



הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT VAYIKRA 5783 • 2023



ISRAEL Parsha Picture








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וְנָתַתְּ עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן,
וְשִׁמַּתְּ עָלֶיהָ לְבִנְיָהּ...









שמות ב:טו

INSIDE



TORAT MIZRACHI

-  Rabbi Doron Perez 2
-  Rabbi Reuven Taragin 4
-  Rabbanit Shani Taragin 5
-  Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon 6
-  Rabbanit Sharon Rimon 7
-  Sivan Rahav Meir & Yedidya Meir 8
-  Rabbi Danny Mirvis 9




PARSHAT HASHAVUA

-  Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l 10
-  Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit"a 12
-  Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit"a 13
-  Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE 14
-  Rabbi Shalom Rosner 15
-  Michal Horowitz 16
-  Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 17
-  Rabbi Eli Mansour 18

INSPIRATION

-  Rabbi Moshe Weinberger 19
-  Rabbi YY Jacobson 20
-  Rabbi Judah Mischel 21
-  Mrs. Shira Smiles 22
-  Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi 23

ISRAEL CONTENT

-  Hebrew Language: David Curwin 24
-  Riddles: Reb Leor Broh 24
-  Dust & Stars: This Week in Jewish History 24

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Giving It Your All

Elevating to the Greatest Heights



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

I am continually inspired by a powerful piece of advice of King Solomon, the wisest of all men, in Kohelet - Ecclesiastes (9:10) where he states so powerfully:

“כל אשר תמצא ידך לעשות, בכחך עשה..”

“Anything that comes your way to do in life, do it with all your might.”

This I believe is a life motto. If you want to succeed in anything in life, you have to give it everything you got. Greatness can never be achieved with a half hearted effort. Indeed, without deep passion, unrelenting drive and absolute commitment to that which is important to us, we will struggle to make a difference. This is a truism of life, from the more mundane undertakings to the most sublime endeavors.

Skin in the Game

As Warren Buffett, arguably the greatest investor of all time said – “if you want to succeed you have to have skin in the game.” You have to be fully personally invested in the venture at hand.

We know that with relation to kosher food, parev food is neither milk nor dairy and therefore may be eaten together with either. When you want to say to someone that they should take a stand on an issue, we colloquially say ‘Don’t be parev’ i.e. don’t remain vague and bland. Parev is neither here nor there. There is a new expression in Israel to express blandness and that is ‘Don’t be חלבי – dairy.’ Even

dairy is not enough as it is only meat which constitutes muscle and flesh; that contains, so to speak, blood, sweat and tears; heart, body and soul.

The 110% Solution

One has to be ‘all in’ and be fully invested with everything one has in order to succeed. I so identify with this. I remember many years ago seeing a book on my father’s shelf written by Mark McCormack, the person who pioneered the sports agency business. He was the first person who convinced sportspeople to focus on sports and allow businesspeople to manage their business interests.

I remember as a teenager picking up this book entitled “The 110% solution.” He highlighted how the greatest people in life in general, and in sports in particular, are those who give not 100% but 110% – everything they possibly have in order to master their craft.

If this is true regarding the more mundane and material endeavors of life then this is true a thousand fold, קל וחומר וכן בנו של קל וחומר, regarding spiritual matters. Especially with the singular most paramount spiritual undertaking – our relationship with Hashem.

Korban # 1

I believe that this is the profound message of both this week’s Parsha Vayikra and next week’s Parsha Tzav with respect to the order of the sacrifices mentioned in

these two Parshiot. The sacrifice which *always* comes *first* is the קרבן עולה, the elevation or burnt offering. Although the order of the five categories of sacrifices changes in these two parashot the burnt offering is always first.¹

Why must the burnt offering always come first?

The reason it seems is that it is the only sacrifice which has the unique distinction that it is *burnt* in its *entirety* on the altar. Neither the one who brings the korban nor the kohen who offers it may partake of any part. The entire offering is fully consumed in the fire. Everything, so to speak, is given to Hashem. All of it goes up to Heaven and hence its name – the Korban Olah, the elevation offering. The message is clear. This korban creates the context of our relationship with Hashem. It must be based on a relationship of full commitment – we need to be ‘all in.’

Offering, Sacrifice or Korban?

In truth this is the essence of the word קרבן. Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch makes a critical insight into the difference between what a קרבן – a sacrifice – is as opposed to the English word ‘offering.’ The English word comes from the Latin

‘offerō’ which means to offer, to give or provide. It implies that we are offering something to G-d, as if He is lacking and we are giving Him something He is in need of. קרבן comes from the Hebrew word קרב – to *come closer*. The distinction is clear. The impact of the קרבן is **on us**. Its aim is for us to come closer to Hashem and build our relationship with Him. It is our need. The first step to any deep and meaningful relationship, especially the most meaningful of all – our relationship with Hashem – is to be wholly and fully committed to it.

The Shema – loving with every fiber of our being

This very sentiment of wholehearted commitment as the very thing the Shema requires of us to declare at twice a day – at the beginning of the day and again in the evening. We are called upon to ‘Love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, your soul and all your might’ בכל לבבך, בכל נפשך ובכל מאדך. Our sages say that “all your soul” means that we are called upon, Heaven Forbid, even to give up our very lives for the sake of our relationship with G-d. All in. If so then what does בכל מאדך mean – translated as ‘with all your might.’ What can you possibly give that is more than your heart and soul – your very life?

מאד is hard to translate, it means ‘very,’ normally used as a descriptive word of emphasis, as an adjective or adverb. Here it is unusually being used as a noun. Love G-d with ‘all your very’ – what does this mean? It seems that we are being called upon to love Hashem with everything – our hearts and souls and then some more – our **very lives and entire beings** – our whole might and strength – everything we got.

May we all indeed give wholeheartedly – heart, body and soul, with everything we have and with all our might to our relationship with Hashem. May we aim to give the same to all those cherished relationships we have with those closest to us and may we give our all to any important endeavor or undertaking, big or small, that we take upon ourselves. Total commitment is the basis for success in all of life’s salient endeavors.

1. The five categories of sacrifices are mentioned in detail at the beginning of both Parshiot. In Vayikra the order is: Korban Olah, Mincha, Shelamim, Chatat and Asham. In Tzav the order is: Korban Olah, Mincha, Chatat, Asham, Shelamim. The Korban Olah is always first.



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רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶן חֲכִינַאי אָמַר, הַנְּעוֹר בְּלֵילָה וְהִמְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ יְחִידִי וְ(ה)מְפָנָה לְבו לְבַטָּלָה,
הָרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנִפְשׁוֹ: (אבות ג:ד)

Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai lists three activities that cause a person to be “*mit'chayev b'nafsho* (mortally guilty)” — staying awake at night, traveling alone and directing one's heart towards meaninglessness.¹ Why are these activities problematic, and why is the punishment for engaging in them so severe?

Natural Danger

Many *mefarshim*² explain that the first two activities (being up at night and traveling alone) are naturally dangerous. Roads outside of cities are (especially in ancient times) less structured and safe. Similarly, darkness makes nights a dangerous time to be up and about. Additionally, staying up late, rather than sleeping, is an unhealthy practice.

Though this interpretation explains the first two cases listed by the mishnah, it does not explain the third — *mefaneh libo l'vatalah* (one who directs his heart towards meaninglessness). Why is this dangerous?

Furthermore, the assumption that the mishnah deals with activities that are naturally dangerous raises two additional questions. Firstly, why does the mishnah use the term “*mit'chayev b'nafsho*” (which implies culpability) to refer to one who puts himself in natural harm's way? Secondly, why does Avot — a mesechet dedicated to ethics and morals — include a *mishnah* focused upon personal safety?

Meaninglessness

For these reasons, many *mefarshim* offer an alternative explanation for the mishnah. They explain the term *mit'chayev b'nafsho* as referring not to naturally dangerous situations, but, rather, to inappropriate behavior that incurs heavenly punishment.

Let us examine the three activities listed by the mishnah from this perspective. The problem with the third activity — *mefaneh libo l'vatalah* — is understandable. We are meant to focus our lives and attention on meaningful things. Though we often become distracted, we should never direct our attention to meaninglessness.

The Meiri adds that not taking advantage of the opportunity to study Torah reflects a lack of appreciation and love for it.³ This is why the heavens cry over those who do not take advantage of their opportunities to study Torah.⁴

This part of the mishnah is critically important to contemporary society. Though people have always been tempted to involve themselves in meaningless pursuits, the easy access to social media and entertainment in the palm of our hand has increased the temptation tenfold. Cell phones offer quick communication, helpful tools, and access to meaningful content, but also distractions and potential time wasters.

Using Our Nights

Many *mefarshim* explain the problem with the first two activities mentioned by the mishnah along similar lines.

Being up at night without learning Torah is a misuse of the night. We work during the day, but have free time at night.⁵ We should use this free time to sleep or to learn Torah.⁶ One awake at night but not learning wastes the night, which was created for these two purposes,⁷ and is thus “*mit'chayev b'nafsho*.” He does not deserve the life he has been gifted.

This part of the mishnah is also very relevant to contemporary life. Electricity has turned night into “day” and extended the amount of time available to pursue areas of interest. To fill the void of the newly available time, society has developed many forms of leisure and entertainment. We need to remember that we were given the wonderful gift of Torah that we are meant to take full advantage of. We do so by studying it whenever we can — especially at night.⁸

It is also important to use our nights to sleep so we are able to fully maximize the coming days. Electricity and technology often cause us to stay up later than we should. Sadly, this impairs our ability to get up on time and function properly the next day. The Shulchan Aruch begins by emphasizing the importance of having the “strength to wake

up like a lion.” In today's world, we (also) need the self-control to go to sleep on time.

According to this approach, the real issue is not being up at night, but the waste of precious time. In essence, the significance of the mishnah's opening phrase — *nei'or balayla* — is explained through the mishnah's closing phrase — *mefaneh libo l'vatalah*. One is *mit'chayev b'nafsho* not for being up late, but, rather, for focusing on meaninglessness during that time.

Travel Opportunities

Many *mefarshim* explain the problem with the mishnah's second activity in a similar fashion. Someone traveling alone has no one (they need) to speak with and can use the time to focus on learning Torah. Travel, like nights, is a time when we are not working and are able to focus our thoughts on Torah learning. One who, instead, chooses to focus on meaninglessness is “*mit'chayev b'nafsho*” because of this waste of time and opportunity.

This idea is also very relevant to the modern world, where many spend hours alone in their cars or traveling with others who they do not know. What do we do while we are driving, or on the train, bus or plane? Do we listen to meaningless things on the radio, read the paper, or, maybe, allow our mind to wander aimlessly? This travel time is an excellent opportunity to listen to a shiur or study other Torah content. When we choose the latter, we take full advantage of our time and merit the life Hashem blesses us with. One who does not is “*mit'chayev b'nafsho*.”

