

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHIOT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI · 27 ADAR 5770 · MAR. 13, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 22

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE NEW ISRAEL

*“And he made the breast-plate as a craftsman, like he made the ephod, from gold, turquoise, purple and crimson wool...” (39:8)*

At the beginning of Megillat Esther, Achashverosh throws a party to end all parties. The party of the millennium. He was celebrating his unassailable grip on the throne of the Persian Empire. At this party, Achashverosh brought out the vessels of the Holy Temple which the Babylonians had plundered and caroused with. More than this, Achashverosh's party attire consisted of the vestments of the High Priest. Why did he do this? Was it some elaborate spoof? Was Achashverosh poking fun at the Jewish People and their prophecies of the demise of his all-mighty kingdom? Or was there something more sinister behind this charade?

“And the land was formless and empty and darkness on the face of the deep.” (*Bereishet 1:2*) These words form part of the opening words of the Torah. They hint to four mighty empires that will subjugate the Jewish People. The first, Babylon, will snatch the crown of Empire from the Jewish People, and then the Persian, Greek and Roman empires will successively snatch world domination one from the other. Eventually, the last of those empires, Rome and its cultural heirs, will return the kingship to the Jewish People. When that

happens “*The lost ones will come from the land of Ashur...*” (*Yeshayahu 27:13*), and the final exile will end.

The name Ashur is related to the Hebrew word “*ishur*.” An *ishur* is a certification. Each nation which takes the kingship from the Jewish People seeks to “certify” itself as being the true and final recipient of the crown of the world. But they can only do this by proclaiming themselves the true heirs. They claim to be the “New Israel.” They claim that the testament of faith of the Jewish People is old; that they have a new one.

That, in essence, was what Achashverosh was attempting to do at his millennial party. He was certifying himself as the New Israel. His party was a grotesque replication of the Temple service. The vessels of the Temple were there and being used. He was dressed as the *kohen gadol*, the high priest. He even went so far as to name his ministers after the offerings of the Holy Temple. He was trying to utilize those forces of holiness for his own means, to set his seal on world domination using the higher spiritual forces. This was no charade.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Vayakhel

**M**oshe 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 Bezalel 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. Bezalel 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 showbreads 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

**T**he Book of Shmot 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

### THE MOON AND US

**T**he first mitzvah given to the Jewish People, even before their receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, was that of the sanctification of the new month. On Shabbat Jews throughout the world will recall this when they hear the reading of *Parshat Hachodesh* in addition to the regular weekly portion.

This mitzvah formed the basis of the Jewish calendar, and it was therefore the sole responsibility of the Sanhedrin to determine when the new month begins and when the holidays are to be observed.

It is unfortunate that government bodies and most of the public in Israel pay more attention to the civil calendar based on the solar year than they do to the lunar calendar which was established for us in our first mitzvah. Our people's relationship to the moon as the lesser of the two heavenly luminaries is a reminder that although we are the least in number of all nations we have the capacity, like the moon, to constantly reappear in all our brilliance after periods of darkness. This is the encouraging reminder that, like the moon, Israel is 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

### THE SARGEL HIGHWAY

**I**n the north of Israel there is a highway called Kevish Hasargel which is part of the road connecting the cities of Afula and Hadera.



Established in 1935 it was given this name because, in contrast to other major highways, it is straight as a ruler (*sargel* in Hebrew).

## 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 *tzitzit*?
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 - Bezalel 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.

- Text of rulings of a rabbinical court
- Combining the separate testimonies of witnesses
- The ban on revealing the decision of an individual judge
- Evidence produced to challenge a court's decision
- Determining where the trial will take place
- In which cases is interrogation of witnesses required
- An issue of right of way on sea and land
- The outstanding rabbinical courts for one to choose
- Which judgments are reversible and what is the responsibility of the erring judge
- A judge's ability to reverse his ruling
- Multiple lessons from a single Torah passage
- Judging at night and qualification of a blind judge
- Judging a capital case on day before Shabbat or holiday
- Why execution of condemned sinner cannot take place on Shabbat or holiday
- Which historic figures had a combination of Torah and power unequalled by anyone in their generation
- Who is not qualified to be a judge in capital cases

## THE RADIANT SAGE

“**T**o the one whose face shines like the son of Batya.” This is how the Sage Mar Ukva was addressed in a letter sent to him as head of a rabbinical court in Babylon, requesting his cooperation in regard to a particular lawsuit.

Rashi offers two possibilities for this unusual title. One is that it is a reference to Moshe who was raised by Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh; and another is that it is a reference to the word *bayti* used in the tribute paid to Moshe by G-d that “In My entire house (*bayti*) he is the trusted one.” (*Bamidbar* 12:7).

The skin on Moshe's face had become radiant when he descended from Mount Sinai (*Shmot* 34:29) and there was a

sort of radiance in the face of the Sage Mar Ukva as indicated in the words of King Solomon that “a man's wisdom lights up his face.” (*Kohelet* 8:1)

Although this approach suggests that it was the Sage's wisdom that created the radiance, another approach is mentioned by Rashi on the basis of an unnamed source:

Mar Ukva was a *ba'al teshuva* who became literally lovesick towards a married woman. The woman one day came to him in desperate need of a loan but he courageously withstood temptation and as a result he recovered from his illness and was rewarded with a Heavenly bestowed light shining from his face. It was these sparks of light that endowed Mar Ukva with the name Rabbi Natan Tzutzita (sparks) attached to him in *Mesechta Shabbat* (55b).

