

Torah ב"ה Tidbits

ISSUE 1653

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MARCH 21ST 2026
ג' ניסן תשפ"ו

פרשת ויקרא
PARSHAT VAYIKRA



Korbanot and the Modern Mind

Rabbi Moshe Taragin Page 46



Shimshon and the Road to Redemption

Mrs. Leah Feinberg Page 62



לרצנו לפני ה' ויקרא א:ג

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT VAYIKRA ZMANIM

CANDLES 5:14 PM • HAVDALA 6:28 PM • RABBEINU TAM 7:08 PM

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To read **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb's**
Dvar Torah please visit:
TorahTidbits.com>Individual Articles



COVER PHOTO

Photographed by Mindy Dickler

I made aliyah in 2021 from Baltimore, MD. This photo was taken from my mirpeset in Modi'in about one year ago, while the Gaza war was raging and there were still many hostages who had not yet returned home. This photo is especially meaningful because of my **בניחן נצח** banner in the foreground.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- 🕒 **Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad 4 Nisan/ Sat. night March 21**
7 Days After Molad 8 Nisan/ Wed. night March 25
- Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until 14 Nisan/ Tues. night March 31**

- 🕒 **Please note we change the clock early am on March 27th.**
At 2am we move the clock ahead to 3am.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



	Vayikra		Tzav		
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	5:14	6:28	6:19	5:38	7:33
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	5:32	6:30	6:37	5:40	7:35
Beit Shemesh/RBS	5:33	6:29	6:38	5:39	7:34
Gush Etzion	5:30	6:28	6:35	5:38	7:33
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	5:31	6:29	6:36	5:39	7:34
Modiin/Chashmonaim	5:31	6:29	6:36	5:39	7:34
Netanya	5:31	6:30	6:36	5:40	7:35
Be'er Sheva	5:32	6:29	6:36	5:40	7:34
Rehovot	5:32	6:30	6:36	5:40	7:34
Petach Tikva	5:14	6:29	6:19	5:39	7:34
Ginot Shomron	5:30	6:29	6:35	5:39	7:34
Haifa / Zichron	5:21	6:29	6:26	5:39	7:35
Gush Shiloh	5:30	6:28	6:34	5:38	7:33
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	5:32	6:30	6:37	5:40	7:35
Givat Zeev	5:34	6:28	6:39	5:38	7:33
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:30	6:28	6:35	5:38	7:33
Ashkelon	5:33	6:30	6:37	5:41	7:35
Yad Binyamin	5:32	6:29	6:36	5:40	7:34
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	5:23	6:27	6:28	5:37	7:33
Golan	5:28	6:27	6:33	5:36	7:32
Nahariya/Maalot	5:20	6:29	6:25	5:39	7:34
Afula	5:30	6:28	6:35	5:38	7:33

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Vayikra - 7:08 PM • Tzav - 8:13 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Menachos 69



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OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
March 18-28* / 29 Adar - 10 Nisan**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:55-5:42
Sunrise	5:46-6:33
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:46-9:38
Magen Avraham	8:10-9:02
Sof Zman Tefila	9:46-10:40
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:47-12:44
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:17-1:15
Plag Mincha	4:33-5:38
Sunset (Including Elevation)	5:48-5:55

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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This week's parsha begins with the word "Vayikra," written with a small *alef*. Rashi explains that this *alef* was written small because Moshe Rabbeinu was so humble that he felt uncomfortable having the Torah record that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* was calling out to him. So instead, he wrote the *alef* small, as if it says "vayikar," as if *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* "happened" to speak to him. Nevertheless, the word remains. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* was telling Moshe, quite literally: You have a calling. Your calling is to lead the Jewish people. To build the *Mishkan*. To guide them through the desert toward *Eretz Yisrael*.

This past Sunday, I drove my son up north to his base near the Lebanese border. I had been trying for over a week to find time to visit our OU Israel team in Kiryat Shemona, so I figured I would combine the trips. We drove up together, watching the rain fall over mountains full of greenery. It was a beautiful ride. But the moment we arrived in Kiryat Shemona, the beauty was punctuated by a different reality. I tried counting sixty seconds without hearing a boom. I could not.

While it was reassuring that most of what we were hearing was outgoing fire - our forces targeting Hezbollah positions - it was still jarring. The booms were so powerful that the windows shook. Stores were empty, streets were quiet, and people stayed in their homes, understandably afraid to go outside. When you live in Yerushalayim or Tel Aviv and a siren goes off, you have roughly a minute and a half to reach shelter. In Kiryat Shemona, you might have ten seconds.

My first stop was the mayor's office. He had a meeting scheduled with army officials, but he asked to postpone it in order to personally express his thanks to OU Israel for everything we have been doing for Kiryat Shemona over the last 16 years, and especially over the past two and a half years. He is very aware of the incredible work being done by Refael Salab, our director up north, together with his wife Avital and their five remarkable children.

Refael serves as the director of our teen center in Kiryat Shemona, and the amount of honor and respect the city has for him and his family is truly admirable. Refael and Avital have earned that respect in the most meaningful way - by staying. While many residents have understandably evacuated, Rafael and Avital have remained in Kiryat Shemona. Over the past two and a half years, Refael has traveled from hotel to hotel visiting evacuees from the north, bringing them love and *chizuk* when they needed it most. And back in the city, he continues to reach out to teenagers, visit their homes, and simply be present and idealistic. Avital (@avitalsalab1) has a very significant presence on social media where she empowers and tries to explain to the world what Kiryat Shemona is going through and how to be an incredible mother. Their decision to remain sends such a powerful message to everyone there: even now, we must stand strong and give *chizuk* to one another.

I shared a *dvar Torah* with the mayor and the staff. I told them that sometimes the call from *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is written explicitly in the Torah, as it was for Moshe in this

week's *parsha*. But sometimes, the calling comes in a different form. You are elected mayor of Kiryat Shemona. You become the *Matnas* director. You are hired as an advisor working with teens. In those moments, it is clear that you have been chosen – not only by the people and the organization, but by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* Himself – to do holy work. I told them that I did not want them to feel alone. The work they are doing is so, so important.

Harel Chetzroni, from our Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center joined me on my visit to Kiryat Shemona. We took the opportunity to meet with advisors of the OU Israel Teen Center, alumni and families, all while making sure to meet in close proximity to a shelter.

Afterwards, I went with my son and Harel to Rafael and Avital's home. Immediately, their children began thanking my son for being a soldier and defending Israel. This was an incredible moment. These kids see thousands of soldiers driving through Kiryat Shemona in Humvees and jeeps, but to have a real person, a real face, walk into their home and be heading into Lebanon to defend them – their gratitude was palpable. That moment made me incredibly proud.

Then something else struck me. Boom after boom would sound outside, and these children barely reacted. They were jumping on the trampoline, playing inside the house, completely accustomed to the constant noise of outgoing fire. But the instant an interceptor launched – meaning a missile was incoming and needed to be neutralized – these kids recognized the difference in a split second and ran for shelter. I could not tell the difference between the sounds. They could. Every single time. It is, on one hand, life-saving. *Baruch Hashem* these children have developed this



instinct. On the other hand, it is very sad. For children so young to be such experts in the sounds of different missiles tells you everything about what life in Kiryat Shemona has been like.

I was also moved to see MK Tzvi Sukkot come and knock on Refael's door. He came to say: I hear you are doing a great job here, and I wanted to thank you personally. Refael told me that this particular MK has already spent a number of nights sleeping in Kiryat

Shemona's bomb shelters alongside the residents. While I (and OU Israel) make sure to always stay a-political and never endorse any specific party, that, to me, is the mark of a true leader – someone who leaves the comfort of his own home to be with the people and understand what they are going through. Voting on policy is one thing when you sleep in your own bed every night. It is an entirely different matter when you have been in the shelters and met the families and felt the ground shake. I am sure other MK's have been up north but I happen to have met MK Sukkot.

Later that day, I brought my son to the base. He walked in while I stood outside waving goodbye. At that point, a car pulled up beside me carrying several high-ranking officers. They asked what a civilian was doing standing outside an army base. I told them, quite proudly, that I had just dropped off my son to defend and serve the Jewish people. They responded warmly, telling me I should be very proud, and that the soldiers up here are doing critical work.

As I tend to do, I struck up a conversation with two of the soldiers, whose names were David Berlin from Abu Tor, Yerushalayim and Amos Davidowitz from Kibbutz Gezer. Upon hearing I was from OU Israel, David lit up. "You're from the OU? I see you in Torah Tidbits! I am sure you know my aunt, she used to volunteer there!" It

turned out his aunt was Sarah Fishman, a beloved figure in our office who used to come in nearly every day to help set up the library and take care of visitors. What a small world – one person originally from Boston, another from Manhattan, myself from Brooklyn, all standing together near the Lebanese border and marveling at what it means to be part of this incredible nation, especially during these challenging yet incredible days.

These officers told me that they and their colleagues had been serving since October 7th, dedicating the coming years to the safety of the Jewish people. It was inspiring to see their commitment, and all I could think was: it is a privilege to be part of a nation that does not just talk about keeping our people safe but actually puts everything they have into this nation. Of course we took a picture, and he told me he looks forward to seeing it featured in Torah Tidbits!

Each and every one of us is receiving a calling during these extraordinary days. Each person has their own *Vayikra* from *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. One is called to fight. Another is called to donate. Another is called to learn Torah. Another is called to hold down the fort at home while a spouse is serving. Another makes sure the army receives the supplies it needs. Another ensures that the residents of Sderot or Kiryat Shemona feel the strength of *Klal Yisrael* behind them.

May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* give all of us the *siyata dishmaya* we need to rise to our calling and accomplish what we are meant to accomplish.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel

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Do You Care?

Our Parsha introduces us to the various offerings that were brought in the Temple, with extensive discussion about the *korban chatat*, the sin offering. These offerings were brought specifically for mistakes made, rather than for deliberate and malicious acts. Nonetheless an offering is required as an act of atonement – for a mistake!

Mistakes happen in a context. Simply put – we make mistakes when we are careless, not when we are careful. We can forget anything anywhere, but we are more likely to leave our worn raincoat on the train than our wallet because we care far more about the wallet than about the old coat. In this light, the concept of atonement for mistakes implies the expectation that we must truly care about doing things right in the realm of Torah and Mitzvot.

How do we make ourselves truly care?