Inspired to Learn

Traveling alone or being awake at night are not just opportunities to learn Torah. They are also situations that should inspire us to do so. The Rashbatz connects the two explanations of the mishnah and explains that we should alleviate the potential danger posed by traveling alone or being up at night by learning Torah, which protects those who study it. One in danger (because he is up at night or traveling alone) who intentionally chooses to focus on meaninglessness shows

Continued on page 9

The “Five-Star” Seder in Bnei Brak



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

“**E**ven if we were all wise... all sages and well learned in the Torah, it would still be our duty to tell the story of the departure from Egypt. And the more one elaborates upon the story of the departure from Egypt, the more one is to be praised.” Immediately after teaching the above imperative, the ba’alei haHagadah recount the narrative of Five-“star” Sages in Bnei Brak, who fulfilled the above: “Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon were telling of the departure from Egypt all night, until their disciples came and said to them: Our masters, the time for the recitation of the morning Shema has arrived.”

This was an odd phenomenon – firstly, at least three of the four Sages mentioned – R. Eliezer (from Lod), R. Yehoshua (from Peki’in), and R. Tarfon were masters and teachers of Rabbi Akiva (from Bnei Brak)! Why were they spending the Seder night with their student (generally students visit their teachers on festivals)?

Secondly, R. Eliezer in particular taught (BT Sukkah 27b) that one is required to celebrate yom tov in one’s home based on the pasuk, “You shall rejoice, you and **your household**” (Devarim 14:26) which he contradicts through spending Pesach night in Rabbi Akiva’s home?!

The Arukh Hashulchan (Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, 1829-1908 in his commentary on the Haggadah, “Leil Shimurim,”) suggests that the Seder in Bnei Brak took place after the destruction of the Second Beit HaMikdash, most probably during the harsh Hadrianic persecutions following the failed Bar Kokhva rebellion. This was one of the most tragic and despairing



The secret is not only to retain optimism and recount redemption of the past as a prelude to the future, but simultaneously to strengthen oneself in religious commitment.

eras in Jewish history as Jewish leaders were being tortured to death and a harsh Roman exile was yet to follow.

How could Pesach – the holiday of freedom and redemption be celebrated that year in the midst of terror and persecution? Who could inspire the leaders to retain their faith and optimism? All agreed that Rabbi Akiva, who could laugh upon hearing the rejoicing of Roman officers and seeing foxes/jackals (or Roman officers) emerging from the *Kodesh Kodashim*, confident in the fulfillment of the prophecies of consolation (BT Makkot 24b), could offer them the inspiration they needed!

Rabbi Akiva debated with Rabbi Tarfon regarding the proper conclusion to the Maggid : “R.Tarfon said, *‘Blessed art Thou, O G-d... Who has redeemed us and has redeemed our forebears [past tense] from Egypt’ - and did not seal [the blessing]. R. Akiva continued and concluded R. Tarfon’s blessing: ‘...So shall our G-d and the G-d of our forebears bring to us other festivals and celebrations for peace, rejoicing in the rebuilding of Your city and reveling in Your service; and we shall eat there from the paschal lamb and the sacrifices...*

Blessed art Thou, Who has redeemed Israel.” (BT Pesakhim 116b).

Rabbi Akiva’s berakha of thanksgiving for past and future redemptions would be recited that year (even in the presence of Rabbi Tarfon) as he hosted this monumental seder as one of the Five-“star” / leaders of his generation. For though he may have been the student, that year and onward, he would teach and inspire generations to maintain faith in HaKB”H and the destiny of Am Yisrael. He would live and die with the words of “Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad” on his lips – constantly engaged in *Kabbalat Ol Malkhut Shmayim* (accepting the yoke of Heaven) regardless of dire circumstances.

Rabbi Akiva teaches us messages of redemption for every Seder; the secret is not only to retain optimism and recount redemption of the past as a prelude to the future, but simultaneously to strengthen oneself in religious commitment. It is no surprise that Rabbi Akiva’s own students had to come to announce – “Our masters, the time for the recitation of the morning Shema has arrived.” The Rabbis were well aware of the ideal time to recite “Kriyat Shema”; in fact they had been engaged in reciting Rabbi Akiva’s “Kriyat Shema” all night as they rekindled their faith in redemption, in martyrdom and in acceptance of “*ol malkhut shamayim.*” The students had yet to partake in such a Seder; for otherwise they would have known that the morning sun heralding redemption had already risen hours earlier as the Pesach story was retold throughout the night in Bnei Brak.

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

*The next few weeks will feature Q and A's regarding the different stages of the seder night.
These are taken directly from Rav Rimon's book, "Pesach Haggadah - Shirat Miriam"*

Kadesh

Question: How big must the cup be?

Answer: The cup must hold a revi'it of liquid (86 cc. or 2.9 fluid ounces, but those who are stringent require 150 cc. or 5.07 fluid ounces, especially for the first cup, which also has the mitzvah of kiddush).

Question: How much must one drink?

Answer: Ideally, one should drink the entire contents of the cup, or at least the majority. Therefore, it is preferable not to use too large of a cup. One who finds it too hard to drink the majority of the cup can suffice with drinking the majority of a revi'it.

Question: Must one drink it all at once?

Answer: There are those who hold that it must be drunk in one or two swallows, but the main point is to drink it down continuously, without taking the cup away from one's mouth.

Question: May one use grape juice?

Answer: Wine is preferable because it is a symbol of freedom and of the joy of the festival (another preference is that the wine be red). However, grape juice may certainly be used. Therefore, if a person finds it hard to drink wine because of the taste or because he has a headache or is tired, he may drink grape juice from the start, and many of Israel's greatest scholars have done so (this is sometimes even preferable so that a person will be able to relate the story of Exodus with a clear mind and without being tired).

Question: What intention must one have for the four cups?

Answer:

a. The first cup is that of kiddush, and therefore, one should intend to fulfill the mitzvah of kiddush and that of drinking four cups.

b. When drinking the first cup, Ashkenazim should specifically think not to intend to have the blessing cover the second cup. The same is true for all of the cups, as Ashkenazic practice is to recite a new blessing over each cup (this is because each cup is a separate mitzvah in its own right, and there is a considerable time lapse between cups).

Sefardim should intend to have the first blessing cover the first two cups and the second blessing cover the third and fourth cups, as Sefardic practice is to recite blessings only on the first and third cups (because only the Grace after Meals is considered to be an interruption).

c. By drinking the four cups, one also fulfills the obligation to publicize G-d's miracle, and it is proper to be aware of that.

d. When reciting the shehecheyanu blessing, one should intend for it to cover all of the mitzvot throughout the night.

Urchatz

Question: Why do we wash our hands before karpas?

Answer: This washing is not related to Pesach. Throughout the year one is required to wash one's hands without a blessing before eating any fruit or

vegetable that is wet ("food that has been dipped in liquid")

Question: Why aren't people careful about this throughout the year?

Answer: Some Acharonim (Magen Avraham) justify this practice, especially if one had washed his hands with a utensil the last time he went to the bathroom and had made sure not to soil his hands since then (Birkei Yosef). However, most Acharonim hold that throughout the year we are obligated to wash our hands before eating a fruit or vegetable that has been dipped in water (Mishnah Berurah).

Question: Why are we careful about this on Seder night?

Answer:

Taz holds that it is indeed not logical, but that people do so because the haggadah states that people wash their hands at this point.

Chok Yaakov explains that we do it because it will be something unusual for the children to see.

Netziv explains that on seder night we act as they did at the time when the Temple stood. In those times, according to all views, one was required to wash his hands.

Question: How do we wash our hands?

Answer: We should wash our hands the way it is done throughout the year. Using a utensil, we wash our right hand twice and then our left hand twice, but do not say a blessing.

Continued on next page

דיון משפחתי: פרשת ויקרא - משמעות הקרבנות

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



בפיו כנגד הדבור, וישרוף באש הקרב והכליות שהם כלי המחשבה והתאווה, והכרעים כנגד ידיו ורגליו של אדם העושים כל מלאכתו, ויזרוק הדם על המזבח כנגד דמו בנפשו, **כדי שיחשוב אדם בעשותו כל אלה כי חטא לאלהיו בגופו ובנפשו, וראוי לו שישפך דמו וישרף גופו לולא חסד הבורא שלקח ממנו תמורה** וכפר הקרבן הזה שיהא דמו תחת דמו, נפש תחת נפש, וראשי אברי הקרבן כנגד ראשי אבריו, והמנות להחיות בהן מורי התורה שיתפללו עליו. וקרבן התמיד, בעבור שלא ינצלו הרבים מחטוא תמיד. ואלה דברים מתקבלים מושכים את הלב כדברי אגדה. ועל דרך האמת יש בקרבנות טוד נעלם... (רמב"ן לויקרא א', ט).

רמב"ן מבהיר שהקרבן איננו רק נתינה סמלית של האדם לה', אלא כל פרט ופרט בו הוא בעל משמעות סימלית, כך שאדם המביא קרבן חטאת אמור להרגיש כאילו שהוא מקריב את עצמו לה', ככפרה על מעשיו. כמוכן, שהמשמעות הסמלית של קרבן החטאת שונה מהמשמעות של קרבן התודה או העולה, ולכן, לכל קרבן יש דינים שונים, המותאמים למשמעות שהוא מבטא.

היום, כאשר אין לנו אפשרות להקריב קרבן, עלינו להבין את משמעות הקרבנות ולנסות לבטאם באופנים אחרים.

כך האדם העומד מול אלקיו, יודע שלעולם לא יוכל באמת להבין אותו או להעניק לו משהו, ובכל זאת הוא רוצה להביע רגשותיו כלפי האל, ולכן יתן לו את הכי טוב שביכולתו לתת, מבכורות צאנו או מביכורי פרותיו, למרות שהאל אינו צריך את מתנתו של האדם, ובוודאי שאינו "אוכל" את הקרבן.

בנתינה זו יביע האדם את רצונו להתחבר אל ה', לבטא את אהבתו אליו, ולעתים לבקש מחילה על טעויות, ולעתים להודות על כל הטוב אשר גמל איתו. כך מסביר רד"ק את הקרבן הראשון המתואר בתורה – קרבנו של קין:

אחר שנה משעבד את האדמה הביא לו ממה שהוציאה לו האדמה מנחה... וזה דרך ההודאה לאל... והביאו כל אחד מהמלאכה שבה היה מתעסק, **להודות לאל על הטובה שנתן לו בעבודתו** (רד"ק לבראשית ד', ג).

רמב"ן (לבראשית ד', ג ולויקרא א', ט) מוסיף, **שבקרבנות יש "טוד גדול"**, שאדם הראשון ובניו הבינו אותו, ולכן הקריבו קרבן. מהו הסוד של הקרבנות רמב"ן לא מפרט, אך הוא רומז על כך שקרבן איננו מעשה נתינה רגיל, אלא יש בו עומק נסתר. יחד עם זאת, רמב"ן נותן גם טעם הגיוני למצוות הקרבנות (ומתייחס בעיקר לקרבן חטאת):

כי בעבור שמעשי בני אדם נגמרים **במחשבה ובדבור ובמעשה**, צוה השם כי **כאשר יחטא יביא קרבן**, יסמוך ידיו עליו כנגד המעשה, ויתודה

ה אם עלה במחשבתכם פעם, לתת לה' משהו שיבטא את הקשר שלכם אליו? מה הייתם נותנים לה'?

