

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT EMOR · 19 IYAR 5761 · MAY 11, 2001 · VOL. 8 NO. 28

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### PUT ON YOUR DANCING SHOES

“And Hashem said to Moshe ‘Say to the kohanim...’” (21:1)

**F**red Astaire was the greatest dancer who ever lived. And what made him so great? He made it all look so easy, so effortless. Other dancers of his era *shvitzed* their way around the screen, performing gymnastics which were as improbable as they were impressive, but Fred so guilelessly made it all look so simple. Behind that effortless were hours and hours of relentless hard work. As his co-workers testified, he was a perfectionist. But it never showed. It all looked so, so easy.

A Jew is supposed to dance through life, not to *schlep*.

There once was a rich man who arrived at a hotel. He was given the penthouse suite and the clerk assured him that his luggage would be brought up presently. After a while, and with still no sign of his cases, the rich man telephoned down to the bell clerk. “But sir,” came the reply “we sent your bags up twenty minutes ago!” Just as the rich man was putting the phone down, there came a knock on the door. The rich man made his way over to the entrance to his suite and opened the door. There was a bell-hop who was turning various shades of puce from his exertions. Under both his arms were two large cases. “Here!” he gasped “are your cases, sir!” He then proceeded to sink to his knees from oxygen deprivation. The rich man, without batting an eyebrow said “Take them back downstairs!”

“What!”

“Take them back downstairs!”

“But I’ve practically broken my back bringing them all the way up here!”

“Take them back downstairs! These are not my cases.”

“But you haven’t even looked at them!”

“I know they aren’t mine.”

“How?!”

“My cases are full of diamonds. Diamonds are very

light. If you’re huffing and puffing, these can’t be my cases.”

There’s an old expression in Yiddish, “*Shver tzu zein a Yid.*” “It’s difficult to be a Jew.” This phrase was obviously coined by someone who was carrying the wrong cases.

“Its ways are ways of pleasantness.” says the Psalmist. The Torah may be demanding, it may take a lot of hard work and practice, but the last thing it wants from us is to be a bunch of *shleppers*.

One of the hardest things for people who become religious is to add a little touch of “Fred Astaire” to their observance. Often they return to their not-yet-observant families and, because of their inexperience, make their new-found observance of Judaism seem very burdensome.

When the Torah gives the instructions for a *halacha*, a Torah law, it always uses the expression of *dibur* — speak. *Dibur* is a strong word. It implies an unequivocal, a certain toughness and implacability — as would befit the immutable Word of G-d. All *halachot* in the Five Books and also in the book of Yehoshua are transmitted with the phrase *vaydaber* “And He spoke” or *daber* “speak...” All, that is, except one:

In this week’s Torah portion we see that instructions to the *kohanim*, the priests, were given using the expression “*vayomer*” “and He said” and “*emor*” “say.” This is a much softer and lighter expression. Why the change?

Even though the work of the *kohen* was extremely exacting and in some cases physically taxing, the Torah charges the *kohen* to perform his tasks with lightness and ease. The *kohen* was also responsible to teach the Jewish People, and here again, if they showed that their tasks were light and joyous for them, this would encourage the people. But if they made it all seem so difficult, who would want to follow their example?

In life you have to know how to dance a little — especially if you want others to dance with you.

Sources:

• *The Dubner Magid, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in Darash Moshe Thanks to Rabbi ChaimTzvi Senter*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The *kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother and unmarried sister. The *kohen gadol* (high priest) may not attend any funeral, not even of his parents. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *kohanim*. Physical blemishes that invalidate a *kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *kohanim*, may be eaten only by *kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days

old and is free from any physical blemish. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of Hashem by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the *omer* of barley is offered in the Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the *menorah* and baking the *lechem hapanim* in the Temple. A man blasphemes Hashem and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

## HAFTARAH

YEchezkel 44:15 - 31

This prophecy relates to the future Sanctuary and narrates many special laws of the priests, corresponding to the numerous priestly laws in Parashat Emor. Mentioned, too, is that the countenance of the priests should be exceptional, and they should not be inebriated when entering the Temple.

### BLOOD AND FAT

**B**lood and fat are the parts of the sacrifices depicted in this *haftara* as including the whole concept of sacrifice (44:15). Why?

