

## פ' שמות

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבְּאִיִּם (1:1) The last letters of the first five words in the book of Shemot spell out the word Tehillim (Psalms). This is a hint at the importance of saying Tehillim, especially at a time of trouble. Some time ago, a religious newspaper reported that when a great Rabbi was very seriously ill, people went to recite Tehillim, but it then added that it did not help since the Rabbi died. Immediately in the next edition of the paper a correspondent asked what sort of Apikorsus (heresy) is such a statement. Who said the Rabbi did not suffer less as a result of these Tehillim. Maybe it helped other Jews; maybe it helped those who recited the Tehillim. The power of prayer is immense.

וַיִּקֶם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ (1:8) The king did not want to know. It is convenient for non-Jews to forget the good Jews have done for them in the past. Had Israel not destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the United States would have had a much harder time to conquer Iraq, and maybe they would not have been able to do so. Was is the United States continually grateful to Israel, especially in the Obama era? One should read some of their decisions of the past.

וְעִיֵּץ מִצְרַיִם (1:10) Egypt got their "Minister of Propaganda" at work to stir up anti-Jewish feeling. However absurd the logic is, as we see in these verses in the Parashah, people will be influenced by it. Goebbels, Arafat and others were and are experts at this. Even, or maybe especially, in some countries, school children are indoctrinated in their lessons and by their textbooks that the Jews are evil and must be removed by one way or another. Even in democratic countries there is subtle, and not so subtle propaganda. The Eidot Hamizrach (Oriental Jews) who arrived in Eretz Yisrael in the 1950s were indoctrinated against Torah by the left-wingers then in power. Propaganda has the power to turn a Tzadik (righteous person) into a rosho (wicked person).

וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִעֲנֶנּוּ אֹתוֹ כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרֹץ (1:12) The more the persecution, the larger the family size became. The more non-Jews want to kill the Jews, the more the will of the Jews to increase in size. We should notice that the tribe of Levi, who were not enslaved, increased in numbers far less than the other tribes.

אִם בֶּן הוּא וְהִמְתֵּן אֹתוֹ (1:16) Pharaoh thought he would only have trouble with the men, so he planned to get them killed off! He considered the women would do as he wanted. But how wrong he was! It was because of "nashim tzidkaniot" (righteous women) that the Jews were redeemed from Egypt. The miracles of Chanukah and Purim were also as a result of women.

It is the leftists and the non-orthodox groups who say that women are run down in Judaism. This is completely untrue. They have a different function, just as the brain has a different function than the heart. If either is missing one cannot live. In fact, in the house, women have a greater responsibility than the men, for example. Kashrut of the kitchen (a Kosher kitchen), taharat hamishpachah (family purity), cleaning for Pesach. If the woman does not do her work properly, then the man will also be sinning.

וַיִּצַו פַּרְעֹה (1:22) A study of the wording of the decree of Pharaoh, shows that it did not limit the killing of boys to Jews only. The wording was general and universal! It would not look good to the world to specify Jews! This addition limiting it to Jews, was passed around by word of mouth. One often sees this in the world, with oral discrimination against Jews. For example, golf clubs which are open to everybody by invitation, but it "happens" that Jews are not invited to be members, or cases where only Jews are brought to trial for breaking a certain law.

וְתַחְמֶרָה בַּחֲמֵר וּבִזְפַת (2:3) Rashi explains that this was only on the outside, so that Moshe should not suffer from the smell. If one can ease the suffering of a person, one should do one's utmost to do so. Even something small can often help.

וְתִחַצֵּב אֶחָתָּהּ (2:4) Even though it was very dangerous to do so, Miryam stood watch over her baby brother. She could have easily been caught by a spy, or a moser (informer) who

unfortunately were to be found amongst the Jews. She was rewarded 80 years later by the Jews waiting for her for seven days when she had leprosy. One can learn from this that good deeds must never be forgotten even after eighty years.

וּתְרַד בַּת פֶּרְעֵה (2:5) She was one of the "Chasdei Umot Haolam" (the righteous among the nations) and it is especially praiseworthy since she was Pharaoh's daughter, and furthermore, that she brought him up in Pharaoh's palace, and that she paid for a nursing mother. We can compare this with non-Jews who hid and fed Jews in their houses during the Holocaust, despite the very great risks involved.

וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֶחָיו (2:11) Moshe did not say that life was glorious for him in the palace. He was concerned for his suffering brethren. One can contrast this with the inflated salaries of Members of the Knesset and Ministers, whilst millions have no money to even buy basic foods. Why were there once six deputy mayors in Jerusalem with inflated salaries or at least with expenses. One should give the money instead to the poor of Jerusalem, the second poorest city in Eretz Yisrael.

וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ (2:12) However, by the next day, people knew about it. Of course there were other people in the area, but they did not act like men; they just stood by and did nothing. As it says in Pirkei Avot, "In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man."

וַיִּדְרֹשׁ אֶת הַמִּצְרִי (2:12) A Jew is being killed. Don't wait, but act immediately If you start telephoning the police, he will be dead by the time they arrive!

כַּאֲשֶׁר הִרְגָת אֶת הַמִּצְרִי (2:14) Not only did no-one else act to save the Jew from the Egyptian, there were even mosrim to report Moshe to the authorities. Even though Moshe acted to save a Jew from an Egyptian murderer, Pharaoh wanted to kill Moshe for this; it was considered that an Egyptian life was more valuable than that of a Jew, something which in some countries is still found today.

לְמָה זֶה עֹזְבְתָן אֶת הָאִישׁ (2:20) Yitro told off his daughters, saying to them that here is a man who helps you and you don't even invite him into your house to eat something. One should always recognise a good deed and reciprocate.

וּמִשָּׁה הָיָה רַעִי (3:1) Moshe ran after a lamb who was thirsty. If a person can have compassion, even for an animal, that person is sure to be a good leader of a nation.

וְהַסְנֵה אֵינְנוּ אֹכְלֵי (3:2) This can be compared to the Jewish people. In every generation people arise to annihilate them, but they always survive. European Jewry and the Torah centres in Europe were destroyed by the Nazis and the Communists, but they have been rebuilt in Eretz Yisrael. There are now more Yeshivot (Rabbinical Colleges) and Yeshivah students in Eretz Yisrael than there were in all of Europe before the Second World War.

לֶךְ וְאִסַּפְתָּ אֶת זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (3:16) The Torah is not referring to the residents of the "Jewish Old Age Home in Egypt," but to the Torah students. As can be seen in Parashat Vayigash, Yehudah first went down to Egypt to establish a Torah framework. By this time there were numerous Torah students. Even when one starts on a small scale, the numbers will grow.

וְהָןּ לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ לִי (4:1) Moshe was concerned that if the Jewish people would not have faith in him, what could one expect from Pharaoh. If today the Jews don't want to accept that Eretz Yisrael is ours, what can one expect from the non-Jews?!

כִּי בִיד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם (6:1) From its beginning to its end, this Parashah retrogresses from Cherut (freedom) to the lowest level of Avdut (slavery). In contrast, in this last verse one can see the promise of redemption. From this one can learn, that however bad the situation can reach, there will always be redemption in the end.

## פ' וארא

ווארא אל אברהם (6:3) In the course of the previous Parashah the conditions of the Jews went down and down until it had reached an unprecedented low point. Only in the last verse of the Parashah was there the promise of a better future.

This Parashah begins by G-d reminding Moshe of his promises to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov to give them Eretz Yisrael. However bad a situation may seem to the Jews, they get confidence from the promises that G-d has made to give them Eretz Yisrael. Whatever the world, and worse still, the Israeli "leaders" are saying and planning to do, one must never forget this promise.

והוצאתי ... והצלתי ... וגאלתי ... ולקחתני (6:6-7) These are the famous four expressions of redemption which G-d promised the Jewish people. This is one of the reasons why one drinks four cups of wine on the Seder night. However, the Torah then continues with another expression, "v'hayvayti" (and I will bring you) and the question is asked whether this is a fifth expression of redemption. Indeed, there is an unresolved discussion in the Talmud whether one needs to drink a fifth cup of wine at the Seder. Some even have the custom to do so.

The reason may be that there is a difference between the first four expressions and the fifth one. The first four deal with leaving the bondage of Egypt. Everyone wanted that. The fifth one concerns coming to live in Eretz Yisrael. Sadly, everyone does not want that. Of the millions of Jews who left Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, how many went to Eretz Yisrael, and on the other hand, how many went to America and other countries? There were even Jews who were prepared to accept Uganda or Argentina or Biro Bijan as the Jewish homeland.

ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה (6:8) One should note the word "morashah" and not "yerushah." We begin by teaching almost babies the verse "Torah tziva lanu Moshe morashah..." (Moshe commanded us a law an inheritance). "Morashah" includes living in Eretz Yisrael according to the laws of the Torah. It is not necessary to elaborate on the situation in Eretz Yisrael on this matter. Look at the Knesset, look at the government, look at the Secular Courts. There were those who preferred to have an anti-Torah party in the Government rather than the religious parties. There are areas where there are those who have opened pork butcher shops, or opened their shops on Shabbat, and so on.

הן בני ישראל לא שמעו אלי (6:12) If *the Jews* don't want to accept their rights to Eretz Yisrael, what can one expect from the non-Jews? Should they be greater tzadikim (righteous people) than the Jews?! In a meeting which took place between the Etzel and UNSCOP, Begin asked that they recommend that the Jews be given all Eretz Yisrael Their reply was, that if the "Jewish Agency" is prepared to accept partition, can we, as non-Jews, request more?

אלה ראשי בית אבתם (6:14) But the Torah only gives the genealogies of Reuven, Shimon and Levi. (This is the only instance when this occurs in the Torah.) One then sees that only the tribe of Levi is relevant here. So why also bring down Reuven and Shimon? Maybe the Torah wants to stress that although Moshe and Aharon and also the Kohanim and Leviim came from the tribe of Levi, Reuven and Shimon were older brothers and must accordingly be given respect. The Chazon Ish who was much greater in Torah knowledge than his elder brother, would grant him the respect due to an elder brother.

ובני קרה (6:24) The Torah gives the genealogies of both the good and bad people who came from the tribe of Levi. Even in the best of families, sadly some of the descendants do not always go in the paths of their ancestors.

הוא אהרן ומשה (6:26) However, in the next verse, it says "hu Moshe v'Aharon." This shows that neither was jealous of the other. They did not mind which order their names were mentioned. This can be contrasted with a "kenes" (convention) of Rabbis which took place





בא אל פרעה (10:1) The previous Parashah contains the first seven plagues. In this Parashah, the last three are given. As with the previous Parashah, Moshe again gives a warning to Pharaoh before bringing on the plague of locusts. The language found in the previous Parashah "Vayechazak Pharaoh" (and Pharaoh hardened his heart) has now completely become "Vayechazek HaShem" (and G-d hardened Pharaoh's heart). By this stage, Pharaoh has completely lost control of himself.

וכסה את עין הארץ (10:5) One might well ask what harm can a small locust do?! In fact this is a plague which can and has even occurred today. It happened- in Eretz Yisrael during the First World War when there was a plague of locusts. Millions upon millions came over in swarms; it looked like a cloud in the sky, as it is written in this verse. Aerial photographs were taken of the vegetation before they came and immediately after of the devastation. It needs to be seen to be believed!

בנערנו ובזקנינו נלך (10:9) Moshe attached great importance to the old and to the young. From the old we can learn a lot from their great wisdom and experience. The young are our next generation and keepers of the future of the Torah. The young were the guarantors accepted by G-d when he gave the Torah. One can contrast this with the secular Zionist leaders in the 1930s and 1940s who did not want old Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

ויהי חשך על ארץ מצרים (10:21) It was during this plague that the eighty percent of Jews who did not want to go to Eretz Yisrael died. A number of things can be learned from this: (i) it occurred during the plague of darkness in order that the Egyptians would not see the punishment of the Jews. "Don't wash your dirty linen in public." The left today can learn from this! (ii) even though eighty per cent of the Jews did not want to go to Eretz Yisrael, one does not say "democracy" and one must follow the majority. Instead, one must follow the will of G-d, even if everyone disagrees. Nothing is above the Torah; not the Knesset nor the Courts, even if they have a majority, or even by a unanimous decision.

לא ראו איש את אחיו (10:23) One can learn from this not to be "blind" to the sufferings of one's neighbours. Should we know that they need our help, don't wait until they ask, but go as soon as possible to assist them. Establish or help or contribute to gemachim (free loan organisations). Who almost always runs them? Jews who are shomrei mitzvot (religious Jews) and they help everybody, not only those who are religious Jews.

ולכל בני ישראל היה אור במושבתם (10:23) Whilst some people in the world sometimes live with all manner of "shtuyot," (nonsenses), the Jewish people should have "ohr b'moshvotam" (spiritual light in their houses), namely the Torah and Mitzvot.

אל תספ ראות פני (10:28) Pharaoh's words turned out to be true but not in the way he expected them to be. In a similar vein, a week before the Six Day War, the Jordanians were saying that the next week they would be in Tel-Aviv, having conquered the State of Israel. They were, but not the way they expected it. One should be careful how one talks; it may turn out quite differently from what one had intended!

כלי כסף וכלי זהב (11:2) This was not genaivah (theft). What about the payment for all the slave labour the Jews had done for the Egyptians? Today, it is finally being recognised that one must pay the Jews of Europe for all the slave labour they performed during the Second World War under the Nazis.

כחצת הלילה (11:4) Why say *about* midnight when it was going to happen *exactly* at midnight, as it says later in this Parashah "vayehi *bachatzi* halailah" (and it happened *at midnight*). The Gemara explains that it is very difficult to determine (without the accurate clocks of today!) exactly when it is midnight. Pharaoh's "wise men" could easily have miscalculated and as a result say that Moshe was not telling the truth. Therefore, avoid this problem and say from the outset "about midnight." This is an important lesson and

advice for today!

עַד בְּכֹרֵי הַשְּׂפָחָה אֲשֶׁר אַחַר הַרְחִים (11:5) One can understand the leaders being punished but why the lowest of people. Often when there is a pogrom against the Jews, even the people who do not actually physically take part in the pogrom, go and watch and enjoy seeing the Jews being killed. Can one call such people "innocent bystanders"? This is especially a tradition in Moslem countries where the masses come and cheer when people are being executed.

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה (12:2) As can be seen in Parashat Bereshit, the Torah should really begin here, but as Rashi explains, all the chapters up to here are to show that G-d created the world and gave Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish people. But from the verse which he brings to support this, one can see that first and foremost, the Jewish people must recognise this fact!

בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה (12:3) One might well ask why keep this lamb for four days? Just bring it to their houses on the fourteenth of the month. The reason was the lamb was the idol of the Egyptians, and the Jews would tell them the reason that they intended using the lamb for, and they did not fear the consequences. This was faith in G-d. The lesson is don't fear the non-Jews when keeping Mitzvot.

וְאִם יִמְעַט הַבַּיִת (12:4) People living alone would join with their neighbours. One can learn from this that if one lives alone, on Shabbat join up to eat with other people living under similar conditions, and hence increase one's oneg Shabbat (Sabbath joy).

וְלִקְחוּ מִן הַדָּם (12:7) One should proudly show that one is a Jew in front of the non-Jews. One must not hide one's Yiddishkeit (Jewish religious observances) as, sadly, many Jews in the Diaspora do.

כִּי אִם צְלִי אֵשׁ (12:9) Don't dilute the Torah by "boiling it with water." This is what the non-orthodox groups did and look at the state that they have now arrived at. Some of their clerics will even participate with a Christian cleric in "marriages" between Jews and non-Jews, and "solemnize unions" between people of the same sex.

כִּי יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם בְּנִיכֶם (12:26) The verse does not say "yishalu" (ask) but "yomru" (say). This is the question at the Pesach Seder of the rosho (wicked son). He *tells* you what to do; he doesn't *ask*.

וּבְרַכְתֶּם גַּם אֹתִי (12:32) Pharaoh asked Moshe to bless him and for this he was rewarded. One can thus see that every good deed, even of a complete rosha, is credited to him.

וְגַם עָרַב רַב עִלָּה אֹתָם (12:38) Even though eighty per cent of the Jews had already died during the plague of darkness, to this very day, there are always people who join a group just to make trouble.

כָּל בֶּן נֹכֵר לֹא יֹאכַל בּוֹ (12:43) Onkelus translates this as a Jew who has renounced his faith. But here he apparently wants to keep a Mitzvah of eating the Korban Pesach (Pesach lamb sacrifice). Why then do we prevent him from doing so? Unlike Yom Kippur, when one welcomes every Jew to Shul, where he shows by his coming that he wants to do teshuvah (repentance), in this case, his intention is to enjoy a tasty morsel of lamb, and for this we do not allow him.

תּוֹרָה אַחַת יִהְיֶה (12:49) There must be one Torah for everybody. One can learn from this that a country must not bring one person to trial for an offence, whilst closing its eyes to someone else committing the same offence. Sadly, this is something one sees too often.

וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאוֹת (13:9) The Mitzvah of Tephillin is mentioned twice towards the end of this Parashah. The hand Tephillin is placed specifically on the *weak* arm and the head Tephillin on the brain. One lesson which can be learned from this, is that the brain must be our strong organ and our hand our weak one. The brain must control the hand and not the reverse.

