



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: Chaim Shulman
<cshulman@gmail.com>
& Allen Klein
<allen.klein@gmail.com>

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON ACHREI - 5784

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 29th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l** ben Yecheil Zaydel Dov

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@gmail.com (proceeds to tzedaka)

Friday night count 11 Days of the Omer

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>

to: ravfrand@torah.org

May 2, 2024

subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Acharei Mos

The Consultation That Never Took Place Could Have Made the Difference

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1289 Performing Mitzvos During the Holocaust. Good Shabbos!

There are many different opinions as to why the two elder sons of Aharon died during the ceremony dedicating the Mishkan. An interesting Medrash Tanchuma here in Parshas Achrei Mos enumerates four things they did wrong: The "kreivah" (coming

close); the "hakravah" (bringing an unsolicited offering); the "esh zarah" (foreign fire); and "lo natlu eizta zeh m'zeh" (not consulting with one another as to whether or not they should be doing what they did).

In elaborating upon this fourth point, the Medrash quotes the pasuk in Parshas Shemini that "each man took his own firepan" (Vayikra 10:1). This implies that unbeknownst to each other and independently, they decided on their own to bring this unsolicited Korban. While each came up with this idea individually, neither thought it wise to consult with his brother regarding the wisdom of bringing such an incense offering at this time.

Rav Dovid Soloveitchik asks on this Medrash: And if they would have consulted with each other, would it have made any difference? Apparently, they would have each corroborated their brother's plan, saying, "That's a great idea. I had the same idea!" In other words, it would not have made the slightest difference whether they consulted with one another or not before going ahead and offering this unsolicited incense offering.

However, the Medrash implies that if they would have consulted with one another first, they would not have made such a mistake. Rav Dovid Soloveitchik says that this teaches us a fact about human frailty: I could be doing something wrong, and I may even know that I am doing something wrong, but I don't see it in myself. But when YOU do something wrong and I see YOU doing that something wrong, I will recognize the error. Therefore, if you ask me whether you should do it or not, I will tell you in no uncertain terms, "Of course, you should NOT do it. It is an aveira!"

This is actually a play on words of a Mishna in Masseches Negaim (2:5) "A person is allowed to view (for determining tzaraas status) any and all blemishes, except his own..." A person can rule halachically on the status of anyone else's negah, but not on the person's own negah. Aside from the legal halachic interpretation of this statement (regarding the laws of tzaraas), the Mishna has a homiletic connotation as well: People see the faults of everyone else, but not their own faults. Had Nadav asked Avihu, "Hey, brother, I am thinking about bringing this ketores zarah before Hashem. What do you think about that idea?" Avihu would have responded on the spot "What are you - crazy???" The fact that Avihu was standing there with his own fire pan ready to do the same thing would not matter. He was not able to see the fallacy of his own actions, but he could readily detect that same fallacy in others. That is what the Medrash means: Had they consulted with each other, it could very well have been that their ill-fated action would have been derailed. I can see your faults. I cannot see my own faults.

The Yetzer HaRah Strives to Derail Aspirations for Purity

Parshas Achrei Mos contains the the Avodas Yom HaKippurim that details exactly what the Kohen Gadol does on Yom Kippur. That is the parsha that we read on Yom Kippur following Shachris.

By Mincha on Yom Kippur, we also learn from Parshas Achrei Mos, but the topic is completely different: “Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: I am Hashem, your G-d. Like the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled, do not perform; and like the practice of the land of Canaan, to which I bring you, do not perform, and do not follow their traditions.” (Vayikra 18:1-3) Then we continue reading with the section of arayos, enumerating various forms of sexual immorality.

Why, on the same day, do we read about the Kohen Gadol’s once-a-year angel-like admission to the Kodosh HaKodoshim (Holy of Holies), and then, after spending six or seven hours in fasting and prayer, we need to be warned against the lowest form of moral depravity? Who are we? Are we malachim (angels) or are we mushchasim (depraved individuals)?

The answer is that human beings are capable of being both. They are capable of angel-like entrance into the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting) and the Kodosh HaKodoshim, and they are also capable of incest, homosexuality, and bestiality. A person can, in fact, go from the highest spiritual heights to the lowest depths of immorality. Not only that, but it is precisely when a person is on the highest spiritual level that the Yetzer HaRah gives a tremendous push to make that person lose this level of spirituality.

Specifically, when a person is on the highest level the Satan says, “I need to pull out all stops and make the person fall flat on his face.” The Maharal writes (Tiferes Yisrael Chapter 48) that it is not a coincidence that the aveira of the Eigel Hazavah followed immediately after Kabbalas Hatorah. Moshe Rabbeinu was still on Har Sinai. The Jews were still just post-Matan Torah. Suddenly, they make a molten image and proclaim, “This is your god, Israel, that took you out from the land of Egypt.” (Shemos 32:4) The Maharal says that they went straight from Matan Torah to Ma’aseh haEgel because there was a tremendous Yetzer HaRah at that moment.

Specifically when we reach that high madregah, there is a push of an equal and opposite force.

There is a very amazing Gemara in Maseches Yoma (19b): The Mishna describes the attempts to keep the Kohen Gadol from falling asleep on the night of Yom Kippur: The young Kohanim would snap their fingers before him and say ‘My master, Kohen Gadol, stand up and dispel your drowsiness (by walking barefoot on the cold floor)!’ And they would keep him occupied until the time for the slaughtering (of the morning’s Korban Tamid).

The Gemara cites a Braisa which states: Abba Shaul says that even in the provinces (outside of the Bais Hamikdash without a Kohen Gadol and without an Avodas Yom HaKippurim) they used to do this (remain awake all night on Yom Kippur) as a zecher l’Mikdash (commemorative reenactment of the practice followed in the Bais Hamikdash). This was a beautiful thought on their part – they wanted to hold on to those magical moments of holiness that took place in the Beis Hamikdash on the holiest night of the year. However, the Braisa continues, this led to aveiros. People were staying up the whole night and (Rashi explains) men and women would mingle and have a good time together. Eventually this led to aveiros.

The Gemara then clarifies where this occurred: Eliyahu said to Rav Yehudah the brother of Rav Salla the Pious One: You always say, ‘Why has the Moshiach not yet come? The answer is in fact because of that aveira on Yom Kippur in Nehardea! How could this happen? Can you imagine in your shul – on Kol Nidre night – when every Tom, Dick and Harry comes to shul and they are in deep meditation? They even want to reenact the actions of the Kohen Gadol on Yom HaKippurim and suddenly, the men and women start schmoozing, they start fooling around. The next thing you know they are committing serious aveiros. How does that happen?

It happens because just the opposite of what we may expect occurs: Precisely where there is Kedusha and where there is striving to reenact and hold on to the great spiritual moments of the past, that is when the Yetzer HaRah finds the opportunity ripe to derail such aspirations of spiritual greatness.

