

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1412 MAR 20TH '21 ז' ניסן תשפ"א

פרשת ויקרא

PARSHAT VAYIKRA

ב"ה
40^{Over}
Years
טו ישראל



COURTESY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh
Weinreb
OU Executive Vice
President, Emeritus
page 12



EREV PESACH THAT FALLS ON SHABBAT

Rabbi Daniel Mann
page 38

Special
16 page
OU ISRAEL
Pesach Kashrut
Guide

היום אתם יצאים
בחדש האביב

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Candles 5:14PM • Havdala 6:27PM • Rabbeinu Tam 7:08PM

This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

By: **Ateret Perlmutter** City: **Beit Shemesh**

Place: **Garden of our home**

Meaning: "We do not need to look hard to find the beautiful things in life. The beautiful things in life are right here at our door. For me, seeing the beauty in the simple things around me is where my freedom starts."

Special thanks to the all those that sent in photos! There were so many wonderful shots to choose from!

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Shoshana Solomyak// Zahavia Schudy



HELPFUL REMINDERS:

• **Shabbat Hagadol** derasha is customarily given this Shabbat.

• **Kiddush Levana**

7 Days after Molad: 8 Nisan/Motzei Shabbat Mar. 20

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana Until: 13 Nisan, Thurs. Night Mar. 25, all night

• **Clock** is moved forward on Friday, March 26 at 2 am



CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

RANGES 11 DAYS / WED - SHABBAT MAR.17-27 / 4 - 14 NISAN

Earliest Talit and Tefilin	4:56 - 5:43am
Sunrise	5:47 - 6:34am
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema	8:47-9:39am
(Magen Avraham: 8:11 - 9:03am)	
Sof Z'man T'fila	9:47-10:41am
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic noon)	11:47-12:44am
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:17 - 1:15pm
Plag Mincha	4:33 - 5:37pm
Sunset (counting elevation)	5:53- 6:59pm

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CANDLES	VAYIKRA	HAVDALA	*TZAV	
			Candles	Havdala
5:14	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	6:27	6:19	7:32
5:32	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	6:30	6:37	7:35
5:33	Beit Shemesh / RBS	6:28	6:37	7:33
5:30	Gush Etzion	6:28	6:35	7:33
5:31	Raanana/ Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	6:29	6:36	7:34
5:30	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	6:28	6:35	7:33
5:31	Netanya	6:29	6:36	7:34
5:31	Be'er Sheva	6:29	6:36	7:34
5:31	Rehovot	6:29	6:36	7:34
5:14	Petach Tikva	6:29	6:19	7:34
5:30	Ginot Shomron	6:28	6:35	7:33
5:20	Haifa / Zichron	6:29	6:25	7:34
5:29	Gush Shiloh	6:27	6:34	7:32
5:31	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	6:29	6:36	7:34
5:30	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:28	6:34	7:32
5:30	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:28	6:35	7:33
5:32	Ashkelon	6:30	6:37	7:35
5:31	Yad Binyamin	6:29	6:36	7:34
5:23	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	6:27	6:28	7:32
5:28	Golan	6:26	6:33	7:31

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 7:08 PM • next week - 8:12 pm

* Note: Clock is moved forward on Friday, March 26 at 2 am

Times According to MyZmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities, 40 min. in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

Throughout the past year I found myself going to the OU Israel website and looking at the schedule of the endless Shiurim and special programs taking place online. I enjoyed doing this for two reasons. First, it was nice to see the many faces of our regular participants that I was unfortunately not able to see in person as well as so many new faces. Second, it gave me Nachat to see the number of participants joining our virtual Shiurim from all over Israel (and often all over the world). While each Jew is a world in its own right, there is something beautiful about seeing so many Jews learning Torah together. When comparing the number of virtual participants to those entering the OU Israel Center pre-Covid for the same shiurim, in most cases the online participants were at least double and sometimes even tenfold.

While the OU Israel Center was closed to the public, per Ministry of Health Guidelines, our offices were open when allowed, and it was a very strange feeling

to walk through the building on Keren Hayesod 22 and see its classrooms which are usually full of Torah and activities sitting empty this past year.

Meeting with the leadership of OU Israel and the OU Israel Center team the past couple of months, we spend endless hours trying to take a piece of cake and yet leave it whole. It was critically important for us to open the building and resume the essential Torah atmosphere we are all used to having at the OU Israel Center. But, on the flipside we did not want to lose out on the thousands of individuals that started listening to OU Israel Center Shiurim online this past year after they became so much more accessible.

Myself and the rest of the OU Israel Center team really appreciate all of the feedback you have shared with us during the challenging past year. So many of you shared how much you are enjoying shiurim that you were not exposed to previously, often because you do not live close enough to our building. Many of you expressed that while you come to the OU Israel Center for shiurim, you are tremendously grateful for the added benefit of being part of a community of friends that attend the same shiurim with you week after week, something which is often lacking with virtual programming.

We spent many hours planning and working with the programming, facilities, and IT teams to ensure that we open the

**The entire OU Israel family wishes
Rabbi Avi Berman a refuah shleimah.
We are davening for your speedy
and full recovery, be'ezrat Hashem.**

רפואה שלמה

building in accordance with the Ministry of Health Tav Yarak guidelines and that we can stream the shiurim to our website simultaneously. When I walked into the building this past Sunday morning and saw the blue and white balloons welcoming the in-person L'Ayla Brachfeld Women's Rosh Chodesh Nisan Seminar participants, it felt like a much needed breath of fresh air. When I opened the door and walked in, the security guard asked me to present my green passport and ID to prove it was me.

I entered the Wolinetz Beit Midrash to see approximately 40 women sitting (with social distancing) and listening to Rabbi Ezra Friedman's Shiur about how to Kasher the kitchen for Pesach. I then went up to my office on the second floor, turned on my computer, logged onto the event on Zoom and saw another 100+ women joining from their homes. I felt like we were indeed successful in eating our cake yet still keeping it whole.

Rabbi Eza Freidman who was teaching these women how to Kasher their homes for Pesach worked tirelessly over the past number of weeks, together with our dedicated Art Director Yael Haufmann and many others, in order to produce the OU Israel Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education Pesach Guide which you will find in this week's Torah Tidbits. The work of the Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education is expanding daily. Given the fact that Gus A"H was such a dear friend of mine, it gives me endless nachat to know that a topic which was so dear to him - Jews around the world keeping Kosher - is a focus of OU Israel today, especially for the English speaking population.



Rabbi Avi Berman celebrating the reopening of the OU Israel Center this past week.

This past year, Rabbi Ezra Friedman has answered over 4,500 questions on our Kashrut hotline (050-200-4432 or efriedman@ouisrael.org). He publishes a weekly Torah Tidbits article, gives a weekly shiur about Kashrut, and more. In addition to this Pesach Guide, he is working on a Shemita Guide and Yeshiva & Seminary Guide which we aim to publish over the summer. Kashrut is a complex issue, and we are proud and honored to be serving the English-speaking community in Israel on this important matter.

As always, I would greatly appreciate your feedback and ideas (aberman@ouisrael.org).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Avi Berman'.

Avi
Executive Director, OU Israel

VAYIKRA

ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



Rabbi Reuven Tradburks
Director of
RCA Israel Region

The theme of the parsha is sacrifices. Different offerings will be required in a variety of circumstances later in the book of Vayikra. This parsha outlines the rules of those offerings, so that when they come up later, their procedure will be familiar.

The parsha outlines the procedures for: Olah, a fully burned offering, Shlamim, an offering consumed by the cohanim and by the owner, and a Chatat, a sin offering. In the course of those, the mincha, the flour offering is also described.



1st aliya (Vayikra 1:1-13) And He called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him. When a person brings an **Olah**, it may be brought from cattle or



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sheep. If from **cattle**, the procedure is: the owner places his hands on the animal, it is slaughtered before G-d, the blood is sprinkled about the altar, the fats are burned and the entire offering is burned. If either **sheep** or goat, the same is done: slaughter in the same place, sprinkle blood, offer fats, and completely burned.

The first words of the parsha baffle the commentaries. No English teacher would allow a student to start a book “And He called to Moshe.” Who is the he? Nothing has happened in the book yet that we can refer the he to. Why begin with “And”? The Torah is referring back to the previous story. And continuing it. At the end of Shemot the Mishkan was completed. The thick cloud descended, indicating G-d’s presence. Moshe could not enter the area of the Mishkan due to the cloud. G-d now beckons Moshe to enter, to teach the laws of offerings.

This interaction frames the book of Vayikra. In Shemot, G-d descended to us. He commanded the Mishkan, as a place to meet with us. He descended and filled the place. And now? Our turn. He approached us. Now. We approach Him. In Shemot the Jewish people were passive, drawn to Him. Ordered to make a meeting place for G-d to meet us. Now, in Vayikra, the Jewish people are the active ones. So the book begins as a continuation of the last, only now that He has approached us, we approach Him. And that is the meaning of sacrifices; man approaching G-d.



2nd aliya (1:14-2:5) If the Olah is from **birds**, the procedure is

similar: blood sprinkled, organs burned, and completely burned. If a **nefesh** shall bring a **flour** offering, the procedure is: the flour is mixed with oil and frankincense. The cohen takes a finger full, burns it on the altar. The remainder is eaten by the cohanim. The flour offering may also be **baked** or **fried** as a thin matza with oil.

The Olah offering is voluntary. And expensive. Well, a sliding scale. Cattle, sheep, goat, birds, flour. While the heart may stir one to approach G-d, the pocket may demur. Rashi points out that when describing the one who is bringing a flour offering, the least expensive one, the Torah uses the word **nefesh**, as if to say it is the heart that stirs one to bring; for some, the flour offering is as big a sacrifice as the bull to another.



3rd aliya (2:6-16) Or one may bring a fried **soft flour** offering.

In each of these, the cohen brings the mincha offering to the altar, offering a finger full. The remainder is eaten by the cohanim, treated as holy of holies. No offering of this sort may be chametz or with honey. Only the **first fruits** offering contain chametz and honey. The **Omer** offering is from new barley of parched ground kernels with oil and frankincense.

How can we find meaning in sacrifices? Let me offer the following; and if you find me guilty of projecting modern thought on the distant past, I will stand guilty as charged.

In life, we experience a plethora of feelings

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and emotions. Success brings satisfaction; failure, disappointment. At times, we feel desperate, beaten down by challenges and uncertainty. Threats of war or of illness make us feel frantic. Sin amplifies our vulnerability, bringing a deep sense of worthlessness. At other times we feel exuberant, blessed, fortunate. That the sun has shone upon us. Gratitude, appreciation; hearts full.