האמונה היהודית התרחקה מכל הגשמה. לא-ל אין גוף או דמות הגוף, ואף אסור לעשות פסל או תמונה שייצגו אותו. והנה, מצווה עלינו התורה להקריב קרבנות, שהם כביכול הגשמה ממש: האמנם ה' זקוק לאכילה? או להריח את ריח הניחוח? או שינתנו לו מתנות?

הקרבנות קרבנות הייתה נפוצה בעולם עוד לפני שהתורה ציוותה על כך. חז"ל אומרים שאדם הראשון הקריב קרבן לה' (חולין ט'); קין הביא לה' קרבן מפרי אדמתו, והבל הביא מבכורות צאנו (בראשית ד'); נח הקריב קרבן לה' כשניצל מן המבול (בראשית ט'); ואברהם אבינו בנה מזבחות והקריב לה' בכל מקום אליו הגיע (בראשית י"ב).

אנו לומדים מכך, שהרצון לתת לה', להקריב קרבן לה', הוא תחושה טבעית. ומה יתן האדם לא-ל?

ילד קטן הרוצה לבטא את אהבתו להוריו, אינו יכול להעניק להם משהו שהם באמת צריכים, הוא אפילו אינו מסוגל להבין מה הם צריכים. הוא נותן להם את הדבר הכי טוב שהוא מסוגל לתת, בהתאם ליכולותיו. הנתינה הזו מסמלת בעיני הוריו את הרצון שלו לקשר, את אהבתו.

Continued from previous page

Question: Are all participants required to wash?

Answer: The primary requirement applies to a person who picks up karpas with his hand, but even a person who picks it up with a fork should wash his hands.

Ideally, all should wash their hands. At large seder meals, where it is extremely difficult to do so, one may rely on those who rule leniently and say that only the head of the household must wash his hands.

Question: What should a person who accidentally recided the blessing do?

Answer: He should eat more than a kezayit of karpas (unlike everyone else, who eats less than a kezayit).

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.

Terms of Endearment



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

You have a certain ideology and you are convinced that you are right, but how do you speak to those who do not agree with you? You are a parent who knows exactly what to tell your child to do, but do you really see the little person with whom you are speaking or is the main thing just to fire off what you want to say? And what about a boss who needs to speak to his employee, or a conversation between husband and wife?

The book we begin to read this week – the Book of Leviticus – opens with these words: “And He called to Moses, and He spoke to him.” Our commentators explain: G-d first addressed Moses by his name, and only afterwards did he begin to tell him what to do. In the initial stage, you speak pleasantly to the other person, and only afterwards do you discuss the matter at hand.

ידו, ועלה לשמי מרום, והוריד התורה, ונתעסק במלאכת המשכן – אף על פי כן לא נכנס לפניו עד שקרא לו, שנאמר: ויקרא אל משה.”

כלומר, דרך ארץ ותבונה הן דבר חשוב מאוד. גם אם אתה גדול כמו משה רבנו, אל תקפוץ לתוך אוהל מועד אם לא קראו לך. תחכה, תשלוט בעצמך. ואם תהיה זחוח ומלא בעצמך ותרוץ פנימה, ההגדרה החריפה עליך היא: “כל תלמיד חכם שאין בו דעה – נבלה טובה ממנו.”

לכאורה זו רק הפתיחה של ספר ויקרא, עוד לפני שמתחילים ללמוד, אבל גם המשפט הראשון הזה מלמד אותנו משהו.

Rashi comments on this first verse of the Book of Leviticus as follows: “Before G-d addresses Moses – whether through speech, utterance, or command – He always calls him by name, as an expression of affection.” This is a powerful tool all of us could use, in every situation: to precede whatever we have to say with terms of endearment.



In 1947, David Ben-Gurion spoke before a United Nations investigative committee that had arrived in Israel. He explained our connection to this land as follows:

“Three hundred years ago, a ship called the Mayflower set sail for the New World. This was a seminal event in the history of both England and America. But I want to know if there is a single Englishman who knows on what date the ship embarked and how many Americans know this.



הצבא או בית הספר או התור בדואר?
לשון חיבה. מוזמנים לנסות בפעם הבאה שתפנו למישהו.



מזל טוב, ספר חדש! אחרי בריאת העולם בספר “בראשית” ויציאת מצרים בספר “שמות” – היום מתחילה הקריאה בספר “ויקרא”.

מילות הפתיחה של הספר הן: “וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר.” משה לא נכנס פנימה לאוהל מועד בביטחון עצמי, הוא מחכה שיקראו לו. הנה התיאור שמופיע במדרש:

“כל תלמיד חכם שאין בו דעה, נבלה טובה ממנו. צא ולמד ממשה אבי החכמה, אבי הנביאים, שהוציא את ישראל ממצרים ונעשו נסים על

Do they know how many people were on board and what kind of bread they ate as they departed? And yet, 3,000 years before the Mayflower, the Jews left Egypt and every Jew in the world, including those in America and the Soviet Union, know the date they left was the 15th of Nissan. And everyone knows exactly what kind of bread the Jews ate: matzos. And until today, Jews throughout the world eat these same matzos on the 15th of Nissan – in America, in Russia, and in a multitude of other countries. And they tell the story of the painful experience of Jews when they went into Egyptian exile and of their redemption when they finally left. And they finish the story with this exhortation: this year we are slaves, next year we will be free. This year we are here, next year in Jerusalem, in Zion, in the Land of Israel. Such an innate longing is part of the nature of every Jew.”

כשאנחנו רוצים לומר משהו למישהו, אפילו לנזוף בו, איך אנחנו ניגשים אליו? ספר ויקרא שאנחנו מתחילים לקרוא בפרשת השבוע ממליץ לנו להתחיל ב“לשון חיבה”.

העיקרון הזה מופיע כבר בפסוק הראשון בספר ויקרא: וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד. אלוקים קודם כל קורא למשה, ורק אז מדבר אליו. רש"י כותב שלכל הדיבורים ולכל הציווים קדמה קריאה, “לשון חיבה”. אלוקים קרא קודם כל למשה בשמו הפרטי, נתן לו מקום וכבוד, הערכה והכרה, ורק אחרי היחס החיובי הזה – הגיע העניין, התוכן.

פרשנים רבים מסבירים שאם כך דיבר אלוקים למשה רבנו, אז קל וחומר שכך אנחנו צריכים לדבר. למה להוריד פקודות בבית, במקום לפנות לכל אחד בשמו, בחיבה? למה לא לפנות לבן הזוג קודם כל בצורה נעימה, לא משנה מה רוצים לומר אחר כך? ומה לגבי מקום העבודה, או הישיבה או

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“If a soul (Nefesh) brings a meal offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour and he shall pour oil on it and he shall place frankincense on it” (Vayikra 2:1).

Towards the beginning of this week’s Parsha, we learn about the meal offering, made out of fine flour, oil and frankincense. Rashi comments that this offering stands out from all others:

“Of all the voluntary sacrifices, it only says “Nefesh” with the meal offering. Who is wont to volunteer a meal offering? A poor person. The Holy One Blessed Be He said, “I count it for him (the poor person) as if he offered his soul” (Rashi, Vayikra 2:1).

Rashi (quoting the Gemara in Menachot 104b) explains that although a poor person may not be able to afford an expensive animal or birds to bring as an offering, Hashem treats his modest offering as if he sacrificed his soul.

However, we can ask: If it is not how much a person volunteers which is important, but the effort they put in and the intentions behind their donation, why are the sacrifices listed in price order? If the poor person’s meal offering is so precious before Hashem, why is it taught last?

According to the Kli Yakar, these sacrifices are not listed in order of importance. Rather, he explains:

“The earlier a person appears in the verse, the more likely he is to sin ... and whoever is greater than his fellow with wealth or with honour, his (evil) inclination is greater ... Therefore, it first mentions the cattle for the one who is offering it is presumably rich, and then it mentions the flock, for it is the way of the (person with) average (wealth) to offer flock, and then it mentions the bird offering, for it is the way of the poor to bring birds, and then it mentions the meal offering, which is

brought by the poorest of the poor” (Kli Yakar 2:1).

Wealth is not inherently evil and many wealthy people are exceptionally righteous, generous and humble. At the same time, the Kli Yakar warns against the potential dangers of growing in wealth or honour. When we, as individuals or as a society, become wealthy or important, we risk reaching the arrogant assumption that it is our own greatness and power which has brought us such wealth. As we begin to serve ourselves and forget to serve Hashem, our evil inclination grows and we are more likely to sin.

“And you might say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth’. Then you shall remember Hashem your G-d, for He is the one who gives you strength to make wealth...” (Devarim 8:18-19).

Shabbat Shalom!

Continued from page 4

a complete disregard for the protective power of Torah and is, *because of this disregard, “mit’chayev b’nafsho.”*

The Knesset Yisrael adds that travel and nighttime should also inspire us to think about Hashem. After a full day, when we prepare to return our soul to Hashem, we should reflect upon our relationship with Him. Similarly, when in potential danger while traveling alone, one should appreciate Hashem’s protection. One who turns his attention to meaninglessness at these sensitive moments shows deep insensitivity and is *“mit’chayev b’nafsho.”*

Owning It — A Positive Spin

Rav Nachman Mi’Breslov presents our Mishnah in a positive light. He explains that *“nei’or b’layla”* refers to a person who takes advantage of the night like the day by learning Torah and being constructive. He adds that *“mehalech b’derech yechidi”* connotes one who lives his life in his own, unique way, not affected by those who mock him. The mishnah’s third clause explains that one

accomplishes these things by being *“mefaneh libo l’vatalah,”* clearing his heart of all *batalah* and focusing only on what is meaningful. Rav Nachman explains that such a person is *“mit’chayev b’nafsho”* – *deserves* his life, as opposed to receiving it as a gift.

May the mishnah’s simple explanation caution us against misuse, and may Rav Nachman’s explanation inspire us to take advantage of our time and opportunities

and, through this, “earn” our lives!

● *Summarized by Rafi Davis*

1. Avot 3:4.
2. See Meiri, Rabbeinu Bachya, Machzor Vitri, and Maharal ibid.
3. Instead of calling the time one wastes instead of learning Torah *“bittul zeman,”* Chazal referred to it as *“bittul Torah.”* The time wasted could have generated more Torah.
4. The mishnah later in Avot (6:2) teaches that a *bat kol* bemoans daily: “Woe to people who insult Torah” by not taking advantage of the opportunities they have to study it. See also Talmud Bavli, Masechet Sanhedrin 99a, which describes such a person as “denigrating the word of Hashem.”