What matters to us most is not what others expect of us but what we ourselves value and are passionate about. As slaves in Egypt, we did

absolutely nothing that we cared about. Our days were filled with Pharaoh's priorities and with exercises in futility, such as building pyramids on quicksand. The freedom celebrated on Pesach brought us to a place where we could finally focus on our greatest values and on G-d's will, the greatest thing to be passionate about.

The freedom of Pesach is the freedom to really engage in what we care about.

It is fitting that the Yom Tov of Pesach is where the Halachic context promotes profound care for doing things right. We see this in the Torah obligation to free our entire home of the Chametz that we are not supposed to eat, in the Halachic notion unique to Pesach that even a tiny bit of Chametz can render a mixture not kosher for Pesach, and in the widespread customs of Pesach home preparation that go beyond the basic Halachic requirements. Pesach is handled with the utmost care.

The ultimate symbol of this elevated care and conscientiousness is the Matzah itself. Matzah is made with care – *ush'martem et hamatzot*; and it is made with alacrity. Matzah baking is not a casual enterprise in any sense. And our Sages saw this as a paradigm for all Mitzvot, as the Sages played on the similarity between the Hebrew spelling of the words Matzot and Mitzvot and said that all Mitzvot should be performed with that same care and enthusiasm.

Not only to avoid mistakes, but to really get things right and make things happen, we need to care. When we are motivated by the issue and project at hand, when we are doing it not just because we have to, we are able to preserve our values and live a passionate life. ■

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PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Our parsha begins the description of the sacrifices. It outlines the procedures for the: Olah, a fully burned offering, Shlamim, an offering consumed by the kohanim and by the owner, the Mincha flour offerings, Chatat, a sin offering, and Asham, a guilt offering.

However, with these laws the flow of the narrative has been interrupted.

In the parshiot of the Mishkan, Moshe received commands concerning 3 things: the building, the kohanim's garments, and the inauguration ceremony of the kohanim. And then in Vayakel and Pekudei, those instructions were followed; the parts for the building were made, the kohanim's garments were fashioned and then finally, the building of the Mishkan was successfully assembled.

But the kohanim were not inaugurated. That was left hanging. They are only inaugurated in the second half of next week's parsha. They need to be inaugurated to get the activity of the Mishkan started. So, while the Mishkan has been built, it will sit empty of activity until

the kohanim are authorized to begin work.

However, the inauguration of the kohanim involves many offerings. The inauguration can't be done until we know how to do those offerings. Hence, this parsha and the beginning of the next are required to describe how to do the offerings needed in the inauguration ceremony.

So, while the Mishkan was completed, its action will only begin after the procedure of the offerings of the inauguration are explained and the kohanim's inauguration occurs.



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 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 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 He called"?

Clearly, the Torah is deliberately referring back to the previous story. And continuing it.

At the end of Shmot 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. That is how the book of Shemot ends.

The next verse is ours: He, meaning G-d,

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now beckons Moshe to enter, to teach the laws of offerings.

This interaction frames the book of Vayikra. In Shmot, G-d descended to us. He commanded the Mishkan as a place to meet with us. He descended and filled the place. *He approached us.* And now? Our turn. Now we approach *Him*.

The offerings are the way to approach Him. This book then is a seamless continuation of the last; there He approached us, here He calls us to approach Him.



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 kohen takes a finger full, burns it on the altar. The remainder is eaten by the kohanim. The flour offering may also be **baked** or **fried** as a thin matza with oil.

The Olah offering is 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 soul that is bringing this inexpensive flour offering. For some, the flour offering is as big a sacrifice as the bull is to another.

But the inverse is also true; if one *can* afford a bull, then don't wiggle out of the expensive one. Give what your nefesh can give. Don't be a minimalist when you can be a maximalist.



3RD ALIYA (2:6-16)

Or one may bring a fried **soft** flour offering. In each of these, the kohen brings the mincha offering to the altar, offering a finger full. The remainder is eaten

by the kohanim, 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.

Finding meaning in sacrifices is hard work. But the hard work is often directed at finding meaning in the details. Of equal importance is to step back and look more globally at the entire institution of sacrifices to assess their meaning.

The offerings are vehicles of approach to G-d. Though a simple statement, that notion, that we approach Him is central.

Human experience is varied. We have moments of joy and exhilaration. And moments when we disappoint ourselves through sin. We have birth and death. Illness. Personal experiences. And national ones.

All these varied human experiences impact our walk through life with our Creator. Moments of joy drive us to want to share that, express that with our Creator. Confrontation with our mortality through contact with death or with certain illness dampens our connection with our Creator, the offerings then reorienting us.

The sacrifices, putting their details aside, are the expression of the desire we have in life of reaching beyond, connecting to our Creator, seeing our life as oscillating nearer and more distant from Him. And using the offerings as a way to express our desire to be closer, motivated by the panoply of experiences of our lives.

In our parsha we are describing the how of offerings. When we encounter when to bring the offerings, in which circumstances, we shall attempt to describe the dynamic of the oscillation of distance and approach that the offerings are addressing.



4TH ALIYA (3:1-17)

The **Shlamim** offering may be brought from cattle. The owner places his hands on the head, the kohanim take the blood after slaughter and sprinkle it on the altar, and 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 along with the kohen; not totally burned as is the Olah. As such, it expresses a partnership between man and G-d. It has a mood of celebration. Perhaps the joy that at a certain level, while submissive to G-d we also partner with Him. Submission to, while partnering with is an expression of the complexity in the man-G-d experience.



5TH ALIYA (4:1-26)

When a **nefesh sins**: if the **kohen** sins in his official capacity, he brings a **Sin offering** of a bull. The kohen places his hands on the head, the kohen 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. The elders rest their hands on the head of the animal, the kohanim 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 kohen's sin offering. When the **Ruler** inadvertently commits a **sin**, he brings a goat. He places his hands on its head, the kohanim place the blood on the altar corners and its fats are burned.

This aliya describes 3 sin offerings brought by leaders: the kohen, 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 that though they hold higher office than the rest of the people, they remain subservient to 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 executive) 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. If one withholds testimony resulting in an unnecessary oath, unknowingly violates the laws after becoming impure, or takes any oath unnecessarily, a confession is made and an offering brought. 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.

It is crucial to note that the sin offering is not the first sacrifice in the descriptions of offerings. It is the 4th, following the Olah, Shlamim and Mincha. Sacrifices are not brought only to atone for sins. And not all sins can be expiated through sacrifices. Some do not rise to the need for a sacrifice. And for some, a sacrifice does not suffice for atonement. The offerings rather span the gamut of

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human experience and more accurately express a desire to engage G-d in all sorts of experiences, not just when needing atonement.



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. A finger's full is brought on the altar; the kohanim consume the rest. If a person uses **sanctified property**, he need 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 need 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.

Perhaps the emphasis on the details of offerings is a gift. How to fully express, let's say in words, what we feel when we have erred and hence insulted as it were G-d, well, that is complicated. What do we feel, what do we say? It is far easier to follow a ritual, to have the comfort of a set structure to help us express what would otherwise be difficult to do.

HAFTARAH: 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 *teshuvah* 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. ■

רפואה שלמה מהרה
לליאם יעקב ניסן בן אורה

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOKH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

"If the leader will sin...." (4:22) - אשר נשיא יחטא (ד:כב)

Why does the Pasuk use the phrase "Asher" and not "Ki"?

Rashi explains the use of the word "Asher" to hint at a message. The word "Asher" can refer to "Ashrei" – "Fortunate". Fortunate for the generation whose leader is sensitive to his actions and is willing to admit fault and ask for atonement on unintentional mistakes.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986, Belarus-New York) asks in his Sefer Drash Moshe, why is it "fortunate" to have at all a leader who makes mistakes? Perhaps it would be better for us not to have a king at all?

He answers that it is far better to have a leader, though susceptible to making mistakes, but intent on judging his people judiciously than lacking a leader at all. Fortunate is the generation who bestowed on themselves a leader in the first place. Even a leader who, due to his ego, refuses to admit sin, still, his leadership can bring tremendous positive influence on the people. From here we realize that for all men, leaders and laymen alike, we are faced with two choices, even if both have some negative consequences. It is professed to choose the path with the least errors possible.

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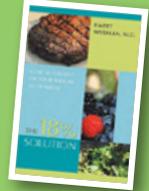
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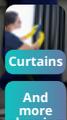
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לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Between Destiny and Chance

The third book of the Torah is known in English as Leviticus, a word deriving from Greek and Latin, meaning, “pertaining to the Levites”. This reflects the fact that in Judaism the priests – all direct descendants of Aaron - were from the tribe of Levi, and that the ancient rabbinic name for the book was *Torat Kohanim*, “the law of the Priests”. It is an appropriate title. Whereas *Shemot* and *Bamidbar* are shot through with narrative, the book between them is largely about sacrifices and the rituals associated, first with the Tabernacle and later with the Temple in Jerusalem. It is, as the name *Torat Kohanim* implies, about the priests and their function as guardians of the sacred.

By contrast, the traditional name *Vayikra*,

“And He called”, seems merely accidental. *Vayikra* just happens to be the first word of the book, and there is no connection between it and the subjects with which it deals. The truth, I will argue here, is otherwise. There is a deep connection between the word *Vayikra* and the underlying message of the book as a whole.

To understand this, we must note that there is something unusual about the way the word appears in a *Sefer Torah* in this particular instance. Its last letter, an aleph, is written small - almost as if it barely existed. The standard-size letters spell out the word *vayikar*, meaning, “he encountered” or “he chanced upon.” Unlike *vayikra*, which refers to a call, a summons, a meeting by request, *vayikar* suggests an accidental meeting, a mere happening.

With their sensitivity to nuance, the Sages noted the difference between the call to Moses with which the book begins, and God’s appearance to the pagan prophet Bilaam, which does not use the same form of the word. This is how the Midrash puts it:

What is the difference between the prophets of Israel and the prophets of the pagan nations of the world? . . . R. Hama ben Hanina said: The Holy One blessed be He reveals Himself to the pagan nations by an incomplete form of address, as it is said, “And the Lord appeared to Bilaam”, whereas to the prophets of Israel He

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the family and friends of

Elaine Pomerantz a”h
on her passing

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

appears in a complete form of address, as it is said, “And He called to Moses.”

Rashi is more explicit:

All [God’s] communications [to Moses], whether they use the words “speak” or “say” or “command” were preceded by a call [*keri’ah*] which is a term of endearment, used by the angels when they address one another, as it is said, “And one called to the other” [*vekara zeh el zeh*, Isaiah 6:3]. However, to the prophets of the nations of the world, His appearance is described by an expression signifying a casual encounter and uncleanness, as it says, “And the Lord appeared to Bilaam.”