The precarious nature of life in the ancient world amplified all these feelings – of both the anxiety of life and its unexpected and the joys of the bounty of success. And while our world has changed dramatically in how we live, the inner life of man remains much the same. We may be anxious over different things, but anxious we are. And joyful appreciation leaps the generations.

An Olah is a voluntary offering that is completely burned. It could be an expression of profound appreciation; that it is not my hands that have wrought my success, but that I as a Jew am charged with living hand in hand with G-d. My success demands an expression to G-d, as does my desperation. I give my life wholly to Him – both my success and my despair. This complete resignation is expressed in voluntarily offering an olah – an offering completely burned. As if to say, I am in Your hands.



4th aliya (3:1-17) The **Shlamim** offering may be brought from cattle. Its procedure is: the owner places his hands on the head, the cohanim take the blood after slaughter and sprinkle on the altar, the fats are burned.

If it is brought from sheep, the same procedure is followed. Or if brought from goats. An eternal law is that no blood or fats may be eaten.

The Shlamim is eaten by the owner in Yerushalayim. As such, it would be brought, also voluntarily, in a mood of celebration. Perhaps for success. Perhaps for personal blessings of family. Or for the feeling of joy and satisfaction at how rich a lot in life our Torah and our G-d grants us.



5th aliya (4:1-26) When a **nefesh sins**: if the **Cohen** sins in his official capacity, he brings a **Sin offering** of a bull. Its procedure is: the cohen places his hands on the head, the cohen sprinkles the blood toward the curtain of the Holy of Holies and on the incense altar. The fats are burned. The bull is burned outside of the holy area, where other ashes are deposited. If the **entire people** err in committing a **sin**, a bull is brought as a sin offering. Its procedure follows that of the Cohen: the elders rest their hands on the head of the animal, the cohanim sprinkle the blood in front of the Holy of Holies and on the incense altar. Its fats are burned and the bull is burned outside of the holy area as was the Cohen's sin offering. When the **Ruler** inadvertently

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its condolences to

Mitch Aeder and family

Chairman of the OU Board of Directors

on the passing of his mother

Mrs. Wilma Aeder עייה

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

commits a **sin**, he brings a goat. He places his hands on its head, the cohanim place the blood on the altar corners, its fats are burned.

This aliya describes 3 sin offerings brought by leaders: the Cohen, the Sanhedrin when it makes a ruling that all the people follow and that they realize was in error, and the King. True leaders must recognize their roles; they serve the people and they serve G-d. Papal infallibility is not a Jewish notion; here we assume that the Cohen (the religious leader), the Sanhedrin, (the judiciary) and the King, the political leader will all sin. And admit their sins.



6th aliya (4:27-5:10) If a **person sins** inadvertently, he brings a goat as a sin offering. He places

his hands on the head, the blood is placed on the corners of the altar, the fats are burned. He may bring a sheep; the procedure is similar. An **Asham sin offering** is brought for: withholding testimony resulting in an oath taken unnecessarily, unknowingly violating the laws after becoming impure, taking an oath unnecessarily. A confession is made. The offering may be brought from sheep or goats. If the **owner cannot afford** these, then he may bring **2 birds**, one an olah and one a sin offering.

The sin offerings are brought for inadvertent sins. Sin stains the relationship between man and G-d. But not all sins are granted the privilege of an offering to grant atonement. Sinning with gusto demands remorse and a change of attitude; sacrifice does not suffice.

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7th **aliya** (5:11-25) And if **he cannot afford** these, then he may bring a **flour** offering, though without oil or frankincense, as this is a sin offering, an Asham. A finger full is brought on the altar; the cohanim consume the rest. If a person uses **sanctified property**, he needs to bring a ram to atone as an Asham. And to compensate the holy fund with a 1/5 additional penalty. If a person is **unsure of a sin**, he needs to bring a ram to atone as an Asham. If a person **denies** a financial obligation and swears falsely, he must make restitution with an additional 1/5 and to bring a ram to atone.

These offerings are required to be brought to the Mishkan and later, to the Temple in Jerusalem. The experience of the grandeur of those places would generate humility. Healthy humility, knowing our place as both majestic beings and meek in His presence is generated by the experience of sacrifice in the holy place. ■

HAFTORAH FOR VAYIKRA

YESHAYAHU 43:21- 44:23

This week's parsha focuses exclusively



on the sacrifices brought in the Mishkan. Related to this theme, this week's haftorah starts with a rebuke to the people of Israel for abandoning the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

The message which is conveyed from the prophet Yeshayahu are words of rebuke related to the Israelites turning away from dedicating their lives to God and turning to idolatry instead. The Almighty calls to his people to do *teshuva* and He promises that their transgressions will be forgiven.

Yeshayahu exhorts the people by mentioning to them that serving idols is merely serving an object crafted by an artisan and has no power - "neither see nor hear nor do they know..."

The conclusion of the haftorah states God's overwhelming desire that His beloved people remember Him and return to Him. ■



STATS

24th of 54 sedras; 1st of 10 in Vayikra
 Written on 215 lines in a Torah, rank: 19
 21 Parshiot; 13 open, 8 closed
 111 p'sukim - rank: 26 (2nd in Vayikra)
 Same number of p'sukim as Eikev
 1673 words - rank: 20 (1st in Vayikra)
 6222 letters - rank: 20 (1st in Vayikra)
 The sedra is of average length, but its p'sukim are longer than average for the Torah.

MITZVOT

16 mitzvot; 11 positive, 5 prohibitions

The book of Vayikra has the largest number of mitzvot among the five Chumashim - 247, 40% of Taryag. On the other hand, Vayikra is the shortest Book by far - in number of columns and lines in a Sefer Torah, number of p'sukim, words, and letters. This makes the mitzvah stats even more impressive.

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THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

IN THE PARSHA

Courtesy and Confidentiality

“There is no such thing as privacy anymore.”

“There are no secrets anymore.”

These are two complaints that are heard frequently nowadays.

We live in a world of cell phones and e-mails, blogs, Facebook and Twitter. We have no privacy, for almost anyone can reach us wherever we are, whatever we happen to be doing, at all times of the day.

And we can have no secrets, because anyone who knows anything about us can spread it to the entire world in a matter of seconds.

How often have I sat down for a moment of private time, for study or contemplation,

or just to “chill out”, only to have the silence disrupted by some total stranger who managed to obtain my cell phone number?

How many dozens of e-mails and blogs fill up the space of my inbox with communications that, at best, are of no interest to me and often are offensive and obnoxious?

We once felt entitled to privacy and courtesy, but they no longer seem achievable.

Often, we write a confidential note to a trusted friend, sharing a message that we would rather others not know, only to discover that the note is now circulating in cyberspace, accessible to literally everyone. Sometimes, it is the friend’s betrayal that has made our secret public. Often, it is simply misjudgment or carelessness on his part. But more frequently, it is an unwanted error, a mistaken pressing of “send” instead of “delete.”

We once expected confidentiality and discretion, but they too no longer seem possible.

Our contemporary society has lost what once was among its primary values. “A man’s home is his castle” once meant that decent citizens respected the “fences” around another individual’s personal space and would not casually trespass those boundaries.

The value of trusting in the discretion of another, once a cornerstone of human interaction, is now in danger of being relegated, along with other once cherished values, to

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The Family

the oblivion of “old-fashionedness.”

The right to privacy and the ability to assume confidentiality are universal human values. It is important to know that they are primary Jewish values as well. Sources for these values in our tradition include this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Vayikra*.

This might come as a surprise to you, dear reader, because you know that this week’s portion is the introduction to *Leviticus*, the biblical book which focuses upon sacrifices and Temple ritual. This week’s portion especially seems limited to the comprehensive and complex details of sacrificial offerings. Where is there even a hint of these contemporary concerns, courtesy and confidentiality?

The first two verses in the first chapter of *Vayikra* say it all, albeit between the lines:

“The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: ‘Speak to the Israelite people and say to them...’”

The rabbis of the Talmud saw in these simple and direct phrases two subtle messages.

First of all, the Lord called to Moses first and then spoke to him. He didn’t surprise Moses. He didn’t intrude on Moses’ privacy and autonomy. First, He called to him. He knocked on Moses door, as it were, ringing the bell first, asking to be invited in. No unwanted intrusion, even from the Lord Almighty, to his favorite prophet!

This observation is made by the rabbis in the Talmudic tractate of *Yoma*. In a less well-known Talmudic source, the tractate of *Derech Eretz*, the rabbis find that the

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Almighty's courteous concern for the privacy of his lowly creatures did not begin with Moses. It goes back to the way He treated the very first man, Adam. Genesis chapter three, verse nine: "The Lord God called to Adam and said to him: 'Where are you?'" Here too, even when the Lord wishes to rebuke Adam, He first "calls to him", signaling the uncomfortable conversation which is about to ensue.

God respects Adam's privacy, and He doesn't just "barge in" on Moses. Surely a lesson in human values.

The rabbis on the same page in the tractate of *Yoma* find another message in the deceptively simple opening verses of our *parsha*. "...saying: 'Speak to the people and say to them...'" From the redundancy here, "say," and "speak," and "say," the rabbis derive the lesson that when someone tells you something, you are forbidden to share it with another unless you are given explicit permission to do so.

Moses was not permitted to re-tell even the divine message that he heard until God Himself told him that it was okay to "say it over".

The medieval Rabbi Moses of Coucy actually enumerates this admonition for utter confidentiality as one of the prohibitions comprising the 613 commandments of the Torah.

As I have reflected upon these specific teachings over the years of my personal

parsha study, I have come away with several conclusions:

Firstly, there is much that is implicit in the Torah; much that lies beneath the surface. The long and complicated ritual laws that confront us as we read this week's *parsha* are contained in a context that teaches us more than the surface lessons. Our rabbis of old were particularly expert at digging out these unexpected but precious nuggets.

Secondly, these nuggets are often of astounding relevance for our contemporary condition. What can be more relevant than a reminder about the values of courtesy and confidentiality?

Finally, these lessons are not merely abstract teachings or bits of wisdom for us to ruminate upon as we relax in our armchairs. Rather, they are calls to arms. They are challenges.

It is difficult indeed to combat the value system that is foisted upon us by the technology which pervades the world in which we now live. Very difficult. But very necessary.

If we lazily submit to the pernicious influence of modern convenience, we risk the ultimate loss of our very humanity.

A culture devoid of courtesy can turn into a culture of callousness and cruelty.

A world where one cannot trust his confidante is a world where authentic friendship is impossible.

Troubling thoughts? Yes, indeed. But they are thoughts which we ignore at our own peril.

