



Parshas Shmini

For the week ending 22 Nissan 5758 *29 Nissan outside Israel
17 & 18 April 1998 *23 & 24 April outside Israel

Overview

On the eighth day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanos* (sacrifices) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. Hashem allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the *Mishkan* and draw closer to Him through their *mitzvos* there. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an original offering that was not commanded by Hashem. A fire comes from before Hashem and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the *Mishkan*. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. The Jewish People are commanded to be separate, and holy – like Hashem.

Insights

IS A SPADE STILL A SPADE?

"But this is what you shall not eat ... it is unclean to you." (11:4)

I confess. I have something to be very proud of. I'm *follically challenged*.

I used to be just plain old bald, but overnight my life has changed. Now I'm a part of a sensitive minority whose feelings demand to be taken into account. Follically challenged of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your wigs!

It's ironic that as society becomes more and more insensitive to mindless *physical* violence (be it on the silver screen or the less-than-silver screen of life) that there is a concomitant new sensitivity to the "violence of language."

Even the religious world is not exempt from this phenomenon.

In the new Oxford University Press publication "*The New Testament and Psalms - An Inclusive Version*," G-d loses gender to become "Our Father-Mother in Heaven." (We don't have this problem in Hebrew because Hashem is referred to by nouns of both genders: e.g., *Shechina* — the Divine Presence — is a feminine noun.)

The publishers say the translation is designed to "respond to the new climate of language."

It deletes references to "the right hand of G-d" to avoid stigmatizing the left-handed, and avoids equating "darkness" with evil out of racial sensitivity.

The 23rd Psalm no longer begins "The Lord is my shepherd," because the word "*lord*" implies "old-fashioned and inappropriate social status." Instead, the line has been changed to "G-d is my shepherd." Children should now "heed" their parents rather than "obey" them.

The team of authors stopped short of the term "differently-abled," in favor of referring to "the person who has leprosy."

Actually, the idea of Political Correctness (PC) goes back more than 4,000 years. When Noach brought the animals into the ark the Torah describes an animal which is *tameh* (spiritually polluted and not kosher) as "*lo tahor*" (not pure). The Torah never writes two words where one will do. The lesson of the Torah writing the longer phrase "*lo tahor*" is to teach us to be sensitive to the feelings of others: If the Torah goes out of its way to call an animal, who presumably isn't too concerned with the niceties of language, "not pure" rather than calling it "polluted," how much more should we be careful not to hurt the feelings of our fellow humans.

But there is a big difference between this and PC.

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

©1998 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

972-2-581-0315

1-212-213-3100

1-905-886-5730

fax: 972-2-581-2890

fax: 1-212-213-8717

fax: 1-905-886-6065

info@ohr.org.il

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@aol.com

Somayach@MSN.com

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

Dedication opportunities are available for Torah Weekly — Please contact us for details.

Parshas **Shmini** — 22 Nissan 5758, 17 & 18 April 1998

Production Design: Lev Seltzer

It's true that the Torah never stints to avoid upsetting feelings, provided that the meaning and clarity of the law will suffer in no way. If there is the slightest doubt that a "nicer" word will not convey the same power in communicating the Law, then there is no place for euphemism. A spade has to be called a spade. In the Torah there is a place for the most explicit terminology in the appropriate context.

This is more than just concern for the accurate transmission of the Law. It implies that language has an *absolute value*.

PC is a distortion of language because it is "*political*." It subtly invokes its own value judgments which are at least as biased as those it seeks to replace. More insidious than this, though, it destroys the integrity of the connection between the thing and the word; between the world of ideas and the world of concrete reality.

This connection is fundamental and vital: Hashem created existence with words. "And G-d said 'Let there be light'". Words are the bridge between the metaphysical and the physical. In Hebrew, *davar* means both "word" and "thing."

In George Orwell's book *1984*, Winston Smith worked in the Ministry of Truth, editing history to suit the current political complexion of the government. His job was to defraud history. Every book, every newspaper archive had to be constantly rewritten so that it expressed the dogma that there had never been any other political policy except the current policy that all alliances were as they had always been; today's friends had always been friends, and last week's enemies were just as loathsome today.

Smith was changing reality.

When we politicize the words that describe the world, we limit the palette of our perception. We limit the colors of our sensitivity. We interpose a gray mask of euphemism. In the end we change reality and we find ourselves inhabiting a self-made world of politically correct illusion.

If we change words, the building blocks of thought and cognition, let us not be surprised if our mental landscape begins to reflect a terminal blandness and lack of color. You know, I always kind of liked being bald.

"DOCTOR LIVINGSTONE, I PRESUME."

"And the swine ... it is impure for you." (11:7)

Moshe may have been the greatest teacher in the world, but he was no global explorer. His entire experience as a naturalist must have been quite limited. He never ventured out of a rather small part of the Middle East. Which makes it all the more strange then that the Torah makes predictions about animal life which it would have been impossible for Moshe to know about.

The Torah defines a kosher animal as having split hooves and chewing the cud. However it singles out the pig as the only animal that that has a true split hoof and yet does not chew its cud.

No person living in such a small part of this vast world could have known such a fact. More so, no prudent individual would have stated so definitively that there are absolutely no creatures alive that break this classification.