The Baal HaTurim goes one stage further, commenting on the small *aleph*:

Moses was both great and humble, and wanted only to write *Vayikar*, signifying “chance”, as if the Holy One blessed be He appeared to him only in a dream, as it says of Bilaam [*vayikar*, without an *aleph*] - suggesting that God appeared to him by mere chance. However, God told him to write the word with an *aleph*. Moses then said to Him, because of his extreme humility, that he would only write an *aleph* that was smaller than the other *alephs* in the Torah, and he did indeed write it small.

Something of great significance is being hinted at here, but before taking it further, let us turn to the end of the book. Just before the end, in the *sedra* of Bechukotai, there occurs one of the two most terrifying passages in the *Torah*. It is known as the *tochachah* (the rebuke: the other appears in Devarim 28), and it details the terrible fate that will befall the Jewish people if it fails to keep its covenant with God:

As for the survivors, I will bring such insecurity into their hearts in their enemies’ lands that the sound of a windblown leaf will make them run as if they fled the sword; and they will fall, though no one is chasing them. They



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will stumble over one another as if fleeing the sword, when no one chases them. You will have no power to stand before your enemies. You will perish among the nations; your enemies' lands will devour you. (*Lev. 26:36-38*)

Yet despite the shocking nature of the forewarning, the passage ends with a note of consolation:

I will remember My covenant with Jacob; and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Avraham I will also remember, and I will remember the land . . . Yet even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them nor despise them and annihilate

them, will not break My covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. (*Lev. 26:42-44*)

The keyword of the passage is the word *keri*. It appears exactly seven times in the *tochachah* - a sure sign of significance. Here are two of them by way of example:

If, despite all this, you still do not listen to Me – if still you walk contrary to Me – then I, in My fury, will walk contrary to you. I will punish you seven times more for your sins. (*Lev. 26:27-28*)

What does the word *keri* mean? I have translated it here as “contrary”. There are other suggestions. The Targum reads it as “harden yourselves”, Rashbam as “refuse”, Ibn Ezra as “overconfident”, Saadia as “rebellious”.

However, Rambam gives it a completely different interpretation, and does so in a *halachic* context:

A positive scriptural command prescribes prayer and the sounding of the alarm with trumpets whenever trouble befalls the community. For when Scripture says, “Against the adversary that oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets” the meaning is: Cry out in prayer and sound an alarm...This is one of the paths to repentance, for when the community cries out in prayer and sounds an alarm when threatened by trouble, everyone realises that evil has come on them as a result of their own wrongdoing... and that repentance will cause the trouble to be removed.

If, however, the people do not cry out in prayer and do not sound an alarm but merely say that it is the way of the world for such a thing to happen to them, and that their trouble is a matter of pure chance, they have chosen a cruel path which will cause them to continue in their wrongdoing, and thus bring additional troubles on them. For when Scripture says,

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“If you continue to be *keri* towards Me, then in My anger I will be *keri* towards you”, it means, “If, when I bring trouble upon you in order to cause you to repent, you say that the trouble is purely accidental, then I will add to your trouble the anger of being-left-to-chance” *Mishneh Torah, Taaniyot, 1:1-3*.

Rambam understands *keri* to be related to the word *mikreh*, meaning “chance”. The curses, in his interpretation, are not Divine retribution as such. It will not be God who makes Israel suffer, rather it will be other human beings. What will happen is simply that God will withdraw His protection. Israel will have to face the world alone, without the sheltering presence of God. This, for Rambam, is simple, inescapable measure-for-measure (*middah kenegged middah*). If Israel believe in Divine Providence, they will be blessed by Divine Providence. If they see history as mere chance - what Joseph Heller, author of *Catch-22*, called “a trash bag of random coincidences blown open by the wind” - then indeed they will be left to chance. Being a small, vulnerable nation, chance will not be kind to them.

We are now in a position to understand the remarkable proposition linking the beginning of *Vayikra* to the end - and one of the most profound of all spiritual truths. The difference between *mikra* and *mikreh* - between history as God’s call and history as one event after another with no underlying purpose or meaning - is, in the Hebrew language, almost imperceptible. The words sound the same. The only difference is that the former has an *aleph* while the latter does not (the significance of the *aleph* is obvious: the first letter of the alphabet, the first letter of the Ten Commandments, the “I” of God).

The letter *aleph* is almost inaudible. Its appearance in a *Sefer Torah* at the beginning of

Vayikra (the “small *aleph*”) is almost invisible. Do not expect - the Torah is intimating - that the presence of God in history will always be as clear and unambiguous as it was during the Exodus from Egypt and the division of the Red Sea. For much of the time it will depend on your own sensitivity. For those who look, it will be visible. For those who listen, it can be heard. But first you have to look and listen. If you choose not to see or hear, then *Vayikra* will become *vayikar*. The call will be inaudible. History will seem mere chance.

There is nothing incoherent about such an idea. Those who believe it will have much to justify it. Indeed, says God in the *tochachah*: if you believe that history is chance, then it will become so. But in truth it is not so. The history of the Jewish people - as even non-Jews such as Pascal, Rousseau, and Tolstoy eloquently stated - testifies to the presence of God in their midst. Only thus could such a small, vulnerable, relatively powerless people survive, and still say today - after the Holocaust - *Am Yisrael Chai*, the Jewish people lives. And just as Jewish history is not mere chance, so it is no mere coincidence that the first word of the central book of the *Torah* is *Vayikra*, “And He called”.

To be a Jew is to believe that what happens to us as a people is God’s call to us - to become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** zt”l are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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Alongside their own trauma, there is another burden carried in silence: reservists called up again and again, grandchildren growing up under the sound of sirens, children managing impossible lives on the home front and beyond. Parents and grandparents watch from the side - and hold their fear alone, not wanting to be a burden.

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Beresheet opened in November 2025 - in Ramat Motza, in the hills of Jerusalem.



Left to Right:
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The Importance (Or Not) of Korbanot

With the opening of Sefer VaYikra, we are introduced to the world of korbanot. In it, the Torah depicts, details and delineates the proper procedures to be observed when involved in the sacrificial ritual. This first parasha of Sefer VaYikra includes the proper practices to be followed for a range of offerings, including: the diverse types of Olot, the variety of Menachot, the assorted kinds of Sh'lamim, the different sorts of Chatot and various array of Ashamot. The following parasha of Tzav depicts more practices that must be carried out when sacrificing to Hashem, including the specific tasks of the Kohanim, the choice of the sanctified utensils and where and how the sacrifice is to be taking place.

Given the litany of laws and practices of the korbanot that fill these parshot, it is more than curious to find that the haftarat of each portion do **not** focus on sacrifices at all. Instead, both readings speak of Israel's **corruption** of the ritual service [Yishayahu 44: 9-17] and how **inconsequential** it really is!!! [Yirmiyahu 7: 21-22]

I would submit, therefore, that the words of our nevi'im are, indeed, targeted at the importance of the korbanot – but they do so by revealing what the **essence** of divine worship must be.

The popular quotation “familiarity breeds contempt” dates back to the fabulist, Aesop,

some 2600 years ago, but the truth of its message pre-dated the Greek storyteller by 1,000 years at Har Sinai. There, Hashem charged the entire nation to be a “Mamlechet Kohanim”, a kingdom of ministers [of G-d] and a holy nation, and, therefore, may not even approach the holy mountain due to its sanctity. The very act of approaching a source of sanctity suggests an improper closeness and inappropriate familiarity with **kedusha**. Unfortunately, such behavior inevitably leads to the diminishing of one's reverence toward Hashem.

It is for this reason that **sanctity demands reverence** and, therefore, **kedusha requires separation**. And this was the challenge that the Israelite nation of the prophetic era failed to meetand the challenge that the Jewish community in our own time must face.

It was this failure that Yishayahu condemns in our haftarah.

When we carefully read through the haftarah, we find that the first eight p'sukim [43: 21-28] are filled with the condemnation of Israel for their failure to show the proper respect to Hashem and His worship. G-d reminds Yishayahu of how He had to punish the earlier generations for their sins –having to defile, “profane” even those “officers” who were to serve G-d [“Va'achalel sarei kodesh”!]

The bulk of the prophet's message, however,

is found in the 23 verses of perek 44. There, the navi details the various ways that the people (even the Kohanim) had desecrated the ritual service to the point of deifying the pagan gods and worshipping them! Yishayahu implies that the nation's disregard of Hashem's overwhelming power and abilities, leading them to equate Him with other "gods", was due to their loss of the reverence, respect and awe of HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Indeed, **Kedusha DOES require separation and distance**, whether if refers to the need of keeping a respectful relationship with a parent, a teacher or a scholar. Sadly, I believe it is this "challenge of the ages" that we fail to meet in today's world.

Furthermore, I do not see this failure as being limited to our behavior toward individuals alone but it also demands us to consider how we regard our treatment of Yeshivot, of Batei Midrash and, most commonly, of Batei Kneset. Should we not reflect on the propriety of entering a shul for tefilla with a cup of coffee in hand to drink? Do find it acceptable to depart the sanctuary while our litter remains on the floor? And, can we not complete our (unnecessary) conversations *after* the conclusion of tefilla?

Yes, we can create develop an atmosphere of sanctity in our lives, but only when we distance ourselves from the mundane during those precious moments of holiness. Simply, we will better cherish the consecrated in our lives when separating the holy from the profane. The ancient prophets demanded this to their generation.

And, I submit, they were speaking to us, as well. ■

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Sacrifice and Integrity

In his posthumously published work *I Believe*, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks returns to a theme that we have encountered in several contexts, yet one that deserves continual revisiting. Reflecting on the concept of *korbanot* (sacrifices), Rabbi Sacks notes a striking tension within Tanach itself. On the one hand, Sefer Vayikra opens with painstaking detail devoted to the laws of sacrifice. On the other hand, some of the most forceful prophetic passages appear to reject sacrifices altogether.

Shmuel HaNavi declares to Shaul: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל הֲחִפְּץ לֵה' בְּעֹלוֹת וּזְבָחִים כְּשֹׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹל ה'? הֲנִיָּה שֹׁמֵעַ מִזְבַּח טוֹב, לְהַקְשִׁיב מִחֻלָּב אֵילִים.

