

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

An Amazing Hint

“...to kindle the light continually.” (27:20)

If you count all the lights lit over the eight days of Chanukah (without including the Shamash), the number is thirty-six. There is a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai about how to light the candles. Beit Hillel says you start with one light on the first night and go forward up to eight on the last night, and Beit Shammai says you start with a blaze of glory with eight candles, and work your way back down to one.

“...to kindle the light continually”

If you count backwards thirty-six Torah portions from the beginning of the Torah, you will get to Parshat Tetzaveh, this week’s portion, in which the lamp is referred to in the singular, “lamp,” like Beit Shammai who says to go backwards down to one.

But, if you count forward from the beginning of the Torah thirty-six Torah portions, you will come to Parshat Behaalotecha, where it says, *“When you kindle the lamps.”* The word lamps is in the plural, like Beit Hillel who says to go forward to thirty-six candles by the end of Chanukah.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem 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.

Hashem 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. Hashem commands that another Altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this Altar each day.

Q & A

Questions

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of the 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 *tzitz*? (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?

Answers

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, tzitz, 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 -
 - (a) The claims of the litigants
 - (b) The court's ruling
 - (c) 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 *tzitz* and the *mitznefet*.
14. 28:38 -
 - (a) It always atones, even when not being worn.
 - (b) 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*.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Bava Kama 114-119

On a High Note

“One should conclude Torah study with a ‘good word’.”

The concluding portion of Bava Kama teaches how to determine when taking another’s property is considered theft and when it is not. The underlying principle is that when the owner is *makpid* about his property (meaning that he is not agreeable to another person taking his property), it is considered theft if another person in fact takes it.

An example cited in a *beraita* is the case of unripe grains that were fit only for animals to eat. Rabbi Yehuda states that it is not theft if another person takes some of it unless the owner is *makpid* and not agreeable to any taking of it. Ravina adds that the city of Masa Machsia was a place where the owners were not agreeable to taking their animal grain without permission. Rashi explains that they were *makpid* regarding others taking their animal grain because Masa Machsia was a place of many animals, and much of this grain was needed by the animal owners since their animals required a “good pasture.”

The Maharsha points out that it would have been sufficient for Rashi to have written the word “pasture” without the word “good.” He suggests that Rashi intentionally included the word “good” (*tov*) as the final word of his commentary on Bava Kama in order to end on a “good note” – after nearly completing study of a Tractate that is virtually entirely dedicated to the negative topic of damages. Therefore, instead of ending his commentary with the word “pasture” (*mireh*), which in Hebrew would be stating the word “bad” (*ra’ah*) at the end, Rashi ends with the word “good,” a word that is correct in the context of the case in the *gemara*, and serves to “conclude Torah study with a ‘good word’.” In this case, the “good word” is literally the word “good,” whereas in other cases it may be an optimistic or consoling message. Other Tractates actually conclude with a positive message, but since Bava Kama is, in a sense, the first of the trilogy of Bava Kama, Bava Metzia, and Bava Batra, the Maharsha suggests that the *gemara* in Bava Kama does not conclude on a clear “good note” message, as is the case with other Tractates.

Although the *gemara* does not openly conclude on a good note or a good message, the Maharsha suggests that it actually concludes in a way that *hints* to a positive ending. He notes that the final four letters of the Tractate are *yod*, *heh*, *vav* and *alef*, which hint to three different names of our merciful Creator, Who is with us in exile. In addition, these four letters are considered “partner letters” for the Hebrew letters that spell “*Hatov* – the Good.” (We should add that the source for concluding with a good word seems to be the halacha to make sure to begin and end a section of a public Torah reading on a positive note, as is taught in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 138. Commentaries extend this idea beyond the public Torah reading to include *all* Torah study. I have even heard of a great Rabbi who would occasionally add some words that were not seemingly connected to Torah at the end of a lecture in order to fulfill this principle of concluding Torah study with a “good word.”

▪ *Bava Kama 119b*

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

BIRKAT HAMAZON (PART 14)

BLUEPRINT OF JEWISH DESTINY

“Anyone who recites Birkat HaMazon is blessed through it.”
(Zohar HaKadosh to Parshat Terumah)

Birkat HaMazon continues with a series of requests that all begin with the same phrase: “The Compassionate One.” The blessing says, “The Compassionate One, may He rule over us forever. The Compassionate One, may He be blessed in heaven and on earth. The Compassionate One, may He be praised throughout all the generations, may He be glorified through us forever to the ultimate ends, and be honored through us forever and for all eternity.”

