

# SEVEN PILLARS

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Behar

## Seven Pillars

Behar Bechukotai  
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Today's Learning:  
Keilim 22:6-7  
O.C. 308:1-3  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Metzia 21  
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Metzia 11

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (9:1), "With all forms of wisdom she did build her house; she carved out its seven pillars." R' Yaakov Sakly z"l (Spain; 14th century) comments: It is well known that both the meshalim / parables and the nimshalim / morals of King Shlomo deserve study, for the parable is not randomly chosen and it has its own importance. Indeed, the more important the lesson to be taught, the more important the subject of the parable should be. In the words of Mishlei (25:11), "Like golden apples carved on silver platters." True, silver is not as valuable as gold, but it is nevertheless a worthy material on which to serve golden apples. [On the other hand, one would not serve golden apples on paper plates.]

In our verse, the parable is about a woman. R' Sakly explains that King Shlomo is acknowledging the special role that women play in the development of human civilization. No other creature needs its food prepared or its home cared for in the manner that humans do, and this is a role filled by the

woman. Thus, "With all forms of wisdom she did build her house." What is the meaning of, "She carved out its seven pillars"? R' Sakly explains that a basic house requires only four pillars-one at each corner. Thus, "seven pillars" signifies a larger, more luxurious home. When a man has a large house and is able to host guests (as one should), this, too, is to the credit of the woman of the house.

The nimshal of our verse is wisdom in general, and Torah in particular. In those contexts, the number seven refers to many things, including: the "seven wisdoms," the seven books of the Torah (see Shabbat 115b), and the seven "places" where Hashem gave the Torah: (1) from His mouth; (2) face-to-face; (3) from the heavens; (4) at Har Sinai [as mentioned in the opening verse of our parashah]; (5) in the Ohel Mo'ed; (6) in Trans Jordan; and (7) in Zion, as it is written (Yeshayah 2:3), "From Zion the Torah shall go forth." (Torat Ha'minchah)

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"You shall sanctify the year of the fiftieth year . . . and each of you shall return to his ancestral heritage . . ." (Vayikra 25:10)

Why is the word "year" mentioned twice? R' Yechezkel Shraga Lifschutz-Halberstam z"l (the Stropkover Rebbe) explains:

During the 49 days of the Omer, we are supposed to be preparing ourselves to receive the Torah on Shavuot, the 50th day. But what if Shavuot comes and we realize that we have not prepared at all? It is written in certain works that one should not become depressed, for, on Shavuot itself, one can make-up all of the spiritual gains that he should have accomplished during the Omer.

The same thing, says the Stropkover Rebbe, is true of the Yovel / Jubilee year, which has additional holiness compared to other years. The repetition of the word "year" in our verse teaches that one can attain in one year everything that he should have achieved in the preceding 49 years. This is similar to that which Rambam writes: "Even the repentance of one who does not repent until he is on his death bed is accepted." [Ed. note: Rambam does write, however, that such a repentance is not as meaningful as a repentance that occurs in one's youth, when one's drives are stronger.]

Why is it that one can repent in his old age after a lifetime of sinning? Why is it that one can accomplish in a short time (in the 50th year or on Shavuot) what one should have spent a long time accomplishing? Our verse tells us the answer: Such a person is merely returning to his ancestral heritage. In reality, no Jew ever lets go of that heritage completely, whether he realizes it or not. (Divrei Yechezkel Shraga Vol. III)

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"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments . . ." (26:3)

Rashi writes that "If you will follow My decrees" refers to toiling in Torah study. If so, writes R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (Hungary and Yerushalayim; died 1922), we can understand why this verse

follows immediately after the verse, "My Sabbaths you shall observe." Specifically, the Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu states that the primary time for Torah study is on Shabbat, when one is free from work. (Torat Yechiel)

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"Then they will confess their sin and the sin of their forefathers, for the treachery with which they betrayed Me . . . I, too, will behave toward them with casualness, and I will bring them into the land of their enemies." (26:40-41)

