

OHRNET

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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*”:

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.)

Smile. You’re on Candid Camera!

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.

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.

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

Usually the “strictly kosher” food arrives before the

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

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

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

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; however, the Jewish People 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 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 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 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 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 RED COW MESSAGE

“It is not the corpse that causes spiritual contamination or the ashes of the Red Cow which cause purity. These laws are Divine decrees and man has no right to question them.”

These words of Rabbi Yochanan in the Midrash relate to the special Torah chapter which will be read along with the regular weekly portion this Shabbat.

The opening words of this *Parshat Parah* are “This is the decree of the Torah.” The term “decree” (*chukat*) applies not only to the purification process of the Red Cow, but also

to other laws that are beyond human comprehension. Although our Sages saw many messages in the details of the Red Cow process, it is still shrouded in mystery.

It has been suggested that we learn from our lack of fully understanding the reasons for some *mitzvot* that we are also incapable of fully comprehending world events and must ultimately rely on our faith that whatever G-d does is for our good.

How important is such faith in these troubled times and only such faith can preserve Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

TEVERIYA – A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT

Tova riyata - a beautiful sight - is the description of the famous city on the shores of Lake Kinneret which is known by the contraction of those two words — *Teveriya*.

The name more familiar to people outside Eretz Yisrael — Tiberius — echoes the Midrashic explanation that the Emperor Tiberius named it in his



own honor during the Roman occupation of the Land.

The Talmudic Sages have another version. The city's name was originally Rakkat but was nicknamed Teveriya because it was in the *tabur* navel of the Land, a centrality arising from its location in the Galilee where the main Jewish community was concentrated after the destruction of Jerusalem.

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 con-

tributions 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 - 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.

- Animal designated for worship or offered as sacrifice to an idol
- Animal used to compensate a harlot
- Animal exchanged for a dog
- The offspring of a *treifah* animal or one which has otherwise been disqualified as a sacrifice
- The bird hatched from egg of a *treifah* mother
- The differences between two categories of gifts to the Sanctuary
- The ban on changing the status of a consecrated animal
- Redemption of a consecrated animal
- Which forbidden matters must be burned and which buried

THE UNWANTED DOG

The Torah's ban on offering as a sacrifice an animal that was acquired in exchange for a dog is so strict that it even applies to a situation in which the exchange was for only a portion of the dog. The *Mishnah* describes a case in which two partners divide up their property, one receiving ten sheep and the other nine sheep and a dog. Since the single dog is worth more than each of the sheep in its group, this means that this extra value is being exchanged for all ten sheep in the other group. The result is that the nine sheep in the dog's group are eligible

for sacrifice while the ten sheep in the other group are disqualified.

Why is an animal exchanged for a dog unfit for sacrifice?

One of the reasons given is that hunters and guards train vicious dogs which are a menace to the public and seek to achieve atonement for their wrongdoing by offering an animal exchanged for the dog as a sacrifice.

Another reason given is that such dogs are considered an abomination and it is a disgrace to sacrifice an animal received in exchange for a dog. (See Ramban commentary on *Devarim* 23:19)

• *Temurah* 30a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"The Torah's statement about a man dedicating his house to the Sanctuary teaches us that one can only consecrate something which he owns."

• *Gemara - Temura* 29b

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RACE FROM THE START

From: Debra

Dear Rabbi,

I have always wondered how from Adam and Eve came all the different races and colors of the peoples of the world? Was it like that from the start? If not, how did the variation take place?

Dear Debra,

Great Question! The Talmud itself deals with this. In reality, the modern concept of adaptation to the environment is discussed in the Talmud written 1,800 years before Darwin was born!

The Sages teach us that in order to help people survive in different climates and conditions, G-d created them with the ability to adapt physical characteristics specifically suited for their environment. For example, the Talmud states that for this reason people who live in swampy regions may have large feet to help them contend with the soft footing. And to those who live in eastern desert climates G-d enabled special eyelids to develop which help them contend with the sand that is prevalent in the air.

In the same line of reason, we can clearly postulate that G-d enabled melanin to adjust the epidermis of people who live in different longitudes to contend with the varied exposure to the angles of the sun's rays.

