

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

Vayikra 5770

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NISSAN :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The glorious month of Nissan is upon us. The harbinger of warm weather, longer daylight hours and a wonderful holiday season are part of the message of the month. Here in Israel we had a rather mild winter punctuated by periods of strong rains. Yet all of us look forward to the unbroken period of sunshine that the next months promise us.

There is probably no other month in the entire Jewish calendar year that engenders the positive welcome that occurs with the entry of Nissan. The Torah told us that this month of Nissan is “yours” and the Jewish people have certainly taken that message to heart.

The exciting, if somewhat taxing and expensive, preparations for Pesach dominate the first half of the month. And then Pesach arrives with its message of hope and freedom, optimism and family. That leaves us another week to recover from the holiday and to continue to bask in the warmth of its message and the memories of our contentment.

This the only month of the year when penitential prayers are not recited, eulogies are curtailed and great efforts to help the needy are maximized as being mandatory obligations.

The month of Nissan has a special aura to it both physically and spiritually. It sets our calendar (and our clocks here as well) and is the month of the year upon which all other months of the year are dependent. It therefore has a special Shabat that introduces it and prepares us to appreciate its presence and blessing.

There are two differing opinions in the Talmud as to when the world was created. One opinion is that it was created in Tishrei and the holiday of Rosh Hashanah which occurs in that month is proof of this.

The other opinion is that the world was created in Nissan – so to speak, the planning and decision to create our universe took place in Nissan even though the actual process may not have begun until Tishrei. Jewish tradition treats Rosh Hashanah, the first day of Tishrei, as being the day of the birth of the creation process. Nevertheless, the idea of Nissan as being the anniversary of the world’s formation is an intriguing one.

The Talmud teaches us that the world was originally created b’midat hadin – by the standards of strict justice. That certainly is represented by the month of Tishrei, which is the month of judgment when we are all weighed in the scales of God’s unfathomable justice. However the rabbis teach us that our world would have no chance of permanent existence if it was judged by midat hadin solely.

So, God, so to speak, tempered the midat hadin with midat harachamim – the measure of mercy, forgiveness and compassion. That midat harachamim is represented by the month of Nissan, warm, optimistic, fresh and invigorating.

It is true that judgment takes place in Tishrei and that our years are counted from that month onwards. But the influence of the month of Nissan is nevertheless felt even in the midst of judgment six months later – it is our hope for a merciful outcome on the days of judgment.

The same type of differing opinions appears in the Talmud regarding the time of the ultimate redemption of Israel. One opinion is that it will take place in Tishrei and the alternate opinion is that it will occur in Nissan. Here also I feel that we are not so much concerned regarding actual dates, as we are regarding the climate and environment that will lead us to eventual redemption, security and peace.

The idea of Tishrei is, again, one of judgment – that we will merit the redemption based upon our sterling character and impeccable behavior. We will be entitled to redemption for we have earned it through our behavior and obedience to God’s will and commandments.

Well, in our current world that seems to be a bit of a stretch for us. But if the redemption is Nissan born, arriving through Heaven’s mercy and

compassion and independent of our human failings and errors, then Nissan is truly the month of our redemption.

Some of the rabbis in the Talmud stated that the first redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage occurred in Nissan. The Jewish people, on their own merits, are not entitled to deliverance. So, too, will the final redemption of Israel also occur in Nissan – by God’s mercy, compassion and in His own inscrutable way.

It is because of this that Nissan is so joyously welcomed by the Jewish people, mired as we are in so many difficulties, disappointments and doubts. Nissan, the month of springtime, raises our hopes and spirits.

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha VAYIKRA Rabbi Berel Wein

This Shabat we begin to read the book of Vayikra. This book of Vayikra has very little narrative to it and concentrates mainly on the sacrifices that were offered in the Temple service of the mishkan and the beit hamikdash; the laws of purity and defilement; and a listing of many of the commandments of the Torah and Jewish ritual.

This makes this section of the Torah a difficult one to comprehend, internalize and attempt to teach to others. Therefore our educational sense would have postponed the teaching of this book of the Torah until the years of maturity and life experience have fashioned us as Torah devotees and scholars. Yet the rabbis of Jewish tradition have ordained that children begin their Torah experiences by studying the book of Vayikra.

Their statement is: “Let those who are still pure and holy begin their education by studying the concepts of purity and holiness.” Purity and holiness are difficult concepts to study. They are states of being, more of the heart and soul than that of the mind.

Someone who does not ever deal in being holy and pure will never be able to fathom the secrets of the Torah that lie in this book of Vayikra. That person will only see a seeming hodgepodge of laws and rituals, many of which would be judged to be anachronistic in our “enlightened” age.

But our Torah is a Torah of experience and emotion as much as it is one of soaring intellect and deep analytical thought. To begin to understand the concepts of purity and holiness, one must be, or at least strive to be, a person of holiness and purity. And that is a most significant lesson that the book of Vayikra teaches us.

Purity and holiness are inextricably bound to the overriding value of constant sacrifice in Jewish life. It is no coincidence that the laws of the sacrificial worship in the Temple are connected to the laws of purity in this book of Vayikra. Without sacrifice, constant daily sacrifice, purity and holiness are unachievable goals.

In a very contaminated environment, it is most difficult to keep one’s self clean and pure. It requires great discipline and restraint, care and will – in short, a supreme sense of sacrifice. In life we are always faced with myriad, daily choices. Every choice that we make indicates that we have sacrificed another choice that we could have made.

Then the only question that remains is whether we made the correct sacrifice. Will our choice bring us closer to a sense of holiness and purity and purpose in our lives or, perhaps, will it do the opposite? The seeming jumble of laws in the book of Vayikra is meant to guide our choices of which sacrifices we should wisely make in our lives.

The Torah details for us all of the categories of sacrifices – public, private, those of leaders and of paupers – and thereby points the way to our sacrificing wisely and productively. This is the overall thrust of this great biblical book of Vayikra.

Shabat shalom.

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Overview

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), also known as Torat Kohanim — the Laws of the Priests — deals largely with the korbanot (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called korban olah, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the kohen sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remaining portion is eaten by the kohanim. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burnt on the altar and part is eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats. The Torah prohibits eating blood or chelev (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the Kohen Gadol, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

Insights

The Biggest Bar-B-Q In The World

"When a man among you brings an offering" (1:2)

Imagine you're an intergalactic traveler flying over Jerusalem some two and a half thousand years ago. Your 3D scanner picks up a beautiful building. Opening your intergalactic "Earth on Five Dollars-a-Day", you read about what you're seeing: "The Beit Hamikdash is the most spiritual place on earth." Something doesn't seem quite accurate about this description because everywhere you aim your scanner all you can see are very physical things.

For a start, animals are being slaughtered, dissected and burned on what looks like the world's biggest barbecue. Wine is being poured down two holes on top of a square monolith on which the meat is being burned. Nearby, bread is being baked. Oil is being mixed with flour and fried in open pans. There are animals in pens, along with birds. Everywhere there are all kinds of cooking utensils. Men are washing their hands and feet. There is a column of black smoke rising perpendicularly into the sky. This is spirituality?

You make a mental note to write to the editors of "Earth on Five-Dollars-a-Day" that their description of this tourist spot is way off the mark.

Our intergalactic traveler could be forgiven for mistaking what he saw, for indeed the Beit Hamikdash ostensibly was a very physical place. Our fearless voyager, however, failed to notice a key item in the Beit Hamikdash: the Aron, the Holy Ark. Inside the Ark was the Torah. It was only through the Holy Torah that the Divine Presence rested on the Beit Hamikdash and turned the most physical of places into the most spiritual.

The Beit Hamikdash is a microcosm of the universe, and a macrocosm of the body of a human. If you look at a person, he seems to be a very physical thing. He consists of sinew and flesh, fluids and membrane. And yet, he is so much more.