“Does Hashem desire burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as obedience to His voice? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice; attentiveness than the fat of rams.” (I Shmuel 15:22)

Amos echoes this rebuke:

In loving memory of my father
אברהם אבא בן
מנחם מנדל ז"ל
I miss you so much
Meni Koslowsky
May the learning in this issue be
לעילוי נשמתו

כִּי אִם-תְּעַלּוּ-לִי עֹלוֹת וּמִנְחֹתֵיכֶם לֹא אֲרַצֶּה...
“Even if you offer Me burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them.” (Amos 5:22)

Hoshea states the principle even more succinctly:

כִּי חֶסֶד חִפְצָתִי וְלֹא-זָבַח, וְדַעַת אֱלֹהִים יַעֲלוֹת.
“For I desire kindness, not sacrifice; knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (Hoshea 6:6)

Perhaps the most searing critique appears at the opening of Sefer Yeshayahu, read on Shabbat Chazon:

לְמַה-לִּי רַב-זְבָחֵיכֶם? יֹאמֶר ה'... וְדָם פְּרִים וּכְבָשִׁים וְעֵתוּדִים לֹא חִפְצָתִי.

“Of what use are your many sacrifices to Me? says Hashem... the blood of bulls, sheep, and goats I do not desire.” (Yeshayahu 1:11)

These prophets were not addressing a nation that had abandoned ritual observance. On the contrary, the people were offering sacrifices precisely as commanded. Yet God rejected them. Why?

The answer is consistent throughout Tanach: ritual devotion divorced from moral responsibility is not divine service. One cannot stand before God while trampling on the dignity of others. It is therefore no coincidence that the commandment of לְרַעֲוֶה “וְאָהֳבֶתָ לְרַעֲוֶה” appears in Sefer Vayikra alongside the laws of *korbanot*. The two are inseparable.

This dual responsibility is embedded in the very structure of the Luchot. One tablet contains mitzvot *bein adam laMakom* - between man and God - while the other contains mitzvot *bein adam laChavero*—between man and his fellow

man. A God-fearing life demands loyalty to both.

THE MEIRI: MIRRORING THE TWO TABLETS

The Meiri, in his introduction to Shas, preserves a fascinating tradition regarding the layout of the Ten Commandments. According to this view, the commandments on the right tablet correspond directly to those opposite them on the left: the first aligns with the sixth, the second with the seventh, the third with the eighth, and so on. These pairings reveal deep thematic connections between religious devotion and ethical behavior.

The pairing most relevant to our discussion is that of the third and eighth commandments:

“YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF GOD IN VAIN” ↔ “YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.”

At first glance, the connection is puzzling. The Meiri offers a straightforward explanation: theft often leads to false oaths, particularly when one denies wrongdoing in court. But he then proposes a far deeper interpretation.

“Do not take God’s name in vain,” the Meiri explains, means: do not *carry* God’s name falsely. Do not cloak yourself in the external trappings of religiosity while behaving dishonestly. In his striking formulation:

“שלא תתעטף בטליתך והולך וגונב... זהו נשיאת שמו של הקב”ה לשוא.”

“Do not wrap yourself in a tallit and then go and steal... that is bearing the Name of the Holy One in vain.”

Religious hypocrisy, the Meiri teaches, is a double betrayal. It is a theft—of trust, integrity, and moral credibility—and it is a desecration of God’s Name.

AN OFFERING OF THE SELF

Sacrifice, then, is not merely about the animal placed on the altar. It is about the inner posture of the one who brings it. Intention and integrity are as central to *korbanot* as

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they are to interpersonal conduct. To serve God authentically is to serve humanity. To love God is to love His children.

We cannot ask God for forgiveness while withholding it from others. We cannot yearn for spiritual elevation while tolerating moral dissonance. Consistency between *bein adam laMakom* and *bein adam laChavero* is not an ideal, but rather a prerequisite.

As we study the laws of *korbanot* and pray “והשב את העבודה לדביר ביתך”—that God restore the service to His Temple—we must remember that the Mikdash can only be restored when the fractures between us are healed.

When our devotion to God is mirrored by our devotion to one another, when our rituals reflect integrity and compassion, then our service will no longer be symbolic alone, it will be sincere. Only then will our sacrifices (and today our *tefilot*) once again find favor in His eyes. ■



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Money Mandate

“*Adam ki yakriv mikem korban la’Hashem* — When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice to Hashem...” (*Vayikra 1:2*) The book of Vayikra, the volume that focuses on *kedushah*, opens with the section detailing the specifications of bringing *korbanot*. Rashi explains the unusual use of “*adam*” as opposed to the more common word for man, “*ish*,” to teach us that one may not bring a stolen animal as a sacrifice, “Just as Adam, the first man, never offered sacrifices from stolen property, since everything was his, so too, you must not offer sacrifices from stolen property.” (Rashi 1:2) Why is this the opening message of *Sefer Vayikra*? What are some applicable and relevant messages for us here?

Rav Mordechai Druk *zt”l* in *Darash Mordechai* notes that the Torah is teaching us a

fundamental lesson in living a holy and elevated life. Just as we are inclined to ask about the halachic status of a chicken or other food, we must also evaluate the *kashrut* of our business dealings. Indeed, one of the questions asked to every soul after its time on earth is whether his business dealings were carried out with honesty. One is obligated to be scrupulous about his finances, acting with faithfulness, integrity and moral sincerity.

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt”l* was approached with the following question, “Although it has been common practice to begin teaching Talmud to children with the tractate of “*Eilu metzi’ot*,” delineating the laws pertaining to property and damages, perhaps it would be more age appropriate to begin with “*Masechet Brachot*,” teaching the laws of blessings?” Rav Moshe responded, “Absolutely not! It is crucial to teach children from a young age the value of another’s possessions and how careful one must be with someone else’s money!”

Rav Dovid Hofstedter in *Darash Dovid* points out that this abhorrence towards stealing is borne out in the bird sacrifice. There is one part of the bird that is not burned on the altar with the rest of its parts — the innards. *Chazal* explain that the bird takes its food from all different places, and specifically from food given to them. Therefore, the innards, a symbol of tainted gain, may not be brought as part of the sacrifice.

Although we no longer have sacrifices today, the message is still very applicable. Rav Shimon Pincus *zt”l* emphasizes that we must be very careful with the money we spend on our

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Further, Chazal teach, "One whose hands are contaminated with burglary will call out to Hashem and will not be answered..." (*Shemot Rabbah* 22:3) This is learned from Iyov who said, "But not because of any violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure." (*Iyov* 16:17) Tefillah today is our service in place of *korbanot*. Let our hands know only impeccable honesty, and may our earnest prayers be answered *le'tovah*. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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As *Chodesh Nisan* is upon us, we begin to look ahead and prepare for *Pesach*. In addition to purging our homes of *chametz*, and the many provisions to procure to prepare for *yom tov*, we also begin to prepare and look ahead to the majestic night of Freedom, the *Seder Layl Pesach*.

Among the many incredible messages inherent in the *Seder Layl Pesach* experience is the fundamental idea of sacred speech. Speech plays a central role in the entire evening. Our Sages teach us that we must verbally express and recall the many details and nuances of the redemption from Egypt. Our youngest children traditionally verbalize four questions to begin this dialogue. We then reply to those four questions by stating:

“We were Slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt...and there is a *mitzva* incumbent upon each of us to discuss and tell of the redemption from Egypt.” “**Vchol Hamarbeh lesaper b’yetziat mitzrayim — harei zeh meshubach...**” — “All who say ***much*** in their description of the redemption from Egypt are to be praised...”

In the *Hagada* text of the *Rambam*, we note a slightly different version of this last statement: “**Vchol Hamaarich — lesaper b’yetziat mitzrayim, harei zeh meshubach...**” — “All who speak ***extensively*** in their description of the redemption from Egypt are to be praised...”

How are we to interpret the subtle difference between our more familiar version and that of Maimonides? What lesson might we glean from clarifying the difference between the words ***hamarbeh*** (much) and ***hamaarich*** (extensive)? Why ultimately do most of us not utilize the *Rambam’s* version of this important text?

Perhaps one answer to these questions actually is hinted at later on in the *Seder’s* discussions of the ten plagues. After listing those ten plagues, we are then introduced to several rabbinic interpretations of those plagues, but the first comments included are those of *Rebbi Yehuda*.

Unlike the other Sages mentioned, *Rebbi Yehuda* doesn’t choose to elaborate extensively about each of the plagues; rather, he teaches us an acronym to recall the plagues in a short, concise, memorable way. *Rebbi Yehuda* seems to be telling us that the most memorable ideas are clear and succinct instead of the most verbose or extensive. What Rabbi Yehuda is teaching us is that we need to become more accustomed to realizing the power of our words. When we are able to share important information in a most direct and clear manner, it is more likely to be understood and received favorably. When we are not aware of this important concept, our intended messages might get lost or misconstrued.

This very idea of the power of speech is actually an important lesson that is also alluded to in the Exodus story itself. The Chasidic Master *Rebbe Moshe Yechiel HaLevi Epstein of Ozarov, zy’a* makes an interesting



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observation in his commentary on the *Hagada*. The Rebbe points out that the prime villain in the Exodus story is not simply called *Melech Mitzrayim*, the King of Egypt, but also **Paroh**. The Rebbe taught that the word **Paroh** is made up of the same Hebrew letters (*pay, reish, ayin, and hay*) as the words **peh ra**, a wicked mouth! The Rebbe wrote that inherent in the Jewish People going forth and becoming freed from Egyptian oppression is the need to work to leave behind that power represented by **Paroh**; that is, to leave behind the use of words for wicked purposes and begin to use our words to speak appropriately and for sacred purposes.

The great contemporary teacher of Chasidut, **Reb Elimelech Biderman shlita**, points to a beautiful passage in the *Kedushat Levi*, of **Reb Levi Yitzchak MiBerditchev zy'a**, to clarify this idea further:

The more one tells the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, the more they are meshubach, which means not simply praiseworthy, but also improved! When the words of the hagada come from the mouths of the Jewish People, the letters themselves arouse great chasidim in all realms, generating wonders and miracles for each of us!