5. See Rabbeinu Yonah (Avot 3:4) who explains that not needing to work or be with others at night allows us to focus on Torah learning.
6. See Rashi (Avot 3:4) quoting Avot D’Rabbi Natan (29), who explains that the problem of being *“nei’or b’layla”* is that one is not learning Torah at night. See Chovot HaLevavot (Sha’ar Ahavat Hashem 6) who elaborates on how nighttime is an opportunity to draw close to Hashem.
7. See Talmud Bavli, Masechet Eiruvin 65a.
8. Talmud Bavli (Masechet Bava Batra 121b) teaches that from Tu B’av and on, when the nights start getting longer, we are expected to devote more time to Torah learning. Those who do so will live longer lives. Those who do not use their time well will not. The Gemara emphasizes both the importance of learning at night and the danger of not doing so in many places. Masechet Sanhedrin (92a) speaks of how a fire will eventually consume a house where there is no learning at night. Masechet Eruvin (18b) adds that a house in which there is Torah learning will never be destroyed. Masechet Chagigah (12b) teaches that a person who learns at night has a *“chut shel chesed”* drawn over him during the day. Masechet Menachot (110a) asserts that a person who learns during the night is considered as if involved in the *avodat hakorbanot*. Masechet Tamid (32b) explains that the *shechinah* joins a person who learns at night. The Rambam says that *“rov chochmato”* of a person comes from learning at night, and one must therefore be very careful to use every night properly.

The Pursuit of Meaning



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

The American Declaration of Independence speaks of the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Recently, following the pioneering work of Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology, there have been hundreds of books published on happiness. Yet there is something more fundamental still to the sense of a life well lived, namely, *meaning*. The two seem similar. It's easy to suppose that people who find meaning are happy, and people who are happy have found meaning. But the two are not the same, nor do they always overlap. Happiness is largely a matter of satisfying needs and wants. Meaning, by contrast, is about a sense of purpose in life, especially by making positive contributions to the lives of others. Happiness is largely about how you feel in the present. Meaning is about how you judge your life as a whole: past, present, and future.

Happiness is associated with *taking*, meaning with *giving*. Individuals who suffer stress, worry, or anxiety are not happy, but they may be living lives rich with meaning. Past misfortunes reduce present happiness, but people often connect such moments with the discovery of meaning. Furthermore, happiness is not unique to humans. Animals also experience contentment when their wants and needs are satisfied. But meaning is a distinctively human phenomenon. It has to do not with *nature* but with *culture*. It is not about what happens to us, but about *how we interpret* what happens to us. There can be happiness without meaning, and there can be meaning in the absence of happiness, even in the midst of darkness and pain.¹

In a fascinating article in *The Atlantic*, "There's More to Life Than Being Happy,"²

Emily Smith argued that the pursuit of happiness can result in a relatively shallow, self-absorbed, even selfish life. What makes the pursuit of meaning different is that it is about the search for something larger than the self.

No one did more to put the question of meaning into modern discourse than the late Viktor Frankl, who has figured prominently in these essays on spirituality.³ In the three years he spent in Auschwitz, Frankl survived and helped others to survive by inspiring them to discover a purpose in life even in the midst of hell on earth. He knew that in the camps, those who lost the will to live died. It was there that he formulated the ideas he later turned into a new type of psychotherapy based on what he called "man's search for meaning." His book of that title, written in the course of nine days in 1946, has sold more than ten million copies throughout the world, and ranks as one of the most influential works of the twentieth century.

Frankl used to say that the way to find meaning was not to ask what we want from life. Instead we should ask what life wants from us. We are each, he said, unique: in our gifts, our abilities, our skills and talents, and in the circumstances of our life. For each of us, then, there is a task only we can do. This does not mean that we are better than others. But if we believe we are here for a reason, then there is a *tikkun*, a mending, only we can perform; a fragment of light only we can redeem; an act of kindness, or courage, or generosity, or hospitality only we can perform; even a word of encouragement or a smile only we can give, because we are here, in this place, at this time, facing this person at this moment in their lives.

"Life is a task," he used to say, and added, "The religious man differs from the apparently irreligious man only by experiencing his existence not simply as a task, but as a mission." He or she is aware of being summoned, called, by a Source. "For thousands of years that source has been called G-d."⁴

That is the significance of the word that gives our parsha, and the third book of the Torah, its name: *Vayikra*, "And He called." The precise meaning of this opening verse is difficult to understand. Literally translated it reads: "And He called to Moses, and G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...." The first phrase seems to be redundant. If we are told that G-d spoke to Moses, why say in addition, "And He called"? Rashi explains as follows:

And He called to Moses: Every [time G-d communicated with Moses, whether signalled by the expression] "And He spoke," or "and He said," or "and He commanded," it was always preceded by [G-d] calling [to Moses by name].⁵

"Calling" is an expression of endearment. It is the expression employed by the ministering angels, as it says, "And one called to the other" (Isaiah 6:3).

Vayikra, Rashi is telling us, means to *be called to a task in love*. This is the source of one of the key ideas of Western thought, namely the concept of a *vocation* or a *calling*, that is, the choice of a career or way of life not just because you want to do it, or because it offers certain benefits, but because you feel *summoned* to it. You feel this is your meaning and mission in life. This is what you were placed on earth to do.

There are many such calls in Tanach. There was the call Abraham heard to leave his land and family (Gen. 12:1). There was

the call to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:4). There was the one experienced by Isaiah when he saw in a mystical vision G-d enthroned and surrounded by angels:

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Is. 6:8)

One of the most touching is the story of the young Samuel, dedicated by his mother Hannah to serve in the sanctuary at Shiloh where he acted as an assistant to Eli the priest. In bed at night he heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli. He ran to see what he wanted but Eli told him he had not called. This happened a second time and then a third, and by then Eli realised that it was G-d calling the child. He told Samuel that the next time the voice called his name, he should reply, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening." It did not occur to the child that it might be G-d summoning him to a mission, but it was. Thus began his career as a prophet, judge, and anointer of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (see I Samuel 3).

When we see a wrong to be righted, a sickness to be healed, a need to be met, and we feel it speaking to us, that is when

we come as close as we can in a post-prophetic age to hearing *Vayikra*, G-d's call. And why does the word appear here, at the beginning of the third and central book of the Torah? Because the book of Leviticus is about sacrifices, and a vocation is about sacrifices. *We are willing to make sacrifices when we feel they are part of the task we are called on to do.*

From the perspective of eternity, we may sometimes be overwhelmed by a sense of our own insignificance. We are no more than a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the seashore, a speck of dust on the surface of infinity. *Yet we are here because G-d wanted us to be, because there is a task He wants us to perform.* The search for meaning is the quest for this task.

Each of us is unique. Even genetically identical twins are different. There are things only we can do, we who are what we are, in this time, this place, and these circumstances. For each of us G-d has a task: work to perform, a kindness to show, a gift to give, love to share, loneliness to ease, pain to heal, or broken lives to help mend. Discerning that task, hearing *Vayikra*, G-d's call, is one of the great spiritual challenges for each of us.

How do we know what it is? Some years ago, in *To Heal a Fractured World*, I offered this as a guide, and it still seems to me to make sense: Where what we want to do meets what needs to be done, that is where G-d wants us to be.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Who decides on what your calling is?
- Do you know what your calling is? How do you know?
- Can you think of other key times in the Tanach when G-d called someone to a task?

1. See Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D. Vohs, Jennifer Aaker, and Emily N. Garbinsky, "Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life," *Journal of Positive Psychology*, vol. 8, issue 6 (2013): pp. 505-16.
2. Emily Smith, "There's More to Life Than Being Happy," *The Atlantic*, 9 January 2013.
3. See in particular the essay from earlier in this series for entitled "Reframing."
4. Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: from Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1965), p. 13.
5. Rashi on Leviticus 1:1.



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Yedi'as HaCheit



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

If his sin that he committed becomes known to him, he shall bring his offering. (Vayikra 4:23)

This *passuk* teaches that *yedi'as hacheit* (definite knowledge of the sin) is a necessary prerequisite to bringing a *Korban Chatas*. Tosfos questions why the Torah had to specify this point, as it should have been understood from the fact that a *Korban Chatas* may not be offered voluntarily. Since this *korban* may be offered only after one commits a *cheit*, it is obvious that the sinner must be aware that he sinned before bringing the *korban*.

Tosfos explains that the *passuk* comes to exclude a case in which the individual merely suspects that he may have sinned accidentally and is therefore *mafrish* (sets aside) an animal to be used as a potential *korban* if he ascertains that he did, in fact, commit an *aveirah*. The *passuk* teaches that even if he subsequently comes to the realization that he did sin, he is not able to use that animal (unless he sanctifies it again after the *yedi'ah*), because it was sanctified as a *korban* prior to definite knowledge that he sinned. The obligation to offer a *Korban Chatas* simply does not exist prior to *yedi'as hacheit*.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman Hy" d elaborates on the nature of the requirement of *yedi'as hacheit* prior to offering a *Korban Chatas*. The Gemara in Kereisos derives that a sinner is not liable to a *Chatas* if an *eid echad* (single witness) reports his *aveirah* to him: "If his sin becomes known to him, and not that others tell him." Although there is an well-known principle that a single witness is believed with regard to *issurim*, this form of testimony is insufficient to obligate someone to bring a *Korban Chatas*. Even though an *eid echad* is trusted, his report does not produce *yedi'ah*. When the Halachah requires *yedi'ah*, as in the

case of a *Korban Chatas*, only the testimony of two *eidim* is sufficient.

Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that *yedi'as hacheit* is necessary not only to bring a *Korban Chatas*, but also for one to have a *chiyuv teshuvah*. Thus, *hakaras hacheit* (recognition of the sin) is the first step in the *teshuvah* process. The natural state of the Jewish *neshamah* is that it seeks to be close to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. It is considered an aberration for a person to desire to sin. Thus, *hakaras hacheit* stems from the sinner's feeling that he is distant from *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. He wants to return because of the sense of loneliness that he experiences.

Rabbeinu Yonah (Sha'arei Teshuvah 4:17) writes that there is a special mitzvah of *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur, beyond the general obligation to repent every day. He bases this view on the *passuk*, לפני ד' חטהרו - "before Hashem shall you be cleansed" (Vayikra 16:30), which he understands as a directive to cleanse ourselves on this day. The Rav pointed out a similar statement of the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:7): "Yom Kippur is ... a specific time of pardoning and forgiveness; therefore, all people are obligated to do *teshuvah* and to confess their *aveiros* on Yom Kippur."

Rav Soloveitchik suggested that the nature of the obligation may be different on Yom Kippur than during the rest of the year, specifically in regard to the requirement of *yedi'as hacheit*.

In general, if a person becomes aware of an *aveirah* he committed and thus has *yedi'as hacheit*, he has an obligation to do *teshuvah*.

The unique obligation that exists on Yom Kippur is for one to search through and review all of his actions. In actively reflecting on his actions, including those that he

believed to be permissible in the past, he may well come to the realization that he had been committing an *aveirah* all along that he did not recognize. He may find a *yedi'as hacheit* that he was unaware of until this point, for which he is now able to do *teshuvah*.