## פ' בשלה

ויהי בשלה פרעה (13:17) There is a "joke" which translates the first verse of this Parashah as follows. Pharaoh sent all the Jews but not Nachum. Why not Nachum? because he had derech erez for the Plishtim. Why? Because he felt close to them. Unfortunately, this is not such a joke today. There are Jews who feel closer to the non-Jews than to the Jews. For example, they are quite happy to give Israel's scarce water supplies to their enemies, whilst the Israeli farmers are crying out for water.

והמשים עלו בני ישראל (13:18) From this word "chamushim" one learns that only one fifth of the Jews left Egypt. The other four-fifths wanted to remain, maintaining that "Egypt is our homeland." We already saw a hint of this at the end of Parashat Vayigash - "vayechazu va," namely they invested in real estate in Egypt even though they were only supposed to be there as a temporary measure because of the famine. This sadly has repeated itself throughout the generations. "Spain is our Homeland.... Germany is our Homeland."

ויקה משה את עצמות יוסף עמו (13:19) One can well ask why they did not bury Yosef in Eretz Yisrael as soon as he died, as in the case of Yaacov. Having Yosef's bones with them in Egypt gave the Jews hope and faith that one day they would leave Egypt and come to Eretz Yisrael. A tangible object is often far better than just words.

וה' הלך לפניו (13:21) From this verse we see that G-d is always with the Jewish people, not only in times of good, but also in times of darkness, as is written "v'amud ha'aish lailah" (by night in a pillar of fire). This was G-d's promise to Yaacov when they went down to Egypt that he would always be with the Jewish people. The next verse continues with the same theme "lo yamish heanan" (a pillar of cloud by day). However bad the political or financial future of Eretz Yisrael seems to be, one must always remember this.

ויאמרו מה זאת עשינו (14:5) The Egyptians quickly forgot the plagues, even-the most severe one of the killing of their firstborn. In today's scene, Jews are being murdered and blown up time after time, which hopefully no-one forgets. Why then does the Government repeatedly go and release thousands of terrorists who then go and kill more Jews, and why do they promise the enemy their own "Palestinian" state within Eretz Yisrael, and why do they destroy "illegal" Jewish settlement and even destroy those which are not "illegal," such as Gush Katif, whilst at the same time close their eyes to the thousands upon thousands of illegal Arab building.

ויאסר את רכבו (14:6) Rashi explains that Pharaoh did this action himself He was so keen to chase after the Jews, that he did not wait for his servants to do this job for him. Anti-Semites don't wait to act against the Jews. They act immediately, however inconvenient it might be for them.

המבלי אין קברים במצרים (14:11) Suddenly the Jews forgot all the suffering that had in Egypt. All the "black" of Egypt turned to "white." One often see this with Jews who have come on Aliyah. A problem arises with their absorption, or they came across bureaucracy and they immediately cry out "Why didn't we stay in the Diaspora?!" Suddenly they forget the difficulties of the Diaspora. The anti-Semitism, the difficulties in keeping kashrut, the observance of Shabbat - (in the Diaspora the rest-day is not on Shabbat and even if places of work are closed on Saturday, there is Friday afternoon in the winter months), finding Shuls, mikvas (ritual baths), and suitable places for the Jewish education for their children. All these problems are suddenly forgotten!

התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' (14:13) When everything seems black, one must look for the light at the end of the tunnel.

ויבאו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה (14:22) But this was only after Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped into the water. One learns from this that if we want help from G-d, one must show our faith in him. If every minute, we capitulate to America, Europe, UN, and the world, with

regard to Eretz Yisrael, we will be the losers. Instead of stopping settlement in Yehudah and Shomron, or worse still demolishing Jewish settlements, we must make a mass settlement. Remember! G-d is much stronger than all the world's nations put together.

ובמשה עבדו (14:31) The Jews had faith in G-d *and his servant Moshe*. Today the gedolei hador (greatest Rabbis of the generation) are the servants of G-d and we must listen to what they say.

אז ישיר משה (15:1) When the Jews saw their deliverance from the Egyptians, they showed their gratitude to G-d with "Shirat Hayam" (the song of Moshe). Sadly people rarely write letters of thanks for good service. Letters of complaint - yes; letters of thanks - no!

ותקה מרים הנביאה (15:20) There was separate dancing and singing by the women. A sign of tzniyut (modesty) which is often lacking today.

וילכו שלשת ימים במדבר ולא מצאו מים (15:22) Water is Torah and one must not go three days without Torah. This is the source for leining (reading the Torah) on Mondays and Thursdays. Continuity in learning Torah is crucial. Cutting off Torah is like cutting off the water supply.

וימתקו המים ... חק ומשפט (15:25) "Chok umishpat" (statute and an ordinance) and "vayimtaku" that which is sweet, is a hint to Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is not "kef" (fun) but it is sweet. Days of Repentance are like bitter medicine and are thus not "kef" but they are sweet in the sense that we know we will be forgiven if we repent, and we will then be able to start a clean sheet. This is similar to an operation on one's body; it is not pleasant but after that one is healed.

חק ומשפט (15:25) At Marah the Jews received a few sample laws before receiving the whole Torah at Sinai. One can learn from this that when one wants to make a person a ba'al teshuvah (a Jew returning to observing the Torah), not to give him everything in one go. One should introduce him to a few dinim (Jewish laws) and then gradually add to this.

הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים (16:4) Everyone had the quantity of manna he needed, and it tasted what one desired. One did not have to queue up in a supermarket each day to pay for it, since it was free! There were just a few laws connected with its collection, but still there were people who broke these laws. However much and however easy one makes things for people, there are always some who are not appreciative and complain and break the rules. The "ayrev rav" (group who created problems). Two of them, namely, Datan and Aviram, even tried to put out Manna early on Shabbat morning in order to cause trouble by "proving" that Moshe was wrong. However, the birds ate it up! Sadly, every generation has its "ayrev rav."

קה צנצנת אהת (16:33) Moshe told Aharon to keep a sample of this manna to show future generations. This is far better than just relating it. People won't then be able to say that it's a "buba meisa" (fairy tale!). Today we remember the manna every Shabbat by the "lechem mishnah" (two loaves of bread put on the table on Shabbat) and the covering over the challot, which symbolises the layer of dew over the manna.

ויבא עמלק (17:8) The difference between Amalek and other enemies of Israel was that Amalek made a cowardly attack on the Jews from the rear; they did not observe the laws of war and hence one shows no mercy on Amalek. Sadly every generation has its Amalek.

כאשר ירים משה ידו (17:11) By his actions, Moshe gave encouragement to the Jews. A leader must give encouragement to his people and not do the opposite by caving in on every demand the world might make on him. A leader who cannot stand up to pressure is no leader.

ויקחו אבן (17:12) One might well ask, why not a pillow rather than a stone, since Moshe was then an old man? The answer is that when the Jewish people have troubles, their leaders must participate in the trouble. One can contrast this with a situation when there is no money for the poor, yet there is ample money to pay inflated salaries and extras to Ministers, members of the Knesset and numerous deputy mayors.



## פ' יתרו

וישמע יתרו (18:1) Yitro was born a non-Jew but when he saw all the wonderous acts of G-d and the "mesirat nefesh" (self-sacrifice) of the Jewish people and the war with Amalek, he decided to convert. This was a case of a *genuine* convert. Today we unfortunately see "converts" who have no intention of keeping Torah and Mitzvot (commandments). They "convert" for social and not religious reasons. Regrettably there are some Rabbis who go through the motions of conversion with these people. It has gone so far that a non-orthodox movement specially built a mikvah (ritual bath) in their headquarters mainly for their "converts." It must be stressed that all these types of "conversions" are completely invalid.

יתרו (18:1) He was one of the three advisers to Pharaoh; the other two were Iyov and Bilam. When Pharaoh consulted with these advisers whether to kill the Jewish boys, Yitro ran away. Iyov was silent and because of his silence was punished with afflictions. Bilam agreed with Pharaoh. One can learn from this that one must not even listen to a rosho (wicked person) since by doing so he will think that he has something worthwhile to say, and, as a general rule, one should never sit with them on the same platform or meeting.

חתן משה (18:1) Now that Moshe was famous, Yitro was referred to as his father-in-law. Sometimes one sees written on Siddurim (prayer books) donated to a Shul, "Donated by Avraham Cohen in memory of his parents." As if their parents are afterthoughts. It is far more respectable to write, "Donated in memory of Yitzchak and Sarah Cohen by their son." One must be careful in the way one refers to people. (It is much better still to donate anonymously without writing who donated the various items.)

אהר שלוהיה (18:2) Moshe did not, when returning to Egypt, take his wife and children with him. There were already enough Jews suffering in Egypt. One can compare this with Jews living in Eretz Yisrael moving to the Diaspora, even to countries where there is rife anti-Semitism. This sadly happens. Sometimes they learn their lesson too late, or worse still after members of their families have already been murdered there.