The evil inclination is a combination of two types of passion, that of physical enjoyment and that of nonphysical desires like honor and pride. Fat symbolizes the physical gain of gluttony and other materialistic pleasures, while blood represents the dynamic greed for glory and the endless pursuit of honor, which is often associated with bloodshed — the destruction of a fellow human. The idea of sacrifices is for us to connect our cerebral, abstract repentance with a physical action; we therefore offer up to G-d tangible entities corresponding to the two parts of our evil inclination that we wish to overcome in order to refine ourselves and come closer to G-d.

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## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

**“The son of the Israelite woman cursed Hashem...his mother’s name was Shlomit bat Divri....” (24:11) The Midrash says: “Why was she called ‘bat Divri?’ Because she brought *dever* (disease) upon her son.” (Vayikrah Rabba 32)**

The blasphemer was executed by stoning. Why, then, does the above Midrash say that his mother brought “*dever*” — disease — upon him?

One of the ten plagues was cattle disease. The commentaries explain that although no cattle belonging to the Children of Israel died, there was one apparently Jewish person whose cattle did die. Who was this person? The son of Shlomit bat Divri. His cattle died because his father was an Egyptian taskmaster; he was therefore not one of the “Children of Israel” such that his cattle would enjoy miraculous protection. Hence, by bearing a son from an Egyptian man, his mother caused her son to suffer from the plague of “*dever*.”

• Heard from Rabbi Sholem Fishbane

לע"נ

הרה"ח ר' דוד בן ר' אהרן הי"ד

ומרת לאה בת ר' שמואל הי"ד

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE

**O**ur *mesechta*, which is dedicated to all the laws pertaining to the writing and delivery of a “get” divorce document, concludes with a discussion of what are considered legitimate grounds for divorce. Three opinions are mentioned in the last *mishna* and they all revolve around the same passage:

“When a man takes a woman in marriage and she subsequently does not find favor in his eyes, for he discovered some shameful thing, he shall write her a document of severance, place it in her hand and send her away from his home.” (*Devarim 24:1*)

The sages of the school of Beit Shammai interpret this passage as informing us that she does not find favor because she committed a shameful act of infidelity. They therefore conclude that a man should not divorce his wife unless such a serious offense has been committed.

The sages of the school of Beit Hillel read the passages listing two different categories as grounds for divorce — either something shameful like infidelity, or some other thing which causes her to lose favor, even if it is only because she burned his food.

Rabbi Akiva substitutes “or” in place of “for” in the translation of the Hebrew word “*ki*” in this passage. He therefore concludes that the Torah permitted divorce either for something as serious as infidelity which is the discovery referred to in the passage, or for something as slight as deciding that he prefers another woman over her which is the reason she “does not find favor in his eyes.”

Even though we rule like Beit Hillel that any offense can be grounds for divorce, a note of caution is introduced in the final lines of the *mesechta*. In regard to the prophet’s words about “hate” and “sending away” (*Malachi 2:16*) there are two interpretations. Rabbi Yehuda says it means that if a man hates his wife for anything she did to offend him, he may send her away. Rabbi Yochanan says it means that if a man sends away his wife for anything less than infidelity or immorality he is hated by Heaven. There is no dispute, explains the *gemara*, because in regard to a man’s first wife he should not resort to divorce unless there is a serious reason, while in regard to a second wife he can exercise this option even for the reason given by Beit Hillel.

The reason for being more cautious in regard to a first marriage is based on a statement by Rabbi Elazar that even the altar weeps for a man who divorces his first wife.

All of these aforementioned opinions obviously refer to a situation in which the wife does not consent to divorce and the husband wishes to use his prerogative according to Torah law to divorce her against her will. Since today a man cannot divorce his wife against her will (because of the ban instituted by Rabbeinu Gershom) all of the above is inapplicable. Nevertheless, the halachic authorities (*Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer 119:1*) urge extreme caution in ending a first marriage even when there is consent.

• *Gittin 90a*

## THE LOST RIB

**M**esechta Kiddushin begins with the words “A woman is acquired (as a wife) in three ways.” The reason it does not state “a man acquires a woman” is that this might be misinterpreted as indicating that a man can marry a woman against her will. The *mishna* therefore speaks about her being acquired in order to communicate that marriage is valid only with her consent.

