

SH'MINI



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

157.2 lines in a Torah, rank: 42nd

6 Parshiyot; 3 open, 3 closed

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

1238 words - 41st (5th in Vayikra)

4670 letters - 41st (5th in Vayikra)
tied with Chukat, more p'sukim,
fewer words

MITZVOT

17 mitzvot; 6 positive; 11 prohibitions

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a 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 the 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 like it. 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? Definitely not. He should 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 - a Purim-time example - 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'lamim, 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 that 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.]

MITZVAnotes

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 (still on a d'Oraita level) is much wider. The Written Word forbids a Kohen from doing sacred service while having recently drunk wine or other intoxicating beverage. 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 Menachot 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 (and not eaten), 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 kill animals for their meat. Only No'ach - AFTER offering Korbanot to G-d of the kosher animals that had been with him on 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, non-sacred 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]

[154, L172 11:4]. 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, L173 11:11].

MITZVAnotes

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, fries them up on his camping stove, 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 we 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 us) have lost the ability of identifying kosher locust, so we don't eat any of them. [Some Yemenites and others 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 - can a non-Teimani rely on the Teimani's tradition as to how to identify a kosher locust, and eat it.]

[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 three p'sukim are reread for the Maftir. These p'sukim stress our challenge to strive for Kedusha, as HaShem is Kodesh. This goes along with HAVDALA, not the one on Motza'ei Shabbat, but to be well aware of the distinction between the Tahor and the Tamei, as we do when it comes to eating meat.

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.