Just as the Torah caused the Divine Presence to rest on the Beit Hamikdash and the Mishkan, similarly the Torah turns flesh and blood into a dwelling place for the Most High.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Vayikra

He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Moed. (1:1)

The Rashbam considers this pasuk to be a transition from the closing pesukim of Parashas Pikudei (40:35) to this parsha. "And Moshe was not able to come to the Ohel Moed, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan." It appears that even though Moshe Rabbeinu erected the Mishkan, he was not able to enter it because the edifice was filled with the glory of Hashem. Therefore, Hashem called for him to come inside. The Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei Tosfos add that Moshe feared entering into the Mishkan. He had to be invited. Thus, the opening pasuk of Vayikra is the sequel to the parshios that address the construction of the Mishkan. Moshe Rabbeinu completed the "job." He supervised the creation of a dwelling place on earth for the Divine Presence. He "seemed," however, to ignore his own input, for he felt that he was unqualified to enter without Hashem's explicit welcome.

This incident showcases Moshe's unusual sense of humility. He judged himself inadequate to partake in the glory of the Mishkan. Hashem recognized this unique quality which Moshe exemplified, and He beckoned him to enter. The word Vayikra is written with a diminutive aleph at the end, transforming the word to appear as if it says, Vayikar, "He chanced upon." The Baal HaTurim explains that Moshe did not want to call attention to his relationship with Hashem. In an attempt to play it down, he wrote Vayikar without the aleph, as if asserting that Hashem "just happened" to speak to him. This is similar to the way Hashem appeared to the wicked Bilaam: by chance. Hashem did not approve of Moshe's "spelling" of the word and instructed him to write an aleph at the end. Moshe wrote the aleph, but he made it very small. His sense of humility did not allow him to call attention to himself.

The Torah is, thus, teaching us about Moshe's humility. Why does the Torah teach the lesson at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra, in association with the korbanos, animal-offerings? Is this the only place in which the Torah could have taught this lesson? What about the sacrifices renders this parasha such fertile ground for observing our leader's sense of humility?

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, cites a fascinating Midrash which can be used to shed light on this question. The Midrash notes that, throughout the detailing of the completion of the Mishkan, the Torah constantly reiterates the phrase, kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe, "As Hashem commanded Moshe." This may be seen as an analogy to a king who commissioned his servant to build a palace for him. The dedicated servant did as he was asked, erecting an exceptionally beautiful edifice. He then took his own initiative by writing the king's name on every facet of the place. Every stone, every girder, every window: all had the king's symbol etched somewhere on its surface. The king was so impressed by his servant's devotion to him that he felt he owed him a special reward. After all, he was ensconced within the palace, while his servant, who had done so much and demonstrated such unusual devotion, remained outside. The king invited his trusted servant to join him in the palace. Likewise, Hashem saw all that Moshe had done for Him. Everything that Moshe did was executed solely for the sake of Hashem's Name. Such utter devotion must be acknowledged. Thus, Hashem called to Moshe to enter the Mishkan. After all that he had done, he belonged there. Moshe never thought of himself. He was just a "worker," toiling in Hashem's field. Kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe, "as Hashem commanded Moshe": he was just doing his "job." Such an attitude warrants recognition. Hashem invited him to enter into the edifice that he so devoutly constructed "for Hashem."

Rav Schlesinger feels that the Torah alludes to this idea in the parsha of the korbanos. In the Talmud Sotah 5b, Chazal note the distinctiveness of those who are unassuming before Hashem. When the Bais Hamikdash existed, one who brought a Korban Olah, Burnt-offering, received his due for offering a Meal-offering. The individual who is self-effacing is considered to have brought all of the korbanos, as David Hamelech says in Tehillim 51:19, Zivchei Elokim ruach nishbarah, "The sacrifices Hashem desires are a broken spirit." One who is unpretentious is considered before Hashem to have brought all of the sacrifices.

This is signified by the diminutive aleph. The aleph alludes to adam, man. The diminutive aleph is a reference to a man who diminishes himself, who is demure and meek. We are being taught that one who acts modestly, without arrogance, is greater than all of the korbanos. Humility is the key to connecting with the Almighty.

The idea of living exclusively for the purpose of sanctifying Hashem's Name - understanding that we are here solely for that purpose - brings to mind a poignant story which I feel should be shared with the reading public. During the days of the evil Czar Nicholas I of Russia, a despotic decree was issued against the Jewish population. In their blatant attempt to destroy Judaism, the government decreed that all Jewish youths from the young age of twelve should be conscripted into the Czar's army for a minimum of twenty-five years! During this time, the army made every effort to convert these children to the "religion of love": Christianity. While this was the decree, the crazed Russians went so far as to kidnap children as young as seven years old, sending them off to the Arctic wasteland. They allowed them no contact with Yiddishkeit, gave them very little food and subjected them to cruel back-breaking labor. Many of these children died from malnourishment, the cold, the labo
r and beatings. They were forcibly baptized. For most, the alternative was death. Many caved in and accepted the way out provided by the "loving" Christians. Some survived the unspeakable tortures. Of these, very few survived to adulthood. Emotionally broken and physically crippled, some of them eventually established their own communities and shuls. The Cantonists, as they were called, became the symbol of the Czarist treachery and the Jew's ability to triumph over adversity.

The episode took place when a group of Torah leaders came to St. Petersburg to intercede with the Czar on behalf of Russian Jewry. Apparently, the cruel Czar found it necessary to extract some more blood from his Jewish citizens. Because of the timing of their trip, they were forced to remain in St. Petersburg for the Yamim Noraim, High Holy days. The shul nearest to their place of lodging was one founded and attended primarily by these Cantonist survivors. It was Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, and the rabbis decided to daven in this shul. The last service of the day is Neilah, the Closing Prayer of Yom Kippur. The rabbis suggested that one of their own ascend to the amidur, lectern, to lead this most important tefillah. The conscripts, however, disagreed: "We accept that your chazan, cantor, must be a distinguished spiritual leader, whose knowledge of Torah matches his piety. We have with us such an individual, who is unique. Despite suffering unspeakable torture at the hands of the Russians, he remained dedicated to Hashem. He never succumbed to their cruelty, maintaining his unstinting fidelity to Hashem. We would like to honor him with leading the Neilah service."

The rabbis readily agreed, as they anxiously waited to see who this spiritual giant was. They turned towards the rear of the shul, and noticed a broken man, an invalid, emaciated and scarred all over, who appeared to be an old man, but was actually quite young. He hobbled on crutches up to the amidur. Prior to commencing his prayer, he turned to the kahal, congregation, and said, "Usually one prays for bani, chayei, u'mezonei, children, life and sustenance. Ribono Shel Olam, we do not need to pray for these; we need no food. The Czarist army provides us with rations. We are either too old or too sick to marry and have children. As for life, considering what type of existence we lead, we would probably be better off dead. Therefore," he said, as he began to slowly turn towards the Aron Kodesh, "All we pray for is: Yisgadal v'yiskadash Shmei Rabba - May Hashem's Name be glorified and sanctified! May Yiddishkeit survive its enemies! May the Torah triumph over the forces of darkness! May Klal Yisrael prosper!"

This is the meaning of the words, kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe. This man, just as so many others like him, prayed for one purpose: to serve Hashem. Not himself - not his family - only Hashem. No one should ever be placed in such a situation, but that should not prevent us from davening with the same purpose, crying out with the same intense emotion.

And He (Hashem) called to Moshe. (1:1)

The Yalkut Shimoni teaches us that Moshe Rabbeinu waited obediently outside the Mishkan, waiting for Hashem's call before entering the Ohel Moed. He waited due to his derech eretz, refinement and proper etiquette. One does not enter a meeting place without first being invited in. The Midrash concludes: "From here we derive that any scholar who lacks understanding is worse than a neveilah, animal carcass, for Moshe, the father of wisdom, greatest of all prophets, performed miracles and received the Torah; yet, he did not enter the Ohel Moed until he was called by Hashem."

This Yalkut has been addressed by many commentators. In the famous Slabodka Yeshivah, it was used to demonstrate the primacy of derech eretz in the life of a Jew. Many of us view derech eretz as sort of a supplement to the Torah personality. It is nothing more than a bit of polish on the exterior of an individual who is already a Torah scholar. Chazal teach us differently. Had Moshe transgressed this "insignificant" etiquette, had he entered before being invited in, he would have been categorized among those who are worse than a dead carcass. Can you imagine? Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest Torah leader of all time, would have been denigrated to the lowest of the low! Why? He would not have demonstrated derech eretz. This tiny infraction would have beclouded his every spiritual achievement, because it would have indicated a character flaw that eclipsed his lofty spiritual distinction. A scholar who does not understand the basics of proper behavior is missing more than extreme polish; he is lacking in the most basic of Torah character, thus nullifying all of his previous achievements.

