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Home Weekly Parsha SHMINI Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The parsha deals with the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan. In general, it can be stated that the eighth day after any event can be a time of challenge. The eighth day of life is the day of circumcision of male Jewish children. The eighth day – the day after the week of rejoicing of a young newly married couple - was and is the day when real married life with all of its joys and challenges begins.

The eighth day after the beginning of the holiday of Pesach in Israel is the day when we return to our ordinary lives and tasks and many times that is a moment of at least temporary depression. And here in the parsha the eighth day is transformed from the day of joy and supreme attainment to one of tragedy and silence.

The eighth day is a difficult day. But the main lesson here is that life is in reality a series of 'eighth days.' The eighth day is unpredictable, it can bring pain and sadness but it can also be inspiring and joyful, productive and worthy. So the eighth day syndrome has become a metaphor for life in general and certainly for Jewish life particularly.

Because of the potential problems and difficulties that the eighth day may bring, the Torah begins the parsha with the word "vayehi" which is not necessarily an expression of happiness. Here it will refer to the untimely deaths of the two sons of Aharon. But in general it serves as a warning to humans to view life cautiously and realistically. The Torah always teaches us to drive defensively in all areas of living. Aharon's reaction to the tragedy that has befallen him is noteworthy. The Torah emphasizes that he keep silent. Many times events occur in human lives that are so shocking, sudden and overwhelming that humans are left speechless. Silence then is really a reflex reaction. But here the Torah records Aharon's silence as an act of bravery, restraint and holiness and not as a reflex reaction to the destruction of half of his family.

It indicates that Aharon had plenty he could have said and could have taken Heaven to task, so to speak, but instead he himself chose to remain silent. The Talmud in many instances advocates the supremacy of silence over complaint, in fact over unnecessary speech generally. There is much to complain about from our human viewpoint of life and its events. Heaven states that the fact that we are alive and functioning should be sufficient to stifle any complaints.

This hard judgment is also one of the primary lessons of the eighth day. Aharon's unspoken heartbroken complaint and his unanswered, in fact unasked, question hang in the air of Jewish history – mysterious and unfathomable. This also is true of all eighth day challenges that face us - the righteous and faithful shoulder on.

The great Rebbe of Kotzk said famously: "For the believer there are no questions; for the non-believer there are no answers." We are all eighth day Jews. Let us also shoulder on to build the Jewish people in strength, compassion and belief.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Spontaneity: Good or Bad?

SHEMINI

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Shemini tells the tragic story of how the great inauguration of the Tabernacle, a day about which the Sages said that God rejoiced as much as He had at the creation of the universe, was overshadowed by the death of two of Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu:

"Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before the Lord, which [God] had not instructed them [to offer]. Fire came out from the Presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord".

Lev. 10:1-2

Many explanations were given by the Sages and later commentators as to what Nadav and Avihu's sin actually was. But the simplest answer, given by the Torah itself here and elsewhere (Num. 3:4, Num. 26:61), is that they acted on their own initiative. They did what they had not been commanded. They acted spontaneously, perhaps out of sheer enthusiasm in the mood of the moment, offering "unauthorised fire". Evidently it is dangerous to act spontaneously in matters of the spirit.

But is it? Moses acted spontaneously in far more fraught circumstances when he shattered the Tablets of Stone upon seeing the Israelites cavorting around the Golden Calf. The tablets – hewn and engraved by God Himself – were perhaps the holiest objects there have ever been. Yet Moses was not punished for his act. The Sages said that though he acted of his own accord without first consulting God, God assented to this act. Rashi refers to this moment in his very last comment on the Torah, whose last verse (Deut. 34:12) speaks about "all the strong hand, and all the great awe, which Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel":

לעיני כל ישראל: שנשאו לבו לשבור הלוחות לעיניהם, שנאמר (לעיל ט, יז) ואשברם לעיניכם, והסכימה דעת הקב"ה לדעתו, שנאמר (שמות לד, א) אשר שברת, יישר כחך ששברת:

This refers to when Moses] took the liberty of shattering the tablets before their eyes, as it is said, "I shattered them before your eyes." The Holy One, Blessed be He, consented to his opinion, as it is said, "which you shattered" – 'More power to you for shattering them!'

Why then was spontaneity wrong for Nadav and Avihu yet right for Moshe Rabbeinu? The answer is that Nadav and Avihu were Kohanim, Priests. Moses was a Navi, a Prophet. These are two different forms of religious leadership. They involve different tasks, different sensibilities, indeed different approaches to time itself.

The Kohen serves God in a way that never changes over time (except, of course, when the Temple was destroyed and its service, presided over by the Kohanim, came to an end). The Prophet serves God in a way that is constantly changing over time. When people are at ease the Prophet warns of forthcoming catastrophe. When they suffer catastrophe and are in the depths of despair, the Prophet brings consolation and hope.

The words said by the Kohen are always the same. The priestly blessing uses the same words today as it did in the days of Moses and Aaron. But the words used by a Prophet are never the same. As it is noted:

“No two Prophets use the same style.”

Sanhedrin 89a

So for a Prophet spontaneity is of the essence. But for the Kohen engaged in Divine service it is completely out of place.

Why the difference? After all, the Priest and the Prophet were serving the same God. The Torah uses a kind of device we have only recently re-invented in a somewhat different form. Stereophonic sound – sound coming from two different speakers – was developed in the 1930s to give the impression of audible perspective. In the 1950s 3D film was developed to do for sight what stereo had done for sound. From the work of Pierre Broca in the 1860s to today, using MRI and PET scans, neuroscientists have striven to understand how our bicameral brain allows us to respond more intelligently to our environment than would otherwise have been possible. Twin perspectives are needed fully to experience reality.

The twin perspectives of the Priest and Prophet correspond to the twin perspectives on creation represented, respectively, by Genesis 1:1–2:3 (spoken in the priestly voice, with an emphasis on order, structure, divisions and boundaries), and Genesis 2:4–3:24 (spoken in the prophetic voice, with an emphasis on the nuances and dynamics of interpersonal relationships).