This caution of expression seems to run counter to the term used in the Torah when it speaks of “when a man takes a woman in marriage” (*Devarim 24:1*). Why does the Torah use such a term which might be misinterpreted as sanctioning marriage without the woman’s consent rather than write “when a woman will be taken?”

Rabbi Shimon explains that the Torah speaks of the male initiative because it is the natural way of a man to look for a woman and not for a woman to seek a man. He compares it to the situation of a man who lost some possession. Who looks for whom? Of course it is the man who looks for his lost object.

The lost object in Rabbi Shimon’s parable, explains Rashi, is the rib which was taken from Adam in order to create a wife for him. Maharsha notes that since this rib was taken from him without his knowledge while he was asleep, it is termed a lost object. He refers us to a *gemara* in *Mesechta Sanhedrin (37a)* for a deeper insight into the significance of the lost rib.

A heretical Roman ruler challenged Rabbi Gamliel that his G-d was a thief because He put Adam to sleep and took away his rib. The ruler’s daughter asked the sage to allow her to answer her father. She turned to him and asked for legal action against thieves who had entered the palace and stolen silver vessels which they replaced with golden ones. The ruler’s reaction was to express a hope that such thieves should visit them every night. His daughter then asked him to consider that Adam also got a good deal by exchanging a rib for a woman to be his faithful companion.

The search of man for a wife is thus not the ordinary situation of an owner looking for his lost object. In the case of Adam the loss was more than compensated for by being transformed into something of far greater value. When a man appreciates that he will find something worth much more than what he lost, he undertakes the search with a much greater sense of urgency. It is this sense which the Torah communicates in describing marriage as the initiative of the man even though mutual consent is required.

• *Kiddushin 2b*

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *kohen gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. A *kohen's* daughter may no longer eat *terumah* if she marries a “zar.” What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a *nedavah*?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of Hashem?
12. Apart from Shabbat, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). Of what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *etrog* tree?
19. Who was the blasphemer’s father?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its mother on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of Nissan.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be complete, because according to the Torah a day starts at nightfall.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidat* (binding of) Yitzchak.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemot* 2:12).
20. 24:21 - Death.

## KASHA! (KASHA MEANS “QUESTION”)

**“And you shall count from the day after Pesach, from the day you bring the *omer* offering, seven complete weeks...” (23:15)**

Starting the day after Pesach, Jews worldwide begin the *mitzvah* of “counting the *omer*,” counting the 49 days until the Shavuot Festival. Why don’t we say a *shehechyanu* blessing when we begin this *mitzvah*, as we do when fulfilling other *mitzvot* that come around once a year? (For example, we say *shehechyanu* when we shake the lulav or read the Megillah.)

**Answer:**

The *omer* was an offering brought on the day after Pesach in Temple times. We only say *shehechyanu* on a *mitzvah* which brings us joy. Counting the *omer*, on the other hand, reminds us of the sadness that we are presently unable to bring the Temple offerings.

• *Rashba, cited in Aruch Hashulchan 489:5*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to [kasha@ohr.edu](mailto:kasha@ohr.edu) with your questions on any Parsha!

This week, “Ask the Rabbi” presents Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky on Jewish education. Rabbi Orlofsky was Long Island Director of NCSY (the National Conference of Synagogue Youth) from 1979-88. He presently teaches at Ohr Somayach Yeshivah and lectures throughout the English-speaking world.

This article is adapted from the soon-to-be-published book titled *Judaism for the Disinterested Jew or The Last Book You Read Before You Assimilate*.

## BRINGING UP BABY:

### A JEWISH EDUCATION PRIMER

**M**azel tov! It’s your first baby.... So the little baby is home and growing and helping you become better people by overcoming the embarrassment that comes from constantly running to the emergency room every time the baby is constipated. Now begins the next task of a Jewish parent: Providing the little one with a Jewish education.

