

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### TO B OR NOT TO B?

*“These are the clothes that they shall make: a breastplate...” (28:4)*

Clothing can represent the ultimate in narcissism and conceit, the vain and the transitory, or they can reflect the “glory and the splendor” (28:2) of the service of the Almighty – as are the clothes of the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) described in this week’s Torah portion.

Clothes can be a means of assimilation, an attempt to blend into a non-Jewish world. Or they can be the proud badge of a Jew.

This is the story of Major Mike Neilander and his buddies who “wore” their Judaism with “glory and splendor.”

“In the fall of 1990, things were heating up in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I had been an Army Captain and a helicopter maintenance test pilot for a decade, and received notice that I would be transferred to the First Cavalry Division which was on alert for the Persian Gulf War. Consequently, I also got wind of the Department of Defense “dog tag dilemma” vis-a-vis Jewish personnel. Then, as now, Jews were forbidden by Saudi law to enter the country. But our Secretary of Defense flat out told the King of Saudi Arabia, “We have Jews in our military. They’ve trained with their units and they’re going. Blink and look the other way.” With Kuwait occupied and the Iraqis at his border, King Fahid did the practical thing.

“We shipped out, but there was still the issue of classification. Normally the dog tags of Jewish servicemen are imprinted with the word “Jewish.” But Defense, fearing that this would put Jewish soldiers at further risk should they be captured on Iraqi soil, substituted the classification, “Protestant B,” on the tags. I didn’t like the whole idea of classifying Jews as Protestant anything and so I decided to leave my dog tag alone. I figured if I were captured, it was in G-d’s hands. Changing my tags was tantamount to denying

my religion and I couldn’t swallow that.

“In September, 1990 I went off to defend a country that I was prohibited from entering. The “Jewish” on my dog tag remained as clear and unmistakable as the American star on the hood of every Army truck.

A few days after my arrival, the Baptist chaplain approached me. “I just got a secret message through channels,” he said. There’s going to be a Jewish gathering. A holiday. Simkatoro or something like that. You want to go? It’s at 1800 hours at Dhahran Airbase.”

“Simkatoro turned out to be the festival of Simchat Torah, a holiday that hadn’t registered on my religious radar in eons. Services were held in absolute secrecy in a windowless room in a cinder-block building. The chaplain led a swift and simple service. We couldn’t risk singing or dancing, but Rabbi Ben Romer had managed to smuggle in a bottle of Manischewitz. Normally, I can’t stand the stuff, but that night, the wine tasted of Shabbat and family and Seders of long ago. My soul was warmed by the forbidden alcohol and by the memories swirling around me and by my fellow soldiers. We were strangers to one another in a land stranger than any of us had ever experienced, but for that brief hour, we were home.

“Irony and pride twisted together inside me like barbed wire. Celebrating my Judaism that evening made me even prouder to be an American, thankful once more for the freedoms we have. I had only been in Saudi Arabia a week, but I already had a keen understanding of how restrictive its society was. Soon after, things began coming to a head. The next time I was able to do anything remotely Jewish was Chanukah. Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe it was G-d’s hand that placed a Jewish Colonel in charge of our unit. Colonel Lawrence Schneider relayed messages of Jewish gatherings to us immediately. Had a non-Jew been in that position, the information would likely have taken a back seat

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the *menorah* in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments): A breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate, and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices,

dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil. G-d commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the altar in the *Mishkan*. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. G-d commands that an altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this altar every day.

## ISRAEL Forever

### THE END OF EXILE

When is exile over? This is a question that has bothered Jews for thousands of years. The answer to this, like everything else concerning our national existence, must be found in the Torah.

The second of the five *Chumashim*, *Sefer Shmot*, is called by the name “The Book of Exile and Exodus”. In his introduction to his commentary on this *chumash*, Ramban points out that the first four chapters deal with our People’s first exile and the physical liberation from it. The remaining chapters concentrate on what we may refer to as spiritual liberation. During the past two weeks our Shabbat Torah readings were about the first stage of this latter liberation, the receiving of the Torah. This week’s chapter and the one before it deal with the climax, which is the construction of the Mishkan sanctuary, a project that is the main focus of the remaining five chapters of *Shmot*.