Now let us consider one other area in which there was an ongoing argument between structure and spontaneity, namely tefillah, prayer, specifically the Amidah. We know that after the destruction of the Temple, Rabban Gamliel and his court at Yavneh established a standard text for the weekday Amidah, comprising eighteen or later nineteen blessings in a precise order (Mishnah Brachot 4:3).

Not everyone, however, agreed. Rabbi Joshua held that individuals could say an abridged form of the Amidah. According to some interpretations, Rabbi Eliezer was opposed to a fixed text altogether and held that one should,

each day, say something new (Talmud Yerushalmi Brachot 4).

It seems that this disagreement is precisely parallel to another one about the source of the daily prayers:

It has been stated: R. Jose, son of R. Hanina said: The prayers were instituted by the Patriarchs. R. Joshua b. Levi says: The prayers were instituted to replace the daily sacrifices.

Brachot 26b

According to R. Jose, son of R. Hanina, Shacharit was established by Abraham, Minchah by Isaac, and Maariv by Jacob. According to R. Joshua b. Levi, Shacharit corresponds to the daily morning sacrifice, and Minchah to the afternoon sacrifice. On the face of it, the disagreement has no practical consequences, but in fact it does.

If the prayers were instituted by the patriarchs, then their origin is prophetic. If they were established to replace the sacrifices, then their provenance is priestly. Priests were forbidden to act spontaneously, but Prophets did so as a matter of course. Someone who saw prayer as priestly would, like Rabban Gamliel, emphasise the importance of a precise text. One who saw it as prophetic would, like Rabbi Eliezer as understood by the Talmud Yerushalmi, value spontaneity and each day try to say something new.

Tradition eventually resolved the matter in a most remarkable way. We say each Amidah twice, once privately and silently in the tradition of the Prophets, then a second time publicly and collectively by the shaliach tzibbur, the “reader’s repetition”, in the tradition of a Priest offering a sacrifice at the Temple. (It is easy to understand why there is no reader’s repetition in the Maariv service: there was no sacrifice at night-time). During the silent Amidah we are permitted to add extra words of our own. During the repetition we are not. That is because Prophets acted spontaneously, but Priests did not.

The tragedy of Nadav and Avihu is that they made the mistake of acting like Prophets when they were, in fact, Priests. But we have inherited both traditions, and wisely so, for without structure, Judaism would have no continuity, but without spontaneity it would have no fresh life. The challenge is to maintain the balance without ever confusing the place of each.

The Tribe of Levi – Public Servants Revivim Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Contrary to the claim that members of the tribe of Levi were studying Torah and not participating in the wars of Israel, the Torah and our Sages note a series of public roles that were placed upon the Levites and Priests * The Levites served in policing roles against criminals and deserting soldiers, and when necessary, they also joined the most elite combat units in the war itself * Their Torah study was largely by way of teaching the entire nation of Israel, and not just studying for themselves

The Role of the Tribe of Levi

Q: Some say that yeshiva students who do not enlist in the army are like the members of the tribe of Levi who studied in yeshivas and kollelim, and did not participate in the wars of Israel. According to them, the Rambam wrote this as well. Are their words correct according to the Torah?

A: There is no basis for their words. On the contrary, the members of the tribe of Levi were dedicated to public affairs, and were committed to this. In times of peace, their role was to go out to the nation and teach Torah, instruct in Jewish law, and serve as police officers for all matters of law and order regarding interpersonal matters, and matters between man and God.

And in times of war, their role was to strengthen the spirit of the fighters, like the Military Rabbinate and the Education Corps, and to serve as military police enforcing the draft laws on the entire nation, severely punishing deserters and those fleeing from the battlefield.

They also guarded the Holy Ark that went out with the fighters and the senior command that was close to it, in the capacity of the “king’s legion” (IDF Special Forces Unit). And anyone who remained without a specific role was among the first to go out to battle with the other soldiers, as befits public servants of the highest rank.

After defining all their roles, I will briefly explain each detail.

The Role of the Tribe of Levi to Teach the Ways of God to Israel

God sanctified the members of the tribe of Levi, led by the Priests, to perform the service of the Temple, and teach Torah to all of Israel. In practice, the work in the Temple was only about two weeks a year, according to the rotation of priestly and Levite shifts, and for the rest of the year, they taught Torah to all of Israel, as it is stated:

“They shall teach Your judgments to Jacob, and Your Torah to Israel” (Deuteronomy 33:10).

They also served in rabbinical and judicial roles, as it is stated:

“If a case is too baffling for you to decide, be it a controversy over homicide, civil law, or assault—matters of dispute in your courts—you shall promptly repair to the place that your God will choose, and appear before the Levitical priests, or the magistrate in charge at the time, and present your problem, and they will tell you the word of judgment” (Deuteronomy 17:8-9).

The prophet Malachi also said about the sons of Levi:

“I had with him a covenant of life and well-being...Proper rulings were in his mouth, and nothing perverse was on his lips; he served Me with complete loyalty, and held the many back from iniquity. For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and rulings are sought from his mouth; for he is a messenger of GOD of Hosts” (Malachi 2:5-7).

In order for the Priests and Levites to be able to fulfill their role, the Torah decreed that no portion in the Land would

be given to them, but rather they would be spread throughout all the borders of Israel, and each tribe would allocate cities for them to live in its portion (Numbers 35:1-8). And so the Children of Israel did (Joshua 21:3).

The Tithes and Terumah for Torah Teachers

The Torah commanded the Children of Israel to provide for the Levites and Priests through tithes and terumah (great offering) so they would not need to engage in earning a livelihood, and could be Torah teachers and Jewish law instructors. The intention was not for them to study in yeshiva halls for years, but rather to study Torah in order to teach it to the public. As the general commandment of Torah study is mentioned in the Torah as a commandment to teach one’s students and children (Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19, Sifri there, Kiddushin 31a).

They were called the “upholders of the Torah.” As King Hezekiah instructed:

“And he said to the people, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to give the portion for the Kohanim and the Levites, so that they could strengthen themselves in the Torah of Hashem” (II Chronicles 31:4). Our Sages said:

“Whoever upholds the Torah of Hashem has a portion, and whoever does not uphold the Torah of Hashem does not have a portion” (Chullin 130b).