That is why on Yom Kippur morning, we read “No man shall at that moment be in the Ohel Moed” and then on Yom Kippur afternoon by Mincha, we read “Like the abominations of Egypt where you were dwelling, you shall not do.” Especially on Yom Kippur, we need to warn the people – Do not be a low-life. Do not be a shegetz.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

date: May 2, 2024, 11:43 AM

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Count What Counts

Chazal (Yerushalmi, Rosh Hashana, 3:5) teach us, " דברי תורה עניים במקומו ועשירים במקום אחר - the words of Torah are poor in one place and wealthy in another", which means that insight regarding one area of Torah can often be found in an entirely different part of Torah. There is a halacha concerning Chanuka candles that can offer us a perspective on the time of year we are now beginning, i.e. Sefiras Haomer, the countdown to Shavuos. We are taught (Shabbos 22a) that one is not permitted to count one's money by the light of the Chanuka

candles. The Gemara questions why this should be so and offers an answer that has its source in Parshas Acharei Mos, regarding the mitzva in of kisui ha'dam - covering the blood of a wild animal or bird with dirt after it is slaughtered. Chazal derive from the phrase the Torah uses to describe the performance of this mitzva that one must use one's hand to cover the blood and not kick the dirt with one's foot to do this mitzva, since using one's foot would constitute a bizayon ha'mitzva - a disgrace to the object of a mitzva. Similarly, counting money by the light of the Chanukah candles is degrading to the mitzva and is therefore prohibited.

These halachos that govern kisui hadam and neiros Chanukah teach us about our mindset concerning mitzvos. It is not sufficient to only perform mitzvos; it is also critical that we appreciate their significance. Perhaps there is something unique about these two mitzvos that serve as the paradigms of appreciating mitzvos. Kisui ha'dam is performed with the most insignificant item, literally the dust of the earth. Recently, when we all declared that our chametz was utterly worthless to us during Pesach, we mentioned the dust of the earth in our declaration as the ultimate example of something worthless. And yet, even this seemingly insignificant dirt is elevated to a status in which it cannot be kicked around and must be handled with respect when it is being used for a mitzva. Only Torah and mitzvos elevate us; without them we are truly like the dust of the earth from which we were created.

When illustrating the use of Chanuka candles for our personal benefit, Chazal chose to describe one counting one's money by their light. Of all activities, why did Chazal choose counting money to highlight the halacha? One counts what is important and therefore the one counting his money is making a statement about what he values. Counting one's money and focusing on one's material wealth by the light of the Chanuka candles indicates a complete misunderstanding of their light. The Chanuka lights symbolize the spiritual light of Torah. Counting one's possessions rather than counting the words of Torah that are more precious than gold and silver is the ultimate disgrace to a mitzva.

These two mitzvos teach us what is important and what is not. Dirt which is intrinsically worthless becomes elevated if used for a mitzva, whereas the seemingly precious coins become meaningless if they are substituted for words of Torah.

As we count the days to receiving the Torah we should be focusing on what really counts in this world. We count every day because every day is precious. By appreciating the importance to these days, we elevate time to be something so significant that every minute counts. May Hashem help us see the importance of every mitzva we encounter and not be misled by the counting of money and the like. May the light of

Torah guide us to elevate everything in our lives for the glory of Torah and mitzvos.

© 2024 by TorahWeb Foundation. All Rights Reserved

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

<info@jewishdestiny.com>

reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Home Weekly Parsha Achrei Mos

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah has already described the tragedy of the family of Aaron, when his sons Nadav and Avihu died while performing incense burning on the day of the final dedication of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. So, why does the Torah return to the subject and mention it again in this week's Torah reading? The commentators over the ages, from the time of the Talmud onwards, have derived many explanations, laws and moral ideas from the repetition of this incident here in this parsha. Since the Torah is limitless, eternal and speaks to all generations, I take the liberty of suggesting another idea to help us understand the depths of the Torah's sensitivity to the human psyche and condition.

In a subtle but important way the Torah emphasizes that from now on everything that Aaron and his sons will do in the service of God and Israel, inside the holy Mishkan/Tabernacle or outside of it, will always be influenced by the tragedy they witnessed and experienced on the day their sons and brothers died. Moshe's comment that Nadav and Avihu were holy and sanctified people, close to God, so to speak, only amplifies the tragedy and makes it more difficult to comprehend and rationalize.

For the rest of their lives, Aaron, his surviving family and the entire Jewish nation will be haunted by this tragic event. It will hover over every occurrence that will befall them, personally or nationally, for all time. Everything will now be encapsulated in the time frame of "after the death of the two sons of Aaron." And this idea is implicit in the message of the Torah to us this week.

The Holocaust...the inexplicable iniquity of this tragedy haunts the Jewish people today, even decades after the fact. It seems that every accomplishment and shortcoming in Jewish life generally, and regarding the State of Israel particularly, is Holocaust driven. Everything is seen as being holy vengeance or justified retribution, as "remember and do not forget," or "never again!" There is no event that takes place in Jewish life today that does not have Holocaust overtones. We are always "achrei mot" - after the tragedy that brooks no explanation and constantly challenges our faith on one hand and our rationality on the other. It is as though the formal commemorations of the Holocaust are not that special and unique, hard as we try to

make them so, because every day and every occurrence now is still just another form of that memorial.

Naturally, the formal commemoration of the Holocaust invokes again the emotional connection to this enormous national tragedy. That is why such a national day of mourning is justified and necessary. And this only enhances our realization that we are all living in the time of “achrei mot.” And this explains a great deal of the mood and behavior of the Jewish people in our time.

And now, since October 7th, and with the war that we are engaged in now, “Achei mot” reflects the attitude and behavior of our people.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>
subject: Covenant and Conversation
COVENANT & CONVERSATION
Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Holy People, Holy Land

ACHAREI MOT

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

I had been engaged in dialogue for two years with an Imam from the Middle East, a gentle and seemingly moderate man. One day, in the middle of our conversation, he turned to me and asked, “Why do you Jews need a land? After all, Judaism is a religion, not a country or a nation.”

I decided at that point to discontinue the dialogue. There are 56 Islamic states and more than 100 nations in which Christians form the majority of the population. There is only one Jewish state, 1/25th the size of France, roughly the same size as the Kruger National Park in South Africa. With those who believe that Jews, alone among the nations of the world, are not entitled to their own land, it is hard to hold a conversation. Yet the question of the need for a land of our own is worth exploring. There is no doubt, as D.J. Clines explains in his book, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, that the central narrative of the Torah is the promise of and journey to the land of Israel. Yet why is this so? Why did the people of the covenant need their own land? Why was Judaism not, on the one hand, a religion that can be practised by individuals wherever they happen to be, or on the other, a religion like Christianity or Islam whose ultimate purpose is to convert the world so that everyone can practise the one true faith?

The best way of approaching an answer is through an important comment of the Ramban (Nahmanides, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman Gironi, born Gerona, 1194, died in Israel, 1270) on this week’s parsha. Chapter 18 contains a list of forbidden sexual practices. It ends with this solemn warning:

Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. The land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep My decrees and My laws . . . If you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

Lev. 18:24-28

Nahmanides asks the obvious question. Reward and punishment in the Torah are based on the principle of middah kenegged middah, measure for measure. The punishment must fit the sin or crime. It makes sense to say that if the Israelites neglected or broke mitzvot hateluyot ba’aretz, the commands relating to the land of Israel, the punishment would be exile from the land of Israel. So the Torah says in the curses in Bechukotai:

“All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.”

