
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE • WWW.OHR.EDU

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT PEKUDEI • 2 ADAR II 5779 - MARCH 9, 2019 • VOL. 26 NO. 23

PARSHA INSIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Remember to Forget

“These are the reckonings...” (38:21)

Every year on *erev* Rosh Hashana, Rabbi Stephen Ammon’s wife would go to her mother’s grave at the Staten Island Jewish Cemetery. One year she knew that she wouldn’t be able to go, but it happened that a couple of weeks before Rosh Hashana she was driving with her husband past the freeway exit to the cemetery. Seeing as they were so close, Rabbi Ammon suggested that they turn off and go. They pulled off the freeway and drove to the cemetery. It was completely deserted. They were able to pull up right by the grave. They prayed there for a while. Rabbi Ammon was waiting for his wife to finish praying when he turned around and noticed that a hearse and a couple of cars had pulled up at an open grave a couple of rows behind them. One of the funeral party came over and asked if Rabbi Ammon could be “a tenth man” so they could say Kaddish. “Sure!” said Rabbi Ammon. He went over, helped them put the coffin into the grave, and they said Kaddish. After that they started leaving. Rabbi Ammon said, “One minute. You didn’t bury him!” “Oh, don’t worry,” they said, “we got the tractor to do that. We don’t do that.” And they left.

Rabbi Ammon suddenly remembered learning in yeshiva that the concept of *met mitzvah* — literally “a mitzvah of the dead” — doesn’t apply only when you find a dead person someplace and there is no one else to bury the body. Rather, this important concept also

applies when the burial is left *incomplete*. So he went over to the person driving the tractor and said, “Would you mind lending me a shovel? I’ll do the burial for you. You can go and I’ll bury the person.” The tractor driver said he didn’t mind, and Rabbi Ammon set about the mitzvah of bringing a Jew to *Kever Yisrael*, to a Jewish burial. Rabbi Ammon spent an hour-and-a-half completing the burial until the grave was completely full. He was just about to stick the grave marker in the ground when he paused, took note of the name, and wrote it down. The entire way driving to Brooklyn he was thinking to himself, “Why, why, why?” Why had he just happened to be there? Why out of the blue did this hearse turn up in a deserted graveyard and he just happened to be “number ten”? And why was he the one to end up burying him? Rabbi Ammon decided to make some enquiries and find out who this person was.

One of the people whom Rabbi Ammon called was his mentor, Rabbi Herman Neuberger (*zatzal*), the executive director of Ner Yisrael Yeshiva — the yeshiva Rabbi Ammon went to. When he told Rabbi Neuberger the name, the Rabbi almost dropped the phone. Rabbi Neuberger told Rabbi Ammon that 40 years previously, when Rabbi Ammon was a young boy and had enrolled in the yeshiva, his father couldn’t meet the expense of keeping him there, and so Rabbi Neuberger tried to find someone who could sponsor

Continued on page seven

Chullin 86 - 92

Spiritual Growth

The angels wanted to harm Yaakov (due to jealousy – Rashi), and therefore G-d stood there to protect him.

This is how one *beraita* on our *daf* explains the vision of the angels on the ladder that Yaakov saw in a prophetic dream, as he slept when the sun suddenly set while he was at Mount Moriah, the place of the *akeida* of his father Yitzchak, and the site of the future Beit Hamikdash. G-d promised that He would protect Yaakov and that Yaakov and his descendants would receive the Land of Israel and thrive there.

Regarding the angels the verse states: “And he dreamed, and behold! A ladder was standing on the ground and its top reached to Heaven. And angels of G-d were ascending and descending upon it.” (Ber. 28:13)

Rashi, in his commentary on the Chumash, explains the ascent and descent of these angels according to the Midrash Rabbah. The two angels who accompanied Yaakov within the Land of Israel would ascend to Heaven when Yaakov would be at the border to go down from the Land of Israel since they were not permitted to leave the Land. But at that point two different angels would descend from Heaven to accompany him while he was outside of the Land. (The Maharsha notes that the accompanying angels here are the same ones we are familiar with from Friday nights, when two angels accompany us home from the Shabbat prayer service to the prepared Shabbat table.)