How fortunate are we that these thoughts are available to us, subtly embedded in the opening verses of this week's Torah portion! ■

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The Sins of a Leader

As we have discussed so many times already this year, leaders make mistakes. That is inevitable. So, strikingly, our parsha of Vayikra implies. The real issue is leaders respond to their mistakes.

The point is made by the Torah in a very subtle way. Our parsha deals with sin offerings to be brought when people have made mistakes. The technical term for this is *sheg-gahah*, meaning inadvertent wrongdoing

(Lev. 4:1-35). You did something, not knowing it was forbidden, either because you forgot or did not know the law, or because you were unaware of certain facts. You may, for instance, have carried something in a public place on Shabbat, perhaps because you did not know it was forbidden to carry, or you forgot what was in your pocket, or because you forgot it was Shabbat.

The Torah prescribes different sin offerings depending on who made the mistake. It enumerates four categories. First is the High Priest, second is “the whole community” (understood to mean the Great Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court), a third is “the leader” (*Nasi*), and the fourth is an ordinary individual.

In three of the four cases, the law is introduced by the word *im*, “if” – *if* such a person commits a sin. In the case of the leader, however, the law is prefaced by the word *asher*, “when” (Lev. 4:22). It is *possible* that a High Priest, the Supreme Court or an individual may err. But in the case of a leader, it is probable or even certain. Leaders make mistakes. It is unavoidable, the occupational hazard of their role. Talking about the sin of a *Nasi*, the Torah uses the word “when,” not “if.”

Nasi is the generic word for a leader: a

Mazal Tov to
Harriet Mark and family
 on the birth of her 
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ruler, king, judge, elder or prince. Usually it refers to the holder of political power. In Mishnaic times, the *Nasi*, the most famous of whom were leaders from the family of Hillel, had a quasi-governmental role as representative of the Jewish people to the Roman government. Rabbi Moses Sofer (Bratislava, 1762-1839) in one of his responsa¹ examines the question of why, when positions of Torah leadership are never dynastic (never passed from father to son), the role of *Nasi* was an exception. Often this role did pass from father to son. The answer he gives, and it is historically insightful, is that with the decline of monarchy in the Second Temple period and thereafter, the *Nasi* took on many of the responsibilities of a king. His role, internally and externally, was as much political and diplomatic as religious. That in general is what is meant by the word *Nasi*.

Why does the Torah consider this type of leadership particularly prone to error? The commentators offer three possible explanations. R. Ovadiah Sforno (to Lev. 4:21–22) cites the phrase “But Yeshurun waxed fat, and kicked” (Deut. 32:15). Those who have advantages over others, whether of wealth or power, can lose their moral sense. Rabbeinu Bachya agrees, suggesting that rulers tend to become arrogant and haughty. Implicit in these comments – it is in fact a major theme of Tanach as a whole – is the idea later stated by Lord Acton in the aphorism, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”²

1 *Responsa Chatam Sofer, Orach Chayyim, 12.*

2 *This famous phrase comes from a letter*

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R. Elie Munk, citing the Zohar, offers a second explanation. The High Priest and the Sanhedrin were in constant contact with that which was holy. They lived in a world of ideals. The king or political ruler, by contrast, was involved in secular affairs: war and peace, the administration of government, and international relations. They were more likely to sin because their day-to-day concerns were not religious but pragmatic.³

R. Meir Simcha ha-Cohen of Dvinsk⁴ points out that a King was especially vulnerable to being led astray by popular sentiment. Neither a Priest nor a Judge in the Sanhedrin were answerable to the people. The King, however, relied on popular support. Without that he could be deposed. But this is laden with risk. Doing what the people want is not always doing what God wants. That, R. Meir Simcha argues, is what led David to order a census (2 Sam. 24), and Zedekiah to ignore the advice of Jeremiah and rebel against the

King of Babylon (2 Chr. 36). Thus, for a whole series of reasons, a political leader is more exposed to temptation and error than a Priest or Judge.

There are further reasons.⁵ One is that politics is an arena of conflict. It deals in matters – specifically wealth and power – that are in the short-term, zero-sum games. ‘The more I have, the less you have. Seeking to maximise the benefits to myself or my group, I come into conflict with others who seek to maximise benefits to themselves or their group.’ The politics of free societies is always conflict-ridden. The only societies where there is no conflict are tyrannical or totalitarian ones in which dissenting voices are suppressed – and Judaism is a standing protest against tyranny. So in a free society, whatever course a politician takes will please some and anger others. From this, there is no escape.

Politics involves difficult judgements. A leader must balance competing claims and will sometimes get it wrong. One example – one of the most fateful in Jewish history – occurred after the death of King Solomon. People came to his son and successor, Rehoboam, complaining that Solomon had imposed unsustainable burdens on the population, particularly during the building of the Temple. Led by Jeroboam, they asked the new King to reduce the burden. Rehoboam asked his father’s counsellors for advice. They told him to concede to the people’s demand. Serve them, they said,

written by Lord Acton in 1887. See Martin H. Manser, and Rosalind Fergusson, The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs, New York: Facts on File, 2002, 225.

3 Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Vayikra*, New York, Mesorah Publications, 1992, 33.

4 Meshech Chochmah to Lev. 4:21-22.

May the learning from this issue of TT
לעילוי נשמת

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5 *This, needless to say, is not the plain sense of the text. The sins for which leaders brought an offering were spiritual offences, not errors of political judgment.*

and they will serve you. Rehoboam then turned to his own friends, who told him the opposite: Reject the request. Show the people you are a strong leader who cannot be intimidated (1 Kings 12:1-15).

It was disastrous advice, and the result was tragic. The kingdom split in two, the ten northern tribes following Jeroboam, leaving only the southern tribes, generically known as "Judah," loyal to the king. For Israel as a people in its own land, it was the beginning of the end. Always a small people surrounded by large and powerful empires, it needed unity, high morale and a strong sense of destiny to survive. Divided, it was only a matter of time before both nations, Israel in the north, Judah in the south, fell to other powers.

The reason leaders – as opposed to Judges and Priests – cannot avoid making mistakes is that there is no textbook that infallibly teaches you how to lead. Priests and Judges follow laws. For leadership there are no laws because every situation is unique. As Isaiah Berlin put it in his essay, 'Political Judgement,'⁶ in the realm of political action, there are few laws and what is needed instead is skill in reading a situation. Successful statesmen "grasp the unique combination of characteristics that constitute this particular situation – this and no other." Berlin compares this to the gift possessed by great novelists like Tolstoy and Proust.⁷ Applying inflexible rules to

6 *Isaiah Berlin, The Sense of Reality, Chatto and Windus, 1996, 40-53.*

7 *Incidentally, this answers the point made by political philosopher Michael Walzer in his book on the politics of the Bible, In God's*

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a constantly shifting political landscape destroys societies. Communism was like that. In free societies, people change, culture changes, the world beyond a nation's borders does not stand still. So a politician will find that what worked a decade or a century ago does not work now. In politics it is easy to get it wrong, hard to get it right.

There is one more reason why leadership is so challenging. It is alluded to by the Mishnaic Sage, R. Nechemiah, commenting on the verse, "My son, if you have put up security for your neighbour, if you have struck your hand in pledge for another" (Prov. 6:1):

So long as a man is an associate [i.e. concerned only with personal piety], he need not be concerned with the community and is not punished on account of it. But once a man has been placed at the head and has donned the cloak of office, he may not say: 'I have to look after my welfare, I am not concerned with the community.' Instead, the whole burden of communal affairs rests on him. If he sees a man doing violence to his fellow, or committing a transgression, and does not seek to prevent him, he is punished on account of him... you are responsible for him. You have entered the

Shadow. He is undeniably right to point out that political theory, so significant in ancient Greece, is almost completely absent from the Hebrew Bible. I would argue, and so surely would Isaiah Berlin, that there is a reason for this. In politics there are few general laws, and the Hebrew Bible is interested in laws. But when it comes to politics – to Israel's Kings for example – it does not give laws but instead tells stories.

gladiatorial arena, and he who enters the arena is either conquered or conquers.⁸

A private individual is responsible only for their own sins. A leader is held responsible for the sins of the people they lead: at least those they might have prevented.⁹ With power comes responsibility: the greater the power, the greater the responsibility.

There are no universal rules, there is no failsafe textbook, for leadership. Every situation is different and each age brings its own challenges. A ruler, in the best interests of their people, may sometimes have to take decisions that a conscientious individual would shrink from doing in private life. They may have to decide to wage a war, knowing that some will die. They may have to levy taxes, knowing that this will leave some impoverished. Only after the event

⁸ *Exodus Rabbah*, 27:9.

⁹ "Whoever can prevent the members of his household from sinning and does not, is seized for the sins of his household. If he can prevent his fellow citizens and does not, he is seized for the sins of his fellow citizens. If he can prevent the whole world from sinning, and does not, he is seized for the sins of the whole world" (*Shabbat* 54b).



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will the leader know whether the decision was justified, and it may depend on factors beyond their control.

The Jewish approach to leadership is thus an unusual combination of realism and idealism – realism in its acknowledgment that leaders inevitably make mistakes, idealism in its constant subordination of politics to ethics, power to responsibility, pragmatism to the demands of conscience. What matters is not that leaders never get it wrong – that is inevitable, given the nature of leadership – but that they are always exposed to prophetic critique and that they constantly study Torah to remind themselves of transcendent standards and ultimate aims. The most important thing from a Torah perspective is that a leader is sufficiently honest to admit their mistakes. Hence the significance of the sin offering.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai summed it up with a brilliant double-entendre on the word *asher*, meaning “when” in the phrase “when a leader sins.” He relates it to the word *ashrei*, “happy,” and says: Happy is the generation whose leader is willing to bring a sin offering for their mistakes.¹⁰

Leadership demands two kinds of courage: the strength to take a risk, and the humility to admit when a risk fails. ■

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10 Tosefta Baba Kamma, 7:5.



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THE PROPHETS

There are times – actually many times – that, when reviewing the weekly haftarah in preparation of these articles, I pause in amazement at the magnificence of the prophecies, or the poetic language or the perception of the spiritual giants and, at the same time, recognize the brilliance of our ancient scholars who established the custom of reading the haftarah each Shabbat. Whether due to their Ru’ach HaKodesh, Divine inspiration, or their uncanny perception of what the future might bring, these weekly selections have helped familiarize the average Jew with the words of the nevi’im. And, when we look back over the centuries and recognize how Torah study has varied in its focus from one generation to another, from one community to another, we appreciate even more how important these haftarot are to the “shul Jew,” one who attends the tefillot services regularly.

