

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

A WORK OF CRAFT

“See, I have proclaimed by name Betzalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda. I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft ... to perform every craft of design.” (31:2-3)

In Hebrew, there is no word for Art. There is a Hebrew word, “*melacha*,” that means “craft,” but no word meaning Art. What’s the difference between Art and craft? An artist can think he is G-d.

He starts off with a blank piece of paper and creates a universe. Being an artist is the closest a person can get to creation *ex nihilo* — creation from nothing. The universe of the artist is entirely at the whim of its creator. He can draw and he can erase. He can form and he can fold. He can “create worlds” and he can “destroy them.” The sky can be blue or gray. The next note could go up or down. And who says that all this has to be the way it is?

Me. The artist.

For the past two and half thousand years there has raged a global-historical conflict over the place of art in the world.

The ancient Greeks, who invented Art with a capital “A,” claimed that Art is a doorway to ultimate truth. “*Beauty in Truth, Truth, Beauty...*” This *Weltanschauung* says that through art and artifice, you can reach the elemental truths of existence. Celebrating the surface, the way things look, said the ancient Greek, leads to the essence of things themselves.

The Jew says that the artifice and illusion leads only to greater illusion, unless that skill subordinates itself to the service of truth.

Art that is not for Art’s sake is called craft. Craft knows it is the servant of another master.

The Talmud teaches that if you never saw the Second *Beit Hamikdash* (Holy Temple), which Herod built, you never saw a beautiful building in your life. Its walls were constructed from blue/green marble and white Marmara marble. One

layer was indented and the next protruded so that the plaster would adhere. Herod thought of covering the whole edifice with gold plate. The Rabbis told him to leave it as it was: unplastered and ungilded, since it looked better in its natural state with the different levels of green/blue and white resembling the waves of the sea.

“See, I have proclaimed by name Betzalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda. I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft ... to perform every craft of design.”

Every talent has a place in Judaism. Every talent is a gift of G-dly spirit: A beautiful voice, a brilliant mind, the skill of an artist. Every talent is a gift — and a responsibility.

“By His breath the Heavens are spread (shifra)...” (Iyov 26:13).

G-d spreads aside the curtain of cloud to reveal that which is beyond. He disperses the clouds that conceal so we can see past the obstruction, past the surface. The word “spread,” “*shifra*,” has the same root as “*shafir*” which means “to beautify.”

In Jewish thought, beauty means seeing past the surface to the essence. That which is beautiful is that which takes us beneath the surface, beyond the clouds, to reveal the endless blue heavens — to reveal the truth.

Similarly, the word for “ugly” and “opaque” in Hebrew are the same — “*achur*.” Something that conceals essence is ugly, however “beautiful” it might seem.

“Art for Art’s sake” can never be a Jewish concept. For, if the definition of beauty is that which reveals, something that reveals nothing but itself can never be beautiful.

The true beauty of the Tabernacle and the Temples was that it was the place of the greatest revelation in this world. It revealed that existence is not bounded by the physical constraints of space and time. It demonstrated that this world is connected to that which is beyond this world.

It was a Work of Craft.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to

destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and he destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

ISRAEL Forever

THE BIG GIVERS

“**W**hen Jews are solicited they give. When they were solicited to donate their jewelry for making the golden calf they did so. When they were solicited to donate for building the Mishkan sanctuary they did so.”

This Midrashic comment upon the Jewish character, which finds expression in this week's Torah reading, reveals one of the truly unique characteristics of the Jewish People. Jews are givers like no other people in the world. Just take a look at how much is contributed every year by Jews of every economic class to every sort of cause.

It is this sort of indiscriminate giving, however, which is at the root of the problem of Jewish education today. Too many philanthropists fail to distinguish between the golden calf and the sanctuary, pouring millions into secular cultural projects, while Jewish educational institutions struggle to stay afloat.

How many American parents have been discouraged from providing their children with a Jewish Day School education because they simply could not afford the tuition payments, and were forced to send them instead to the public school building grounds of assimilation and intermarriage? How many victims of this system who longed to return to their people and their tradition upon reaching maturity were denied the opportunity because they, and the institutions developed to serve them, lacked the necessary funds?

The time has come for intelligent, generous Jews to use their heads as well as their hearts when it comes to giving. The merit of charity is indeed a great one. The prophet declares that the returnees to Zion will be redeemed because of it. But there must be a priority in giving. Giving for the Sanctuary rather than some modern golden calf is what will redeem Israel forever.

