardness over delaying the minyan and puzzlement over how much such a kaddish helps. Still, he uncompromisingly continued his painstaking kaddish for the whole year. When he finally finished the year, he felt very good about having honored his father, but he also felt a tremendous relief.

The very next day, he and his wife received a phone call that her grandfather had passed away and it soon became clear to them that there was no one to say kaddish for him. Confronted with the dilemma of whether he should take it upon himself to say kaddish for another year, he was perplexed. It then occurred to them to take this strange sequence of events as a sign that G-d actually desired this painstaking kaddish – perhaps the minyan needs to be slowed down a bit, maybe the words need to be thought about a bit and maybe even some people might be inspired by his effort and therefore put more into their own prayers. Encouraged by these thoughts, he embarked upon saying kaddish for another whole year.

I'd like to add the following postmark to the story. Obviously, we're used to associating the kaddish with death and mourning. However, in this case, ironically, perhaps his recital of kaddish over his departed father was actually helping to keep his wife's grandfather alive. Because as long as he was saying kaddish over his father, he might not have taken on saying it for someone else. So G-d prolonged the grandfather's life until his granddaughter's newly religious husband would be free to give him his undivided kaddish-attention for an entire year.

## A HEAVENLY MESSENGER

**Question:** I am accustomed to have poor beggars come to my home seeking contributions. But sometimes I hear a knocking on the door late at night when the entire family is in the process of retiring. What is the right thing to do when I open the door in anticipation of some emergency only to see a beggar standing there?

**Answer:** This question was once put to Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein, rav of the Ramat Elchanan Community in Bnei Brak. His response was that while the homeowner, renowned for his philanthropy, saw such a beggar as a late

night nuisance, in reality he should be seen as a “Hatzalah” paramedic who has arrived to save his life.

Although when a “Hatzalah” volunteer comes there is usually a siren announcing his arrival, he added, one should imagine that he hears a Heavenly siren accompanying the beggar which echoes the message that charity saves one from death.

Instead of venting your anger at the beggar for disturbing you, keep in mind that he may well be a Heavenly messenger to save you from tragedy.

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

### THE MARITAL “TRANSPLANT”

When the couple came before Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Rosh Hayeshiva of “Yeshivat Me’or Hatalmud” in Rechovot, to complain about their relationship, he was shocked to discover that they had never had a proper halachic wedding.

“But we did make a financial arrangement between us,” declared the couple, “so what is wrong with that?”

The Rosh Hayeshiva explained the difference between their arrangement and a proper wedding by comparing the *chupah* to a transplant operation performed in a hospital. Just

as the Creator took one of Adam’s ribs to create the first woman, so too does a “transplant” take place every time man and woman are united in marriage when they stand beneath the *chupah*.

He also added that just as there is an atmosphere of awe surrounding a hospital transplant with the participation of a large medical staff, so too should there be an aura of respect surrounding the guests witnessing the *chupah*. This explains why it is a custom among many people to stand in respect while the *chupah* ceremony takes place.

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# Independence & Survival

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

DURBAN II

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

What do all of them have in common?

## The survival of the Jewish People!

**A**s Israel celebrates its 61st birthday as the renewed homeland of the Jewish People, there is an urgent need to do some serious soul-searching as to whether the creation of a modern Jewish state has guaranteed the survival of the Jewish People.

If anyone needed a reminder that the hatred towards Jews that led to a Holocaust claiming the lives of six million Jews is still very much a threat to our survival, one event that took place a week before Independence Day certainly did the job.

On the very day that Jews in Israel and elsewhere were identifying with the victims of Hitler's "final solution to the Jewish problem", a modern-day Hitler, who has become infamous as the world's most prominent Holocaust denier, was the main speaker at the Durban II Conference on Racism in Geneva.

The fact that so few of the nations invited to this Conference boycotted it was a sad indication that most of the world still harbors enough latent anti-Semitism to honor a Holocaust denier who brazenly declares his intention to "wipe the Jewish state off the map of the world".

What is the source of this hatred of Jews in its virulent Nazi-Iranian form or its more subtle form in the countries who collaborated with Hitler's murderers and those who collaborate through their silence with his Iranian successor?

Our Talmudic Sages tell us why the mountain on which the Torah was given, an event which will be celebrated on Shavuot in a few weeks from now, was called Sinai. The

Hebrew word for hatred is "*sinah*", and it was what took place on that mountain which brought the *sinah* – hatred of Jews – to the world.

An insightful interpretation of this was offered by one of the Holocaust's most famous victims, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, may G-d avenge his blood, the rosh hayeshiva of Yeshivat Baranovitch in Lithuania. When Jews committed themselves to receiving and observing the Torah, they were given a message that there was no copping out of that responsibility. They had two choices in surviving as a nation – Sinai or *sinah*. Sinai meant loyalty to the commitment made at that mountain which would deserve Divine protection and guarantee physical survival. *Sinah* shown to Jews trying to assimilate by their unwelcoming non-Jewish neighbors would remind them that they could not hope to survive by fleeing from their faith.

This is why assimilation in all its forms has been a failure throughout history. Even when Jews attempted to dress, talk and act like non-Jews they never succeeded because "you can change your Moses but you can't change your noses."

Which brings us back to Independence Day. Of course we are profoundly thankful to Heaven for giving us the opportunity of a Jewish state that is the pride of Jews throughout the world and a haven for those living in its borders. But the threats from Iran and the international pressures for a perilous proposal for settling the conflict with the Arab world remind us that a Jewish state is simply not enough to guarantee Jewish survival. Only a full-fledged return to Sinai can eliminate the need for *sinah* and ensure our spiritual and physical survival.