

Home Weekly Parsha VAYIKRA

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

As all of you are aware that the first word in this week's Torah reading is written in a different fashion in the scroll of the Torah itself. The word 'vayikra' is written with a small 'alef' at the end of the word. This has been discussed widely over the ages by the great commentators and thinkers of Israel, who have derived many important lessons from this unusual writing of the word.

I find a connection between this small letter and another idea that the rabbis advance regarding this third book of the Bible. It was somehow traditional amongst many communities in Jewish society that this book of Vayikra should be the first book that children study when they begin their biblical education. The words of the rabbis to describe this educational advice were that "let those that are completely pure study the laws of holiness and purity." In other words, the laws and rituals regarding the service of the priests and of the Temple and of the sacrifices that were to be brought, either as donations or as atonement for sins or omissions, are the core holy sections of the Torah. And since young children are still not tarnished by the experiences of life and the maturity of physical growth, they should begin their Jewish education by studying this part of the Torah. The small miniature letter at the end of the word signifies that this section of the Torah has a special connection to young children beginning their education and their understanding of life.

Holiness is not subject to human logic and understanding. It is removed from our sphere of rationality. The holy is not ordinarily found in the everyday world and mundane activities of human society. Holiness is an atmosphere created by goodness and devotion to the Almighty and to its value system. Holiness is something that human beings must create. It is ephemeral and intangible, difficult to define and yet it can be glimpsed and experienced.

The fact that it is so inexplicable makes its pursuit in this world so difficult. All the sacrificial laws that appear in this book of Vayikra – laws that are so difficult to understand and far removed from our world and society – are tools to be used in the pursuit of holiness.

Children have the gift of imagination and are not yet stifled by the realities that surround us. They can imagine and see things that we sophisticated but jaded adults are no longer able to envision. To children, nothing is strange, and nothing is impossible, and imagination and reality operate in the same sphere of their personality and understanding. To children, legends are real and imaginary characters are their friends. These laws that aim to direct us to holiness, to reach for the stars so to speak, have meaning and reality.

Later in life, when childhood curiosity and imagination has been rubbed away by the harshness of reality, these laws will become more difficult to understand and appreciate, and the pursuit of holiness will become far more difficult. A small letter at the end of the word comes to remind us of this truth.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

The Pursuit of Meaning (Vayikra 5779)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The American Declaration of Independence speaks of the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Recently, following the pioneering work of Martin Seligman, founder of Positive Psychology, there have been hundreds of books published on happiness. Yet there is something more fundamental still to the sense of a life well-lived, namely, meaning. The two seem similar. It's easy to suppose that people who find meaning are happy, and people who are happy have found meaning. But the two are not the same, nor do they always overlap.

Happiness is largely a matter of satisfying needs and wants. Meaning, by contrast, is about a sense of purpose in life, especially by making positive contributions to the lives of others. Happiness is largely about how you feel in the present. Meaning is about how you judge your life as a whole: past, present and future.

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

In a fascinating article in *The Atlantic*, 'There's more to life than being happy' [2], Emily Smith argued that the pursuit of happiness can result in a relatively shallow, self-absorbed, even selfish life. What makes the pursuit of meaning different is that it is about the search for something larger than the self.

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

Frankl knew that in the camps, those who lost the will to live died. He tells of how he helped two individuals to find a reason to survive. One, a woman, had a child waiting for her in another country. Another had written the first volumes of a series of travel books, and there were others yet to write. Both therefore had a reason to live.

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

"Life is a task", he used to say, and added, "The religious man differs from the apparently irreligious man only by experiencing his existence not simply as a task, but as a mission." He or she is aware of being summoned, called, by a Source. "For thousands of years that source has been called God." [3]

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

And He called to Moses: Every [time God communicated with Moses, whether signalled by the expression] "And He spoke", or "and He said", or "and He commanded", it was always preceded by [God] calling [to Moses by name]. [4] "Calling" is an expression of endearment. It is the expression employed by the ministering angels, as it says, "And one called to the other..." (Isaiah 6:3).

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

There are many such calls in Tanach. There was the call Abraham received, telling to leave his land and family. There was the call to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:4). There was the one experienced by Isaiah when he saw in a mystical vision God enthroned and surrounded by angels:

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

One of the most touching is the story of the young Samuel, dedicated by his mother Hannah to serve in the sanctuary at Shiloh where he acted as an assistant to Eli the priest. In bed at night he heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli. He ran to see what he wanted but Eli told him he had not called. This happened a second time and then a third, and by then Eli realized that it was God calling the child. He told Samuel that the next time the voice called his name, he should reply, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.' It did not occur to the child that it might be God summoning him to a mission, but it was. Thus began his career as a prophet, judge and anointer of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Samuel 3).

When we see a wrong to be righted, a sickness to be healed, a need to be met, and we feel it speaking to us, that is when we come as close as we can in a post-prophetic age to hearing Vayikra, God's call. And why does the word appear here, at the beginning of the third and central book of the Torah? Because the book of Vayikra is about sacrifices, and a vocation is about sacrifices. We are willing to make sacrifices when we feel they are part of the task we are called on to do.

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

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

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

Shabbat shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayikra (Leviticus 1:1- 5:26)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel –“Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them: When any person of you brings an offering unto God, you shall bring from the cattle, the herd or the flock “ (Leviticus 1:2)

The book of Leviticus continues where the book of Exodus left off: after the exquisite description of the complexity of the Sanctuary's components, the Torah is ready to introduce the priestly duties of sacrifices described in the verse above.

Undoubtedly, the entire sacrificial system, replete with whole burnt offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings and peace offerings, has a rather raucous ring to the modern sophisticated ear.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch attempts to provide a symbolic significance for each of the sacrifices, and etymologically suggests that

the essence of korban (Hebrew for sacrifice) is to bring the individual close (karov) to God.

For our purposes, I'd like to approach the entire holy Temple ceremony by analyzing a rather striking midrash which emphasizes an otherwise innocuous pronoun in our opening verse: "When any person of you (mikem) brings an offering unto God...." The fact is that if the purpose of our verse is to issue a command to bring offerings, it could just as easily have been transmitted without the word mikem. Indeed, this particular pronoun in this particular context never appears in the Bible again. Teaches the midrash:

Why does [the biblical text] state mikem [of you]? From here we derive that whoever fulfils the obligation to recite one hundred blessings each day is considered as if he/she offered a sacrifice. How do we know this? From the Hebrew word mikem [of you], which has the numerical equivalent of one hundred [mem-kafmem=40+20+40]. (Midrash Yalkut Ma'ayan Ganim, ad loc.)

Why does the midrash link these 100 daily blessings with an offering to God? Presumably, if we understand the connection, the world of blessings may very well illuminate the world of sacrifice.

Let us examine the essence of a blessing. Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi in his classic work *The Kuzari*, teaches that the laws of proper blessings enhance our pleasure, create heightened awareness and a more sensitized appreciation of every object in the world; indeed the necessity of our making a blessing precludes the possibility of our taking for granted God's many bounties. After all, pleasure demands awareness, and a blessing sharpens our senses, leading them to appreciate what we have and are about to enjoy: a glorious sunrise, a burst of lightning, the children around the Sabbath or festival table, a bright, red strawberry.

But what then should we do with our awareness? How do we channel our new-found awakenings to the gifts of the world around us? A comment of Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, on a passage in Tractate Berakhot, can provide us with an interesting insight.

Rabbi Levi asked concerning two contrasting texts. It is written:

'The heavens are the heavens of God but the earth has He given to the children of men,' (Ps. 115:16), and it is also written, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 115:16). There is no contradiction: in the one case it is before a blessing has been said, in the other case after. (Berakhot 35a)

The usual interpretation explains that before I make a blessing, everything belongs to God; the blessing is my request for permission to partake of God's world. Hence, partaking of something without a blessing is in effect committing thievery against God; it is as a result of our blessing that the Almighty grants us permission to partake of His physical world. In effect, before the blessing, the world is God's, and after the blessing, He gives the world's bounty to us humans.

In a unique twist, Rabbi Soloveitchik turns this interpretation on its head: "The heavens are the heavens of God, but the earth has He given to the children of men." (Ps. 115:16) is the description of the world before blessings, and the verse, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," is after the blessing!

Why? A world devoid of blessing is a world without any divine connection, a neo-platonic world with an iron curtain separating the human and godly realms.

Suddenly, earth and heaven are no longer enemies, strangers in a strange universe, but all of God's creations magnificently and miraculously come together. If the Torah has one urgent message, it is the sanctification of our physical world. For Jews, the divine and the physical meet in an eternal dialogue, and the first expression of that dialogue is the blessings we make.

An additional and related aspect of the significance of blessings is the Hassidic-Kabbalistic nation. Early in the book of Genesis, God becomes disappointed with His world and decides to destroy it (except for the righteous Noah, that is):

And God said, "I will blot out the human being whom I have created.... both humans, and beast, and creeping things, and fowl of the air...." (Genesis 6:7)

Rashi asks why God's anger is directed toward animals? After all, these brute creatures are innocent of any wrongdoing. Rashi then presents us with two possible interpretations. First, that all of creation including animal life had become so depraved that nothing could be called innocent – a perversity that pervaded all of reality. But his second answer is the one that concerns us here:

Everything was created for the human being. When he ceases to be, what need have I for them (beasts, creeping things, fowl)! (Rashi, ad loc.)

This is a profound idea that looks at God's creation as a hierarchy, starting with inanimate rocks, ascending toward living plant life, and from there to animal creatures of mobility and then reaching upward to the communicating human being. All the mobility of an animal cannot alter the fact that animals are ruled by the earth and the waters and the skies, into the mold of each individual species. Only the human being's gift of communication enables him to relate to God – if indeed he utilizes his freedom of choice properly.