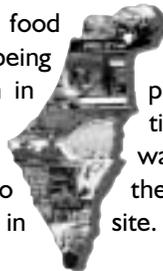
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

PARVEH – NOT SO NEUTRAL

We are accustomed to refer to neutral food which is neither meat nor dairy as being “Parveh”. But there was actually a man in Jewish history by that name and an office in the *Beit Hamikdash* courtyard as well.

Parveh was a sorcerer who was determined to observe the very secret services of the *Kohen Gadol* in



the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. Towards this end he dug a tunnel which would lead him there. The place where he was discovered and taken for execution was subsequently named the “Parveh Office” to warn any potential peeping toms what fate awaited them for showing such great disrespect for the holy site.

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THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

One of the few exceptions to the general rule that the penalty of lashes applies only to a violation of a Torah prohibition through *action* is the prohibition mentioned in the third of the Ten Commandments: “You shall not take the name of G-d, your G-d, in vain, for G-d will not absolve the one who takes His name in vain”. (*Shmot* 20:7)

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai deduces from the wording of this command that it is G-d’s Heavenly court that does not absolve him of the sin of swearing falsely or needlessly, but allows the earthly court to absolve the violator of his sin by punishing him with lashes, even though he was guilty of speech rather than action.

The unique dimension of G-d not absolving the violator of this prohibition is brought to the attention of one who is about to take an oath to prove his claim in a monetary lawsuit. The judges warn him, say our Sages (*Shavuot* 39a), that in regard to all other sins the Torah says that one who repents will be absolved (*Shmot* 34:6), while in regard to swearing falsely such forgiveness is denied.

In *Mesechta Yoma* (86a) there is a dispute as to whether there is a difference in the nature of atonement required for swearing falsely and that required for any other transgression of a prohibition. Rambam (*Hilchot Teshuva* 1:2) rules that because of its unique nature, the sin of swearing falsely or needlessly is in the category of the serious sins which are not atoned for by the scapegoat on Yom Kippur without repentance as are all other transgressions which do not carry a penalty of death or extirpation. Two paragraphs later, however, when he writes that repentance combined with Yom Kippur achieves atonement for transgressions not punished by death or extirpation, he neglects to make the distinction between the sinful oath taken and other transgressions. (See *Minchat Chinuch*, *Mitzvah* 364.)

• *Shavuot* 21a

A COMMITMENT OF THE HEART

What force is there to a commitment made in the heart but not verbalized? In two places we find that such a commitment is binding. When Jews contributed materials for the building of the Mishkan sanctuary, the Torah describes these donors as “voluntarily giving of the heart” (*Shmot* 35:22). When the righteous King Chizkiyahu renewed the *Beit Hamikdash* service halted by his sinful father, the sacrifices brought by the people included “burnt offerings brought through the voluntary giving of the heart” (*Divrei Hayamim* II 29:31).

These two passages indicate that one who commits himself in his heart to voluntarily bring a sacrifice is obligated to do so even if he never verbalized his commitment. Since this rule is mentioned only in regard to these two matters of materials for the sanctuary and sacrifices, the *gemara* concludes that it is restricted to these areas, and one who takes an oath in his heart to do something or refrain from doing something is not bound to this commitment so long as he did not verbalize it.

What if someone today purchases property with the thought of dedicating it to the Sanctuary or makes a commitment in his heart to give charity? Is he bound to fulfill this unspoken pledge as in the above cases because of the similarity to them?

Two opinions on this subject are mentioned in *Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat* (212:8) and *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* (258:13). In both places it is the ruling of Rema that it is proper to follow the more stringent opinion and fulfill the commitment made only in the heart and mind.

• *Shavuot* 26b

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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PARSHA Q&A?

1. How many “*geira*” are in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called “*malachim*”?
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbat is a “sign.” What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, G-d says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did G-d show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'at* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between G-d and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from G-d!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say “Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people.”
16. 32:34 - Whenever G-d punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. G-d commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

CLONE #3

Who's my clone? Me, my child or my twin? A clone is genetically identical to the gene donor, unlike normal male/female reproduction where the genes are a fusion of both parents. Therefore my clone, while sharing my genes (we're the same size), is really the result of the fusion of my parents' genes. In this way my clone cannot be considered me; rather he would be more like my identical twin, just as in nature identical twins share the same genetic material. However, since my clone was created from *my* genes, from *my* body, and later gestated and birthed by my wife, perhaps he is to be considered my child.