But there is a pitfall. Chazal could establish only a relatively short selection of the words of the nevi’im for the haftarah reading. As a result, we don’t always get the full impact of the navi’s words and, at times, can fail to understand what message Hashem’s agent was trying to share to the nation. I believe that is what often happens especially when studying this week’s haftarah.

The prophetic selection for this parasha of Vayikra, connects clearly to the Torah

reading as it too discusses the sacrificial rite commanded by Hashem. And yet, we tend to focus upon those psukim that censure Israel for her for her improper worship of Hashem, or, more precisely, for her complete failure to offer the sacrifices regularly. And yet, that condemnation occupies but three verses (Sefer Yishayahu 43; 22-24) of the entire reading – less than 10% of the haftarah!! Why must we leave our Shabbat tefillah with the feeling that the navi has, once again, condemned Israel as he has so often in past haftarot, when, in fact, that is completely untrue??!!

Had we read the previous prakim, we would realize that these chapters bear messages of comfort. This section of the sefer begins with perek 40 – a chapter that opens with the words: “Nachamu, Nachamu, Ami” – a cry to the nevi’im to comfort the nation – which is why it is read on Shabbat Nachamu, when we open the post-Tish’a B’Av time of consolation. And this 43rd perek that we read this week is also one of comfort - not condemnation! As we peruse the text we come to realize that Yishayahu’s message is that **ALTHOUGH** the nation has not been perfectly observant, **ALTHOUGH** they had not observed the sacrificial rite regularly, **NONETHELESS**, Hashem will forgive them. Indeed, the very next pasuk after the three verses of “condemnation” is one that we recite every Yom Kippur when

we urge G-d to forgive us: “Anochi, Anochi, Hu mocheh f’sho’eche,” “It is I Who will erase your transgressions”...”V’chatotecha lo Ezkor,” “And will not recall your sins.”

So I urge you to read this selection – read it well – and see how the entire 44th chapter carries on with that theme, condemning the idolatry of the OTHER nations and the uselessness of their worship of the false gods. Hashem’s reassurance of His forgiveness of Israel’s sins and his guarantee of the future geulah attests to the actual theme underlying Yishayahu’s words, a theme of comfort and of consolation, NOT of criticism and condemnation.

How fitting is this haftarah’s message to this parasha that introduces the laws of korbanot. As important as the sacrificial rite is, as vital as it might be to creating a bond between the mortal and the Immortal, the physical and the Spiritual, it is not essential for the survival of our nation. The importance of teaching this truth to a nation that would see its spiritual centers destroyed three times (two Batei Mikdash and the Mishkan) is inestimable. We need only look to our past history to look at the proof of Yishayahu’s words.

Or we can read the final message of the haftarah: “Let the heavens sing and the foundations of earth break out in song.... for Hashem has redeemed Jacob and has been glorified through Israel!!” ■

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The Sensitivity of Burning Feathers

ואם מן העוף עולה קרבנו לה' והקריב מן התורים או מן בני היונה את קרבנו. והקריבו הכהן אל המזבח, ומלק את ראשו והקטיר המזבחה וכו' ושסע אותו בכנפיו לא יבדיל. (ויקרא איד-טז)

And if his offering to God is a burnt offering of fowl, then he shall bring his offering of doves or of young pigeons. And the kohen shall bring it unto the altar, and pinch off its head, and make it smoke on the altar... and he shall split it open with its wings intact. (Vayikra 1:14-16)

The Torah mentions different animals that could be brought as a *korban ola* (elevation offering): bulls, sheep, and two types of birds – pigeons and doves.

The *korban olah* is entirely burned on the altar – even its feathers. Rashi explains that the burning of the feathers releases a foul scent. If so, why not remove the feathers before offering the bird? Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik (*Masores HaRav*)

explains that a bird would be offered by a poor person who cannot afford a larger animal. Imagine what the small bird would look like after its feathers had been plucked off! Then imagine how the poor person would feel on seeing his small bird stripped down, after seeing all the large animals that others brought – it would exacerbate his feelings of inferiority. Therefore, the Torah says, leave the feathers on. Here is the analysis of a halakhic detail that seems minute and barely relevant to our lives, but it teaches us to be sensitive and to think about others.

Rav Soloveitchik then quotes a statement in the Gemara (Brachos 17a) by *Chachmei Yavneh*, who proclaimed elegantly that they toiled at their labor of study just as others toiled at their labor, with each group fulfilling its role. And they concluded: “Lest you say that only our contribution is considered great, we have learned (Menahos 110a): אחד המרבה ואחד הממעט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, whether one does much or little, as long as he directs his heart to the heavens...”

Quantity is not what HaKadosh Barukh



Hu is seeking. As we said regarding *korbanos*, whether one brings a cow or a bird, God truly desires the heart (Sanhedrin 106b), so leave the feathers on the bird so that everybody will feel equal in the eyes of Hashem.

Each person has his own, God-given role. We do not choose our roles. Some have major roles, and some have minor roles, but the show is only a success if all the players perform their parts successfully. Accomplishment is not what sanctifies an individual – it is the faithfulness with which one engages in the assignment. As the Rav states: “Man is not judged by his accomplishments but by the devotion and sacrifice through which he pursues his mission.”

We must be sensitive to the less fortunate and enable them to feel satisfied with wholeheartedly offering their humble sacrifice. This life lesson is learned from not removing the feathers from the offered bird. It applies to all of us, in particular, during this time of year. It behooves us to reach out to those that require assistance so that they can enjoy a festive *yom tov* with their families. ■

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Fortunate Are We!

Rebbe Pinchas of Koretz, zy'a, was a contemporary and friend of the Baal Shem Tov, known for his righteous ways and uncompromising commitment to *emes*. The talmidim of Reb Pinchas learned their teacher's way of direct and open honesty. It is said that those who followed the path of Koretz did not speak unless they were certain that what they were saying was absolutely true. Two of the great talmidim of Reb Pinchas, who later became Rebbes in their own right, were Rebbe Aryeh Leib, the "Zeide of Shpole", and Rebbe Refael of Barshad.

One Leil Shabbos, while surrounded by his chasidim, the Shpoler Zeide seemed troubled and heaved a heavy sigh: "I'm afraid that I lit candles too late today. I may have been *mechalel Shabbos* — Oy, I think

I've inadvertently desecrated the holiness of Shabbos!" Anguished, he covered his face with his hands and sunk down, deep in thought.

One by one, the chasidim attempted to strengthen their Rebbe, each one with his own way of trying to justify and explain the situation: "It can't be, no wrongdoing can befall a tzaddik!" "Rebbe, there must have been some confusion about the time." "Hashem watches over the righteous." After numerous expressions of chizuk and comfort, the Shpoler Zeide's old friend Reb Refael of Barshad spoke up: "Even the mere possibility of unintended *chillul Shabbos* is extremely severe and must be taken to heart! *B'vadai*, certainly, it is incumbent upon the Rebbe to do *teshuvah!*"

The chasidim present gasped in horror. While they were accustomed to openness and honesty, and were aware the two were friends, addressing the Rebbe in such a way was unprecedented, even outrageous. All eyes were fixed nervously on the Shpoler Zeidy waiting for his reaction.

Raising his head, the Rebbe's teary eyes lit up and a smile spread across his face. Turning to the chasidim, he spoke words of rebuke: "Had I been swayed by your empty reassurances, who knows? I might have lived the rest of my life without doing *teshuvah* for this! Reb Refael, I owe you my life!"



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Among the many categories of *korbanos* outlined in this week's sedra are the various people obligated to bring a *korban chatas*, sin offering, as an atonement for mistakes, whether made by the Kohen Gadol, members of the community or the king:

אָפּער נָשׂיָא יִחְטֵא וְעָשָׂה אֶחָת מִכָּל־מִצְוֹת ה' אֲלֵקוּי אָפּער
 לֹא־תַעֲשִׂינָהּ בְּשִׁגְגָה וְאָשָׁם: אֲרֹהֲוֵת אֱלֹוֵי חַטָּאתוֹ אָפּער חַטָּא
 בָּהּ וְהִבְיֵא אֶת־קֶרְבָּנוֹ שְׁעִיר עִזִּים זָכָר תָּמִים:

“If a leader of Israel sins and unintentionally commits one of all the commandments of Hashem which may not be committed, and he realizes his guilt, or the sin of which he is guilty is brought to his knowledge — he shall bring as his offering a male goat without blemish.” (4:22-23)

Rashi points out a textual shift in our *pasuk*. Instead of the Torah using the word אִם, “if” as is used earlier in our *perek* to introduce a scenario in which someone sins, our verse employes a different, less commonly used term to express “if”: אָשֶׁר. Rashi says this term is reminiscent of אָשֶׁר־י, ‘fortunate is...’ Reading our *pasuk* this way, it means, ‘Fortunate is (the generation whose) leader... does not hold himself too high, but rather, he gives attention to bringing an atonement offering for his unintentional sins; and how much more so will he experience remorse for the sins he has committed willfully.’

The Torah is pointing out a subtle but important perspective on our leaders and ourselves. One is not meant to be perfect, beyond reproach. In fact, the opposite is true. *Ashrei* — fortunate are we whose leaders are fallible and admit wrongdoing.

Rav Yitzchak Hutner, zt”l, pointed out the danger in emphasizing the successes of our

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leaders, or focusing solely on the brilliance, spiritual accomplishments and lofty levels of avodah achieved by the *gedolei yisrael*, without recognizing their struggles, mistakes and failures along the way. Recognizing that our leaders are imperfect and that we have no expectation otherwise can be a great source of strength. Learning how giants of spirit and righteous people handle setbacks and missteps is far more constructive than misplaced adulation and a false expectation of perfection.

As Rav Hutner explains in a powerful letter to a talmid who was struggling, the true measure of greatness is growing and learning from our failures. “The tzaddik may fall seven times, and rises” (*Mishlei*, 24:16) This does not mean that one achieves ‘greatness’ from rising after a fall; the experience of stumbling itself is the source of his spiritual efforts and achievements. Instead of sweeping failures under the rug and pretending they didn’t happen, a great leader — and we, as well — can *value* our failures as spiritual springboards.

.....

As Pesach approaches, we are focused on cleaning chametz from our homes. To search out our dwelling places for leaven is also to examine our lives for crumbs

of the *yeitzer hara*. There are limits to what one is expected to achieve in this endeavor. The Sfas Emes (*Bereishis*, 1:1) explains that inherent in God’s design is man’s imperfection. Although we aspire to greatness, what greatness actually means requires some clarification. The *Talmidei haBaal Shem Tov* drew an understanding of our spiritual responsibility from the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz* on Erev Pesach. Halachically, we are obligated to search for ‘leaven’ מנעוץ והשער מנטל בליבו, “as far as the hand can reach, and the rest is the work of the heart” (*Pesachim*, 8a). We are to yearn in our heart for perfection, and yet it is not upon us to complete the task.