The Rav suggested a parallel halachah that illustrates this additional requirement. In discussing the destruction of *avodah zarah* specifically in Eretz Yisrael, the Torah commands: "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations worshipped ... their gods ... and you shall obliterate their names from that place." (Devarim 12:2-3) Based on this, the Rambam rules, "In Eretz Yisrael, there is a mitzvah to chase after [*avodah zarah*] until we destroy it from our entire land." In *chutz la'Aretz*, no such requirement exists; there, the *chiyuv* only applies to *avodah zarah* that we know about that is located in an area that we occupy.

Indeed, these *pessukim*, which describe the settling of Eretz Yisrael after the mitzvah of destroying the *avodah zarah* therein, imply that as long as we have failed to achieve *bi'ur avodah zarah* in Eretz Yisrael, the mitzvah of *yishuv ha'Aretz* is incomplete. An essential component of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* is cleansing the land from the *tum'ah* of *avodah zarah*.

In parallel, the *chiyuv teshuvah* that exists year-round only begins once there is *hakaras hacheit*, in the same way that the obligation to bring a *Korban Chatas* requires *yedi'as hacheit*.

However, the additional *teshuvah* obligation on Yom Kippur is similar to the increased obligation in Eretz Yisrael to chase after *avodah zarah* until we destroy it from our entire land.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

One Word, Two Meanings



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

Let's start with something that sounds a bit technical. In 3:9, the Parsha discusses putting the fats of the tail on the Mizbeach. The word used for fats is חֵלֵב. Rashi explains that חֵלֵב doesn't mean fat here, it means the best part of it - המובחר שבו - the best part of it. Rashi adds that the best part of the tail is the fatty part. However, he is very clear that חֵלֵב doesn't mean fat, it means something like the fat of the land, meaning the excellent part.

Why is Rashi doing this? The Ramban explains as follows. We know that there are two words in Hebrew for animal fats. Cheilev and Shuman. Both of which are usually translated as fat. However, Cheilev refers specifically to those fats that are prohibited by the Torah, that are Assur, and Shuman refers to permitted fats. The Ramban explains that all Cheilev is fat which is not mixed into the meat, but all Cheilev D'oraissa (fats which the Torah prohibits eating) is fat which comes as

a strip of fat; either on the diaphragm where we pull off the fat, like on a skirt steak, or a string of fat in the ribs, which we pull off to make the animal Kosher. It is never mixed in to the meat.

In the case of the tail there is no such string or strip of fat. As a matter of fact, the Ramban says, any part of the body, be it fingers or feet, parts of the body that are constantly moving, never have strips of fat in them. The tail, which moves, also doesn't. Therefore, it is impossible for the word חֵלֵב to be referring to Cheilev. The Ramban brings many proofs from Pesukim that חֵלֵב can also mean מובחר שבו - the best part of it. This is clearly why Rashi explains the verse in the way that he does.

What is of particular interest is that the Ramban says והוצרכתי להאריך בזה לשתום שם - פיהם של צדוקים ימחה שם 'I have to say this because there are heretics out there.' The Ramban is alluding to the fact that there

were people then, as there are today, who say that Chazal didn't know the physical facts. Or, G-d forbid, they say it about the Torah itself. That the physical facts don't match. Since the physical facts don't match, it is evident that the Torah is not from G-d, or you see that Chazal don't know what they are talking about. The Ramban says that there were those who said that Cheilev is a strip of fat from the fact it says חֵלֵב, and there is no such fat! So it must be that Chazal don't know what they are talking about because they never looked into fats and they never saw fats, they were busy in the Beis Medrash and they never looked at animals. To answer back the heretics, the Ramban says that we have to show from numerous places that חֵלֵב can also mean the fat of the land, and Chazal did know there is no such fat on the tail.

● Edited by Yehuda Kaufold and Josh Harris.

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Teachers are Mighty



Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

The leftovers of the Mincha offering were to be given to Aharon and his sons. These were the Kohanim, members of the tribe of Levi.

Now, of course, the Levites worked in the temple, but there were so many of them that as a result, there was a rota system. So, in addition to serving God through sacrificing in the temple, the tribe of Levi became our teachers - the prime educators of the nation. And Hashem here declares that it is important that the people should support the educators, hence, this contribution.

In Psalm 17, King David tells us, “The mighty ones take from your hand, O Lord.”

And the Midrash tells us that this is a reference to the tribe of Levi taking from the hand of God, that is to say, benefiting from these handouts in the temple.

Isn't it fascinating that the tribe of Levi are referred to here as the 'mighty ones'? You know, if you went into any Jewish community around the globe and you were to ask people, 'who are the mighty ones of your Jewish community?', I think they would refer to perhaps Presidents or Chairpersons, CEO's, trustees, philanthropists. Would anybody mention the teachers? I doubt it.

You know, it's in the hands of our teachers that we entrust the future to the greatest gift that the Almighty has given to us

- our children. They are the ones who are molding and shaping the minds and the hearts of the next generation. So, therefore, surely within our communities, we need to change mind-sets. We need to provide adequate incentives for outstanding young men and women to enter into the teaching profession, to take it on as a vocation through which they can excel in the contribution that they give to the Jewish world and to our society.

“The mighty ones take from your hand”, in truth, we learn from this week's Torah portion that it is our teachers who are the greatest.



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Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

עלה הוא אשה ריח ניחוח לה'. (ויקרא א:יג)

It is a burnt offering, a fire offering [with] a pleasing fragrance to Hashem. (Vayikra 1:13)

The Torah refers to the acceptance of the *korban* using the phrase “*rei'ach nicho'ah la'Hashem*,” a sweet-smelling aroma or fragrance to Hashem. What does this phrase *rei'ach nichoach* mean? Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg suggests a unique approach in his commentary, *HaKetav VeHaKabbala*: “*Rei'ach nichoach*” does not describe the scent of the *korban*; rather, it **describes the person** who offers it.

A *rei'ach nichoach* is a pleasant smelling fragrance. If one walks into a garden or one enters a home on Erev Shabbat, one can already smell that there is something tasty cooking. As he walks further into the house, the aroma becomes stronger and stronger until he reaches the kitchen and lifts off the pot cover, finally discovering the source of the scent. The smell hit him immediately when he opened the door, and it informed him that there was something coming, that there was something tasty to anticipate. Similarly, if you walk into a garden and you immediately smell a flower – the scent informs you that there is a sweet-smelling flower in the vicinity.



Our actions have to mirror what we just did – we brought a rei'ach nichoach, so we need to make sure that our actions improve as well.

When we offer a *korban*, we offer a *rei'ach nichoach*. It is a sweet-smelling “aroma” that we put out to Hashem, saying, “Hashem, I am putting out a fine ‘scent’ now, but I am going to improve even more. I am going to use this to lead me to change my actions for the better.” Just like a smell precedes the item causing it, so too is the *korban* our *rei'ach nichoach*. We provide a good smell to HaKadosh Barukh Hu, as a foreshadowing of what is going to transpire in the future. Our actions have to mirror what we just did – we brought a *rei'ach nichoach*, so we need to make sure

that our actions improve as well. Anything that is sensed in advance is called *rei'ach*, as Iyov states when he “smells war” (Iyov 39:25). How could he smell war? Because he felt it beforehand. Therefore, anybody who offers a *korban* should contemplate *teshuva* – to return and get closer to Hashem. We should appreciate that the *korbanot* we offer should lead us to further our connection to Hashem.

Today, in the absence of actual sacrifices, we should view each improvement as a step in the right direction. As we have said on many occasions, life is like riding on a downward escalator, on which one cannot stay put. If we are not climbing, we will descend. As the *rei'ach nichoach* symbolizes that there is more to come, we should maintain that attitude of constant growth and self-improvement, always emitting our finer “fragrance”.

The Supremacy of Eretz Yisrael



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

The first verse of Vayikra states: *And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying.* The final letter, the 'alef', in the word וַיִּקְרָא is known as the 'alef ze'eirah – a small alef, because it is written smaller than the rest of the letters. The well known, and oft quoted, reason for this is because Moshe, 'the most humble man upon the face of the earth' (Bamidbar 12:3), wanted to make it appear as if G-d just 'chanced upon' him (*vayakar*), and not that he, Moshe, was worthy of an actual Divine calling.

However, the Zohar offers an alternative, and very powerful, explanation. In his sefer, "Eretz Yisrael in the Parashah," Rabbi Moshe D. Lichtman writes, "The Zohar offers a completely different answer, one that puts the entire book of Vayikra in perspective. He sees the small alef as a sign of imperfection. The Zohar writes: 'Why is there a small alef? Because this 'calling' was imperfect. Why so? For it took place in the Mishkan, and in a foreign land. True perfection can only be found in the Land of Israel.'

"Let us contemplate this answer," R' Lichtman writes. "There was probably never a period in history during which the Jewish people enjoyed a more intimate relationship with Hashem than the forty year journey through the desert. Heavenly clouds surrounded them on all sides, protecting them from the elements. Their clothes grew with them and never wore out. Celestial food was delivered to them fresh every day (at no cost). They were led by the greatest prophet ever to live, and he was readily available to answer questions and give advice on religious matters. And perhaps, most importantly, they had a portable Beit HaMikdash which accompanied them throughout their journey.

There, they were able to offer sacrifices to G-d and draw spiritual inspiration whenever they needed. Can there possibly be a more ideal, loftier and spiritual existence than this!?"

"When the Jews eventually entered the Land, they had to lead 'normal' lives. (Michal notes – In fact, some say the reason the *meraglim* slandered and rejected the Land was because they didn't want to leave this miraculous, elevated existence for the daily living, and reality, of life in Eretz Yisrael.) They had to work the land to derive sustenance; they had to wage wars to conquer the Land; they had to make their own clothing and repair or replace them when they wore out. Nevertheless, *the Zohar teaches us that no matter how good it is in Chutz LaAretz – even from a spiritual standpoint – something is lacking, for true perfection for a Jew can only be attained in G-d's special Land!*

"Nowadays, many Jews feel quite satisfied with their spiritual lives outside the Land of Israel. Baruch Hashem, the Diaspora communities can boast many fine *yeshivot* and *shiurim*, glorious *chessed* organizations, stores and restaurants that adhere to the strictest standards of *kashrut*, amongst many other wonderful spiritual accomplishments. Let us not forget, however, that the Jews in the desert had it even better, yet their existence was considered imperfect, simply because it was outside the land of Israel.

"Let the diminished *alef* at the beginning of this *parsha* serve as a subtle reminder that for many of us, we have yet to reach our ultimate goal – to serve Hashem in utter perfection in His Chosen Land" (Eretz Yisrael in the Parashah, p.181-182).

After a long period of lockdown due to the pandemic, we (*chutz la'aretz* Jews) realized

just how very precious, special and meaningful our Holy Land is. Davening at the Kotel, walking her holy streets, breathing the air, and feeling truly at home once again... we are reminded that no matter how 'good' other lands may seem, we truly have no other home in the world – אין לנו – ארץ אחרת. I am reminded of the following story that is told by Miriam Peretz:

"Once a soul went up to heaven, but it wasn't accepted into the Garden of Eden. The angels asked it to go back down to earth and bring up three gifts, which would allow it to open up the longed-for gates of Eden. The soul went back down to earth and took a simple pin. A young Jewish girl had used it to pin her skirt, when she was tied to the tail of a horse that galloped through the city streets. The girl was so modest that she didn't want anyone to see any part of her flesh, and though the pin had pricked her and caused her to bleed, she continued to wear it to protect her modesty. The soul took that pin, which was soaked with her blood. It went up to heaven, and the gift was accepted.