This understanding of the verse is one of two explanations that are found in our *sugya*. We learn on our *daf* two separate *beraitas* with two different interpretations of the verse. (See Tosefot and the Maharshal on this point.)

One *beraita* states that the width of the ladder was 8,000 *parsa'ot* (one *parsa* is equal to about four kilometers) since there were two ascending angels and also two other descending angels. Since altogether there were four angels on the ladder when they met, the width needed to accompany four angels of 2,000 *parsa'ot* each (the angel's width is taught in the gemara, based on a verse in the Book of Daniel and a teaching from the Oral Law.) So, according to these *beraita* there the verse is speaking about four angels.

According to a different *beraita*, however, there were only two angels. The ones that descended were the very same ones that first ascended. “They went up and glimpsed the image of the man in the four holy *Chayot* and then descended to see the image of Yaakov below. When they realized that it was the image of Yaakov that they had seen Above, the angels became jealous and wanted to harm Yaakov in their envy. (Rashi) This is why the next verse states. “And G-d stood on (over) him” — to protect Yaakov from the angels. According to this second *beraita* there were only two angels on the ladder.

This discussion of the angels on the ladder reminds me of a story I once heard in Jerusalem. There was a pious storekeeper who decided to retire. He closed the store and studied in the store by himself, from morning until night. When he eventually passed from this world, it was found that he had left many notebooks of his Torah ideas, but with a proviso: they should all be buried with him!

Word of this made the rounds of Jerusalem and a delegation led by a young Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld quickly set off to inspect the writings to decide what to do. Copy them all by hand so as not to lose them? They opened the first notebook and starting reading. “It states in the verse that the angels were ascending and descending the ladder, but we all know angels have wings. Question: So, why the ladder? The answer is: That verse is speaking about *baby* angels.” The Rabbis closed the notebook and did not question the man's request to be buried with his notebooks.

Although this story is told to illustrate the importance of learning Torah with a study partner, a group, a Rabbi and a Yeshiva, the question remains: So, why the ladder? One answer I have heard is that the ladder with its rungs is symbolic of how we should view spiritual growth. One rung at a time, incremental growth. Another mitzvah, another prayer, another *daf*. A person should not be disappointed with not becoming a spiritual giant at supersonic speed. Each mitzvah, each prayer, each deed of loving-kindness elevates the person another rung on the “ladder” of spiritual growth.

And the parable of incremental descent is also one of encouragement and optimism regarding one's spiritual well-being even when there is a spiritual setback. When one has spiritual ups-and-downs (probably like most people), the “down” should be understood to be only like going down a rung, but not a freefall. In fact, there is a concept in the Torah called “going down for the need of going up,” and any “descent” should be viewed as an opportunity to ascend to a spiritual level even greater than just the next one up!

• Chullin 91b

PARSHA Q&A?

1. Why is the word Mishkan stated twice in verse 38:21?
 2. Why is the Mishkan called the “Mishkan of Testimony”?
 3. Who was appointed to carry the vessels of the Mishkan in the *midbar*?
 4. Who was the officer in charge of the *levi'im*?
 5. What is the meaning of the name Betzalel?
 6. How many people contributed a half-shekel to the Mishkan? Who contributed?
 7. Which material used in the *bigdei kehuna* was not used in the coverings of the sacred vessels?
 8. How were the gold threads made?
 9. What was inscribed on the stones on the shoulders of the *ephod*?
 10. What was on the hem of the *me'il*?
 11. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear between the *mitznetet* and the *tzitzit*?
 12. What role did Moshe play in the construction of the Mishkan?
 13. Which date was the first time that the Mishkan was erected and not dismantled?
 14. What was the “tent” which Moshe spread over the Mishkan (40:19)?
 15. What “*testimony*” did Moshe place in the *aron*?
 16. What function did the *parochet* serve?
 17. Where was the *shulchan* placed in the Mishkan?
 18. Where was the *menorah* placed in the Mishkan?
 19. Who offered the communal sacrifices during the eight days of the dedication of the Mishkan?
 20. On which day did both Moshe and Aharon serve as *kohanim*?
-