According to Rabbi Samson ben Abraham ((ש”ר and Rabbeinu Asher ((ש”א, it is forbidden to give gifts to an am ha’aretz (ignorant person). In contrast, according to the Rambam, it is permitted to give gifts to an am ha’aretz, but the primary mitzvah is to give to Kohanim and Levites who teach Torah. And the halakha follows the majority of the Rishonim, that the obligation is to give the priestly gifts specifically to Torah teachers, and only if there is no Torah scholar present, are they given to an am ha’aretz (Tosafot, Ramban, Rashba, Ran, Ritva, and Meiri on Chullin 130b; Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 61:7. See Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 7:3:1).

Police Officers

The members of the tribe of Levi also served as the police officers who enforced law and order in Israel (I Chronicles 23:1-4, 26:29). So too, in the days of Jehoshaphat:

“And the Levites, from the sons of the Kehathites and the sons of the Korachites stood up to praise Hashem, the God of Israel, with an exceedingly loud voice” (II Chronicles 20:19).

And in the days of Josiah:

“And from the Levites, scribes and officers and gatekeepers” (II Chronicles 34:13).

Our Sages also said (Sifrei Devarim 15) that the Levites were the police officers who accompanied the judges to punish sinners.

Our Sages also said:

“Originally (in the times of the First Temple), they would not appoint police officers except from the Levites, as it is

stated: ‘And the Levite officers before you’” (Yevamot 86b).

In the times of the Second Temple, since few Levites ascended from Babylon, the officers were from all the tribes.

Encouraging the Army and the Fighters

The tribe of Levi had another important role – to encourage the fighters of Israel. For this purpose, in addition to the High Priest who was responsible for the Temple service, they would anoint another priest with the anointing oil, called the “anointed priest for war.” His role was to go out with the fighters and encourage their spirit to fight bravely (Deuteronomy 20:2-4). It was also a commandment for the priests to go out with the fighters and blow the trumpets in order to express the sanctity of the fighters’ mission, as it is stated:

“And the sons of Aaron, the kohanim, shall blow the trumpets...And when you go into battle in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, you shall sound short blasts on the trumpets, and you shall be remembered before Hashem your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies” (Numbers 10:8-9).

The Military Police

Along with the words of encouragement from the anointed priest for war, the police officers would determine who would go out to battle: In an optional war, they would exempt those who planted vineyards or built homes or were newlyweds in their first year, as well as the fainthearted. In a milchemet mitzvah (a mandatory war) – that is, a defensive war against an enemy, they would not exempt any fighter except for those who were truly unable to fight. This is what our Sages said in the Mishnah:

“In a milchemet mitzvah, all go out, even a groom from his chamber and a bride from her chuppah” (Sotah 8:7).

After the war began, the officers would stand like brave heroes in order to revive those who fell in battle, and to severely punish those fleeing from the front. As the Mishnah states: “And they had iron spikes in their hands, and anyone who tried to go back (flee), the officer had permission to amputate his legs, for the beginning of fleeing leads to downfall” (Sotah 8:6). That is, if they allow soldiers who are afraid to flee, eventually all of Israel will fall to the enemy.

Rashi wrote:

“And I found in the Talmud Yerushalmi (quoted in other Midrashim), that when Aaron died, the Clouds of Glory departed, and the Canaanites came to wage war against Israel. And [the Jews] lost heart and wanted to return to Egypt, and they retreated eight journeys from the Mount Hor to Moseroth...And the sons of Levi pursued them to return them, and they killed seven families from them, and four families fell from the sons of Levi” (Rashi on Numbers 26:13).

Bearers of the Ark and the Prayers

The Priests also carried the Holy Ark that went out with the fighters to war, fulfilling what is stated:

“For Hashem your God is the One who goes along with you, to fight for you” (Sotah 42b, Sefer Yereim 432, and others).

In parallel to the fighters going out to battle, there were Levites who stood in song and prayer on behalf of the fighting vanguard, as it is stated in the days of Jehoshaphat:

“And the Levites, of the sons of the Kehathites and of the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise Hashem, the God of Israel, with an exceedingly loud voice...and when they began with praise and thanksgiving, Hashem set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and the dwellers of Mount Seir who had come against Judah, and they were struck” (II Chronicles 20:19-22).

And some say that Psalm 20 “May Hashem answer you on a day of distress” was written for the Levites praying for the fighters in battle (Meiri on Sotah 42b).

The Tribe of Levi Fought on Behalf of All Israel

After the Priests and Levites fulfilled all their special roles – encouraging the fighters, military police, singers and prayers – many served as brave soldiers. And so we find that when they came to anoint David as king, the number of elite troops

“From the sons of Levi was 4,600”, and from the Priests “3,700”. From Judah there were 6,800, Shimon 7,100, and Ephraim 20,800 (I Chronicles 12:25-28).

Based on all this, we can understand the words of the Rambam:

“And why did Levi not merit a portion in the Land of Israel and in its spoils along with his brothers? Because he was set apart to serve Hashem, to minister to Him, and to teach His upright ways and His righteous ordinances to the multitudes...Therefore, they were set apart from the ways of the world (they do not engage in earning a livelihood, but rather, in public service), they do not wage war like the rest of Israel, they do not inherit or acquire for themselves by their physical strength, but rather, they are the legion of Hashem, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 33:11): ‘Bless, Hashem, his legions,’ and He, may He be blessed, is the One who provides for them, as it is stated (ibid. v. 9): ‘For they observed Your word and kept Your covenant’” (Rambam Hilchot Shemittah V’Yovel 13:12-13).

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook explained that they were spread throughout all the borders of Israel, and therefore they did not fight to conquer their own tribal portion, but rather, fought in the wars of the entire nation of Israel. Meaning, “When all of Israel goes out to war, they [the Levites] are also obligated to go out. And the war of the entire nation of Israel is also the service of Hashem, to which whoever is more dedicated to the service of Hashem is more connected than the rest of the nation.”