"On its second journey, the soul brought a single thread from the *kippah* of a Jew who stood between two rows of men who whipped him. They flogged him mercilessly, and when they had had their fill, he lifted his hand up to his head, felt that his *kippah* had fallen off, and bent down to pick it up. The round of beatings began again, until he gave up his soul to his Creator. The soul took a single thread from the *kippah* up to heaven, and this gift was also accepted.

"On its third journey, the soul reached the wastelands of Siberia, coming to the home of a Jew just as a gang of robbers was breaking into his home. The Jew stood beside a small chest, and as he watched

Continued on page 22

A Korban Primer



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

Sefer Vayikra begins with the laws of korbanot for a very simple reason. Sefer Shmot concluded with the construction of the Mishkan. Now that the ‘equipment’ has been set up, we are ready to go ahead and use it. Therefore, Sefer Vayikra could be considered an ‘instruction manual’ that explains **how** to use the Mishkan!

If an individual wishes to offer a “korban n’dava,” he must first **choose** the category of korban (**olah**, **mincha**, or **shlamim**) and then select the appropriate animal.

Should he choose an **olah** – which is totally consumed on the **mizbayach** – then he must choose from either cattle, sheep, or fowl. The Torah then proceeds to spell out the details of the procedure for the offering of each of these animals.

Should the individual choose a **mincha** – an offering made from flour – then he must select one of five different ways to bake the flour.

Should he choose a **shlamim** – a peace offering, part of which is consumed by the owners – then he must choose between cattle, sheep, or goats.

This **Korban N’dava** section also includes several other details regarding the procedure for offering the various korbanot. For example, before offering an **olah** or **shlamim**, the owner must perform the act of “smicha”. By doing “smicha” – resting all his weight on the animal – the owner symbolically transfers his identity to the animal. That is to say, he offers the animal instead of himself.

In contrast to the ‘voluntary’ korban **n’dava**, an individual offers a korban **chova** only if he commits a transgression. Therefore, this section is organized by **event**, since the nature of the sin committed will determine which offering is required.

The specific animal brought for a **chatat** depends upon the personal status of the violator. If the **Kohen Gadol** (high priest) sins, he brings a bull. If the **Nasi** (political leader) sins, he brings a “se’ir” (male goat). A commoner brings a female goat (or lamb).

This first category of “korban chova,” better known as “chatat kavua”, atones for the transgression of “any of God’s mitzvot”.

The Torah then moves on to several instances of specific transgressions, detailed in chapter 5, that require either a “chatat oleh v’yored” or an “asham.”

The korban “oleh v’yored” is unique in that the type of korban brought depends entirely upon the individual’s financial status.

The final cases mentioned require a korban **asham**: a) when one takes something belonging to hekdesch b) when one is unsure if he must bring a chatat c) when one falsely denies having illegally held possession of someone else’s property

Now that we have explained the logic of the internal order of each section, we must explain why the laws of korban **n’dava** precede those of korban **chova**. Intuitively, one would have perhaps introduced the **compulsory** korban before the **optional** one.

One could suggest that Parshat Vayikra begins specifically with the “korban n’dava” since these korbanot in particular reflect the individual’s aspiration to **improve** his relationship with God. Only afterward does the Torah detail the “korban chova,” which **amends** that relationship should it be tainted by sin. Additionally, perhaps, the korban n’dava reflects a more **ideal** situation, while the obligatory sin-offering seeks to rectify a problematic situation.

We may, however, suggest an even more fundamental reason based on the “double theme” that the Mishkan served a dual purpose: A) To perpetuate the experience of Har Sinai (emphasized by Ramban); and B) To atone for Chet Ha’Egel (emphasized by Rashi).

At Ma’amad Har Sinai Bnei Yisrael offered **olot** and **shlamim**. In fact, in this ceremony we find Chumash’s **first** mention of a korban **shlamim**, suggesting a conceptual relationship between the korban shlamim and Har Sinai.

The korban **olah** likewise relates to Ma’amad Har Sinai. Recall the key phrase in the Torah’s description of the korban olah: “ishe rayach nichoach l’Hashem.” The Torah employs the exact same phrase in its presentation of the **olat tamid**, the daily congregational offering, as inherently connected to Bnei Yisrael’s offerings at Har Sinai: “**Olat tamid** ha’asu’ya b’**Har Sinai**, l’ray’ach ni’choach ishe l’Hashem.”

In Parshat Tezaveh, when the Torah first introduces the olat tamid and summarizes its discussion of the Mishkan, we find the same phrase: “... l’**rayach nichoach** ishe l’Hashem... **olat tamid** l’doroteichem petach Ohel Mo’ed...”

Hence, by offering an olah or shlamim – the efficacious reminders of Ma’amad Har Sinai – the individual reaffirms the covenant of “na’aseh v’nishma” – the very basis of our relationship with G-d at Ma’amad Har Sinai.

Recall also that the last time Bnei Yisrael had offered olat and shlamim before Chet Ha’Egel was at Har Sinai. The Sh’china left Bnei Yisrael on account of the egel, thus precluding the possibility of offering korbanot. Now that the Mishkan is finally built and the Sh’china has returned, G-d’s **first** message to Bnei Yisrael is that they

Continued on page 18

Hard Work is Good



Rabbi Eli Mansour

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The Midrash observes that in the Torah's account of the creation of light in Parashat Bereshit, the word "Or" ("light") appears five times. These five instances of the word "Or," the Midrash comments, correspond to the five books of the Torah. The Torah is our source of "light," giving us the knowledge and perspective we need in order to live our lives properly, the way G-d wants us to live. Appropriately, then, the word "Or" in the story of creation alludes to the Torah, the "light" which guides us each and every moment of our lives.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) noted that if, indeed, the five instances of "Or" in the creation story correspond to the five books of the Humash, then we should assume that each instance has a specific connection to the corresponding book. This would mean that the third instance of the word "Or" is particularly relevant to the third book of the Humash, which

we begin reading this week – the Book of Vayikra.

The third time the word "Or" is mentioned is in the verse, "Va'yar Elokim Et Ha'or Ki Tob" – "G-d saw that the light was good" (Bereshit 1:4). The description of light as "good," the Lubavitcher Rebbe explained, is especially appropriate for the Book of Vayikra. This book is, without question, the most technical and most difficult of all the books of the Humash. Unlike the other books, there is hardly any narrative in Vayikra, as it contains mainly laws. And not only does it consist mainly of laws – but the laws it presents are the most complex and intricate, involving the procedure for offering the sacrifices and the laws of Tum'a and Tahara (impurity and purity). Precisely for this reason, the Book of Vayikra is "good." The Zohar teaches that hard work and effort in the study of Torah is especially beneficial and brings great blessing. The Book of Vayikra can be studied only with hard work and exertion.

The material is technical, complicated and involved, and it can be understood only through patient, diligent study. And so the "light" of the Book of Vayikra is "good" – because while the study of any part of Torah is valuable and precious, the study of this book, which requires a great deal of work and effort, is especially precious.

We live at a time when comfort and convenience are placed on a pedestal, when we are led to believe that the easier something is, the better. From a Torah perspective, however, this is not the case. The Torah teaches us that the most valuable things in life are acquired through hard work and diligence. In order to reach meaningful and important achievements, we need to put in the work. Hard work is "good," and is what brings us the "light" we need to live properly and make the very most out of the short time we are given here in this world.

Continued from page 17

can once again offer olot and shlamim, just as they did at Har Sinai.

This explains not only why korban n'dava occupies the first parsha in Parshat Vayikra, but why it must occupy the first parsha of Sefer Vayikra!

In contrast to the 'refrain' of "ishe ray'ach nichoach" concluding each korban n'dava, we noted that each korban chova concludes with the phrase "v'chiper alav ha'Kohen... v'nislach lo." Once again, we find a parallel to the events at Har Sinai.

Aharon acted as he did at Chet Ha'Egel with the best of intentions; only the results were disastrous. With the Sh'china present, any transgression, even

unintentional, can invoke immediate punishment. Nevertheless, G-d's attributes of mercy, the essence of the "second luchot," allow man a 'second chance,' the opportunity to prove to G-d his sincerity and resolve to exercise greater caution in the future.

Before he ascends Har Sinai to seek repentance for Chet Ha'Egel, Moshe Rabbeinu tells the people: "Atem **chatatem chata'ah** g'dolah... u'lai **achaprah** b'ad **chatatchem**."

Later, when Moshe actually receives the thirteen "midot ha'rachamim" on Har Sinai along with the second "luchot", he requests atonement for Chet Ha'Egel: "... v'**salachta** l'avoneinu ul'**chatateinu**..."

This key phrase of the korban chova – "v'chiper alav... v'nislach lo" – may also relate to this precedent of God's capacity and willingness to forgive. The korban chova serves as a vehicle by which one can ask forgiveness for sins committed "b'shoge'g" and beseech G-d to activate his "midot ha'rachamim."

Therefore, we may conclude that the korban n'dava highlights the Mishkan's function as the perpetuation of Ma'amad Har Sinai, while the korban chova underscores the Mishkan's role as means of atonement for Chet Ha'Egel.

Searching for the Inner Afikomen



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

When Avraham Avinu bound Yitzchak his son, Hashem instituted two rams [for the Eternal Offering], one for the morning and one for the afternoon. And why did he do all of this? So that when the Jewish people would bring the Eternal Offering on the altar and read this pasuk, “toward the north [side of the altar] before Hashem” (Vayikra 1:11), Hashem will remember the binding of Yitzchak: “I call the Heavens and the earth as witnesses that whether gentile or Jew, whether man or woman, whether slave or maidservant, [if one] reads this pasuk, ‘toward the north before Hashem,’ the Holy One Blessed is He will remember the binding of Yitzchak...” (Vayikra Raba 2:11)

It is amazing. Our whole existence is dependent on the merit of Avraham’s act of sacrificing his son. But what is the connection between the binding of Yitzchak and the reading of this one particular pasuk, “toward the north before Hashem”?

Let us learn another Midrash relevant to an early part of Avraham and Yitzchak’s lives. The pasuk says that Avraham made a great celebration to celebrate Yitzchak’s birth and health (Bereishis 21:8): “And Avraham made a great celebration on the day of Yitzchak’s weaning.” The Midrash (Bereishis Raba 25:4) says that the angels complained, “Avraham rejoiced and caused everyone to rejoice, but he did not separate a single bull or ram for Hashem!” Not allowing their complaint to stand, Hashem Himself responded: You just wait. You will see what kind of sacrifice Avraham will bring “I will tell him to sacrifice his son, and he will not withhold [him].”