Now when the human being takes the objects of the world around him, and he makes blessings over the world he lives in, he brings all of existence – including plant life, animal life, and every worldly object into a relationship with God. In effect he is giving a higher purpose to all of these realms, thereby bringing everything back to its ultimate divine source. By uplifting the world, by restoring it to its divine dimension, the human being repairs a world broken by iniquity and despair, alienation and materialism. And without this potential for uplifting the world, without a lofty and up-reaching human being, all of creation becomes short-circuited, the universe has no purpose for being, a reverse “bang” takes place.

Now we are ready to return to our midrash, the rabbinic concept which identified the daily blessings with the sacrifices that brought humanity close to the divine. What God wants from us is not only to build a Sanctuary, but to transform the entire world into God's Sanctuary, God's Temple. “You shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell in your midst,” commands God. And so the sacrifices bring cattle, grain and fruits back to the Almighty who created them, enlisting the world – inanimate, vegetative and the human facilitators – in the service of the divine.

Just as Temple sacrifices brought God and all of His creations into the world, so do the daily 100 blessings bring God into the world – suffuse the material world with divine spirituality – in our world today. By means of daily blessings we have the potential of making the entire universe a divine sanctuary.

Shabbat Shalom!

Vayikra: Sacrifices vs. Fasting

Rav Kook Torah

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.

Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit" a

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Preparing Eulogy Before Person Dies

Q: Is it permissible to prepare a eulogy for a person who seems to be close to dying?

A: Yes. There is no Ayin Ha-Ra in doing so.

Counting Someone who Visits Har Ha-Bayit in Minyan

Q: Is it permissible to count someone who visits Har Ha-Bayit in a Minyan?

A: Certainly. One should not visit Har Ha-Bayit and one should not act this way to someone who does.

Video Game With Murdering People

Q: Is it permissible to play a video game which involves murdering "people"?

A: "Do not murder". It is not a game.

Knowledge of the Deceased

Q: Does my grandfather z"l know that I named my son after him?

A: Certainly. And he is happy.

Lighting and Thunder during Torah Learning

Q: Does one pause from Torah learning to recite a blessing on lighting and thunder?

A: Yes. Just as one pauses from Torah learning for a fleeting Mitzvah (Moed Katan 9b. And this was the practice of Ha-Admor Imrei Sofer of Erlau. And he also said that if he is learning with students, this is an opportunity to teach them how to properly recite the blessings. Halichot Ve-Hanhagot Imrei Sofer Volume 1 p. 157 and note #15).

Ice Cream Cone as Mishloach Manot

Q: Is ice cream in a cone considered two separate foods in relation to Mishloach Manot?

A: No. In general, the cone is nullified by the ice cream. The same is true in the case of a Krembo, in which the whipped cream sits atop a biscuit and is then covered in chocolate (see the "Krembo Song" of R' Aharon Razel).

Talking during Anim Zemirot

Q: In our Shul, people chatter or leave during Anim Zemirot, when the Aron Ha-Kodesh is open. Should we stop reciting it?

A: Yes. But it is better for them to repent and change their behavior. After all, we are talking about religious people.

Rental Agreement

Q: In our rental agreement it is written that the renter may not make changes in the apartment, and if they do, they must pay to have the apartment restored to its original state. Is it permissible to make changes and then restore them?

A: It is permissible if they are minor, normal changes which are needed for living normally.

Stopping Dvar Torah of Groom or Bar Mitzvah in the Middle

Q: Why in some places do people interrupt and stop the Dvar Torah of a groom or Bar Mitzvah?

A: I heard in the name of the Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon, that this custom is based on the Gemara in Berachot (57a) that it is a good sign if one sees himself Davening in a dream, but it is not a good sign if he sees himself finishing the Davening in a dream (brought in Ma'asei Choshev pp. 88-89). I, the lowly one, hold that one should not interrupt and should allow them to complete the Dvar Torah, since interrupting them is disrespectful to the Torah.

Learning in a dream

Q: Does one fulfill the Mitzvah of learning Torah if he learns Torah in his sleep?

A: No. But his soul had an ascension in his dream by merit of the Torah he learned when he was awake (Although Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievsky once woke up and asked for some wine for a Siyum on a Massechet of Gemara that he learned while sleeping).

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For the week ending 16 March 2019 / 9 Adar II 5779

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

Root and Branch

"And He called..." (1:1)

If you look at a tree and see healthy branches, you can be sure that its roots are strong.

When a young child takes his first steps in learning Torah, you would think that he starts by learning "In the beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and the earth," and from there he slowly works his way to the end of the Five Books.

However, many Torah education experts start not with the Book of Bereishet but with the volume that we start reading in synagogue this week, the third of the Torah's volumes, Vayikra.

What is the reason to start with Vayikra?

Firstly, it's easy to misunderstand the opening chapters of the Torah. They contain many deep mystical ideas which are understood only by the wisest and holiest people in each generation.

However, there is another reason. The Book of Vayikra is principally concerned with sacrifices. By teaching our children the book of Vayikra first we are inculcating the knowledge that Torah can only thrive in someone who is prepared to sacrifice his time, his ego, and his pursuit of worldly pleasure to achieve its crown.

In a similar vein, Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin (the founder of the Daf Yomi cycle of Torah study) explains the saying of our Sages, "Be watchful of the children of the poor, for from them the Torah will come forth." A Torah education does not come cheaply. For someone who has trouble making ends meet, the self-sacrifice required to give one's children a good Torah education is considerable. The Torah of these children comes through difficulty, from self-denial. Because the Torah of the "children of the poor" is earned through hardship and self-sacrifice, it has a staying power which lasts for generations.

If the branches look strong, the roots must be stronger.

• *Sources: based on the Avnei Ezel in Mayana shel Torah*
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OU Torah

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Zachor: An Enemy on Many Fronts

Three very different individuals inspired me to write this week's column. One was a newspaper editor who "dared" to censor a sentence in one of my submissions. The other was a very wise sage whose pre-Purim lecture I was privileged to hear many years ago. And the third

was an anonymous Jew who was fond of the use of gematria, the technique by which special significance is given to the numerical value of the Hebrew letters which comprise a biblical word or phrase.

Let me begin by telling you about the editor. I have been writing columns on the weekly Torah portion for many years. My columns have been reviewed by quite a few editors, coming from quite a variety of backgrounds. Only once did an editor insist upon censoring a phrase, and a critical one at that, from one of my columns.

As a pulpit rabbi in the community in which I then served, I was invited to be part of a rotation of rabbis, each of whom would submit a column once a month to the local Jewish newspaper. My turn in the rotation coincided with this week's special additional Torah reading, Parshat Zachor. In it, we read the verses from Deuteronomy 25:17-19, in which we remember the treachery of our ancient enemy, Amalek. We are commanded to eradicate every trace of this vicious foe from the face of the earth.

I no longer recall all that I had written in this connection way back then. But I concluded my remarks by quoting from the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 21:4) which enunciates the principal of self-defense: "Haba lehorgecha hashkem lehorgo, When someone attempts to kill you, kill him first." That is to say, there are situations in which one's life is threatened and which justify killing another person in self-defense. Kill or be killed.

The Jewish people have found themselves in such dire circumstances many times in our history. Aggressive responses to mortal threats are not merely permissible, they are correct and proper. The editor of the newspaper found my words objectionable, and, without requesting my permission, simply omitted them.

I protested then, and continue to maintain, that when we face an enemy, we must respond firmly and assertively. In those hopefully rare circumstances in which our very lives are threatened, we must be prepared to "kill or be killed." In less extreme situations, we must resort to less extreme responses, but we must not forget that we are dealing with an enemy and must respond in kind. I refer specifically to the recent rise of anti-Semitism all over the world. We are misguided if we limit our responses to attempts at dialogue, efforts at persuasion, and programs designed to educate our opponents. We are dealing with enemies who must be stopped by whatever effective means are at our disposal. To borrow a phrase from an article I recently read, "no more Mr. Nice Jew."

This age-old archenemy, Amalek, operates on many fronts. Often, as in the biblical story, he is murderous. But sometimes he adopts more subtle methods of doing us in. Thus, another Midrash (Shemot Rabba 27:6) quotes a phrase from the Book of Proverbs (Chapter 19, verse 25) to define Amalek. In Hebrew, this verse reads, Leitz takeh ufesi yaarim. One translation renders this: "Strike a scoffer and the simpleton may become shrewd." Traditional Jewish readers understand leitz to mean not merely a "scoffer, but a "joker," or, perhaps, a "clown."

This brings me to the second source of inspiration for this column. I was but a teenager when I joined an old friend at one of the pre-Purim talks of the late Rabbi Isaac Hutner. He proposed a different translation for the term leitz. He suggested that a leitz was a "cynic," and he went on to define "cynic" as a person who, when confronted with another person's accomplishments, feels compelled to belittle those accomplishments, and therefore exclaims, "big deal!" or, "so what!"

This, for Rabbi Hutner, was and remains Amalek's strategy. When faced with the Israelites' triumphant enthusiasm during the early weeks of the Exodus, Amalek "cooled off" their enthusiasm by sneaking up upon them and attacking them. To this very day, we have individuals, including some in our own ranks, who diminish the spiritual enthusiasm of others by deriding them, teasing them, or otherwise denigrating their achievements.

Rabbi Hutner concluded his remarks by urging his audience to avoid such cynicism and to remain ever appreciative of the accomplishments of others.

Besides physical hostility, and in addition to scoffery and scorn, there is yet another technique that Amalek utilizes to attack people of the Jewish

faith. He takes aim at our basic belief system and attempts to instill philosophical doubts in our minds. For the linkage of Amalek to agnosticism, I return to the third source of inspiration for this column.

He was an elderly gentleman who frequented the same tiny synagogue as did I in the early years of my marriage. He was adept at a homiletic technique known as gematria, sometimes referred to as “numerology.” Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value, and profound meanings can be found by comparing the numerical values of different words and phrases in the Bible. The letters that spell out “Amalek” total 240. The letters of the Hebrew word for “doubt,” safek, also total precisely 240.