ויחד יתרו (18:9) Even though halachically (according to Jewish law) when a person converts to Judaism, he is a "new creature" and is therefore not related in any way to his previous family, he is human and as such still has feeling for them. He is even very likely to visit them. Thus when Yitro heard of the sufferings of the Egyptians, it made him feel uncomfortable.

ויהי ממחרת (18:13) This was the day after Yom Kippur, when although Moshe was busy building his Sukkah and selecting his Arba'at Haminim, he still found time for his public duties. Even on a busy day, one must still make time to daven (pray) and to learn Torah; there are no "holidays" from these activities.

לשפט את העם (18:13) Before even writing about kabbalat haTorah (receiving the Torah), the Torah writes about judges and courts. This subject is of such great importance that it is one of the seven Noachide laws which applies both to Jews and to non-Jews.

כי יהיה להם דבר בא אלי (18:16) Why does it not read "baou" (in the plural)? The answer is that it is not the people who come before the judge, it is the case that comes before him. The actual people, whether they are great or small, whether rich or poor, are irrelevant. The Rabbi of Bialystok would cover his eyes in order not to see the people coming before him when he judged a case.

כי כבד ממך הדבר (18:18) A judge must not take upon himself too many cases at the same time. He cannot possibly judge them all properly if he does so. He certainly at the same time should not be giving lectures and writing books.

ואתה תחזה מכל העם (18:21) The Torah brings here the criteria for choosing judges. One of them "sonei batzah" - hates money. A judge who fights for an increase in salary is not a good judge.

The Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) Choshen Mishpat, writes that in order to ensure that there is *absolute equality* between the two sides, lists very strict regulations for judging a case. In addition, it is not enough just to know the relevant dinim (laws), one must be *experienced* in court procedure. In non-Jewish courts the judge must have been a lawyer for a number of years before being appointed a judge. If one side can turn the judge "around their finger" what sort of judgment can it be?!

הדבר הקשה יביאון אל משה (18:26) In Jewish law, this does not refer to a case involving a large amount of money., The law clearly states, "Din laprutah, din lamayah" (the law for a small amount of money is the same as for a large amount); Jewish law deals with the complexity of the case and not the amount involved. In Jewish law there are no such things as a small claims' courts.

באו מדבר סיני (19:1) Mount Sinai was chosen as the mountain on which to give the Torah, because it was a small mountain. One can learn the lesson of modesty and humbleness from this.

The Torah was given in the Diaspora, so that the non-Jews cannot turn around and say that they had no opportunity to receive it. Indeed, it was first offered to them, but they refused it since it contains such Mitzvot as not killing or nor stealing which they did not observe and did not want to observe in the future.

ויהן שם ישראל (19:2) It does not say "vayachanu" (in the plural). When the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai they were united, and hence the singular. When the Jewish people are fragmented, as today in Eretz Yisrael, there are all the political and financial troubles. Sadly there is enough in-fighting not to need external enemies!

כה תאמר לבית יעקב (19:3) One should note that first of all the *women* are mentioned. The first teacher of a child is his mother. In the Pesach Haggadah is written in the answer for the child who does not know even how to ask "At petach lo" - you in the *feminine* are the one who begins to teach your child.

וירד משה מן ההר אל העם (19:14) The *first* thing that Moshe did when he went down from Mount Sinai was to go to the people. He did not say that he had to deal with his own private affairs first. This is the sign of a genuine leader. First the people, and only then oneself.

את כל הדברים האלה (20:1) The Ten Commandments never have and may not form part of our prayers. People may then think that this is the whole Torah or these ten commandments are more important than other laws in the Torah. A Jew needs to remember that he has 613 laws in the Torah, all of equal importance.

א-לקיך (20:2) The first two commandments were given in the first person - they heard them from the voice of G-d. But they continue in the third person - the voice of Moshe. It was too much for the people to continue hearing the voice of G-d, and so Moshe continued. One can learn from this, that if something is too hard for a person, one should try and find a way to make it easier.

זכור את יום השבת (20:8) However, in Parashat Vaetchanan it is written "Shamor" which means abstain from work on Shabbat. One must not look on Shabbat as just don't don't don't. One must enjoy Shabbat, namely "oneg Shabbat" (enjoyment on Shabbat), and thus "zachor" which was said by G-d simultaneously with "shamor" means enjoy Shabbat, namely Kiddush, three tasty meals, zemirot (Sabbath songs) and so on.

כבד את אביך ואת אמך (20:12) This is a very difficult commandment to keep and the reward is the promise of a long life. There is also in the Torah, the Mitzvah of "Shiluach hakan" (sending away the mother bird) which is a very easy Mitzvah to keep. Yet the reward is the same as for honour to parents. From this one can learn that one must treat all mitzvot equally. We don't know the reward for their observance.

ולא תעלה במעלה (20:23) One can learn from this that even a person reaching a high position must not show off. He must avoid "ga'avah" (being proud).

## פ' משפטים

ואלה המשפטים (21:1) One should note that the Torah says “v’aileh” not just "aileh," since this is a continuation of what was written in Parashat Yitro. Moshe did not just receive the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. He received the *entire* Torah. To just have received the Ten Commandments, it would have been sufficient to have been on Mount Sinai for a few hours. He was there for 40 days and 40 nights; he was learning the *entire* Written and Oral law. The laws in this Parashah are sandwiched between Moshe on Mount Sinai which is written in Parashat Yitro, and again at the end of this Parashah to stress the fact that *all* laws come from Sinai.

כי תקנה עבד עברי (21:2) A Jew who had stolen something and couldn't repay it, had to work to earn the money to repay the owner. He could not plead that he no longer had the money. If one does wrong, one must make amends to correct what one has done. Before one can get forgiveness for a sin between man and man, one must put right the wrong one has done to his fellow man.

ואשר לא צדה (21:13) It can occur in everyday life that a person may kill somebody without intention. The Torah makes provision for this and established "cities of refuge" where he can go to and there be judged. Today there are no “cities of refuge” and criminal cases like this are judged in a secular court. Examples are the deaths at the Versailles Hall, the Maccabiah bridge, and the Arad festival. But one must be consistent. What about those responsible for the "Oslo Accords" and the giving of guns to the Arabs which then were used to kill Jews. Are these people exempt from judgment?!

מעם מזבחי תקחנו למות (21:14) There is no "sanctuary" in Jewish law. A person cannot even flee to the Temple Mount and expect to be safe. If he has done wrong, he will be punished for it. One can contrast the Church where criminals could run there and then be free from receiving their just punishment.

ורפא ירפא (21:19) One might well ask why a surgeon is allowed to cut a person open with a knife. If another person sticks a knife into someone, he would quite rightly be charged with grievous bodily harm. On the other hand, the surgeon has, from this verse, received permission from the Torah to do so.

One can also learn from this verse that when one is ill, one is obliged to receive medical treatment. Prayers for the sick are of course important, but they do not exempt a person from the obligation to receive medical treatment. In contrast, a group known as "Christian Scientists" refuse medical treatment.

עין תחת עין (21:24) Primitive nations would then take out the eye of the person who caused a similar injury to another person. This is not so in Jewish law. If one injures a person, one is obligated to compensate him financially for the damage caused, plus compensation for the pain caused, medical expenses, loss of earnings and the shame caused.

וכי יכה איש את עין עבדו (21:26) In Jewish law, even a slave is a human being and must be treated as such. Injury to him by his master would grant him immediate freedom. One can contrast this with the way the Nazis, Soviets or Japs treated their "slave workers." It took sixty years for people to realise this!

וכי יגה שור (21:28) One must take responsibility for one's animal's actions. How often does one see dogs running around frightening children and other people, whilst their owners are elsewhere? One can add to this, likewise for one's car or other machines in one's possession.

וכי יפתח איש בור (21:33) If one is a worker repairing water pipes or sewage pipes which are under the ground and one has to dig a pit, one is required to put a barrier around it. It is the workers responsibility to do so and not leave dangerous things in a public place. Sadly, one often sees, or does not see until it is too late, open ditches or unattended dangerous machines in a public place. Likewise, one must by Torah law, build a parapet on a roof which is used by people. There is even a berachah (blessing) which one makes on

doing this.

אם במחתרת ימצא הגנב (22:1) Should a person break into your house during the night and you do not know his intentions; maybe he wants to kill you. In Jewish law you may, under certain conditions, kill him. From this we learn the principle, "Habo l'horgecha, hashkem l'horgo" (anyone who comes to kill you, kill him first).

כי תצא אש (22:5) When one lights a fire in a public place, and the wind then springs up, and as a result the fire causes damage, one cannot claim that it was not his fault. Before one lights such a fire, one must realise the potential damage it might cause. People have even been burnt to death as a result of this.