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 38:21 - To allude to the *Beit Hamikdash* that would twice be taken as a “*mashkon*” (pledge) for the sins of the Jewish People until the nation repents.
 2. 38:21 - It was testimony for the Jewish People that G-d forgave them for the golden calf and allowed His *Shechina* to dwell among them.
 3. 38:21 - The *levi'im*.
 4. 38:21 - Itamar ben Aharon.
 5. 38:22 - “In the shadow of G-d.”
 6. 38:26 - 603,550. Every man age twenty and over (except the *levi'im*).
 7. 39:1 - Linen (See *Rashi 31:10*).
 8. 39:3 - The gold was beaten into thin plates from which threads were cut. (See *Rashi 28:6*).
 9. 39:6, 39:7 - The names of the tribes.
 10. 39:24,25 - Woven pomegranates and golden bells.
 11. 39:31 - *Tefillin*.
 12. 39:33 - He stood it up.
 13. 40:17 - *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* of the second year in the desert. For seven days before this, during the consecration of Aharon and his sons, Moshe erected and dismantled the Mishkan. (*Rashi 39:29*)
 14. 40:19 - The curtain of goatskin.
 15. 40:20 - The *Luchot Habrit*.
 16. 40:21 - It served as a partition for the *aron*.
 17. 40:22 - On the northern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed*, outside the *parochet*.
 18. 40:24 - On the southern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed* opposite the *shulchan*.
 19. 40:29 - Moshe.
 20. 40:31 - On the eighth day of the consecration of the Mishkan.
-

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, *zt"l* • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO

© 1992 - 2019 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.
Editor's disclaimer: Ohrnet Magazine is not intended to be a source for halachic rulings. In any real and specific case one should consult a qualified halachic authority for a ruling.

LOVE of the LAND

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

Ezra the Sofer (Scribe) and Israel

When a Jew today thinks of making *aliya* to move up to the Land of Israel, or even to visit the Land, all he has to do is get on a plane and arrive in a matter of hours. But when Ezra the Scribe laid the “foundation for aliya” (*Ezra* 7:9), by leading a large number of Jews from Babylonian



exile to Eretz Yisrael, it took him four months until he arrived in Jerusalem.

This is how this historic foundation is described: “For Ezra prepared his heart to see the Torah of G-d, to do it and to teach the People of Israel the statutes and laws.” (*ibid.* 7:10)

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of Shmot concludes with this Parsha. After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the Mishkan, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels which had been fashioned. *Bnei Yisrael* bring everything to Moshe. He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to G-d’s specifications. Moshe blesses the people. G-d speaks to Moshe and tells him that the Mishkan should be set

up on the first day of the first month, i.e., Nissan. He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the Mishkan and its vessels.

Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that G-d’s glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, *Bnei Yisrael* would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אֲחֵינוּ כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

Fixed on Prayer

From: Robert

*Dear Rabbi,
Is there any significance in praying regularly in the same shul? What would be the criteria? And what about within the shul itself: Is there anything special about davening in the same place? If so, how is this regulated in practice?*

Dear Robert,

It is very important to try to *daven* in the same shul on a regular basis. Ideally, this would mean *davening* at the same shul for all prayers during the week, on Shabbat and the holidays. Some people have a very close connection to, and live nearby, well-established communities and can *daven* most of the prayers in the same shul. However, for most people nowadays this is simply not practical.

Rather, nowadays, most people can only try to consistently *daven* at a specific shul for specific prayers. For example, one might *daven* regularly at a shul near his house for the morning *shacharit* prayer, at a separate *minyan* for the afternoon *mincha* prayer during work, and then at a third shul for the evening *ma'ariv* prayer where he might have a daily Torah class. And this would apply to the weekday — but he might have yet another shul which he regularly attends for the Shabbat prayers.

In such a case, while he does not *daven* all his prayers regularly at the same shul, at least he is consistent regarding the various prayers throughout the day or week by praying at the same time and place with the same people. This consistency is very dear in G-d's eyes. For one, it demonstrates one's commitment to, and regard for, prayer. Secondly, it helps a person to focus and concentrate on prayer since he is less likely to be diverted by various distractions in an unfamiliar environment.