This question of whether my clone is my twin or my child has halachic ramifications regarding inheritance. If my clone is my twin, he will not inherit together with my other children, his "siblings". However, if he is my son he will inherit. This will also apply to the mitzvah of *yibum*. There is a mitzvah that when one's brother dies without children he marries the widow (if they both agree) in order to perpetuate his brother's line, or do the mitzvah of *chalitza* and doesn't marry her (which is what is done today). If his clone is a twin, the clone will have to perform *yibum* or *chalitza* (after waiting for his bar mitzvah!). If the clone is a son, he exempts his mother from the mitzvah altogether, even if his father had other brothers, since his father had a child.

This also raises the question of who is the clone's mother. For example, in a case where a woman is cloned, having her genes inserted into another woman's egg which is then gestated and birthed by a third woman (similar to the case of "Dolly"), there are four possible mothers: woman #1, the mother of the cloned woman (who is the original source of the genes); woman #2, the gene donor; woman #3, the egg donor; and woman #4, the

gestation donor.

Since Judaism follows matrilineal descent, the question of who is the clone's mother will have bearing (sorry) on whether the clone is Jewish. Whether genetic or physical birth factors (or both) are what determine if the child is Jewish is a discussion for another forum, and please do not draw any conclusions from this article.

This week's article concludes a three-part series. However, I think we have not heard the final word regarding cloning. In the meantime I'd like to share a thought-provoking and somewhat humorous email I received from a reader in reaction to the first article of this series, which addressed the question if it's okay to "play G-d":

Dear Rabbi,

I mean no disrespect when I say that there is a potential problem with cloning man toward becoming self-sufficient and losing the very dependence he has cherished in the past with G-d. This story illustrates a problem in its infancy:

One day a group of scientists came before the Almighty and said that they had all the knowledge and ability to create man, and they said, "We no longer have any need for You since we have arrived in our own time to match anything You have done in the past concerning the making of a human. We can take your place because we have the ability to duplicate your power and knowledge." Scientifically they had the knowledge to clone a human so they were feeling pretty self-sufficient.

They went on to say that they would do this with their own test tubes and equipment to make humans perfect and the only thing left would be to take some dirt and commence with the exercise. The Almighty said, "Hold on a moment; get your own dirt."

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WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

HOLD THAT BUS!?

Question: I am the last one in line at my bus stop and as I am about to board I see someone half a block away frantically running to catch this bus that runs only every quarter hour. Is it my responsibility to try to get the driver to hold the bus so that this party can reach it in time to get on?

Answer: You seem to be focusing your entire consideration on the need to save a late-arriving passenger a quarter-hour wait for the next bus. There are, however, a couple of other factors to consider.

What about the extra minute or so that all those passengers – who waited so long at the bus stop – will have to wait because of this late arrival? Must they pay this price of precious time to accommodate him?

And what about the bus driver who has a schedule to keep

which will be rendered almost impossible if he has to hold up the bus at each stop for latecomers?

What we have before us is a classic example of a noble desire to show kindness to someone without making a proper calculation as to whether it is not being done at the expense of others. Life is filled with similar moral dilemmas.

In this particular case, perhaps the ethical procedure would be to point out to the driver that someone is running to catch the bus. If the driver agrees to wait, then you could turn to the passengers on the bus and appeal to their patience as well. If either the driver or the passengers voice an objection, which they are entitled to do, don't press your case and don't – even in your heart – condemn the objectors as being inconsiderate.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

SPOTLIGHT ON AN ALUMNUS - REUVEN ABEDON

How does someone who studied Torah at Ohr Somayach and Chinese and Economics at Harvard combine all three of these achievements into a service to the Jewish community?

The answer comes from the recent announcement that alumnus Reuven Abedon has been appointed the director of the Baltimore-based Star K *kashrut* supervision office in Shanghai, China.

When Reuven arrived at Ohr Somayach two decades ago he brought with him a research paper he had done on “The

Over-representation of Jews in Cults”. His thesis was that the hunger for spirituality led Jewish youths to pasture in foreign fields. But Reuven wanted the real thing and dedicated his academic skills to learning Torah at Ohr Somayach.

After many years of learning he taught in a Day School in the U.S. and was involved in the world of finance. His new role as a *kashrut mashgiach* and office director in the Far East offers him an opportunity to combine his educational background and experience in expanding the frontiers of kosher food for Jews throughout the world.

DID YOU KNOW...

...there are thousands of classical Torah volumes, including some rare editions, in the Joseph Tanenbaum Library located on the Ohr Somayach Campus in Jerusalem.

...that dozens of books and articles in Judaic research and thought have been written and published by Ohr Somayach staff members and graduates.