### PRE-EDUCATION

Education begins while a child is lying flat on his back, half asleep. No, I’m not referring to high school. I mean that as the baby is looking around his nursery for stimulation, the environment will teach him things about what is important in life. Is his room decorated with pictures of great sages, of grandparents and great-grandparents, inspiring him with a sense of continuity? Or will he grow up believing that the most important thing in life is a purple dinosaur? Or a six-foot mouse? Or a frog with a banjo who dates a pig? And if so, then doesn’t that continue into life, being replaced by the lat-

est media star? Barney turns into Michael Jordan who turns into Robin Williams who turns into Donald Trump. The things we use to decorate our children’s rooms — and for that matter, our own homes — impress our children with what we value.

A fellow I knew once asked to meet with me to discuss his children. Although he wasn’t observant, it was very important to him that his children marry Jewish people. While we were talking he told me about his late grandfather, who had been a Talmudic scholar. His grandfather had left him crates of Jewish books. The man told me that since they were in Hebrew he had no use for them and I was free to take what I wanted. I refused. “Those books are your inheritance,” I told him. “If you’re worried about who your children are going to

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“If our children said they weren’t interested in learning spelling or grammar, would we say we’ll let them decide when they’re older?”

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marry, then take those books out of the garage and display them in your living room. Let your children see that they’re more important to you than valuable antiques or china.” The man agreed and displayed the books in his living

room for his children to see. (I offered to take the antiques and the china — I already had Jewish books.)

As our children grow we teach them how to say the blessings and prayers a Jew must recite. At this point some parent will complain, “That sounds like coercion!” This is the same parent who spends hours annoying his children with flash cards for math and language skills. Why is it that anything we care about, that we force our children to learn, is called education, but anything we don’t really care about is coercion? If our children said they weren’t interested in learning spelling or grammar, would we say we’ll let them decide when they’re older? No way, because language skills are very important. They are part of the “real world.”

*continued on page six*

Well, if Judaism isn't important enough for us to instill when our children are young, we've already taught them how important we think it is. Less than "The Itsy, Bitsy Spider," which every parent seems manic about their children learning, with, of course, all the proper movements. Heaven help the small child who can't simulate the part when the rain washes the spider out (which is really a little sick when you think about it — what's next, melt the little ant with a magnifying glass?).

## SCHOOL

Before you know it, the little genius is ready for school. As you might've guessed, the choice of school is going to affect his Jewish education. If you choose a fine secular school and plan to supplement the education with after-school studies, you might as well quit now. What kid is going to enjoy *shlepping* to extra classes with a bunch of exhausted teachers at the end of a long day while his friends play outside?

This is the time to consider a Jewish day school. This way there's at least a chance that your child will be exposed to the classics of Jewish thought such as the Bible, the Talmud, Maimonides, and the Code of Jewish Law in the original Hebrew. But won't a child look down at parents if he knows more than them? That depends. If the parents are secure with who they are as people and their relationship with their child, then no, they'll all share the learning experience together. If the parents are insecure and are dominating and controlling, then yes, they will feel threatened. But they'll

probably also feel threatened if their child has any friends or goes away to college or, G-d forbid, gets married (probably to a girl who will hate them and take their little boy away — they're really starting to sound like characters out of a Tennessee Williams play).

How should you choose a Jewish day school? Look for a school where the children are happy. Don't worry so much about the facilities, worry more about the staff. Do they love teaching? Do they love their students? Will they fill your child with a feeling of awe and delight for Judaism? That's what you're looking for in a Jewish school. But if there are more rules than smiles, more honor rolls for grades than for good deeds, more tests than questioning, you've found a great private school, but not a great Jewish school.

More than anything, the obligation for educating children is the parents' responsibility. We hire teachers only to help us do our job. We have to take an interest in our children's school work and communicate with the teachers to reinforce the studies at home. Parents who say things like "Who cares what your teacher said? If he knew anything he'd get a real job!" are sending a clear message to their children. I'm not saying teachers are always right, but they are not always wrong either. Make sure your both working on the same side.

This article is adapted from the book "Jewish Matters" and is reproduced here with the kind permission of the publishers and [www.jewishmatters.com](http://www.jewishmatters.com)

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

21:6 Holiness  
22:32 Sanctifying G-d  
23:17 Leavened Bread  
23:27 Judgment and Repentance  
23:40 The *Etrog*

### SEFER HACHINUCH

291 Perfection of Creation  
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