

Sh'mini

26th of 54 sedras; 3rd of 10 in Vayikra

157.2 lines in a Sefer Torah, rank: 42nd

6 Parshiyot; 3 open, 3 closed

91 p'sukim - ranks 41st (4th in Vayikra)

1238 words - 41st (5th in Vayikra)

4670 letters - 41st (5th in Vayikra)
tied with Chukat, which has fewer
p'sukim but more words than Sh'mini

MITZVOT

17 mitzvot; 6 positive; 11 prohibitions



[P> X:Y (Z)] or [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya 16 p'sukim - 9:1-16

[S> 9:1 (31)] On the 8th day, Aharon was commanded to offer the first set of sacrifices (not counting the korbanot that were brought during the previous preparatory week). Specifically, "personal" korbanot - an EIGEL (calf)

as a CHATAT and an AYIL (ram) as an OLAH.

Then the People offer a goat as a CHATAT and a calf and a lamb as OLOT. Then a bull and ram as SH'LAMIM.

Ponder this... It is "obvious" that the CHATAT of a calf is an atonement for the Sin of the Golden Calf and/or an indication that G-d has forgiven the people for the Golden Calf. In one context the Golden Calf was called "the calf that Aharon made". Therefore, the calf on the Eighth Day is his CHATAT. The calf of the people is an OLAH, rather than a CHATAT. OLAH is brought for thoughts of certain sins; CHATAT is for acts. Those of Bnei Yisrael who DID whatever we will call it, the EIGEL, were killed. The rest of us were "guilty" of indecision, fence-sitting, confusion - "sins" of thought. Our calf was an Olah. Aharon's OLAH was a ram, reminding us of Akeidat Yitzchak. No sin associated with that. (Olah often not about sin.) Our CHATAT was a goat, reminding us of our former collective sin of the selling of Yosef and deception of Yaakov with the help of goat's blood.

SDT The Kohen Gadol removes his gold garments before entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, because the "accuser does not become the defender". Why then would we not make the same argument against Aharon's offering of a calf as a Korban? Rashi indicates that the super-sensitivity involved here applies inside the Mikdash's inner sanctum, but not

outside (at the Mizbei'ach).

Here's a general answer to this question and others. Horns from the bovine family of animals are not acceptable as a Shofar. On the other hand, look at these korbanot. And the fact that the Para Aduma is considered an atonement for the Golden Calf.

The KG didn't enter "inward" with gold, but what greeted him inside was an ARON plated with gold, gold rings, gold-covered poles, a solid gold lid, and K'RUVIM of gold.

Bottom line: If G-d commands us to use gold, we use it. If He says no, we don't. Calf, cow, yes, no. Fine with us. Yes AND no, just as G-d commands. Apply your own logic and do what you decide is best - WRONG. Not up to us. Halacha tells us what is appropriate.

Carrying this a step further into the realm of MASHAL - analogy.

Picture this: A nine year old boy is left home alone while his parents are out shopping. They return an hour later to find that their son was busy with his new box of 128 Crayola crayons, drawing beautiful colorful pictures... all over the kitchen's white walls. After yelling at the kid, making him clean the walls, and grounding him until his 30th birthday, the parents do two, seemingly contradictory things. First, they confiscate his crayons - if this is what you do with them, you shall not have them! And then, the next afternoon, they sit the boy down at the kitchen table, give him several sheets of paper and return his crayons to him. But not

for his own use. He is to use his crayons to draw some nice, colorful pictures which they will all take over to the senior citizen's residence in the neighborhood and brighten up the rec room there with the drawings.

Should the boy have used his crayons to write an apology to his parents for his misdeed? No. Better use a pen or a pencil. The crayons are too sensitive. They are associated with his "sin". But, at his parents' "command", he uses those very same crayons to effect a TIKUN for what he had done wrong.

So too, gold no and gold yes. Cow horn no, and calf/cow offerings yes. And, similarly - and just over a month ago - eating and drinking, no - on Taanit Esther, to atone for and effect a TIKUN of the improper, inappropriate eating and drinking at Achashveirosh's parties. AND, eating and drinking, YES, even to excess, on Purim day, for the same atonement and the same TIKUN. Fasting when required AND eating and drinking for the sake of Heaven, and L'SHEIM MITZVA, are both the proper thing to do. But we don't make these things up on our own - we follow G-d's commands.