How can we understand the nature of the angels’ complaint? Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, zt”l, in Derech Hashem (2:6:2), explains the process of judgment in the upper worlds. He teaches that the various

types of angels each examine the hidden details of every aspect of man. Some dissect and examine the negative aspects of man’s actions and others examine the positive aspects. They see parts of us that we do not see; aspects of ourselves which are not outwardly visible.

Based on this, we can understand the angels’ complaint against Avraham Avinu at his celebration for Yitzchak’s birth. While Avraham’s celebration for the miracle of Yitzchak’s birth created a great sanctification of G-d’s name, the true measure of a person is what he is willing to give up, what he is ready to sacrifice. The angels saw that something was missing from Avraham’s feast because he did not give anything up for Hashem; he did not bring a sacrifice.

That is why Hashem gave him the test of the binding of Yitzchak. He did not even wait for the defending angel to respond to the prosecuting angel’s complaint. He wanted to show the angels that Avraham had something hidden deep inside of him that even they could not comprehend. He had the capacity to give Hashem “your son, your only son that you love, Yitzchak” (Bereishis 22:2). He was ready to give up everything he held precious in the world. That is what he had hidden within him.

That is the secret of “toward the north before Hashem.” The Hebrew word for “toward the north [צפונה]” has the same root as the word for hidden (צפון). That is why the Midrash says that the pasuk “toward the north before Hashem” reminds Hashem of the binding of Yitzchak Avinu. It reminds Hashem of Avraham’s hidden capacity for self-sacrifice. The pasuk “toward the north before Hashem” was taught in the context of the Elevation Offering, which is completely consumed by fire. The person who brings

the korban and the kohanim take no portion in it. It is emblematic of a Jew’s hidden capacity to give up everything for G-d, to sacrifice his needs, wants, property, and even his life, if necessary, for the sake of his service of G-d.

There are actually two hidden aspects of ourselves. One is the hidden goodness within ourselves. The other is hinted at in the pasuk in Yoel (2:2), “And I will distance the northern one [הצפוני] from you.” The simple meaning of the pasuk is that Hashem will distance the northern kingdom of Bavel, located where modern-day Iran and Iraq are, from us. But on a deeper level, the Gemara (Sukkah 52a) teaches that this “northern one [הצפוני]” is “the evil inclination, which is hidden [צפון] in a person’s heart. There is an aspect of our heart which attempts to prevent us from sacrificing or giving anything up for Hashem’s sake. It demands that we withhold parts of our heart and our lives from G-d. This aspect of us tries to keep the greater, holy part of ourselves, the “piece of G-d above” that resides within us, from being found. It may permit us to do some mitzvos and hold feasts for Hashem, as long as we don’t give up anything for G-d.

The greatness of Avraham was how he was willing to give over everything, whether hidden or revealed. Our challenge is to look for our own inner Afikomen (צפון), the greater piece of ourselves which we can give over to Hashem. Are we willing to give up little things for Hashem? Can we sacrifice that few extra minutes of sleep to come to shul on time? Can we give up speaking about our insights into international politics for an hour a day to avoid talking during davening? Can we sacrifice a few minutes of rest to be in the beis medrash in our seat when our scheduled time for learning begins?

The Dignity of Sacrifice



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

A very successful businessman had a meeting with his new son-in-law. “I love my daughter dearly, and now I welcome you into the family,” said the man. “To show you how much we care for you, I’m making you a 50-50 partner in my business. All you have to do is go to the factory every day and manage the operations.”

The son-in-law interrupted, “I hate factories. I can’t stand the noise.”

“I see,” replied the father-in-law. “Well, then you’ll work in the office and take charge of those responsibilities.”

“I hate office work,” said the son-in-law. “I can’t stand being stuck behind a desk all day.”

“Wait a minute,” said the father-in-law. “I just made you half-owner of a money making organization, but you don’t like factories and won’t work in an office. What am I going to do with you?”

“Easy,” said the young man. “Buy me out.”

“Speak to the children of Israel,” G-d tells Moses in the beginning of Vayikra, “And tell them: ‘A man who will sacrifice from among you a sacrifice to G-d; from a cow, from a bull, and from sheep shall you offer your offering (Leviticus 1:2).’”

The construction of the sentence seems incorrect. It should have said, “A man from among you who will sacrifice a sacrifice to G-d.” Not: “A man who will sacrifice from among you a sacrifice to G-d.”

Rabbi Schnuer Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), offered the following moving interpretation. What the Torah is attempting to teach us via this grammatically “flawed” sentence is that the primary sacrifice G-d cherished was not the one that came of animals or grain, but rather the one stemming from the person himself: “From among you.” We must sacrifice something of ourselves to truth. The verse, then, must

be understood thus: “A man who will sacrifice,” when an individual seeks to make a sacrifice, “from among you a sacrifice to G-d,” he or she must remember that the primary sacrifice must be brought from their very selves. They must offer a piece of their heart, of their soul, to G-d.

Sacrifice — the courage for one to give up something truly valuable for an ideal or a person outside of oneself — has become in our day an “endangered species.” In the minds of many it is a dirty word, conjuring up images of repression, dogma and abuse. Sacrifice is often seen as the arch enemy of the virtues that have become emblematic of our times—self expression, self assertion and emotional independence. Sacrifice, we are often told, is a crutch for insecure and co-dependent victims who eclipse their emotional dysfunction by employing the heroic myth of sacrifice.

It is obviously crucial to challenge forms of sacrifice that erode rather than affirm the quality of one’s life. Sacrifice that is feeding into abuse and tyranny is not a virtue. A beaten spouse or a crushed employee should not tolerate the immoral behavior of their spouse or employer in the name of sacrifice. Yet is it not possible that in our hypersensitivity toward the pursuit of individual liberty and the importance of self affirmation, we have deprived ourselves and our children of the vital awareness that to live means to sacrifice something of ourselves for truth, for G-d, for another human being, for your marriage, for your nation, for your values, for making the world a good place?

Nothing in the contemporary secular conversation calls on us to sacrifice anything truly valuable for someone or anything else. We have been taught to be nice and cordial, tolerant and respectful, to give five dollars to a homeless man in the

street and to be sensitive to other people’s feelings; but not to make real sacrifices that challenge our pleasures, force us out of our comfort zones and require profound and unwavering commitments. Yet when you do not need to fight for something, for anything, how do you learn who you really are? When you do not need to give up anything of yourself, how do you acquire the depth, dignity and maturity that comes along with sacrifice?

When we live a life that lacks any sacrifice, our humaneness is diminished. We become more superficial, more timid, and more external. The entire book of Leviticus, dealing with sacrifices, is Judaism’s way of stating that to live means to live for something.

“Whenever anyone divorces his first wife, even the Temple Altar sheds tears. As the Bible states, ‘You cause the altar of G-d to be covered with tears, with weeping and with sighing; so that G-d no longer turns to the offerings to retrieve it with good will from your hands. And you might ask: Why?—Because G-d has borne witness between you and the wife of your youth, that you have betrayed her, though she is your companion and the wife of your covenant.’”

Why does a divorce arouse tears in the Temple Altar?

The Altar was the place in the Temple where all the daily sacrifices of grain, wine and animals were offered. The Altar represented the profound but often forgotten axiom that a relationship with G-d demanded sacrifice and the giving of oneself and one’s wealth. For centuries, the Altar has stood as a silent witness observing the depth and dignity characterizing a life of commitment and sacrifice. Day after day, the Altar internalized the truth that the path to self-realization leads through self-sacrifice.

Continued on page 23

Vayikra: The Calling



Rabbi Judah Mischel

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Rav Yitzchok Breiter, Hy'd, was one of the great Breslover *manhigim* of Pre-War Europe. As one of the first Jews in Poland to make the difficult journey to Uman for Rosh Hashanah, he was a trailblazer. His journey opened the way for countless Jews to reach Uman as well, inspiring them to draw close to Hashem and to Rebbe Nachman's path. He is the author of a number of significant essays and sefarim, including *Seder haYom*, a step-by-step guide to applying Rebbe Nachman's teachings to our daily life. A respected elder in the Warsaw ghetto before being murdered in Treblinka, he composed *Shir Yedidus*, a beautiful *piyut* expressing *hiskashrus*, devoted connection to Rebbe Nachman.

Once, Rav Yitzchok and his neighbor were arrested on false charges by the Polish authorities, and led away in handcuffs and heavy iron chains on their legs, in a degrading fashion. A man of intense focus, faith and resilience, Rav Yitzchok maintained his composure and was not fazed. His neighbor, however, was a nervous wreck and crestfallen.

"My friend," called Rav Yitzchok, quietly, "The Ribbono Shel Olam is with us! Why should you allow this to break you? Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and imagine your chains to be made of gold, a heavy, precious gift Hashem is giving you to carry. Is *that* a reason to be sad?" When the verdict was delivered freeing his friend but sentencing him to five years in prison, Rav Yitzchok stood tall and recited the blessing expressing praise for Hashem in face of difficult news. Then he added the bracha of *Ohev tzedaka u'mishpat* from the *Amidah*, and proclaimed, "Now I will have the opportunity to serve G-d in a new way." Rav Yitzchak was held in prison for just a couple days and released without explanation.



In 1917, when the political and security situation made the pilgrimage to Uman impossible, Rav Yitzchok organized and led a Rosh Hashanah *kibbutz* at the famed Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. As a preparation, he authored *Chalukei haNachal*, a concise and powerful work divided into seven "pillars" or fundamentals of faith according to the path of Rebbe Nachman. This small sefer was designed to help guide the members of the *kibbutz* to step into deeper *emunah*. Preserved over the precarious generations, it continues to guide us, today.

The second section of *Chalukei haNachal*, called עמוד התגלות אלקות, "The Pillar of G-dly Revelation", describes what we experience through the 'Divine call' in the opening of our *sedra* this week: ויקרא אל משה, "And G-d called to Moshe." Rav Yitzchok notes that G-dliness is revealed to a person continuously, day and night. However, on rare occasions, one experiences a full-fledged revelation: קוראין אותו ממש והוא שומע, "One is actually called and he hears." At such times, his eyes are illuminated and he yearns for closeness with Hashem.

Most often however, Hashem reveals Himself to us in a more concealed fashion, by means of spiritual struggle, thoughts and feelings of despair, heaviness, laziness or lack of motivation. There are even revelations in moments of heresy, confusion, lust and delusion.

והעיקר לידע, כי מה ששומע ורואה, מאזין ומקשיב, או מרגיש מיד איש ומיד אשה, מקרוב ומרחוק, בפרט מאשתו ומבני ביתו, הכל הוא דברי ה' ית' אשר קורא אותו אליו בזה, וזה הוא התקונין שנותנין לו מלמעלה

"The main thing is to know is that *all* we hear, see, intuit and feel in every interaction we have — with those who are close to us and those who are far from us, with family and with strangers, but in particular with our spouses and

children — all of it, everything, is an **invitation and calling from Hashem.**

This is the *tikun*, the rectification that has been given to us from On High."