“This,” proposed my elderly gentleman friend, “is Amalek’s secret weapon. Get people to doubt the principles of our faith. Amalek does not only dress in the guise of a Gestapo officer. He sometimes sits in a lounge chair, or across a table over a cup of coffee, and says things that get young Jews to doubt the Almighty and His benevolence.”

Amalek is a tricky adversary and operates on many fronts. He can be murderous. He can be abusive. He can be cynical or insulting, persuasive or even seductive. No wonder we are commanded to devote this particular Shabbat to contemplating this ancient enemy, against whom we must always be on guard, and whose final elimination must be our ultimate goal.

Drasha

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Hear Conditioning

Whoever misses the Divine hand that touched the Purim story is not looking. And if he claims that he heard the Megilah, he probably was not listening. Imagine, the Prime Minister draws lots and decides to annihilate the entire Jewish nation. Within 24 hours he has approval from the ruler of the not-so-free-world, King Achashveirosh.

Within days, the plot is foiled, the Prime Minister is hanged and his prime target is promoted to replace him! Pretty political. Pretty miraculous. And definitely divine. Yet Hashem’s name is not mentioned once in the Megilah. Why? Of course, the Megilah is replete with allusions. There are acronyms that spell the name of Hashem, and our sages explain that every time the word “King” is mentioned in the Megilah, it has a divine reference. But, still, why does the last book of the Prophets, a Divinely inspired Megilah, have only veiled references to Heavenly intervention?

It was a sweltering August day when the Greenberg brothers entered the posh Dearborn, Michigan offices of the notoriously anti-Semitic car-maker, Henry Ford.

“Mr. Ford,” announced Hyman Greenberg, the eldest of the three, “we have a remarkable invention that will revolutionize the automobile industry.” Ford looked skeptical, but their threats to offer it to the competition kept his interest piqued. “We would like to demonstrate it to you in person.” After a little cajoling, they brought Mr. Ford outside and asked him to enter a black Edsel that was parked in front of the building. Norman Greenberg, the middle brother, opened the door of the car. “Please step inside Mr. Ford.”

“What!” shouted the tycoon, “are you crazy? It must be two hundred degrees in that car!”

“It is,” smiled the youngest brother, Max, “but sit down, Mr. Ford, and push the white button.”

Intrigued, Ford pushed the button. All of a sudden a whoosh of freezing air started blowing from vents all around the car, and within seconds the automobile was not only comfortable, it was quite cool! “This is amazing!” exclaimed Ford. “How much do you want for the patent?”

Norman spoke up. “The price is one million dollars.” Then he paused, “And there is something else. We want the name ‘Greenberg Brothers Air Conditioning’ to be stamped right next to the Ford logo.”

“Money is no problem,” retorted Ford, “but no way will I have a ‘Jew-name’ next to my logo on my cars!”

They haggled back and forth for a while and finally they settled. One and one half million dollars, and the name Greenberg would be left off. However, the first names of the Greenberg brothers would be forever emblazoned upon the console of every Ford air conditioning system.

And that is why today, whenever you enter a Ford vehicle you will see those three names clearly defined on the air-conditioning control panel: HI — NORM — MAX.

The writers of the Megilah left us with a message that would accompany us throughout our long exile. You will not always see G-d’s signature openly emblazoned upon every circumstance. However, throughout persecution and deliverance, He is always there. And just like on Purim His obvious interference is undocumented; but we know and feel it — and we search for it, and we find it! So, too, in every instance we must seek His name, find it, and recognize it. It may not be emblazoned on the bumper; it may be hidden on the console — but it is there. For Hashem is always speaking. All we have to do is listen. Joyous Purim!

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayikra

We Follow the Torah’s Teaching, Whether It Makes Scents or Not!

The pasuk in this week’s parsha says, “When a soul will bring a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; he shall pour oil on it and place frankincense on it.” [Vayikra 2:1] The Korban Mincha needed to contain three ingredients: It needed to contain sol’es [fine flour]; it needed to contain shemen [oil]; and it needed to contain levona [a type of spice that makes it sweet smelling]. The Torah then adds [Vayikra 2:11] “Any meal offering that you offer to Hashem shall not be prepared leavened, for you shall not cause to go up in smoke from any leavening or any honey as a fire-offering to Hashem.” All Mincha offerings must be made as matzah — therefore any seor [a leavening agent] and any devash (not literally bee’s honey but any fruit juice or any sweet ingredient like honey) may not be part of the recipe.

Parshas HaKetores, which is part of the morning prayer’s preliminary recitations, contains the teaching of the Tanna Bar Kappara that not only are we prohibited from adding devash to a Korban Mincha, but we are also prohibited from adding it to the daily incense offering (the Ketores) in the Beis HaMikdash. “Had one put a kortov (a trace amount) of fruit-honey into it, no person could stand (in the Temple Courtyard) because of its (malodorous) aroma.” The Ketores is made up of eleven difference spices. Bar Kappara teaches that if someone were to add devash to any of the different spices, it would make such a bad scent that no one could stand it. (This is the explanation according to some commentaries.) The Braisa there finishes off “And why did they not add thereto devash? It is because the Torah teaches, “For any leaven and any devash, you are not to burn from them a fire-offering to Hashem.”

This seems to be a very peculiar statement. The Braisa just got finished saying that a person cannot add fruit-honey because if someone did, no one would be able to take the smell. Then the Braisa says, “Why don’t they in fact add devash? It is because the Torah said not to!” We have two disparate reasons given here — each of which would seem to make the other reason totally redundant.

I believe this is an example of the well-known Sifrei, which teaches that a person should NOT say “I do not like (the taste of) pig.” We are living in the great State of Maryland which is world famous for its crabs. If you have ever smelled crabs cooking — which I have — one can truthfully say “No one can stand there because of its (malodorous) aroma.” It is the worst smelling thing. I sometimes pass by the fish aisle in the supermarket and see the lobsters, the shrimp, and the oysters. They are ugly! And yet everyone talks about the delicacies of shellfish. I have heard Baalei Teshuva tell me that the hardest thing for them to give up when they became Torah-observant was not chazer [pig]. The hardest

thing for them to give up was shellfish. So even though I am tempted to say “I cannot stand crabs” according to the teaching of Sifrei, I am supposed to say, “I would desire them, I love crabs but what can I do? My Father in Heaven decreed upon me that I am not allowed to eat them.” This is the correct attitude.

This teaching of Bar Kappara is an example of the same principle. In fact, if someone added fruit-honey to the Ketores, we would not be able to stand there because of the scent. However, the reason why we do not add fruit-honey is because the Torah prohibited it and therefore we would not do it even if it smelled fantastic.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky connects a very cute little story to this idea. There was a ShopRite supermarket in Lakewood for many years. At this ShopRite, there was a frum woman standing in line behind a non-Jewish woman, who was shopping with her little son. As we all know, supermarkets put candy right next to the checkout counters and the non-Jewish woman’s son started throwing a temper tantrum because his mother would not buy him a certain candy bar that he saw in the checkout aisle. Finally, the woman said to her son, “It is not kosher!” The boy said to his mother “What do you mean ‘It is not kosher’? — It says on the wrapper that it is delicious.”

At that point, the woman turned to the frum woman behind her and said, “I do not understand something. Every time when you people go into the store and your children want something at the checkout counter, you say ‘It is not kosher’ and that is the end of the discussion. Does that not just mean that it does not taste good?” The frum woman explained to her that kosher has nothing to do with how it tastes. It is just that we are allowed to eat kosher and we are not allowed to eat non-kosher. This was a difficult concept for the non-Jewish person to understand. It says explicitly on the label that it is delicious, so what kind of problem is it that “it is not kosher”?

This is the interpretation of Bar Kappara’s “bottom line”: We do not add fruit-juice to the Ketores because the Torah teaches ‘Don’t sacrifice from it a fire-offering to Hashem.’ End of discussion. It does not matter if the smell is malodorous or irresistible — That is academic. We do as the Torah commands us.

Putting Aside the Attribute of Silence as Necessary

There was a certain Jew who gave the shirt off his back to any and all comers. This person went to see the Rebbe Reb Bunim of Pishische. The Rebbe told this person that he should not act that way. The Rebbe explained that such behavior only demonstrates that he does not have the ability to say “no”. Such an attribute is not characteristic of Gemillas Chessed. Gemillas Chessed is when a person makes a conscious decision: This person “Yes”; this person “No.” Some people are undeserving. When a person cannot say “no,” all it says about him is that he is not in charge of his emotions. That, per say, is not an admirable quality.

The Rebbe told this fellow a vort [homiletic teaching] from the Chozeh of Lublin. The pasuk says that the Patriarch Yaakov was an “Ish Tam, Yoshev Ohalim” [Bereshis 25:27]. “Ish Tam” is normally translated as a “simple person” or a “naive person”, a person who knows no “shtick”, who does not connive, a man who does not know how to cheat – that is how we usually picture an “Ish Tam”!

And yet Chazal say that Yaakov Avinu said about his uncle, Lavan, “I am his match when it comes to trickery.” The Chozeh of Lublin asked – which is it? Was Yaakov an “Ish Tam” to whom one can sell the Brooklyn Bridge or was he “Achiv ani b’Ramaus” [Lavan’s match in deception]? The Chozeh of Lublin answers that the description “Ish Tam” means that Yakov had control over his Temimus [his naiveté]. When the situation demanded Temimus, Yaakov was a Tam; but when the situation demanded that he not let a conniver run circles around him, he could be as full of tricks as the best of them.

This is why the Baalei Mussar say that when we describe a person who is a mensch, we call him a Baal Midos. The word Baal means the person is the master. He is the “Ba’alim” [owner] over his middos. He can choose as necessary. Sometimes he will employ this characteristic and other times he will employ that characteristic. There is a place for humility and there is a place for being proud. There is a time and place

to be forgiving and there is a time and place to stand up for one’s rights. There is a time to be a man of peace and there is a time to be a man of war.