Ashreinu, fortunate are we, that we, *Am Yisrael*, have been given the *Korban Chatas*, an opportunity to repair that which we have broken and to draw close to Hashem through honestly admitting error and embracing our imperfection. Like the Shpoler Zeide, may we keep the company of friends, teachers and students who will guide us and accompany us on a path of honesty, spiritual development and growth. And may we clean our homes of *chametz*, and purify our hearts as well, in preparation for our redemption this Pesach. ■

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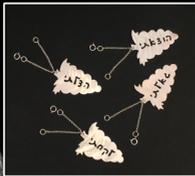
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11:30 AM
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz
 Mishlei: Wisdom for Life (L'Ayla)

2:00 PM
Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld
 Men's Gemara Chabura S,T,TH
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4:30 PM
Rabbi Hillel Ruvell
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 Shel Pesach
Rav Meir Goldwicht
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MON, MAR 22

10:30 AM
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
 Rav Soloveitchik on the
 Parsha

11:45 AM
Rabbi Shmuel Herschler
 Ethics, family and society in
 the writings of Rav Hirsch, Rav
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4:30PM
Rabbi Hillel Ruvell



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 Freedom: Transition or
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9:00 AM
**Rabbi Yitzchak
 Breitowitz**
 Minchat Chinuch

10:30 AM
**Rabbi Shmuel
 Goldin**
 Parshat HaShavua

2:00 PM
**Rabbi Jeffrey
 Bienenfeld**

5:00 PM
Mrs. Sylvie Schatz
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Halacha and Medina

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Issues in Halacha and
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4:30PM
Rabbi Hillel Ruvell



THURS, MAR 25

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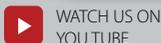
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Practical Halachot *for* Shabbat Erev Pesach

1 Thursday 12 Nisan, March 25 is *Ta'anit B'chorot* (Fast of the Firstborn).

2 Thursday evening (eve of 13 Nisan) is *Bedikat Chametz* after Ma'ariv. The procedure is the same as every year: prior to the bedika, the bracha of “*al biur chametz*” is recited. After the bedika any chametz that one did not see/find – “*d'lo chaziteih*” – is nullified (*bitul*).

3 Friday (13 Nisan) *chametz* should be burnt by the deadline – 11:27 AM. We do not recite “*Kol Chamira*” as any remaining chametz is not nullified. The chametz that one will eat for the remainder of the day and on Shabbat should be concealed.

4 Any Seder preparations that can be done before Shabbat should be done before Shabbat, for example: roasting of the shankbone (*z'roah*) cooking of the egg, preparation of salt

water, checking of lettuce, and opening the matzah boxes and preparing three whole matzot.

5 Do not forget to light a “*yahrtzeit*” candle before Shabbat in order to have a fire to use on Yom Tov, and to prepare an extra set of candles to light for Yom Tov.

6 Food preparation for Shabbat: If you are going to eat *chametz* at your Shabbat meals do not cook foods that are likely to stick to pots, pans, etc. It is preferable for the Shabbat meals to consist of Kosher for Pesach food that is cooked in Kosher for Pesach pots, pans, utensils, etc.

7 Making *Hamotzi*: It is preferable to use rolls or pitot (less likely to generate crumbs) and to eat them in a confined area (there is also the possibility of using “*Matzah Ashira*” – aka “Egg Matzah”).

8 The custom is to daven Shacharit early.

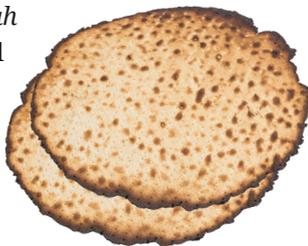


9 Final time for eating Chametz on Shabbat: this year 10:10 AM (end of the “fourth hour”) and after finishing eating chametz shake out your clothes and nullify any remaining chametz. Any remaining crumbs may be disposed of in the garbage or toilet until 11:27 AM (end of the “fifth hour”). If you have a significant amount of chametz remaining you can pour soap over it to make it unfit for consumption or you may abandon it outside. Then recite the nullification language “*Kol chamira*”.

10 From the beginning of the tenth hour of the day – 15:49 – one should refrain from having a full meal on both Erev Shabbat and on Erev Yom Tov.

11 Seudah Shleesheet on Shabbat – there are three options:

- If one’s custom is to eat *Matzah Ashira* (generally Ashkenazim do not eat *Matzah Ashira* on Erev Pesach) one may eat *Matzah Ashira* for *Seudah Shleesheet*. Care should obviously be taken to complete the meal before the tenth hour.
- One who refrains from eating *Matzah Ashira*



can have a *Seudah Shleesheet* comprised of meat, fish or fruit, etc.

- Some take the approach of splitting their Shabbat morning meal into two parts. After eating a portion of the meal, stop and say *Birkat Hamazon*. Then after a short break, wash and make *Hamotzi* again and continue the meal, again concluding with *Birkat Hamazon*.

12 On Motzei Shabbat at 19:31 one can say “*Baruch hamavdil bein kodesh l’chol*.” Thereafter, women should say: ” “*bein kodesh l’ Kodesh*” and can light Yom Tov candles (include *Shehechyanu*) and then the preparations for the Seder can begin

13 The special *YaK’N’HaZ* Kiddush is recited with “*Hamavdil bein kodesh l’kodesh*” and there is no *bracha* on, or use of *b’samim*.

With thanks to Rabbi Shai Finkelstein for these helpful instructions.



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Erev Pesach that Falls on Shabbat

Question: What do you suggest we do on *Erev Pesach* this year, which is on Shabbat, regarding when and what to eat?

Answer: Among the valid solutions to the challenges of *Erev Pesach* on Shabbat, people must determine the most practical solutions, according to the halachic possibilities their rabbis present. One practical assumption is that people will use only *Pesachdik* and/or disposable utensils, keeping any remaining *chametz* separate. “Bread” is needed for the first two meals and is preferred for *seuda shlishit* (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 291:5), which should be held in the afternoon (ibid. 2). Since the prohibition to eat *chametz* begins four halachic hours into the morning (consult a local calendar), our standard Shabbat practice needs to be changed. Let’s take a meal-by-meal look.

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Friday night meal - Those who do not want to keep *chametz* around can eat *matza* according to most *poskim*. If one has the *minhag* not to eat *matza* from the beginning of Nisan, *matza ashira* (known as “egg *matza*”) is an alternative.

Shabbat morning meal - If one finishes eating *chametz* (not necessarily the whole meal) by the end of the 4th hour, accomplished by *davening* very early, matters are halachically simple. (Getting rid of crumbs or leftovers by the end of the 5th hour is solvable and beyond our present scope.) *Matza* is desirable for situations when it is hard or nerve-racking to deal with *chametz*. However, *Chazal* forbade eating *matza* on *Erev Pesach*, according to most, from the beginning of the morning, so that when we eat it at the *seder*, it will be clear that it is for the *mitzva* (see Rambam, *Chametz U’matza* 6:12). However, one may eat *matza* that cannot be used for the *mitzva* (Shulchan Aruch 471:2), primarily, *matza ashira*, which is kneaded with liquids other than water (see *Pesachim* 35a). If it contains no water, most *Rishonim* rule that it cannot become *chametz*, and one would seemingly not need to rush.

Yet there are two issues. Firstly, as Ashkenazim are stringent to treat *matza ashira* as possible *chametz*, which is permitted to eat on Pesach only in cases of great need (Rama 462:4), the time issue

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



reawakens. (Some *poskim* rely on the Noda B'yehuda (I, OC 21) that it is sufficient to be wary of *matza ashira* only after midday of *Erev Pesach*.) Secondly, *matza ashira* may have a status of *pat haba'ah b'kisnin*, similar to cake, making it a questionable substitute for *challa*. (Igrot Moshe OC I:155 explains that this is not a problem on Shabbat, but still seems to prefer *challa* when convenient. To see Rav O. Yosef's preferred solution, see *Yechaveh Da'at* I, 91).

Seuda shlishit (=ss) - We mentioned the two preferred opinions about how normally to perform ss, which conflict this Shabbat. One is to eat bread at ss. The other is to have ss after midday, at which time *chametz* and *matza* are forbidden, and *matza ashira* is problematic for Ashkenazim. The Rama (444:1) says that we eat other foods, such as fruit or meat, at this ss. The Mishna Berura (444:8) cites a different solution, of breaking up the morning meal into two, so that one can fulfill ss on *challa* or *matza ashira* at that time. He points out that there should be some break between the two meals, to avoid a problem of an unnecessary

beracha. However, he does not say how long that should be. Opinions range from a few minutes to half an hour, with some suggesting taking a short walk in between (see *Piskei Teshuvot* 444:6). One who is not usually careful to have *challa* at ss throughout the year need not consider this idea. He can eat a normal ss for him (no bread) in the afternoon, preferably earlier than usual to leave a good appetite for the *seder*. Even those who are stringent about ss may follow the Rama over the Mishna Berura's suggestion, which is somewhat counter-intuitive and not without halachic problems. Sephardim, who can use *matza ashira*, must do so before three hours before sunset (Shulchan Aruch, OC 471:2). ■

Eretz Hemdah has begun a participatory Zoom class - "Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe" - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact info@eretzhemdah.org to join.

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REBBETZIN SHIRA

SMILES

Faculty, OU Israel Center

Pesach, Matzah, Marror

The *baal Haggadah* quotes Rabban Gamliel who would say, “Whoever does not discuss the following three things on Pesach night has not fulfilled his obligation. They are: *Pesach*, *Matzah*, and *Marror*.” What can these three fundamental ideas teach us as we prepare for *Seder* night? Further, why does Rabban Gamliel say *pesach*, *matza* and *marror* in this specific order? Shouldn’t *marror* which represents the bitterness of *galut Mitzrayim* be stated first, as the difficulties and pain came first?

Rav Gedalyah Schorr in *Ohr Gedalyahu* emphasizes that each of these symbols embody aspects of *emunah*, an integral component of the *Seder* experience. *Pesach* represents the intense Divine Presence that was revealed in Egypt the night of the redemption. The *Netziv* explains that this

revelation was so intense that it caused the death of the Egyptian firstborns. Rav Soloveitchik explains that on *Seder* night we too experience this ‘*gilui shechinah*’ and can access it to solidify our *emunah* each year.