As Rebbe Nachman expounds on the *Alef Zeira*, the small letter *Alef* in the word *Vayikra* as written in a Torah scroll, he tells us the following. Sometimes Hashem 'calls' us through a mode of דקה דקה, a quiet, subtle 'voice', perhaps concealed within the workings of nature, embedded in everyday experience, hidden in plain sight. This is because Hashem's Presence fills the entire world and all experiences:

וְצָרִיף לְדַעַת, שְׁמָלָא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וְלִית אַחַר פְּנוּי מְנָה, וְאִיהוּ מְמַלָּא כָּל עֲלָמִין וְסוּבָב כָּל עֲלָמִין.

Now, one must also know that "G-d's Glory fills the whole world" (Isaiah, 6:3), and there is no place empty of Him; He fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds (Zohar III, 225a)

And we can therefore call to Hashem — and Hashem calls to us — even in a place of darkness, as Rebbe Nachman continues (Likutei Moharan 33):

וְזֶה שְׁמֵיבֵיא בִירוּשָׁלַיִם (תענית פא): אָם יֵאמֶר לָךְ אָדָם הֵיכָן אֵלֶיךָ, תֹּאמֶר לוֹ: בְּכַרְךָ גְּדוֹל שְׁבָרוּמִי, שְׁנַאָמֶר: אֵלֵי קֵרָא מִשְׁעִיר.

And this is what is brought in the Jerusalem Talmud (Taanis, 1:1): If anyone should ask you, "Where is your G-d?" answer him, "In the great city of Rome." As it is said, "One calls to Me from Seir" (Isaiah, 21:11).

May we be blessed to know with complete certainty that wherever we are and whatever we are busy with, if we open our hearts and believe, we can hear Hashem calling us to draw close. And even if we are in the depths of exile or despair, if we listen carefully, perhaps we will hear, the voice of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* encouraging us, "My friend, why should you allow this to break you?"

Sweet and Sour

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

In Parshat Vayikra includes some of the laws pertaining to the meal offering, the mincha. The laws include two ingredients that must be excluded from the offering, leavening and honey, and one that must always be included, salt. While Rambam tells us that all the laws pertaining to the sacrifices are chukim, which we must obey although we cannot understand it, we can nevertheless attempt to study them and extract some lessons for life.

Tiv Hatorah explains that leavening represents the attitude that things are not right and need to be improved, while honey implies that everything is sweet and wonderful. These ingredients then can be likened to depression or arrogance. Neither of these attitudes has a place on the altar. One must create a balance of the two within himself so that he is not paralyzed by feelings of inadequacy or unwilling to change due to pride. Either of these mindsets can hold us back from working toward achieving our potential.

The leavening, which is the essence of chametz, and the honey can be symbolic of the evil inclination, writes Rabbi Frand. There are two prohibitions on Pesach, not to see chametz and not to own chametz. The prohibition against seeing chametz parallels our actions, while the prohibition against owning chametz parallels our thoughts. Neither our thoughts nor our actions should carry sin within them. It is precisely because of sin that we were commanded to bring offerings on the altar,

so it follows that one should not mix our offerings with the symbols of the enticer and corrupter that brought us to sin.

Citing Rabbi Nevenzahl, Rabbi Frand explains that when adding leavening to dough a chemical process takes place which makes the dough rise. But in fact there is nothing there except empty fluff. If you stick your finger into the dough, the bubbles burst and the dough falls flat. So too the yetzer hara is a mere illusion that seems more attractive than it really is. Punch it down and deflate it before it grows and overpowers you.

The Imrei Chemed expounds on this further. Yeast works when it is left alone. When we feel motivated to do good, the yetzer hara tells us to be complacent. If we ignore his call and do Hashem's will, we deflate the evil inclination. Similarly, everything that falls into honey is absorbed by it. The yetzer hara wants us to fall back into our sweet, easy life and not work toward self-improvement. Hashem commanded us to leave out these two ingredients from the mincha offering to teach us that the sluggishness of leavening and the self-indulgence of honey can bring us down.

Laziness is especially insidious, teaches the Siftei Chaim. With other flaws such as anger or jealousy, one is aware of doing something wrong, but laziness is something we might allow ourselves as part of the flow of life. The kohanim in their service in the Temple were always in motion.

Similarly, a crucial aspect of preparing the matzah for Pesach is alacrity. We must not allow idleness, symbolized by leavened products, to taint our service to Hashem.

It's not that we must live an ascetic life, writes Rabbi Scheinerman, quoting Rabbi Feinstein. There are a plethora of opportunities to enjoy the pleasures of this world, particularly on Shabbat and Yom Tov, when we are commanded to eat festive meals. But the question is what are our true pleasures? Is it discovering a new Torah commentary or indulging in frivolous nonsense? The Alter of Kelm once pointed out that children play with toys while adults indulge in their toys. The difference is that children know they are children playing, while adults often do not realize they are playing with life.

We are permitted to enjoy life, writes Rabbi Yaakov Hillel, but we must strike a balance so that pleasure itself becomes a way of enhancing our spirituality. Rabbi Z. Pliskin explains that both yeast and honey are external additives that change the flavor and texture of the initial ingredients, and therefore they were not permitted on the altar. Salt, on the other hand, enhances the inherent flavor of the ingredients. Therefore it was always a part of the sacrifices. Let us not be like the yeast and honey that try to find growth outside themselves. Let us strive to be like the salt, using our innate talents and strengths to reflect our unique spiritual potential.

Continued from page 16

the robbers burst in, he protected the chest with his body. The robbers pushed him, as they thought a treasure must be hidden inside the chest. He fought them

until he collapsed, because inside the chest was a box, and inside the box was dust from the ground of the land of Israel. The soul flew with this dust-up to heaven,

and the gates of Eden opened. Through the dust of the land of Israel, the soul entered into the World to Come" (Miriam's Song, p.31-32).

Love Letter



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

How hard it is to believe in love. So often it seems that we have invested and no one appreciated it. We are tormented by the fact that we only know how to love and do not know how to be assertive, decisive and unequivocal. How often love is perceived by us as weakness and sacrifice!

And there is only one reason for this: love is simply slower, but it wins. Everything. Always. Even G-d, so to speak, “does not know” how to be a determined Father. He overlooks and skips over things that might have been appropriate to protest and punish, but suddenly He is a diminished, imperfect Father. “My firstborn children of Israel!” He will say to His truly imperfect children, and He will love them and pass them over...

This week, in my capacity as President of the European Rebbetzins, I met with Rebbetzins from all over Europe in Austria. They encounter assimilation of alarming proportions (someone said that in their congregation there is only one couple in the synagogue where both the mother and father are Jews) and the question, repeated in variations, was, “How can I express tolerance and inclusion to all who come to the synagogue, but in my private household there are children who need clear boundaries! How can I not confuse them?” This is by no means a simple question, and the answer to it is absolute trust in the fact that the power of love, of any love, comes solely from the fact that we are people of the Torah and the Torah is love.

Continued from page 20

This simple truth so well known to the Altar has been forgotten by many. We are scared of making sacrifices, lest they deprive us of our personal happiness. Our self-esteem is so fragile that we desperately feel the need to protect it against

The Torah has commanded us as a supreme commandment to have this patience towards people who want to sit at the holiday table, at the Shabbat table and in the synagogue, just as it has commanded us to observe Shabbat, modesty or kosher laws.

The message that love and Torah are two authorities has cost us so many boys and girls, too many.

“G-d called to Moses and spoke to him...” If He speaks to him, why do we have to write that He called him? Or, in the words of the great lover Nechama Leibovitz, what is difficult for Rashi? And Rashi wrote precisely about these non-romantic words: “And G-d called: It is a way of expressing affection, the mode used by the ministering angels when addressing each other. The Voice went on and reached his (Moses’s) ears only but all the other Israelites did not hear it”...

Precisely in the Chumash, which is full of details of the sacrificial laws, laws so far removed from our world, Rashi will insist on saying: read this letter, it is the most beautiful love letter you will ever read! And the less you understand the letter, the more the writer will reveal to you and the built-in relationship between you.

It is in the most incomprehensible Chumash that young children begin to learn to read, for it is much more than understanding the details of the sacrificial work. It is important that they learn the work of kinship. They will lick letters they

any outside or foreign intrusion, lest it fade away into oblivion. But happiness is an altar. The more you give, the more you receive. The soul is most at peace with itself when it shares itself with another soul. When we give up on all forms of

do not understand with excitement just because they understand that it is a letter from Father addressed only to them.... The closeness to the sender of the letter is much more important than understanding the sacrifices...

We are raising a generation of brilliant, perceptive people who will understand in seconds what it took us a long time to grasp. And they will, by and large, never feel loved enough. They want to understand that they are loved, much more than to understand, and that’s it.

“True reading is the completion of the work [of literature], as though it were taken from the potential to the actual which the reader accomplishes by means of his voice and spirit. What a difficult task, to teach to read! Reading the Torah is like reading a poem, therefore everyone has a different reading, because the one who reads the book does not absorb it into his soul only, but word and content are bound together in a living and essential connection!” (Nechama Leibowitz, “How to Read a Chapter of Tanach”)

Do not despair if you were too lax in front of the children, do not regret showing love, they will sometimes understand this text better than any precise instruction. They will try to read and obey you even if they do not understand a word, because this text was written by someone who loves them very much, someone who reads them a story before bedtime, someone who just reads to them, a love letter.

sacrifice, we deprive ourselves from reaching our deepest potentials.

This week’s portion invites us to ask: When was the last time I made a real sacrifice?



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Ma Tov Day Camp
Ohav Emeth
Pal Foundation
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center
Yavneh Academy
National Council of Young Israel
Young Israel of Teaneck

NEW YORK

Beis Community
Congregation Anshei Shalom
Congregation B'nai Tzedek
Congregation Bais Tefillah of Woodmere
Congregation Beth Sholom
Ramaz
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls
MTA – Yeshiva University
High School for Boys
Young Israel of Merrick
Congregation Beth Torah
Congregation Etz Chaim of
Kew Gardens Hills
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun
Congregation Ohab Zedek
Great Neck Synagogue
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth
Hadassah Synagogue
Irving Place Minyan
Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach
Kehilath Jershurun
Kingsway Jewish Center
Lincoln Square Synagogue
Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park

North Shore Hebrew Academy
Young Israel of Merrick
NYC Department of Correction
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University
OU-JLIC at Cornell University
Queens Jewish Center
Stars of Israel Academy
The Jewish Center
The Riverdale Minyan
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha
West Side institutional Synagogue
Yeshiva University High School for Girls
Young Israel of Hillcrest
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst
Young Israel of New Rochelle
Young Israel of North Woodmere
Young Israel of Oceanside
Young Israel of Scarsdale
Young Israel of Woodmere

OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla
Congregation Sha'arei Torah
Congregation Torat Emet
Green Road Synagogue
Fuchs Mizrachi School
Heights Jewish Center

PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel
Congregation Dor Tikvah

TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue
Robert M. Beren Academy
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath
Northwest Yeshiva High School
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

URUGUAY

Comunidad Yavne Uruguay

VENEZUELA

CARACAS

Ashkenazi Kehilla
Mizrachi Venezuela



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