The Rambam added that anyone who wishes to be like the tribe of Levi can dedicate themselves, but the intention is not that they are then exempt from military service – on the

contrary – they become even more devoted to serving the nation and the army.

For the soldiers fighting in the Israel Defense Forces are fighting for the honor of Heaven and the honor of Israel, as the Rambam wrote about all fighters who must gird themselves with bravery:

“He should rely on the Hope of Israel and its Savior in time of distress, and know that he is waging war for the Unification of the Divine Name, and place his soul in his hand, and not fear, nor dread” (Hilchot Melachim 7:15).

Just like the Levites, who did not fight for their own tribal portion, but for the honor of Hashem, and His nation.

In Summary

The role of the Levites and Priests was to serve the public, to teach Torah, and serve as judges and police officers, for the sake of the entire nation of Israel. In this role, they had to act bravely against criminals and violent people, as well as against deserting soldiers. For this purpose, many of them had to be trained as fighters, and therefore, in times of war, they were drafted into the front lines of the most elite combat units. As was the case in the days of the Hasmoneans, when the Greeks tried to force Israel to abandon their religion, the Priests and Levites were called upon to stand up and bravely fight to guard the nation and the Land, and the Hasmonean Beit Din (Court of Jewish Law) ruled that it is a mitzvah to fight even on Shabbat, and they restored the kingdom of Israel to its place for over two hundred years, which is why we celebrate Chanukah to this day (see Ramban on Numbers 8:2).

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Parshat Shemini: Brides and Grooms, Feasts and Fasts
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“And it happened on the eighth day...of the consecration of the Sanctuary, which was the first day of the month of Nisan...” (Rashi, Leviticus 9:1)

The first day of the month of Nisan is a great occasion of joy within biblical history. It is the day when the Almighty declared His first commandment to Israel: “This renewal of the moon shall be to you the festival of the new moon; it is to be to you the first month of the months of the year” (Exodus 12:2).

Indeed, the Midrash records that these divine words were heard throughout Egypt, because they foretold that a most significant event was about to take place on this first of the yearly months, the Israelite nation was about to be born as it leaves Egypt amidst great wonders and miracles, a stupendous change was about to transform the political and social character of the greatest power in the world, the Egyptian slave society (hodesh, hidush, month, change, novelty).

Therefore, the whole of the month of Nisan is considered to be a holiday, thus, “We are not to fall on our faces (by reciting the penitential prayer tachanun) for the entire

month of Nisan... and we are not even to fast (during this month) for a *yahrzeit* (death anniversary of a departed parent). (Shulkhan Arukh, Orakh Chayim 429, with Rema) The apparent reason for this festive quality of the month is the fact that Nisan is the month of our redemption. And this is especially true for Rosh Chodesh Nisan, the first day of the month of Nisan, when God’s word was heard throughout Egypt and the optimistic command of sanctifying the monthly renewal of the moon was given to Israel. Indeed, this is probably the reason why the author of the Passover Haggadah even suggests that the Seder ought to have taken place on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, were it not for the requirement of matza and maror on the evening of the 15th of Nisan.

And yet, the same Rabbi Moshe Isserles who forbids fasting on a *yahrzeit* during the month of Nisan and who generally forbids a bride and groom from fasting on their wedding day if they are married on any Rosh Chodesh (first of the month) throughout the year – since a bride and groom are forgiven all of their prior sins on their wedding day, they are by custom enjoined to make the day before their wedding a mini Yom Kippur fast up until the marriage ceremony – does specifically enjoin the bride and groom to fast on Rosh Chodesh Nisan! (Shulkhan Arukh, Orakh Chayim 572, Rema).

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, the Chafetz Chaim, agrees, although other authorities consider it “a great wonder.” How can we explain the tradition allowing a bride and groom to fast on Rosh Chodesh Nisan?

The reason given by the Rema for the wedding fast is precisely because of the horrific tragedy of which we read in the opening verses of the biblical reading: The deaths of Nadav and Avihu, which occurred specifically on the first day of the month of Nisan, the eighth day of the consecration of the Sanctuary, the very day on which the Sanctuary was erected.

Why was a day of such religious sensitivity and significance transformed into such tragedy and terror? And why express the agony of what was supposed to have been a day of ecstasy into the fast of a bride and groom on that day?

According to Rashi, Nadav and Avihu were righteous individuals, even more righteous than Moses and Aaron.

Why does the sanctification of the House of God require such sacrifices – the sincerely pious sons of Aaron, the High Priest? The sacred text doesn’t explain itself, it merely ordains and decrees. The Divine Presence is a flame of fire – and fire purifies, purges, but it also consumes.

But why do we recognize the tragedy of the day – a day on which we still recite the usual Psalms of Praise (Hallel) of Rosh Chodesh – specifically by allowing the bride and groom to fast prior to their wedding ceremony if they are being married on that day?

The answer to this question is to be found in the Midrash, which suggests that the commandment to build the

Sanctuary was given only after the Almighty had forgiven Israel for the sin of the golden calf, on the morrow of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. From this perspective, the Sanctuary became the nuptial home in which God and Israel were to dwell together forever, the supreme symbol that Israel had indeed been forgiven; from this moment onward, the major metaphor for the God-Israel relationship became that of bride and groom.

Hence, every bride and groom are a reflection of God the groom and Israel the bride, with the bond of matrimony reflecting a little bit of divine love and forgiveness. And just as every marriage has moments of tragedy as well as joy, of fasting as well as feasting, even God's subsequent relationship with Israel contained the zenith of our holy Temples and the nadir of our exiles. Ultimately, however, we know that God will redeem us, so that a Jewish marriage is an expression of faith in a glorious Jewish future despite our rootedness in blood, and of Jewish belief "that there will be heard in the streets of Judea and the great places of Jerusalem the sound of joy and happiness, the sound of bride and groom" despite our exile and persecution.