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908), in his monumental work *Aruch Hashulchan*, explains that the rest of Birkat HaMazon consists of a series of short prayers appealing for Hashem’s mercy and compassion. It is interesting to note that although, in general, personal requests on Shabbat are not normally made (*Orach Chaim* 306), the accepted approach of most of the Halachic authorities is that all of the particular requests in this blessing are recited on Shabbat (*Darchei Moshe* 188). Despite the fact that there are authorities who rule that one can skip all of these requests throughout the week, Rabbi Yisroel Belsky (1938-2016) would ask why anyone would choose not to ask for all of the wonderful blessings that we are requesting!

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch points out that the expressions “the ultimate ends” and “for all eternity” appear to be repetitious. In English there is very little difference between the two. However, unlike English, there are no synonyms in Lashon HaKodesh, and as the wording is different, they must be referring to two different ideas. The phrase in Lashon HaKodesh for “ultimate ends” is “netzach netzachim.” Rabbi Hirsch explains that the word “netzach” originates from the same word as “nitzachon,” which means victory. He writes that the phrase alludes to the fact that, ultimately, Hashem’s blueprint for the world will occur, and all the hurdles that mankind has tried to put in its way will not stand in His way. In Lashon HaKodesh, “for all eternity” is “u’lolmei olamim.” The word “olam” is closely connected to the word “ne’elam,” which means hidden. Because, even though we may not see Him, Hashem is hidden within our world, waiting to be discovered. As Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro (1726-1791), from Koretz in the Ukraine, used to say, “We need faith to know that Hashem is concealed within the universe. But once we know that He is hidden there, He is no longer disguised.”

How immeasurably true! So often it is during the darkest moments that we come face to face with Hashem’s Presence. And, as His Presence becomes clearer and clearer, the darkness recedes, and the most beautiful and purest light floods into our lives

In the darkest years of the last century, two students of the illustrious Telz Yeshiva in Lithuania escaped the war-torn town, trying to stay ahead of the Nazis. Forced into hiding, these two scholars were crouched in an underground hole as they heard the pounding footsteps of the Nazi soldiers, searching for Jews, just above their heads. As the ominous sound of their boots filled the small space, Rabbi Chaim Stein (1913-2011), who later was to become the revered head of the Telz Yeshiva that had been replanted in Cleveland, Ohio, looked at his friend Rabbi Meir Zelig Mann and told him, “You are musical. Quickly compose a tune to the words of the prophet Yeshayah (52:7), “How pleasant are the footsteps of the herald upon the mountains [announcing peace, heralding good tidings, announcing salvation]!”

In their hate-filled, threatening footsteps, Rabbi Stein heard instead a verse describing the footsteps of the messenger of the redemption.

As Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen (1823-1900) from Lublin so poetically writes, “Just as darkness is sometimes hidden behind light, so too is light sometimes hidden behind darkness.”

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Wet Words

In this essay we discuss six different words that mean “wet” in Hebrew: *lach*, *ratuv*, *ra’anan*, *rutfash*, *tofeach* and *mefulam*. While on the surface all of these words seem to mean the same thing – which would make them synonyms – we will delve into how these words were used and consider how each of these words has its own unique implications. Along the way we will encounter some interesting etymological insights which will help us better appreciate the nuances expressed by these discrete terms.

The first term which we will discuss is *lach*, which refers to something wet as being “moist/liquid.” It appears three times in the Torah, and four times in the rest of the Bible. This term is first used when relating that Jacob would take the branches of a Libnah tree while they were still “wet” (*lach*), and peel white strips from them to place before his animals, so that they will give birth to offspring with white spots (Gen. 30:37). In a different context, the Bible (Num. 6:3) forbids a Nazirite from eating grapes, whether they are “wet” (*lachim*) or “dry.” Finally, when describing Moses’ vigor on the day he died (at the ripe age of 120), the Bible says “his eye had not weakened and his wetness [*leicho*] had not fled” (Deut. 34:7). The term *lach* is also used elsewhere in the Bible to refer to flora that had not dried up, but rather retained its moisture/wetness (Judges 16:8-7, Yechezkel 17:24, 21:3, 30:37). The word *lach* also appears numerous times in the Mishna (*Demai* 2:3, *Nedarim* 7:1, *Eduyot* 5:4, *Menachot* 9:2, *Bechorot* 6:3, *Mikvaot* 9:2, *Niddah* 4:3, 7:2).

The etymology of *lach* is a great case study for the differences between the various opinions about how Hebrew roots work. Menachem Ibn Saruk (920-970), the consummate biliteralist, writes in *Machberet Menachem* that the root of *lach* is the biliteral root LAMMED-CHET. This makes sense because the word *lach* itself is a two-letter word. However, the trilateralists are at a loss as to the etymological root of *lach*, with Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach (990-1050) in his *Sefer HaShorashim* writing that its root is either LAMMED-VAV-CHET or LAMMED-YOD-CHET, while Rabbi David Kimchi (1160-1235) in his *Sefer HaShorashim* more definitively writes that its root is LAMMED-VAV-CHET (as does Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Parchon in *Machberet He’Aruch*).

Fascinatingly, Rabbi Moshe Tedeschi Ashkenazi (1821-1898) suggests that *lach* is actually related to the Hebrew word *rach* (“soft”), via the interchangeability of REISH and LAMMED, as well as the interchangeability of KAF and CHET.

Another Hebrew word for “wet” is *ratuv*. In this case, all the classical lexicographers agree that its etymological root is the trilateral REISH-TET-BET. Words derived from that root only appear twice in the entire Bible – both in the Book of Job. In one case, it is said about a fertile plant, “it is wet [*ratov*] before the sun [comes to dry it out]” (Job 8:16). In the other case, it is said about a victim of theft whose clothing was taken away, “from the flow [of water that descends from the] mountains, he will become wet [because he has no clothes]” (Iyov 24:8), with the word for “he will become wet” being *yirtavu*. Besides for appearing twice in the Book of Iyov, *ratuv* is also the standard word in the Targumim for rendering the Hebrew *lach* into Aramaic. And, in fact,

Rashi (to Iyov 8:16, 24:8, *Sukkah* 10b), Ibn Ezra (to Iyov 8:16), and Radak (*Sefer HaShorashim*) define *ratuv* as *lach*.

In Mishnaic Hebrew, the word *ratuv* also means “wet” (*Tevol Yom* 3:6, see also *Uktzin* 2:2). But the Mishna more commonly uses a cognate of *ratuv* used in the form of the word *rotev* (“juices, fluids, sauce”). This word appears numerous times in the Mishna (*Pesachim* 7:2, *Nedarim* 7:6, *Zevachim* 3:4, *Chullin* 7:5, 9:1, *Taharot* 1:4, *Taharot* 3:1), and also appears elsewhere in rabbinic literature.

Rashi (to Iyov 24:8) and Ibn Ezra (to Iyov 8:16) note that the Targumim typically translate the Hebrew *lach* into *ratuv*. This suggests that perhaps the words *lach* and *ratuv* are not technically synonymous because *lach* is a native Hebrew word, while *ratuv* is borrowed from Aramaic or another Semitic language.

To be continued...

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS

Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, *Bava Kama* 17a)

THE EIGHT PRIESTLY GARMENTS

Mitzvos #99, #100, and #101 in *Sefer HaChinuch*

The Kohanim are commanded to wear eight majestic garments of the type worn by royalty at the time of the Giving of the Torah (*Ramban*). On a simple level of understanding, the garments serve the two functions of a uniform: they accord honor to the service, and they keep the Kohanim aware of their role and its responsibilities. Looking up, a Kohen would see his turban; he would constantly feel his thick sash with his arms. This would help him to keep his mind focused on serving Hashem in the same way *tefillin* help a person focus on Hashem (*Sefer HaChinuch*). Some of the garments, including the basic Tunic worn by all Kohanim, are made of pure white linen, which suggests purity (*Rav Hirsch*). Lightly dressed, and walking without shoes on cold marble stones, the Kohanim would serve Hashem with humble alacrity every single day, conveying our worship, gaining atonement, and bringing down blessings.

One of the central themes regarding the Kohanite garments is that each provides atonement for the Jewish people for a different sin, as set forth in *Zevachim* 88b. We shall elaborate on this theme, based on the Commentaries.

THE FOUR GARMENTS OF ALL KOHANIM

TUNIC [KESONES]

The Tunic atones for bloodshed. This is because the tunic clings to the flesh, and is the first garment to absorb spilled blood (*Maharal*).

SASH [AVNET]

The Kohanim wear a long Sash wrapped several times around the torso. It atones for sinful thoughts of the heart since it covers the heart (*Rashi*), or because it serves as a division between the heart and the private area (*Pnei Menachem, Tzav 5753*). In addition, the act of tightening garments with a sash or a girdle invokes alacrity (see *Iyov 38:3*), which causes one's thoughts to become focused on his actions and liberates the heart of sinful thoughts. Its length of 32 cubits (approx. 16m) alludes to *lev* (heart), which has that numerical value.

UNDERPANTS [MICHNASAYIM]

This garment, which covers nakedness, serves to atone for immoral acts that are called *gilui arayos*, “uncovering of nakedness.”

TURBAN [MITZNEFES]

The Turban atones for haughtiness since it is worn at the highest extremity, on the head. As does any head covering, the Turban instills fear of Heaven within its wearer (*Maharsha*). It is a coiled scarf that is 16 cubits in length, which alludes to the four four-faceted angels of the Divine Chariot. The Kohen Gadol would be constantly aware that Hashem is above Him, seeing what he sees and thinking what he thinks (*Malbim*). He would serve before Hashem with the appropriate reverence and dignity, and this virtuous type of pride atones for sinful pride.