Lev. 26:35

Its meaning is clear: this will be the punishment for not observing the laws of shemittah, the sabbatical year. Shemittah is a command relating to the land. Therefore the punishment for its non-observance is exile from the land.

But sexual offences have nothing to do with the land. They are mitzvot hateluyot baguf, commands relating to person, not place. Ramban answers by stating that all the commands are intrinsically related to the land of Israel. It is simply not the same to put on tefillin or keep kashrut or observe Shabbat in the Diaspora as in Israel. In support of his position he quotes the Talmud (Ketubot 110b) which says:

“Whoever lives outside the land is as if he had no God” and the Sifre that states, “Living in the land of Israel is of equal importance to all the commandments of the Torah.”

Ketubot 110b

The Torah is the constitution of a holy people in the holy land. Ramban explains this mystically but we can understand it non-mystically by reflecting on the opening chapters of the Torah and the story they tell about the human condition and about God’s disappointment with the only species – us – He created in His image. God sought a humanity that would freely choose to do the will of its Creator. Humanity chose otherwise. Adam and Eve sinned. Cain murdered his brother Abel. Within a short time “the earth was filled with violence” and God “regretted that He had made human beings on earth.” He brought a flood and began again, this time with the righteous Noah, but again humans disappointed Him by building a city with a tower on which they sought to reach heaven, and God chose another way of bringing humanity to recognise him – this time not by universal rules (though these remained,

namely the covenant with all humanity through Noah), but by a living example: Abraham, Sarah and their children.

In Genesis 18 the Torah makes clear what God sought from Abraham: that he would teach his children and his household after him “to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.” Homo sapiens is, as both Aristotle and Maimonides said, a social animal, and righteousness and justice are features of a good society. We know from the story of Noah and the Ark that a righteous individual can save themselves but not the society in which they live, unless they transform the society in which they live.

Taken collectively, the commands of the Torah are a prescription for the construction of a society with the consciousness of God at its centre. God asks the Jewish people to become a role model for humanity by the shape and texture of the society they build, a society characterised by justice and the rule of law, welfare and concern for the poor, the marginal, the vulnerable and the weak, a society in which all would have equal dignity under the sovereignty of God. Such a society would win the admiration, and eventually the emulation, of others:

See, I have taught you decrees and laws . . . so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will be your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” . . . What other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

Deut. 4:5-8

A society needs a land, a home, a location in space, where a nation can shape its own destiny in accord with its deepest aspirations and ideals. Jews have been around for a long time, almost four thousand years since Abraham began his journey. During that period they have lived in every country on the face of the earth, under good conditions and bad, freedom and persecution. Yet in all that time there was only one place where they formed a majority and exercised sovereignty, the land of Israel, a tiny country of difficult terrain and all too little rainfall, surrounded by enemies and empires.

Jews never relinquished the dream of return. Wherever they were, they prayed about Israel and facing Israel. The Jewish people has always been the circumference of a circle at whose centre was the holy land and Jerusalem the holy city. During those long centuries of exile they lived suspended between memory and hope, sustained by the promise that one day God would bring them back.

Only in Israel is the fulfilment of the commands a society-building exercise, shaping the contours of a culture as a whole. Only in Israel can we fulfil the commands in a land, a

landscape and a language saturated with Jewish memories and hopes. Only in Israel does the calendar track the rhythms of the Jewish year. In Israel Judaism is part of the public square, not just the private, sequestered space of synagogue, school and home.

Jews need a land because they are a nation charged with bringing the Divine Presence down to earth in the shared spaces of our collective life, not least – as the last chapter of Acharei Mot makes clear – by the way we conduct our most intimate relationships, a society in which marriage is sacrosanct and sexual fidelity the norm.

This message, that Jews need a land to create their society and follow the Divine plan, contains a message for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. To Christians and Muslims it says: if you believe in the God of Abraham, grant that the children of Abraham have a right to the Land that the God in whom you believe promised them, and to which He promised them that after exile they would return.

To Jews it says: that very right comes hand-in-hand with a duty to live individually and collectively by the standards of justice and compassion, fidelity and generosity, love of neighbour and of stranger, that alone constitute our mission and destiny: a holy people in the holy land.

from: Rabbi Pinchas Winston <winston@torah.org>

to: perceptions@torah.org

date: May 1, 2024, 10:36 AM

subject: Perceptions - In The Moment

Perceptions

By Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Parshas Acharei Mos

In The Moment

THE POWER OF a moment. One second, life can be going in one direction, and the next, completely another direction. It can start all-time bad and turn into all-time good, and vice versa.

There is always some kind of build-up to the turning point moment that we might or might not have seen. But there is always one moment in particular past which there is no turning back, the infamous and often tragic “Point of No Return.” It’s like throwing a rock into what appeared to be an open and safe space, only to helplessly watch some car’s windshield shatter as a car began to drive through it at exactly the wrong moment. The Gemora, at least in one place, emphasizes the importance of respecting the moment: If a person pushes off the moment, the moment will push them off. If they allow themselves to be pushed off by the moment, the moment will be pushed off for them (Brochos 64a).

In other words, if a person impatiently tries to achieve a result before its time, it usually backfires. But if they allow the moment and opportunity to naturally unfold, then they might even achieve more than they bargained for. You may want to call again to find out if you got the job while sensing that it is one call too many and end up losing it because you seem too impatient. Or, you may hold yourself back only to receive a call of approval even earlier than anticipated.

Some might call it tempting fate. The truth is, you can't. A person's mazel is a person's mazel (Shabbos 156a). And even though the Gemora goes on to say that a Jew can alter their mazel through their actions, Kabbalah explains that we cannot completely do that. The best we can do is mitigate our mazel, temper it so that it is not as bad as it was meant to be, or a little better.

Then who needs Yom Kippur? Are we only apologizing for not mitigating our mazel, which might have led us to sin in the first place? And if a gentile can't mitigate their mazel at all, a right that comes from living according to the Torah, then why are they ever responsible for the evil they do?

Because even though this is a world of action, action is not the purpose of the world. Will is. As the Gemora says, "All is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven" (Brochos 33b), another way of saying: successful actions are beyond your control, but the will to accomplish them is not. A person may be destined to accomplish an act or to fail at it, but it is only considered a failure to God if the person fails to will to succeed.

As Chazal say, "According to the pain is the reward" (Pirkei Avos 5:23). And by pain, they don't mean unnecessarily self-inflicted pain. They mean the kind of pain that comes from willing to do something meaningful against the wish of the body, what we call Mesiras Nefesh, or self-sacrifice.

That is what we do viduy for on Yom Kippur, the lack of mesiras Nefesh we could have done to avoid sin, but didn't. This is what the Gemora alludes to here:

In the future, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will bring the yetzer hara and slaughter it before the righteous and the wicked. It will appear like a towering hill to the righteous but like a thread of hair to the wicked. Both will cry. The righteous will cry and say, "How were we able to overcome such a towering hill?!" The evil will cry and say, "How is it that we were unable to conquer this hair thread?!" (Succah 52a) But which was it, a towering hill or a thread of hair? The answer is, both. For the righteous, it was a towering hill but it became like a hair once they made an initial effort to conquer it. As it says, "If a person comes to purify themselves, Heaven helps them" (Yoma 38b).