Exodus from exile, he concludes, is not the mere removal of shackles, but a return to the lofty spiritual level of our patriarchs who served as “chariots” for the Divine

Presence in this world. Only when physical and political freedom is followed by a commitment to Divine guidance, and the creation of an earthly base for that Divinity, can our people be considered as having ended their exile.

There is an important message here for all those whose shortsightedness misleads them into assuming that the mere establishment of a national homeland, as important as it is, spells the end of exile. We should rather view this Heavenly gift of a return to our land as a long-awaited liberation from physical and political persecution that enables us to freely pursue the next two stages. The first is completely in our power — to recommit ourselves to the Torah our ancestors received at Sinai. In regard to the final stage we can today only create a “minor sanctuary” in the form of synagogues and *yeshivot* for prayer and Torah study. But this will pave the way for the climax of the ultimate sanctuary, the *Beit Hamikdash*, and a return to the spiritual level of our patriarchs with the Divine Presence resting upon 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

### RABBI ZEIRA – NO TIME TO WAIT

“Why don’t you wait for the ferry?!” This is the mocking outcry which the Talmudic sage Rabbi Zeira heard as he crossed the river separating him from Eretz Yisrael on a primitive bridge consisting of a log spanning the river with an overhead rope for support.

The heathen observer of this hasty, improvised crossing accused the sage of following the same course of impulsive behavior shown by his ancestors who accept-



ed the Torah without even knowing what was written in it.

Rabbi Zeira’s response to why he did not wait around for the next ferry and a more comfortable crossing to the land he had so long dreamed of making his home was:

“A land which Moshe and Aharon did not merit to enter — who knows if I wait any longer that I will have the privilege of entering it!”

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## NOT SIZE THAT COUNTS

When Ezra succeeded in rebuilding Yerushalayim together with the Jews whom he had brought back with him from exile in Babylon, he sanctified the city's precincts with a ceremony which included the parading around its wall with "two large thanksgiving offerings" (*Nechemia 12:31*).

By a process of elimination, Rabbi Chisda arrived at the conclusion that they were two loaves of leavened bread which accompanied the *korban todah* — a thanksgiving sacrifice which was voluntarily offered by one who enjoyed Providential release from a critical situation. Since flat, unleavened *matzot* were offered together with the risen breads which accompanied the animal sacrifices as a *korban todah*, the latter are referred to as the "large" thanksgiving offerings because of their greater size.

But why do we not interpret the term "thanksgiving offerings" literally as a reference to two animals sacrificed and the description "large" as a reference to the size of those animals?

Rabbi Chisda rules this out because it is unthinkable that Ezra would have called attention to the size of the sacrifice, since quantity is insignificant in the eyes of G-d. The basis for this is a *mishna* (*Mesechta Menachot 110a*) which points out that the Torah states that an offering brings pleasure to G-d regardless of whether it is in the form of an animal (*Vayikra 1:9, 13*), a fowl (*ibid. 1:17*) or flour (*ibid. 2:2*), in order to teach us that it matters not whether one offers more or less so long as he dedicates his heart to Heaven.

Lest this approach of Rabbi Chisda gives the impression that there is no merit in selecting the best available in matters of sacrifice, Tosefot reminds us that the *gemara* (*Mesechta Yoma 34b*) states that both in regard to communal and individual sacrifices there is a priority to offer the best animal available. The point made by Rabbi Chisda is that while offering a larger animal may certainly be considered meritorious, it would have been improper for Ezra to proudly call attention to the size of the animals he offered as if this were the only way of achieving his purpose of sanctifying the city, when the truth is that G-d would have been pleased with a more modest offering as well.

