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PARSHA INSIGHTS

HISTORY LESSON

“On the first day, Nachshon ben Aminadav, prince of Yehuda, brought his offerings.” (7:12)

At the inauguration of the Mishkan, the princes of the twelve tribes of Yisrael each brought identical donations. These donations contained within them a symbolic “history lesson” depicting the history of the world from Adam onwards. What was the significance of this historical panorama?

The silver bowl that they brought alluded to Adam, the first man, for the *gematria* (numerical value) of word *ke'arat kesef* is 930 the years of Adam's life. It was made of silver which hints to the fact that Adam kept six commandments of the Torah, for the Torah is likened to silver. The weight of the bowl was 130 shekels, symbolizing the 130 years that Adam lived before his successor, Shet was born. It was through Shet that mankind was established.

Apart from this silver bowl, they brought a silver basin. The *gematria* of *mizrak ehad kesef* (“one silver bowl”) is 520. Noach did not have children until the age of 500, and 20 years before this event, G-d decreed the flood. The word *mizrak* is from the same root as “to be thrown out,” and Noach was an outsider in a generation that scoffed at his building of the ark. This basin was also silver to represent the Torah, for in addition to the six *mitzvot* that Adam observed, Noach kept a seventh *mitzvah* not to eat the limbs or the meat of a living animal. The basin weighed 70 shekels corresponding to the seventy nations that are descended from Noach who are

commanded to observe these seven *mitzvot* to this day.

The offerings of one bullock, one ram and one lamb as *olah* offerings hint to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. The bullock symbolizes the hospitality of Avraham when he ran to bring oxen for his guests. The ram is a reminder of Yitzchak's willingness to be bound on the altar even though a ram was offered in his stead. The lamb represents Yaakov who separated his herds from Lavan.

The two oxen, which were offered as *shlamim*, allude to Moshe and Aharon who made peace (*shalom*) between the Jewish People and their Father in Heaven.

The *kaf*, spoon, represents the giving of the Torah. The Torah is called a *kaf* because *kaf* can also mean “hand” — the Torah was given to us directly to be the “Hand” of G-d. The spoon weighed 10 shekels, corresponding to the Ten Commandments. It too was gold, alluding to the Torah. The *kaf* was filled with *ketoret* incense. The *gematria* of *ketoret* is 613, the number of *mitzvot* in the Torah.

When Adam sinned the Divine Presence withdrew from this world. The message of the symbolic “history lesson” of the princes' offerings was that with the inauguration of the Mishkan which these offerings honored, the Divine Presence rested on the world once again.

• Sources: *Bamidbar Rabbah*; *Tzror Chamor*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscribing G-d's

Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nisan* in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

ISRAEL Forever

THE SPECIAL DIVISION

“You shall count them (the Levites) everyone who comes to join the *tzava* to perform work in the Sanctuary.” (*Bamidbar* 4:21)

Thus was Moshe commanded by G-d, as recorded in this week's Torah portion.

Why were they not counted in the same census recorded in the portion preceding this?

The answer given by Rashi citing the Midrash is that “the legion of the King deserves to be counted separately.” (*Bamidbar* 1:49)

In both the census of all the tribes and in the census of the Levites, the term “*tzava*”, literally translated as “army”, is used. In regard to all the tribes the terminology used is “who goes out the army” to indicate that they have the responsi-

bility of military duty. Regarding the Levites, the term used is “those who come to join the army” as mentioned above because their duties were performed in the Sanctuary and not on the battlefield.

All Jews were thus described as being in the “*tzava*” but with different responsibilities. Our Sages have already pointed out that those who dedicate their lives to the study of Torah are the virtual Levites of today when we lack a Sanctuary.

Those populist politicians in Israel who are clamoring for an end to the practice in this country of deferring military service for yeshiva students should learn from these Torah chapters that today's Levites are really another indispensable division in the army of the Jewish nation.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE LAND THAT HAS EVERYTHING

Eretz Yisrael is described as a land “in which nothing is missing” (*Devarim* 8:9). This outstanding feature of Eretz Yisrael is hinted at again when the Torah prohibits the eating of the fruit of a tree in the first three years of its life. This rule, we are told, applies to “every food-producing tree whose fruit must be shunned as *orlah*” (*Vayirka* 19:23).



There seems to be a redundancy here, notes the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Meir (*Mesechta Brachot* 36b), since mentioning fruit once obviously identifies it as a food-producing tree. His conclusion is that “food-producing” is a reference to the kind of tree whose wood has the same taste as its fruit and is intended to teach us that even such a rare tree is to be found in the land that has everything.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's *Parsha*?
2. Besides transporting the *Mishkan*, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is referred to in this *Parsha*?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *teme'im* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnot kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnot kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the Name of G-d is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people "with a full heart." What word in the *Parsha* conveys this idea of "a full heart?"
18. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d bless you and guard you"?
19. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d lift up His countenance upon you"?
20. The tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the *Mishkan* was erected.
4. 5:2 - The camp of the *Shechina* was in the center, surrounded by the camp of Levi which was surrounded by the camp of *Yisrael*.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *yav* was permitted in the camp of *Yisrael* but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the camp of the *Shechina*.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of G-d is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shelamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - "*Amor*."
18. 6:24 - "May G-d bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissachar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

- The source for relying on an established pattern of menstruation
- The nursing mother and the need for examination
- What is the sign of a woman reaching old age
- When examination is not required
- Who deserves the title of “tzenuah”
- Avoiding the waste of male seed
- The grave sin of masturbation
- What is holding up the arrival of Mashiach
- Mental incompetents maintaining purity
- Choosing between teacher and disciple

THE IMPACT OF DISCIPLES

When Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi) praised Rabbi Chama bar Basra to Rabbi Yishmael ben Rabba Yossi and described him as a great scholar, the latter asked that he be brought to him. To test him he suggested that he ask him a question in regard to a halachic matter. When he did so Rabbi Yishmael asked him if he wished to hear an answer according to the opinion of his father Rabbi Yossi (who was the teacher of Rebbie), or according to the position of Rebbie.

The response of Rabbi Chama that he favored hearing the position of Rebbie upset Rabbi Yishmael who exclaimed:

“This is a great scholar? How can he favor the opinion of a disciple (Rebbie) over that of the master (Rabbi Yossi)?”

What was the rationale of Rabbi Chama?

The *gemara*’s explanation is that since Rebbie was the head of the Sanhedrin and the head of a great yeshiva, he was always interacting with disciples and this sharpened his understanding.

Tosefot raises the problem that we find elsewhere that Rabbi Yossi was a greater scholar than Rebbie. His resolution is that when Rebbie was very young Rabbi Yossi was indeed greater than him, but in his later years the interaction with his disciples made him the superior scholar as indicated in our *gemara*.

• *Nidah* 14b

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“The scion of David (Mashiach) will not arrive until all of the souls in a place called Guf (the storehouse of souls to be born) are born.”

• *Rabbi Yossi - Nidah* 13b

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GENEROUSLY WRONG

From: Shelly

Dear Rabbi,

I ordered a particular arts/craft item from an acquaintance to be prepared from materials that I bought and paid for. As it turned out, I was not particularly pleased with the final product and I preferred not to pay for it. So I offered that she keep it for herself, or sell it for whatever profit she wants. I thought this was fair and even generous since, although I wouldn't be paying her for the work, I paid for the materials and she'll be able to cover the labor or make a profit by selling it if she wants. She claims that that's not fair since she prepared what I ordered and I should pay her what we agreed upon even if I don't want it. What do you suggest I do?

Dear Shelly,

You don't deny that she prepared what you ordered, only that you don't particularly like the way it turned out. Your offer, then, from her point of view doesn't seem particularly generous. On the contrary, after the time and labor she invested in the project anticipating remuneration, you're suggesting she keep it for herself, or have to deal with finding someone else who will be willing to buy what you ordered and didn't like.

When you consider paying her what she deserves and keeping it for yourself, or selling it yourself in order to cut your losses, does that seem appealing to you? I imagine

not, so you should be able to imagine why she's not particularly pleased by your proposition either.

I suggest you pay her for it, and if you are still intent on being generous with her, you can then give it to her as a gift to do with as she pleases – to either keep for herself or to resell it!

Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli and his household were very poor. After many years of forgoing new clothes, his Rebbetzin finally was able to obtain some nice cloth and commissioned the local tailor to prepare her a nice dress.

When she went to pick up the dress, she noticed that the tailor's eyes were teary. He replied to her inquiry by explaining that his daughter was recently engaged, and when his future in-laws became aware that the beautiful dress that he was preparing (and could certainly not afford himself) was not, in fact for the wedding, they were very upset and he suffered much embarrassment.

Without thinking twice about it, the Rebbetzin gave the dress to the tailor for his daughter and left the store. When she told the story to her husband, the holy Rabbi Zusha, he immediately inquired, "And what of the tailor's wages – did you pay him for his work?" "Pay him?" she exclaimed, "I gave him the entire dress as a gift!"

The Rabbi replied that the poor tailor worked day and night on the garment, not for his daughter, but for the Rebbetzin, and that the tailor certainly placed his hopes on using the wages for his labor to buy food for his hungry children. But now that she gave the dress to him, where will he have money for his family? "Why should the tailor suffer" he challenged, "because you decided to give his daughter the dress as a gift?"

The wise Rebbetzin, without hesitation, rushed to the tailor and paid him his wages due.

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A LESSON FROM A FOOTBALL HERO

Question: I am a young American college graduate studying in a yeshiva in Israel. Missing the opportunity to study Torah in my earlier years I feel an urgent need to spend another year at yeshiva before entering law school in order to gain the degree of self-sufficiency in studying Talmudic texts that will enable me to successfully continue my Torah studies on a part-time basis while I am practicing law. My parents, however, argue that I am sacrificing a valuable year of career preparation. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The opportunity to start your career preparation in law school will be available even a year later, while the opportunity to achieve your long-awaited breakthrough in your Torah learning skills may never return.

As regards sacrifices for ideals, try drawing your parents' attention to the publicity recently given to the death of football star Pat Tillman while serving his country in Afghanistan in the battle against terrorism.

A pro football star playing in the important position of opening safetyman, the Arizona Cardinals offered him a 3.6 million dollar contract. Then came the catastrophe of 9/11. Pat was so inspired by the patriotic need to defend his country against those who wished to destroy it that he passed up this lucrative offer and joined the Army Rangers with whom he served until he fell in battle.

If someone like Pat is capable of sacrificing a career of stardom and riches for the sake of his ideals, why should it be so unthinkable for a young man to sacrifice one year of preparation for a career as a lawyer in order to fulfill his ideals of development as a knowledgeable Jew?

The right thing to do is make it clear to your parents that you appreciate their genuine concern for your future but expect them to appreciate that you are an adult who must make the decisions which will shape your life and that you are old enough to know the difference between a sacrifice and an investment.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

“MAGIC MICHAEL”

What is an Orthodox immigrant from Baltimore, U.S.A. doing with a case full of balloons, musical instruments and all sorts of gadgets in a hospital for kids in Jerusalem?

The answer is that Michael Tulkoff (a.k.a. “Magic Michael”) has arrived at Alyn Hospital, the national pediatric and adolescent rehabilitation center, to do his weekly session of entertaining the kids. Proudly billing himself as the “only medical magician in the Middle East”, Michael also helps out with his endearing clown-like antics in the general pediatric wards of Dana Children’s Hospital in Tel Aviv and the Safra Children’s Hospital at Sheba in Tel Hashomer.

The hospital staffs are very enthusiastic about Michael’s impact on the youngsters. As he wanders through the wards

he greets every patient by name. Not all of these incapacitated patients are capable of returning the greeting but they acknowledge it with widened eyes.

Just one example of what he achieves is the story of his encounter with a 17-year old victim of cystic fibrosis, a living skeleton attached to a respirator, who used a communication board to spell out that he wants to die. Michael told him a story he liked and then proceeded to build up his self-esteem and raise his spirits with a variety of magic tricks. Before leaving, Michael placed his hand on the youngster’s curled fingers as a sort of handshake.

Michael felt good when a visitor sitting next to the boy told him, with tears in his eyes, that this was the first time this unfortunate boy had actually smiled.

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