Why, if Bnei Yisrael confess their sins, will Hashem behave toward them with casualness and bring them to the land of their enemies? R' Moshe Freidiger z"l (communal leader in Pest, Hungary) explains:

Teshuvah means confessing one's sins and not making excuses. Here, Bnei Yisrael will confess, but they will justify their actions by saying that their forefathers acted the same way. Such "teshuvah" will be rejected. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

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Pirkei Avot

"Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in [connection with] the Holy Temple: . . . (10) No man ever said to his fellow, 'The space is too narrow for me to stay overnight in Yerushalayim'." (Chapter 5)

R' Chaim Palagi z'l (1788-1868; rabbi of Izmir, Turkey) notes that the early commentaries offer three explanations of this statement:

Rashi z"l explains that Yerushalayim provided adequate sustenance for all of its inhabitants and no resident of Yerushalayim had difficulty earning a living there.

Rabbeinu Yonah z"l explains that there was adequate room in Yerushalayim for all Jews who came there.

Others explain that, no matter how crowded Yerushalayim was, the air was always fresh.

R' Palagi observes that these three praises of Yerushalayim are alluded to in the words of Birkat Hamazon, in which all of Eretz Yisrael is described as "chemdah, tova, ur'chavah." "Chemdah" means "desirable," a reference to the pleasant air. "Tova" means "good," and it refers to the availability of a livelihood. Finally, "rechavah" means, "wide-open," a reference to there being enough space for all Jews. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Pninei Rav Chaim Palagi p.380)

R' Avraham Azulai z"l (the Chessed L'Avraham; died 1643 in Chevron) interprets the mishnah as referring to pilgrims who came to Yerushalayim for the Shalosh Regalim. He notes that the words of

the mishnah were carefully chosen. Not only did no one ever say, "There is no room for me," no one even complained that "There is space, but it's too narrow to be comfortable."

Moreover, writes R' Azulai, it is human nature to complain before trying the accommodations and to acknowledge in the morning that they were not so bad after all. Nevertheless, not only did no one ever say, upon awakening in the morning, "The space was too narrow," no one ever said before laying down to sleep, "I don't know how I'll get a good night's sleep in such a narrow space." (Peirush Al Masechet Avot)

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This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

23 Iyar was observed as a fast day in Worms (Vermiza) in commemoration of the massacres of Jews by Crusaders in 4856 (1096). (Luach Davar B'ito p.990)

This date is listed in Megilat Ta'anit as a day when fasting is prohibited in commemoration of the salvation that took place on this date. Specifically, the Chashmonaim expelled the Greeks and their allies from the fortress from which they had terrorized the inhabitants of Yerushalayim.

25 Iyar (the 40th day of the Omer): R' Yechezkel Halberstam (the Shiniva Rebbe; died 1899) would eat dairy today because the gematria of "chalav" / milk is 40. (Likkutei Divrei Yechezkel Ha'chadash)

26 Iyar (41st day of the Omer): Some have the custom to visit the grave of Yosef Ha'tzaddik (son of Yaakov Avinu) in Shechem on this day because Yosef was the paradigm of morality alluded to by the kabbalistic attribute associated with this day of the Omer ("Yesod she'b'yesod"). (Luach Davar B'ito p.995)

On this Hebrew date, World War II ended in Europe. (Hostilities ended after sunset on May 8, 1945; thus, the 26th of Iyar had already begun.)

28 Iyar is listed in Megilat Ta'anit as a day when fasting is prohibited in commemoration of the salvation that took place on this date. Specifically, the Greek occupiers of Eretz Yisrael and their Jewish allies used to decorate their places of idol worship, as well as their stores and homes, with floral wreaths in honor of their gods. They also used to sing songs in public that honored their idols. On this date, the Chashmonaim put a stop to these practices.

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the Hamaayan page.

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