The death of Nadav and Avihu on the very day of the completion and final consecration of the Sanctuary was an expression of our realization that our marriage with God will be rocky as well as rapturous, will have moments of loving communication as well as moments of inexplicable isolation and abandonment. The young bride and groom similarly reflect the heartthrobs and heartaches of married life by their fast on Rosh Chodesh, as well as their faith in each other that they will overcome every challenge and emerge from their trials strengthened and redeemed. And so Aaron is silent, "Vayidom Aharon," (Leviticus 10:3) when faced with the tragedy of his sons' demise. He realizes that there are divine decrees which must be accepted even when they cannot be understood.

In a Munich Synagogue several years ago, I witnessed another kind of silence. There were about one hundred people in shul – but only the cantor and I were praying. Everyone else was talking – not in the hushed tones in which neighbors generally speak during the prayer service but in loud conversations, even occasionally walking from place to place as they spoke, seemingly totally unaware of the praying and Torah reading going on at "center stage." My host explained it very well: "These Jews are all Holocaust survivors or children of Holocaust survivors. They're angry at God – so they can't, or won't speak to Him. But neither can they live without Him. So they come to shul, and they don't speak to Him. But they do speak to each other..."

I believe that bride and groom must also learn from the congregation in Munich. There are often difficult moments in life, so difficult that you can't even speak to God, you can only be silent before the divine decree. But at these moments you must speak to each other, give to and garner

strength from each other, attempt to find comfort in the miracle of your love for each other.

Shabbat Shalom

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subject: Rabbi Reisman's Weekly Chumash Shiur
Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Shemini 5784

Topic – Last few days for Nefilas Apaim for a month. Make the most of it. Make it meaningful!

Rosh Chodesh Nissan is coming up on Tuesday. Now of course there are many things that change when Rosh Chodesh Nissan comes about. One of the main things that change is that we suddenly have an Issur to say Tachnun. We have the Zechus to say Tachnun all year round and it comes Rosh Chodesh Nissan and we have to stop. Which really means that these next couple of days are days that we should prepare ourselves. The last days that we have an opportunity to say Tachnun and to make it more meaningful.

What is Tachnun? Tachnun – Nefilas Apaim is the main part of Tachnun and what do we do by Nefilas Apaim? Ashkenazim say the 6th Perek of Tehillim. Sefardim have a custom to say Perek Chaf Hei of Tehillim. We say this by Nefilas Apaim. Both the Sefardim and Ashkenazim although they say different Kapitalach Tehillim have a Hakdama, a sentence of preparation. (רחום ותנוון קטאתי לפניך. (ר' מלא רחמים. רחם עלי וקבל תחנוני). That is our Hakdama. Sefardim say it B'lashon Rabim, Ashkenazim B'lashon Yachid. Be that as it may, everyone says this. It is not a Posuk. It is just a Tefilla which is a Hakdama.

We already find Rabbeinu Chananel in Maseches Megillah Daf Chaf Daled mentioning B'derech Agav that (רחום ותנוון) is what we say at the beginning of Nefilas Apaim. You are supposed to be B'Nefilas Apaim already when you say the (רחום ותנוון). This is what we say in preparation. Why do we say this beforehand if the Ikkur of Nefilas Apaim is the Kappital Tehillim?

It may well be that the reason we do it is a Hachana as I just mentioned. A Davar Shebik'dusha needs Hachana. Nefilas Apaim which is a major part of the Davening needs a Hachana and that is a Tefilla (רחום ותנוון) a preparation for saying Tachanun, for saying Nefilas Apaim.

I have mentioned in the past that during Nefilas Apaim a person can add his own Bakashos. Just like in Shemoneh Esrei a person can add his Bakashos, the same thing when a person is bent down saying Nefilas Apaim he can add his own requests. This surprised many people.

I want to mention to you that this is not a surprise. It is as a matter of fact an Ikkur of Nefilas Apaim is personal Bakashos. The Tur quoting Rav Amrom Gaon, one of the first Siddurim, says and I quote, Noflim Tzibbur Al

P'naihem Umevakshim Rachamim, B'shoel Kol Echad Bakashos. He says Nefilas Apaim is that you fall and say the request that you want. Therefore, Nefilas Apaim is of great significance. That is a thought for these days leading up. We don't have much left. We have Friday morning, Sunday for Shacharis and Mincha and Monday Shacharis. We have four Nefilas Apaim's left. Chap a' Rein, make it meaningful and think of the meaning of the words.

Topic – The Eclipse

There is a lot of hype about the eclipse and for us the meaning of the eclipse is to study the idea of the Molad, the idea that every month there is a Molad of the Levana and the eclipse is just a symbol of the Molad Halevana.

Chazal say that when there is a solar eclipse it is a Siman Tov L'yisrael. The moon which is a Remez to Klal Yisrael, the eclipse is the sun which is a Remez to the Umos Haolam, and that is a Siman Tov. Some people think that how can it be a Siman Tov as it is on the schedule and it is predicted? Chazal knew it is predicted. There are certain Zemanim that are Zemanim that are a Siman Tov and that is a Molad which falls at the time that it eclipses the sun.

What is the Hachana? What do you tell your children? What do Rabbeim do with Talmidim? They arrange a class to teach about the Molad. The Molad happens every month why is it only an eclipse now? Another Kasha. We are going to announce the Molad in the Shul on Shabbos when we Bentch Rosh Chodesh. Is that time exactly the time of the eclipse, adjusting for Eretz Yisrael time? Listen carefully and see if it is. Then figure out why it is not. Which of course the Rambam addresses in Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh.

And so, I suggest you prepare, take out a Sefer called Shekel Hakodesh. Shekel Hakodesh is Rav Chaim Kanievisky's Sefer on Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh in the Rambam, and there in the Perek that deals with the Molad learn the Perek. It is really like the Mishna Brura. Anybody can learn it. Learn it and get a Geshmak and make it significant.

So three thoughts for this week. Shemini, the idea of the 8th day of the Hachana. The ideas of Tachnun, the Hachana we do for Tachnun, and the Hachana for the eclipse by learning about the Molad. A Gutten Shabbos to one and all! Yehi Ratzon that it should Tak'e be a Siman Tov for Klal Yisrael and Acheinu Bnei Yisrael especially in Eretz Yisrael should have a Yeshua from the challenges they are facing. A Gutten Shabbos to one and all!