We need to know when to employ each human attribute. Yaakov was an “Ish Tam” – he had control over his “Temimus” but when the situation demanded it, he could act the other way as well.

If a person’s nature requires him to feed any and all comers no matter what, he has lost fulfillment of the specific Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim. It tells us that his kindness and generosity do not stem from the fact that he is a true Baal Chessed. They stem from the fact that he is a bleeding heart who can never say no.

Based on this idea, the Bei Chiya from Rav Elisha Horowitz shares a beautiful observation on a pasuk in Megillas Esther. In the famous pasuk there, Mordechai tells Queen Esther, “For if you will persist in keeping silent at a time like this (b’Es haZos), relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, while you and your father’s house will perish...” [Esther 4:14] This is the time to go to Achashverosh and plead for your people. If you keep quiet now, you and your family will be wiped out.

The question is, what is meant by the expression b’Es haZos? What does it mean “at a time like now”? Of course it is “now”! It is always “now”. What was Mordechai emphasizing by use of this expression?

Chazal say that Queen Esther possessed the Midas HaShtikah [the attribute of remaining silent]. She had the capacity to keep quiet. Some people cannot keep their mouth shut. Esther had an inborn capacity to remain silent. The Medrash (on the words “and Esther revealed nothing of her kindred and her people” [Esther 2:20]) says that Esther received this strength of character from her ancestress Rochel.

Rochel kept quiet. She did not reveal to Yaakov the secret that it was actually going to be Leah under the wedding canopy. Esther inherited Rochel’s Midas haShtikah. Chazal point out that Binyamin, the son of Rochel, possessed this family trait as well. He knew the secret of the sale of Yosef and he refused to share it because of the Cherem [ban of excommunication] the brothers imposed on anyone who revealed it. Likewise, Shaul (who also came from the Tribe of Binyamin and descended from Rochel) also kept quiet. Finally, by Esther as well it is written that “Esther did not reveal her national origin.”

The Attribute of Silence is a great thing. However, Mordechai tells Esther there is a time and place for everything. Yes, you possess the Midas HaShtikah, but if you will maintain silence AT THIS TIME, tragedy will occur. NOW is not the time for silence. Now is the time to speak up. If you, Esther, are really in charge of your Midas HaShtikah then you will demonstrate that ownership.

There are people who keep silent because they are shy. There are people who are quiet and introverted. They cannot open their mouths. “Esther, now is the moment of truth. Why are you a “Shosekes” [silent one]? Are you silent because that in fact is your middah, which, in this situation demands that you do not keep quiet, or are you merely shy and introverted? Esther, show your true colors: Are you in charge of your Midas HaShtikah, or is it in charge of you?”

With this concept, we can explain the following idea: All the Tribes had a unique stone in the Choshen worn on the Kohen Gadol’s chest. The stone of Biyamin is Yoshpeh. The word Yoshpeh (yud-shin-fay-hay) is made up of two words: Yesh (yud-shin) Peh (fay-hay) meaning “There is a mouth.” Binyomin had the Midas HaShtikah. Why did he possess the Midas HaShtikah? Was it because he was too shy to open his mouth? Chazal say, no. His trademark stone was Yesh Peh – “I have a mouth.” I am able to speak when the situation demands it, BUT when the situation demands for me to keep quiet – if they tell me do not reveal the secret of our sin of selling Yosef – then I am able to keep quiet. Someone who has a mouth, but can keep it closed, demonstrates that he is a Baal [owner] of his Shtikah.

This too may be the interpretation of the end of Mordechai’s warning – “...you and your father’s house will be destroyed.” Why is Esther’s father’s house brought into the picture? It is because Mordechai is telling her that if you go ahead and keep quiet now, this will retroactively reveal that your whole genealogy – Rochel, Binyomin,

Shaul – did not keep quiet because they controlled their “attribute of silence”, they kept quiet because they were naturally shy people. Show me by speaking now, Mordechai told Esther, that the Midas HaShtikah that is part of your genealogy, part of your heritage, part of your family, does not come from the fact that you have introverted genes. Show me that your entire mishpacha had the ability to control their silences, based on the needs of the moment.

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Vayikra

פרשת ויקרא השלש

ויקרא אל משה וידבר ד' אליו

And He called to Moshe; and Hashem spoke to Moshe. (1:1)

Psychologists talk about the importance of living a focused life. One who is focused possesses an inner peace borne from having direction, the knowledge of where he is heading, as well as a plan to get there. To live a focused life takes goals, practice and skill. The Torah does not rely on contemporary psychology. The Torah is the source of all psychology and ethics. *Chazal* derive from the above *pasuk* that Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not enter the *Mishkan* until Hashem called to invite him to enter. This was a manifestation of the attribute of *daas*, commonly translated either as knowledge or, in this instance, as manners. *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, explains that *daas* is an awareness of what he is doing, as opposed to acting mechanically out of habit.

Chazal teach that a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who is *daas*-deficient is inferior to an animal's carcass. If *daas* means manners, the Torah is teaching us the importance of manners, *mentchlichkeit*, human decency, acting appropriately, politely, respectfully, etc. Alternatively, according to *Rav Wolbe*, being a *talmid chacham* means living a focused life. He knows what he is doing, so that he does not waste time sitting around either doing nothing or, worse, hanging out with a group of like-minded friends, doing absolutely nothing.

Daas takes on new meaning concerning *Tefillah*. With regard to *davening*, *daas* is a reference to *kavanah*, intention, devotion. How often do we *daven* without *kavanah*, just reciting the words without stopping to think about and consider their meaning? Such a *tefillah* is recited without *daas*. Essentially, this idea applies to everything that we do and say. If our actions lack focus, if our conversations are thoughtless, we are not focused, so that the time that we spend is totally wasted.

The concept of *yishuv hadaas* describes actions performed with focus and awareness of what one is doing. One who has *yishuv hadaas* lives an entirely different life than one who lacks this quality. Moshe waited for Hashem to call him before he entered the *Mishkan* because he did everything with a *cheshbon*, calculation and purpose. He understood that if he belonged in the *Mishkan*, Hashem would invite him in. Otherwise, he had no business entering the holy edifice on his own volition.

We worry about different things. Some worry about money; others about health. How many are concerned with their destinies to the point that they worry about them? That is *daas*: the awareness of what is most important and, as a result, on what one should place his greatest focus. As *Yidden* our focus should be on “What does Hashem ask of you?” That is our destiny.

אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לד'

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem. (1:2)

Without a *Bais Hamikdash* where we can offer *korbanos*, offerings, we rely on our *tefillas*, prayers, to take the place of these *korbanos*. As such, our *tefillas* must be on the *madreigah*, spiritual plateau, of *korbanos*. The *Sefer HaChinuch* (*Parashas Terumah, mitzvah* of constructing the *Mishkan*) explains that *korbanos*, like the *Mishkan*, availed the Jew the opportunity to express himself to Hashem in a tangible manner. Thus, when a person sinned and brought a *korban* as penance, he was not getting by with a perfunctory, *Chatasi*, “I

sinned. I am sorry.” Rather, he offered a *korban*, an animal which would take his place, thereby intimating that he understood that, indeed, he should be up there on the *Mizbayach*, Altar; his body should be suffering the travail that the animal was undergoing. This would bring to his mind the reality of his transgression, its gravity. Today, when we pray, we must keep all of this in mind. “I am sorry” does not suffice.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, recalls an incident concerning a well-meaning *yeshiva* student who acted out of character, and, when he sought penance, *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*, refused to allow him to achieve absolution with a simple apology. He placed a heavy demand on the young man. The story occurred following the nine days of mourning which precede *Tishah B'Av*. During this period, observant Jews do not eat meat or drink wine, except on *Shabbos* or for a *simchah*, joyous celebration, such as a *bris* or *siyum*, completion of a *Meseches*, Tractate, of *Talmud*. The Galei Sanz Hotel in Netanya is near the *Sanz yeshiva*. The *Klausenberger Rebbe* offered to send a student over every night to make a *siyum* to avail the hotel's guests the opportunity to eat meat. Afterwards, one of the students came forward and expressed his great remorse over having fooled the guests. Apparently, he had commenced the *Meseches* – and even concluded it. The problem was that he had not studied the pages between the beginning and the end. His *siyum* was a sham. The people had eaten meat during the Nine Days. He was terribly sorry, very apologetic. What more could he do to absolve himself?

Rav Chaim asked how many guests had attended the *siyum*. He was told that fifty people had attended. *Rav Chaim paskened*, rendered his decision: The young man should make fifty *siyumim* on that *Meseches*! When *Rav Zilberstein* heard this, he wondered if perhaps this might be too much. Then *Rav Chaim* added, “And one time should be with the commentary of the *Maharasha*!”

Apologies do not replace a concrete expression of regret. As the *korbanos* tangibly expressed our feelings, so should our *tefillas*. I think we may derive from the *psak* of *Rav Chaim* that every *aveirah*, sin, has consequences which reverberate, repercussions whose fallout can, and do, affect others. All of this must be taken into consideration when one attempts to do *teshuvah*, repent. Perhaps this is why *teshuvah* for *chillul Hashem*, profaning Hashem's Name, is limitless. The repercussions are quite possibly impossible to delineate, since we have no idea how many religious mindsets were altered as a result of any specific profaning of Hashem's Name, nor do we know for how long. A family's religious trajectory can be changed because a father or mother had been negatively affected by someone's actions. Do we truly understand the domino effect for generations to come? This is why *teshuvah* is a non-issue.