I would like to take this idea a bit further. The Lithuanian yeshivos focused on different aspects of the student's spiritual development. The direction and focus of each institution was set by its Rosh Yeshivah. Two yeshivos that stand out were Kelm and Slabodka. While Kelm was much smaller in size than Slabodka, its impact on the Torah world vis-à-vis its talmidim was powerful. Kelm stressed sheleimus ha'adam, perfection of man. Although the Alter of Slabodka, Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl, was a student of Horav Simchah Zissel Ziv, zl, the Alter of Kelm, he emphasized gadlus ha'adam, the greatness of man.

The standard of perfection in Kelm was not limited to time or space. Thus, the Alter taught that one must be a Jew and a "man" in one's house and abroad. This was contrary to the opinion of the early Maskilim, followers of the Enlightenment, who opined that one should be a Jew at home and "a man" abroad. Perfection meant wholeness, with spirituality permeating every aspect of one's essence, physical/mundane, as well as spiritual.

While the two yeshivos differed in their approaches to the development of man and his relationship towards avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty, they agreed that derech eretz was a critical component in the makeup of a ben Torah. Without it, he was either "imperfect" or missing "greatness."

To have a better understanding of the variegated approaches of the two yeshivos, we quote from contrasting remarks of two of their greatest exponents. Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, venerable Mashgiach of Pre-World War II Mir, was the quintessential Kelmer talmid, student. He offered a defining comment concerning a statement made by Chazal on the Mishnah in Eiruvin 80a. Chazal teach that a loaf of bread, regardless of its diminutive size, is suitable for eiruvei chatzeiros, merging of the courtyards. (This is done by collecting a whole loaf of bread from each dwelling and placing it in one of the homes for the entire Shabbos.) On the other hand, a piece of bread, its size notwithstanding, may not be used for an eiruv. Rav Yeruchem explained, "One sees from here that shleimus, wholeness/perfection is preferable to gadlus, greatness/size."

Horav Meir Chodosh, zl, Mashgiach of Chevron and an exponent of the Slabodker Mussar approach, countered, "A person can have every limb perfectly formed and whole, yet he can still remain a midget." In short, we observe two approaches to understanding the role played by derech eretz. No matter the size - or otherwise perfection - of the individual, without derech eretz, a person is missing a crucial component in his essential character. He is lacking a fundamental quality of a human being.

And He (Hashem) called to Moshe. (1:1)

The commentators question why the Torah does not identify Hashem as the One Who called to Moshe. In his Nesivos Shalom, the Slonimer Rebbe, Horav Shalom Noach Barzovsky, zl, explains that the Torah conceals the source of the calling by design. Vayikra el Moshe, "And He called to Moshe," may be viewed allegorically as a portent for all of the times in which Hashem calls to each and every one of us via the messages we are to derive from life's occurrences. It is not a direct sound, but rather, an implied message that can be heard by each individual. There is one stipulation: he must be listening. Hashem talks to us every time something happens in our life. Regardless whether the occurrence has a negative or positive connotation, it is nonetheless a message.

At times, this message is uplifting, elevating our spirits to incredible heights. There are instances in which the episode that serves as the medium for the message is heartrending and mind-shattering. It is a message, however, that we should take to heart, regardless of its numbing effect. Those who claim that they do not hear the message are simply not listening. Furthermore, since no two people are alike, the lesson that two different people may derive from the exact same incident varies. Each is created to meet a different goal in life. The message speaks to the individual in relation to achieving his specific goal. My neighbor's message is not identical to mine, because we have been sent down to this world for different purposes.

Thus, the Vayikra el Moshe, "He called to Moshe," is a calling out to each individual Jew. The call to one Jew is not the same as the call to another Jew. At times, the two messages are diametrically opposed. Each person sees what he is supposed to see and understands what he is supposed to understand - if he is listening.

This calling actually goes by another name: Hashgacha Pratis, Divine Providence. Hashem watches over each one of us individually, making us aware of the various times in which we stray from the goals that He has set for us. There are times when the occurrences that take place totally seem to be without rhyme or reason. Alternatively, they may be cataclysmic events that defy scientific rationale. Hashem also sends punishments that are bizarre. How are we to understand these messages? Are they to be understood from a negative perspective? Has Hashem lost all "patience" with us? Are we doomed to infamy? Is there some way to view these occurrences from a positive perspective?

Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Shlita, cites Horav Yehonassan Eibeshutz, zl, in his Yaaros Devash, who takes a positive approach to these "misunderstood" events. In the Talmud Berachos 7b, the question is raised concerning David Hamelech's use of the word mizmor, a song, regarding the circumstances while he was running from his son, Avshalom: "A Psalm/song by David, as he fled from Avshalom, his son" (Tehillim 3:1). A son pursuing his father with intent to kill is reason for an elegy - not a song. The Talmud explains that this may be compared to one who owes a large amount of money to a debtor. Prior to paying the debt, he is depressed. After he has paid the debt, however, he has reason to be filled with joy. He has paid off his note; he is no longer encumbered; he is free. Likewise, when Hashem informed David that He would challenge him with something bad from his own house, David was depressed. He did not know the extent of this challenge. Perhaps a slave would arise against him, or some other base person, who would show no compassion, who would be relentless in his battle against the king. Once David discovered that his challenger would be none other than his own son, Avshalom, he was calmed. A son does not kill his father. This gave David reason to sing. Rav Yonasan Eibeshutz questions Chazal's statement. Avshalom did want to kill David, so why was he happy? His worst fears were realized, and his enemy was his own offspring! This was all the more reason to be depressed.

Rav Elyashiv explains the answer given by the Yaaros Devash in the following manner: there are two forms of punishment meted out by Hashem. One is punishment for man's sins. These yissurim, pain/troubles, are dispatched to cleanse and purify the individual and atone for his transgressions. These punishments are dispensed with compassion, because

Hashem still cares about the person. Therefore, He still maintains him under His Fatherly Providence.

There is a threshold, however, at which point a person has gone too far. He has sinned against Hashem with impunity and has angered Him greatly. At this point, Hashem releases him from His supervision, sort of flings him away. He no longer wants anything to do with him, leaving him, so to speak, subject to the forces of nature. Whatever happens - happens. This is like the son who has finally gone too far and angered his father, so that he throws him out of the house: "Do what you want. I want nothing more to do with you!" This constitutes the second form of punishment.

How does one distinguish between the two punishments? How does he discern to which one he is being subjected? Is there any way of determining if Hashem still cares about us? Rav Yonasan suggests that we look carefully at the particular disasters/misery/troubles that have befallen a person. If they are natural and not especially unique, it is an indication that Hashem has allowed us to fall under the purview of nature. We no longer experience a sense of Divine intervention. It is almost as if Hashem was not "concerned" about us. When the troubles are of an uncommon - almost super-natural - composition, a tsunami, earthquake, major tornado, phenomena that rarely, if ever, occur, it is emblematic of the Divine Hand, which demonstrates to us that Hashem still cares.

I must interject at this point and emphasize that everything - every occurrence - originates from Hashem. It is just that most phenomena are cloaked in a dressing called "nature." There are some that are so unusual that they are clear signs from Heaven Above that Hashem is "talking" to us.

This is why David Hamelech sang when he realized that his pursuer was his own son. A son does not kill his father. One that does is acting unnaturally. This idea emboldened David, because he now realized that Hashem still cared.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, supplements this idea, examining the unusual, totally insane actions of the Jihadists and suicide bombers, whom he feels manifest a form of vicious hatred unparalleled in the annals of history. Anyone with a modicum of common sense understands that conventional warfare is not necessarily effective - or even appropriate - against such a sick mentality. He cites an incident in which a young Palestinian woman, who had just given birth to a child, went together with her newborn in an ambulance, supposedly to seek medical treatment in an Israeli hospital. For some "reason," the Israel border guards decided to search the woman. She was found to be carrying explosives which she would have set off in Eretz Yisrael, quite possibly at the hospital, an act of terrorism which would have killed her, her newborn and a number of innocent victims. Such senseless, implacable hatred is unreal and unnatural. Clearly, it is Hashem's message to us: "I have not forsaken you. It is time to return to Me." The only way to battle such an enemy is through increased avoda, service to Hashem, thereby forging a stronger bond with Him.