כי יתן איש אל רעהו כסף או כלים לשמר (22:6) One should remember that if one asks someone to look after some possession of yours, he is doing you a favour, and not the reverse. Should something therefore happen to the object, unless he is grossly careless, you cannot blame him for any damage or loss. On the other hand, if one borrows something from a person, he is doing you the favour, and you therefore have a greater responsibility for the object.

כל אלמנה ויתום לא תענון (22:21) One needs to be extra sensitive to the feelings of these people. A Rebbe who wouldn't eat food with a particular "Hechsher" (Rabbinical supervision) was offered such a food by a widow. He ate it and when asked by his secretary why he ate it, he quoted this verse. In fact one needs to be sensitive to all people's feelings. If one is visiting someone and does not eat a particular Hechsher, one should be diplomatic and say for example "I'm on diet or have an upset stomach." This way you won't offend anyone by causing a slur on their Kashrut.

אם כסף תלוה את עמי (22:24) One should help a person by giving him a loan. If one sees he is hard up, one may not press him to return it.

לא תקלל אלהים (22:27) It is forbidden to curse judges if they rule against you. A shochet (ritual slaughterer) once lost a monetary case and started to curse the Rabbi. The Rabbi asked him why when he ruled that an animal was treife (not kosher) and he thus lost money by it, he didn't curse him. The Shochet replied that in a monetary case, the Rabbi was saying that the Shochet was wrong. The loss of prestige was worse to him than the loss of money.

לא תהיה אחרי רבים לרעת מצוה (23:2) One may not say that because no-one keeps a particular mitzvah (commandment), I also won't do so! Observance of the Torah does not depend on majorities or democracy!

I

כי תראה חמור שנאך (23:5) One must even return lost property to one's enemy; maybe as a result he will become your friend. When anybody loses something, he worries about it and it is a great mitzvah to try and help him to find it. This is one of the reasons that we often begin teaching children Gemara with the chapter "Eilu Metziot," so that they should realise that if they find something, they cannot just keep it.

עזב תעזב עמו (23:5) Note the word "*imo*." If a person does you a favour, such as an electrical repair which you don't know how to do yourself, one should not just disappear whilst he is working. Instead one should try and help him, for example, by passing him his tools, carrying the ladder for him.

ואכלו אביני עמך (23:11) Shemittah (Sabbatical year) produce is hefker (ownerless), so that the poor can take it. This is just one of the wonderful things connected with the mitzvah of shemittah.

למען ינוח שורך וחמרך (23:12) Even your animals are entitled to rest on Shabbat. The Torah puts great stress on kindness to animals.

כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה ונשמע (24:7) Unlike certain groups of non-Jews, the Jewish people gave an unconditional acceptance to everything in the Torah, before they even knew its contents. They had complete faith in G-d and gave Him a "blank cheque."



## פ' תרומה

ויקחו לי תרומה (25:2) At the period of the year when one reads this Parashah, one also reads Parashat Shekalim. In that Parashah, every male Jew above the age of twenty is commanded to give an annual half shekel to pay for the animal sacrifices offered up in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) (and at a later period in the Temple). This is a compulsory levy, like income tax. Every Jew has to give this sum whether he likes it or not! What is more, the sum is equal for all such Jews; one cannot give more and one cannot give less.

In this week's Parashah, one reads of a different type of giving. This time it is purely voluntary. The Torah calls it a "terumah" and specifically states "kol nediv libo," give what your heart desires. The money here was for the building the Mishkan. People could give their gold, silver and other materials.

There were collection points and everything was carefully recorded, so that there should be no suspicion of the leaders pocketing "percentages" of the donations! One can contrast this with what sadly happens today!

Betzalel who had the ability to tell the intentions of the donors, by looking at them, was present at the collection points. From this we learn an important lesson. There are various degrees of giving charity. For example, it is far better that the donor does not know who receives his donation and the receiver does not know who gave it, than by putting charity directly into the hand of the receiver. Similarly, when donating something to a Shul, for example, in memory of someone, it is far better not to add on the plaque or write in the book who donated this particular thing.

There is a story of a rich "miser" in a certain town who asked everybody who came to him how much they needed each week, but then sent them away emptyhanded. The week he died, person after person came to the gemach (free loan organisation) of the town, to ask for money. How could it happen that suddenly no-one had money! It was then discovered that this "miser" had secretly put money outside the doors of the poor people of the town each week, without any of them knowing where this money had come from. Rather than embarrass these people by directly handing them money, he preferred to be known as a "miser."

ועצי שטים (25:5) The Jews were at the time in the Sinai desert. One might well ask where were they to find atzei shitim (acacia wood)? When Yaacov went down to Egypt, he planted there these trees. He knew by "ruach hakodesh" (Divine inspiration) that when they would finally leave Egypt, they would be given this command in the desert to build the mishkan. This is another example of emunah (faith) in G-d, namely that being in Egypt was only something temporary.

ועשו לי מקדש (25:8) The Torah does not write "v'asu li mishkan" (make me a Tabernacle)- yet they were not building a "mikdash" but a "mishkan." A Shul is called a "mikdash me'at." (a small Temple). One can learn from this use of the word "mikdash" the importance of building a Shul in every community. Unfortunately, one often sees in a new community, that Shuls are only built a late stage. Everything is built except the Shul! Sheds, shelters, caravans and all sorts of other unsatisfactory structures serve as a Shul for a long, long period.

There are also some places which although they build magnificent Shuls, they are almost empty on Shabbat. On weekdays they are closed completely. There is a great importance in davening (praying) in a Shul, even if there is no minyan there at the time. It is far better than davening at home.

ושכנתי בתוכם (25:8) Grammatically, it should read "v'shachanti betocho." From this unusual language we can learn that when a Jew does G-d's will, G-d will dwell within the Jew.

וכן תעשו (25:9) The construction of the mishkan and all its furniture and vessels is given in very great detail almost entirely in this Parashah. Yet we find that all these details are repeated almost word for word in Parashat Vayakhel. Nothing in the Torah is superfluous and so one may well ask why is there all this repetition? It is to show us that Moshe did

*exactly* what G-d told him to do. He did not make any changes. One can contrast this with the non-orthodox groups who make changes in halachah (Jewish law). It started by small changes, such as in the format of the prayers. Then the breach grew and grew and has now reached a state where some of their clerics conduct intermarriages together with Christian clergy!

מבית ומחוץ תצפנו (25:11) One can understand coating the outside of the Ark with gold. Everyone can see the outside. But what is the point of coating the inside with gold since no-one can see it! One can learn from this that a Jew must be pure not only outwardly but also inwardly. Outward signs such as a beard and peyot (sideburns) and distinctive dress are not sufficient; one's inward signs must match one's outward ones. When pupils asked Rav Yisrael Salant whether they should grow a beard, he answered that only when they feel that they can match it inwardly.

כרובים זהב (25:18) These keruvim (cherubs) had the faces of children. If one did not have the gold for the mishkan, one could make the various parts of the mishkan with other metals. There was one exception to this and that was the keruvim. Here there was no compromise, gold *had* to be used. One can learn an important lesson from this. With our children's Torah education there is no compromise. They are the next generation to carry on the tradition of the Torah. They were the only guarantors G-d would accept when he offered the Torah to the Jewish people.

ופניהם איש אל אחיו (25:20) Children and indeed grownups as well, must act together in harmony. "Ish el achiv" namely, everyone must go in the same direction. That is the problem we have today in Eretz Yisrael. If only all the Jews would together fight the non-Jews for the good of Eretz Yisrael, we would easily be successful. But one can see what happens when many leftists and even some "who call themselves rightists" fight on the same side as the non-Jews!

לחם פנים (25:30) The purpose of the table in the mishkan was to hold these lechem panim (showbread). Twelve loaves of bread were put out every Shabbat morning and they remained until the following Shabbat morning, and they retained their complete freshness, namely they did not go stale. Likewise, one must keep one's Torah learning fresh. One must revise what one has learned time and time again. The Gemara says that a person who has learned something one hundred and one times cannot be compared with a person who has learned it one hundred times. Once someone asked the Chazon Ish whether Rav Moshe Feinstein has an exceptional memory. He answered that he hasn't but he remembers things because he is always revising it, and it is therefore always fresh in his memory. Indeed, it has been reported that he went over the entire Shas one hundred times! There was a great Rabbi whose father was a simple baker and he said that his father had taught him that bread must always be fresh, and this Rabbi then added that so must be Torah learning.

ועשית מנרה (25:31) The menorah was lit in the heichal (hall) of the mishkan, which was a dark room. Just as this gave light to the dark room, so the Torah gives light even to the "darkest" Jew. This is why the miracle of Chanukah took place with finding just a small quantity of oil for the menorah (candelabra) which "stretched and stretched" and lasted for eight days. Likewise, even the smallest spark of light in a Jew can be "stretched and stretched" to make him a Ba'al Teshuvah (a Jew returning to the observance of Torah). Yad I'Achim, Chabad and similar organisations do excellent work in this direction.