Having touched on the topic of *tefillah* and its status in post-*Bais Hamikdash* times, I came across a powerful insight from *Horav Yaakov Edelstein, zl*. He was asked by *Horav Shmuel HaLevi Vosner, zl*, how he merited that Hashem would always listen to his *tefillas* (on behalf of others) and *berachos* (that he gave others)? *Rav Edelstein's* response was, “Who says that Hashem listens to me?” When that response did not succeed in convincing *Rav Vosner* to withdraw his question, *Rav Edelstein* said, “Perhaps it is because many people come to me to share their problems, and I have (or make) the patience to listen to each and every one of them.” He listened to each individual person, regardless of the substance of the issue, since what is a problem to one person does not necessarily define the term “problem.” Each person has his own individual sensitivities and barometer for what constitutes a “problem.” This might encourage Heaven to say, “As you are patient to listen to others, Heaven will be patient in listening to you.”

Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita, offers the following (perhaps frightening) analogy. Reuven and Shimon were brothers, but this is where their commonality began and ended. Reuven was a wealthy businessman who was well-known and sought after; in contrast, his brother was relegated to living in solitude in abject poverty. One day, the situation in Shimon's house became acute. He decided he would go to his wealthy brother and ask for his assistance. Little did he imagine his brother's attitude upon seeing him. “I have no idea who you are,”

Reuven said quite callously. “You must have the wrong address. You are definitely not my brother. I will not give you a penny.” Dejected and broken, Shimon returned home penniless and humiliated.

Sometime later, Reuven had occasion to visit their father. “Who are you?” his father asked. Fearing that his father was becoming a victim of premature dementia, he said, “What do you mean, who am I? I am Reuven, your son!”

“I do not have a Reuven who is my son. I do not have a son by the name of Reuven,” the father said. “Surely, you have a son, Reuven. Indeed, you have two sons: Reuven and Shimon. I am Reuven.”

The father replied, “I have no idea who you are. It is true that I have a son by the name of Shimon, but I have no son named Reuven. In fact, you told Shimon that he was not your brother. If Shimon is not your brother, then you obviously cannot be my son.”

Hashem tells us (when we scream *Avinu Malkeinu*, Our Father, Our King!), “If you are brothers, I am your King. If, however, you are act callously to one another, how can you be My son? In order for you to be united as one, you must act as a brother. They go hand-in-hand.”

וְהָיָה כִּי יֵאשָׁם לְאַחַת מֵאֵלֶּה הַתּוֹרָה אִשְׁרָה חַטָּא עֲלֶיךָ

When one shall become guilty regarding one of these matters, he shall confess what he has sinned. (5:5)

Horav S.R. Hirsch, *zl*, observes that in addressing the concept of *vidui*, confession regarding a sin, the Torah uses the word, *v'hisvadah*, which (loosely translated) means, “he shall confess,” but should really be translated, “he shall confess (acknowledge) to himself.” *Hisvadah* is *hispa'el*, reflexive form, that denotes a confession of guilt pointed at oneself. The sinner is not expected to “make confession” (as they do in other religions), certainly not to G-d, Who knows everything. He does not require our confession to make Him aware of our sins. It is to himself that the sinner must admit that he “missed the mark”, that he has a failing, a shortcoming in his character that has caused him to sin. Indeed, such a form of confession, a personal admission that one has sinned – a stark and thoughtful observation in the mirror accompanied by penetrating introspection – is the first critical step toward repairing one’s ways. This represents a solemn resolution that is an indispensable prerequisite for his *Korban Chatas*, sin-offering. As such, the offering presupposes the individual’s earliest resolve of *teshuvah*, repentance. The offering is the external expression of the resolve, which consists of *vidui* to oneself. Without this resolve, the offering has limited meaning.

Self-knowledge is the first step towards a resolve of *teshuvah*. Delusion is the antithesis of *teshuvah*, since, if one does not see clearly where, how and why he has sinned, he is incapable of mending his ways. As long as he is bound up in the deception that cloaks reality in his own mind, the sinner will continue being a sinner, the taint of his sin forever besmirching his life. One cannot expect to conduct his life in a truly punctilious manner as long as he is living under the self-imposed façade of duplicity. Furthermore, Rav Hirsch contends that a “broad” acknowledgement that one had sinned and admitting to himself in “general” terms that he is not “up to par” are not much better than no confession. One must keep in mind the specific area in which his transgression has occurred and focus on it, so that he can get to the root of his misstep.

The concept of *v'hisvadah*, self-acknowledgement, is far removed from the popular notion of “confession”: be it in a religious milieu or to a friend or mentor. These forms of admissions of guilt are more mistake than virtue. A sin committed by a person is between himself and G-d; thus, it needs to be known only to Him. Revealing our shame to others is improper exposure. Shame/admission of guilt should be kept quietly in one’s heart where he addresses his personal guilt.

Why is it so difficult to admit to oneself that he is wrong? Mistakes are hard to digest and even more difficult to swallow. We would rather hunker down and find some way to justify our actions than confront, admit and face the music. Psychologists have a term for this form of doubling down: cognitive dissonance. This applies to the tension we experience when we maintain two contradictory thoughts, beliefs, opinions, or attitudes. One might believe that he is kind-hearted, decent, benevolent – until the moment when, out of anger or other provocation,

he acts out of “character” and cuts someone off on the highway, slams a door in his face, or takes the last donut in the bakery that he knows his neighbor wants for himself. How does one cope with such dissonance? He denies his actions, either by justifying it or by blaming the other fellow. In any event, he was not the one that acted rudely.

Apologizing empowers the other fellow and belittles the wrongdoer, or so he thinks. Such a person is not open to constructive criticism, because, after all, he did no wrong. By digging in our heels, by refusing to acknowledge that we erred, by disregarding the feelings of the person whom we hurt and by refusing to apologize, we make it clear to everyone that we possess a flawed character and are, indeed, weak.

Perhaps we might take the concept of *v'hisvadah*, self-acknowledgement, a bit further. A wise person once said, “There is greater fulfillment in life knowing that one (at least) made the attempt, rather than settled and gave in from the onset.” Giving up hope before one even starts is a form of refusing to acknowledge one’s own potential. How many people have refused to give up hope in the face of adversity and succeeded beyond anyone’s dreams? When someone is told, “You don’t have a chance,” he can either throw in the towel, refuse to go forward, or prove others wrong. Indeed, adversity brings out the real us, the best that lays dormant beneath an exterior of mediocrity. How many great authors gave up when their first manuscript was ignored, and how many kept on writing – to prove everyone wrong? One who gives up on himself is guilty of *v'hisvadah* – refusing to accept his latent talents.

I came across an inspiring story in, “*Stories that Unite Our Hearts*,” by Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky, which I take the liberty of sharing (with my own embellishment). There are *rebbeim* – and there are *rebbeim*. Some have classes comprised of students that are highly motivated. Others have classes in which the students had long ago given up hope of ever achieving success. A host of circumstances can cause such negativity in a student. This is not the forum to discuss these innocent “victims of circumstances.” *Baruch Hashem*, we have people who care, *rebbeim* whose boundless love for Torah, for their students, and for *Klal Yisrael* does not allow them to reinforce their students’ negativity. Thus, they make every attempt to encourage, cajole, empower and embolden them in order to ensure their students that, indeed, they can make it big – and they do!

Rabbi Fine (the name used by the author) is a *rebbe* who focused on effort, rather than test scores. If he saw a student try his hardest to study and master the subject, even if he missed his mark, he still considered him to be top drawer – a success. The young mind and heart looks at a test score and asks, “Is it all worth it? Even when I study all night, I barely get a passing grade. Why bother?” Observing the prevailing attitude in his class of high-attitude, low-achieving students, Rabbi Fine attempted to hearten them. Otherwise, he would get nowhere with them. He sought to encourage them, as illustrated by the following story.

“Boys, close your *Gemorahs* and relax. I want to tell you a story about a group of teenage students from one of the poorest, inner-city neighborhoods in Los Angeles, who were invited by a local ranch owner to visit his property and spend the day riding horses.

“After a day replete with fun and relaxation, the wealthy rancher invited the group to join him in his large living room for snacks, drinks and conversation. He went out of his way to treat the boys like royalty. He called everyone to attention as he explained the reason for inviting them for the day. “You see, once upon a time, there was a young boy whose father was a horse trainer. The family traveled from place to place with no time to really set up roots. Money was extremely limited even though the father accepted whatever work was available.

“In high school, the boy had a teacher who gave the class an assignment for each student to write a paper about his dream in life. The boy wanted so much to do well, so he wrote an excellent paper about the 200 acre ranch he would own one day. He added the thoroughbred horses and massive palatial ranch house in which he would live. In short, the dream, albeit quite impressive, was absolutely unrealistic for a boy of such a poor, foot-loose background. The teacher disregarded the

excellent presentation, and, instead of giving the boy an A, gave him a failing grade for writing an unrealistic dream.

“The boy was dejected. He thought he had done everything right. The teacher drove home a point: “From the background that you had, you have no chance of realizing such a far-fetched dream.” The boy thought about the teacher’s criticism and decided to return with the same paper, “Sir,” he began, “this is my dream. I hope to see it through to fruition. You can keep the failing grade, and I will keep my dream!”

“Boys, by now you must realize that that boy was me. I slaved and refused to give up. Today, you are sitting in the room of my dream. You spent the day having fun on the ranch which is the culmination of my dream. If you look at the back wall, you will notice my paper with the failing grade. It motivated me to work – to never give up on my dreams. Neither should you.”

Rabbi Fine concluded with his personal message to his students, “True, there are – and will be – times in your life when your dream seems unrealistic, almost audacious. You will dream: of one day completing the *Shas*, the entire *Talmud*; of becoming a *Rosh Yeshiva*; of being a fearless and inspiring communal leader. And then, someone will throw cold water on your dream, laugh at you, and say, ‘You? No way!’ Never give up! If you try your best, you will succeed.”

The greatest disservice we can do to ourselves is to refrain from making an attempt to succeed. This is especially true concerning success in Torah learning. It has nothing to do with acumen. True, someone with a superior mind has a head start, but he also has a greater obligation to succeed. Hashem gave him this gift for a purpose. Hashem is the Torah’s Author, and He assists those who assist themselves. The greatest loser is the one who does not enter the race!

לא ישים עליה שמן ולא יתן עליה לבנה כי השאת היא

He shall not place oil on it nor shall he place frankincense on it, for it’s a sin-offering. (5:11)

The plain meal offering for a *chatas*, sin (offering), was brought for specific sins. This *korban* is part of the *Korban Oleh v’yoreid*, variable sin-offering, class, which is a dispensation to provide one who is poor the opportunity to atone for his sin with a *korban*. The variable *korban* is comprised of either a sheep or a goat, two turtledoves or two young doves, or, in the event that one has no funds, a tenth of an *eiphah* of flour. While oil and frankincense are put on all other meal offerings, the *chatas* receives no embellishment of oil or frankincense, since it is brought to atone for a sin.

Chazal (*Talmud Menachos* 59b) note a *halachic* difference between oil and frankincense with regard to the prohibition against including them in the meal offering. Whereas a single drop of oil invalidates the *korban*, a minimum of a *kazayis* (olive size) is required to invalidate the *korban*. Why is oil different than frankincense? Perhaps, since the oil is mixed in, it becomes an intrinsic part of the *korban*. In such a case, anything – even the bare minimum -- invalidates the offering. Frankincense is used to enhance/adorn/ add to the external *korban*. This requires a greater amount of embellishment than the bare minimum.

Chazal derive the variance in *halachah* from the disparate words which the Torah uses to signify supplementing a *korban* with either of these two products. Concerning oil, the Torah writes *yasim*, which means to place even a *mashehu*, the most insignificant amount. Regarding the frankincense, the Torah uses the word *v’yitein*, and give, which means a *nesinah chashuvah*, significant placement, equivalent (according to *Chazal*) to the size of an olive.

Horav Avraham Pam, זל (*Messages from Rav Pam/Rabbi Sholom Smith*), quotes the *Maharil Diskin* (commentary to *Parashas Eikev*), who applies *Chazal’s* semantic difference (between *simah* and *nesinah*) in explaining a *pasuk* in *Devarim* 7:15. *V’heisir Hashem mimcha kol choli... lo yesimam bach u’nesanam b’chol sonecha*, “Hashem will remove from you all illness... He will not place them upon you, but He will put them upon all your foes.” Here, too, the *pasuk* uses two words that seem synonymous with one another, but are actually different. *Yesimam* and *u’nesanam* are not the same. Wherein lies their difference?

Maharil Diskin applies the aforementioned distinction related to *Korban Chatas*, *Oleh v’yoreid*. *Yesimam* refers to an insignificant, minute amount, while *u’nesanam* appertains to a full measure. Hashem ensures *Klal Yisrael* that if they maintain their fidelity to Him, if they observe and adhere to His *mitzvos*; *lo yesimam* – He will not place upon them even the slightest vestige of illness and will, instead, put them with a full measure on our enemies. This is how Hashem blesses.

With this idea to guide us, perhaps we might adapt it to the blessing we give our children: *Yesimcha Elokim k’Efraim u’k’Menashe, yesimeich Elokim k’Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel v’Leah*. We ask Hashem to bless our children using the word *yasim*, which, as we just explained, is used in connection with a minute amount. Why? One would think that we want Hashem to bless our children with a full dose of blessing. Why settle for anything less? I think the message that we should derive from here is that blessing plays a critical role in starting the child off toward a positive goal. We want our children to aspire to such greatness, as evinced by these giants -- both men and women -- of our nation. If the children do not put forth their own effort toward the realization of their blessings, it will be short-lived at best. Blessings are wonderful, but we must do our part. We must nurture our children, encourage, guide, discipline and inspire. They must do their “thing” to work for the lofty goals represented by our Torah giants. This, together with the blessings, will engender much Torah *nachas*, satisfaction, from our children.

Va’ani Tefillah

ולירושלים עירך ברחמים תשוב – *V’Yerushalayim Ircha b’rachamim tashuv*. And to Yerushalayim, Your city, You should return with compassion.

Why is the Holy City of Yerushalayim referred to as *Ircha*, Your city, and not *ireinu*, our city? *V’avisah Sehillah* explains that three entities are called *b’Shem Hashem*, the Almighty attaches His Name to them (*Talmud Bava Basra* 75b). *Tzaddikim*, righteous persons; *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*; Yerushalayim. Thus, we pray to Hashem to return to the Holy City to which His Name is attached. *Achas Shoalti* explains that while it is true that we all yearn for the Final Redemption, we are subjective in our reasoning for wanting it. Some hope that, with the advent of *Moshiach*, their economic problems will cease. Others have health, family and child-rearing issues that occupy their precious time. Hopefully, with the coming of the *Moshiach*, their worries will end. We are not supposed to yearn for *Moshiach* for personal reasons – but rather, for *Kavod Shomayim*, the Glory of Heaven. Thus, we underscore that we ask Hashem to return to His city, for His Glory. We must remember that it is not about us – it is about Hashem.

*In loving memory of Mrs. Glka Scheinbaum Bogen by her family
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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

Weekly Halacha Parshas Vayikra

Zachor And Purim

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

QUESTION: If one missed one or several words from the Torah reading of Parashas Zachor, must he hear the Torah reading again?

DISCUSSION: L’chatchilah, one should pay full attention so that he does not miss even a single word of the reading.(1) But as long as one heard the basic message of the Torah portion – o remember Amalek’s dastardly deed and to eradicate their memory- one has fulfilled his obligation even though he did not hear every single word of the reading.(2)

Similarly, some poskim(3) consider the birchos ha-Torah recited over Parashas Zachor an integral part of the mitzvah. This means that the *oleh* who recites these blessings must recite them slowly, loudly and with kavanah to be motzi the congregation with the berachos. The congregation, too, must hear every word with kavanah to be yotzei with the berachos. But since most poskim do not mention this stringency, if one did not hear part of the berachah, or even if he missed the berachos altogether, he has fulfilled his obligation.(4)

QUESTION: When Purim falls on erev Shabbos as it does this year, when should the Seudas Purim begin and end?

DISCUSSION: When Purim falls on erev Shabbos, the festive Purim meal should begin earlier than usual. L'chatchilah, the meal should begin on Friday before chatzos(5) (approximately 12:00 p.m. in the New York area). If, for some reason, the meal is delayed, one may still start his meal until the beginning of the tenth hour of the day(6) (approximately 3:00 p.m. in the New York area). B'diavad, if the meal did not begin by the tenth hour of the day, one is still permitted to start eating, but he may only eat and drink the bare minimum so that he will be able to eat the Shabbos meal with appetite.(7)

Most people end the meal early enough to allow sufficient time for cleaning up and completing all other Shabbos preparations before the onset of Shabbos. By ending the meal in a timely fashion, one ensures that all of the other mitzvos of the day, including Birchas ha-Mazon with Al ha-Nissim, Minchah, Kabbolas Shabbos and Maariv, are all fulfilled as they should be.

QUESTION: If one wishes to do so, may he continue the Seudas Purim into Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: Some people have the custom of continuing the Seudas Purim into Shabbos.(8) One who does so must abide by the following guidelines(9):

Take a break before sunset in order to daven Minchah.

Stop all eating and drinking – including water – once it is sunset.

Cover any challah or bread that is on the table,10 and recite Kiddush over a cup of wine or grape juice. If the person reciting Kiddush has already drunk some wine or grape juice during this meal, Borei pri ha-gafen is omitted.

Uncover the challah and eat at least a k'zayis of it.(11) Preferably, he should eat two k'zeisim.(12)

Recite Retzei in Birchas ha-Mazon. Al ha-Nissim is omitted.(13)

Recite the Shema and the Shabbos Maariv at the conclusion of the meal.

QUESTION: Is a son required to listen to his father's strict orders not to become inebriated on Purim?

DISCUSSION: Generally, a child is not allowed to listen to a parent's command if the parent tells him to do something which is in any way contrary to the Halachah. Since the Halachah obligates one to drink on Purim until he can no longer distinguish between boruch Mordechai and arur Haman,(14) it would seem that a son should disregard his parent's request not to get drunk on Purim. Harav S. Z. Auerbach,(15) however, ruled otherwise. He explained that the Halachah does not require one to become inebriated to the degree of ad delo yada. Rather, as the Rambam and Rama(16) hold, one can drink just a bit of wine [a little more than his customary daily amount], and then go to sleep. This is enough wine to fulfill the mitzvah, since in his sleep one is certainly not able to distinguish between "blessed Mordechai" and "cursed Haman." Since the son can fulfill the mitzvah in that manner, he has no right to ignore an explicit command from his father prohibiting him to get drunk.

QUESTION: Who should recite the berachos when a man, who has already read or heard the Megillah in shul, reads the Megillah for a group of ladies?

DISCUSSION: The preferred method depends on several factors:

If there are fewer than ten ladies present, then each lady should recite the berachos herself.(17)

If there are ten or more ladies, there are two options: Either one lady recites the berachos and is motzi the rest of the group,(18) or each lady recites her own berachos.(19) Either way is l'chatchilah.(20)

If the ladies do not how to recite the berachos, then the man reading the Megillah recites the berachos for them.(21)QUESTION: If there is no man available to read the Megillah for a lady who was unable to go to shul, may another lady read the Megillah for her?

DISCUSSION: A lady may read the Megillah for another lady but only if she herself has not yet fulfilled her obligation of hearing the Megillah. If she has already fulfilled her own obligation, she may not read it again in order to be motzi another lady.(22)

QUESTION: Do mishloach manos need to be delivered via a messenger or may the sender deliver it directly to the recipient?