<https://aish.com/judaism-and-the-solar-eclipse/?src=ac>
What is the deeper meaning behind this natural phenomenon?

by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

March 4, 2024

Eclipse fever is growing as many people anticipate the "Great American Eclipse" on April 8th 2024. A total solar

eclipse will turn day into night across North America in a path from the southwest to the northeast.

Many Jews are even more excited, thanks to being connected historically and spiritually to the upcoming event. Judaism has always had a fascination with astronomy, because of the necessity of that science for computing the Jewish calendar and because it serves as a gateway to getting a glimpse of the wondrous nature of God, as King David wrote in Psalms, the "heavens speak of the honor of God."¹

You may be surprised to find out that there are three craters on the moon named after medieval Rabbis. Zagut, is named after Rabbi Avraham Zaccutto,² whose astronomical charts were used by Christopher Columbus.

Rabbi Levi,³ is named after Rabbi Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides) a Biblical commentator, philosopher and astronomer. Gersonides is believed to have invented an instrument to measure the azimuth of stars, called Jacob's Staff,⁴ and describes it in one of his books.⁵ He also personally observed a solar eclipse in Portugal on March 3rd 1337.⁶

Rabbi Levi crater

The crater, Abenezra, is named after the commentator, poet and grammarian, Abraham ibn Ezra.⁷

Maimonides, the great 12th century Jewish scholar and physician of Cairo, wrote his first book at the age of about 18, on the subject of astronomy and mathematics,⁸ and the Talmudic Sage, Samuel, was known by the monicker, Samuel of the Moon,⁹ because of his interest in, and knowledge of astronomy. The ancient astronomical instrument, the astrolabe,¹⁰ gets a mention in the Code of Jewish Law,¹¹ in a discussion about the permissibility of its use on the Sabbath, and there is a possible reference to a very early telescope prototype in the Talmud (circa 500 CE). "Rabban Gamliel had a special tube through which he would look and see a distance of two thousand cubits on land, and also determine a corresponding distance of two thousand cubits at sea."¹²

The Jewish Calendar

The fascination of Rabbis with astronomy can be attributed, at least in part, to the Jewish calendar. The Bible references the festivals by their dates in the lunar month, but also relates the festivals to the seasons of the solar year. "And God spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be to you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."¹³ This means that although Judaism uses a lunar calendar, where the beginning of the month is the new moon and the middle of the month a full moon, it adjusts ("intercalates") the calendar to synchronize both lunar and solar cycles. All this requires knowledge of astronomy and mathematics, both of which take on a religious significance in Jewish thought.¹⁴

In addition, the Rabbis of the Talmud encouraged the study of astronomy and the performance of astronomical

calculations as being a mitzvah, a religious precept. “Anyone who knows how to calculate astronomical times and constellations and does not do so, the verse says about him: “They do not take notice of the work of God, and they do not see His handiwork” (Isaiah 5:12)... From where is it derived that there is a mitzvah incumbent upon a person to calculate astronomical seasons and constellations? As it was stated: “And you shall guard and perform, for it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations” (Deuteronomy 4:6).¹⁵

A Comprehensible Universe

Some explain that the religious duty of performing astronomical calculations is based on these calculations indicate that the world is rational and understandable to the human mind which is a strong argument for a rational and purposeful Creator, who is interested in a relationship with the human being.¹⁶ The very fact that the world can be described in logical terms, using mathematical algorithms indicates that the world is not haphazard or random. As Albert Einstein put it in a letter to a friend, “You find it surprising that I think of the comprehensibility of the world... as a miracle or eternal mystery. But surely, a priori, one should expect the world to be chaotic, not to be grasped by thought in any way.”¹⁷

The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is its comprehensibility.

The pithy way to paraphrase this is, “The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is its comprehensibility.” Mathematics, deductive logic and the scientific method are incredibly effective in understanding the universe. As the mathematician Morris Kline writes:

A study of mathematics and its contribution to the sciences exposes a deep question. The concepts, the broad ideas, the logical standards and method of reasoning... were fashioned by human beings. Yet with the product of his fallible mind, man has surveyed spaces too vast for his imagination to encompass; he has predicted and shown how to control radio waves which none of our senses can perceive; and he has discovered particles too small to be seen by the most powerful microscope... Some explanation of this marvelous power is called for.¹⁸

So the prediction of the eclipse with complete accuracy and the plotting of its path of visibility are, in the words of the Talmud, a religious precept, a mitzvah, and in the words of Einstein, “a miracle, or eternal mystery.

The total solar eclipse on May 29, 1919 actually proved Einstein’s theory that the mass of objects curves space and hence affects light’s path through space.¹⁹ In a famous paper, three scientists, Arthur Eddington, Frank Watson Dyson, and Charles Davidson, concluded, “Thus the results of the expeditions to Sobral and Príncipe can leave little doubt that a deflection of light takes place in the neighborhood of the sun and that it is of the amount demanded by Einstein’s generalized theory of relativity, as attributable to the sun’s gravitational field.”²⁰

Eclipse and the Bible

A possible reference to the phenomenon of the eclipse is found in a famous Biblical passage in Genesis, “God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; and they serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.’ And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars.”²¹ Rashi,²² the Biblical commentator, notes that the verse refers to the sun and moon as “the great luminaries” implying that they are equal in size, yet in the same verse refers to “the greater light” and “the lesser light.”²³ We know that although the moon is about 400 times smaller than the sun, it appears to us to be same size because it is also about 400 times closer to the earth, hence its apparent size is the same as the sun, thus enabling a total eclipse of the sun by the moon.²⁴ Given these facts, some suggest that the statement, “the great luminaries” refers to the apparent size of the sun and moon, and the statements “the greater” and “the lesser” refer to the actual sizes of the sun and moon.²⁵

Eclipses have always been somewhat frightening and awe-inspiring. As William Shakespeare wrote, “These late eclipses of the sun and moon portend no good to us.”²⁶ In a similar vein the Talmud states, “The Sages taught: When the sun is eclipsed it is a bad omen for the entire world. To what is this matter comparable? It is comparable to a king of flesh and blood who prepared a feast for his servants and placed a lantern before them to illuminate the hall. He became angry at them and said to his servant: Take the lantern from before them and seat them in darkness.”²⁷

Many commentaries on the Talmud find this statement perplexing. Since an eclipse is a natural and predictable phenomenon, how could it be a “bad omen” or an indication of sin, as the Talmud²⁸ suggests?