But for the evil, the people who chose not to even take baby steps to conquer their yetzer haras, it remained something too

big to overcome. Until, that is, they were later shown how God had been prepared to match their mesiras Nefesh to win the battle against their yetzer haras with Heavenly help.

Everyone wants success in life, but not everyone gets the kind of success they imagine for themselves. But the success God imagines for us is determined by how much we realize the opportunity in each moment to make a meaningful free-will choice, regardless of the impact it may have on others or history. Realizing this is the first step to even greater success than we could ever imagine for anyone.

fw from allen.klein@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig <genesis@torah.org>

to: rabbizweig@torah.org

subject: Rabbi Zweig

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Esther Ann Brown Adler, Esther Chana bas R' Tzvi.

Time After Time

You shall observe My decrees and My laws; which a man shall carry out and he shall live by them – I am Hashem (18:5).

In this week's parsha, the Torah introduces a new concept regarding observing the mitzvos: they give a person "life."

Rashi (ad loc) is troubled with the literal meaning that a person can achieve life through observing the mitzvos and asks, "Is it not man's destiny to die?" Thus, Rashi explains that this "life" refers to the eternal reward that a person achieves in "The World to Come."

Interestingly enough, both of the Aramaic translations of the Torah, Targum Onkelos and Yonasan Ben Uziel, understand the plain meaning of this verse in exactly the same manner – that this "life" refers to the reward a person receives in the next world.

Yet this understanding of the verse to simply refer to the "life" a person receives in the next world is difficult to accept in light of the following discussion in the Talmud (Yoma 85a). The Gemara relates that R' Akiva, R' Yishmael, and R' Elazar Ben Azaryah were traveling together with a few others and the question was raised, "From where do we know that one is obligated to violate Shabbos to save a person's life?"

The Gemara then records each of the tana'im's opinions as to why we are obligated to violate Shabbos to save a person's life. Most of the opinions were based on brilliant logical inferences in Jewish law. One by one the Gemara takes them apart and invalidates them as the ultimate source for this law. The Gemara then quotes the amora Shmuel, that the source for this law is based on this very verse from this week's parsha: "and he shall live by them."

The implication of this verse is that a person must live through the mitzvos and that one should not die through the observance of the mitzvos. Thus, the Gemara concludes that the literal meaning of this verse is that the preservation of a person's life overrides the obligation of keeping mitzvos (the only mitzvos that are excluded from this and for which one must give up his life to fulfill are murder, idolatry, and illicit relations). Indeed, Maimonides (HilchosShabbos 2:3) quotes this very verse as the source for this law.

This is very difficult to understand in light of the literal translations according to Rashi and the targumim. According to Rashi and the targumim, the life mentioned in this verse doesn't refer to a person's life in this world. How is it possible that the source for saving a person's life in this world is the very verse that they say refers to the life one merits in The World to Come?

The Torah is teaching us one of the most fundamental principles of Jewish philosophy. People in this world have a very temporal existence. Thus, the most precious possession that any person has is time. Yet, without a greater purpose to one's life, one's most precious possession is merely a depreciating asset. In other words, if an average person lives 70-80 years, approximately 27,375 days, then every day that passes is one less in his possession.

Anyone who lives on savings knows the insecurity of contemplating what will happen when the savings runs out. A person's temporal existence is the very same issue but on a much larger scale. This gnawing feeling that one's life is merely slipping away is undoubtedly the source for many questionable decisions that come as a result of this issue. This is why one often sees older people wearing "hip" clothes or sporting ponytails – fashions that are generally reserved for teenagers and young adults – because they are trying to hold on. This feeling, that one's life is slipping away, is also the reason people go through midlife crises.

Chazal are teaching us a fundamentally different way of viewing our lives – one that should change a person's outlook on life. By observing the mitzvos, a person merits "life" in The World to Come. As Rashi points out, earning "life" in this world is essentially meaningless because it's temporal. But receiving a share in The World to Come is achieving an eternal existence. Therefore, our lives here aren't merely a diminishing asset; each day provides an opportunity to deliver an incredible eternal existence.

This is the very same reason that we violate Shabbos (or other mitzvos) to save a person's life. Because the value of our temporal life is based on the fact that through it we have the potential to achieve eternal life.

Happiness of Holiness

For on this day He shall provide atonement to cleanse you [...] (16:30).

Much of this week's parsha is dedicated to discussing the service that the kohen gadol does in the Beis Hamikdosh on Yom Kippur. According to the Gemara(85b),this verse is the source that Hashem grants atonement on Yom Kippur. Interestingly, the day itself provides atonement for certain sins, even without a person's complete repentance for those transgressions.

The Gemara(Ta'anis 30b) suggests two reasons why the Mishna considers Yom Kippur to be one of the two happiest days on the Jewish calendar: because a person receives atonement on this day and because on Yom Kippur the Jewish people received the second set of tablets.Even though receiving the second tablets signified that Hashem forgave His people for the sin of the Golden Calf, this forgiveness cannot be the reason why Yom Kippur is considered a very happy day, as that would be the same reason as the first (i.e. Hashem grants atonement). What is the connection between receiving the second set of luchos and the day a person receives forgiveness?

At the end of Gemara Megilla (31a)the Talmud lists all the Torah readings for the different days of the year. Among this list is the reading for Yom Kippur and it is quite interesting to note that all of the readings of the day come from this week's parsha.

In the morning we read from the beginning of this week's parsha, which discusses the avodah and other Yom Kippur observances (such as fasting), while in the afternoon we read from the end of this week's parsha, which enumerates all the illicit relationships. While the morning's readings are quite understandable, we must try to understand why Chazal instituted the reading of forbidden relationships on the holiest day of the year. It seems a little incongruous.

In the beginning of the parsha,we find a fascinating Rashi (16:1). Rashi describes the reason for observance of the mitzvos is not as one might think, because Hashem's relationship with the Jewish people is not one of a king-subject relationship but rather as a doctor-patient relationship. This concept is very important to internalize.

Just as a doctor advises his patient on what's the best way for him to act in order to live, so too the reason that Hashem gave us the Torah is so that we would have a guide to living our best lives possible. Only by observing Hashem's mitzvos can we have the most remarkable physical, emotional, and spiritual lives. The Torah and mitzvos are in place for our sake.

A person who lives his life with little structure and is driven to continuously experience succeeding levels of a hedonistic lifestyle essentially defeats his own purpose for existence. This is because the physical body is only capable of experiencing a

limited amount of pleasure (e.g. you can only eat and drink so much). Anything physical is limited to physical boundaries. The more continuous physical pleasure a person seeks, the less pleasure he receives from the same acts, and eventually a person becomes a slave to his very desires. Consider a drug addict: the first time the pleasure may be beyond belief, but for the rest of his drug filled life he is trying to achieve that same original high – a feat that cannot be reached and ultimately causes a spiral of destruction.