On the *Seder* night, we recall the Exodus from Egypt, and we are mandated to speak with clarity of all the miraculous events that transpired as we went free from Egypt. Each year, as we tell this sacred tale and come together to experience leaving Egyptian oppression behind, may we also merit to heed the beautiful messages introduced by the Rebbe of Ostrov and Reb Meilech Biderman. May the words of Torah we share on the *Seder* night inspire us to realize the sacred gift of speech and the potential redemptive power inherent in channeling our words to inspire, improve, bring clarity, and build unity among us. ■

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In the Beis Medrash of Rebbe Yitzchak Meir Heshel of Zinkov (d. 1854), the oldest son and successor of the Oheiv Yisrael of Apta zy'a, there was an emphasis on *avodas ha-midos*, refining character traits, and in particular attaining humility. When the Rebbe returned home to Zinkov from a lengthy road trip, he found that over the course of his protracted absence, his community had hired a *chazan* to lead prayer services. Unfortunately, this *chazan* seemed to be lacking in *yiras Shomayim*, and his *midos* did not live up to the standards the Rebbe was comfortable with. In defense of their hiring, the Gabbai pleaded: "The *chazan* was passing through town and had such a magnificent voice; everyone was so impressed! His voice fills the room, and he davens before the *amud* so beautifully that we didn't think we needed to know anything more about his personality, and we offered him the job on the spot."

Said the Rebbe, "Indeed, you found a *chazan* who davens for the congregation 'before the *amud*', however I would have preferred that in Zinkov we have a *chazan* who davens before *Hashem*".

.....
... ויקרא אל משה. "Hashem called to Moshe,"

inviting him to enter the *Ohel Moed*, the Tent of Meeting, and stand before Him there for the first time. The last letter of the word *Vayikra* is written in our Torah scrolls as an *alef ze'ira*, a "small alef", graphically smaller than the other letters. The *Meforshim* comment that this points out Moshe Rabbeinu's humility; even as Hashem called to Moshe directly, Moshe remained *anav mikol adam*, "more humble than any other person" (Vayikra, 12:3)

Rav Yisroel Belsky, zt'l, Rosh Yeshiva of Torah VaDaas points to Moshe Rabbeinu's *midah* of humility and noted how self-aware those in positions of Jewish leadership and influence must be within their roles of power and authority. Jewish law states that when a Jewish king davens the *amidah* he must remain in a bowed position throughout the entire prayer, instilling in himself self-negation and humility before the King of Kings. Rav Belsky would say that *malchus*, rulership, is the ultimate *avdus*, servitude. It is in this spirit that the great *tzadik*, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook zy'a, would sign his letters as "A Servant of the Holy Nation in the Holy Land".

Rambam writes of a Jewish king: "He must be exceedingly humble; (he must) not exercise pomp and dignity over his people more than necessary... (he must) be gracious and compassionate to young and old, and go and come for their sake and their good...and protect the honor of the smallest of the small...." (*Hilchos Melachim*, 2:6)

.....
When the Tzemach Tzedek, Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (the 3rd

Lubavitcher Rebbe) was brought to *cheder* to learn Torah, he asked his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, why the letter 'alef' of the word *Vayikra* is written smaller than the other letters. The Alter Rebbe explained to the young genius and future Rebbe that the *alef zeira* honors Moshe's humility, his 'smallness' in his own eyes. He shared an insight as to how Moshe maintained that *midah*: "Moshe Rabbeinu was aware of the outstanding qualities he had been blessed with, yet did not become conceited. Instead, with great humility, he said to himself, 'Someone else in my position, given the opportunity to receive the Torah face-to-face from Hashem and granted all of this spiritual potential, would have accomplished so much more.'"

After experiencing the chaotic unraveling of Covid 19 - of our routine, expectations, sense of control and stability - what is clear is how so many of us have been '*davening for the amud*' - relying on external structures and framework, man made (holy!) institutions and constructs for our spiritual and personal connection with Hashem.

In the aftermath of this period, it is clear each of us are called upon to be a *shalich tzibur*: We are all davening for one another, leading a congregation of even one... in our own homes, for & with our families, our friends, online - it is so clear how much we are all standing before Hashem. Individually and collectively, we are experiencing the humility of the *alef ze'ira*.

This Shabbos Vayikra, may we embrace a humbled state, hear Hashem's calling, and respond directly to Him, with open, sincere conversation, real talk, real *keshet*.

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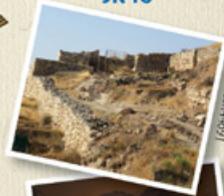


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All ads must be in by Tue, Mar. 24th.
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Enjoying the Milk of *Eretz Yisrael*

The Torah describes our land as “*eretz zavat chalav u’dvash*” (*Shemot* 3:8), a land flowing with milk and honey. Most commentators understand that the Torah is referring to goat’s milk and date honey (see *Mechilta D’Rashbi* 13:5). While the dairy industry in Israel is highly accommodating to kashrut standards, various concerns remain regarding the kashrut of milk.

POWDERED MILK

Powdered milk, a common ingredient in many chocolates and sweets, is essential in the food industry due to its long shelf life and ease of transport. It is produced through a spray-drying process, in which milk is dried into a solid powder using hot gas and air pressure.

Halachic authorities discuss the status of

milk powder considering the prohibition of non-Jewish milk. If the milking process was carried out by a Jew or under Jewish supervision, it is considered *chalav Yisrael*. However, what is the status of powdered milk produced from *chalav stam* or even *chalav nochri*?

Authorities who follow the ruling of Rav Moshe Feinstein generally permit milk powder produced from regular milk in countries where there is strict government supervision of the dairy industry. An even greater leniency was put forth by the former Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873–1960). Rav Frank, in his responsa *Har Tzvi* (YD 103–104), permitted milk powder produced from non-Jewish milk. He based his ruling on several arguments, one being that since the milk has been transformed from a liquid into a solid, it is no longer included in the original decree of *chalav nochri* instituted by Our Sages.

While many authorities disagree with Rav Frank’s ruling, his position has been adopted by the Chief Rabbinate to allow the importation of non-Jewish milk powder for use in non-*mehadrin* products.

It is important to note that this discussion relates only to milk itself. Since the spray-drying process uses complex and expensive equipment, the machinery is often shared between multiple factories or used to produce other, possibly non-kosher, products. Therefore, according to all opinions, the process of converting milk into powder requires reliable kashrut supervision.

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original decree of *chalav nochri*, OU policy is to approve even liquid milk when there is proper government supervision. It should be noted that there is no fundamental discrepancy between the leniencies applied to powdered milk and those applied to liquid milk; Israeli *Poskim* were asked about this specific question, and the leniency appears to relate to both forms. This is evident from the Chazon Ish (YD 41:4), cited in last week's article.

Nevertheless, the Chief Rabbinate maintains a policy that differentiates between liquid and powdered milk and does not approve liquid milk products under certain standards. This is why, for example, Häagen-Dazs ice cream cannot be sold in Israel under Chief Rabbinate approval, even though it bears the OU symbol and is fully supervised by OU kosher personnel.

MODERN-DAY MILK PRODUCTION IN ISRAEL

In Israel, milk is produced almost entirely by Jewish-owned companies, and all commercial milk is under kashrut supervision. When milking is performed by Jews, additional supervision is not required. When milking is carried out by non-Jews, *mashgichim* conduct spot checks and monitor the process using remote surveillance to ensure that the milk qualifies as *chalav yisrael*.

A complex issue in Israeli milk production concerns cows milked on Shabbat. By law, all milk produced in the country must be purchased by Israeli dairy cooperatives (e.g., Tnuva and Tara). On many farms, systems have been implemented to ensure that milking is conducted in a halachically permissible

manner on Shabbat. However, it is not uncommon for some farmers to milk cows in a prohibited manner on Shabbat and subsequently sell the milk to dairy companies.

According to an important minority opinion (Ktav Sofer, Orach Chaim 20), if a Jew intentionally violates Shabbat, others may not derive benefit from that violation.

There is significant dispute among later authorities regarding milk that was produced on Shabbat. Consequently, the policy of all Israeli dairy companies is not to use milk collected on Shabbat in *mehadrin* products. Over the years, there has been tremendous progress in addressing this issue, including technological advancements designed to avoid Shabbat violations. Nevertheless, milk produced on Shabbat is still present in the market. Since it is often mixed with milk produced during the week, tracking it can be difficult.

OU-certified products manufactured in Israel and exported abroad do not contain milk produced on Shabbat. In OU establishments within Israel, Shabbat-produced milk is not permitted, and only *mehadrin* dairy products are used. ■

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Korbanot and the Modern Mind

Chazal gave each sefer of the Torah a nickname. The nickname of Sefer Vayikra is Torat Kohanim, as it outlines the laws of the Mikdash, which are administered and supervised by the kohanim.

The sefer opens with two parshiyot that list the laws of korbanot. Sefer Shemot described the construction of the Mishkan, including the two mizbechot. It did not describe the korbanot themselves. Parashat Vayikra and Parashat Tzav introduce the various korbanot and the ceremonies through which they are brought.

KORBANOT BEFORE VAYIKRA

Although korbanot first appear in detail in Sefer Vayikra, they are deeply woven into Jewish identity and Jewish history. The covenant that shaped Jewish history at the Brit

Bein HaBetarim was sealed through several korbanot. According to Chazal, one of the messages conveyed that night was that Jewish history would be redeemed through the merit of korbanot.

Of course, Avraham’s most iconic moment occurred when he was commanded to offer his son upon a mizbeiach on Har HaMoriah. Stopped at the final moment, he instead offered a ram as a korban. Yitzchak and Yaakov also brought korbanot, and korbanot were presented at Har Sinai even before they became formal mitzvot. The world of korbanot lies at the heart of Jewish history and Jewish identity.

MODERN DISCOMFORT WITH KORBANOT

The modern world chafes at the thought of korbanot. Rituals involving blood and animal parts feel ancient and even unsettling, far removed from modern sensibilities. We do not typically express reverence by sacrificing animals or by performing rituals with their blood and organs. Much of the imagery surrounding the Mikdash can feel foreign to contemporary instincts. Descriptions in Chazal of the Mikdash courtyard as a “river of blood,” meant to convey the intensity and grandeur of the avodah, stand sharply at odds with modern cultural instincts.

Some have attempted to contextualize the world of korbanot. In a famous and very controversial claim, the Rambam argued that korbanot were instituted to redirect ancient man’s instinct for sacrifice away from idolatry and toward the worship of Hashem. The debacle of the egel demonstrated how powerful

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and seductive sacrificial worship was to the ancient imagination and how easily it could slide into idolatry. For that reason, the Torah established a different and carefully structured system of korbanot, allowing those generations to express reverence through korbanot, but directing that impulse exclusively toward Hashem.