Rav Schorr describes *matzah* as the response to *Pesach*. If *Pesach* expresses an intense Divine revelation, *matzah* expresses “running after the *Shechinah*”. The Jewish people faithfully followed Hashem to leave *Mitzrayim*; they did not even have time to let their bread rise. He notes that within each Jew there exists a point of complete dedication to Hashem, a part that is ready to do Hashem’s will without asking questions. This point of deep belief and connection is the *matzah* within us. It is the part stripped of *chametz*/ego that yearns for a spiritual path. Each year, when eating the *matzah*, we can try to access this part within ourselves and recommit to a life being drawn to the ephemeral and spiritual; a life more deeply



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connected to our Source.

Marror is last in this list. Rav Schorr, quoting the *Sefat Emet*, teaches that one can only appreciate the *marror*, the challenges in life, within the context of redemption. Every hardship is for our ultimate good and allows us to grow, becoming more refined people. When going through difficulties, we are challenged to find the good and purpose. We are tasked with looking back to see how we grew from our experiences and how those adversities became part of the redemptive process.

Rav Avraham Schorr in *Halekach Vehalebuv* Haggadah notes a custom to kiss the *marror* at this point demonstrating our appreciation for the troubles we are given as well as the grace. One of the lessons of Seder night is to trust that Hashem continues to take care of us through whatever means He determines with our absolute best interests considered. The night is about the love Hashem always has for us on a macro and micro level. *Leil Haseder* allows us to see life from the vantage point of *emunah*, giving life a whole different perspective where Hashem's overarching love sustains and nurtures us. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Perhaps my earliest memory of our family's annual *Pesach Sedarim*, was the daunting moment when I was called upon to recite for the first time, the *Ma Nishtana*, the segment of the *Hagada* text commonly referred to as the "Four Questions." This year (More than 40 years since my personal four questions debut), I look forward to once again hearing those very same words from my adorable six year old daughter.

What exactly is the origin of the custom for the youngest child who is capable to recite this section of the *Hagada*? Might there be a specific educational and pedagogic rationale for this long standing tradition?

The *Mishna* in *Pesachim* (116 A), introduces the basic premise for our familiar custom:

"Mozgo lo kos sheini, v'kaan haben shoel Aviv. V'im ein daat b'ven, Aviv melamdo- 'ma nishtana halaila hazeh, mikol haleilot...' ulefi daato shel ben, Aviv melamdo..."

"A second cup of wine is poured and the child should then inquire of his father (the reasons for the Seder ritual). If the child is intellectually incapable to do this, the father is bound to instruct him as follows: 'What differentiates this night from all other nights...?' A father should instruct the child in accordance with his capacity to understand..."

It seems from this teaching that upon pouring the second of the four cups of

wine, a child should ask regarding the purpose of the many aspects of the *Seder*. If the child is not intellectually capable to ask those questions then his father should demonstrate for him, meaning he should recite the *Ma Nishtana* text to instruct his child in the proper *Seder* protocol, and should in general begin to cultivate the curiosity of the child, and engage the child in a manner that is consistent with his capacity to understand.

Our *Chazal* explain this teaching further:

Tanu Rabanan: Chacham beno, shoelu, v'im eno chacham, ishto shoeloto. V'im lav, hu shoel l'atzmo, v'afilu shnei talmidei chachamim, sheyodiin b'hilchot haPesach shoelin zeh lazeh..."

"The rabbis taught: One whose child is intellectually capable, should be asked by his child; if the child is not capable, the wife should inquire, and if the wife is not capable, he himself should ask those questions; and even if two scholars who are well versed in the laws of the Pesach should sit together at the Pesach-meal, one should ask the other the above questions..."

The Sages introduce a new wrinkle to this entire teaching. Ideally we should be asked by our children, but if no child present is capable to ask, or if there is no child present, then the adults should still ask these questions of each other!

Perhaps, then there is an important

educational idea being introduced through this teaching. Even if no child is present, we as adults still must ask these questions, to reiterate the value of verbalizing a question, of articulating our intellectual curiosity. One cannot truly grow intellectually if he/she does not have the capacity to seek, inquire and probe, to look for answers and understanding. The mechanism of the question is perhaps the most vital and fundamental of pedagogical tools.

The *Rambam* also addresses this Talmudic teaching in two entries in his *hilchot Chametz UMatza*.

In Chapter 7 (the third entry):

“V'tzarich laasot shinui balayla hazeh, kidei sherau habanim, veyishaalu, v'yamru 'Ma nishtana halayla hazeh mikol haleilot'...”

“It is necessary to make changes on this night (the many rituals which are unique to the Seder evening), in order that the children will notice these differences, and ask saying: ‘What differentiates this night from all other nights?’...”

In Chapter 8 (the second entry), we read a slightly different scenario concerning these four questions:

“...umozgin hakos hasheini, v'kaan haben shoeil, v'omeir haKorei: ‘Ma Nishtana halaila hazeh mikol halailot...’”

“And you should pour the second cup of wine, and here the child asks. And the Reader (the one leading the Seder-RSS) says: ‘What differentiates this night from all other nights?’...”

In our first entry from Chapter 7, the *Rambam* explains that all the symbolic food and actions of the *Seder* are meant to peak the child's curiosity so that he

will notice and ask the familiar questions, while in Chapter 8, seems to contradict himself, suggesting that once the second cup is poured, the children ask whatever questions they wish, and then the person leading the *Seder* states our familiar questions.

This of course leaves us to ask, which is it? Does the child ask or does the Leader ask? How are we to understand this apparent contradiction?

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook zy'a explained that really this entire section of the *Ma Nishtana*, is meant for the *Sheayno Yodea LiShole-* the child who does not know how to ask, the child who does not yet understand the value in asking questions. For the other children they see all that is going on in the ritual of the *Seder*, in the symbolic foods, in the discussion, and they are naturally inclined to ask, but sometimes there is the child who does not yet know how to formulate a question, so as the *hagada* text tells us *‘at ptach lo...’* we give him the script- begin the process for him, teach him how to ask questions.

Perhaps though there is something more profound in the words of the *Rambam*, beyond Rav Kook's suggested interpretation. Perhaps, the *Rambam* is

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teaching us in Chapter 7, make all these changes on this night-create a laboratory-to encourage and cultivate our children's innate curiosity.

However, sometimes that innate curiosity, if not properly channeled can lead to inappropriate queries and mischief. In Chapter 8, the *Rambam* teaches us that sometimes we need to not only encourage the precocious nature of each and every child, but sometimes we need to acknowledge and harness that inquisitiveness by demonstrating how to ask the right questions, how to properly apply that curiosity for pursuit of timely and appropriate knowledge.

Our *Chazal* introduce to us that the goal of this evening is to encourage our children to ask questions. The Sages of the *Talmud* explain that even if no child is present and the adults ask each other these questions, the *Seder* serves an incredible educational experience. Yes, adults should teach children the intrinsic value of asking questions; but on the *Seder* night, even adults sitting together with no children present become re-acquainted with the most fundamental, yet powerful

tools for growth, the capacity to ask an articulate question, to seek an answer to that which seems strange, confusing, or challenging...

Pesach is referred to as *zman cheiruteinu*, the Festival of our Freedom. The *cheirut* (freedom) which we commemorate each and every *Pesach* is so much more than freedom from the physical servitude of ancient Egypt. *Cheirut*, true spiritual freedom is the capacity to learn, probe and grow, to cultivate the penchant for knowledge and identity which is innate within each of us. True *cheirut*, is the capacity to seek the answers to life's challenges and questions, so that ultimately each of us may become who we are destined to be!

May those familiar questions which we'll recite and reply to in just a few days, inspire within each of us the capacity to continually thirst for answers, to continually probe, to continually seek to become exactly who each of us was meant to be.

Wishing you a truly joyous Festival of Freedom!!

Chag Kasher V'Sameach! ■

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Canola Oil and Lecithin on Pesach

Question: I am Ashkenazi and avoid eating *kitniyot* on Pesach. I would like to find out if the prohibition against eating legumes applies to canola oil. My understanding is that this oil is produced from rapeseed (*liftit*). Also: if canola oil is permitted, then would it also be permitted to eat chocolate when it says on the package “includes rapeseed” (מכיל לפתית)?

Answer: Harav Yaakov Ariel, President of Torah VeHa'aretz Institute, wrote a detailed answer (Ohalo Shel Torah, part II, 67) regarding the *liftit* plant (Rapeseed), from which lecithin is produced. He was then chief rabbi of Ramat Gan, and was in charge of the kashrut of the Elite Chocolate Factory that remained in Ramat Gan until 2003.

Lecithin is produced from a plant called Rapeseed, *Brassica napus*. Lecithin is made from the small black particles in the flowers; they are not edible, but used only for feeding animals. Oil is produced from *liftit* through a dry extraction process. Lecithin has sticky qualities that are used in the chocolate industry.

According to Rav Ariel, we can rule leniently regarding lecithin on Pesach due to the following reasons:

Lecithin is not for human consumption (only animals); there is no foodstuff at all on it and was never included in the *kitniyot* decree because it was unknown at the time.

Lecithin is created by dry extraction: no water is involved in the process.

The lecithin is *batel b'rovan*, and we can be meikel with *bitul issur l'chatchila* here.

However, Rav Ariel writes that there are those who are *machmir* and therefore, products with lecithin should be labelled “Kosher LePesach for those who eat *liftit*/lecithin”; the Rabbanut HaRashit instructs this as well.

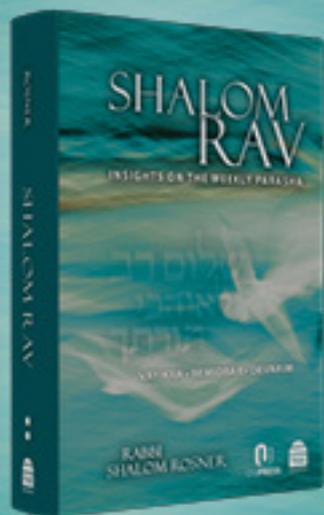
Note that Rav Yehuda Amichai, head of the Halacha Department of Torah VeHa'aretz Institute, wrote that in fact, it is best to be *machmir* regarding lecithin.

Lema'ase: Ashkenazim are allowed to consume canola oil and chocolate which contain lecithin, on the condition that they are labelled “Kosher for Passover.” ■



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The *Hag'alah* Procedure (continued)

H*ag'alah*, kashering with hot water, can be done at home in a few simple steps. Nevertheless, it is imperative to ensure the safety of everyone involved, as well as children who may be at home. When working with large quantities of boiling water, precautions are essential!