This emphasis on praying in a regular, fixed place is not only at a specific shul, but also at a particular place within the shul. Doing this is not just a matter of order and decorum. Rather, as mentioned above, when one becomes accustomed to the particular matrix of light, sounds, sights, smells and other stimuli of a specific place within the shul he will not be distracted by them and will thereby be liberated to pray more freely and

fluidly. And since each person affects his environs in a unique, individual way, praying in a set place within the constellation of the other regular prayer-goers similarly limits distractions he might otherwise experience around unfamiliar people.

The Talmudic Sages taught (Berachot 6b): One who fixes a set place for his prayer is deemed a disciple of Avraham Avinu. What's more, it is said of him, "How pious, how humble!" Why is such a person compared to Avraham? Because the Torah relates that Avraham prayed in a specific place: "And Avraham arose early in the morning to the place in which he had stood." And "standing" refers to prayer, as in the verse, "And Pinchas stood in prayer." This refers to when Avraham prayed to save the inhabitants of Sodom and Gemorra.

In addition, such a person is referred to as being pious and humble since it requires much piety and humility to pray consistently at the same time and place. A person's life and daily schedule can be erratic and change from day-to-day. He is likely to want to adjust his prayers around his varying schedule. But this would be putting his personal interests before G-d, where he selfishly puts his own endeavors before prayer. Thus, one who nevertheless gives precedence to prayer, and organizes his day accordingly, is truly pious and humble before G-d.

Because of the importance of praying in a regular shul and in a fixed place in the shul, one who is visiting for the first time should ask if there are set places, and, if so, where he can sit. On the other hand, one who finds a visitor in his place should either say nothing and be glad for the opportunity for hospitality, or politely explain the situation and arrange for the person to sit in an unreserved place. Under no circumstances should a person be rude and gruff about someone's sitting in his place. Anyway, the *close vicinity* of one's regular place is also considered "one's place," and he could pray nearby as a one-off solution. However, even if a person impolitely demands "his place," the one already there should still make the place available for the person who regularly *davens* there. In either case, perhaps this is another way in which striving to pray in a fixed place requires calling upon the piety and humility of Avraham Avinu.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

The True Blue

The English language is blessed with a plethora of words that represent the color blue and its various shades. We have blue, navy blue, cobalt, indigo, azure, and, of course, we also have aquamarine, turquoise, and cerulean, not to mention teal, zaffre, lovat, and mazarine. But what about in Hebrew? In the Torah portions dealing with the construction of the Tabernacle and its paraphernalia there are two words that seem to refer to the color “blue”: *sapir* and *techeilet*. However, this understanding is somewhat of a misnomer, because the Torah never actually refers to the color blue in itself, but rather uses these two terms to refer to specific items that are colored blue. In that spirit we will seek to uncover what these words actually mean in the Bible, as well as the origins of the Modern Hebrew word *kachol*, which has been adopted to mean “the color blue”.

We begin with *sapir*. The second stone of the second row of the Kohen Gadol’s *Choshen HaMishpat* is called *sapir* (Ex. 28:18, 39:11). Exodus 24:10 describes the *sapir* as resembling the clear-blue sky. Rabbeinu Bachaya writes that the *sapir* stone on the breastplate corresponds to the tribe of Yissachar because they toiled in Torah, and the Tablets of *sapir* that given from Above were the physical incarnation of the Torah. Indeed, tradition teaches that not only were the Tablets which Moshe brought down from Mount Sinai made of *sapir* rock, but so was Moshe’s staff.

The prophet Ezekiel also lambasts Hiram, the king of Tyre, for having attained the pinnacle of wisdom and for having been in the Garden of Eden where he had access to all sort of precious gems — but then allowing his excessive haughtiness to be the bane of his downfall. In that context, Ezekiel lists seven types of precious gems that were found in the Garden of Eden, and, among them, he mentions the *sapir* stone (Ezekiel 28:13).

So what exactly is *sapir*? From all the above, it is as clear as day that the word *sapir* refers to a blue precious gem. But exactly what gemstone is it? The prophet Ezekiel, when describing his vision of G-d’s Heavenly Chariot, mentions something that looked like a *sapir* stone and was in the form of a throne (Ezekiel 1:26; 10:1). The Targum translates *even sapir* into

Aramaic as *even tava* (“a good stone”), without further description. Gemologists tend to identify the *sapir* stone with the *lapis lazuli* or the sapphire — both of which are blue jewels.