• *Sanhedrin* 31b

## What the SAGES Say

“Like a hammer splitting a rock” is the Prophet Yirmiyahu's poetic description of Torah. Just as the rock is split into many parts, so can one Torah passage offer a number of interpretations.

• *The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yisrael (according to Rashbam) - Sanhedrin 34a*

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## MEZUZA AS AMULET

**From: Guy**

*Hi. I am a university student researching the mezuzah. Can you please send me information on its history, and its potential use as an amulet. Thanks.*

Dear Guy,

When you ask about the history of the mezuzah, you are probably asking about its origin. If so, the answer is that the mezuzah has the same origin as all the commandments in the Torah: It was revealed by G-d to the Jewish People at Mount Sinai.

Interestingly, though, the mezuzah was soon singled out for criticism by a group of people rebelling against Moshe. "If a room is filled with holy books," they asked, "does it still need a mezuzah [with passages from the Torah] on its door?" They were basically trying to ridicule Moshe, but their point was this: Does the 'House of Israel' (the holy Jewish People) need a 'mezuzah' — i.e., a leader or priest who adds to their holiness? Since the entire nation is holy, they challenged, surely there is no need for Moshe and Aaron at their head.

The answer to them was simple: Everything Moshe did, whether appointing priests or affixing *mezuzot*, was commanded by G-d. This also answers the question of the origin of the commandment — from G-d.

The mitzvah of mezuzah is to write two paragraphs from the Torah — "Shema" and "V'haya" — on a piece of parchment and affix it to the doorpost of all gates, houses and rooms. Among other things, these two paragraphs state that G-d is One, and that we should take the Torah's words to heart and teach them to our children.

Mezuzah literally means doorpost, although as far as the commandment is concerned, the term has come to refer to the actual parchment that is affixed to the doorpost. Since the parchment is usually placed in some

protective/decorative container which is then affixed to the doorpost, the container itself has erroneously come to be referred to by some as the mezuzah.

Wearing an actual mezuzah parchment as an amulet should not be done. This could lead to desecration of the Torah verses and G-d's Name therein. Fortunately, what is often worn around the neck and called a mezuzah doesn't contain a real mezuzah, but is simply a replica of the decorative case used to cover the real mezuzah parchment.

However, placing a valid mezuzah on your doorpost in fulfillment of the mitzvah earns special protection from G-d for you and for your children. This idea is related by the Talmud in the following moving episode:

Onkelos, the brilliant nephew of the Roman Emperor Titus, converted to Judaism and became a disciple of the Sages. Hearing this, Titus sent a brigade of soldiers to bring him back to Rome. But when Onkelos engaged the soldiers in discussion and showed them the beauty of Torah, they converted to Judaism.

Titus then sent another brigade, instructing them not to speak to Onkelos. But after listening without even speaking, they too converted to Judaism. Finally Titus sent a third brigade and instructed them not even to listen to Onkelos. When they were leading him away, Onkelos placed his hand on the mezuzah and inquisitively inquired, "What is that?"

"You tell us," the soldiers said. He replied, "Normally, a human king sits inside and his servants stand outside and guard him. But, for the Holy One Blessed be He, His servants are inside and He guards them from outside." They too converted. Titus sent no more soldiers.

Sources:

- Deuteronomy 6:4-8; 11:13-21
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 284
- Tractate Avodah Zarah 11

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# QUESTION MARKET

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## A PESACH PROBLEM

**Question:** With the approach of the Pesach Festival I anticipate a problem which may arise in regard to my observance of the halacha forbidding having chametz in my possession. The Gentile business associate of mine plans to visit my home during the intermediate days of the holiday and to bring along his young child. This youngster will probably be munching on some wafer while he is in my home and thus bring forbidden chametz into my possession. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** There is no need for you to postpone such a visit nor to ask your friend to leave his son's wafer at home. Halacha does not require you to do anything in such a situation because you are not the owner of the chametz even though it is in your home.

What you should do, however, is to politely ask the youngster to avoid leaving behind any uneaten parts of his wafer so that you can avoid being left with them – and make sure to clean up afterwards.

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

### IN PLACE OF A GIFT

Many wonder stories are told about the “Jerusalem Tzaddik”, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, of blessed memory. His renowned son-in-law, the generation's foremost halachic authority, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, is reported to have told the story of how this saintly man and his wife merited raising such an outstanding family.

It is a widespread custom in Eretz Yisrael for a *chatan* to give his *kallah* a gift when they enter the privacy of the

*yichud* room following the *chupah*. But Rabbi Levine was so poor that he could not afford to buy a present. Instead he informed his new wife that in place of a gift he would present her with a promise that whenever they would have a discussion in their married life he would concede that she is right. Her response was that she was reciprocating with a promise that she would always concede that he was right.

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