הקריש (26:16) This word regularly appears in this Parashah regarding the building of the mishkan. Rearranged the letters of this word spell out "sheker" (falsehood), which is one of the lowliest things for a Jew. In contrast the mishkan was one of the loftiest things in Judaism. One can learn from this that a Jew must try and "rearrange" his low points (and everyone has them) so that they became his high points.

## פ' תצוה

ואתה תצוה (27:20) This Parashah continues from the last Parashah with details concerning the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Also included are details of the special "uniforms" worn by the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) and the ordinary Kohanim (priests) during their service in the Mishkan (and, at a later date, the Temple).

Another thing which one can learn from the various kinds of work which were performed in order to build, (whilst according to other opinions, the day to day operations in) the Mishkan. These are the "39 headings" of work forbidden on Shabbat. In fact, these classifications are very similar to our daily activities today. If one were to ask what are the main physical components of our life today, one might well answer: food, clothes, housing, and books. Let us now look into this in some detail. Our most basic food is bread. To prepare it one must go through the processes which include ploughing, sowing, reaping, threshing, sorting, grinding, kneading and baking. These are indeed the processes which were done in the Mishkan. Our most basic material for clothing is wool. To prepare a woolen garment, one must shear the sheep, wash, dye and spin to get threads which are then woven and sewn. Again, these are the processes done in the Mishkan. Housing includes the actual construction of the house and making of the furniture. This corresponds to the work heading in the Mishkan of "building." One now come to books and we shall illustrate it with those written on parchment, such as a Sefer Torah, Tephillin, Mezuzot and Megillot: To prepare this parchment, one must first trap an animal, then kill it, skin it, tan it and polish the skin. This is followed by cutting the sheets of parchment to size, drawing guide lines and then doing the actual writing. This again follows the work done in the Mishkan. To complete the 39 categories, there are some general headings such as sources of energy, which coming down to basics is lighting and extinguishing. There is also putting the final touches to any object one makes, and transporting materials from place to place. One should also mention that one can go from group to group in our daily activities. For example, to prepare meat, one begins from catching, killing and skinning the animal and at a later stage in cooking it. To prepare a cotton garment, one begins by ploughing and planting and finally arriving at weaving and sewing. For today's books, one begins with the agricultural processes to make the paper and then continue with cutting this paper to size and printing (which is identical to writing). These are the 39 categories of work of the Mishkan and although they were defined thousands of years ago, they are just as relevant in the course of our daily lives today. They are in no way out of date in the 21st century as the non-orthodox groups might suggest. This is the beauty for a Shomer Shabbat (a Sabbath observer) taking a rest from his everyday physical creative activities.

Conspicuous by its absence from this Parashah, is the name of Moshe Rabbeinu. In addition, this Parashah is almost always read in the week of 7 Adar, the date of the birth and death of Moshe. One's birthday is a date when most people like to publicise themselves. But not so Moshe Rabbeinu since he was the most modest of all men. One can learn an important lesson from this, namely, the lesson of humbleness. About twenty years ago a "kenes" (conference) was due to take place in a small town in Eretz Yisrael and the names of the participating Rabbis were published on the noticeboards. On the day of this kenes, one of the Rabbis due to participate failed to turn up. The reason was that his name appeared on the *second* line of the publicising leaflet! Moshe's name is also absent from Parashat Netzavim, which is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah. This resembles the idea of a bent Shofar for Rosh Hashanah, namely the sign of humbleness.

להעלות נר תמיד (27:20) This Menorah (candelabra) was lit every night in the Heichal (hall), a part of the Mishkan which was naturally dark This symbolises that we must always have light namely, Torah. Also the word "tamid" (perpetual) is used. There must be the continual light, of Torah. There are no holidays from observing the Torah. When planning one's summer vacation, one must check: Will the kashrut (kosher food) be up to our standards? What will the Shabbat observance and atmosphere be like? Will there be a Shul on the premises? Is the entertainment programme suitable? Will there be facilities for separate

swimming! And so on.

אתם (28:2) From these "bigdei kehunah" (priestly garments) one can see the importance of dress for a Jew. They must be "lechavod ultiferet." (splendor and beauty). For example, it is not respectable for a man to go around outside with short trousers or a completely sleeveless shirt. In addition to all this, one must have special clothes for Shabbat and Yom-Tov. In fact, to stress they are for these days only, one should change back to one's weekday clothes after the Melave Malka (post Sabbath meal).

אבני שהם (28:9) Some of the Priestly garments incorporated precious stones. The authorities of the time would go to the greatest of lengths and not skimp on money to obtain the best stones available and when they got damaged to find replacements. Although in our daily performance of Mitzvot, the Rabbis have fixed a limit on how much one must add to get a more "mehudar" (better religious quality) object, one must do one's best within these limitations to find the best, Tephillin, Tzitzit, Arba'at Haminim, and so on.

ארבעה טורים (28:17) These are the four rows of precious stones on the Kohen Gadol's breastplate. The author of the Tur, divided his Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) up into four sections corresponding to these four rows. One might ask why? The Shulchan Aruch is like precious jewels to the Jewish people. They tell them how a Jew must live his entire life, and they contain laws appertaining to tephillot (prayers), berachot (blessings), Shabbat, Festivals, kashrut (kosher food), taharat hamishpachah (family purity), marriage, and civil law.

את האורים ואת התמים (28:30) The Bible critics will describe the Urim and Tumim as a lot of "hocus pocus." They ridicule how can one put a question to these stones and an answer be flashed out?! If half a century ago, one would have suggested by touching a few knobs on one's computer, the computer would flash out the answer to one's question, such as the price of a night's stay in a hotel in Argentina or the name of the first president of Timbuctoo, one would say that such a person was crazy! Yet today we have precisely this, namely the Internet. The Urim and Tumim were just thousands of years ahead of the Internet!

ועשית ציץ זהב (28:36) Written on this garment of the Kohen Gadol were the words "kodesh laShem" (holy to G-d). Because it had G-d's name on it, the Kohen Gadol had to constantly have this in mind when he wore the tzitz (golden plate worn on head). To this one can add that how much more so when one is wearing the Tephillin. They don't just have G-d's name once on them; indeed it is found numerous times in the Tephillin. When wearing Tephillin, one must therefore act accordingly, and this includes not engaging in levity or idle conversation.

מכנסי בד לכסות בשר ערוה (28:42) This garment worn by the Kohanim, was not for "kavod ultiferet" but for "tzniut" (modesty). Not only must the kohanim be dressed in a tzanua manner, but so must every Jew. This is particularly so for women and the halachah rules how much of a woman must be covered, and also that the material must not be too thin, or too tight. Sadly, standards of the public at large have gone down in past years. It reached such a state that some years ago a member of the Knesset proposed that women in the Knesset should dress properly.

וזה הדבר אשר תעשה להם לקדש אתם (29:1) We must always remember we are a holy people and do the maximum to observe the Torah even under the most difficult circumstances. There are numerous true accounts how Jews observed Mitzvot, (to quote just a few examples), in the Spanish Inquisition, in the Russian Army, under the Communist Regime, in the Concentration Camps. In all these cases, any detection of such observances could have easily led to the harshest of punishments including in many cases, the death penalty.



## פ' כי תשא

מחצית השקל (30:13) This commandment stating that every male Jew above the age of twenty must give a half shekel annually to the "Mishkan" (Tabernacle) occurs between the instructions for building of the Mishkan and its implementation. However, there is an important difference between this half shekel on the one hand, and on the other hand the donations for the building the Mishkan. This half shekel levy was like income tax. One had no option and one had to pay it, like it or not! For the construction of the Mishkan, it was a purely voluntary contribution, namely, "kol nadiv libo." It is much harder to give a voluntary contribution. There was a case where in a Jewish boarding school, the headmaster decided that attendance at minchah (afternoon service) would henceforth be voluntary. He then commented that the pupils may think that he had made it easier for them, since they now do not have to attend this service. But he then added, that in fact it is harder since they now have to decide for themselves.

The Gemara states that G-d showed Moshe a half shekel made of fire. One might well ask, why specifically of fire? The reason is that fire can be either destructive, such as arson, which is the deliberate burning down of buildings or forests, or alternatively, fire can be constructive, since it is the source of many forms of energy. Likewise, money can be used for destructive purposes, for example to purchase drugs, pornographic literature and unsuitable films or other wasteful activities. On the other hand, it can also be used for positive purposes such as charitable donations, supporting Shuls, Yeshivot (Rabbinical Colleges), Torah Institutions, and so on.