Yom Kippur is the day that, through Hashem's beneficence, we "reboot" and begin anew. We distance ourselves from all physicality and contemplate our lives and the sins that we are driven towards by our physical bodies. Hashem grants us forgiveness, much in the same manner one declares bankruptcy; thus it is a chance to start over and begin anew to lead a productive life.

This is the reason we read about the forbidden relationships as Yom Kippur draws to a close. It's a reminder that focusing merely on seeking higher and more exotic physical pleasure leads to destructive and debasing behavior. In addition, just as a sugar addict must seek continually higher and higher sugar levels to enjoy food and drink, and eventually loses the ability to enjoy typical healthy foods, so too the constant pursuit of any physical pleasure is self-defeating in that eventually it causes us to be unable to enjoy the physical pleasures that life offers.

This is why on this day of "rebooting" we also received the second luchos. The Torah is the manual given to us by Hashem to lead the most incredible life. The structure that Hashem put into place is the only way to achieve the maximum physical, emotional, and spiritual pleasure from life.

<https://www.theyeshiva.net/jewish/item/949/parshas-acharei-mos-shmini-dont-be-silent-about-the-antisemitism>

Rabbi YY Jacobson

Don't Be Silent About the Antisemitism

The Holocaust Began with Propaganda

May 2, 2024 24 Nisan 5784

In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time, no one was left to speak up.—Martin Niemöller

As the Jewish world grieves for the heinous mini Holocaust of October 7th, 2023, all the soldiers slain in Gaza, and the innocent souls languishing in Hamas captivity; as we are alarmed and disgusted by the horrific display of antisemitism

in the elite US universities and the world over; as many survivors and their families will soon commemorate Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, to remember the 6,000,000 who perished in the Holocaust; as Jews in Israel continue to be threatened by nations determined to destroy it; as abuse and injustice often take root in our own communities due to the silence of good people—let us reflect on a stirring Midrash on this week's Torah portion.

The Fateful Conversation

This week's Torah portion, Acharei Mos, relates (for the second time, after the first time in Shmini) the tragic episode of the premature death of Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu. On the day the Tabernacle in the desert was erected and Aaron's four sons were inaugurated as priests, the two oldest children entered the Tabernacle and did not come out alive [1]. The Talmud[2] relates the inside story to explain the cause of their death:

"It once happened that Moses and Aaron were walking along the road, Nadav and Avihu (Aaron's two sons) were walking behind them, and all Israel was walking behind them. Said Nadav to Avihu, 'When will these two old men die, and you and I will lead the generation?' Thereupon, G-d said to them: 'We shall see who will bury whom!'"

A Cryptic Midrash

Now, this story of Aaron's two sons engendered a cryptic Midrash. It reads like this[3]:

"When Job heard about the death of the two sons of Aaron, he was seized by tremendous fear. This event compelled Job's best friend, Elihu, to state [4]: "Because of this, my heart trembles and jumps from its place."

This Midrash seems strange. Why did the Nadan-Avihu episode trigger profound fear in the heart of Job's friend? Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, the 18th-century Italian sage and mystic known in short as the Chida [5], presents the basis of the following interpretation of this obscure Midrash. He quotes it [6] "in the name of the Sages of Germany."

Three Advisors

The Talmud relates [7] that Job served on the team of advisors to Pharaoh, the emperor of Egypt. The other members of the team were Balaam and Jethro. When the Jewish population in Egypt began to increase significantly, developing from a small family of seventy members into a large nation, Pharaoh, struck by the fear that this refugee group would ultimately pose a threat to his empire, consulted his three advisors on how to deal with the "Jewish problem."

Balaam chose a tyrannical approach. He suggested that Pharaoh drown all Jewish baby boys and force every adult Jewish male into slave labor.

Job remained silent. He neither condemned the Jews to exertion and death nor defended their rights to life and liberty.

Jethro was the only one among the three who objected to Balaam's plan of oppression. To escape the wrath of Pharaoh, who enthusiastically embraced Balaam's "final solution," Jethro fled from Egypt to Midian, where he lived for the remainder of his years.

The Talmud (7) relates the consequences of the advisors' respective behaviors. Balaam was slain many decades later during a Jewish military campaign in the Middle East [8]. Job was afflicted by various maladies and personal tragedy [9], while Jethro, the exclusive voice of morality in the Egyptian palace, merited not only Moses as a son-in-law but also descendants who served as members of the Jewish Supreme Court (Sanhedrin) in Jerusalem, loyally representing the Jewish principles of justice and morality [10].

Job's Self-Righteousness

What went through Job's mind after this incident? Did Job consider himself morally inferior to his colleague Jethro who, in an act of enormous courage, stood up to a superpower king and protested his program of genocide? Did Job return home that evening and say to his wife, "I discovered today that I am a spineless and cowardly politician who will sell his soul to the devil just to retain his position in the government."

Job, like so many of us in similar situations, did not entertain that thought even for a moment. On the contrary, Job considered himself the pragmatist and Jethro the idiot. "What did Jethro gain from speaking the full truth?" Job thought to himself. "He lost his position and was forced to flee. He acted as a fanatical zealot. By employing my savvy diplomatic skills and remaining silent, I will continue to serve as Pharaoh's senior advisor; I will assist the Jewish people, subtly and unobtrusively, from within the governmental ranks of power." For decades, Job walked the corridors of the Egyptian palace, saturated with a feeling of self-righteousness and contentment.

Till the day he heard of the death of the sons of Aaron.

Job's Shattering Discovery

When Job inquired as to what might have caused the premature deaths of these two esteemed men, he was answered with the famous Talmudic episode quoted at the beginning of this essay:

"It once happened that Moses and Aaron were walking along the road, Nadav and Avihu (Aaron's two sons) were walking behind them, and all Israel were walking behind them. Said Nadav to Avihu, 'When will these two old men die, and you and I will lead the generation?' Thereupon, G-d said to them: 'We shall see who will bury whom!'"

Job was astounded. "I can fully understand," Job said [11], "why Nadav was punished. It was he who uttered these disgusting words. But why was his brother, Avihu, punished? He did not say anything [12]."

"Avihu?" came the reply. "He was punished because he remained silent[13]."

Because when a crime is happening in front of your eyes, your silence is deafening [14].

No Time for Silence

In the face of despicable anti-Semitism, coming from so many academics and their foolish students —all good people who remain silent, become accomplices to the crime.

Ideas have power. It was the propaganda of the Nazi party nine decades ago which allowed millions of Germans to become active murderers of millions. When Jew hatred goes unchallenged and unprotested, the consequences can be horrific.

Throughout history, Haile Selassie said, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted, the indifference of those who should have known better, and the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most that have made it possible for evil to triumph.