• *Shavuot 15a*

## A BACKWARD LOOK

"One who enters that house while it is quarantined shall be in a state of impurity until the evening." (*Vayikra 14:46*)

The dwelling which has been quarantined because a leprous-like stain has been detected by a *kohen* on one of its

walls contaminates one who enters it with a state of *tumah* — ritual impurity. Rabbi Oshiya called attention to the Torah's use of the term "enter" which he sees as ruling out the same contraction of impurity if one comes into the house backwards, since this is not considered a normal form of entry.

Rabbi Oshiya expressed a reluctance to publicly state the tradition he had received that one who entered backwards with only his nose remaining outside remained pure. He anticipated a challenge from his colleagues as to why that same backward-entering individual would even become impure if he thus entered in his totality. The Sage Rava, however, solved this problem by comparing the presence of the entire body in the contaminated house to that of vessels which were already in the house when it became contaminated, as is evident from an earlier passage (*ibid. 14:36*). If his nose remained outside he can only become impure because of the entry of the majority of his body, and entering backwards is not considered entry.

The only problem remaining is the one raised by Tosefot who cites a *gemara* (*Mesechta Chullin 10b*), which states that exiting backwards is considered a normal exit. The proof of this is the manner in which the *Kohen Gadol* exited the *Kodshei Kodshim* — Holy of Holies — on Yom Kippur after performing his service there. His departure is described (*Mesechta Yoma 52b*) as being executed by walking backwards with his face towards this holiest of places. If a backward exit is considered normal why is a backward entry not considered so?

Tosefot resolves this by differentiating between backward entry which is never normal and a backward exit which is perfectly in order when a disciple takes leave of his master and demonstrates his respect by not turning his back on him.

• *Shavuot 17b*

## The Weekly Daf

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## PARSHA Q&A?

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of oil for the *menorah*?
2. How was Aharon commanded to kindle the *menorah*?
3. What does *tamid* mean in reference to the *menorah*?
4. What does *kehuna* mean?
5. Name the eight garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*.
6. To what does Rashi compare the *ephod*?
7. In which order were the names of the Tribes inscribed on the *ephod*?
8. The stones of the *ephod* bore the inscription of the names of the sons of Yaakov. Why?
9. For what sins did the *choshen mishpat* atone?
10. What are three meanings of the word *mishpat*?
11. What was lacking in the *bigdei kehuna* in the second *Beit Hamikdash*?
12. Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
13. When the *Kohen Gadol* wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the *tefillin* situated?
14. What does the word *tamid* mean in reference to the *tzitzit*? (two answers)
15. Which garments were worn by a *kohen hediot*?
16. During the inauguration of the *kohanim*, a bullock was brought as a sin offering. For what sin did this offering atone?
17. Moshe was commanded to wash Aharon and his sons to prepare them to serve as *kohanim* (29:4). How were they washed?
18. What was unique about the bull sin-offering brought during the inauguration of the *kohanim*?
19. How did the oil used for the meal-offering differ from the oil used for the *menorah*?
20. What does the crown on the *mizbeach haketoret* symbolize?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 27:20 - The olives were pressed and not ground; and only the first drop was used.
2. 27:20 - He was commanded to kindle it until the flame ascended by itself.
3. 27:20 - It means that it should be kindled every night.
4. 28:3 - Service.
5. 28:4,36,42 - *Choshen*, *ephod*, *me'il*, *ketonet*, *mitznefet*, *avnet*, *tzitzit*, and *michnasayim*.
6. 28:6 - A woman's riding garment.
7. 28:10 - In order of birth.
8. 28:12 - So that G-d would see their names and recall their righteousness.
9. 28:15 - For judicial errors.
10. 28:15 - 1) The claims of the litigants 2) The court's ruling 3) The court's punishment.
11. 28:30 - The *Urim V'Tumim* — the "*Shem Ha'meforash*" placed in the folds of the *choshen*.
12. 28:31 - The fabric of the *me'il* was made only of *techelet*.
13. 28:37 - Between the *tzitzit* and the *mitznefet*.
14. 28:38 - 1) It always atones, even when not being worn. 2) The *Kohen Gadol* must always be aware that he is wearing it.
15. 28:40,42 - *Ketonet*, *avnet*, *migba'at*, and *michnasayim*.
16. 29:1 - The sin of the golden calf.
17. 29:4 - They immersed in a *mikveh*.
18. 29:14 - It is the only external sin-offering that was completely burned.
19. 29:40 - Oil for the *menorah* comes only from beaten olives. Oil for meal-offerings may come from either beaten olives or from ground-up olives.
20. 30:3 - The crown of *kehuna*.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

... Ohr Somayach has graduated close to a dozen students who have practiced or are still practicing medicine in Israel.