DISCUSSION: The poskim are divided on this issue. There are three opinions:

Shulchan Aruch and most poskim(23) do not state a preference. The basic halachah follows this view.(24)

Some poskim(25) hold that the word "mishloach" suggests that the manos must be "sent" via a messenger.(26) The messenger may be a minor or a non-Jew.(27)

A minority opinion holds that mishloach manos should l'chatchilah be delivered directly and not via a messenger.(28) In order to satisfy both opinions, is it appropriate to send mishloach manos both ways – once via a messenger and once directly.(29)

1 Mikroei Kodesh, Purim, 7.

2 Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Moadei Yeshurun, pg. 47 and in l'Torah v'Horoah vol. 8, pg. 16); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo, 2:18-2).

3 See Taz O.C. 685:2 and Chasam Sofer (notes on Pri Chadash 685:7).

4 Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Moadei Yeshurun, pg. 47). See similar ruling in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 32, quoting Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky.

5 Mishnah Berurah 695:10.

6 Mishnah Berurah 249:13. In this case it would be preferable to daven Minchah first; see Mishnah Berurah 232:30.

7 Mishnah Berurah 529:8. Alternatively, he can daven Minchah, wash and eat all he wants at the Purim meal, and continue the seudah into Shabbos as discussed in the next segment; see Hisorerus Teshuvah 2:172.

8 See Meiri (Kesuvos 7a) who writes that this was his family's custom.

9 O.C. 271:4.

10 According to the Levush, quoted in Peri Megadim O.C. 271 Eishel Avraham 7, all of the food on the table should be covered.

11 Based on Mishnah Berurah 271:32. See also 267:5.

12 Based on Mishnah Berurah 291:2.

13 Mishnah Berurah 695:15 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 19. The Meiri, however, writes that his custom was to recite Al ha-Nissim.

14 O.C. 695:2.

15 Halichos Shelomo 2:19-25.

16 O.C. 695:2 and Mishnah Berurah 5.

17 Based on Mishnah Berurah 689:15 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 692:13. See Minchas Yitzchak 3:53-14.

18 Recommended by Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 2:19-3).

19 Recommended by Minchas Yitzchak 3:54-38; 8:63.

20 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Balaylah Hahuh, pg. 8)

21 Mishnah Berurah 692:10.

22 Beur Halachah 689:1 s.v. venoshim.

23 Chayei Adam, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Aruch ha-Shulchan do not mention this concept at all.

24 Chazon Ish (Dinim V'hanhagos 22:8). See also Shearim Metzuyanim Bhalachah 142:1.

25 Mishnah Berurah quoting Tesvhuvos Binyan Tziyon 44.

26 There are a number of suggestions as to the reason behind this requirement:

1) It is derech kavod to deliver gifts via a messenger; 2) It is greater pirsumei nisa since an additional person is involved; 3) To free the sender from time-consuming deliveries thereby giving him more time to celebrate Purim.

27 Chasam Sofer (Gittin 22b).

28 Eishel Avraham O.C. 295; Salmas Chayim 1:105.

29 See Kaf ha-Chayim 695:41 and Halichos Shelomo 2:19-14, note 44. vv Weekly-Halacha, Text Copyright © 2005 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. Weekly sponsorships are available—please send email to the moderator, Dr. Jeffrey Gross jgross@torah.org.

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Hilchos Purim

8188. Boys and girls who are over Bar and Bas Mitzvah age should fulfill the Mitzvah of Matanos L'Evyonim (and Mishloach Manos) using their own money. If they do not have any money, their parents should provide them with money for this purpose. Piskei Tshuvos 695:15

8189. Boys and girls under the age of Bar and Bas Mitzvah should be taught the Mitzvah of Matanos L'Evyonim (and Mishloach Manos) by way of acting as a shliach - messenger for their parents who send them to give Tzedakah to poor people on Purim. Piskei Tshuvos 695:15

8192. Many have the minhag to give money on Purim to their Rov and to their children's Rebbeim and teachers. One may not use Maaser money for this purpose unless the recipient is poor and one initially undertakes to give it as tzedakah rather than as a gift to the Rov, Rebbe, or teacher. One also does not fulfill the Mitzvah of Matanos L'Evyonim

with these gifts. Piskei Tshuvos 694:7, see Mishnah Berurah 694:2 MB7, Aruch Hashulchan 694:4, Tzedakah Umishpat 6:2

8193. On Purim one does not check credentials of those requesting tzedakah. Rather, "anyone who stretches his hand for tzedakah, we give to him". Shulchan Aruch 694:3

The Whys and Wherefores of Zachor

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Homebound

"As a mother of several small children, it is not easy for me to go out on Shabbos to hear Parshas Zachor. Am I required to do so?"

Question #2: Outreaching in the Afternoon

"At the outreach program that I run, many of our students do not arrive on Shabbos until the afternoon. Should we have a second Parshas Zachor reading for them?"

Question #3: Reading without a Brochah

"Why is no birkas haTorah recited on Parshas Zachor at a women's reading?"

Answer:

Introduction:

This Shabbos we read the special maftir that begins with the words Zachor es asher asah lecha Amalek baderech be'tzeis'chem miMitzrayim, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the road as you were leaving Egypt." According to the Rambam and many others, this short maftir reading actually includes three different commandments:

(1) A positive mitzvah, mitzvas asah, to remember the evil that Amalek did (Sefer Hamitzvos, Positive Mitzvah #189).

(2) A lo saaseh commandment not to forget what happened (Sefer Hamitzvos, Negative Mitzvah #59).

(3) The mitzvah to blot out the people of Amalek, mechiyas Amalek (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 5:5, and Sefer Hamitzvos, Positive Mitzvah #188; Semag).

The Torah's repetitive emphasis, remember and do not forget, teaches that the commandment "remember" means to express, to state it as a declaration. This is similar to the mitzvah of Kiddush, Zachor es yom haShabbos lekadsho, which is a requirement to state the sanctity of Shabbos and not simply to remember Shabbos (Sifra, beginning of Parshas Bechukosai). In addition, many authorities derive from the doubled command that the Torah requires us to review this declaration annually, since after a year one might forget it (see Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 603). The Sefer Hachinuch explains that since the mitzvah is to make sure that one does not forget, the Torah requirement is to restate this reminder every one to three years. The requirement of the mitzvah is fulfilled both in one's heart and on one's lips (Sefer Hachinuch).

(We should note that some authorities [Behag, Rav Saadya] count all three of the mitzvos mentioned above as one mitzvah in the count of the 613. Presumably, they consider these additional statements of the Torah as encouraging us to remember to fulfill the mitzvah of destroying Amalek.)

The Gemara (Megillah 18a) states that the positive mitzvah of remembering what Amalek did requires reading from a sefer Torah. For this reason, many authorities conclude that the annual public reading of Parshas Zachor from a Sefer Torah is required min haTorah (see Tosafos, Megillah 17b s.v. kol and Ritva ad loc.; Tosafos, Brachos 13a; Rosh, Brachos 7:20). Some conclude that the requirement to hear Parshas Zachor is even greater than that of hearing Megillas Esther, since the mitzvah of reading Megillah is miderabbanan, whereas Parshas Zachor is required by the Torah (Terumas Hadeshen #108). For this reason, the Terumas Hadeshen concludes that those who live in places that have no minyan are required to go to where there is a minyan for Shabbos Zachor to hear this reading, a ruling codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 685:7).

Those who disagree

Notwithstanding the long list of recognized early authorities who rule that an annual reading of Parshas Zachor is required min haTorah, several later authorities find this position difficult to sustain, contending that the requirement was introduced by Chazal. For example, the Minchas Chinuch (#603) states that the requirements for a minyan and a sefer Torah can be only miderabbanan. Similarly, Shu't Toras Chesed (Orach Chayim #37) provides a lengthy analysis as to why he feels that it is difficult to rule that reading Parshas Zachor annually is a Torah requirement. Nevertheless, in his final conclusion, he accepts the decision of the earlier authorities who rule that the Torah requires that we hear Parshas Zachor every year.

Hearing the parshah

At this point, we should explain the following question: If we are required to read Parshas Zachor, how do we perform the mitzvah by listening to the reading, without actually saying the words? The answer is that there is a halachic principle called shomei'a ke'oneh, hearing someone recite the appropriate passage fulfills a mitzvah responsibility the same way reciting it does. Shomei'a ke'oneh explains how we observe the mitzvah of kiddush when we hear someone else recite it, and

applies in numerous other situations, such as reading Megillas Esther and blowing shofar.

For shomei'a ke'oneh to work, the individual who is reciting must have in mind that he is performing the mitzvah on behalf of those listening, and the listeners must have in mind that they are fulfilling their duty to perform the mitzvah by listening. It is for this reason that, in most shullen, prior to the reading of Parshas Zachor the gabbai, baal keriah or rabbi announces that everyone should have the intention to fulfill the mitzvah.

Custom of the Gra

The Maaseh Rav (#133) records that the Gra not only received the aliyah for Parshas Zachor, but used to read the Torah himself for that aliyah. Presumably, the reason he did this was because of the general principle of mitzvah bo yoseir mibesheluch, "it is a bigger mitzvah to fulfill a commandment by performing the mitzvah oneself than by relying on someone else to perform it."

The Sefer Torah was pasul!

What is the halachah if one discovers, after the reading, that the Sefer Torah used for reading Parshas Zachor is missing a letter or has some other defect that renders it invalid? Must one re-read Parshas Zachor?

Allow me to provide some background. Although there are rishonim who rule that the mitzvah of kerias haTorah does not require reading from a kosher Sefer Torah, the halachic conclusion is that it does. However, if during or after kerias haTorah one finds that the sefer Torah was not kosher, one is not required to repeat what was already read (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 143:4). The rationale behind this is that since the mitzvah of reading the Torah is miderabbanan, one can rule that, bedei'evid, after one read the Torah, one fulfilled the mitzvah.