[1] Leviticus 10:1-3; 16:1. [2] Sanhedrin 52a. [3] The Midrash is quoted in Nachal Kedumim and Chomas Anach by the Chida Parshas Acharei Mos (see footnotes 5-6); in the book "Midrash Pliah," and in Pardas Yosef to Leviticus 16:1. - See Vayikrah Rabah 20:5 (and commentaries of Matnois Kehunah, Yefah Toar and Rashash). [4] Job 37:1. [5] 1724-1806. The Chida, author of more than fifty volumes on Torah thought, was one of the great Torah luminaries of his day. He resided in Israel, Egypt, and Italy.[6] In his book Chomas Anach (however, see there for his refutation of this interpretation). This answer is quoted also in Pardas Yosef ibid and in "Midrash Pliah - Chedah Upelpul." [7] Sotah 11a. [8] Numbers 31:8. [9] See Job chapters 1-2. Job, just like Balaam, received a punishment measure for measure. One cries when he suffers, even though he knows that doing so will not alleviate his suffering. Why? Because pain hurts. This keenly demonstrated to Job his state of moral apathy. For if he were truly perturbed by the plight of the Jewish victims, he would have voiced his objection to Balaam's plan even if he thought that protesting it wouldn't bear any results, just as one cries out in pain upon suffering though the cry will not help the situation (See Chidushei HaGriz by Rabbi Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik to Sotah ibid.). [10] Jethro, too, was rewarded measure for measure (see Toras HaKenaos to Sotah ibid.). [11] It is unnecessary to assume that the Chida intends that Job actually heard of this Talmudic tradition and posed the following question. As with many Midrashim, certain statements and episodes may be understood symbolically. Possibly, the Midrash is conveying to us its perspective on moral silence by employing the images of Job and Aaron's two sons as examples. [12] This question is raised (independently of this entire discussion) in Birchas Shmuel to Sotah ibid. [13] Cf.

Eyoon Yaakov to Ein Yaakov Soteh *ibid.* [14] This essay is partially based on an address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Purim 1971. Published in *Sichos Kodosh* 5731 vol. 1 pp. 560-568 and in *Toras Menachem Purim* 5731.

Alan Fisher <afisherads@yahoo.com>

BS"D We lovingly dedicate the Devrei Torah for this week in memory of special family members' yahrzeits: 25 Nisan (Yetta Franks, Alan's aunt); 26 Nisan (Nathalie Morrison, Hannah's mother); 27 Nisan (Leonard Franks, Alan's cousin and also Yom HaShoah); and 28 Nisan (Anne Fisher, Alan's mother). Alan & Hannah

BS"D May 3, 2024

Thursday night – Friday day, May 3 is the 10th Day of the Omer

Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 11 #30, May 3-4, 2024; 25-26 Nisan 5784; Acharei Mot; Mevarchim HaHodesh

Hamas recently announced that it cannot find even 40 of the remaining approximately 130 hostages (alive and presumed dead). During the past week, Hamas suddenly released a video including Hersh Polin Goldberg, cousin of very close friends of ours. We continue our prayers for all our people stuck in Gaza. With the help of Hashem, Israel and a few friendly countries prevented an attack by Iran from causing more than minimal damage. May our people in Israel wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully – with the continued help of Hashem.

Acharei Mot comes almost exactly at the middle of the Torah, and the middle is the most significant location in the Torah's chiasmic structure. (If you do not understand my first sentence, look up "chiasm" on the Internet.) The first two (of the three) chapters direct Moshe to tell Aharon how and when to come close to Hashem's presence without dying the way that his sons Nadav and Avihu did during the dedication of the Mishkan. Moreover, the Kohen Gadol is to follow the procedure precisely every year on Yom Kippur, and the result of performing the ritual exactly as prescribed is that it will attain Kapporet (forgiveness) for the sins of the people. We read Acharei Mot shortly after Pesach – during Sefira – every spring. Sefira traditionally is a very sad period in Jewish history. April 30 is International Holocaust Memorial Day, in memory of the six million Jews that the Nazis murdered leading to and during World War II. 27 Nisan is Yom Ha Shoah, in memory of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising on that date (pushed off one day this year to avoid conflicting with Shabbat). The period of Sefira is also a period when our

ancestors faced pogroms and murderous attacks many times in history, such as during the Crusades, Inquisition, Russian pogroms, and numerous other similar episodes all over Europe.

This year, the IDF is still working to defeat Hamas in Gaza and to free the remaining hostages (approximately 130, including an unknown number still alive and others who died since October 7). Meanwhile, there has been an explosion of anti-Semitism all over the world, including outside leaders and anti-Semitic university teachers and students at many universities. Two of the ugliest conflicts have been at Columbia University and UCLA, both institutions in heavily Jewish New York and Los Angeles. (UCLA is on the west side of Los Angeles, a large region that has been heavily Jewish for well in excess of fifty years.)

Acharei Mot contains links all over Tanach. For example, ever since God expelled Adam and Chava Rishon from Gan Eden, a persistent theme has been man's attempt to re-establish a close personal connection with Hashem, including finding a way to come near His presence and survive. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, observes that the two goats in the Kohen Gadol's Yom Kippur ritual correspond to the goats that Yaakov and Esav brought to Yitzhak when he asked Esav to trap a goat and bring it to him cooked, after which he would bless his son. (Rifka and Yaakov arranged for Yaakov to bring a meal posing as Esav to steal that blessing.) The ritual of sacrificing one goat and sending away the other connects back to the beginning of problems between Jews and descendants of Esav (first Seir and later Rome and Christian Europe).

Rabbi David Fohrman and his fellow scholars at alephbeta.org observe that Megillat Esther (the Purim story) follows the Kohen Gadol's Yom Kippur ritual very precisely. The King (who represents Hashem in the Megillah) calls for Vashti to come to his banquet. She refuses, and he has her killed. Mordechai tells Esther that she must approach the king and ask him to save the Jews from Haman's edict of death. Esther reminds Mordechai that the penalty for approaching the king (Hashem's presence) without being called is death. Esther must find a way to do so safely. She follows the prescription in Acharei Mot. She and all the Jews fast for three days, and she goes to the king while fasting. She wears the special clothes set aside for approaching the king. She goes at the appointed time (from Mordechai) and brings a sin offering (herself). These preparations mirror those of the Kohen Gadol in Acharei Mot.

In the seven months since Hamas attacked us on October 7, one frequent question could be, "Where has God been when we need Him, both in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world?" I am reprinting an article from the Internet Parsha Sheet from the ending days of Pesach. Dr. Maximilian

that it is the greatest land. It was beloved by the Avot, and Moshe Rabbeinu longed for it greatly... and yet, despite all these promises and reassurances, and a great vision of the fulfillment of Jewish destiny in Eretz Yisrael, the people rejected the land.

“Hence, וְכַמְעַשָּׂה אֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אָנִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם שָׁמָּה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ means: do not reject Eretz Yisrael.

“The two ‘you shall not do’ of this verse teach us: 1. לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ - do not get too comfortable in exile, and 2. לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ - never reject or despise the land.

