

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT PEKUDEI-SHEKALIM · 29 ADAR I 5771 · MAR. 5, 2011 · VOL. 18 NO. 23

PARSHA INSIGHTS

WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY

"...As G-d had commanded Moshe." (39:1)

One guaranteed way to increase sales of a product is to put a flash on the box saying "NEW!!! IMPROVED!!!" Inevitably, the veracity of this claim is in inverse proportion to the number of exclamation marks which follow it.

We seem to have an almost insatiable desire for 'new'. Our society is founded on the self-evident premise that everything can and *needs* to be improved.

There's an old American folk saying "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

In this week's Torah portion the words "*...As G-d had commanded Moshe*" appear over and over again. Twenty-two times. At the end of every single detail of the Mishkan: "*...As G-d had commanded Moshe. ...As G-d had commanded Moshe. ...As G-d had commanded Moshe.*"

What was the need for this seemingly redundant repetition?

The purpose of the Mishkan was to atone for the making of the golden calf. And the underlying flaw that was evinced by the golden calf was the desire to be smarter than G-d.

The Jewish People had seen that Moshe had acted as an intermediary between them and G-d. After Moshe failed to come down from the mountain they saw in the clouds a vision of his dead body being carried on a bier. In their confusion the Jewish People surmised they would need someone, or

something, to replace Moshe; something that would be a vehicle for the Divine Presence to rest amongst them.

In fact, in this assumption they were not far off the mark. However, not being far from the mark can be as far as day is from night.

It was true that there would be a vehicle through which the Divine Presence would rest on Yisrael, and its name was the Mishkan. However, the Mishkan could only be built according to the original Maker's instructions. No improvements are possible in His Instructions. And when we try to make improvements, we end up with a golden calf. When we try and modernize, democratize, pluralize — we end up with a golden calf.

The word of G-d is perfect. It "restores the soul". It is like no man-made panacea. If we want G-d's presence to dwell in our lives, the only way is through following the Maker's instructions — to the letter of the Law. Otherwise we end up with a golden calf.

It is for this reason that after each detail of the Mishkan the Torah says "*...As G-d had commanded Moshe.*"

The essence of the Mishkan was that it was 'as G-d had commanded Moshe' — not through the mistaken good intentions of man.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The 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.

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THE RALLYING CRY

“Chazak, chazak V'nitchazek!” This is the traditional rallying cry which Jews throughout the world will be shouting as the Reader of the Torah concludes *Parshat Pekudei* and *Sefer Shmot*.

Looking back at the chapters of this second of the five *Chumashim*, we can appreciate why Ramban refers to *Sefer Shmot* as the “Book of Exile and Redemption”. The first chapters deal with the exile in Egypt and the Exodus. Liberation from Egyptian bondage brought our ancestors physical freedom, and the chapters dealing with the

receiving of the Torah describe the beginning of spiritual redemption. Only when the Mishkan Sanctuary, the subject of the last five chapters, was built could our people be considered liberated because they then returned to the level of the Patriarchs as a base for the Divine Presence.

“Chazak, chazak v'nitchazeik” is a communal pledge to spiritually strengthen ourselves in our prayer, Torah study and good deeds which invite the Divine Presence to return to us and dwell in Israel forever

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

RABBI MOSHE BEN NACHMAN – THE HISTORIC REPORT

When the great Torah and Talmud commentator came to *Eretz Yisrael* in the year 5027 (1267), he found a desolate land and prayed for its restoration. This is what he wrote to his family:

“What can I tell you about the land other than it is barren and desolate? In general that which is most sacred is most desolate. *Yerushalayim* is most desolate of



all. There are virtually no Jews in it, only two brothers who are dyers who are joined by other Jews in the vicinity for a *minyan* on Shabbat.”

Despite this gloomy report Ramban concludes with the prayer that “He Who gave me the privilege of seeing *Yerushalayim* in its desolation will give me the privilege of seeing it in its restoration when the Divine Presence returns to it.”

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is the word Mishkan stated twice in verse 38:21?
2. Why is the Mishkan called the “Mishkan of Testimony”?
3. Who was appointed to carry the vessels of the Mishkan in the *midbar*?
4. Who was the officer in charge of the *levi'im*?
5. What is the meaning of the name Betzalel?
6. How many people contributed a half-shekel to the Mishkan? Who contributed?
7. Which material used in the *bigdei kehuna* was not used in the coverings of the sacred vessels?
8. How were the gold threads made?
9. What was inscribed on the stones on the shoulders of the *ephod*?
10. What was on the hem of the *me'il*?
11. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear between the *mitznetfet* 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.

1. 38:21 - To allude to the *Beit Hamikdash* that would twice be taken as a “*mashkon*” (pledge) for the sins of the Jewish People until the nation repents.
2. 38:21 - It was testimony for the Jewish People that G-d forgave them for the golden calf and allowed His *Shechina* to dwell among them.
3. 38:21 - The *levi'im*.
4. 38:21 - Itamar ben Aharon.
5. 38:22 - “In the shadow of G-d.”
6. 38:26 - 603,550. Every man age twenty and over (except the *levi'im*).
7. 39:1 - Linen (See *Rashi 31:10*).
8. 39:3 - The gold was beaten into thin plates from which threads were cut. (See *Rashi 28:6*).
9. 39:6, 39:7 - The names of the tribes.
10. 39:24,25 - Woven pomegranates and golden bells.
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

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Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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- Animals disqualified for sacrifice in *Beit Hamikdash* which are offered outside of it
- The *asham* sacrifice of the *nazir* and the *metzora*
- Sacrificial service before establishment of the Mishkan Sanctuary
- The sacred silence of Aharon
- The animals which found refuge from the great Deluge and which were offered as sacrifices
- The reverberations of Torah given at Sinai
- The sacrifices of non-Jews
- The camps in the wilderness and their counterparts in Yerushalayim
- Which sacrifices were offered on the *bamah* altar outside the Mishkan
- What was heard by Yitro and Rachav
- The wanderings of the Mishkan
- Differences between the Mishkan and the major and minor *bamah*

SPEECH AND SILENCE

“A time to speak and a time to be silent.” (*Kohelet* 3:4)
Our Sages explain this profound observation of King Shlomo as a reference to the reward one can sometimes receive for speaking and sometimes for remaining silent.

The silence which earned a reward was that of Aharon who silently accepted the tragic death of his two sons. When Moshe comforted his brother that the sudden death of his son served as a sanctification of G-d's Name, Aharon responded with silent acquiescence. The midrash cited by Rashi states that his reward was that the very next command

given by G-d was only to Aharon (*Vayikra* 10:8) and not to Moshe.

While the time to remain silent is explicitly mentioned in our *gemara*, we turn to Rashi in *Kohelet* for an explanation of when there is a time to speak. Three examples are listed there: The song of Moshe and the Children of Israel at the splitting of the sea, the song of the Prophetess Devorah after the victory over the Canaanites, and the call of the Prophet Hoshea to return to G-d and “take words with you”.

The reward for such speech is self-evident and needs no elaboration.

• *Zevachim* 115b

What the SAGES Say

“What did Yitro hear that motivated him to join the Jewish People? The splitting of the sea.”

• *Rabbi Elazar ben Yaakov - Zevachim* 116a

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ELEVATED PRAYER

From: Sean

Dear Rabbi,

I will be making an international flight where I expect to be praying on the plane. While I've never actually done it, I've seen others doing it and I'm kind of intrigued by the idea of praying so high in the sky. However, I seem to remember wondering as I watched whether it bothered anybody on the flight. Would you recommend that I pray in a minyan on the plane?

Dear Sean,

First of all, from your question, I understand that you cannot avoid being in flight during prayer time. However, in general, one should schedule travel so as not to coincide with prayer times if possible in order to pray with a *minyan* in a synagogue.

Second, while I understand your excitement about praying in such "elevating" surroundings, please remember that G-d is equally everywhere, and the main component of prayer is not the physical elevation but the spiritual elevation, which is a function of *kavanah* — intention and focus during prayer. In any case, the thrill of praying in the sky applies to praying in your seat as well.

If you do want to pray out of your seat, for example with a *minyan* that is being organized by the passengers – or even alone – you must ask permission from the flight crew and pray only at times and in places that they allow. If after receiving permission you are asked by the airline at any point in the prayers to return to your seat, you must sit down immediately, even in the middle of the *amida*. This is an issue of law that must be respected, and may also involve personal and public safety which must be taken seriously.

Even if the cabin attendants permit prayer, they may be doing so only begrudgingly. In addition, it may, and often does, bother other passengers. Blocking free movement in the aisle, obstructing passage to bathrooms, crowding near those sitting, eating or sleeping, and similar such obtrusions are unacceptable. One's "right" to pray in public does not precede others' comfort, and praying in this way will not increase the public's respect for Judaism, only cause animosity.

In any case, praying near bathrooms, which is usually the only open space on the plane for a *minyan*, is hardly appropriate. First, it is improper to pray in front of a toilet

even when the door is closed. Second, a *minyan* where people are pushing through to get to the bathrooms is hardly respectful to the prayers. And often, the bathroom doors are opened during the prayers, revealing sights and odors which are certainly not acceptable during prayer.

Even if one prays (with permission), not near the bathrooms but rather in the aisle or galley, there is still a problem of being interrupted by passersby-passengers. In addition, it is forbidden to pray in view of someone who is not dressed according to the modesty laws of Judaism. Much of common dress nowadays is considered "bare" for this purpose, revealing parts of the body that may not be seen while reciting the prayers.

So, considering all the possible drawbacks and pitfalls involved in praying with a *minyan* on a plane, it's hard to imagine that anyone could have *kavanah* in the first place. And, in truth, one who knows a priori that he will not have proper intention during prayer is technically exempt from praying anyway. I would even go so far as to say that you don't have to/shouldn't participate in a *minyan* being organized under such conditions. G-d does not want you to be an accomplice to prayer that justifiably disturbs others and, for the reasons I've outlined, likely doesn't qualify as prayer anyway.

I think the best thing is to just pray in your seat by yourself. This way you're not getting in anybody's way, or on anybody's nerves. You can pray at your own pace with concentration, and you're not being interrupted, bumped into, asked to move or confronted with inappropriate sights or smells. Of course, this assumes that you won't have similar problems while in your seat. If you do, you'll have to try to manage the situation accordingly.

In any case, tell the person next to you what you plan to do, how long it will take, offer to temporarily change seats if needed, explain to him (or her) and the flight attendant for your section that for some parts of the prayer you won't be able to speak or respond, and ask if there's anything that needs to be communicated before you start. Be sensitive to time your prayers in a way that will least disturb your neighbors.

In such circumstances, the entire prayers may be said sitting, even the *amida*. In fact, sitting has an advantage in that the seat intercedes between you and inappropriate sights in flight. In addition, not only may the *amida* be recited while sitting, you also don't have to be facing Jerusalem if you can't or don't know the direction. It is in this situation that one is truly encouraged to direct his prayers upward to G-d in Heaven.

HONOR VS. SHAME

Question: A pupil who was guilty of disturbing his class was demoted, as punishment, to a lower class in which he has a younger brother. Is this form of discipline acceptable?

Answer: Embarrassing someone publicly is equated by our Talmudic Sages with murder in the gravity of the harm caused to the victim. No teacher or principal would consider murdering a pupil regardless of the problem he poses. In the same manner, extreme caution must be exercised in choosing the manner in which a pupil is disciplined. There are cases mentioned in the Talmud, and experiences of people in our own day, which testify to the terrible effects of shaming someone, ranging from abandonment of society to abandonment of life itself.

The flip side of this issue is the utilization of honor to encourage a reluctant pupil to try harder. The Talmud

(Bava Metzia 85a) relates that a particularly rebellious young man was placed by Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi under the tutelage of a great teacher of Torah and was granted the title of "Rabbi". At one point the youngster expressed a desire to leave his studies and return to his sinful ways. "You have been granted wisdom," his teacher reminded him, "and a golden crown of honor will accompany your title of rabbi and you still speak of returning to your old shameful ways!"

This appeal to a pupil's desire for honor had the desired effect, and the problematic youngster developed into a distinguished sage. Every capable teacher similarly has a number of ways in which he can motivate pupils with honor rather than shame and thus achieve the result that every educator desires.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

BROTHERS IN BLOOD

Students of the Sanz Yeshiva in Netanya were in the midst of their holiday prayers on the morning of Shavuot when a nurse from nearly Lanyado Hospital came rushing in and excitedly called one of them outside. A patient's life was at risk, she explained, and fresh blood was needed immediately. Some 70 of the young men there quickly interrupted their prayers and rushed to the hospital and succeeded in saving a life.

Shulamit Marom had entered the hospital in which her husband, who made aliya from Russian 12 years ago, serves as a gynecologist, to give an expected normal birth to her

fourth child. Something went wrong and a pulmonary embolism brought her heartbeat to a standstill. In 90% of such cases the woman dies and the severe hemorrhaging of Shulamit posed a serious threat to her life. An alarm was sounded for 20 units of fresh O+ blood, and staff members with such a blood type quickly responded. But it was not enough and the yeshiva next door was the only answer. Pints were taken from those with O+ blood and Shulamit was saved. A 3.2 kilogram healthy baby boy was delivered by Caesarean section and all the donors were invited to his Brit Mila.

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