

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA · 18 SIVAN 5761 · JUNE 9, 2001 · VOL. 8 NO. 32

PARSHA INSIGHTS

MEET A WELL-KNOWN CELEBRITY

“And whenever the cloud was lifted from upon the Tent, afterwards the Children of Israel would journey...” (9:17)

Early in the morning, our household is frequently the scene of a major war. There are no mortars in the bedrooms. No sappers are seen defusing booby-trapped dollies. There are no tanks riding over the bunk beds, but a major war is ensuing never the less.

“Keep your head down! Don’t you know it’s dangerous to get up and daven! You’re much better safe here in bed.”

The war I’m talking about is with a well-known celebrity. He appears all the time on the media. He’s a master of disguise. He’s an incredibly talented impersonator. He can appear as almost anyone: A knight in shining armor; a deeply sympathetic friend; or as a blood-thirsty murderer and a heartless serial killer. We all know his name. Give him a big welcome please! Heeeeeeeere’s Mr. Yetzer Hara!

The Chafetz Chaim awoke one morning at his customarily early hour. He was already advanced in years. As he was about to summon up the strength to arise, our celebrity Mr. Y. Hara, the evil inclination, whispered in his ear, *“Reb Yisrael Meir, you are a holy Jew! All your life, you have risen with alacrity to praise your Maker. You’re old now, why don’t you just take another five minutes in bed? Five minutes isn’t going to kill anyone. Stay in bed. It’s still early.”* Replied the Chafetz Chaim, *“If you’re up already, it can’t be so early.”*

When the Jewish People camped in the desert, a cloud covered the Tabernacle by day. At night, it had a fiery appearance. When the cloud lifted above the tent,

it first moved to the camp of Yehuda and hovered there in a beam-like formation. The trumpets would then sound in the camp. Moshe would say *“Arise, Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You!”* (9:22) The Jewish People would then start to journey. Sometimes they stayed a long time at a place they found inhospitable. Sometimes, having journeyed for weeks, wearily, they would leave after camping for only a couple of days. Sometimes, they stayed for only one night. Or, they would march all night, and after twenty four hour’s rest they would see the cloud settle on the Tabernacle; assuming that they were staying for a while, they would start to unpack. Then, without warn-

ing, the cloud would suddenly lift and they would have to re-pack everything. At other times they would be summoned to travel at night, which was even more difficult seeing as flashlights were extremely difficult to come by in the Sinai desert 3000 years ago.

But whatever happened, and whatever demands were made of the Jewish People, they marched and rested without complaint, according to G-d’s word.

I don’t know about you, but on the day that I take delivery of a new car, I have no problem springing out of bed. On a regular day, somehow it’s much more difficult.

Maybe if we keep in mind that every day when we get up to do what G-d wants, we’re going to get something a lot nicer than a new car, it will be much easier to turn off the voice of our frequent guest celebrity — Mr. Y. Hara.

Source:
• Ramban

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the *menorah*. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the *Mishkan*. They replace the firstborn, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the *Mishkan* from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, Hashem commands Moshe concerning the *korban Pesach*. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the *mitzvah of Pesach Sheini*, allowing a "second chance" to offer the *korban Pesach* one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the *Mishkan* signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in

the Exodus — some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. Hashem tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that — Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. Hashem sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. Hashem explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard). Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

HAFTARAH

Reflecting the opening theme of *Parshat Beha'alotcha*, the *haftarah* describes a vision of the *menorah* that Aharon lit in his service as *kohen gadol*, high priest. The Prophet Zachariah assures the Jewish People that even during the Messianic era when the entire world will recognize Hashem and evil will be eliminated, the Jewish People will still play an important role. There will be a need for Jewish leadership and education, and the Jews will be a light for all nations. The *menorah* symbolizes this role of spiritual illumination.

The Prophet conveys a message which those religions that are offshoots of Judaism have too

ZECHARIA 2:14 - 4:7

often ignored: "Not by military force, and not by physical strength, but by My Spirit alone (4:6)...."

WITH A FLOURISH

"Behold, I am bringing my servant, the flourishing one." (3:8)

Why is *mashiach* referred to as the "flourishing one?" Even though today it seems that all remnant of the majesty of the Royal House of David has been uprooted and vanished into nothingness, nevertheless, the root is still living, hidden and dormant. At the appropriate moment, *mashiach* will appear, like a majestic tree flourishing from barren ground, laden with fruit, revealed to all.

• Malbim

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The *menorah* in the Temple had 7 stems, 9 flowers, 11 pomegranates, and 22 cups. Its height was, according to one opinion, 17 handbreadths. These numbers correspond to the number of words in the first verse of each Book of the Torah: The first verse of Bereishet has 7 words; the first verse of Shemot has 11 words; Vayikra 9 words, Bamidbar 17 words; Devarim 22 words.