One scholar concluded that the Talmud is not referring to an eclipse but rather the phrase in the Talmud “eclipse of the sun” literally, “blemish or affliction of the sun” refers to sunspots.²⁹ Most commentaries reject this approach and understand the Talmud as referring to a solar eclipse. If so, how do they explain the idea that the natural, predictable eclipse is somehow a “bad omen”?

A Bad Omen?

The Maharal of Prague,³⁰ the great 16th century thinker Rabbi Yehuda Loew, maintains that the Sages understood that the phenomenon is natural, but the Talmud is explaining the “reason of the reason,” that is, why God created the orbits in such a way as to produce occasional eclipses. He explains that light symbolizes reality and existence, and darkness symbolizes chaos and illusion. Because God gave humanity freedom of will, He knew that sin would be inevitable and that people would often choose chaos over order, and illusion over reality. He created a system that would remind us regularly that our choices can

create darkness, even at times when there should be light, and that our free will choices can create a barrier between us and the Divine light, but can also allow Divine light to be seen here.³¹

A note of caution; it is extremely dangerous to look directly at the sun at any time, however, usually we instinctively look away because of its brightness. During an eclipse when the moon covers most or all of the sun, the lower brightness makes it easier to look at and it is also more interesting than usual. Care should therefore be taken to use appropriate eye protection, and ideally to only view the eclipse using projection.³²

However, make sure you don't miss this incredible event, something that is linked to the creation of the universe, to the Jewish calendar, to Jewish monotheism, and to Jewish history. Most importantly the eclipse is a demonstration of the power of light and darkness and a reminder of the ultimate power of human free will to obscure light but also to reveal light.

1. Psalms 19:2 2. Andersson, L. E.; Whitaker, E. A. (1982). NASA Catalogue of Lunar Nomenclature. NASA RP-109Z 3. Ibid. 4. http://www.surveyhistory.org/jacob's_staff1.htm 5. Feldman, Seymour. The Wars of the Lord (3 volumes). Jewish Publication Society. 6. A History of Solar Eclipses. By: Bakich, Michael, E., Discover, 02747529, Mar/Apr2024, Vol. 45, Issue 2 7. For a full discussion of lunar craters named after Jewish scholars, see the article Jews on the Moon by Adina Hersberg on Aish.com - <https://aish.com/jews-on-the-moon/> 8. Maamar Haibur-Treatise on the Jewish Calendar (1158) - Astronomy, Halachah, and mathematics clearly and concisely explained. 9. Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 85b, Rashi ad loc. 10. <https://www.britannica.com/science/astrolabe-instrument> 11. Code of Jewish Law, Orach Chaim 307:17 12. Babylonian Talmud, Eiruvim 43b, see Rashi ad loc. 13. Exodus 12:1-2 14. Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, Shaar Press, NY, 2007. pp. 81-85 15. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 75a 16. Hear from Rabbi Dr. Moshe Dovid Tendler OBM 17. Albert Einstein, Lettres a Maurice Solovine, Paris, Gauthier Villars, 1956, p. 102 18. Morris Kline, Mathematics and the Physical World, New York, Dover, 1980, ix 19. David Levy, David Levy's Guide to Eclipses, Transits and Occultations, Cambridge University Press, NY, 2010. Pp. 19 - 24 20. A History of Solar Eclipses. By: Bakich, Michael E., Discover, 02747529, Mar/Apr2024, Vol. 45, Issue 2 21. Genesis 1:14-19 22. Troyes, France 1040 - 1105. 23. Rashi ad loc. Based on Talmud Chullin 60b. 24. <https://www.universetoday.com/17109/the-sun-and-the-moon/> see also Reader's Digest Atlas of the Universe, Reader's Digest, Sydney, 1974, pp. 82 - 84 25. Cited by Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (19th Century), Haktav Vehakabbalah, ad loc. He personally rejects this interpretation. 26. William Shakespeare, King Lear, 1.2.101-102 27. Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 29a 28. Ibid.

29. Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz, Ye'aros Devash 2:12 30. Rabbi Yehudah Loewe of Prague Be'er Hagolah, Be'er 6, Chapter 2 31. For other understandings of the Talmud, see Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, Ben Yehoyada, Sukkah ad loc., and Rabbi Zadok Hacoheh Rabinowitz of Lublin, Kometz Haminchah, 1:18 32. For a complete discussion of the danger in direct viewing, appropriate eye protection and projection viewing techniques, see David Levy's Guide to Eclipses, Transits and Occultations, pp. 36 - 40

[https://oukosher.org/halacha-yomis/bracha-recited-solar-eclipse-bracha-said/#:~:text=Shulchan%20Aruch%20\(OC%20227%3A1,a%20blessing%20is%20not%20recited.](https://oukosher.org/halacha-yomis/bracha-recited-solar-eclipse-bracha-said/#:~:text=Shulchan%20Aruch%20(OC%20227%3A1,a%20blessing%20is%20not%20recited.)

Should a bracha be recited on a solar eclipse, and if so which bracha should be said?

Shulchan Aruch (OC 227:1) lists many natural events for which the bracha of 'Oseh Ma'aseh Breishis' ('He performs the acts of creation') is recited, such as lightning, thunder and great winds. However, an eclipse is not included in this list. It therefore may be presumed that a blessing is not recited. Why should this be? Isn't an eclipse an incredible and awe inspiring event, as much so as thunder and lightning?

Rav Chaim David Halevi, former Av Beis Din of Tel Aviv and Yaffo, suggests in Teshuvos Asei Licha Rav (5:7) that 'Oseh Ma'aseh Breishis' is only recited for natural events, which are part of 'Ma'aseh Breishis'. The Talmud (Sukkah 29a) states that the likui chama, sun diminutions, is a response to man's sinful behavior. It is a punishment and ominous sign. Many commentaries assume that likui chama refers to solar eclipses. As such, 'Ma'aseh Breishis' cannot be recited, since eclipses are not part of the natural sequence and order of creation.