Based on the assumption that the mitzvah of Parshas Zachor is min haTorah, the Pri Megadim suggests that if the sefer Torah used was found to be invalid, one is required to read Parshas Zachor a second time, from a different sefer Torah (Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav, Orach Chayim 143:1).

Birkas hamitzvah

Why is no birkas hamitzvah recited for Zachor? When Parshas Zachor is read as maftir, the person receiving the aliyah recites birkas haTorah before it is read, as we do with all aliyyos to the Torah. Why is no birkas hamitzvah recited before reading Zachor es asher asah lecha Amelek, since it is one of the 613 mitzvos?

The authorities answer that we do not recite a brochah on an act of destruction, even though the world benefits from the removal of evildoers. This can be compared to one of the reasons cited why we do not recite the full Hallel on Pesach after the first day or days. "My creations are drowning, and you are singing praise?" Similarly, it is inappropriate to bless Hashem for the ability to destroy evil (Kaf Hachayim 685:29, quoting Yafeh Leleiv).

What exactly is the mitzvah?

Among the rishonim and geonim, we find differing opinions as to exactly what this mitzvah entails. Some understand that the mitzvah of remembering Amalek is a requirement to know the laws involved in destroying Amalek (Raavad and Rash to Sifra, beginning of Parshas Bechukosai, as explained by the Encyclopaedia Talmudis). According to this approach, the mitzvah of zechiras Amalek is primarily a mitzvah of learning Torah.

On the other hand, most authorities seem to understand that the mitzvah is to take to heart the evil that Amalek did and represents, and that it is our responsibility to combat evil in the world and help make the world a more G-dly place.

Why specifically Amalek? Because after the Exodus from Egypt and the splitting of the sea, all the nations were afraid of the Jews, until the moment that Amalek attacked. Although Amalek was beaten, this attack decreased the nations' tremendous awe and fear of the Jews (Rashi).

An afternoon reading

At this point, I would like to address one of the questions cited above:

"At the outreach program that I run, many of our students do not arrive on Shabbos until the afternoon. Should we have a second Parshas Zachor reading for them?"

This question was posed to Rav Shmuel Vozner, of Bnei Braq, by someone doing outreach in a small community in Brazil (Shu't Shevet Halevi 4:71). The community had a minyan in the morning, but most of the people did not come. The question was whether they should have a second Parshas Zachor reading late in the day.

Rav Vozner compares this situation to the following responsum authored by the Chida.

On Shabbos Parshas Shekalim in a small town, the local townspeople forgot to read the special maftir on Shabbos morning, and realized it in the afternoon. The townspeople proposed three options:

Some suggested that at minchah they read Parshas Shekalim for the kohen, and for the other two aliyyos they read the regular minchah reading from the next week's parshah.

Others suggested that they read Parshas Shekalim on Monday, instead of the weekday reading, since it was still before Rosh Chodesh Adar.

Still others suggested that they read Parshas Shekalim the next Shabbos, as maftir.

The Chida disputed all three approaches, contending that Parshas Shekalim may be read only in the morning, and can be read only on the Shabbos on which it is designated to be read. In his opinion, one who missed reading Parshas Shekalim at its appropriate time does not fulfill the takanas chachamim by reading it any other time (Shu't Yosef Ometz #27).

Rav Vozner contends that, according to the Chida, just as one cannot read Parshas Shekalim after its designated time, one cannot read Parshas Zachor after its designated time, and that, therefore, one cannot read it in the afternoon for those who missed it in the morning.

However, it appears that not all authorities accepted this ruling of the Chida. The Dagul Meirevavah (Orach Chayim 135) rules that a community that was unable to have kerias haTorah on Shabbos morning, but was able to have it on Shabbos afternoon, should read the full reading and call up seven people prior to beginning minchah. Then, after reciting Ashrei and Uva Letzion, they should take out the Sefer Torah again and read the appropriate minchah reading from the following week's parshah. Thus, he holds that one may read the main Shabbos reading in the afternoon, if necessary, which disagrees with the Chida's ruling.

One could argue, however, that the Dagul Meirevavah might accept the Chida's ruling that one cannot read Parshas Shekalim in the afternoon, but for a different reason: maftir may be read only immediately following the rest of the week's reading, and not by itself.

However, there might be a difference between Parshas Shekalim, whose reading does not fulfill any mitzvah of the Torah, and Parshas Zachor. Since Parshas Zachor might fulfill a Torah requirement, there is a responsibility to hear it, even if you were not in shul Shabbos morning. This is the reason why there is a widespread custom of having Parshas Zachor readings in the afternoon for those who cannot attend the hearing in the morning.

Women and Parshas Zachor

Now that we understand the basics of the mitzvah, we can address the first question asked above -- whether women are obligated to hear Parshas Zachor annually. The Chinuch states that women are excluded from the requirement to remember to destroy Amalek, since they are not expected to wage war. In his opinion, women have no obligation to hear Parshas Zachor, although they certainly may hear it and receive reward for doing so, as one who observes a mitzvah in which s/he is not obligated.

Other authorities dispute the Sefer Hachinuch's approach. In Adar 5628 (1868), Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, the author of the classic Aruch Laneir commentary on several mesechtos of the Gemara, was asked by his son-in-law, Rav Moshe Leib Bamberger, whether women are required to hear Parshas Zachor. The Aruch Laneir reports that he asked his rebbe, Rav Avraham Bing, who told him that Rav Nosson Adler (the rebbe of the Chasam Sofer) ruled that women are required to hear Parshas Zachor, and he insisted that they all go to hear it. The Aruch Laneir explains that Parshas Zachor is not a time-bound mitzvah, since one can read Parshas Zachor whenever one wants, as long as one reads it once a year. He then quotes the Chinuch's reason to absolve women from the obligation, and notes that it should not make any difference if women are the actual warriors, since they are involved in destroying Amalek -- as evidenced by Esther's participation (Shu't Binyan Tziyon 2:8).

Others dispute the basic assumption of the Chinuch, since, in a milchemes mitzvah, everyone is obligated to contribute to the war effort, even a newlywed bride (Sotah 44b). Evidence of this is drawn from Yael, who eliminated Sisra, and Devorah, who led that war effort (Minchas Chinuch). On the other hand, others find creative reasons to explain and justify the Sefer Hachinuch's position. (The intrepid reader is referred to the responsum on the subject penned by Rav Avraham of Sochatchov [Shu't Avnei Nezer, Orach Chayim #509].)

The Kaf Hachayim (685:30) presents a compromise position, ruling that women are obligated in the mitzvah to remember the events of Amalek, but are not

obligated to hear Parshas Zachor, since this is a time-bound mitzvah. (See also the Toras Chesed, who reaches a similar conclusion, but based on a different reason. More sources on this topic are cited by Shu't Yechaveh Daas 1:84.)

With or without a brochah?

It has become fairly common today to have special women's readings of Parshas Zachor later in the day, for the benefit of those who must take care of their children in the morning, during regular shul davening. The universal practice is not to recite a brochah of any type before these readings. There are three reasons why one should not recite a brochah on the afternoon reading:

- (1) We do not recite a brochah on the mitzvah of Zachor.
- (2) It is not certain that women are obligated to hear this reading.
- (3) It is not clear that one may recite maftir when it does not immediately follow the reading of the Torah.

Despite what we have just written, some authorities contend that whenever one reads from a sefer Torah in public, one is required to recite a brochah, because of the Torah-ordained mitzvah of birkas haTorah. In their opinion, this is true even when the reading itself is not required, and even when one has already recited birkas haTorah in the morning (Be'er Sheva and Shu't Mishkenos Yaakov, both quoted by the Toras Refael #2). Although the Toras Refael concludes that most rishonim dispute that reciting birkas haTorah under these circumstances is a Torah requirement, he nevertheless understands that the Shulchan Aruch rules that birkas haTorah is required miderabbanan, whenever the Torah is read in public.

Based on this opinion of the Toras Refael, some contemporary authorities feel that one should avoid entirely the practice of additional Shabbos Zachor readings, since the special reading creates a safek brochah, a question as to whether one should recite a brochah on the reading (seen in print in the name of Rav Elyashiv). Nevertheless, the accepted practice is to have these special readings to enable women to fulfill the mitzvah.

On the other hand, the Minchas Yitzchak was asked whether one makes a brochah for an auxiliary Parshas Zachor reading (Shu't Minchas Yitzchak 9:68). He quotes those who contend that every public reading of the Torah requires a brochah, and then notes many authorities who did not share this opinion. The Minchas Yitzchak then specifically mentions the practice of those who read all of Sefer Devarim in shul on the night of Hoshanah Rabbah without reciting a brochah, noting that this was the practice of the Divrei Chayim of Sanz. He also quotes several other authorities who advocate reading the parshah of the day's nasi after davening each day of the first twelve days of Nissan, also a custom performed without first reciting a brochah.

Thus, we have several precedents and authorities who ruled that one may have a public reading of the Torah without reciting a brochah, and there is, therefore, no need to change the established practice of reading Parshas Zachor and not reciting a brochah beforehand. We should also note that when the Magen Avraham (139:5) quotes the opinion of the Be'er Sheva, he opines that once one has recited birkos haTorah in the morning, he exempts himself from any requirement to recite further brochos on reading Torah that day, unless there is a specific institution of Chazal to recite them.

Reading on Purim

Some authorities contend that a woman may fulfill her responsibility to hear the mitzvah of mechiyas Amalek by hearing the Torah reading on Purim that begins with the words Vayavo Amalek (Magen Avraham 685). Since many later poskim dispute this, I refer you to your halachic authority regarding this question.

Conclusion

The Semak (Mitzvah #23) explains that the reason for the mitzvah not to forget what Amalek did is so that we always remember that Hashem saved us from Amalek's hands. Constant perpetuation of this remembrance will keep us in awe of Hashem, and this will prevent us from acting against His wishes.

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה