

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

MEANS TO BE A MENSCH

...“and let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My portion.” (25:1)

“**B**eing a mensch” is one of those untranslatable Yiddish phrases which define what it means to be Jewish.

A few years ago an El Al flight to London was carrying a young child in need of an urgent and critical operation. Apart from the child’s medical problem, there was another problem: money. The parents had barely enough to cover the cost of the flight to London, which involved the purchase of a whole row of seats to accommodate the stricken child and his medical support systems.

During the flight, a religious Jew who was traveling in first class came to the back of the plane to pray with a *minyán*. On his way back to his seat he went over to the father of the child and asked how the child was doing. In the course of the conversation the father mentioned he had no idea how he was going to be able to cover the cost of the operation. He was already way over his head in debt with the medical expenses that he had already incurred. He would need nothing short of a small miracle.

Without further ado the man took his leave, walked back to the first class cabin, pulled out his hat, and proceeded to tour the aisles of the first-class cabin collecting for the operation. In approximately ten minutes his hat contained checks to the value of some \$100,000, sufficient for both the operation and the flights and all the medical expenses to date.

If Jews excel at anything, it’s *tzedaka* — charity.

“Charity,” however, really doesn’t translate the word *tzedaka*. *Tzedaka* means “righteousness.” Unfortunately as we live in a largely selfish and unrighteous world, the word

“righteousness” usually finds itself being used with the reflexive pronoun “self” as in “self-righteous.” However, “righteousness” is no more than “rightness,” doing what is right. A Jew gives *tzedaka*, not because it’s charity, not because he is charitable, but because that’s what’s right. The definition of what is right is what G-d wants. Thus ultimately we give *tzedaka* not because our hearts reach out to the plight of others but because that’s what G-d wants from us.

...“and let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My portion.”

There are three kinds of *tzedaka*, and they are all hinted at in this verse.

The highest level is “let them take for Me a portion.” Here the giving is “for Me” because that’s what G-d wants us to do. The second level is when we give *tzedaka* out of the kindness of our hearts because we cannot bear to see the suffering of the poor, “from every man whose heart motivates him.” Noble as it is, this is not the highest level of giving.

And the third level is the person who would really prefer not to give at all, but is too embarrassed to say no. About him the verse says, “you shall take My portion.”

No one will ever know from which of these groups were the passengers in that first-class El Al cabin, but one thing is clear: whatever a Jew’s motives, he knows what it means to be a *mensch*.

• Source: *Nachalat Chamisha in Iturei Torah*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d commands Moshe to build a Mishkan (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. The Children of Israel are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the Mishkan's outer courtyard are an altar for the burnt offerings and a laver for washing. The Tent of Meeting is divided by a curtain into two chambers. The outer chamber is accessible only to the *kohanim*, the descendants of Aharon. This contains the table of

showbreads, the *menorah*, and the golden altar for incense. The innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, may be entered only by the *kohen gadol*, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur. Here is the Ark that held the Ten Commandments inscribed on the two tablets of stone that G-d gave to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the Mishkan, are described in great detail.

ISRAEL Forever

WHO IS CARRYING WHOM?

The recent tumult in Israel over the issue of government support of family heads studying Torah full-time once again brought to the fore two opposite approaches to the value of Torah study.

In this week's Torah portion we read about the Holy Ark which was to be the repository of the Torah in the Mishkan Sanctuary. Staves of acacia wood covered with gold were to be inserted in the rings on the side of the Ark so that it could be carried as the Jewish People moved through the Wilderness.

It would appear then that it was the Levites who were carrying the Ark. But this was an illusion, for in truth it was the Ark which was carrying its bearers.

The Ark, our commentaries point out, represents those who study Torah and its bearers are those who support Torah study. Instead of viciously denouncing those who receive government support for Torah study as "parasites", appreciation should be shown to them carrying the government and securing 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

UZIYAHU – THE FREED KING

In the Kidron Valley in East Jerusalem one can still see, right next to Yad Avshalom, the column remaining from the *Beit Hachofshet*. This was the "House of Freedom" to which King Uzizyahu was assigned after becoming a *metzora* as punishment for usurping the privilege of offering incense in the *Beit Hamikdash* that was reserved for



kohanim.

A *metzora* could not reside within the walls of Jerusalem, so his kingly duties were assumed by his son Yotam. Since the responsibilities of a king were so burdensome, his forced release from this burden was seen as a sort of freedom, which became the title for his residence.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many types of items were the Jews to donate?
2. The donation of silver for the Mishkan differed from the donation of the other items. How?
3. What property do *techelet* and *argaman* share that *orot eilim m'adamim* do not share?
4. What property do the above three share that *shesh* and *orot techashim* do not share?
5. Onkelos translates "*tachash*" as "*sasgona*." Why?
6. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Egypt?
7. Describe two uses of: 1) oil, 2) spices, 3) jewels.
8. The *aron* was made with three boxes, one inside the other. Exactly how tall was the outer box?
9. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?
10. What did the faces of the *keruvim* resemble?
11. On what day of the week was the *lechem hapanim* baked?
12. What does *miksha* mean?
13. What was the purpose of the *menorah's gevi'im* (cups)?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the *menorah*?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapestries of the Mishkan?
16. What is meant by "standing wood"?
17. How long was the Mishkan?
18. How wide was the interior of the Mishkan?
19. Why was the altar coated with *nechoshet*?
20. Which function did the copper *yeteidot* serve?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 25:2 - 13.
2. 25:3 - No fixed amount of the other items was required. The silver was given as a fixed amount: a half-shekel.
3. 25:4,5 - They are wool; *orot eilim* are not.
4. 25:4,5 - They are dyed; *shesh* and *orot techashim* are not.
5. 25:5 - The *tachash* delights (*sas*) in its multi-colors (*g'vanim*).
6. 25:5 - *Arazim* — cedars.
7. 25:6-7: 1) The oil was lit in the *menorah* and used for anointing. 2) The spices were used in the anointing oil and for the incense. 3) The precious stones were for the *ephod* and the *choshen*.
8. 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half *amot* plus a *tefach* plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the *kaporet*. (The *kaporet* was a *tefach* thick — see 25:17).
9. 25:16 - It testifies that G-d commanded us to keep the *mitzvot*.
10. 25:18 - The faces of children.
11. 25:29 - Friday.
12. 25:31 - Hammered.
13. 25:31 - Purely ornamental.
14. 25:40 - G-d showed Moshe a *menorah* of fire.
15. 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
16. 26:15 - The wooden beams were to be upright and not stacked one upon the other.
17. 26:16 - 30 *amot*.
18. 26:23 - 10 *amot*.
19. 27:2 - To atone for brazenness.
20. 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.

לע"נ
פרשת ריזל מלכה בת ר' שמואל זאב הלוי ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach
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- Which things must be returned to the altar if they fell from it
- The timing for ritual removal of ashes from altar
- The impact of the altar on whatever touches it
- How sacred vessels sanctify their contents
- Restoring vessels and washing *kohanim* garments
- Regularity and sacredness as factors for precedence
- The scales of sacredness in sacrifices
- The ages of animals eligible for sacrifice
- When regularity competes with sacredness for precedence
- The various functions of oil in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Which sacrificial blood must be laundered if spilled on garment

WHAT COMES FIRST?

Why do we first put on a *tallit* before we put on *tefillin*? The answer, of course, is that there is a rule that precedence is given to something which is more regular. Since the mitzvah of *tzitzit* applies every day, while *tefillin* is not worn on Shabbat and holy days, this mitzvah must be performed first.

The source for this rule is the *mishna* which states, in regard to the offering of sacrifices, that a sacrifice which is more regular must be offered before one less regular. This rule is based on the Torah passage (*Bamidbar* 28:23), which concludes the list of additional sacrifices to be offered on Pesach with the reminder that they are “aside from the *olah* sacrifice of the morning which is regularly offered”. This is interpreted as giving precedence to the daily *olah* sacrifice because it is more regular.

Tosefot raises the question as to why the *mishna* found it necessary to cite this source, since we find (*Mesechta Pesachim* 58b) another source based on the word *ha'olah* (*Vayikra* 6:1) used to describe the daily *olah* sacrifice. The definitive prefix (the *olah*) indicates that it must be the first sacrifice to be offered.

The resolution of the problem presented by Tosefot is a distinction between the slaughtering of the animal and application of its blood to the altar, whose precedence to other sacrifices is based on the source cited in our *gemara*, and the burning of the *olah* parts on the altar whose precedence is based on the *gemara* in *Pesachim*. This distinction can be understood by noting that the passage quoted in *Pesachim* is in a chapter that deals with the burning of the sacrifice rather than with its slaughter and blood application.

• *Zevachim* 89a

What the SAGES Say

“The Torah chapter about the *kohen's* garments is next to the chapter about sacrifices in order to teach you that just as sacrifices provide atonement, so too do the *kohen's* garments.”

• *Rabbi Eineini bar Sasson - Zevachim* 88b

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YETZER DILEMMA

From: Olivia

Dear Rabbi,

I want to educate my children properly, but I am having difficulty with the concept of the “yetzer hara” or evil inclination. On the one hand, attributing bad behavior to the “yetzer hara” avoids giving children the impression that they, in essence, are bad when they do something wrong. But on the other hand, blaming bad behavior on “the yetzer” seems to remove culpability for misbehaving. Please clarify.

Dear Olivia,

Enabling children (and adults for that matter) to identify the inclination to do wrong as something separate from themselves, foreign to their essence, is a very powerful and liberating tool in self-improvement and in service of G-d that should accompany a person for one's entire life.

Judaism teaches that by virtue of the Divine soul endowed within us, we are basically and essentially good. We aspire for correctness, righteousness and perfection. However, there are forces whose inception was outside ourselves, but became en-coiled within us, which draw and prod us toward the improper, harmful and, ultimately, destructive path. It is this tendency or inclination that must be controlled.

As difficult as it is for adults to overcome this inclination, for obvious reasons, it's even more difficult for children. Scolding a child every time he does wrong by saying how bad he is, is not only incorrect, it's also harmful. If a child comes to understand and accept that he's bad, he's basically lost much of the incentive to be good. What will it help to try to be good, when, as a child he's repeatedly told he's bad.

What's more, it's also confusing, because sometimes he's told he's good. So, he asks himself, “Am I good or am I bad?” If his parents don't seem to know for sure, how will he ever gain a clear understanding of himself and confidence in his ability to really be good?

For these reasons, the Jewish way of education is to reinforce to the child at all times, during good behavior or

bad, that he, in essence, is good. It's the evil inclination that is misleading him to behave in a way that is wrong and ultimately harmful. A parent might even add, “The yetzer might be temporarily fooling you into thinking that what you're doing is fun or good or beneficial, but its intention is to make you fall, and when you do, it will be the first to accuse and make a fool out of you”.

Then a parent should remind the child that despite the difficulty in overcoming this challenge, he has the power to decide to be good. In this way we express our confidence in him and give him the positive encouragement to gain control over himself. After all, he, in essence, is good and wants to do good. When he overcomes the challenge, he should be told how proud we are of him, and that we knew he had it in him. In fact, G-d is proud and knows he has it in him.

But what if he doesn't overcome the challenge? What if he gives in to the yetzer? Is he to be held unaccountable? Should there be no punishment?

The answer is no. He *is* to be held accountable and punished commensurately to what he did wrong. But the parent must emphasize that this is not because the child is bad – because both the parent and G-d know that he's really good – but because he succumbed to the inclination when he could have overcome it. For this he is being held responsible, and the purpose of the punishment is to enable him to appreciate the magnitude of his wrong decision.

In this way, we reinforce the idea that despite his bad behavior he himself is good, but rather was led astray by a force that he must learn to divorce himself from. On the other hand, he is still at fault for not doing so since he could have. This is the formula to give him the strength, confidence and courage to overcome the drive to do wrong. And since children are likely to continue to misbehave, rather than reinforcing the idea that he's bad (with all of the accompanying pitfalls mentioned above), this approach, precisely when repeated, empowers the child with self-control, and prepares him to exercise his free will responsibly into adulthood.

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FOR WHOM WE STAND

Question: An older person gets on an intercity bus whose seats have been filled by passengers who got on at the first stop on the route. Is there any obligation on the younger passenger to give up his seat, even if it means standing during a long trip, or is it the responsibility of the older person to make an effort to get on at the first stop or to at least clarify whether there is sitting room before boarding the bus?

Answer: This is not the sort of issue that will ever come before a rabbinical court but rather one which presents an ethical challenge to both parties involved.

The older person should be reminded that although the Torah demands respect be shown to the elderly and to Torah scholars, it is improper for such individuals to impose on the public by intentionally walking past them to require standing up for them (*Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 244:6*). Boarding a

crowded bus and compelling another passenger to stand throughout the journey is tantamount to such an imposition, and it would therefore be proper for the older passenger to board the bus at its first stop or seek an alternative form of transportation.

Once such a person has already boarded the bus, however, it is only proper that he be offered a seat, at least for a part of the trip. Not only is this considered by a number of authorities as an extension of the halachic obligation to rise in respect, but must also be viewed as a matter of lifesaving, since prolonged standing may pose a serious threat to the health of an older passenger. This latter consideration is also relevant to a pregnant woman passenger.

• Based on the response of Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, Rabbi of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

LIFE-SAVING VOLUNTEERS

Another group of Jewish doctors from North America recently completed its tour of duty in Israel. This was the seventh such group of volunteers to arrive in Israel recently to help in the nation's hospitals, especially with victims of terrorism.

These 19 volunteers are part of a unique project in which Jewish doctors from the U.S. and Canada place themselves on call for Israel, with a commitment to arrive in the country

within 24-72 hours if needed. They come here once every two years from anywhere from one to three weeks. Aside from volunteering their services they also learn how to handle situations arising out of terrorist actions and familiarize themselves with the Israeli health system. So far about 200 doctors have participated in this wonderful program.

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