HISTORICAL APPROACH TO MITZVOT

This approach reflects the Rambam's broader tendency to explain mitzvot within their historical context. For example, he suggests that the prohibitions of sha'atnez and of removing the pe'ot were meant to distance us from contemporary pagan practices. Certain religious sects wore garments of mixed wool and linen or shaved the corners of their heads as part of their rituals. The Torah therefore prohibited these practices to separate Jewish life from those pagan rites.

What made the Rambam's position controversial is the implication that once the socio-cultural context disappears, the mitzvah might no longer be necessary. For religious Jews who view the word of Hashem as eternal and transcending specific cultural moments, this is unimaginable. Explaining mitzvot primarily through historical circumstances can make them seem temporary and can reduce them from expressions of divine command to responses to social conditions.

A similar discomfort surrounds the Rambam's view of korbanot. By presenting them as a redirection of ancient sacrificial impulses, his approach appears to diminish their divine character and raises the unsettling possibility that, at some stage of religious development, they might become obsolete.

Making explicit what the Rambam only suggested implicitly, Rav Kook also wondered whether in the future animal korbanot might

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no longer be necessary. He did not state this categorically but merely raised the possibility that if humanity rises to a higher spiritual state, the service of the Mikdash might take a different form.

His position, however, remains a minority view, in part because it is so difficult to imagine halacha without korbanot.

A DIFFICULT IMAGINATION

It is difficult to imagine that such a central feature of the Torah and of halachic life would simply disappear. Korbanot stand at the heart of the Torah and are woven into our daily tefillah and the rhythm of the chagim. We pray constantly for the rebuilding of the Mikdash and for the restoration of the avodah. To suggest that these hopes are merely metaphorical, that we long for a rebuilt Mikdash but without korbanot, edges toward intellectual dishonesty.

Yet if we are honest with ourselves, we must



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also ask whether we can realistically imagine the return of blood sacrifices.

A REVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Evidently, though we cannot imagine ourselves drawn to korbanot, our imagination may simply be limited by the contours of our current worldview. At present we inhabit a cultural and moral space that recoils from the imagery of blood ritual. It feels distant from our religious instincts and jars against our sensibilities.

Yet redemption may transform not only the world around us but also the human mind itself. When the presence of Hashem becomes manifest, human consciousness will expand and categories that now feel foreign may assume entirely different meaning.

INNER TRANSFORMATION

There is much debate about whether the arrival of Moshiach will unfold through an apocalyptic upheaval that reshapes the existing order, or whether the world will continue largely as it is, with history adjusted through renewed Jewish sovereignty and our return to Yerushalayim. The Rambam famously adopted the latter position, insisting that *olam k'minhago noheg*, the world will continue to function much as it does now. Others envisioned a far more dramatic and transformative messianic era, one that overturns the familiar structures of history.



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Yet regardless of how one imagines the changes in the world around us, the arrival of Moshiach will undoubtedly transform the world within us. A reality in which the presence of Hashem is unmistakable will inevitably alter the texture of human experience. Living in a world where divine providence is visible, where history unfolds with a clarity we have never known, will reshape the way we interpret events and understand our place within them.

The restoration of prophecy will also reshape the delicate balance between divine guidance and human autonomy. And the manifest presence of Hashem may spark a profound revolution of consciousness, allowing us to move beyond the limits of our current imagination. Ceremonies of the Mikdash that today feel distant or difficult to comprehend may one day appear meaningful and compelling, experienced in ways far richer and more resonant than we can presently envision.

The appearance of Hashem in our world will be so dramatic and so revolutionary that it will recalibrate the way we experience *avodat Hashem*. What now feels alien may one day appear radiant with meaning. We may yet discover a beauty in *korbanot* that presently lies beyond the reach of our imagination.

FRAGILE ASSUMPTIONS

Even within ordinary history we occasionally experience moments that force us to rethink what once felt unimaginable.

It is often challenging to step outside our current assumptions and imagine a reality different from the one we inhabit. Human nature inclines us to believe that the structures of our present world will remain stable and enduring into the future. We live within familiar frameworks and assume that they will

continue unchanged.

Yet the past several years have confronted us with moments that shattered these assumptions. Only five years ago, the coronavirus pandemic overturned our basic expectations about health, society, and daily life. None of us could have imagined the year that awaited us. We could not picture ourselves davening outside of shul. We could not foresee the sweeping disruption to nearly every aspect of ordinary life.

Three years later our assumptions were shattered again. We believed we had established security and deterrence along our southern border. The savage attack of Hamas on October 7, 2023 overturned that confidence and thrust us into a new and painful reality. Those six dark hours carved themselves into our national memory, permanently altering the way we view our security and our vulnerability.

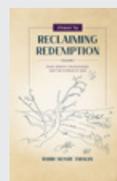
Over the past two and a half years our outlook has continued to shift. For years we understood ourselves to be surrounded by hostile forces, all bent on our destruction. One by one, however, many of those forces have collapsed or been sharply degraded in their ability to threaten us. Only after dismantling large parts of their terror infrastructure did we fully grasp the magnitude of the danger that had encircled us. Even as we remain locked in a

second confrontation with the murderous regime in Iran, it has become increasingly apparent that our security landscape, though still precarious, is significantly stronger than it was before October 7.

If the past six years have taught us anything, it is that events far beyond the scale of ordinary human expectation can suddenly break into our world. They reshape our consciousness and force us to see reality in ways we could never have imagined beforehand.

The return of Hashem's Shechinah to this world in an open and unmistakable manner will far surpass any of these events. It will not merely change the world around us; it will reshape our consciousness itself. In such a world our spiritual imagination may expand beyond its current limits.

Will that transformation allow us to appreciate korbanot in ways we cannot presently grasp? It is entirely possible that what now feels distant from our sensibilities will one day appear natural, meaningful, and even beautiful within a world suffused with the presence of Hashem. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.

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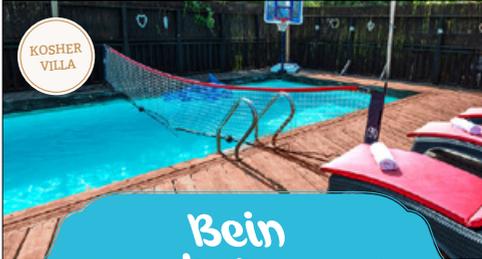
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For My Sake

YESHAYAHU 43:21-44:23

In the middle of this week's Haftorah, Yeshayahu declares: אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא מַחֵה פְּשָׁעֶיךָ אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא מַחֵה פְּשָׁעֶיךָ, I, I am the One who erases your transgressions—for My sake—and your sins I will not remember. (Yeshayahu 43:25)

The repetition of the word אֲנִי immediately echoes the moment when the covenant between Hashem and Israel first began: אֲנִי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. At Har Sinai, that word introduced the relationship that would bind Hashem and His people across generations. Here, Yeshayahu invokes it again. Even after distance and failure, the prophet reminds the people that the covenant established at Sinai still stands.

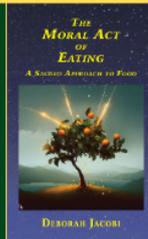
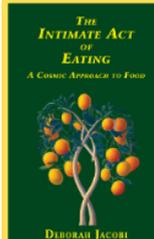
But the verse contains another striking word: לְמַעַן, for My sake. One might expect forgiveness to come for our sake - because we repent, because we improve, because we merit it. Yet the prophet frames it differently. Hashem forgives לְמַעַן.

The Malbim explains that the forgiveness described here does not arise from the merit of the generation alone. Rather, it flows from Hashem's own commitment to the covenant and to the purpose for which Israel exists.

The bond that began with אֲנִי at Har Sinai therefore continues across time. Even when the relationship falters, the covenant does not disappear. Hashem remains committed to the promise and to the future it is meant to bring about.

Forgiveness, in this vision, is not only an act of compassion toward the past. It is an affirmation of the future — of the enduring covenant that began with the word אֲנִי. ■

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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“Thirty days before Pesach, questions about the laws of the festival are asked and expounded” (*Orach Chaim* 429:1). One of the most special aspects of the Seder night is sharing new *divrei Torah* and learning inspiring insights from everyone seated around the *Yom Tov* table. In that spirit I am honored to share, in the following editions of *Torah Tidbits*, teachings from the commentary of Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt”l on the Haggadah. His ideas regarding Seder night emphasize the sacred and exalted nature of the Seder, the spiritual heights that every Jew can reach on Pesach, and the unique longing for Redemption and love of the Land of Israel that is to be felt during the night of Seder.

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt”l: *Mei Marom* on the Haggadah

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop (1882–1951) was an eminent student and close friend of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook. Following Rav Kook’s passing, he served as Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva. Rav Charlop also served as the rabbi of the Sha’arei Chesed and Rechavia neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

He is the author of the *Mei Marom* series on *hashkafa* and Jewish thought, a collection that spans a breathtaking range of topics. Rav Charlop was regarded as one of the most venerated sages in Jerusalem in the years preceding and following the founding of the State of Israel.

ELEVATED PESACH PREPARATION

Rav Charlop emphasizes the unique spiritual quality of the days leading up to Pesach as we prepare for the festival. In Egypt, the Jews were instructed to take a lamb several days prior to the first Seder. The anticipation and excitement that build toward the day possess immense value; these days of preparation

themselves carry great spiritual significance. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p. alef)

Rav Charlop suggests that during the days leading up to Pesach a Jew resembles an eved, a servant of Hashem, whereas on the festival itself we resemble a *sar*, an officer.

At first glance, an “officer” appears to occupy a higher rank than a “servant.” Yet the Talmud in *Berachot* (34b) emphasizes the unique superiority of the eved. The Talmud recounts that when Chanina ben Dosa was studying with his teacher, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, the rabbi’s son became gravely ill. Rabbi Yochanan asked his student to pray for the child, and the child was healed.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai’s wife found this perplexing. Why did he ask his student to pray instead of praying himself? Rabbi Yochanan explained: “He is like a servant before the king, whereas I am like an officer before the king.”

Rav Kook explained this passage to mean that the eved possesses a unique advantage: he serves God with purity and unquestioning faith. A servant does not question the master. By contrast, a *sar*, an officer, expresses his own opinions and is called upon to apply his own wisdom and judgment.

In this sense, the eved enjoys a certain spiritual advantage.