And he shall slaughter it in the place where he would slaughter the Burnt-offering before Hashem; it is a Sin-offering. (4:24)

Interestingly, the Torah does not simply say that the Korban Chatas, Sin-offering, is to be slaughtered in the north, but instead tells us to slaughter it "in the place where he would slaughter the Burnt-offering." Why bring in Korban Olah, Burnt-offering, when the pasuk is addressing the laws of the Chatas? Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, derives from here that, to some extent, the Korban Chatas is similar to the Korban Olah. Neither of these korbanos is eaten by the one who brings them. While the Kohanim partake from the Korban Chatas, the Olah is totally off-limits.

Rav Moshe explains the relationship between the two korbanos and the lesson imparted by this relationship. Man's mission in life is to infuse kedushah, holiness, into everything with which he comes in contact. Sin represents a shortcoming in this mission. Apparently, he has failed to instill kedushah into an area of his life. Hence, we have sin. The mundane aspects of his life have remained earthly and routine. He has demonstrated a deficit in his ability to elevate these aspects, to sanctify them with greater meaning and value.

How does one correct this failing? Rav Moshe explains that he must first disassociate himself from the mundane, elevate himself and learn to imbue all matter with kedushah. These lessons are to be derived from the Korban Chatas. First, the sinner does not eat from the korban, thereby separating himself from the mundane. Second, when he observes it, instead, being eaten by the Kohanim, b'kedushah u'betaharah, amid sanctity and purity, he realizes the type of behavior he must emulate: actions that infuse the mundane with holiness.

Va'ani Tefillah

La'asos nekamah ba'goyim tocheichos ba'leumim.

To effect revenge against certain nations; Admonishments against certain states.

Why do we ask that vengeance be meted out against the nations? Instead of asking for their harm, we should pray that we are liberated from their midst, so that we will no longer suffer at their hands. Is not seeking reprisal for a wrong - or any form of retaliation -- an attitude that leaves much to be desired? Obviously, the pasuk is not addressing the sort of vengeance which is common among ordinary people, because, indeed, this is deplorable. The Torah commands us not to take revenge. Why would we ask Hashem to act in a manner which He admonishes us against? Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl, explains that true nekamah, vengeance, is the manifestation and revelation of the enactment of justice in the world. True nekamah can effect an unparalleled kavod Shomayim, glory for Heaven. It demonstrates that there is an ultimate Judge, and that justice will be carried out. Hashem will not overlook the evil perpetrated by the wicked.

Rav Chaim notes that, although the purpose of nekamah is to reveal Hashem's justice, the individual is the injured party, thus obligated to carry it out. Having been wronged, he is more sensitive to the injury, and, therefore, more keenly attuned to the need for justice. Chazal (Berachos 33a) note that "great is vengeance which has been placed between two Names of G-d," as it says, Keil nekamos Hashem, "Hashem is the G-d of vengeance." Also, the pasuk continues, Keil nekamos hofia, "The G-d of vengeance has appeared." This refers to both reward and punishment. Even reward is referred to as nekamah, because both reward and punishment are equal evidence of Hashem's just dominion over the world.

In memory of our beloved parents Rabbi Dr. Avrohom Yitzchok Wolf, Rebbetzin Anna Moses, Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family, Ari and Rivky Wolf and Family, Abba and Sarah Spero and Family, Pesach and Esther Ostroy and Family, Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family

"Rabbi he pleaded. I have a very difficult question. Is one allowed to fulfill his obligation of the four cups of wine with and other liquid? Would one would be able to fulfill his obligation with four cups of milk?" The Bais Halevi looked up at the man and began to think.

"My son," he said, "that is a very difficult question. I will look into the matter. But until then I have an idea. I would like to give you some money in order for you to purchase four cups of wine for you and your family." The Bais Halevi, then took out a large sum of money, far more than necessary for a few bottles of wine, and handed it to the man who took it with extreme gratitude and relief.

One of the attendants who helped Rabbi Soleveitchik with his chores was quite shocked at the exorbitant amount of money that his rebbe gave the man.

He gathered the nerve to ask. "I, too, understood from the man's question that he needed to buy wine for the seder and could not afford more than the milk he was able to get from his cow. But why did you give him so much money? You gave him not only enough for wine, but four an entire meal with meat!"

Rabbi Soleveitchik smiled. "That, my dear student is exactly the point! If a man asks if he can fulfill his obligation of the four cups of wine with milk, then obviously he cannot have meat at the seder. That in turn means that not only can he not afford wine, he cannot afford meat or fowl! So not only did I gave him money for wine, I gave him money for a meat as well!"

The Chasam Sofer tells us that we have to ponder the circumstances and put the episode in perspective. The poorest man he who cannot even afford a lowly bird — has a form of Torah welfare. It is called leket, shikcha and peah — the poorest and most destitute are entitle to grain left behind in field. And from that grain, which was not even bought, the man can make fine flour. When that individual decides to remove the grain from his very own table and offer that grain to the Almighty, he is considered giving his soul. True, a bird may cost less, but to the poorest man, even the bird costs more than the grain he received gratis. However, when he takes those kernels and gives from them, he is offering his very soul!

Often we try to assess contributions and commitments based on monetary value. It is an inaccurate evaluation, for a wealthy man may give time which is harder for him to given than his money. A musician may give of his skill, despite aching fingers or a splitting headache. The Torah tells us that when we assess the needs of a poor man, or anyone who gives, don't look at the wallet. Look at the whole person. And the way to do that is to look at the soul person.

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Parshas Vayikrah: Soulful Offerings

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Matzav.com)

Parshas Vayikrah opens with the laws of the Korban Olah, a volunteered offering with a variety of options, depending on one's financial status. The wealthier individual could bring cattle, a less wealthy person, sheep, an even poorer individual could bring a turtledove. For the most destitute individual who would like to offer something but has no money for even a turtledove, the Torah commands: "When a nefesh, a soul, offers a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; he shall pour oil upon it and place frankincense upon it" (Leviticus 2:1). Rashi adds a comment: "Nowhere is the word nefesh used in connection with free-will offerings except in connection with the meal-offering. For who is it that usually brings a meal-offering? The poor man! The Holy One, blessed be He, says, as it were, I will regard it for him as though he brought his very soul as an offering" (Menachos, 104b).

The Chasam Sofer asks both a poignant and practical question. The price of fine flour is more expensive than that of a turtledove! So why is the fine flour offering the option meted for the poorest person, and why isn't the one who brings the turtledove considered as if he gave his soul?

It was only a few days before Passover when a man entered the home of Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soleveitchik of Brisk, known as the Bais Halevi. The man had a look of constant nation on his face.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Vayikra

The Relationship Between Leavening Agents and the Yetzer Hara

Parshas Vayikrah contains the halachos of various sacrifices, including the Korban Mincha. The Mincha offering is made from flour and oil and although it is baked, it is not allowed to become leavened [Vayikra 2:11]. Neither leavening agents (seor) nor sweeteners (devash) may be added.

Rabbeinu Bechaye brings two reasons for this prohibition. First he quotes the Ramba"m, in his Moreh Nevuchim [Guide to the Perplexed]. According to the Moreh Nevuchim, the custom of idolaters, when bringing meal offerings to their gods was that they specifically added leavening agents and sweeteners. To distinguish Jewish ritual from the taboo rites of the pagans, the Torah prohibited preparing a flour offering in the same fashion as that used by the idolaters. This explanation would make the prohibition to add seor and devash to flour offerings similar to the Torah's prohibition to build a single-stone matzevah for offering sacrifices, because that was the type of structure used by idolaters, whose offerings are "hated by the L-rd our G-d" [Devorim 16:22].

Rabbeinu Bechaye offers his own explanation as to the why chametz [leaven bread] is prohibited in sacrifices. A sacrifice, Rabbeinu Bechaye writes, is meant to achieve atonement. Were it not for a person's evil inclination, the person would never sin and there would be no need for

sacrifices. Rabbeinu Bechaye refers to the evil inclination by the term "meisis and madiach" - meaning the enticer and corrupter. Leaven (seor) and sweeteners (devash) represent man's evil inclination. Chametz is symbolic of the yetzer hara; therefore, the offering brought to atone for sin must be free of chametz.