...Hundreds of Ohr Somayach alumni have settled in dozens of communities throughout Israel and have greatly contributed to their development.

## CLONE #2

This week's discussion of cloning will address the question of whether a clone has a soul.

Some opinions answer in the negative, comparing a clone to a golem (a human-like being), such as the well-known golem made by the Maharal of Prague. Before refuting this comparison let's examine the idea of creating a golem as it appears in our traditional sources.

The Talmud refers to *Sefer Yetzira* (Book of Creating), attributed to our patriarch Avraham, which teaches that different combinations of the 32 Channels of Wisdom, the 10 *Sefirot* (Divine Attributes), and the 22 Hebrew letters can be used to create beings, just as G-d did in creating the universe. The Talmud relates that Rava used *Sefer Yetzira* to create a person. Similarly Rav Chanina and Rav Oshiya would study *Sefer Yetzira* every Friday to create a calf which they would eat for their Shabbat meal. *Sefer Yetzira* is an accepted part of the Jewish tradition and was studied by such luminaries as Rav Hai Gaon, Ramban, the Arizal, and the Gaon from Vilna.

The Maharal, a great Jewish 16th century thinker, allegedly created a golem to protect the Jews of Prague from anti-Semitism. Some say that G-d's name was written on the golem's forehead, while others claim that the golem

was activated or de-activated by adding or removing the *alef* from the word *emet* on his forehead (Hebrew for "truth" and without the *alef* means "dead"). The golem was left in the attic of the Maharal's synagogue and recent accounts tell of Nazi soldiers fleeing in horror after having broken into the attic.

We find a question in the Responsa about whether a golem is human and may be included in a minyan, and the answer is "No". The golem has no internal organs or blood, and therefore it is not forbidden to "kill" a golem, just as the Maharal de-activated his golem. Furthermore, a golem cannot speak, which, according to Judaism, indicates that it has no (human) soul.

A clone, on the contrary, is created biologically, has normal body functions (like a pumping heart and circulating blood), most likely has the power of speech, and therefore presumably has a human soul, just like me, my sibling or my child.

Next installment: Is my clone me, my sibling or my child?

Sources:

- *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 65b*
- *Responsa Chacham Zvi #93*
- *Targum Onkelos, Bereishet 2:8, and Rashi*

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

### REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

## KEEPING YOUR WORD

**Question:** I have been negotiating with a potential buyer of my home and made up my mind to sell it to him at a certain price. I even made a verbal commitment to do so but never legally formalized it in any manner. A higher offer has been made and I wonder if it is ethical for me to back out of my first commitment.

**Answer:** There are different levels of responsibility. If a *kinyan* act of acquisition has been made, such as receiving some down payment, the first buyer can halachically compel you to go through with the deal. (In the case of items which are not real estate, money alone is not considered a *kinyan*, but backing out may incur a Heavenly curse for going back on your word.) Where no *kinyan* has been made there is still an issue of faithlessness (*Bava Metzia 49a*) and a halachic authority must be consulted as to

whether there is a justification for switching to the higher offer after making a verbal commitment to the first buyer.

How high a standard one should strive to maintain in keeping his word is illustrated by the story of the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Safra. He was in the midst of reciting the *Shema* when someone approached him to purchase an item he had for sale. Since Rabbi Safra could not interrupt his recital, the buyer assumed that he was not satisfied with the offer and therefore made a higher offer. When he finally completed the *Shema*, the Sage turned to the buyer and said: "Take the article for the amount you initially mentioned, because I had intended to sell it to you for that sum."

This, conclude our Sages, was a fulfillment of what King David praises in one "who speaks the truth in his heart." (*Tehillim 15:2*)

### IN THE NICK OF TIME

When the Sabbath-observant passengers on El Al's Flight #02 from New York were informed that they would be arriving in Israel at 3:30 on Friday afternoon rather than 1:00 as scheduled, they began worrying about where they would spend the holy Day of Rest. This delay, resulting from inclement weather on the East Coast, meant that they had only one hour and ten minutes until the beginning of the Sabbath.

Their problem was solved thanks to two airline rabbis and scores of generous hosts. Rabbi Yochanan Chayot, El Al's Director of Religious Passengers Services, and El Al Rabbi Avshalom Katzir set up an emergency service for the 50 pas-

sengers who requested it. They were rushed off the plane on a special staircase and hurried through two special border-control lines. In the meantime an appeal was made on a religious radio station for families to host passengers for the Sabbath. Some 80 calls came in response, many more than were needed.

In a matter of minutes those who lived nearby were on their way home while the others enjoyed the hospitality of families in Bnei Brak, Elad, Kfar Chabad and Shoham. Two other passengers who arrived on another flight only 20 minutes before the holy day began spent the Sabbath at the airport, courtesy of El Al.

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

*continued from page one*

to a more pressing issue. Like war. But it didn't.

"When notice of the Chanukah party was decoded, we knew about it at once. The first thing we saw when we entered the tent was food, tons of it. Care packages from the States: cookies, latkes, sour cream and applesauce and cans and cans of gefilte fish. The wind was blowing dry across the tent, but inside there was an incredible feeling of celebration. As Rabbi Romer talked about the theme of Chanukah and the "ragtag" bunch of Maccabee soldiers fighting Jewry's oppressors thousands of years ago, it wasn't hard to make the connection to what lay ahead of us. There in the middle of the desert, inside an olive-green tent, we felt like we were the Maccabees. If we had to go down, we were going to go down fighting, as they did. We blessed the candles, acknowledging the King of the Universe who commanded us to kindle the Chanukah lights. We said the second prayer, praising G-d for the miracles he performed, *bayamim hahem bazman hazeh*, in those days and now. And we sang the third blessing, the Shehecheyanu, thanking G-d for keeping us alive and for enabling us to reach this season.

"We knew war was imminent. All week we had received reports of mass destruction, projections of the chemical weapons that were likely to be unleashed. Intelligence estimates put the first rounds of casualties at 12,500 soldiers. I heard those numbers and thought, "That's my whole division!" I sat back in my chair, my gefilte fish cans at my feet. They were in the desert, about to go to war, singing songs of praise to G-d who had saved our ancestors in battle once

before. The feeling of unity was as pervasive as our apprehension, as real as the sand that found its way into everything from our socks to our toothbrushes. I felt more Jewish there on that lonely Saudi plain, our tanks and guns at the ready, than I had ever felt back home in synagogue. That Chanukah in the desert solidified for me the urge to reconnect with my Judaism. I felt religion welling up inside me. Any soldier will tell you that there are no atheists in foxholes and I know that part of my feelings were tied to the looming war and my desire to get with G-d before the unknown descended in the clouds of battle.

"It sounds corny, but as we downed the latkes and cookies and wiped the last of the apple sauce from our plates, everyone grew quiet, keenly aware of the link with history, thinking of what we were about to do and what had been done by soldiers like us so long ago.

"The trooper beside me stared ahead at nothing in particular, absent-mindedly fingering his dog tag. "How'd you classify?" I asked, nodding to my tag. Silently, he withdrew the metal rectangle and its beaded chain from beneath his shirt and held it out for me to read. Like mine, his read, "Jewish."

"Somewhere in a military depot someplace, I am sure that there must be boxes and boxes of dog tags, still in their wrappers, all marked Protestant B."

*"...for glory and splendor..."*

Sources:

• Gershon Burd, Debra Darvick, *Hadassah Magazine*