Levi - Second Aliya **7 p'sukim - 9:17-23**

The Torah continues the details of the opening set of sacrifices, the accompanying Mincha, the Sh'lammim, what parts go on the Mizbei'ach. This short Aliya concludes with Aharon raising his hand(s) to the people and blessing them.

The Torah spelled YADAV, his hands, without the second YUD, making the word resemble YADO, his hand. From here comes the tradition of the kohanim holding their two hands together as one during Birkat Kohanim.

SDT Baal HaTurim says that the three parts (3 p'sukim) of Birkat Kohanim correspond to the three kinds of korbanot that Aharon brought on this first day of official functioning of the Mishkan. May G-d bless you and protect you... from sin (CHATAT), the second pasuk uses words that tie in with OLAH, and the SHALOM of the final pasuk for the SH'LAMIM.

Shlishi Third Aliya 12 p'sukim - 9:24-10:11

A Divine Fire descended and consumed everything on the Mizbei'ach. The people reacted to this miracle with praise to G-d and reverence for Him.

Then Nadav and Avihu, two sons of Aharon (who had been assisting Aharon), took censers with fire and offered incense before G-d. The fire was their own, not that of the Mizbei'ach. A Divine Fire struck them dead, consuming them from within, leaving them outwardly unmarked.

Moshe's words of consolation to Aharon are met with Aharon's silence. Moshe calls two cousins, Misha'el and Eltzafan, sons of Uziel, to remove the bodies.

❖ That Aharon would not be allowed to become TAMEI to his sons is known

from the rules of Kohein Gadol. But neither were Elazar and Itamar allowed to tend to the bodies of their brothers. Although neither was a kohein gadol (yet), they had been anointed to the k'huna which gave them the status of KG. Hence, the cousins, who were Leviyim had to be called.

❖ According to the opinion that the 8th day refers to the 8th day of Nissan, it was Misha'el and Eltzafan who were on their seventh day of ritual impurity from contact to the bodies of Nadav and Avihu, who were the ones who "complained" to Moshe about not being able to participate in Korban Pesach (the first annual one). They were "rewarded" with the parsha of Pesach Sheini, set down in the Torah in the context of their story. According to the other opinion, the people who said LAMA NIGARA were others were TAMEI.]

(Almost in reaction to the tragedy,) the Torah next sets down several rules (mitzvot) for kohanim, to save them from endangering their lives. Kohanim may not enter the Mikdash with long hair (a monthly trim was required) [149,L163 10:6], nor with torn garments [150,L164 10:6]. They may not leave the Mikdash while performing their sacred work [151, L165 10:7].

[P> 10:8 (4)] Furthermore, kohanim may not enter the Mikdash while under the influence of wine [152,L73 10:8]. Violations of any of the above would be a show of disrespect to G-d. [Some commentators infer from this last prohibition that Nadav and Avihu had drunk wine before they entered the

Mishkan. Others offer different reasons for their deaths.]

MitzvaWatch

With Mitzva #152 above, we have an example (there are others) of a mitzva that has a specific, narrow context and application from the Written Torah, but the scope of the mitzva is much wider, in the Oral Law. The Written Word forbids a Kohen from doing sacred service while having recently drunk wine. Sefer HaChinuch gives a second definition for mitzva, based on the Oral Law. Namely, a halachic authority may not render a decision (psak) while under the influence of alcohol. (It seems that this prohibition does not apply to Divrei Torah and the like - only to halachic decisions.) This prohibition is NOT a case of Rabbinic extension of the scope of Torah Law (there are plenty examples of that); it is part of the Oral Law on the D'Oraita level.

It is further interesting to note that the Sefer HaChinuch, whose final paragraph of each Mitzva presents its applicability - who, when, and where, says that this mitzva [152] applies to men and women in the time of the Beit HaMikdash, that is for the first part of the mitzva. As to the second application of the mitzva, this, says the Chinuch, applies in all times and all places, to men AND women who are qualified to render halachic decisions. Noteworthy is that the Chinuch, about 800 years ago, acknowledged the permissibility of a woman being

qualified to poskin halacha. We have yet to catch up to him, but there is progress in that direction.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 4 p'sukim - 10:12-15

[P> 10:12 (9)] Moshe next commands Aharon, Elazar, and Itamar to eat the Minachot and parts of the various offerings of the day. (Some was to be eaten only by them, in the area of the Mishkan; other parts could be taken "home" and shared with their families.) This was an unusual command, since generally, kohanim who have suffered a close loss would not eat of the sacred foods on the day of the burial. Nonetheless, Moshe tells them that he was thus commanded to tell them.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 5 p'sukim - 10:16-20