Interestingly, in Rabbinic literature, the word *sapir* is generally displaced by a different, similar word, which can be spelled in various ways: *sampiryon*, *sanpiryon*, *sampiryonon*, or *sanpiryonon*. These words seem to be Aramaic variants of the Hebrew word *sapir*. However, etymologists admit that the ultimate source of this word is obscure. Some claim that it is a Sanskrit loanword. Others prefer to think of it as simply a conjugation of the Aramaic word *shappir* (“beautiful” or “good”), as specifically applied to a gem, and then adapted into Greek and reborrowed from there.

The Torah commands us to color the strings of the *tzitzit* with *techeilet* in order to remember all the *mitzvot* (Num. 15:38). What is *techeilet*? Rashi (there and Ex. 25:4) explains that the definition of *techeilet* is wool that is dyed with the blood of a *chilazon* and its color is *yarok* (which is a catch-all phrase that includes any color from orange to violet, with yellow, green, blue and indigo in-between). The Midrash explains that because the color of *techeilet* resembles the color of the *sapir* stone, looking at the *tzitzit* will remind a person of the entire Torah (because the Tablets were made of *sapir* rock).

What is the *chilazon*? Some claim it might be the *murex trunculus* (a marine snail found off the coast of the Holy Land) or the *sepia officinalis* (the common cuttlefish), although traditional sources assert that it is something that has been hidden from us — so we do not know exactly what it is.

The word *kachol* has its origins in Arabic, where it was originally pronounced *kohl*. Kohl — which was historically made from antimony — was commonly applied to the area around one’s eye for medicinal or cosmetic purposes. This silverish powder is mentioned multiple times in the Talmud, and was generally applied using a special applicator (the Talmudic expression *k’makchol b’shfoferet* literally means “like kohl in a[n applicator] tube”). Its hue varied widely and included many dark colors from blue to black. It certainly does not exclusively mean “blue”.

Continued on page eight



Letter & Spirit

Insights based on the writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

Sanctified Creativity

The full description of the construction of the Mishkan culminates with the following observation of Moshe: *Moshe saw the entire work and lo! They had accomplished it; as G-d had commanded, so had they done; and Moshe blessed them.*

Moshe noted that this work bore two distinct characteristics: *The people* had done the work, and they had done it *exactly as G-d had commanded*. These two characteristics will come to define all spiritual work: it must be “done” by the individual and it must be done strictly as G-d has commanded.

The people “did [the entire work]” — they had done every part of the work, from the smallest to largest component, and the work was an expression of their devotion, enthusiasm and dynamism. But every last detail was done “as G-d as commanded” — their zeal and enthusiasm had been subordinated completely to the Divine command. There had been no attempt on the part of any craftsman to bring his own ideas and his

own individuality to bear upon the work by making additions or omissions. Rather for each and every one of the craftsmen this was his greatest reward: to carry out G-d’s command and intention with scrupulous care and precision.

This “freedom in obedience and obedience in freedom” was the crowning characteristic of the craftsmen, and the nation as a whole, in the construction of the Mishkan. Precisely when one subordinates himself and his creative energies to the Will of G-d, does he realize the unsurpassed joy of a duty eagerly fulfilled. Upon this energetic devotion, carefully circumscribed by duty, the blessing of Moshe takes root. The text does not record the content of this blessing, but our Sages do: *May it be His will that the Shechina (Divine Presence) should rest in the work of your hands. And may the pleasantness of the L-rd our G-d be upon us.*

• Sources: Commentary, Shemot 39:43

Parsha Insights...continued from page one

the young Rabbi Ammon. Rabbi Neuberger said over the phone, “The person you just buried was the very same person who paid for all of your years in the yeshiva.”

Rabbi Ammon suddenly remembered that one of the sections of the Talmud that he had learned in Ner Yisrael was the *sugya* of *met mitzvah*.

“These are the accountings...”

In the liturgy of the Rosh Hashana service, we say that G-d “remembers all that is forgotten.” Rabbi Yisrael of Rhizhin said, “When you forget, G-d remembers, but when you remember, G-d forgets.”