העשיר לא ירבה (30:15) Every Jew had to give the same amount and no-one could give more than his neighbour. This money was to pay for the daily sacrifices to be offered up in the Mishkan (and at a later period in the Temple), and for this every Jew was equal. No-one could say he had done more than his fellow man. Not only was there a monetary contribution for these sacrifices, but every Jew physically took part, in some way or other, in the actual implementation of the sacrifices. This is an important lesson for today that it is improper to remove oneself from one's communal obligations.

ועשית כיוור נחשת (30:17) The last vessel which was described to be used in the Mishkan is, significantly, a sink for washing. The Kohanim (Priests) had to do their service in cleanliness and purity. Likewise, one should wash one's hands before davening (praying). This is the reason why many Shuls have a sink at their entrance.

בצלאל ... ואמלא אתו (31:2-3) The Torah here gives the "job requirements" of Bezalel. To do any trade properly, one does not just require knowledge or "degrees" but one also requires skill and practical experience. In addition, one sometimes has to do an apprenticeship for many serious occupations. Up to this day when one puts out a tender for a job, one includes a list of all the requirements.

לחשב מחשבתו (31:4) A rather unusual attribute given to Bezalel was that he could "thought read." One might readily ask why was such an attribute necessary? There were some donors who gave their precious metals and other things purely for the sake of the Mitzvah. There were others who gave it for personal glorification, so that they could boast to their friends how much they had given. By looking at the donors, Bezalel could read their intentions. One can learn from this how important it is for charity to be given anonymously and discretely; indeed, this is a higher level of charity.

אך את שבתתי תשמרו (31:13) Again and again the Torah stresses the importance of Shabbat. The Gemara states that when one says "Vayechulu" during ma'ariv (evening service) of Shabbat, one is a partner with G-d in the Creation of the World.

אות הוא לעולם (31:17) Shabbat is a "sign" between G-d and the Jewish people. If one sees

a shop that is closed, it is very likely that it is only temporary, and that it will soon open again. However, when the sign comes down, one can be sure that the shop has completely closed down. Likewise, one can compare this with a Jew. If he neglects many of the other Mitzvot (commandments), it is likely that he will return to Judaism. If, however, he gives up Shabbat, the prognosis is not good! Sadly, when Shabbat goes, everything usually goes.

ויקהל העם על אהרן (32:1) The incident of the "golden calf" occurred just thirty-nine days after the Jewish people personally witnessed and heard the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. If people could act like this, just about five weeks later, what can one say about people who thousands of years later break Mitzvot? When one today teaches Mitzvot, one must stress that it is not an academic exercise but for the purpose of observance.

ויאמר אלהם אהרן (32:2) The people went to Aharon and Chur to make their demands which led to the incident of the golden calf. Chur refused and they killed him. Aharon however was a man of peace and therefore did not want an argument with the people and so he agreed. From this incident, one can see the consequences by agreeing to such demands! Indeed, a stage is sometimes reached when one must *not* use the method of peace. The State of Israel today, unfortunately listens to America or Europe to have a "peaceful life" with them and one must look at the consequences, namely Jews are continually being killed and maimed. There are occasions when there is a time to say NO!

וישרף באש (32:20) After the crime comes the punishment. If one wants to do something wrong, one must realise that a punishment can follow.

אתה ידעת את העם (32:22) Aharon tried to pass on the blame. Here once again one has the same old story, "It's not *my* fault -it's *his* fault."

מי לה' אלי (32:26) The tribe of Levi came to Moshe's side. They realised the seriousness of the matter. Even in a country with a dictatorship, there are usually a few people brave enough to come out publicly against the leadership. For example, there were some Russians who publicly opposed the Soviet policies.

כשלישת אלפי איש (32:28) When the matter was investigated it was found that only a very small percentage of the people were actually responsible for the golden calf. The rest of the people just "followed like sheep." A comparison might be when it is only a few Arabs who actually do the killing of Jews; on some occasions many others just go along to watch and cheer. Can such people be called "innocent bystanders"?

אנא חטא העם הזה (32:31) After the people had been punished, Moshe begged that G-d forgive them. Once a person has been punished, the matter is finished. The person now has the opportunity to turn over a new leaf. The Rambam writes that one is forbidden to remind a person of his past sins after he has done repentance.

פסל לך (34:1) Moshe was then instructed to make new tablets. The Gemara says that even the broken pieces of the original tablets were stored in the Ark of the Mishkan and that one can learn from this that even a scholar who has gone senile and forgotten his learning must be treated with respect.

הנני גרש (34:11) G-d gives his promise to remove all our enemies from Eretz Yisrael, a promise we must always remember, however black the situation seems.

שליש פעמים בשנה (34:24) There was the Mitzvah to go up to Jerusalem on the "Shalosh Regalim" (Three Foot Festivals). So much was the love for Jerusalem that even after the Destruction of the Temple, when this Mitzvah no longer applied, people continued, and indeed still continue till this day to go up to Jerusalem on these occasions.

## פ' ויקהל

ויקהל משה (35:1) The previous three Parshiot (and especially Parashat Terumah) dealt with the very detailed instructions for the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and the making of the bigdei kehunah (Priestly garments). This and the following Parashah deal with the implementation of this building. Plans are important but they generally lose their importance if they are not implemented!

ששה ימים (35:2) One immediately notices that the first three verses of this Parashah apparently have nothing to do with the building of the Mishkan. They deal with Shabbat, and the immediate question to be asked is why are these three verses found immediately before the actual building of the Mishkan? One might think that something so important and central to the Jewish people as the building of the Mishkan, which was the forerunner to the Temple, would override the Shabbat. The verses are therefore placed here to show us that this is not the case. However important the building of the Mishkan was, the sanctity of Shabbat is more important. One can contrast this with the early days of the State of Israel, when the then Prime Minister wanted the building of the State to take priority over Shabbat.

The words "Vayakhel Moshe" (and Moshe assembled) teach us that before beginning the actual construction of the Mishkan, Moshe assembled the people together to lecture to them about the importance of Shabbat. In fact, in almost every Parashah from B'shalach until this Parashah, the observance of Shabbat is mentioned. Today, the reason that the majority of people don't observe Shabbat properly is because they don't understand its importance and, also as a consequence, have never studied its many laws. They are, as a former President of Israel said, such people come under the category of "tinok shenishbah" (a child who has been raised with no Jewish knowledge). A Rabbi related that one Shabbat, he saw a Jew in Jerusalem, who looked religious, writing on Shabbat. He spoke to him and discovered that he didn't know that writing on Shabbat was forbidden! Just as Moshe Rabbeinu assembled the people together to lecture the people on the laws of Shabbat, it is our duty to go and explain, in a gentle manner, to a "tinok shenishbah" all about Shabbat. Chabad and other groups do excellent work in this field.

Some non-Jews realise that if they could remove Shabbat from the Jewish people, they would be able to uproot Judaism. Hence the Russians once arranged five days of compulsory work followed by one day's rest. One can easily see the reason for this! For the vast majority of the years Shabbat would occur on a compulsory work day.

ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה (35:2) This verse does not say "sheshet yamim ta'aseh melachah" - six days you shall work, but "sheshet yamim te'aseh melachah" - six days work shall be done. With countries with mass unemployment, many people would be glad to have work for six days each week. Resting on Shabbat gives the Jew blessing for the six days of work. The Chafetz Chaim learned that in one town a Jewish factory owner kept his factory open seven days a week and he asked him to close it on Shabbat. "Look how much money I will lose if I close on Shabbat," he answered the Chafetz Chaim. He reminded this factory owner of this verse in the Torah and warned him that by non-observance of Shabbat, he would lose even the six weekdays as work days, but he laughed at the Chafetz Chaim. The Bolsheviks then came to power and took away his factory and he was forced to flee for his life out of Russia. He then wrote to the Chafetz Chaim telling him how right he had been in warning him.

לא לבערו אש (35:3) The Torah then goes on to mention the "Av Melachah" (heading of

forbidden work on Sabbath) of lighting a fire on Shabbat. One might well ask, why pick out this category of work from all the thirty-nine headings of forbidden work on Shabbat?? A reason could be that fire is a source of energy and from this, one can perform many of the other "Avot Melachah" (headings of forbidden work on Shabbat). Also, we sadly see, especially in the Diaspora, that Jews will turn on the electric lights on Shabbat saying that "it is no effort to turn on a light!" adding that it is not like the olden days when it was hard work to make a fire!

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר חִכְמַת לֵב בִּידֵיהֶם טוֹר (35:25) Everything concerned with building the Mishkan was voluntary, whether it was monetary or physical. Here one can see how the women volunteered their skills to spin the various materials. One should also notice that (with one exception) none of the donors or helpers are mentioned by name. There were no plaques in the Mishkan saying who donated what! Tzedakah (charity) should be given anonymously.