Rav Charlop here articulates an exquisite idea often emphasized in Chassidic thought: the time and effort one invests in preparing to perform a mitzvah—sometimes hours, days, or even weeks—is itself a profound expression of purity, devotion, and love for Hashem and His commandments.

THE FOUR SONS: EMULATING EACH TRAIT

The Four Sons of the Seder are often presented as personalities arranged along a spectrum from admirable to problematic. Rav Charlop, however, offers a unique interpretation: each of the four sons represents an elevated spiritual trait that we seek to attain specifically on the sacred night of the Seder.

The Chacham (wise child) represents the pursuit of wisdom and the desire to understand the commandments.

The Tam (simple or pure child) symbolizes the aspiration to reach the level of our forefather Yaakov, described as “*Yaakov ish tam*” (Bereishit 25:27)—a person of pure and wholesome faith.

The child known as “*She’eino Yodea Lish’ol*” (the one who does not know how to ask) reflects a dimension of elevated insight regarding mysteries that lie beyond ordinary human

questioning. On the spiritually elevated night of the Seder, we are able to glimpse spiritual conceptions and visions that are rarely accessible during the rest of the year.

Even the Rasha (wicked child), Rav Charlop suggests, may be understood in a positive light. The Rasha represents a person who recognizes his faults and transgressions and understands that these are merely external layers masking an inner nature that is fundamentally pure and good. External influences and harmful surroundings may obscure that inner holiness, but these layers can be removed, allowing the true sanctity of the soul to shine forth.

Thus, Rav Charlop teaches that each of us strives to attain the lofty qualities represented by the *Arba Banim* on the night of the Seder. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p. 31) ■



Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt”l



Title page of Rav Charlop's commentary on the Haggadah

INVITATION

Rav Kook observed the age-old minhag of reciting the text of the Korban Pesach on the eve of Pesach at the Kotel.

In this spirit, **please join me at the Kotel on Wednesday, April 1, Erev Pesach at 1:15 pm for a Mincha minyan followed by the reading of the Korban Pesach.**

(We will conclude at approximately 1:45 pm). Wishing you Chag Kasher v'Sameach! Men and Women are invited. We will meet in the back, next to the mechitza be"H.



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Question: I will be at a hotel for Pesach. When I arrive, a few hours before Pesach, should I do *bedikat chametz* (=bc), or rely on the hotel to give me a *chametz-free* room?

Answer: The *gemara* (Pesachim 4a) decides that when one rents a house from another Jew before Pesach, the one who has access to it on the night of *bc* is obligated in *bc*. So, since you are coming a few hours before Pesach, the hotel is obligated to do *bc*.

The *gemara* continues with a question – can one who starts renting on *erev Pesach* assume that the landlord indeed did *bc*? We rule that one may assume he did *bc* (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 437:2), but the renter must ask the landlord if he is available. So, ostensibly, if the hotel did not report they did *bc*, you should inquire.

There are a few reasons, though, why this might not be necessary. Arguably, the *hash-gacha* on the hotel includes an assurance that the rooms were properly checked. While this is true in some hotels, there are definitely arrangements where the *mashgiach* is responsible for the kitchen, whereas non-rabbis are responsible for other proper halachic operation of the hotel. Just like in the *gemara*'s case one needs to ask a fine landlord whether he did *bc*, perhaps here too you must ask. Therefore, it is difficult to give clear guidance about unspecified locations.

Another sometimes valid point of leniency is that at some hotels, you may have difficulty receiving a credible answer. Will the receptionist know? Will you be able to get hold of the relevant person on this hectic day? Therefore, it may be equivalent to what the *gemara* calls “he is not around to ask.” While it could be more practical to ask in advance whether the hotel does a halachic *bc* on the rooms, if he did not, perhaps one there can rely on the assumption they did.

The major question is if there was no formal *bc* done but the hotel can assure you that the room is clean, because a hotel’s job is to provide clean rooms all year long. This should fall under the general rule that a professional will not endanger his professional standing (see Shach, Yoreh Deah 155:3).

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While no hotel is perfect, a standard *bc* is not perfect either.

But can a chambermaid's cleaning without a candle and perhaps not on the night of the 14th of Nisan count in lieu of *bc*? If one checks without the halachically prescribed lighting, he does not have to redo the *bc* (Shulchan Aruch, OC 433:1 and Mishna Berura 433:6). Also, most of us rely on the serious cleaning we do in the days leading up to Pesach but not with the characteristics of *bc*, and then do only a cursory *bc*, which would not uncover most of the *chametz* if it still existed. This is based on effectively creating places that are assumed to be *chametz* free (see Living the Halachic Process III, D-15).

Remember, that the *mitzva* of *bc* was not supposed to fall upon you (outside the one you likely will do at your home – see Living the Halachic Process II:D-14). It is just that there is a possibility that your concern about *chametz* may make it necessary. The *gemara* (Pesachim 8a) posits that one does not need to check outdoor areas frequented by *chametz*-eating animals because he can assume there will not be *chametz* there. The birds do

not fulfill the *mitzva* of *bc* for us; they create a place which is excluded from the need of *bc*. For our purposes, the chambermaid is no worse than the birds. Even if she is not Jewish and cannot be an agent to fulfill the *mitzva*, she can still eliminate the likelihood of *chametz*.

It is therefore fine to not do *bc* when you come. (Coming in the afternoon of *erev Pesach*, when *chametz* is useless, makes things slightly but not fully more lenient – see Magen Avraham 437:3; Tosafot, Pesachim 2a. Further discussion is beyond our scope). If one wants to be *machmir* and do *bc*, fine (it can be done in a minute). However, the opinion (see Piskei Teshuvot 437:1) that if the hotel did not do “*bc*,” one should do one with a *beracha* is wrong. ■

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Shimshon and the Road to Redemption

Our Sages (Rosh HaShanah 25a-b) teach that the leaders of each generation, no matter their spiritual level, should be as highly regarded in their own times as were Moshe, Aharon and Shmuel when they lived. The Talmud specifically cites Gid'on, Yiftach and Shimshon as exemplars of this principle - even though they are each problematic figures, they are equated with the three archetypal leaders of the Jewish people. Most commentators explain that the level of the leader is commensurate with that of the generation; thus, a generation on a higher spiritual level would merit a leader of higher caliber, while a less spiritually developed generation would be granted

a leader on a lower spiritual level. Logically, this formulation makes a lot of sense - a leader has to be able to relate to the concerns of his people, and a strong leader in a weak generation might not empathize with the people's limitations.

R. Yosef bar Meir Teomim, known as the Pri Megadim, offers a novel suggestion in his sefer Tavat Gome on the Haftarat: He argues that in general, a leader receives divine inspiration that is fueled both by his own merit and that of the people he leads. If a generation is on a high spiritual level, even a leader who as an individual may not be so spiritually elevated may receive great divine inspiration, fueled by the holiness of his generation. A generation on a lower level might require a leader on an even higher level to enable him to receive prophecy. He cites Shimshon as an example, explaining that this was why Shimshon needed to be a *Nazir m'rechem*, a Nazirite from the womb, a previously unheard of phenomenon. His intense holiness would counteract the spiritual poverty of the generation he led.

R' Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin (Yisrael Kedoshim 5) echoes the idea of Shimshon's extraordinary holiness. He notes that if we look closely at the wording of the text we notice an anomaly. The *pasuk* in Sefer Shmuel cited by the Gemara reverses the chronological order of the three judges mentioned, placing Shimshon before Yiftach, parallel to Aharon HaKohen. This presents us with an enigma. On the one hand, many sources attest to the great holiness of Shimshon. On the other hand, his behavior does not always seem consistent with

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this approach, and just as there are sources in Talmudic and midrashic literature that praise Shimshon for his intense holiness, there are also those that criticize him for his apparently immoral behavior. How can we resolve this contradiction?

Shimshon's extraordinary *Gevurah*, his physical strength, was a reflection of its spiritual source. *Gevurah* in the teachings of our Sages is associated with כיבוש היצר, overcoming one's evil inclination. In his *brachot* to his sons before his death, Yaakov Avinu compared Dan, Shimshon's ancestor, to a snake. Kabbalistically, in the world of ultimate truth, the snake represents the conquest of the evil inclination. The word נחש is numerically equivalent to משיח. Shimshon was a potential משיח, whose *nezirut* was intended to shield him from the desires of the material world. Thus his behavior in the physical realm, while morally incomprehensible on a superficial level, was on a deeper level purely a function of his holy motives. When his *nezirut* was violated, his spiritual strength was depleted and he was no longer protected from physical desire. His ability to rise above the weakness of his generation was impaired.

Yaakov Avinu foresaw and exclaimed over the strength of Shimshon in his *bracha*, but ultimately also foresaw his downfall. When

confronted with the disappointment of Shimshon's defeat at the hands of the Plishtim, Yaakov prayed "לישועתך קויתי השם" - I hope for Your salvation, Hashem. Ultimate salvation may begin, as in the days of Shimshon, with human effort rooted in spiritual strength, but its culmination is in the hands of Hashem. Chazal derive from Yaakov's words that "הכל בקווי", everything is dependent upon our hopeful expectation of Hashem's deliverance. We faithfully await the day when as in the time period of the Sho'fetim, the time between the initial conquest of the land and the building of the Beit HaMikdash, so too in our time, between the establishment of the State and the rebuilding of the Mikdash, we merit Hashem's salvation. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began its fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.

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Managing Relationships During Wartime

Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging. It breeds safety and stability, especially during times of uncertainty.

That being said, maintaining relationships requires energy, which runs low during times of war and stress. So how are we supposed to maintain relationships when we are depleted?

Consider the different relationships in your life. There are colleagues, neighbors, friends and relatives. There's the immediate family and extended family, in-laws, aunts and cousins. It's important to recognize that in times of war people become more irritable and needy and less patient. This makes it more difficult even to connect to your immediate family, spouse and children and requires more effort, patience and understanding than usual.

Since one's physical and emotional reserves

dwindle during periods of prolonged stress, it's important to use your limited energy wisely.

If you're a parent, put yourself in the center and consider the people who need you the most, most likely a spouse and /or children.

Taking care of children during wartime is more demanding than usual. There are a lot of sleep disruptions, constant food preparation, managing zoom school schedules and homework, and providing extra emotional support. Many parents are also trying to work part time and lack regular childcare. Add this to the regular demands of taking care of a home and family and parents are left feeling depleted.

Then focus on relationships that serve you. Which connections fill you rather than drain you? Surround yourself with people who fill you with energy and reach out to others who can help lighten your burden such as babysitters.