The “*Hag'alah* Pot”

A large pot should be used. There is a difference between kashering non-kosher flavor and kashering for Pesach regarding the pot being used for *hag'alah*. When kashering non-kosher flavor (or a mix up between milk and meat) it is customary to take a kosher *eino ben yomo* pot (which wasn't used twenty-four hours before kashering) for the process of boiling water (see *Rema* OC 452:2). However, for Pesach, if a *chametz* pot (e.g. year round) is used, it is customary to kasher it before using it for *hag'alah* (*Shulchan Aruch Harav* 452:22, *Mishna Berura* 452:10). If one wishes to use a Pesach pot as the kashering pot, it is customary to kasher it afterwards in order to use it subse-

quently on Pesach (*Sha'ar Hatziyun* 452:15).

Boiling water

Pure water should be used for *hag'alah*. The water should come to a boil and remain so throughout the kashering process. If after numerous immersions the water has stopped boiling, one should wait for it to re-boil before continuing. If the water was not boiling when the utensils were immersed, the kashering must be repeated (*Mishna Berura* 452:8). In a case where *hag'alah* was done in water that had stopped boiling, the process must be repeated.

The utensils

Utensils must be clean and dry before *hag'alah*. In order to facilitate immersing cutlery and other small items in the boiling water, a metal strainer basket may be used. One should take care that the utensils are not piled densely in the basket, since that might prevent the water from reaching all surfaces. If utensils are too long or too wide to fit into the *hag'alah* pot, kashering may be done in stages (see *Tur* YD 121).

Hag'alah procedure

Once the water has boiled, one should submerge the utensil so that its entire surface comes in contact with the water. When performing *hag'alah* on a cup or small pot, one should take care that the



water completely fills it.

Utensils should not be left in the boiling water too long, so as not reabsorb the flavor. While poskim offer various time limits (see *Pitchei Halacha*, appendix 29), it is common practice to leave the utensil in the water for only 3-4 seconds. (See *Sha'ar Hatziyun* 452:4.) There is no concern if the utensils stay slightly longer in the boiling water (see *Taz* 452:2 and *Levush* 452:2). After removing the utensil, it is customary to immediately rinse or immerse it in cold water (*Shulchan Aruch* 452:7). Since rinsing in cold water is only a custom, if this was not done, it does not invalidate the kashering (*Mishna Berura* 452:34).

Kashering a large pot

When kashering a large pot, the same procedure applies. An even larger *hag'alah* pot is needed so that the pot being kashered can fit inside. In most homes, it is hard to find such a large pot. Alternatively, one may completely fill the pot being kashered and allow the boiling water to overflow over the sides. This method is valid for *hag'alah* (see *Shulchan Aruch* 452:6). The same process can be done to the “*hag'alah* pot” used to kasher utensils, in order to subsequently use it for Pesach.

For further questions on kashering or Pesach-related issues, contact the hotline.

In summary:

- *Hag'alah* at home requires extra emphasis on safety precautions.
- The *hag'alah* pot should be an *eino ben yomo* (not used for 24 hours).
- For Pesach it is customary that the *hag'alah* pot be kashered before use (if it's a chametz pot), and afterwards if it will be used for Pesach.
- The water should maintain a continuous boil. Breaks should be taken to allow the water to re-boil if necessary.
- The utensils being kashered need to come in complete contact with the boiling water, including their inner surfaces.
- The utensils should be removed from the boiling water after a short immersion of a few seconds. It is customary to then rinse or immerse them in cold water to prevent re-absorption of flavors.
- Large pots can be kashered in stages. An alternative is to fill them with water to maximum capacity, causing the boiling water to overflow and come in contact with the whole pot. ■

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RABBI AARON Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

Polishing the Soul

Jewish law requires a person who accidentally committed a sin to bring a sin-offering.

Truthfully, this is a puzzling law. Why should a person who unintentionally erred and stumbled be required to bring a sacrifice?

...“If a soul will sin unintentionally from among all the commandants...” (*Vayikra* 4:2). The Torah is unambiguous. In such a case the individual must bring a ‘guilt offering’ (*asham*). Why should an inadvertent transgression not be granted automatic forgiveness from God?

The Ramban offers a penetrating answer: “All sins result in a stigma on the soul, and they are a blemish on it” (*Ramban*, 4:2). In other words, the Ramban is positing that we conceptualize the consequence of sin from two vantage points. In a case when one sins accidentally, it can be argued that although God automatically forgives because it was done inadvertently, a second element of sin is still present. Namely, its effect on the person. Even a misdeed done accidentally has a detrimental impact on the personality of the sinner.

Based on the perspective stated above, the Ramban explains why the verse (4:2) which deals with the sin-offering attributes the sin to the soul - “If a soul will sin.” Was not the act of sin performed by the person as a whole? His answer is that the Torah is highlighting the contaminating effect that sin has on the inner life of man.

Even when a sin is done accidentally a person is obliged to purify the pollution that has sullied the soul. An act of inner repair and reconciliation is needed. This is the purpose of the *Korban*.

This explanation of the *Ramban* is apparently the basis for an exquisite teaching of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s zt”l regarding a foundational idea in Jewish repentance.

In *Al HaTeshuva*, a collection of Rav Soloveitchik’s “*teshuva drashot*,” he addresses the difference between two central terms we employ when speaking of forgiveness: *kapparah* and *tahara*.

“For on this day He shall provide **atonement** for you to **purify** you; from all your sins before Hashem shall you be **purified**” (*Vayikra* 16:30).

When a Jew follows the required steps for repentance, *kapparah* is given - atonement is granted. For example, Yom Kippur day when the *karbanot* are offered, *kapparah* is granted. Punishment is lifted. However,

tahara, mending our own broken spirit and our relationship with God takes more effort.

Every sin we commit, suggested the Rav, has two results: the punishment that the Torah said would befall us and, in addition, its effect on our personality and the general rift that is caused in our relationship with God. On the one hand our sin incurs a punishment from heaven but there is a detachment from God and a negative impact that we have caused on our lives.

The Rav attempted to put into words the sensation of *tahara* by utilizing a lyrical verse from the book of *Yeshayahu* which describes the elevated feeling it engenders. "I have erased your sins as a haze and your transgressions as a vanished cloud; return to me for I have redeemed you." This verse describes the cathartic and purifying emotion that saturates one who has travelled the full distance in their repentance: "The erasure of sin resembles the dissipation and disappearance of the cloud which obscures the shining sun. When a man achieves repentance of purification (*tahara*), all the clouds above disperse and he feels the pure rays of the sun shining upon him and his entire being is permeated with: "For I have redeemed you." (*On Repentance*, Peli, p.66)

How does one strengthen their inner resolve to successfully refrain from committing transgression? A traditional

approach suggests that we remind ourselves that heavenly court keeps tabs on our transgressions. On the day of reckoning every Jew will ultimately stand in judgment before the Creator. "Reflect on three things and you will avoid transgression... you will give an account and reckoning..." (*Pirkei Avot* 3:1)

For some, picturing this scene in one's mind eye, is an effective tool in curtailing sinful conduct.

However, for others, perhaps such an approach is too hypothetical and difficult to assimilate.

When addressing the issue of refraining from transgression perhaps Rabbi Soloveitchik's teaching may serve us well. Realizing the ill effects that sin has on our psyche; the painful repercussions that we feel immediately and the melancholy sin engenders may help convince us to stay clear of such ruinous conduct. Moreover, we all undoubtedly prefer a path that generates joy and light in our lives. Do we not all yearn to feel the joyful sensation described by the prophet Yeshayahu of "clouds dispersing and the pure rays of sun shining upon us?" ■

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The Small Silent Voice

That we should all merit to hear that small silent voice of Hashem calling to us as it did to Moshe at the opening of this week's Parsha!

Rashi tells us that when Hashem summoned Moshe from the Ohel Moed, the calling was a language of affection – hardly surprising when we consider Moshe's great virtues. However, we will have noticed that the letter Aleph of the Hebrew term *Vaykira* is reduced in size.

The small Aleph might mean that Hashem spoke intimately with Moshe as one friend would talk to another, for Hashem spoke to Moshe but not to Aharon. Indeed, Gur Aryeh comments that Hashem called Moshe's name twice, softly, in a manner of endearment that only Moshe could hear.

The call would stir Moshe's consciousness as he waited with anticipation for God's instructions now that the Mishkan was completed. The verse continues that Hashem *spoke* to Moshe, *saying...* And then, Moshe is commanded to *speak* to Bnei Yisrael concerning the offerings they would willingly bring to Hashem.

Thus, there appears to be a very drawn-out communication process within two

verses, with four expressions of saying, speaking, and addressing. Why so?

It appears that Hashem was about to introduce very delicate commands associated with the sacrifices. The term *Korban* implies that the primary purpose of the offerings was to draw people closer to Hashem. However, only recently, the people had erred with the Golden Calf. Furthermore, as the Haftarah reminds us, in later years, "You [did not] satisfy Me with the fat of your offerings – but you burdened me with your sins."

So, Hashem approaches Moshe very mildly; He is gradually warming Moshe to the subject. It is as if Hashem tells Moshe to tread carefully, as only a father might caution his son. Moshe needed to consider very studiously that he was about to issue very delicate commands in Hashem's name, which were fine and fraught with serious consequences.

Perhaps the little Aleph was declarative: It indicated to Moshe that he, too, needed to convey the intricate laws of the sacrifices with a small, silent, and endearing voice. Moshe would have to step very tenderly to raise the people to a new level, just as the smoke of the sacrifices would now gently rise and present themselves as a pleasant odor to Hashem. ■

Shabbat Shalom!

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Telling Our Children

As we enter into the month of Nissan and the weeks leading up to Pesach, we prepare our homes and ourselves for the Exodus from Egypt. The central feature of the entire festival of Pesach is the Seder night, and the central focus of the Seder is the obligation to tell our children the story. “And you shall tell your children on that day, saying because of this God did to me when I came out of Egypt” (Shemot 13:8).

This verse is the basis for at least two of the four sons, is mentioned four times in the Seder, and urges us to tell the story. But not just to tell, but to pass it on from generation to generation. To tell our children, the next generation, who will in turn tell the next generation.

We could explain that the reason for

this commandment is related to the slavery in Egypt itself. Pharaoh commanded to kill all the boys, throwing them violently into the Nile river. He wanted to destroy families, to attack the deepest core of the Jewish people; the Jewish family.

We go to great efforts to have children, to provide for them, teach them, raise them to be good people, and contribute to society. They are our pride and joy and we cannot get together without showing off our children or grandchildren. Those who are suffering from fertility challenges go to even greater efforts just to bring children into this world.

In light of this it is indicative to see the latest report by the Brookings Institution that showed that during the pandemic there has been a baby bust in America as opposed to a baby boom. Less children have been born, falling to the lowest levels in 35 years. In California there were 10% fewer births and in Hawaii 30% less. People were concerned in the past year

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about their future and so opted to have less children.