וְהַנְּשִׂאִים הַבְּיָאוֹר (35:27) The word "hanesi'im" is spelled defectively. The nesi'im ("princes" - leaders), should have showed an example and been the first to donate, but they left their donations till the end. Leaders must show an example, when it comes to donating money or other things. If, for example, there are financial cuts in the country's budget, the first cut should be made on *their* salaries. Sadly, the opposite is usually the case.

וַיַּעַשׂ בְּצִלְאֵל (37:1) Bezalel did not just give instructions and let other do all the work. He himself participated in the actual construction work. How often today do we see managers who just walk around barking out orders, but doing no actual work themselves!

וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁנֵי כְרֻבִים זֶהָב (37:7) The Keruvim (Cherubs) had the faces of *children* and they *had* to be made of *gold*. For other parts of the Mishkan, there could be a gold replacement - but not for the Keruvim. There is no substitute for the Torah education of children. It is written that the money people will receive and spend during the year is Heavenly determined on Rosh Hashanah. The exceptions are what one spends for Shabbat and Yom Tov, and for the Torah education of one's children. If a Jew during the course of the year spends more on these things, he will then receive extra money that year.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַשֻּׁלְחָן (37:10) The purpose of the table was for a surface on which to place the "lechem hapanim" (showbread). Twelve loaves were placed on it every Shabbat and they remained there until the following Shabbat. There was one particular family who baked these loaves with a "secret recipe" to enable these loaves to remain completely fresh the entire week. This family would only eat bread in their own home of a *different* type of dough, so that people would not be able to accuse them of taking communal dough home from their work. Likewise, the family who prepared the incense for the Mishkan would not use perfume on themselves. One can contrast this today when workers "help themselves" to materials they use at work, such as stationery, or using the telephone for private calls. A survey once done on this found that ninety per cent of workers did this!

בְּמִרְאֵת הַצְּבָאוֹת (38:8) The women donated mirrors for the Mishkan. Moshe was at first reluctant to accept them, since they are associated with vanity. However, G-d told him to take them since the redemption from Egypt was because of the righteous women who had encouraged their husbands to increase their family size. Here is another example of "hakarot hatov" (recognition of good). One must always reciprocate the good things a person does for you.



## פ' פקודי

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדה (38:21) One immediately notices that the word "mishkan" (Tabernacle) is mentioned twice. One might well ask why the repetition? Does this imply that Moshe built *two* Mishkans?! The Midrash explains that Moshe used the surplus contributions to build a Bet Hamidrash (House of Study) near the Mishkan. A Bet Hamidrash is of a higher sanctity than a Bet Haknesset (Synagogue), since it is used not only for prayer but also for study. One should strive that every Shul is also used for study. Every Shul should have a Torah library so that the worshippers can study there on their own or in organised shiurim (lessons). Needless to say, that any seforim (books) there are for actual use and not for beautification! A person once found himself in a Shul with some spare time for study before the service. He took out a book from the bookcase and began studying. Suddenly the Shamash (sexton) came in, and when he saw the man using a book, he told him to return it immediately to the bookcase. "These books are for the decor of the Shul and not for use!" he angrily informed him!

אשר פקד על פי משה (38:21) Moshe insisted that there was "bikoret" (an accounting) on all the gold and other materials that had been collected for the Mishkan. Even the greatest of people must be above suspicion. There are always people who want to speak "motzi shem ra" (slander) even about the most honest of people. This indeed happened when Rabbeinu Gershom built a silver replica of Shlomo's throne for his King. A person who was jealous of him accused him of stealing silver for himself! He was sentenced to death by starvation, but fortunately managed to escape and go to another country before the sentence could take effect.

ביד איתמר בן אהרן. (38:21) Itamar was also present when all the gifts were collected. When one deals with public money, there must always be at least two people involved. For example, one should never just have one signature on cheques of a communal organisation. Unfortunately, today we often see a total disregard for public money. The money of a country is not the private possession of the Ministers to do as they like with. When one wants to woo the votes of another party, some Governments will glibly hand them out astronomical sums of money, as if it were their own private money. Even money reaching the billions are, as if by magic, available for the whims of Government Ministers, but when the genuine needy people need money, they are told that there is no money in the kitty.

ובצלאל בן אורי (38:22) Bezalel the main architect of the Mishkan was mentioned on a number of occasions during the planning and construction of the Mishkan. One of his many attributes was "lachshov machshavot" (to read thoughts). On the face of it, it might seem strange that an architect has this attribute. One can understand this as follows. There were people who donated for the Mishkan purely "leshem shamayim" (for the sake of Heaven) with no ulterior motives. There were others who wanted to show off to their friends how much they had donated. In the Mishkan there were different degrees of holiness. Obviously, a donor would prefer his donation to be incorporated into the holier parts of the Mishkan. One can now begin to understand this attribute of Bezalel. He would gaze at the donors as they brought their contributions and read what their real intentions were. Those who donated "leshem shamayim" would have their donations incorporated into the holier parts of the Mishkan. From all this we can learn that when one donates it should be "leshem shamayim." It is unnecessary to have a plaque stating who donated what. "L'ilui nishmat" (in memory of) with the name of the deceased is sufficient.

כל הזהב (38:24) If one does a calculation of the amount of precious metals used in the construction of the Mishkan and compare it with that used in the Second Temple, one will see that it is much smaller for the Mishkan. This might seem surprising since one knows that the Divine Presence rested in the Mishkan but not in the Second Temple. The lesson is that it is not the amount of money given but the intentions of the people who give it

העשוי למלאכה (38:24) It is a scientific fact that when one works with metals, the weight of the finished article is less than the weight of the raw materials. However, in the Mishkan this was not the case. Likewise, this needs to be so with public money. It must be accounted for up to the last smallest coin.

מאת אדנים (38:27) The Mishkan was supported on a foundation of one hundred silver "adanim" (sockets). The author known as "Ba'al Haturim" compares this with our daily lives as Jews which are supported by the one hundred berachot (blessings) one should try to recite each day. In fact, if one does a calculation of the berachot recited in the daily prayers and over food, one will reach over this number. Needless to say, one should not "gabble them off" but say each one with kavanah (proper concentration). Just as the adanim were made of silver, so should our berachot be like precious metals.

כאשר צוה ה' את משה (39:1) This phrase is repeated time and time again in this Parashah. In the last three Parshiot, detailed instructions were given on the construction of the Mishkan and the bigdei kehunah (priestly garments), and all these details are repeated in this and the previous Parashah. This shows that they were followed to the letter and this fact is stressed "ka'asher tzivah" (as was commanded). Moshe made no changes in the construction. Every point was scrupulously followed. Could one imagine if some non-Orthodox Jewish groups had built the Mishkan, they may well have made changes "left, right and centre!"

פעמן ורמן (39:26) Bells were attached to the Priestly robe. The author of the book "Haktav v'hakabala" compares this with the Mitzvah of Tzitzit where the Tzitzit hang from the corners of our four cornered garments. As one looks at these Tzitzit one is reminded of all the 613 Mitzvot in the Torah. Visual signs are usually far better and more effective than the written word. It is said that one picture is worth a thousand words.

ויברך אתם משה (39:43) After having finished all the work, Moshe blessed the people. They had contributed both their money and their labour to reach this stage and they merited the blessing of Moshe. When a person does something good, one must show one's appreciation. Unfortunately, letters seem to be limited to letters of complaint. Few people seem to write letters of thanks.

ויקם משה את המשכן (40:18) The final stage had now been reached. All the components were brought to Moshe, who then assembled them to make the Mishkan. All the Jewish people had worked together and the results were spectacular. One can see from this, that when Jews work in unity, they can produce wonderful results. This is a lesson for today's situation. Not only are we fighting the non-Jews over our rights to Eretz Yisrael, we are also sadly having to fight with leftist Jews and even some of those who term themselves "rightists."

In the Six Day War we witnessed great miracles. From what seemed a Holocaust approaching, within a few days became the liberation of large portions of Eretz Yisrael. Instead of recognising this miracle and immediately settling these liberated areas, squabbles immediately began with the left offering to "return" all these areas to the Arabs. Almost every house that was built in the liberated areas had to be fought for. Today over half a century later there could be millions of Jews living in these liberated areas. Everywhere there could have been blocks of settlements and no-one in the world could even have contemplated driving Jews out of their homes. But sadly and tragically this is not the case. Every additional construction is photographed by the left and the photographs displayed to the world. They have even organised boycotts against products from Yehudah and Shomron. One should look at the disastrous results, and contrast it with the successful building and completion of the Mishkan.

ואש תהיה לילה בו (40:38) The Mishkan was lit up at night. Similarly, a Shul should be lit up at night. After people return from work, one should not spend the night before going to bed on frivolous activities. One should try and participate in a Shiur (lesson) taking place in the lit-up Shul. If there is no Shiur in the Shul, one can still "light-up" at home and do some study.