This is clearly the way G-d created the whole world. Many times in Tanach we see that G-d created everything with wisdom and benevolence, imparting in everything the innate ability to survive and contend with its environment. Not only does G-d give all life its capability to survive, but He also created the inanimate world in its many manifestations in a way that protect and enhances that life.

For example, King David in Psalms says that G-d gives "snow like wool." What kind of comparison is this? Snow is cold and wool is used to warm and protect? Yet, careful observation gives us the answer: Snow acts like an insulation to protect the ground and its vegetation from the extreme cold of winter. The more toward the poles we traverse, the more snow there is, further insulating the ground underneath. Many animals, seeking warmth, actually burrow themselves in the snow during extreme temperatures.

In his inspired wisdom, King David perceived this concept of ground insulation marvelously. Differences among people, too, can be seen as helpful adaptations from a benevolent Creator.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

PRAYER IN THE AIR

Question: When I travel on an airplane I regularly join a *minyan* of Jews for prayer service at the back of the plane. This invariably creates highly unfavorable conditions for proper concentration and sometimes causes discomfort for stewardesses and fellow passengers. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: This question was put to the renowned halachic authority Rabbi Shmuel Halevi Vosner by El Al Rabbi Shmuel Avraham Katzir. In the ruling which he sent to El Al president Amos Shapira, Rabbi Vosner came out against the practice of large numbers of passengers gathering together for a prayer service in one part of the plane. He pointed out that, aside from being a safety haz-

ard, such a practice is a detriment to true concentration.

Passengers should instead form small *minyanim* scattered around the plane and try to sit in their seats. During the *amida* prayer when they are required to stand, they should try to stand in or near their own places on the plane. If this is impractical they should not clog the aisles but remain seated even during this prayer and even fasten seat belts if asked to do so by the staff.

Another perspective on this problem was provided by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef who ruled that it is preferable to pray in the airport before a flight, even without a *minyan*, than with a *minyan* on the plane that risks disturbing the sleep of fellow passengers.

Mordechai Stenge

Montreal, Canada

McGill University – Business major

Currently in Kollel in Ramat Beit Shemesh, attended Ohr Somayach from 2002-2007

Da'at Torah made Mordechai into the man he is today, thanks to his “run-in” with the JLE and Ohr Somayach. He had already made *aliyah* in January 2001 to fulfill religious/Zionist ideals when his friends brought him to Rabbi Gottlieb’s class. The timing was perfect. His lease had just run out, and the Yeshiva dorms

were open for the taking. He decided to try it. Soon the interest was strong enough to dedicate one year to learning, which developed into five years. This turned into tutoring at the Mir Yeshiva and teaching at Ohr Somayach as the “*Bein Hazmanim Rabbi*”. His other time is spent learning in Kollel and being with his wife and four beautiful children. Somehow, he managed to get his Masters at Bar Ilan University during this time as well.

Mordechai sees that the means to achieving spiritual growth are rooted in Israel and Ohr Somayach. He says the key is to live life deliberately, not just about how to make money, but also about why we are here.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A TIP FROM HEAVEN

After hearing a personal story of Divine Providence from a cab driver in Jerusalem, I had the opportunity of hearing an even better one from him.

He started off one day in a very bad mood. There was a debt of one hundred dollars due for payment that evening and he had no idea how he was going to get that kind of money. Driving through the city streets in a depressed state he picked up a tourist couple, obviously non-Jewish, who asked him to take them to a particular hotel.

After dropping them off he picked up a religious Jewish passenger who informed him that there was a pouch on

the back seat. The cabbie asked for it to be put on the seat next to him and soon heard a cell phone inside the pouch ringing. He answered the call and a worried voice on the other end of the line asked him to immediately bring the pouch to the hotel, assuring him that it would be worth his while.

Our hero drove to the hotel and returned the pouch to its relieved owner who anxiously began examining its contents. Satisfied that nothing of these valuable contents had been touched, he presented the cabbie with a tip of one hundred dollars. This G-d-fearing cab driver clearly saw that this was a tip from Heaven.

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