THE FOUR ADDITIONAL GARMENTS OF THE KOHEN GADOL

APRON [EPHOD]

The Apron is the type customarily worn by idol-worshippers, and it provides atonement for this sin when it is worn for the service of Hashem. It is suspended by straps that go over the shoulders, where there are affixed two black-colored precious stones called *shoham*, and upon each is inscribed the six names of the twelve sons of Yaakov. When Yaakov was on his deathbed, his twelve sons affirmed their belief in Hashem's unity with the first verse of *Shema*, and Yaakov blessed Hashem with the words, *Baruch shem...* In commemoration of this meaningful event, there are 25 letters on each *shoham* stone, representing the 25 letters in the first verse of *Shema* and the 25 letters in the accompanying phrase, *Baruch shem kevod malchuso l'olam va'ed* (*Malbim*). Thus, the *shoham* stones represent the unity of Hashem and atone for idol worship, which is essentially polytheism.

The *shoham* stone also appears on the Breastplate, and on it is inscribed Yosef. The two *shoham* stones on the Apron straps represent Yosef's two sons, Menasheh and Ephraim, who were raised amongst Egyptians but did not learn from their sinful ways (*Pesikta D'Rabbi Kahana*, cited in *Torah Shleimah*). The *shoham* stones represent Egypt either because they can be excavated from the Nile river that runs through Egypt (*Radal*, citing *Bereishis 2:12*), or because the Egyptians were black-skinned (*Rabbi Meir Shapiro*), or because the Egyptians were “black” with sin and impurity. We may explain the significance of this allusion based on Rabbi Avigdor Miller's observation that the Jewish people never invented an idol, but rather copied the practices of the nations amongst whom they lived. Thus, whenever Hashem sees the *shoham* stones, He is reminded of the Jewish people's origin in idolatrous Egypt, where they were exposed to the idolatry of the Egyptians. He recalls that this sin does not represent the true essence of the Jewish people, and He atones for them. Moreover, He recalls those in every generation who, like Menasheh and Ephraim, keep their holiness intact despite their social surroundings.

BREASTPLATE [CHOSHEN]

The Kohen Gadol is commanded to wear an ornamental breastplate studded with twelve different precious stones, upon which is inscribed the names of the twelve tribes, the names of the Patriarchs, and “tribes of Yeshurun.” The Breastplate is set upon a folded piece of fabric, which contains a Divine name of 72 letters called the *Urim V’Tumim* (“illuminates and completes”) because it would illuminate various combinations of the 72 letters of the stones and would thereby communicate Hashem’s will to the Jewish people with finality (*Rashi to Yoma 73b*). It “judges” questions that are posed to it and decides them, and, correspondingly, it atones for the sin of twisting judgment.

The Torah commands us to attach the Breastplate to the Apron and never to separate them. We may suggest that the idea behind this mitzvah is that the glory of the twelve tribes symbolized by Breastplate must never be seen as value in its own right. Our glory is nothing more than an extension of Hashem’s glory, by virtue of our being His servants. Thus, the Breastplate must be attached to the Apron, which symbolizes our service to Hashem, as explained above.

CLOAK [ME’IL]

The Cloak atones for *lashon hara* (malicious gossip). There are 72 types of *tzaraas* (skin impurities) that a person might contract as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Correspondingly, 72 articles hang from the hem of the Cloak: 36 bells, and in between them, 36 balls of fabric that resemble pomegranates. A pomegranate alludes to the Torah since it is filled with numerous seeds, in the same way the Torah is filled with 613 mitzvos. The noise produced by the bells clanging against the pomegranates suggests that a person should use his mouth to speak only meritorious words – and not *lashon hara*. We may suggest that the clanging of a bell against the two adjacent pomegranates further alludes to this idea: the numerical value of *rimon* (pomegranate) is 306, and, therefore two pomegranates amount to 612, plus the bell.

The Cloak is made of pure blue wool, which suggests purity and Heavenliness. This intimates that one’s speech must be pure, in accordance with the holiness of the Jewish mouth. It is a mitzvah to not tear the “lip” (neckline) of the Cloak, which alludes to the idea that one should not “tear” the holiness of the lips with improper speech (*Malbim*).

HEADPLATE [TZITZ]

Upon the Headplate is inscribed *Kodesh LaHashem* (“sacred to Hashem”). It atones for brazenness, as brazenness in Scripture is called *azus metzach* (“a brazen brow”). By wearing the Headplate boldly on his brow in honor of Hashem, the Kohen Gadol atoned for the sinful boldness.

The atonement capacity of the eight garments teaches us a profound insight regarding interpersonal relationships: Even if most of the Jewish people are guilty of a particular sin, Hashem might nevertheless choose to ignore it by focusing on the garment of a single sacred servant in the *Beis HaMikdash*. So too, we should learn to focus on the good points that are verily present in every single Jew, and let those cover up his faults.

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