And what about us?

“When they oppressed them, they increased and spread out” (Shemot 1:12), our belief in the better future encouraged us to have more children, not less. During 2020 the population of Israel increased by 1.7%, of that increase 84% as a result of births.

From Egypt until today, when we face adversity we persevere, when standing before difficulties we overcome, when threatened with death we embrace life. ■

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Real Life Rescues

Thinking Counterintuitively To Save A Life



Last week, on Saturday night, just after 7:00 p.m., United Hatzalah volunteer EMT Yossi Teshuva was sitting with his family for dinner when Yossi's communications device began to buzz. Two medical emergencies were occurring simultaneously in the Ma'ale Adumim area. One being an incident of fainting, the other a stabbing incident.

Yossi did a quick calculation of the distance between him and each emergency and how many volunteers were available to respond to either. Estimating that most of the volunteers would rush to the stabbing incident, and that the incident of fainting was just two short blocks away, Yossi decided to respond to the fainting incident.

Within three minutes, Yossi had arrived at the given address, and was the first person at the scene. He found an unconscious 78-year-old woman lying on the ground. He checked her vital signs and discovered that this was no ordinary incident of fainting, the woman had no pulse and was demonstrating agonal breaths.

Yossi quickly attached his defibrillator and got to work, launching into full blown CPR while requesting immediate back-up from the dispatcher. Slowly, volunteers came rushing in to join in the fight in an effort to save the woman's life.

After seven minutes of chest compressions and assisted ventilation a mobile intensive care ambulance arrived at scene and joined the CPR efforts. A heart monitor was attached and the unresponsive woman was given medications in an effort to revive her. Three minutes later, one of the paramedics at the scene announced that the woman's pulse had returned. Even though she was still unconscious, the woman was stable enough to be transported to the nearest hospital.

"There is no such thing as an easy emergency," commented Yossi. "I say this all the time. As an EMT, you can never be too sure what you are going to walk into when you respond to a medical emergency. You simply can't know what to expect. You always have to be on your toes with your guard up, ready for any emergency. In this instance, I did not expect to find a woman who had just suffered a heart attack. The alert I received described fainting, but I have learned on this job to never assume anything. Once I saw the woman was unconscious, I wasted no time in providing the appropriate response. Thanks to my thinking counter-intuitively, the woman's life was saved that night. This is how I have come to think as a first responder. Help everyone who needs it, and respond to the seemingly less urgent calls just as you would with the urgent ones, with the same vigilance and care."



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TEFILLA

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative

סמיכת גאולה לתפילה

Rachel, mother of five and full-time businesswoman, barely had a chance to get herself and her five children ready every day before stumbling on to the bus to work. She certainly did not have time to daven before she left the house. And so she used her time on the bus to daven. The problem was that when her bus arrived at its destination, she was typically just finishing up the bracha following the Shema, concluding with the words ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל. Her next Tefilla was meant to be the Shemonah Esrei except that her connecting bus was due to arrive in two minutes. If she would begin saying Shemonah Esrei, she would most certainly miss her bus and would be delayed an extra ten minutes. On the other hand, she knew that ideally there should not be an interruption between the bracha of גאל ישראל and the Shemonah Esrei. What should she do? In this article we will discuss the deeper significance of סמיכת

גאל (connecting the bracha of גאל ישראל and the Shemonah Esrei) which will shed some insight into Rachel's dilemma.

The last Tefilla we recite before reaching the Shemonah Esrei is נזרת אבותינו. This is the second half of the last of the Birchot Kriyat Shema (אמת ויציב). The main theme of this Tefillah is Geulah (redemption). We describe how Hashem redeemed us from the house of slavery, killed the Egyptian firstborn, and split the Yam Suf. We end with the section of תי כמוך, in which we conclude with the fitting words, ברוך אתה, ה' גאל ישראל - Blessed are you Hashem, Redeemer of Israel. Immediately following these words, we begin the Shemonah Esrei.

This follows the idea brought down in Gemara Brachot of סמיכת גאולה לתפילה. The Gemara discusses in a few different places the importance of juxtaposing this bracha of Geula right before the Shemonah Esrei (referred to as "Tefilla"). The Gemara notes that one who does so merits the World-to-Come, is protected from injury, and is looked upon very favorably.

Why is this? What could possibly be so praiseworthy about reciting the bracha of גאל right before Shemonah Esrei?? It seems very disproportionate!

One answer is brought down by **Rabbeinu Yonah**. He explains that the reason why Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim was *in order* that we should serve Him. By moving straight from a

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recounting of Yetziat Mitzrayim (גאולה) to our expression of complete dependence on Hashem (through our requests in the Shemonah Esrei - תפילה), we put Hashem's plan into action. Every time we think back to Yetziat Mitzrayim and how Hashem redeemed us, it reminds us how completely dependent we are on Him. It also reminds that we can trust in Him - just as He saved us once, He will be there for everything we need in the future. Once we put that all into perspective, we live our lives in a different way, ultimately making ourselves worthy of the World to Come. According to this approach, the concept of סמיכת גאולה לתפילה is not just a technical guide of how to organize the Tefillot, but it is actually a philosophy on life. We must always remember our history and use it to guide our interaction and relationship with Hashem.

Another way of looking at the need for this juxtaposition is that by placing Geula before the Tefilla, it makes our Tefilla more effective.¹ How so? In two ways –

The **Talmud Yerushalmi** (Berachot 1:1) explains that by reminding oneself of the sense of fear and urgency felt at the time of Yetziat Mitzrayim, one can tap into the power of “יענך ה' ביום צרה” – we read in Tehillim 19 that Hashem answers one's Tefillot when one truly feels that he is in troubled times, when he feels that his whole world is in shambles and His only hope is to turn to Hashem. On the other hand, when one davens with a sense of complacency, that Tefilla can hardly be effective. If we can remind ourselves of the depths of

despair we found ourselves in Mitzrayim before being redeemed (גאולה), we can try and recapture that emotion before we begin our requests of the Shemonah Esrei (תפילה), and in that way, our Tefillot will be more effective.

The second answer is found in a mashal is the **Yalkut Shimoni**. Imagine a friend of the king knocks on the king's door. Because he's his friend, the king goes out of his way to open the door so that he can help out his friend with whatever he might need. But when he opens the door, no one is there, the friend has already left. His requests are left unfulfilled. The lesson is as follows – when we praise Hashem for all He has done at Yetziat Mitzrayim, Hashem (so to speak) gets into the mode and is prepared to redeem and help us with whatever we might need in the present. It is the perfect time to approach Him with all of our requests. If we stop after reciting the “גאולה”, it is a wasted opportunity. Hashem wants to fulfill our requests, He is waiting to do and so the time is ripe for us to plunge forward into our “תפילה”, the requests of Shemonah Esrei. In this way our Tefilla will be most effective.

In conclusion, סמיכת גאולה לתפילה is a special opportunity that enables us to re-enforce our dependence and faith in Hashem, daven with a sense of urgency, and utilize a ripe time for effective Tefilla. *Certainly worth the extra ten minutes of Sara's time if she is able to spare it!* ■

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¹ See Rabbi Ezra Bick's article on VBM for an expansion on this topic.



Shoshana Solomyak Jerusalem Chapter Director

G-d's Call to Man

Parshat Vayikra opens up by saying, “The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying. (Leviticus 1:1)”. We are immediately struck with the question of why the words, “The LORD called to Moses”, are necessary. Couldn't the Torah, which never wastes a single word, just have said, “The Lord spoke to Moses from the Tent of Meeting, saying”? What is the significance of G-d calling to Moshe?

Rashi famously explains that קריאה, calling, is language of love. G-d first calls to Moshe before speaking to him to show His love for him.

Alternatively, the Rashbam explains that in order for Moshe to approach the Tent of Meeting, he first needed a call from Hashem. Sefer Shemot had concluded by telling us, “Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of the LORD filled the Tabernacle (Shmot 40:35)”. Since the tent was shrouded in the cloud of glory, Moshe could not approach at will. He needed Hashem's permission.

If we combine the two approaches,

we can notice that the ‘call’ expresses two complementary dimensions of our relationship with Hashem that sets the theme for all of Sefer Vayikra. On the one hand there is the loving call to come close to Him. “Hashem is near to all who call to him” (Tehillim 145). We feel God's loving call throughout all of Sefer Vayikra, through the numerous mitzvot gifted to us. Each of the mitzvot presents an opportunity for getting close to Him.

On the other hand, just as Moshe does not approach the Tent without God calling to him, our approach to Hashem comes through strict adherence to His Will. The numerous mitzvot of Sefer Vayikra, the laws of sacrifices, tuma/tahara, Yom Kippur etc... are all part of the “call” - the specific instruction for *how* to come close to him.

May we all merit to feel the loving call of God through the mitzvot He has given us and come close to Him through adhering to His laws.



Zahavia Schudy 11th Grade, Jerusalem

The Small Aleph

Parshat Vayikra starts out with the word “ויקרא”, but the alef is not a regular alef it's a small alef. So my question is the following: Why does the Sefer that tells us all about

the laws that God is giving to Bnei Yisrael start out with a small alef?

In the first Pasuk it says that "he called to Moshe- ויקרא אל משה", Hashem called specifically to Moshe. The Baal Haturim explains that Moshe, when writing the Torah, wanted to write "ויקר" which means a random occurrence that Hashem called Moshe, so that it would not seem like Moshe was above Balaam in anyway. Moshe did not want any of the nations or anyone in Bnei Yisrael to think that because of how Hashem called to him that Hashem now favored Moshe. Moshe wanted to write "ויקר" as an act of humility. But Hashem told Moshe to write "ויקרא" as an expression of affection and to show that he called on Moshe purposely. Hashem compromised with Moshe, so to speak, by allowing him to write a small alef instead of a regular sized one.

We should take this story and learn from it. We should learn how to be like Moshe. To always be humble while never believing ourselves to be above others. No matter what, even if you believe that the other person is a rasha. Shabbat Shalom! ■

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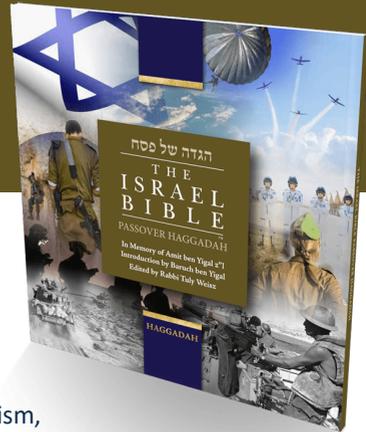
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