Rabbeinu Bechaye then links this idea with the Rabbinic teaching concerning the prohibition against possessing chametz on Pessach. The chametz prohibition is exceptionally severe - one who eats it is deserving of Kares and one is not even allowed to own chametz. Our Rabbis teach that this prohibition symbolizes the fact that we must go to great lengths to remove the evil inclination from our hearts.

In his work Kad HaKemach, Rabbeinu Bechaye elaborates that the prohibition of (a) not seeing chametz [baal ye'raeh] and (b) the prohibition of having chametz found in our possession [baal yimatzeh] correspond with the idea that the evil inclination should not be manifest (a) through our actions and (b) through our thoughts. Just as we are commanded to nullify chametz in our hearts, so too, we are commanded to nullify the evil inclination.

Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl cites the prayer of the Amora Rav Alexandri [Berachos 17a], following his recital of Shmoneh Esrei, as a Talmudic source for linking leaven to the evil inclination: It is revealed and known to You that our wish is to do Your desire, and what stops us? The leavening agent in the bread (seor she'bisa) and foreign domination (shibud malchiyus). Rashi there equates "seor she'bisa" with the yetzer hara [evil inclination].

Rav Nebenzahl explains this metaphor. When yeast is added to the other ingredients in a challah recipe, the small amount of dough in the mixing bowl suddenly rises to filling the entire bowl and perhaps even ove rflowing. How does this happen? It is not magic. It is the effect of carbon dioxide. The CO₂ gas created by the mixture of flour, water, and the leavening agent makes the dough rise. If a person sticks his finger in the middle of the dough after it rises, the dough plops down, falling flat.

This is why the "seor" is like the "yetzer hara". The "yetzer hara" appears to us as an enormous power of huge dimensions. But in reality, it is all air. If we puncture it, it will collapse. The "yetzer hara" is an illusion. We all have our "yetzezer haras" - sometimes for money, sometimes for honor, sometimes for women. But it is an allusion. Passion and physicality is always greater in the abstract than it is in reality. Expectation and anticipation always exceed the real thing when it comes to physical matters. We think the "yetzer hara" is unconquerable, but most of it is fluff. For this reason, the evil inclination is compared to the leavning agent.

Rav Nebenzahl adds the following profound insight: When Yaakov fled with his wives and family from his father-in-law, Rochel stole Lavan's "teraphim" [idols], placed them in her camel's saddlebag and sat upon them to hide them from her father. The Ibn Ezra and many others, based on the Zohar, explain that the "teraphim" had certain magical powers based on the "powers of impurity" in the world. Lavan was a sorcerer and used these "teraphim" to ascertain information about the future. The Zohar states that Rochel feared that Lavan would use these "teraphim" to locate Yaakov and was consequently trying to hide them from him.

The Zohar asks: If this was Rochel's motive why did she not hide the "teraphim" or throw them in the river? Why did she take them with her? The Zohar answers that as long as the "teraphim" were only hidden, they would have still worked and Lavan would have used them to locate Yaakov via his power of divination. It was only by sitting on the "teraphim" that their power was deactivated. When a person demonstrates total disdain for idols, their power is in fact nullified. Avodah Zarah only has power when one attributes power to it. If one treats Avodah Zarah with disdain, it loses its power.

Rav Nebenzahl points out that there are only two items in all of halacha where the concept of bitul [mental nullification] applies - chametz and Avodah Zarah. A Jew's declaration that chametz is nullified like the dust of the earth renders it halachically as non-chametz and equivalent to the dust of the earth (regarding the Biblical prohibition of having it in one's

possession). Likewise, a Gentile's nullification and rejection of his idol, renders it to be no longer Avodah Zarah from a halachic perspective. Chametz is all about the Yetzer Hara, which is all CO₂ - exploding gases. The Yetzer Hara is a bunch of hot air. It has power because we give it power. The way to disable its power is to nullify it. This is what we are supposed to do on Pe sach. Likewise, the way to get rid of Avodah Zarah is to demonstrate that it is meaningless. Then it will lose its power. This is why seor is equated with the Yetzer Hara. It looks big and impressive and powerful but all a person needs to do is stick a finger in the dough and it deflates. This is the lesson of Bitul Chametz. Treat the yetzer hara as what it really is and its power will evaporate.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Vayikra: Sacrifices vs. Fasting

When the fourth-century scholar Rav Sheshet fasted, he would add the following request to his Amidah (Standing) prayer:

"Master of the Universe! You know that when the Temple stood, a person who sinned would bring a sacrifice. Although only the fats and blood would be offered on the altar, the person would be granted atonement. "Now I have fasted, and my fat and my blood have diminished. May it be Your Will that the decrease in my fat and my blood should be considered as if I offered them on the altar, and my offering was accepted." (Berachot 17a)

Rav Sheshet's prayer is inspiring, but it makes one wonder: Why should one go to the trouble of bringing a sacrifice if the same atonement may be achieved through fasting?

His prayer draws our attention to a second issue. Why were only the fats and blood of sin sacrifices (chatat and asham) offered on the altar?

Two Types of Sin

Regarding the offering of fats and blood, Rav Kook explained that there are two major inducements to sin. Some sins are the result of overindulgence in sensual pleasures and excessive luxuries. These wrongdoings are appropriately atoned by offering the fats.

The second category of transgressions is motivated by actual need: hunger and poverty. Great pressures can tempt one to lie, steal, even murder. The corresponding atonement for these sins is through the blood of the offering.

The Disadvantage of Fasting

By fasting, we can attain atonement in a way similar to the sacrifice of fats and blood in the Temple service. However, there is an important distinction between fasts and sacrifices. Offering a sacrifice in the holy Temple instilled the powerful message that it should really be the offender's blood spilled and body burned, were it not for God's kindness in accepting a substitute and a ransom. This visceral experience was a humbling encounter, subduing one's negative traits and desires.

Fasting, on the other hand, weakens all forces of the body. Just as chemotherapy treatment poisons other parts of the body as it fights the cancer, so too, fasting saps both our positive and negative energies. Fasting has the unwanted side effect of weakening our strength and energy to help others, perform mitzvot, and study Torah.

Therefore, Rav Sheshet added a special prayer when he fasted. He prayed that his fasting would achieve the same atonement as an offering in the Temple, without the undesirable effect of sapping positive energies.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 177-178. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 82)

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Weekly Halachah

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Medicines and Cosmetics for Pesach

With the abundance of Kosher for Passover foods on the market today, it has become relatively easy to stock one's kitchen for Passover. But when it comes to inedible items such as medications and cosmetics, there is still much confusion about what is permitted and what is not. In the following review, we will attempt to clarify some of the principles which govern the Pesach laws for such items.

It is a Biblical prohibition to keep any edible chametz item in one's house over Pesach. Even an item which contains only a small admixture of chametz is prohibited.¹ One must either get rid of it before Pesach or sell it to a non-Jew together with the rest of his chametz.

"Edible" is defined as an item which is fit for consumption by a dog. If an item becomes so spoiled that even a dog will not eat it,² it is not considered chametz any more and it may be stored over Pesach. [Chametz items which a dog would eat but are not fit for human consumption are generally considered prohibited chametz.³]

It is permitted, therefore, to store and use all types of ointments, hand lotions, nail polish and medicated drops (for the ear or nose), etc., even if they contain an active chametz ingredient. These items are not fit for consumption and as the Rambam writes, "nifsedah tzuras ha-chametz," they have lost their chametz "form."⁴ Similarly, certain cosmetics (eye shadow, eyeliner, mascara, blush and rouge) and foot and face powders may be stored and used during Pesach.⁵

Although, as stated, an item which is not fit for consumption and has lost its chametz "form" may be stored and used on Pesach, it still may not be eaten. By eating it, its status is elevated from "inedible" to "edible."⁶ This re-classification is referred to by the poskim as achshavei, literally, an "elevation," or an "upgrading" of this item's halachic status. For instance: One is not required to get rid of a charred piece of bread, since it is no longer fit for consumption. One is not, however, allowed to eat it since by doing so, he is "elevating" it to the status of "edible."

