

VAYAKHEL (EXODUS 35:1- 40:38)

Mirror, Mirror in the Sink..." /PARSHAS HACHODESH

2010 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

PARSHAS HACHODESH (Exodus, 12:1-20)

This Shabbos will be a very busy one in the synagogues of the world. As is done every regular Saturday, we will read the weekly Torah Portion. (Actually, Torah Portions – this week is one of those times in the year when the calendar requires us to combine two portions into one. – See “Simchas Torah – Ahead to the Past and Back to the Future”) Then we will continue preparing ourselves for Passover by reading the Torah Portion that announces the advent of the Month of Nissan, the first month of the Jewish year. (See “Nissan Maximum” and “Double Dating”.)

van-i-ty [vánn tee] (plural van-i-ties) noun ...6... a low table with a mirror attached to the top...so that a woman can sit at it when putting on her makeup. ...

7... a cabinet that holds a sink... -- (Encarta® World English Dictionary)

I don't know how they do it. It's reached the point that I'm afraid to turn on the radio. Who knows what terrible news we'll hear next?

Somehow life goes on...Israeli farmers farm, and storeowners sell their wares. To be painfully honest, I find it amazing that more Israelis don't pack up and leave. I sit and wonder what I would do...

Moses had a dilemma.

Donations were coming in for the Tabernacle. This portable structure was to serve as a Temple in the desert. The entire community actively and enthusiastically participated in the fund-raising efforts. Donations of silver, gold, and other precious items were pouring in. Everyone wanted to give something that would be used in construction of the building or the vessels.

One of the vessels in the Tabernacle was the "*Kiyor*," a washstand made out of copper. This sink would be used by the Kohanim – Priests to wash their hands and feet before the Temple Service. Donations of copper had come in, but Moses was reluctant to accept them.

The problem was that women had donated their polished copper mirrors. They wanted to have their mirrors melted down and made into a copper sink.

Moses was repulsed. How could he accept these mirrors? The Tabernacle was to be a holy place filled with holy vessels! These mirrors represented vanity. Women would sit in front of these mirrors for hours on end preening and painting and brushing themselves...What could be more secular and unG-dly than a woman trying to make herself beautiful? How could Moses permit such vanity in G-d's house?

The copper basin was to be used by the Priests to sanctify themselves. They would not be permitted to perform the Temple Service without it. Moses felt that it would be distasteful and inappropriate to make such a holy item out of these unholy mirrors.

Moses' reluctance was overruled: "Accept them," said G-d, "because these are dearest to Me of all, for by means of them, the women established many legions in Egypt." (From Rashi's commentary on Exodus, 38:8.)

The Egyptians had been very concerned about the Jewish population explosion. They HAD to find a way to cut back the Jewish birthrate. The plan was to overwork the slaves so that they would collapse from exhaustion. The men were so weary at the end of the day that "family planning" was the farthest thing from their minds. In this way, the Egyptians hoped to undermine Jewish family life, and thereby reduce the number of children in Jewish families.

The Israelite women had to counter this Egyptian holocaust. They saw the need to build the Jewish Nation. Armed with their mirrors and faith in G-d, they made themselves attractive to their husbands and built a Jewish future.

Now Moses understood what was so special about those mirrors. They symbolized not vanity and sensuality, but faith and dedication. What better material could one possibly find for making the copper basin for the Temple!

It is very easy to understand why an Egyptian Jew would be reluctant to bring children into the world. There was nothing to look forward to but slavery and persecution. Moses himself, when returning to Egypt to lead his People out, left his children with his in-laws, where they would be safe!

However, the Daughters of Israel would not be deterred. The Egyptians, with all their evil plans, would not prevent them from living normal lives. They would, come what may, be wives to their husbands and mothers to their children.

Throughout the millennia, in times of trouble, the Mothers of Israel have demonstrated phenomenal strength and trust in G-d. Whether it was rejecting the Golden Calf or breaking the ice on frozen *Mikvahs*, they went about their daily lives and never let adversity stand in their way.

Such strength deserves recognition in the Temple. Those mirrors earned their place in the copper washbasin.

This is the strength of our Israeli brothers and sisters. They have learned an important lesson from Egypt. Our Israeli brethren realize that if we despair, our enemies win. Our enemies are not the masters of our destiny; G-d is. Therefore, they continue to go about their daily lives with faith and with prayer.

May they too see their efforts rewarded in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.

Have a great Shabbos.

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