

You know what Warren Buffett says? Warren Buffett, 82 years old, has a net worth of \$53 billion, 4 richest person in the world...you know what he says? He says *you've got to have skin in the game*. You've got to have skin in the game...I used to think that was a football reference. I thought the skin, you'll forgive me, was the pig skin—the football itself...no football, no game. But no, evidently having skin in the game means that business executives need to use their own money to buy stock in the very companies that they run. That means that executives have a real personal stake in those companies. Buffet says "*Executives can talk all they want but the best vote of confidence is putting one's own money on the line....*"

Now you're all probably wondering why in the world I'm talking to you about this today? Well, I'll tell you, Buffett's idea of *having skin in the game*, of investing your own precious resources in a company that you work for, that you are supposed to care about...this is precisely what the Book of Leviticus is all about. In fact I think it is what Judaism is all about!

The first verse of the entire book says: *Adam ki yakriv mikem korban lAdonai*...When a person brings or presents an offering to God... Nothing that follows in this book, none of its instructions, none of its rituals, none of its transformative power can happen until someone brings forward something of themselves! Until a person, to borrow from Buffett, has some skin in the game. Judaism rises or falls on this phrase: *Adam ki yakriv mikem*...It all depends on what you bring forward of yourself; what you invest of yourself in this beautiful, precious tradition. How much skin you have in the game!

Everybody knows that Leviticus is all about sacrifices, right? I'm sure that this Torah portion was not Sara's first choice. You know the English word sacrifice, though is profoundly misunderstood. When we hear sacrifice what do we think of: Killing something, destroying something, giving something up, forfeiting something, losing something. Sacrifice comes from the Latin word that means sacred. When you make a sacrifice you consecrate something, you commit it, you dedicate it and prioritize it towards something deeply important. That's what *b'nai Yisrael* were doing in our parasha. They took a cow, which was like a Cadillac in antiquity, and they turned into a means of drawing closer to God, which is what the Hebrew word *korban* implies. They took this item of exorbitant physical value, and turned into something of exorbitant spiritual value.

All the time I meet people who are waiting. They are waiting to be moved. They are waiting to be inspired. They are waiting for everything to fall into place, to make sense; they're waiting for a miracle to happen and erase all their doubts and questions. But you know what, so often they don't have any skin in the game. There's no korban...no sacrifice, no offering of the self. You've heard the expression "Patience is a virtue, just not a Jewish one." Don't get me wrong: You should be patient spouses, and patient parents, and patient friends...but you should be impatient Jews! There is so much to learn, so much to do, so much to love! Don't wait another minute! Remember the Tabernacle did not come to the Jews, the Jews had to come to the Tabernacle. If you want to know why there are these meshuggenah Jews who love to pray in Hebrew, or who look forward to reading this ancient book every week, or are crazy and eccentric enough to turn off their phones for 24-hours on Shabbat, or who actually enjoy coming to shul every week, then for God's sake, find out. Adam ki yakriv mikem...come closer; step inside; bring something of yourself along on the journey. In nine days, we are going to sit at our seder tables and say: *kol dichfin yeitei ve'yeichul*, all who are hungry, let them come and eat. I am convinced that the haggadah is not only talking about physical hunger, but also spiritual hunger. There is a hunger crisis in our world and our community. There are plenty of people who are hungry for food to be sure, and there are plenty who are hungry for God and for Torah as well. And what do we say to them: *yeitei ve'yeichul*...Come and eat at our table. Come share our bounty. Come, be an active participant in this drama, rather than a passive spectator.

A lot of religions in the world ask their adherents to take a leap of faith; to pronounce a creed or a dogma or a catechism of some kind. But Abraham Joshua Heschel taught us that Jews are asked not to take a leap of faith but a leap of action. Just like our desert ancestors long ago. Think about this, there were no words spoken when a person brought that animal to the altar in Leviticus! The emphasis was entirely on the tactile, the palpable, the demonstrative qualities of that ritual. Pay attention to the cascade of verbs in this parasha: Laying on of hands, washing, presenting, pouring, bringing, dashing, removing, preparing...it's so direct and dynamic. And it is a metaphor, just like having skin in the game is a metaphor, for a faith that is based on action not apathy; a religious life that is about doing not just deliberating.

The prophet Isaiah, the source of the Haftarah that Sara so beautifully read this morning and that Daniel so thoughtfully introduced said in the second verse of the reading: *Lo oti karata*

Ya'akov...God says, "you never call me anymore..." This is the biblical source for the Jewish mother's guilt...

You never call me anymore," says God, *ki yagata bi*, because you have grown tired of Me. Isn't that a tragic thing for God to have to say to the Jewish people...You don't call Me because you've lost interest in Me? Too many Jews have lost interest, but its because they long ago stopped looking. *Shuva alay ki ga'alticha*...come back to Me, God says. Let's start over. Let's renew this relationship, this brit, this covenant, *etzak mayim al tzamei*, and I will pour fresh water on your thirsty soil.

Dear friends, Passover is the season of rebirth and renewal. That's why we eat more eggs in parsley in one week than we eat during the rest of the weeks of the year combined. May the life and hope of this season inspire you to get off the sidelines; to rediscover the preciousness of Jewish life; and to get some skin in the game.