When Moshe realizes that the CHATA'OT (sin offerings) were burned, he gets angry with Elazar and Itamar (and Aharon, says Rashi, but to avoid a brother-brother confrontation and shaming Aharon, Moshe addresses his nephews) for not eating of the korbanot, as they were instructed to do. Aharon defends his sons' behavior by explaining that the loss of their brothers would make a "business as usual" attitude unacceptable in G-d's eyes. Moshe accepts Aharon's words.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 32 p'sukim - 11:1-32

[P> 11:1 (28)] Two and a half sedras

devoted to sacred meat (i.e. korbanot), and now we have the presentation of the animals we may and may not eat.

There is a "neat" parallel among the beginning of the book of Vayikra, the story of No'ach immediately after the Flood, and the fifth Order of Mishna. Our antediluvian predecessors were not permitted to eat meat. Only No'ach - AFTER offering Korbanot to G-d of the kosher animals he had taken onto the Teiva - was given permission to eat meat, provided that the animal be dead first, before taking its meat. In other words, first using animals for sacred purposes, allowed personal, profane use. That's what we find in Vayikra. Two and a half sedras of Korbanot FOLLOWED by "these are the animals you may eat..." And this is what we find in Mishna. Seder Kodashim begins with Z'vachim which deals with animal sacrifices, then M'nachot - offerings from the plant world (olive oil, flour, wine...), and then - and only then, Chulin with the laws of ritual slaughter, meat-in-milk, and various other mitzvot relating to the "secular" use of animals.

There is a positive mitzva to check the signs of kashrut of a mammal to determine its kashrut status [153,A149 11:2]. It is forbidden to eat of animals that lack one of the signs of kashrut (split hoof and cud chewing), and of course, those that lack both] [153, A149 11:2]. The Torah names three animals that chew their cud but do not have split hooves - the camel, shafan, arnevet, and one that has a split hoof but is not a ruminant - the pig. We may not eat their meat, and handling

their carcasses renders one TAMEI, ritually unclean.

Likewise, one is required to examine fish for scales and fins [155,A152 11:9]. It is forbidden to eat non-kosher fish [156,L172 11:11].

MitzvaWatch

Think about this: If the Torah only prohibited fish without scales (for example) and not commanded us to examine the fish to see if it's kosher, we would have to examine fish for scales to determine if they are kosher anyway. Why, then, is examining fish for its kosher signs a mitzva among the 248 positive members of the 613? The question, and the answer as well, is that there are some mitzvot that it was "unnecessary" for G-d to command us; we would do them anyway. However, "G-d wanted to benefit Yisrael, therefore He heaps upon us Torah and Mitzvot". This is the mishna of Rabbi Chananya b. Akashya at the end of Makot, the one borrowed for the end of each chapter of Pirkei Avot and borrowed to finish many shiurim.

There are other ways to look at this issue. The positive mitzvot and prohibitions of kashrut interact as in the following example:

A guy goes down to the lake to fish. He catches some fish, cleans them, grills them on his camping grill, and enjoys a delicious fresh fish dinner. A friend of his then comes by for a shmooze. When he tells the friend about his dinner, the friend asks him about the fish - what

kind was it? Was it kosher? The guy says - oops, I don't really know. He rummages through his trash bag and finds the fish's skin. To his relief, there are scales and fins and therefore the fish was indeed kosher. No violation, of course, of the prohibition of eating non-kosher fish, but a violation (non-fulfillment) of the positive command to check for the signs of kashrut. And that is a Torah "violation" (or, at least, non-fulfillment).

With birds, the Torah lists 20 kinds of birds (not species, families, genus, etc. - but kinds) that are not kosher [157,L174 11:13]. All the rest of the birds are kosher. How do know if a particular bird is in one of the forbidden families or not? Usually, the answer is TRADITION. We eat chicken etc. because we have an unbroken tradition.

Finally, the Torah specifies four types (8 families) of locust that we may eat. Checking their identities is a mitzva [158,A151 11:21]. All other insects are not permitted to us. We (most of the Jewish community) have lost the ability of identifying kosher locust, so we don't eat any of them. [Some Yemenites have the necessary traditions to identify the kosher varieties. As to whether they eat locust or not, ask your Yemenite friends. And an interesting additional question is whether we can eat locust that one with a Tradition identified.]

[S> 11:29 (10)] Next the Torah deals with the ritual impurity of creeping things [159,A97 11:21].