The above idea is hinted in the verse "The beginning of Your words will give light" (*Tehillim 119*).

• Vilna Gaon

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לע"נ
מרת מרים בת ר' יחזקאל דב ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

WHY CELEBRATE A BAR MITZVAH?

Rabbi Yosef was a blind sage; whether he was obligated in the *mitzvot* he was fulfilling was a matter of dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and the other sages. Rabbi Yehuda's opinion is that a blind man is exempt from *mitzvot*, while the other sages held that he is as obligated as a seeing man.

At first Rabbi Yosef used to say that if he would be informed that the ruling is according to Rabbi Yehuda, *i.e.*, that he is exempt, he would make a feast of celebration for all of the Torah scholars, because he would then anticipate the great reward due him for fulfilling *mitzvot* without being obligated. Then he heard what Rabbi Chanina said about the one who is obligated in a *mitzvah* being considered greater than the one who fulfills it even though he is not obligated. He thereupon declared that if he is informed that the ruling is according to the other sages, *i.e.*, that he is obligated, he will make that feast.

Tosefot explains that the one who is obligated deserves a greater reward because he has to endure the anxiety over whether he is properly fulfilling his obligation, while the exempt one does not.

Two important lessons are deduced from the first and second statements of Rabbi Yosef. Tosefot cites his first statement as a proof that women may make a blessing on a *mitzvah* they fulfill although they are exempt. Had Rabbi Yosef been unable to make any blessing on the *mitzvot* he voluntarily fulfilled, he certainly could not rejoice in his status of exemption. The ruling of Rema is indeed that women can make a blessing on the time-oriented *mitzvot* from which they are exempt, while the Beit Yosef rules like Rambam that they cannot make such blessings. (See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 17:2*.)

Rabbi Yosef's second statement is cited by Rabbi Shlomo Luria in his *Yam Shel Shlomo* commentary on *Mesechta Bava Kama* (7th perek p. 37) as a source for celebrating a *bar mitzvah* with a feast. If Rabbi Yosef, who was already obligated according to the other sages, was ready to celebrate just for learning that he was obligated, how much more reason is there for celebrating when a Jewish boy reaches the age of *bar mitzvah* and becomes obligated in *mitzvot*!

• *Kiddushin 31a*

STANDING FOR TORAH

When the question was posed to Rabbi Chilkiya, Rabbi Simon and Rabbi Elazar whether one is obligated to stand up in honor of a *Sefer Torah* (since the Torah explicitly orders such respect only in regard to Torah scholars) their response was:

"If we are obligated to stand up as respect for those who study the Torah how much more so must we stand up for the Torah itself!"

This statement seems to be at odds with another *gemara* (*Mesechta Makkot 22b*) where the Sage Rava is quoted as saying:

"How foolish are those people who stand up in respect for a *Sefer Torah* but fail to stand up in respect for a Torah sage. In the Torah it is stated that one who violates a Torah commandment is punished with forty lashes and it is the Sages who interpreted this as meaning only thirty-nine."

Rabbeinu Nisim (Ran) quotes Tosefot as resolving this apparent contradiction in the following way: Since the Torah does not explicitly order standing up for a *Sefer Torah* and this obligation is only deduced through the logic of the Torah Sages, it makes sense that one must stand up for the Sages themselves!

This approach seems to ignore Rava's mention of the reduction in the number of lashes. But it can perhaps be understood in conjunction with the resolution which Ran himself offers. Rava, he writes, never intended to suggest that Torah Sages are more important than a *Sefer Torah*; rather, his intent was to point out that without the Sages' guidance the *Sefer Torah* cannot be properly understood. The proof of this is the number of lashes which appears in the literal text and the true number explained by the Sages. Respect for the Sages is therefore respect for the Torah itself. Tosefot's approach may merely be an extension of this very idea by demonstrating that even the respect required for a *Sefer Torah* cannot be derived from an explicit text, but rather depends on the interpretation of the Sages.

Maharsha (*Mesechta Makkot*) offers an entirely different approach. The respect due to the Torah itself is certainly greater than that due to the Sages. Rava's statement was directed to "those people" — the ignoramuses who scorn the Torah Sages by saying that they never innovated anything with their study beyond what is written in the Torah because "they never made a raven kosher nor a dove non-kosher" (*Mesechta Sanhedrin 99b*). For this reason they stand up for the Torah itself but do not show this respect for the Sages. Rava exposes the folly of their attitude by citing the example of the lashes in which the reduction by the Sages in the number of lashes could have life and death ramifications, and for such a lifesaving interpretation alone they deserve the respect of these foolish people.