“... What tremendous gratitude we owe to HKB”H for allowing us to return to Eretz Yisrael in our day and age. We need to keep the lessons of the Kli Yakar in mind. On the one hand, we must be careful not to become overly comfortable in exile, and we must also strengthen our love for the Land, and never reject her... We must embrace Eretz Yisrael, recognize all the good that Hashem has bestowed upon her, and upon us, and we must appreciate the most precious gift that we have been granted in our generation” (Shalom Rav, v.II, p.89-90). Today, more than seven months after Simchas Torah 5784/Oct. 7, 2023, and the flames of anti-semitism that have engulfed our world, and are continuing to rage, unabated, from east to west, and north to south, we would do well to keep the lesson of the double ‘thou shall not do’ of this verse in mind. No matter where a Jew is in exile, he is a stranger in a strange land. We should never become too comfortable in galus, because as the past seven months have powerfully reminded us, exile is not - and never will be - our home. And we must never reject, and must always embrace with passionate love, the Promised Land of Eretz Yisrael.

May we merit to see her in her rebuilding, may we merit to see her in her peace, and may we merit to see all of her children come back to her loving embrace.

בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/torah/the-foundations-of-our-world/2024/05/02/>

The Foundation(s) Of Our World

By Rabbi Reuven Taragin - 24 Nisan 5784 – May 2, 2024

He [Shimon HaTzaddik] used to say: The world stands upon three things – on the Torah, on [the sacrificial] service, and on acts of kindness (Avot 1:2).

An Existential Opening

After Masechet Avot’s first mishna concludes its description of those who relayed the Torah from generation to generation with the Anshei Knesset HaGedolah (Men of the Great Assembly), the second mishna presents a foundational statement of Shimon HaTzaddik, who was among its last members.

Shimon HaTzaddik’s statement is critical for our general worldview. Unlike most of Masechet Avot, which consists of directives for how to best live life, Shimon HaTzaddik relates here to the more fundamental question of why the world exists. He asserts that the world stands on three pillars: It exists to facilitate Torah (learning), avodah (service of Hashem), and gemilut chasadim (acts of kindness). Shimon HaTzaddik teaches us that the world’s sustenance hinges upon human action and behavior. Because Hashem created the world to offer humanity the opportunity to live meaningful lives, He linked its existence to us doing so.

Torah

Torah is the first pillar. Though all three pillars are important, Torah learning reigns supreme. Chazal (Bereishit Rabbah 1:6) saw this idea in the Torah’s very first word – “Bereishit.” Torah learning is the “reishit” (beginning) the world was created to facilitate.

We remind ourselves of this fact every morning when we conclude our recital of the berachot related to Torah learning with the mishna in Pei’ah, which teaches that “Talmud Torah k’neged kulam,” the significance of Torah study is equal to that of all other mitzvot.

The Gemara (Megillah 16b) asserts that Torah learning is of greater value than building the Beit HaMikdash, honoring one’s parents, and even saving a life. In fact, Chazal taught that the world’s very existence hinges upon Torah learning.

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 3a) explains the Torah’s formulation of the sixth day of creation as “yom hashishi” (as opposed to simply “shishi” like in the description of previous days – “yom echad,” “yom sheni,” “yom shlishi,” etc.) as teaching that Hashem conditioned creation on a future special sixth day – the sixth day of Sivan when the Torah was given. Had we not committed ourselves to the Torah, Hashem would have returned the world to nothingness.

Rav Chaim Volozhin (Nefesh Hachayim 1:16) adds that the world’s existence not only hinged (in the past) on the original Kabbalat HaTorah but also continues to depend upon constant Torah learning. If there would be even one moment completely bereft of Torah learning, the world would cease to exist.

Talmud Torah (Torah study) is not just the world’s purpose; it is also the unique purpose and mission of the Jewish people. As the mishna in Avot’s second perek teaches, “If you have learned much Torah, do not take special credit; it is (simply) why you were created.” (Avot 2:8). Hashem created the world to be a context for Torah learning; He created the Jewish people as the vehicle. This explains why Hillel taught that one who does not study Torah deserves to die (Avot 1:13). Torah study is a central reason for our existence. If we do not commit ourselves to it, we do not deserve to exist.

Why is Talmud Torah so important? Firstly, it is the one

pursuit we can (and should) devote our free time to. While we perform chesed in response to another's situational need and daven three times a day, we can learn Torah in any and every free moment. It is the constant that should fill our lives with meaning.

Additionally, through Torah learning, we transcend our world and meet Hashem through His wisdom. Though we connect to Hashem through the performance of all mitzvot and all forms of Avodat Hashem, when we study Torah, we achieve a higher connection because we immerse ourselves in His thought. We understand and connect to Hashem by appreciating the way He "thinks" and what He values.

Avodah

But Torah is not the only pillar. Avodah is also important. Study alone is not enough to sustain the world and our existence. This is why man's presence in Gan Eden, which was self-sustainable, still included his responsibility to work (Bereishit 2:15).

Avodah should focus on Avodat Hashem. This is why the meforshim explain the mishnah's mention of avodah as referring to korbanot. Korbanot express our appreciation of Hashem's role in the world (and in our lives) and our interest in giving to and sacrificing for Him. As with all relationships, we reinforce our commitment and closeness to Hashem through gift and sacrifice.

Kayin and Hevel were the first the Torah records as having offered korbanot (Bereishit 3:3-4). After Noach (later) offered a korban upon exiting the ark, Hashem responded with His promise to sustain the world for eternity (Bereishit 8:20-22). When we show our appreciation of and commitment to Hashem, He commits Himself to us and our world.

Of course, today, we are unable to offer korbanot. We offer our tefillot instead. The Gemara (Ta'anit 27) teaches that the offering of the korban tamid used to sustain the world; today, our tefillot play this role. In certain ways, tefillot are even more significant than korbanot. Petitioning Hashem for our needs expresses recognition of our dependence upon, in addition to our interest in a relationship with, Him (Netivos Olam, Netiv Ha'avodah 1,3).

The Rambam (Peirush HaRambam L'Mishna, Avos 1:2) extends the pillar of avodah beyond korbanot and tefillah — he explains that the mishna uses korbanot as a paradigm for mitzvot in general. Korbanot are significant because they are how we fulfill Hashem's commandment (to sacrifice them). We serve Hashem in a similar way by observing any and all of His mitzvot.

Gemilut Chasadim

The third pillar is chesed. One might have thought that personal development and commitment to Hashem would be enough to sustain the world. Shimon HaTzaddik teaches us

that this is not the case. In fact, the nevi'im Micha (Micha 6:8) and Yeshaya (Yeshayahu 58) present care for others (in contrast to korbanot) as central to what Hashem wants from us. Korbanot and avodat Hashem are important, but Hashem wants us to serve Him by (also) caring about and for His creations — particularly those He created in His image. By doing so, we emulate Hashem who created the world as an act of chesed. (Of course, He does not need the world; He created it for us.)

Our acts of chesed are also our way of giving back to Hashem. Rav Avraham Chaim Feuer explains that this is why the mishna uses the term gemilut chasadim: our chesed is a way of "paying Hashem back" for His. By assisting others created in His image, we show our appreciation that we, too, were created this way.

Torah and Ma'asim Tovim

Chesed is an essential complement to Talmud Torah. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 17b) compares one involved in only Torah learning but not chesed to one who has no G-d. One focused only on himself lacks a meaningful relationship with Hashem. As we saw, Torah learning can be "gadlus" — greater than other mitzvot — but if taken to a self-centered extreme, it can also be godless. Torah learning is only gadlus when it inspires us to care for Hashem's other creations.