There is a debate among the poskim whether the prohibition of achshavei applies to items like foul-tasting pills or unflavored liquid medications. Some poskim⁷ hold that although these items are not fit for consumption, it is still forbidden to eat them because the person eating such medication elevates their status to "edible." But many other authorities⁸ maintain that achshavei applies only to food items which have become unfit and are now being re-classified as food by the person eating them, such as the piece of charred bread previously mentioned. Therefore, achshavei does not apply to medications or drugs. The person taking those medications does not intend to reclassify them as edible; rather, he is treating his pain or sickness with something which is inedible. While many poskim are lenient, it has become common practice that whenever possible, only chametz-free medications are ingested in deference to the poskim who are stringent.⁹ When a chametz-free, foul-tasting medication is not available, a sick person may take the medication, but only under the guidance of a rabbi.¹⁰

Coated tablets, flavored medications, pleasant-tasting cough syrups and the like are generally considered items which are fit for consumption. Unless one is dangerously ill, they may not be taken on Pesach unless it is determined that they are completely¹¹ chametz free.¹² Flavored lipsticks are also considered fit for consumption and are therefore forbidden as well.

There are certain items on the market which at the time of purchase are not fit for consumption, but could be "fixed" and made fit, either by cooking (distillation) or by adding certain ingredients to them. The poskim debate the status of these items: Do we consider them as "unfit for consumption," since presently that is what they are, or do we view them according to their potential to become "fit"?¹³ The majority of contemporary poskim rule stringently on this question.¹⁴ Accordingly,

pure grain-based alcohol – which in its raw state is unfit for drinking – is prohibited to keep on Pesach since, by undergoing a physical change – distillation – it will become fit for consumption.

Many products use denatured alcohol as an ingredient. Denatured alcohol is alcohol which is mixed with small quantities of various chemicals or substances. Some of those products can be restored to their original "fit" status, which in the opinion of the poskim quoted above classifies them as "fit for consumption" even though presently they are not. While not all items containing denatured alcohol can be restored to "fit" status, especially products using completely denatured alcohol (CDA), it is difficult to judge the potential status of every single item. Accordingly, whenever possible, items containing denatured alcohol should be sold with the chametz and not be used on Pesach.

The issue of restorable denatured alcohol applies only to products which are in a pure liquid state. Some possible examples include cologne, hair spray, deodorants and shaving lotion. Items like soaps,¹⁵ creams, hand lotions and ointments do not present a problem. Certain other liquid products, such as shampoo,¹⁶ ink,¹⁷ and paint are also not restorable to their original alcoholic state and they may be stored and used on Pesach even though they may contain chametz ingredients.

Note, of course, that not all alcohol is chametz. Methanol and Isopropyl alcohol have no chametz components and even ethyl alcohol (ethanol) is not always derived from grain but is sometimes synthesized from chemicals. Only a true expert in these matters can advise one about the exact nature of all these items. Experience has shown that even the manufacturers themselves do not – or cannot – always give reliable, up-to-date information.

A word of caution about perfumes, since the "base" product is "unfit" but the scent added to it may be a "fit" chametz derivative: Some poskim maintain that since the entire purpose of perfume is to exude a fragrance, and the fragrance is "fit for consumption," the perfume cannot be classified as "unfit for consumption."¹⁸ While many other poskim do not agree with this opinion¹⁹ since, after all, the perfume base itself is not fit for consumption, still it is proper to be stringent and use only such products that contain no fragrance derived from chametz.

[Medications which contain kitniyos may be consumed on Pesach when needed. Toiletries and cosmetics which contain kitniyos may be used on Pesach.]

In conclusion, the leniency of "unfit for consumption" is not a blanket heter to use any medicine or cosmetic on Pesach. Although many products do fall into this category,²⁰ there are other factors to consider before an inedible product can be permitted for use on Pesach. Products which contain alcohol that can be restored to "fitness" and products which are scented with a chametz derivative are examples of items which should not be stored or used over Pesach, even though, upon superficial examination, they may appear to be "unfit for consumption."

1 Under certain conditions, even a minute amount of chametz will render an entire batch not kosher for Pesach [even if the chametz was added to the mixture before the advent of Pesach]; see Rama, O.C. 447:4, Mishnah Berurah 35 and Chazon Ish 119:12.

2 Provided that it reached that stage of spoilage before midday of erev Pesach.

3 While normally an item which is unfit for human consumption is no longer considered non-kosher, chametz is different, since that level of spoilage would still allow the item to remain as sourdough, which can make other doughs chametz; Beirur Halachah 442:9. See Chazon Ish, O.C. 116:8, who rules that if the spoiled chametz can no longer start other dough, it is permitted, even if it is still fit for consumption by a dog.

4 O.C. 442:1; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 24; Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:62. Sefer Hilchos Pesach, pg. 26.

5 O.C. 442:4 and Mishnah Berurah 20 and 43.

6 Sha'agat Aryeh 74-75; Achiezer 3:31-4.

7 Kesav Sofer O.C. 111; Darchei Teshuvah Y.D. 155:28; Chazon Ish 116:8; Orchot Rabbeinu, Pesach 24; Igros Moshe O.C. 2:92; Rav S.Z.

Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchasah 40:74). See also Kol ha-Torah, vol. 59, pg. 28, ruling by Rav M. Gifter.

9 See Yechaveh Da’as 2:60; Tzitz Eliezer 10:25-20; Kinyan Torah 4:44; Nishmas Avraham, O.C. 466:1.

10 The rabbi should first determine if the person taking the medication can be classified as a choleh. In addition, certain medications can be mixed together with other food items, rendering the chametz bateil. Some rabbis may also be aware of an alternative medicine.

11 Sha’ar ha-Tziyun 466:6.

12 Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchasah 40:76; Sefer Hilchos Pesach, pg. 23.

13 This issue was already debated by the poskim of the previous generation; see She’arim Metzuyanim b’Halachah 112:8, who quotes the various opinions but does not clearly decide the issue.

14 Rav Z. P. Frank (Mikraei Kodesh 54); Rav I. Z. Meltzer, Rav A. Kotler, Rav M. Feinstein and Rav Y. Kamenetsky, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Pesach, pg. 25.

15 Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 2, pg. 605).

16 Sefer Hilchos Pesach, pg. 26.

17 O.C. 442:10. See Knei Bosem 1:25, who permits using mouthwash even though it has chametz ingredients.

18 See Shoel u’Meishiv (Kamma 1:143) and Divrei Malkiel 4:24.

19 See She’arim Metzuyanim b’Halachah 112:7 and Mikraei Kodesh 54.

20 See also Ha-elef Lecha Shlomo, O.C. 204.

One should not automatically assume about any given item that it is “unfit for a consumption by a dog.” If a dog might possibly consume a given item, it may lose its status as “unfit”; see Minchas Shlomo 1:17.

Can We Offer Korban Pesach Without the Beis HaMikdash? by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff

In the year 5017 (1257), several hundred Baalei Tosafos, led by Rav Yechiel of Paris, headed for Eretz Yisroel. An almost-contemporary gadol, the Kaftor VaFarech, records a fascinating story (Vol. 1, page 101 in the 5757 edition). Rav Ashtori HaParchi, the author of Kaftor VaFarech, had gone to Yerushalayim to have his sefer reviewed by a talmid chacham named Rav Baruch. Rav Baruch told the Kaftor VaFarech that Rav Yechiel had planned to offer korbanos upon arriving in Yerushalayim. Kaftor VaFarech records that at the time he was preoccupied completing his sefer and did not think about the halachic issues involved, but afterwards realized that there were practical halachic problems (that we will discuss shortly) with Rav Yechiel’s plan.

I think we can assume that Rav Yechiel’s plan to offer korbanos failed, presumably because Yerushalayim was under Crusader rule at the time. His community of Baalei Tosafos settled in Acco, as we know from a report of the Ramban about ten years later. (The Ramban reports that he spent Rosh HaShanah with the community of the Baalei Tosafos in Acco and delivered to them a drasha that was recorded for posterity. This is quoted in Kisvei HaRamban, Vol. 1 pg. 211. Rav Chavel, who edited on this essay, concludes that this drasha was delivered either in 1268 or in 1269, based on the fact that the Ramban was in Eretz Yisroel for three years from his arrival until his passing, and that he spent the first Rosh Hashanah in Yerushalayim, which had no community at the time.)

Let us fast forward to the nineteenth century. Rav Tzvi Hersh Kalisher, the rav of Thorn, Germany, who had studied as a youth in the yeshivos of Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the Nesivos HaMishpat (Rav Yaakov of Lisa), published a sefer advocating bringing korbanos in the location where the Beis HaMikdash once stood in Yerushalayim. Rav Kalisher considered it not only permissible to offer korbanos before the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt, but even obligatory.

As one can well imagine, his sefer created a huge furor. Rav Kalisher corresponded extensively with his own former roshei yeshiva, Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the Nesivos, and other well-known luminaries of his era including the Chasam Sofer and the Aruch LaNer. All of them opposed Rav Kalisher’s opinion, although not necessarily for the same reasons.

We can categorize the opposition to Rav Kalisher’s proposal under three headings:

1. There was almost universal disagreement with his opinion that we have a requirement to try to offer korbanos before the reconstruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

2. Some rabbonim, notably Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, the author of the Aruch LaNer, prohibited offering korbanos before the reconstruction of the Beis HaMikdash even if we could resolve all the other halachic issues involved (Shu”t Binyan Tzion #1). However, we should note that this question did not bother either Rav Yechiel of Paris or Rav Ashtori HaParchi. Furthermore, Rabbi Akiva Eiger asked his son-in-law, the Chasam Sofer, to request permission from the ruler of Yerushalayim to allow the offering of korbanos. Presumably, Rabbi Akiva Eiger felt that his son-in-law, who had a close connection to the Austro-Hungarian royal family, might be able to use their influence to gain access to the Ottoman Empire who ruled over Yerushalayim at the time. The Chasam Sofer responded with great respect to his father-in-law, but pointed out that the Beis HaMikdash area is unfortunately covered by a mosque that is sacred to its Moslem rulers who will not permit any non-Moslem to enter (Shu”t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #236). Thus, we see that both Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the Chasam Sofer agreed with Rav Kalisher that we are permitted to bring korbanos before the reconstruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

3. Numerous halachic hurdles need to be overcome in order to offer korbanos. The discussion of these issues forms the lion’s share of the debate.

Rav Kalisher responded to the correspondence, eventually producing a sefer “Derishas Tzion” (published many years after the demise of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the Chasam Sofer, and the Nesivos) and subsequent essays where he presented and clarified his position. I know of three full-length books and numerous essays and responsa that were published opposing Rav Kalisher’s thesis.

Before quoting this discussion, we need to clarify several points. First, can we indeed offer korbanos without the existence of the Beis HaMikdash? MAY ONE BRING KORBANOS WITHOUT THE BEIS HAMIKDASH? The Mishnah (Eduyos 8:6) quotes Rabbi Yehoshua as saying, “I heard that we can offer korbanos even though there is no Beis HaMikdash.” The Gemara (Zevachim 62a) tells us a story that provides us with some background about this statement. “Three prophets returned with the Jews from Bavel (prior to the building of the second Beis HaMikdash), Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi, each bringing with him a halachic tradition that would be necessary for the implementation of korbanos. One of them testified about the maximum size of the mizbeiaħ, one testified about the location of the mizbeiaħ, and the third testified that we may offer korbanos even when there is no Beis HaMikdash”. Based on these testimonies, the Jews returning to Eretz Yisroel began offering korbanos before the Beis HaMikdash was rebuilt.

Obviously, Rav Kalisher and Rav Ettlinger interpret this Gemara differently. According to Rav Kalisher and those who agreed with him, the prophet testified that we may offer korbanos at any time, even if there is no Beis HaMikdash. Rav Ettlinger, however, understands the Gemara to mean that one may offer korbanos once the construction of the Beis HaMikdash has begun even though it is still incomplete. But in the view of Rav Ettlinger, after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash we may not offer korbanos until Eliyahu announces the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

An earlier posek, Rav Yaakov Emden, clearly agreed with Rav Kalisher in this dispute. Rav Emden, often referred to as “The Yaavetz,” contends that Jews offered korbanos, at least occasionally, even after the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, which would be forbidden according to Rav Ettlinger’s position (She’aylas Yaavetz #89). This is based on an anecdote cited by a mishnah (Pesachim 74a) that Rabban Gamliel instructed his slave, Tevi, to roast the Korban Pesach for him. There were two Tannayim named Rabban Gamliel, a grandfather and a grandson. The earlier Rabban Gamliel, referred to as “Rabban Gamliel the Elder” lived at the time of the second Beis HaMikdash, whereas his grandson, “Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh,” was the head of the Yeshivah in Yavneh and was renowned after

the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Thus, if we can determine which Rabban Gamliel is the protagonist of the mishnah's story, we may be able to determine whether Jews offered korbanos after the Churban. This would verify Rav Kalisher's opinion.

Rav Emden assumes that the Rabban Gamliel who owned a slave named Tevi was the later one. He thus concludes that Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh offered korbanos after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Although the Yaavetz brings no proof that the Rabban Gamliel in the above-quoted mishnah is Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh, he may have based his assumption on a different Gemara (Bava Kamma 74b), which records a conversation between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabban Gamliel concerning Tevi. Since Rabbi Yehoshua was a contemporary of Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh, this would imply that the later Rabban Gamliel indeed offered the Korban Pesach after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

However, this does not solve the numerous halachic issues that need to be resolved in order to allow the offering of korbanos. Although Rav Kalisher responded to these issues, the other gedolim considered his replies insufficient.

KORBANOS ON THE MOUNTAIN

The Brisker Rav, Rav Velvel Soloveichek, raised a different objection to Rav Kalisher's proposal. Basing himself on several pesukim and halachic sources, he contended that the Beis HaMikdash site only has kedusha when it is a high mountain. Since the Romans razed the top of the original mountain and it is no longer the prominent height it once was, it is not kosher for offering korbanos until the mountain is raised again to its former glory (quoted in Moadim U'Zemanim Volume 5, pg. 222). Thus, according to this approach, one of Moshiach's jobs will be to raise the mountain to its former height. Presumably, Rav Kalisher felt that although the mountain should and will be raised, korbanos may be offered before that time.

I will now present some of the other questions involved in ascertaining whether we may bring korbanos before the coming of Eliyahu and Moshiach.

MAY A TAMEI PERSON ENTER THE BEIS HAMIKDASH?

Virtually all opinions agree that it is a Torah prohibition to offer korbanos anywhere in the world except for the designated place in the Beis HaMikdash called the mizbeiach. This creates a halachic problem, because it is a severe Torah prohibition to enter the Beis HaMikdash grounds while tamei, and virtually everyone today has become tamei meis through contact with a corpse. (Someone who was ever in the same room or under the same roof as a corpse also becomes tamei meis.) Although other forms of tumah can be removed by immersion in a mikvah at the appropriate time, tumas meis can be removed only by sprinkling ashes of the parah adumah (the red heifer). Since the ashes of the previously prepared paros adumos are lost, we cannot purify ourselves from tumas meis. Thus, we would be prohibited from bringing most korbanos because every cohen is presumed to be tamei meis.

Gedolim have discussed whether a new parah adumah can be prepared before the arrival of the Moshiach, but I am refraining from citing this discussion because of space considerations.

However, although we have no available tahor cohanim, this would not preclude our offering Korban Pesach or certain other public korbanos (korbanos tzibur).

WHY IS KORBAN PESACH DIFFERENT FROM MOST OTHER KORBANOS?

Most korbanos cannot be brought when either the owner of the korban or the cohen offering the korban is tamei. However, the Torah decrees that korbanos that are offered on a specific day must be brought even when every cohen is tamei. Thus, the Korban Pesach, the daily korban tamid, and the special mussaf korbanos that are brought on Shabbos, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh may be offered by a cohen who is tamei meis if necessary.

Other korbanos, however, may not be offered by a tamei cohen even if this results in them not being brought at all. Thus, since there is no tahor cohen

available today, we would assume that Rav Yechiel only planned to offer one of the above korbanos (Shu't Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #236).

LOCATION OF THE MIZBEIACH

As mentioned above, the debate over Rav Kalisher's proposal concerned other halachic issues that must be resolved before we may offer korbanos. The Kaftor VaFarech raised two of these issues over five hundred years before Rav Kalisher. How could Rav Yechiel offer korbanos when we do not know the exact location of the mizbeiach? As the Rambam writes, "The location of the mizbeiach is extremely exact and it may never be moved from its location.... We have an established tradition that the place where David and Shlomoh built the mizbeiach is the same place where Avraham built the mizbeiach and bound Yitzchak. This is the same place where Noach built a mizbeiach when he left the Ark and where Kayin and Hevel built their mizbeiach. It is the same place where Adam offered the first korban, and it is the place where he (Adam) was created.