• *Kiddushin 33b*

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the *menorah* burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the *menorah* made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*t'nufot*" (wavings) are in the Parsha?
5. Why did Hashem claim the firstborn of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "*Bnei Yisrael*" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of *Pesach Sheini* not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the *menorah* and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which *aron* is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the Parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the *menorah* was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *parah aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show Hashem's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the *Mishkan* and *Beit Hamikdash*; singing during the *avoda*; loading the wagons to transport the *Mishkan*.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of *Bnei Yisrael*, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the *Mishkan*.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The *aron* which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, which was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The *Pesach* sacrifice, and the traveling of the *aron*.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic — these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on *Bnei Yisrael* at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

Saul Cohen
from Worcester, Massachusetts
<scohen@cwix.com> asked:

In *Parshat Beha'alotcha* (12:1-13), both Miriam and Aharon are specifically said to be talking together about Moshe separating from Zipporah, yet only Miriam is punished with *tzara'at*. Why is only Miriam punished? Is Aharon also punished in some way that does not appear in the Parsha?

Dear Saul Cohen,

Note that the verse mentions Miriam first, indicating that she was the primary actor. Furthermore, only Miriam actually spoke, as can be seen from the Hebrew grammar of the verse, which literally reads, "She spoke (*vatedabair*), Miriam and Aharon, about Moshe...." Aharon is included because he listened in silence, or showed agreement. (*Ibn Ezra*)

The Midrash states that Aharon was in fact also stricken with *tzara'at* but was healed immediately. (*Sifri cited by Ohr Hachaim*)

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.edu with your questions on any Parsha!

A HOLY VEGETABLE

From: Howard Lucas in the UK
<howard@howardquartz.demon.co.uk>

Dear Rabbi,

I have a somewhat obscure question, but I would like to ask nonetheless! When in Jerusalem I was told that the foliage that grows from the Western Wall of the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) is the plant called caper. This is a fairly common ingredient in Mediterranean cookery and a topping on pizzas and so on. Is there any "special" or mystical significance that it grows where it does on the wall? If so, is there any special blessing to be recited when eating it? I don't want to read too much into this, but I also know that nothing is "coincidence."

Dear Howard Lucas,

The Kotel is the western wall of our ancient Temple built almost three millennia ago by King Solomon. Today, it remains a bustling center of prayer and Torah study. Hundreds pray there daily, and thousands on Shabbat and holidays. The city surrounding it, Jerusalem, hosts tens of thousands of Torah students and scholars.

And, as is known to anyone who has been there or seen pictures, green shrubs grow from between the ancient cracks. What is their significance?

A friend and colleague of mine visited the Acropolis. The Acropolis is an ancient temple in Greece where they used to worship their pantheon of gods. My friend was struck by two marked differences between this ancient site of worship and (not to be mentioned in the same breath) the Western Wall, the Kotel.

One difference he saw was that — unlike the Kotel — no one was praying at the Acropolis. And, two, unlike the Kotel, nothing grew from it.

My friend took the first difference at face value: Their religion is dead, while ours thrives. The second, he saw as a sort of symbol of the first; that while Judaism lives, thrives and flourishes as a vibrant lifestyle, their religion persists only as a fossil in the relics of ancient stone.

I'm no botanist, but I hear that it is the caper which grows from the Kotel. In Hebrew, caper is called "tzalaf." I don't know of any special or mystical significance of this plant. As for the blessing before eating tzalaf, it depends which part you eat. On the berries, the blessing is "ha'eitz." On the three other edible parts (the leaves, the "tamaram" found among the leaves and the berry peels) the blessing is "ha'adama."

There would be no other special blessing for eating tazlaf even if it grew from the Kotel.

Sources:

• Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 202:6

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked:

If ten animals are born to a person's flock in one year, that person is required to separate one of the animals as *ma'aser beheima*, an animal tithe, and bring it to Jerusalem. If less than ten are born to his flock in a single year, he is exempt.

There was once a man who owned only one female animal, a sheep. One year this sheep gave birth to five lambs and to no more; yet, he was obligated to separate *ma'aser beheima* from these lambs? How can this be? (This man would never in his life buy, find, inherit, receive as a gift, or steal another animal, nor would he ever have joint ownership in any animal. A year in this context is from one Rosh Hashana to the next.)

Answer:

These five lambs give birth to five other lambs during the same year.

Source:

• Rambam

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

8:2 Preview of Chanukah
9:1 *Korban Pesach* in the *Midbar*
9:10 *Pesach Sheini*
9:14 *Pesach of the Ger*
10:29 Yitro's Choice
10:35 Flight from Sinai

11:1 Sin of Complainers
11:5 Fish and Vegetables in Egypt
11:6 Complaints about Manna
11:16 Significance of Number 70

SEFER HACHINUCH

380 *Pesach Sheini*

384 Significance of Trumpets

SFORNO

9:1 The Four Merits
11:22 Never Satisfied