Find activities that give you energy and recharge your batteries such as exercising, watching something enjoyable, reading a book or learning something, to keep yourself physically and emotionally strong.

I recommend letting go of obligations, over-extending yourself and spreading yourself thin for others who don't serve you. While

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you may feel like you're being "nice" you're using up energy you won't have for the people who do need you.

Make sure you set boundaries. If neighbors or friends want to come over or ask for favors that you're uncomfortable with, communicate what you CAN do in a clear, assertive, respectful way. Giving to people in a way that fills you with purpose, like getting involved in a chessed project can also energize you.

During prolonged times of war, when so many things are uncertain, be clear about what your needs are and what keeps you functioning at your best. Focus on the things within your control. You may not be in control of the sirens and your sleep patterns but you are in control of what you eat and if you get out in the sun and fresh air. Staying calm, coping well and self-care starts with parents.

Like the safety protocol on the plane, put your oxygen mask on first so that you can breathe freely and help your children put on theirs. May we experience quieter days. ■

Feel free to send in any **parenting questions** you may have to parenting@ouisrael.org (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.

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Singles Events or Stressful Auditions?

לעילוי נשמת
 מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Sarah asks: My candidate is nervous to go to singles events. She finds them very difficult and overwhelming. What’s the right mindset to go in with? And what can she do differently?

Aleeza answers:

Hi Sarah... first of all, please tell her she is so normal. Truly. Walking into a room full of strangers, with your heart quietly whispering, “Maybe this could be something” is vulnerable. Of course it feels overwhelming. When something matters to us, it activates everything: hope, fear, longing, self-doubt. That doesn’t mean she’s not cut out for this. It means she cares.

And I want to gently reframe something. Singles events are not auditions. They are not a stage. They are not a test to pass or fail.

They’re a room full of humans.

So many people walk in thinking, “Will they

like me?” “Will I stand out?” “What if I’m awkward?” That mindset puts her in performance mode. And performance mode creates pressure.

Instead, I want her to shift into what I call “curious connector mode.”

Rather than asking, “Who will choose me?”

She asks, “Who might I want to learn more about tonight?”

When she focuses on discovering others instead of being evaluated, her nervous system can settle. She’s no longer being judged, she’s exploring.

Now let’s get practical, because mindset without tools isn’t enough.

Here are some grounded, doable strategies she can actually use:

1. SET A MICRO-INTENTION BEFORE SHE WALKS IN.

Not “I need to meet my bashert.” That’s too

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big. That creates pressure.

Instead: “I’m going to have three meaningful conversations.”

Or: “I’m going to ask thoughtful questions.”

Small, measurable goals build confidence.

2. ARRIVE WITH QUESTIONS PREPARED.

Anxiety spikes when we don’t know what to say. So remove that stress.

She can keep a few go-to openers in her back pocket:

- “What’s been the highlight of your week?”
- “What made you decide to come tonight?”
- “What’s something you’re passionate about lately?”

Preparedness reduces panic.

3. GIVE HERSELF A TIME CONTAINER.

Tell her she doesn’t have to stay all night. She can commit to 60-90 minutes. When she knows there’s an exit plan, her body relaxes. If she’s enjoying herself, she can stay longer. But she has control.

4. TAKE GROUNDING BREAKS.

If she feels flooded, she can step aside, take three slow breaths, feel her feet on the floor, and remind herself: “I am safe. I am enough. I’m just meeting people.”

Regulation first. Connection second.

5. REDEFINE SUCCESS.

Success is not “Did I leave with a date?”

Success is:

- I showed up.
- I tried.
- I stretched.
- I practiced connection.

That’s growth. And growth compounds.

And here’s something I want her to remember deeply: confidence is not the absence of nerves. Confidence is walking in with nerves and choosing to engage anyway. That takes courage.

Also, and this is important, the energy that’s

magnetic is not perfection. It’s presence. When someone is genuinely listening, genuinely curious, genuinely themselves: that’s attractive. People feel that.

So instead of trying to be impressive, she can focus on being interested. That alone transforms the entire experience.

Tell her this from me: She doesn’t have to sparkle. She doesn’t have to shine brighter than anyone else in the room, she just has to be real. The right person isn’t looking for a performance. They’re looking for a person.

Blessings for courage, connection, and beautiful surprises.

Aleeza ■



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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

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RABBI AHARON HERSHKOVITZ

SENIOR PSYCHOLOGIST OF OU ISRAEL'S CHAVERIM MAKSHIVIM HOTLINE

Roaring Lion

Since the beginning of this latest round of war, Am Yisrael has answered the cry: whether behind enemy lines (both near and far) or on the home front, we as a nation have aimed to rise to the occasion. Together with our faith in Hashem and our gratitude for His protection, we must also be honest and recognize that these two and a half years have not been easy.

All of us have experienced risk to ourselves and our families, especially our soldiers and their families, and so many have experienced loss, grief and sorrow. This, combined with uncertainty and disruption of routine in our workplaces, homes and families, may have many of us feeling that our internal reserves are depleted. Perhaps we're not fully in crisis mode, but we may not always feel the energy for another continued round

of fighting.

It's important to recognize that this feeling is not weakness: this is simply how prolonged stress affects people's energy. It's a completely normal reaction to an abnormal situation. But that does not mean we are condemned to be subsumed by it. What we need to do first is recognize it, because only then can we know

how to deal with it and move forward.

One helpful model for building resilience in the face of burnout is the BASIC-Ph model, developed by Prof. Muli Lahad and others (known in Hebrew

as גישור מאחד"ד). This model identifies six areas of life that support resilience: **B**elief (faith in Hashem, in the army, in our own ability to cope), **A**ffect (emotions, learning to recognize and express them, whether through speech, laughter or tears), **S**ocial (connection with others), **I**magination (creative thinking, humor, storytelling, being a little silly), **C**ognition (thinking rationally, gathering information,

planning, troubleshooting), and **P**hysical (movement, exercise, stretching). It can be genuinely useful to think about which of these channels come most naturally to each of us, and which ones we might be neglecting.

For young people looking for a friend to reach out to, the OU's "Chaveirim Makshivim" hotline offers a listening ear and helpful support in Hebrew and in English: you can reach us every weekday evening



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Research on post-traumatic growth is also worth considering here. Difficult experiences have a way of loosening things that had previously felt fixed. We discover that we are more flexible than we thought, both in what we're willing to let go of, and in what we're willing to reach toward.

On one side of that equation: there are things we've been saying yes to for years, commitments, habits, roles we've accumulated almost without noticing, that we may now realize we can actually put down. The disruption of the last two and a half years has a way of clarifying what was truly essential and what was just inertia. Saying no, even to things that felt impossible to refuse before, turns out to be survivable. Sometimes even necessary.

On the other side: having lived through genuinely difficult situations, many of us find that our comfort zone has quietly expanded. The conversation we've been putting off, the community role we didn't feel ready for, the relationship we wanted to invest in more deeply, these can feel less daunting when held up against what we've already navigated. Crisis, paradoxically, can give us permission to grow in directions we'd previously talked ourselves out of.

None of this means the difficulties weren't real, or that growth is automatic. But it does mean that within this very hard period, seeds have been planted. The question worth sitting with is: what do *you* want to say no to, and what have you been waiting for permission to say yes to? ■

Aharon Herskovitz is the senior psychologist of the OU's Chaveirim Makshivim hotline. Additionally, he is the Rav of Kehillat Shevet Achim in Netanya, founder and clinical director of Ogen LaNefesh in Raanana, a reserve mental health officer, husband and father of five.

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CHANNELING OUR INNER FORCES

This week we read Parashat Vayikra, the opening of the third book of the Torah. In this parashah, Hashem calls to Moshe and teaches him the laws of the korbanot brought in the Mishkan.

Among these laws is the prohibition against eating certain fats and any blood from the animals. The Torah states (Vayikra 3:16-17):

“וְהִקְטִירָם הַכֹּהֵן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְחֵם אֵשׁה לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לִלְחָב לָהּ. חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם לִלְחָב וְכַל־דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ”

“The Kohen shall turn them into smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire of pleasing aroma. All fat is for Hashem. This is an eternal statute throughout your generations, in all your dwellings: you shall not eat any fat or any blood.”

The Rashbam comments that even when it came to animals that were not offered on the mizbeach as a korban, and none of the fat or

blood of those animals was destined for the mizbeach, it is still forbidden to eat them.

What is the significance of the Torah’s prohibition against eating the animal’s fat and blood?

Rabbi Yamin Goldsmith offers a powerful insight. He draws a parallel between the blood and fats of the korban and the “blood” and “fat” within the human being. Blood is active and constantly flowing. Fat, by contrast, is heavy, slow, and resistant.

In our avodat Hashem, both qualities are essential, but only when directed properly.

When it comes to positive mitzvot, we must be like blood: alive, energetic, and quick to run toward opportunities to do good. But when faced with negative actions or temptations, we must be like fat: slow, resistant, and unwilling to move. That “laziness” can save us from sin.

The Torah teaches us that blood and fat are powerful forces. Our task is not to eliminate these traits, but to elevate and control them, channeling each one at the right time and in the right way.



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THE WHISPER OF VAYIKRA

In this week’s parsha, Vayikra, Hashem teaches Moshe the avodah of the Mishkan. In contrast to the thunder and revelation in Sefer Shemot-particularly in Parashot Yitro, Mishpatim, and Ki Tisa-Vayikra opens with a whisper: “וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מֹשֶׁה”.

Mefarshim explain that this softer form of speech reflects both the halachot being taught and the nature of the daily avodah. Rashi derives this from the small aleph, stating that it hints to humility. The Meshech Chochmah says the change in speech comes to show the separation between public revelation and private avodah, teaching that holiness is found in the quiet, repetitive, disciplined acts that build inner kedushah.

Sinai was about Hashem revealing Himself to the nation, but the Mishkan is about us learning how to bring ourselves closer to Hashem through personal effort.

The Sforno points out that this call was direct and only to Moshe. It wasn't meant to impress a crowd, it was personal. That itself is a message: real growth happens when no one else is watching.

In our lives, we experience our own "Sinai moments," but we must recognize that most of our avodat Hashem is done quietly, how we speak, how we act when no one is looking, and how we perform mitzvot as individuals.

Vayikra shows that real holiness isn't loud or dramatic; it is found in the quiet things we do every day. Vayikra challenges us to pay attention to those small moments, because that's how we build a real connection with Hashem. ■

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