"The dimensions and shape of the mizbeiach are very exact. The mizbeiach constructed when the Jews returned from the first exile was built according to the dimensions of the mizbeiach that will be built in the future. One may not add or detract from its size," (Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 2:1-3).

As noted above, prior to building the second Beis HaMikdash, the prophets Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi testified regarding three halachos about the mizbeiach that were necessary to locate the mizbeiach and reinstitute the korbanos. If so, how can we offer korbanos without knowing the location of the mizbeiach?

Rav Kalisher offered an answer to this question, contending that the prophets' testimonies were necessary only after the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash because the Babylonians razed it to its very foundations. However, Rav Kalisher contended that sufficient remnants exist of the second Beis HaMikdash to determine the mizbeiach's precise location, thus eliminating the need for prophecy or testimony to establish its location.

Rav Kalisher's correspondents were dissatisfied with this response, maintaining that the calculations based on the Beis HaMikdash remnants could not be sufficiently precise to determine the mizbeiach's exact location. Thus, they felt that we must await the arrival of Eliyahu HaNavi to ascertain the mizbeiach's correct place.

YICHUS OF COHANIM

Do we have "real" cohanim today? Only a cohen who can prove the purity of his lineage may serve in the Beis HaMikdash (see Rambam, Hilchos Issurei Biyah 20:2). The Gemara calls such cohanim "cohanim meyuchasim." Cohanim who cannot prove their lineage, but who have such a family tradition, are called "cohanei chazakah," cohanim because of traditional practice. Although they observe other mitzvos of cohanim, they may not serve in the Beis HaMikdash.

An early source for the distinction between cohanim who can prove their lineage and those who cannot is the story found in Tanach about the sons of Barzilai the Cohen. When these cohanim came to bring korbanos in the second Beis HaMikdash, Nechemiah refused them because of concerns about their ancestry (Ezra 2:61-63; Nechemiah 7:63-65). The Gemara states that although Nechemiah permitted them to eat terumah and to duchen, he prohibited them from eating korbanos or serving in the Beis HaMikdash (Kesubos 24b). Similarly, today's cohanim who cannot prove their kehunah status should be unable to serve in the Beis HaMikdash. This would eliminate the possibility of offering korbanos today.

However, Rav Kalisher permits cohanei chazakah to offer korbanos. He contends that only in the generation of Ezra and Nechemiah, when there was a serious problem of intermarriage (see Ezra, Chapter 9), did they restrict service in the Beis HaMikdash to cohanim meyuchasim. However, in subsequent generations, any cohen with a mesorah may serve in the Beis HaMikdash.

Chasam Sofer (Shu't Yoreh Deah #236) also permits cohanei chazakah to offer korbanos, but for a different reason, contending that although using a cohen meyuchas is preferred, a non-meyuchas cohen may serve in the Beis HaMikdash when no cohen meyuchas is available.

Other poskim disputed, maintaining that a cohen who is not meyuchas may not serve in the Beis HaMikdash (Kaftor VaFarech).

The question then becomes - If only a cohen who can prove his kehunah may offer korbanos, and there are no surviving cohanim who can prove their kehunah, how will we ever again be able to bring korbanos?

The answer is that Moshiach will use his Ruach HaKodesh to determine who is indeed a kosher cohen that may serve in the Beis HaMikdash (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 12:3). However, this approach preempts Rav Kalisher's proposal completely.

VESTMENTS OF THE COHEN

Before korbanos are reintroduced, gedolei poskim will have to decide several other matters, including the definitive determination of several materials necessary for the cohen's vestments.

The Torah describes the garments worn to serve in the Beis HaMikdash as follows: "Aharon and his sons shall put on their belt and their hat, and they (the garments) shall be for them as kehunah as a statute forever," (Shmos 29:9). The Gemara deduces, "When their clothes are on them, their kehunah is on them. When their clothes are not on them, their kehunah is not on them," (Zevachim 17b). This means that korbanos are valid only if the cohen offering them wears the appropriate garments.

One of the vestments worn by the cohanim is the avneit, the belt. Although the Torah never describes the avneit worn by the regular cohen, the halachic conclusion is that his avneit includes threads made of techeiles, argaman, and tola'as shani (Gemara Yoma 6a). There is uncertainty about the identification of each of these items. For example, the Rambam and the Ravad dispute the identity of argaman (Hilchos Klei HaMikdash 8:13). The identity of techeiles is also unknown. Most poskim conclude that Hashem hid the source of techeiles, a fish known as chilazon, and that it will only be revealed at the time of Moshiach. Thus, even if we rule that our cohanim are kosher for performing the service, they cannot serve without valid garments! (It should be noted that several great poskim, including the Radziner Rebbe, the Maharshal, Rav Herzog and Rav Yechiel Michel Tukochinski contended that we could research the correct identity of the techeiles. I have written other articles on the subject of identifying the techeiles.)

Rav Kalisher himself contended that the garments of the cohen do not require chilazon as the dye source, only the color of techeiles. In his opinion, chilazon dye is only necessary for tzitzis. (He based this approach on the wording of the Rambam in Hilchos Tzitzis 2:1-2.) Therefore, in Rabbi Kalisher's opinion, one may dye the threads of the avneit the correct color and perform the service. However, other poskim did not accept this interpretation but require the specific dye source of chilazon blood to dye the vestments (Likutei Halachos, Zevachim Chapter 13 pg. 67a).

Rav Kalisher did not discuss the dispute between the Rambam and the Ravad about the color of the argaman. Apparently, he felt that we could determine the answer and dye the avneit threads appropriately.

The other poskim raised several other issues concerning Rav Kalisher's proposal. One question raised is that Klal Yisroel must purchase all public korbanos from the funds of the machatzis hashekkel, which would require

arranging the collection of these funds. However, this question would not preclude offering Korban Pesach, which is a privately owned korban. Rav Kalisher's disputants raised several other questions, more than can be presented here. The gedolei haposkim of that generation rejected Rav Kalisher's plan to reintroduce korbanos before the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash.

However, we have much to learn from his intense desire to offer korbanos. Do we live with a burning desire to see the Beis HaMikdash rebuilt speedily in our days? If, chas v'shalom, we are still not able to offer Korban Pesach this year, we should devote Erev Pesach to studying the halachos of that korban. And may we soon merit seeing the cohanim offering all the korbanos in the Beis HaMikdash in purity and sanctity. Amen.

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For the week ending 20 March 2010 / 4 Nisan 5770

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

The Sun as a Parable - Sanhedrin 39b

"You Jews say that wherever ten of you pray together the Divine Presence is there. How many Divine Presences are there?"

This was the challenge presented to Rabban Gamliel by a heretic. The Sage's response was to gently rap the heretic's servant on the neck and ask him why he let the sun come into his master's room.

"But the sun is everywhere!" protested the heretic in wonder at the Sage's statement.

"If the sun, which is but one of the billions of G-d's servants, can be everywhere at once," said Rabban Gamliel, "why is it so difficult to understand that the Divine Presence can be wherever ten Jews pray together!"

In one of his halachic responsa, (Binyan Zion Response 3) Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger offers this explanation of Rabban Gamliel's reply.

Even though the sun is many millions of miles from earth, it is a common figure of speech to say that the "sun came into the room" when the curtain is removed. It is also common to refer to this as a sudden appearance of the sun even though it was always there even before the curtain was removed. The truth is that it is not the sun which has entered but rather its rays, and those rays were always there but only become visible when the curtains are removed.

In similar fashion we speak of the Divine Presence as rays emanating from the Divine Source in Heaven. Those spiritual rays are always there but our physicality serves as a barrier like the curtains against the rays of the sun. When ten Jews pray together, that physical barrier is removed and the rays of Divine Presence can thus be everywhere such a holy gathering takes place.

What the Sages Say

"One who makes the blessing for the new moon in its proper time is considered as if he welcomed the Divine Presence."

Rabbi Yochanan - Sanhedrin 42a

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