This is why we celebrate Torah and ma'asim tovim (good deeds) as the goals and the epitome of life. They are the life goals the community wishes for newborn babies and which mothers daven for each week when they light candles. The two together are how we serve Hashem in the fullest sense of the word.

The Three-Legged Stool

Put together, these three foci, Torah, avodah, and gemilut chasadim, are what the world exists for and what we should, therefore, focus upon. May appreciating this foundational idea help us maximize our lives and our contribution to sustaining the world.

from: Aish.com <today@aish.com>

newsletterserver@aish.com

date: May 2, 2024, 7:38 AM

To The **Protesters in America Calling for an Intifada**
by **Sherri Mandell**

May 2, 2024

Slogans that promote murder and terror don't further the cause of the Palestinian people. Try "Peace by any means necessary!" instead.

When you say that you want an intifada, a global uprising against Jews, you condone the murder of innocent people, like my son Koby and his friend Yosef, who were in eighth grade when terrorists beat them to death with rocks, leaving them in

a cave with blood smeared on the walls at the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2001.

Koby was our oldest child. He loved baseball and basketball and pizza. He was just a kid, out for a hike. That's who you are talking about killing — by any means necessary.

That murder did not move us out of Israel. That murder did not bring peace. That murder brought no positive results for the Palestinians. Supporting murder will not help the Palestinian cause, neither then 23 years ago, nor today.

When you say you want an intifada, when you shout, "Resistance by any means necessary," you may be unwittingly losing the battle for the Palestinian people.

You condone the murder of families like the Fogel family who were murdered in their home. Their 12-year-old daughter came home that night to find her family massacred — mother, father, 3-month-old baby and two siblings. One child who survived, a 2-year-old, sat next to his parents, who lay in a pool of blood. He was trying to wake them.

The rest of the Fogel family did not leave Israel. The murder of the Fogel family did not advance the political agenda of the Palestinians.

When you call for an intifada, you are an accomplice to atrocity and murder.

When you say you want an intifada, you condone the murder of Hallel Ariel who was 13 when a terrorist stabbed her to death in her bed.

When you say you want a global intifada, you are saying that you believe in killing Jews at Passover seders, like the one at the Park Hotel in 2002 where 30 Israelis were murdered. You believe in killing us at discos like the Dolphinarium in Tel Aviv where 21 Israelis were killed, most of them teenagers. You want to kill us at schools like Mercaz HaRav yeshiva, where a terrorist shot and murdered eight teenagers.

When you call for an intifada, you are an accomplice to atrocity and murder. You encourage violence and antisemitism. You support radical Islam, Hamas, and Iran who want to annihilate the nation of Israel. You embolden Palestinians to murder and take captives, as they did on October 7th, as though that were a pathway to peace. You are being used. Your self-righteousness and rage are being exploited as you support terror against Jews anywhere in the world. You will not be victorious. Instead, your sensibilities will be deadened as you partake in an orgy of hatred.

Instead of resistance by any means necessary, imagine changing your slogan: Peace by any means necessary. Imagine if you told Hamas to release the Israeli hostages and stop launching missiles, so that the war could end.

Peace by any means necessary. Now that's a slogan that would end this war, bring home the hostages, and even encourage the

Israeli government to advance a Palestinian state.

from: Israel National News <news@israelnationalnews.com>

date: May 2, 2024, 7:35 AM

Pres. Herzog to Diaspora Jews: We hear you, we support you

President Herzog issues special message of support for Jewish communities around the world.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Thursday issued an urgent message of support to Jewish communities around the world in light of the dramatic resurgence in antisemitism and following the hostilities and intimidation against Jewish students on campuses across the US in particular.

In his special broadcast, President Herzog said: "To our sisters and brothers, to our friends on campuses and in Jewish communities across the United States and all over the world, to those who stand by and defend the Jewish people and the state of Israel, to all people of good will: from Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel, I say to you: The people of Israel are with you. We hear you. We see the shameless hostility and threats. We feel the insult, the breach of faith and breach of friendship. We share the apprehension and concern."

"We see prominent academic institutions, halls of history, culture, and education contaminated by hatred and antisemitism fueled by arrogance and ignorance, and driven by moral failings and disinformation. We watch in horror as the atrocities of October 7th against Israel are celebrated and justified."

Herzog stressed, "We hear you. We recognize your heroic efforts. We are with you, and we are here for you."

"In the face of violence, harassment and intimidation, as masked cowards smash windows and barricade doors, as they assault the truth and manipulate history, together we stand strong. Together we will continue building a flourishing, life-affirming nation.

"As they chant for intifada and genocide, we will work – together – to free our hostages held by Hamas, and fight for civil liberties and our right to believe and belong, for the right to live proudly, peacefully and securely, as Jews, as Israelis – anywhere."

Noting the timing, the President added, "Next week the Jewish people will mark Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day. We will speak of the dark times of the past, and we will remember the miracle of our rebirth: in our ancient homeland, the Jewish, democratic State of Israel, and throughout the Jewish world."

"Together, we shall overcome.

"In the face of this terrifying resurgence of antisemitism: Do

not fear. Stand proud. Stand strong for your freedom. Israel stands with you. Israel cares for you. We care for you. We are here for you.

"We will know better times ahead. And together we will say: Am Yisrael Chai."

from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

In memory of Rabbi Meir Zlotiowitz ZTL

date: May 2, 2024, 7:01 PM

subject: **Tidbits for Parashas Acharei Mos**

Tachanun is not recited until after Rosh Chodesh Iyar and the Yehi Ratzons following Kerias Hatorah are also omitted during this time. In spite of being Mevorchim HaChodesh, Av Harachamim is recited in most Shuls, due to the sefirah mourning period. Tzidkascha is omitted at Minchah on Shabbos. or this Shabbos, the Shabbos following Pesach, some have the custom to bake a Shlissel Challah. Minhagim include baking a challah in the shape of a key, or baking an actual key within it, among other variations. As the precarious situation in Eretz Yisrael continues, each person should increase reciting tehillim and performing other mitzvos as a zechus for the many Acheinu Beis Yisrael in travail and captivity as well as for the soldiers in battle. Pirkei Avos: Perek 1

"אחר י מות שני בני אהרן"

“After the death of the two sons of Aharon” (Vayikra 16:1)

The Midrash says among the four sins for which Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, deserved death was they did not confer sufficiently with each other in determining whether to bring unauthorized ketores. Rav Dovid Soloveichik zt”l asks as follows: Clearly Nadav and Avihu individually held that they should bring this Ketores. If so, while they surely sinned by not consulting Moshe or Aharon, what would have changed if they had conferred with one another?

Rav Dovid Soloveichik zt”l explains that we see from here the importance of deliberating a decision with our peers. If Nadav and Avihu had deliberated together they would have realized that they should not bring the ketores, and avoided the sin that cost them their lives. Perhaps it can be added that even if Nadav and Avihu decided to go ahead after a proper deliberation, the sin would have been considered far less severe, as it then could have been considered an honest mistake.