This means that when you remind everyone of all the favors you did for them, G-d “forgets,” so to speak. He says, ‘Well, if you remember so well, I can forget about it!’ But if you “forget” — if you don’t remind people that they owe you because you did something good for them — then G-d remembers and takes care of all your accountings, down to the last shovel full of earth.

• Sources: heard from Rabbi Yoel Gold
www.inspireclips.com

<https://www.torahanytime.com/#/lectures?v=76720>

LISTEN NOW TO RABBI SINCLAIR’S PARSHA PODCASTS

at <http://ohr.edu/podcast>



BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

Kissing the Mezzuah

Q: My little daughter loves to kiss the mezuzah before going to sleep. She keeps on asking me to move the mezuzah lower down on the post so she can reach it. I always tell her that it must stay where it is. But when she asks me: "Why?" I don't know what to tell her, except "That's where it is supposed to be!" To be honest, I would also love to know why!

A: The Talmud equates the mitzvah of tefillin to mezuzah, which follows it in the first paragraph of the Shema. Just as tefillin are placed on the upper part of the body and the head, so too, the mezuzah should be affixed within the top third of the doorway.

Also, the mezuzah must be visually noticeable to the adults who pass by it, as a reminder to observe the mitzvot incumbent upon them.

The custom of kissing a mezuzah, precious as it may be, cannot push aside these halachic principles. R' Yonason Rosenblum, in his classic biography of Rav Yaakov Kaminitzky, records:

Reb Yaakov was particularly attuned to the dangers of exposing children to any kind of falsehood. He once vis-

ited the kindergarten of his son Binyamin's yeshiva and noticed that the mezuzah had been placed lower on the doorpost than halachically prescribed, so the children could reach it upon entering the classroom. The idea of getting children used to touching the mezuzah when they come into a room was a good one, said Reb Yaakov, but the means were wholly inappropriate. "Put the mezuzah on the upper third of the doorpost where it belongs," he said, "and let them use a stool to reach it. Otherwise they will grow up thinking a mezuzah can be put anywhere you wish. One does not raise children with falsehood."

Perhaps there is another lesson here as well: It's important to convey to our children — and to ourselves — that our job is to lift ourselves up to meet our spiritual challenges, even when it's "oh-so-tempting" to look for ways to simply lower the bar.

- Sources: *Agur B'ohalecha* 12:9:26, citing *Minchas Pitim*; *Yitzchak Yikarei* 6:9:24, citing *Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach*; R' Y. Rosenblum and R' N. Kamenetsky in *Reb Yaakov, Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2004, pp. 326-7*

*Got a mezuzah question or story? Email rabbi@ohrsandton.com or submit on my website mymezuzahstory.com
Free "Mezuzah Maven" book for every question or story submitted (when published in the near future!)*

What's in a Word...continued from page six

In fact, there are some instances in which the word *kachol* clearly means "black" and not "blue." For example, the Midrash in *Bamidbar Rabbah* discusses the colors of the different tribal flags and says that the color of Yissachar's flag was *kachol*, while stating that the color of Dan's flag was *sapir*. Similarly, the Talmud (*Bava Batra* 4a) declares that anybody who has not seen the Holy Temple as refurbished by King Herod the Great has not seen a truly beautiful building. According to one opinion in the Talmud, one of the materials with which Herod adorned the Holy Temple was *avnei kochla*. Rashi (there and *Succah* 51b) explains that this refers to marble that is *kachol* — seemingly blue marble (see also Nachmanides to Gen. 49:12). Yet, Frankie Snyder (an expert in tiles found at the Temple's site) wrote to me that archeologists have not found any blue marble (although they have found several other colors from Herod's Temple). This suggests that *kachol* does

not really mean "blue."

Professor Aharon Demsky (from Bar Ilan University) points to another poignant example of ancient usage of the word *kachol*. Archeologists found an ancient wine decanter near Hebron and on its side was a Hebrew inscription that read: "[Belonging] to Yachzeyahu, wine *kachol*." I may not be an expert in wine — though my father has been working for Herzog Wine Cellars in Oxnard, CA for close to twenty years — but I've never heard of blue wine. I've heard of blue cheese and blue-grass, but not blue wine. So this inscription most likely refers to *dark* wine, bolstering our assertion that the word *kachol* originally meant "black" or "dark" — not "blue".

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu