

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

ONE SMALL STEP FOR A MAN

“Lest you become contaminated...” (11:43)

The road to holiness does not start with lofty ideals or sublime thoughts. It does not begin with a mind-expanding revelation or a Close Encounter. It cannot be produced by psychotropic drugs, nor can it be experienced by climbing the Alps or the Andes.

True, gazing down from Mont Blanc or Everest may fill us with awe at the Creator’s handiwork. Nature can truly inspire closeness to G-d. But all this inspiration will vanish like a cloud of smoke if we lack the fundamental ingredients to concretize inspiration into actuality.

The road to holiness starts with a few small boring steps. Like being a decent moral person, controlling our emotions and our appetites.

As Jews, we may not eat what we like when we like. On Pesach we may eat no bread. On Yom Tov we should eat meat. On Yom Kippur we may eat nothing. At all times we may not eat the forbidden foods that are the subject of this week’s Torah portion.

“Lest you become contaminated...” In Hebrew this sentence is expressed as one word, *V’nitmay’tem*. The spelling of this word is unusual. It lacks an *aleph*, and thus it can also read as *V’nitumtem*, which means *“Lest you become dulled.”*

In our search for holiness and meaning in this world, one of our greatest assets and aids are the laws of kashrut. Kosher food is soul food. Food for the soul. Food that feeds our spirituality and sharpens our ability to receive holiness.

Food that is not kosher does the reverse. It dulls our senses. It makes us less sensitive, less receptive to holiness. A Jew who tries to seek holiness sitting on top of some mountain in the Far East living on a diet of salted pork will find it impossible to achieve his goal. The view of Ganges, or the Himalayas (or his navel) may titillate his spiritual senses, but he will find no growth or nourishment reaching his core.

The spiritual masters teach that if a person contaminates himself a little, he becomes contaminated a great deal. Spirituality is a delicate thing. It doesn’t take much to jam the

broadcast from “Upstairs”. On the other hand, a little bit of holiness goes a long way. As the Torah teaches *“You shall sanctify yourselves and you shall become holy.”* (11:44) A little bit of sanctity generates a lot of holiness. If we sanctify ourselves down here in this lowly world with all its barriers to holiness, if we guard our mouths, our eyes and our ears, then the Torah promises us that we will be given help to lift us to lofty peaks of holiness.

It all starts with one small step.

A little bit of sanctity generates a lot of holiness.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not

drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

ISRAEL Forever

LIBERATION AND ELEVATION

“**F**or I am G-d who elevates you from the land of Egypt...” (*Vayikra* 11:45) In this phrase which appears at the end of this week's Torah portion's chapter on forbidden creatures, there is an important lesson in regard to the role of *kashrut* observance.

While the usual reference to the Exodus is one of being taken out of Egypt, here we find the use of the term “elevate”. Rashi explains that it was worthwhile leaving Egypt if for no other reason than avoiding the consumption of creeping creatures, which was common amongst the

Egyptians. This is in itself an elevation, which places Jewry on a higher level than other nations.

While this concept of elevation is applied to eating, it can certainly be extended to all aspects of Torah observance. Liberation from Egypt was not an end in itself but rather a means of elevation. Statehood as well must be seen only as a step towards spiritual elevation rather than just being a nation like all other nations.

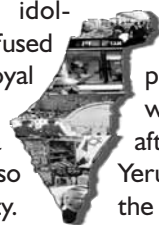
Only such elevation can secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

NAVOT THE YIZRE'ELITE – THE VOICE THAT FAILED

Nevot is known to every student of Biblical history as the tragic victim of the avaricious idol-worshipping King Achav. When Nevot refused to sell to King Achav his vineyard adjoining the royal winter palace, Achav followed the suggestion of his wicked wife Izevel (Jezebel). He framed him on a false charge of blasphemy and had him executed, so that he could then appropriate the desired property.



The Midrash states that Nevot was thus punished by Heaven for withholding his beautiful voice from serving G-d. When he would make his regular pilgrimage to Yerushalayim during the Festivals, people would gather to hear him sing praises to Heaven. It was after he was negligent and failed to travel once to Yerushalayim and share his talent with those who came to the *Beit Hamikdash* that this tragedy befell him.

לע"נ

הרב פסח יוסף בן ר' שלמה יהודה זצ"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What date was “*yom hashemini*”?
2. Which of Aharon’s *korbanot* atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What *korbanot* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatat* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkat kohanim*?
6. Why did Moshe go into the *Ohel Mo’ed* with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three *chatat* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.
11. Which he-goat *chatat* did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the *chatat*. Why?
14. Why did G-d choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrut*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only *one* sign of *kashrut*? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called *chasida* in Hebrew?
19. The *chagav* is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 9:1 - First of *Nissan*.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a *korban chatat*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatat*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *mincha*.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a *chatat* offered on the courtyard *mizbe’ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanot*, before descending from the *mizbe’ach*.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the *Shechina* to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the *Mishkan* after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a *halachic* ruling. Also, a *kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, approach the *mizbe’ach*, or perform the *avoda*.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of *Rosh Chodesh*, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.
11. 10:16 - The *Rosh Chodesh chatat*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninut* (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the *kohanim* eat the *chatat* are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4,5,6,7 - Four: Camel, *shafan*, hare and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with *chesed* (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher *chagav*.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern).

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- Relationship between *kometz* and *levonah*, and between Shavuot sheep and bread in regard to *pigul*
- What constitutes *pigul* in a mincha offering
- Non-essential details of the mincha service
- Which parts of this service must be done by a *kohen*
- To which part of the altar must the mincha be brought
- The “covenant” of salt in regard to sacrifices
- What does not require salting
- Where did the salt come from and where was it stored
- When one person’s *kometz* got mixed up with that of another person’s

THE MYSTERIOUS KOHEN

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai was one of the outstanding Talmudic Sages and the leader of his people in the period preceding and following the destruction of the Second *Beit Hamikdash*.

But was he also a *kohen*?

Our *gemara* seems to indicate that he was not a *kohen*. In opposition to the Sage Ben Buchri who ruled that a *kohen* is exempt from the obligation to contribute a half-shekel for the purpose of purchasing the materials needed for the sacrificial service, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai stated that the *kohanim* are indeed obligated like the rest of the people, but that they sinfully fail to contribute based on a misunderstanding of the source.

Tosefot points out that his critical reference to *kohanim* indicates that he himself was not a *kohen*. A *gemara* in *Mesechta Shabbat* (34a), however, seems to indicate otherwise. We there find this Sage handling *terumah*, which Rashi explains was for the purpose of guarding their purity, a duty he assumed because he was a *kohen*.

The basis for Rashi’s explanation is a Sifri that quotes Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai telling his disciples that he forgot exactly what he did in regard to the Red Heifer preparation which was restricted to *kohanim*. Tosefot, however, rejects this proof because it is possible that what he meant was not that he participated in those preparations as a *kohen* but rather as a rabbinical guide.

• *Menachot 21b*

What the SAGES Say

“How fortunate are you, Torah Sages, that the words of Torah are so beloved by you.”

• *Rabbi Elazar ben Shamoah - Menachot 18a*

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DOORWAY DISPUTE

From: Dennis

Dear Rabbi,

I will be moving into a home that is presently occupied by Jewish people. I know that one cannot take the mezuzot down if you know that the new occupants are Jewish. The wife called me to ask me to bring 9 mezuzot to replace the 9 she is taking with her. Since she has expensive mezuzot (\$60 each) she figures I'd rather replace them than pay for them. She is correct, especially since I already own a few. My question is this: There will be a few weeks between the time they leave and I move in when the painters will be painting. I would prefer not putting up my mezuzot until after they have painted and I can buy nice mezuzah covers. The wife prefers that my mezuzot be up when she takes hers down. Do I have time or must I do as she says? Can the mezuzot be wrapped in plastic and put up with tape rather than with a proper cover and nails until I move in? And what if I said I couldn't pay for her mezuzot, can she still take them?

Dear Dennis,

Yes, you have time. Before you move in you have no obligation at all to put up mezuzot, and you don't need to comply with the request of the current occupants.

But you are a nice person and you want something tactful to tell them. If you simply "show them the door" they may "go through the roof," and your relationship will surely be "out the window." So I suggest you tell them the following:

True, generally, when moving out of a house it's forbidden to remove the mezuzot if a Jewish person will be moving in. [This is based on an incident in the Talmud where a person moved out, took his mezuzot, and as a result, ended up burying his wife and two sons (no need to tell them this

part)]. But the *poskim* qualify this rule: One may take down the mezuzot if he needs them and the new tenant is not going to pay for them. That's the case here: They need the mezuzot and you don't want to pay for them.

Furthermore, you said the house is going to be painted. Before painting, it's recommended that the mezuzot be removed so they don't get damaged.

So for both of these reasons, the present occupants need not worry about removing them when they leave. Once the current occupants remove the mezuzot for a permitted reason – i.e., painting – the unoccupied home may remain 'mezuzah-less' until you move in.

If, nevertheless, they do not want to leave the house without mezuzot, they can either leave theirs (or some inexpensive others, such as from a *gemach*) until you start painting or until you put up your own. In such a case, arrange in advance when and who will remove the mezuzot that are left and how they shall be returned.

Speaking of doorway disputes reminds me of the following:

People experiencing difficulties in life often check that their mezuzot are kosher and properly affixed on their doorposts. Once, a certain non-religious person's children were becoming religious one by one. He didn't know what to do. Comically, one of his friends mentioned that maybe the source of his problems is that there's something wrong with his mezuzot. When he approached the local rabbi with his "problem", the rabbi responded, "If you check your mezuzot you'll probably find they're kosher!"

Sources:

- *Tractate Bava Metzia 102a*
- *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 291:2*
- *Yesodei Yeshurun, Ma'arechet Beit Haknesset 2, citing the Atzei Zayit*

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THE LITTERBUG BOOMERANG

Question: I recently hired a contractor to build an extension of my house. Some neighbors warned me that this fellow has a reputation of littering the street with the rubble resulting from such construction. Is this something that I should be concerned about?

Answer: The Talmud tells a story about a fellow who was throwing rocks from his private field into the public thoroughfare. A righteous passerby reprimanded him with a puzzling challenge. "Reckless one, why do you throw rocks from an area which does not belong to you into an area which does?" (*Mesechta Bava Kama 50b*)

Failing to comprehend the logic of this reprimand, the rock-thrower laughed it off and continued his activity. Time went by and he came upon hard times, which compelled him to sell that field. As he walked by it one day on the public thoroughfare he tripped over one of the rocks he had thrown there. Only then did he realize the wisdom of the

reproof he had earlier received. The field he thought was his forever was no longer his, while the street he littered belonged to him and everyone else!

Littering a public area is a sin and a crime because of safety, ecological and aesthetic reasons. When you or your agent casts rubble into the street even for a while, you are guilty not only of causing certain harm to others, but are also possibly causing damage to yourself. This is why righteous people disposed of their unwanted thorns and broken glass in a manner which could not possibly affect others in the most remote ways (*ibid. 30a*).

Littering is a terrible thing regardless of whether it is using the street as a dump for discarded bricks or as a repository for candy wrappers or cigarette butts. It also makes little difference if it is litter thrown from a car or bus or if it is the garbage carelessly spilled near a public bin. If you can't convince your contractor to provide for immediate removal of the litter he creates, get yourself another builder.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

FORMULA FOR HAPPINESS

For the last three years, Gallup has called 1,000 randomly selected American adults each day and asked them about their emotional status, work satisfaction, eating habits, illnesses, stress levels and other indicators of their quality of life.

Gallup's answer: He's a tall, Asian-American, observant Jew who is at least 65 and married, has children, lives in Hawaii, runs his own business and has a household income of more than \$120,000 a year. A few phone were made to find such a person.

Meet Alvin Wong. He is a 5-foot-10, 69-year-old,

Chinese-American, Kosher-observing Jew, who's married with children and lives in Honolulu. He runs his own health care management business and earns more than \$120,000 a year.

Reached by phone at his home on Friday, Mr. Wong said that he was indeed a very happy person. He said that perhaps he manages to be the happiest man in America because "my life philosophy is, if you can't laugh at yourself, life is going to be pretty terrible for you."

He continued: "This is a practical joke, right?"

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