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 15 p'sukim - 11:33-47

Minding the laws of "purity" of food and drink is a mitzva [160,A98 11:34]. (It is one of the details of these laws that "requires" us to wash for karpas at the Seder table, and in general before wet food, all the time.)

[S> 11:39 (9)] Once again, the Torah presents the rules of the carcass of animals and the resulting ritual impurity from contact of various types [161,A96 11:39]. The Torah reiterates the prohibition of eating "creepy things" [162,L176 11:41], as well as worms and insects that infest fruits and vegetables [163,L178 11:41], seafood and other life-forms that inhabit the water [164, L179 11:43], and maggots that develop in rotting food material [165,L177 11:44].

All of the above is meant to elevate the Jew's soul to the sanctity that G-d wanted us to attain. For us, there is a direct link between body and soul, the spiritual and the mundane. The laws of kashrut bring the point home. The last 3 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

Haftara 40 p'sukim Shmuel Bet 6:1-7:17

...story of Uza who touched the Aron to prevent it from slipping (as he perceived it) and was struck dead as a result... Parallels Nadav & Avihu... Rabbi Jacobs z"l says that both sedra and haftara contain very joyous celebrations that were "marred" by the deaths of people with noble motives. Note: Uza's father was Avinadav, a

combination of the names Avihu & Nadav.

PROBING the PROPHETS

The story of the death of Aharon's two sons during the joyous celebration of the Chanukat HaMishkan, of which we read in this week's parsha, is one of the most troubling and puzzling stories in the Torah. Similarly, the haftara's story of the death of Avinadav's son, Uza, in the midst of celebrating the relocation of the Holy Ark to Yerushalayim, the story that begins the haftara, is equally troubling and puzzling. In both stories, the punished individuals were rejoicing with the people, celebrating a great spiritual moment. In both stories the sons seemed to have had the best intentions of serving Hashem and enhancing that holy moment. As a result, we are left wondering what exactly was the sin committed by the children of these holy men that earned them G-d's ultimate punishment. Although there have been many approaches attempting to unravel the mystery, I would like to focus on two approaches that, I believe, will help us better understand these events and will leave us with a lesson to apply to our own lives.

Common to both stories is the misguided attempt of perhaps well-meaning individuals to serve Hashem as they saw fit, but in doing so, ignored G-d's wishes. Aharon's sons decided on their own to offer the ketoret, when they were not bidden to do so. The entire

ritual of that holy day was detailed beforehand and every rite that was to be followed was one that had been commanded to Moshe. Hence, the Torah refers to their offering as an EISH ZARA, an "alien fire", unacceptable to G-d especially on the day when the formal laws of the worship of Hashem were to be set in motion.

The sin of Uza we read of in the haftara is even more difficult to understand and yet it too reflects a certain cavalier attitude to serving G-d. The Holy Ark rested upon a cart pulled by two oxen, a custom unknown in Israel (for the Ark was always carried upon the shoulders of the Levi'im as we learn in Bamidbar 7:9 - BAKATEIF YISA'U) but practiced by the Philistines when they transported the Aron (see Shmuel Alef 6:11). When the oxen stumbled, Uza grabbed hold of the Ark itself in an attempt to steady it and prevent it from falling. Although a seemingly innocent act, it was a trespass of the most holy of things. Rather than steady the animals, rather than seize the cart, rather than hold on to the poles that were there for precisely that purpose, Uza shows an improper familiarity with the Holy Ark by grabbing hold of this sanctified appurtenance from whose adorning K'ruvim G-d's voice was heard by Moshe. I recall the words of Chief Rabbi Dr. J. Hertz who explained homiletically (so no one should take offense) that when people might slip and fail to uphold the holy Torah, the job of her teachers and supporters is

to strengthen those who slip and might need inspiration and explanation – but never to put our hands on the eternal Torah and “touch” it or change it in order to make it more “palatable” to the people.

For thousands of years we have borne the yoke of Torah and successfully passed down its morality to the next generation. There may be different ways to teach and inspire different generations but never have we – or should we – change our Holy Torah to fit the preferences or changing attitudes of each different generation.

‘Torah tziva lanu Moshe MORASHA kehillat Ya’akov’ – the Torah is a “Morasha”, a “heritage” to all of our nation. Our job is to keep it alive and pass it down to the future in the exact same state that we received it. Unchanged, undefiled and, therefore, eternal.

Probing the Prophets, weekly insights into the Haftara, is written by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)