The Torah tells us that any fish that has fins and scales is kosher. If Moshe was no globetrotter, he was even less a deep-sea diver. Yet the Oral Law states that any fish that has scales will always have fins. How could such a fact be known to someone who lived some 3,300 years ago and was more familiar with splitting the sea than diving into it?

The Talmud teaches that Hashem inserted subtle reminders of His authorship in the Torah. Only the Creator of the universe could have, and would have, stated so dramatically and so accurately such definitive rules of the natural world.

PUTTING A TIGER IN THE TANK

"Neither shall you defile yourselves with any swarming thing that moves on the earth, because I am the Lord that brought you up from the land of Egypt." (11:44-5)

You pull into the gas station in your Ferrari Berlinetta, the fenders barely clearing the tarmac by two inches. You bring it to a halt and get out. There it sits, purring, a large expensive beast waiting to be fed. You say to the attendant "Fill it up with Cheapo gasoline." The attendant does a double take. He looks at you as if you were a serial murderer. And he's right.

An advanced machine requires highly refined fuel. A simpler machine can get by on something much more basic.

The Jewish People received the laws of *kashrus* only after they had been raised from the pits of slavery to the status of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The Torah normally refers to the Exodus with the expression "*to take out of Egypt*." Here, however, the expression is "*to bring up*."

Only after the Jewish People have been brought up, only after they have been elevated to their new status, do they become sensitive to the spiritual damage which non-kosher food causes.

From now on, non-kosher food for a Jew becomes worse than Cheapo gasoline in the tank of a Ferrari.

Sources:

"Doctor Livingstone, I Presume." - Tractate Chullin
Putting A Tiger In The Tank - Rabbi Simcha Zissel from Kelm

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

©1998 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

☎ 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

☎ 972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

✉ info@ohr.org.il

☎ 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

☎ 1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

✉ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

☎ 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

☎ 1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

✉ Somayach@MSN.com

Dedication opportunities are available for Torah Weekly — Please contact us for details.

Parshas **Shmini** — 22 Nissan 5758, 17 & 18 April 1998

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

Production Design: Lev Seltzer 

Haftorah: Shmuel II 6-7:17

This week's *Parsha* describes the dedication ceremony of the *Mishkan*. The Haftorah continues this theme by describing the arrival of the Ark in Jerusalem. In the *Parsha*, two of Aharon's sons die on the first day of the *Mishkan's* inauguration. This will be a permanent warning that good intentions can never replace strict obedience in our service of Hashem.

Similarly, in the Haftorah, Uzah died by Hashem's hand when he tried to protect the Ark from falling. In a moment of thoughtlessness he forgot that Hashem Himself transports the Ark, and He would never let it fall.

Although Uzah's intentions were good, he forgot the awe which is due to the One whose word lay in the Ark.

When King David finally brought the Ark to Jerusalem, he danced in front of it with all his might. From this we see that he was a true servant of the Torah. King David saw kingship as a responsibility rather than a privilege. This is exactly what displeased his wife, Michal. She thought David had debased himself by dancing like a commoner before the Ark.

However, David's dancing was the stamp of a true Jewish King. Because of his loyalty, David was rewarded that the Temple to be built by his son would carry his name.

Rabbi S.R. Hirsch

LOVE OF THE LAND

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



ENOUGH TO BE THANKFUL FOR

"Dayenu!"

This is the title of the most popular song of the Passover Seder in which we enumerate the historical kindness bestowed on our people by our Creator. After mentioning each kindness, from the Exodus from Egypt to the building of the *Beis Hamikdash*, we declare in melodic fashion that any one of them would have been enough for us (*Dayenu*) to be thankful for.

The final pair of this long list is arranged in a pattern which teaches an important lesson in our scale of values:

"Had He given us the Torah and not brought us into *Eretz Yisrael* — it would have been enough."

Torah without *Eretz Yisrael* is a viable formula for the fulfillment of our identity as a chosen people. For thousands of years Jews have preserved their identity in lands not their own. *Eretz Yisrael* without Torah, on the other hand, can degenerate into the empty nationalism of other peoples.

Once we have the Torah, however, *Eretz Yisrael* becomes the ideal setting for the development of our spiritual potential, and the *Beis Habechira* — the house in Jerusalem chosen by Hashem as the dwelling place for His presence — the sacred shrine for facilitating total development of our human potential to connect with our Creator.

Today, when all Jews have the Torah and the opportunity to come to *Eretz Yisrael* — even if we have not yet merited having the *Beis Habechira* in our midst — we can joyously sing:

Dayenu!

What do
you do with
Torah Weekly?

Hinda Kaplan of Brooklyn, New York

Every week I print your mailing. I usually send it to my friends also. I wait until Friday night to read it. While my father is in shul, I begin to read the mailing. I usually read the rest of it after dinner. Then, I leave it for my family to read. I really enjoy your mailing a lot more than others. The parables are great. They are both inspiring and entertaining. They also seem to be very relevant to present day society. Sometimes, even during the week I think back to something that was said in your mailing. It really gives me guidance and keeps me learning when ordinarily I probably would not. Thank you and *Tizku L'mitvo!* *Shabbat Shalom!*

E-mail what YOU do with Torah Weekly and we'll share it with other readers. E-Mail should be addressed to whatldo@ohr.israel.net

Parshas Shmini

Torah Weekly is available from several sources:

- World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>
- Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America. Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.
- E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub weekly {your full name}" to listproc@virtual.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

For the week ending 22 Nissan 5758, 17 & 18 April 1998