How can an eclipse be a response to human conduct when eclipses occur at predictable points in time? See Maharal, Be'er Hagolah 6 and Aruch L'ner (Sukkah 29a).

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>
date: Apr 4, 2024, 4:04 PM
subject: 10-7 and 9-11: Hitler, Hamas, and a Historic Diary

10-7 and 9-11: Hitler, Hamas, and a Historic Diary
G-d Wants You to Be Good, But He Also Wants You to Shine

Rabbi YY Jacobson at the Zikim beach in the south of Israel. Hamas terrorists came by boat on October 7th 2023 and murdered the Jews on the beach here.

As Israel and the Jewish people face the horrors of October 7th, 2023, I wish to share the story of a fascinating 9-11 diary (capturing a significant theme of the weekly Torah portion of Shemini). This diary can shed light on the ongoing struggle between Israel, the West, and radical Islam.

September 11, 1941: The world is swimming in Adolf Hitler's bloodbath. In a few days, the Germans will capture Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, and massacre 100,000 innocent human beings in a ravine named Babi Yar. On this day—9/11 1941—in Arlington, Virginia, the U.S. Department of Defense starts construction on its new headquarters, the Pentagon.

On the same day, a middle-aged new immigrant to the shores of the United States, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, later to become known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe, writes an entry in his private journal concerning two traits that make for a moral and productive human being: "fins" and "scales." [1]

Nobody imagines that sixty years later, on 9/11 2001, the free world would be struck again. Radical Islamists would crash planes into the Pentagon and the Twin Towers, murdering thousands. A new era of global terror would descend on our planet.

The Journal

The idea the Lubavitcher Rebbe presented in his journal on this day is worth reflecting on today.

The Torah states in this week's portion (Parshas Shmini as well as Reah): "This may you eat of all that is in the waters: everything that has fins and scales, you may eat. But anything that has no fins and scales, you may not eat."

[2] For a fish to be kosher, it needs both fins and scales.

The Talmud states a fascinating fact: "All [fish] that have scales also have fins [and are thus kosher]; but there are [fish] that have fins but do not have scales [and are thus unkosher]." [3]

"If so," asks the Talmud, "the Torah could have written only 'scales,' without having to also write 'fins?'" If a fish that has scales inevitably has fins, why is there a need for both signs? The Talmud answers: "Said Rabbi Abahu, and so it was learned in the study house of Rabbi Ishmael: "This is so that the Torah should be increased and made great." This is a strange answer. Where is the logic in presenting fins as an identifying sign for kosher fish when it is totally irrelevant and inconsequential since scaled fish inevitably have fins as well? How does this make the Torah greater?

Also, why are fins and scales the characteristics that distinguish kosher fish? What is special about these two identifying signs to deem fish suitable for Jewish consumption?

Food's Force

The Rabbis and Mystics teach that the physical attributes of fish, and of all animals, reflect their psychological and spiritual qualities. They further explain that the food a person consumes has a profound effect on his or her psyche. Therefore, when one eats the flesh of a particular creature, the "personality" of that creature affects the person in some way.

Fins and scales too embody two qualities embedded in the souls of these types of fish that are necessary for the

healthy development of human character. When the Jew consumes the substance of such fish, he becomes a more "kosher" and refined human being. When he consumes fish lacking these characteristics, it may dampen some of these vital qualities.

Drive & Direction

Scales, the "armor" that shields and protects the body of the fish, represent the quality of integrity, which protects us from falling prey to the many pitfalls that life presents. A person of integrity will not deceive his customers, despite the apparent financial profits involved. He will not tell a lie to a friend, despite the short-term comfort gained by doing so. He will not cheat on his spouse despite the tremendous temptations.

Integrity means that you have absolute standards of right and wrong and that you are committed to a morality that transcends your moods and temptations. Integrity preserves and protects your life and your soul.

Fins, the wing-like organs that propel fish forward, represent ambition. A healthy sense of ambition, knowing one's strengths and wanting to utilize them in full, gives a person the impetus to traverse the turbulent sea of life and to maximize his or her G-d-given potential. It propels us to fulfill our dreams and leave our unique imprint on the world.

What Is Our Priority?

Which of these two qualities is more important to cultivate in life—fins or scales? What ought to be the main function of education? Should we concentrate primarily on providing our children with the confidence and skills necessary for them to become productive and accomplished human beings? Or ought we to focus more intensely on raising children of high moral standing, concentrating more on how they will live than on how they will make a living? The Talmud teaches that all fish that have scales also have fins. But some fish have fins but do not have scales and are thus non-kosher. On a deeper level, this symbolizes the idea that a human being who possesses fins may still lack scales and thus remain "non-kosher." He might swim and frolic through large seas and oceans with his talent and genius, but his achievements may be corrupt, hurting others in the process. Creating ambitious and confident children does not guarantee their moral uprightness and integrity. In our times, we have seen the result of people who had fins but no scales.

On the other hand, the Talmud tells us that all fish with scales have fins. If you teach your children to approach life with truth and honesty, with an unyielding commitment to morality and decency, this child will certainly succeed and develop "fins" as well. Regardless of his or her degree of intellectual prowess, they will find the "fins" with which to advance in their learning and their achievements to make the world a more beautiful place.

To Change the World

"If so," asks the Talmud, "the Torah could have written only 'scales,' without having to also write 'fins'." On a deeper level, the Talmud is asking, why is it important to emphasize the need for fins in developing a "kosher" human being? Why does an emphasis on ambition constitute part of a moral and "kosher" education? Why not just focus on integrity and ethics?

The Talmud's answer is marvelous: "This is so that 'Torah be increased and made great.'" This means that our spiritual mission consists not only of professing integrity and morality but also of developing our full potential materially and spiritually. G-d wants us to be good; but He also wants us to be successful and shine; to utilize all of our talents and resources to transform the landscape of our planet into an abode for the Divine; to make the Torah "great and large." The light, majesty and depth of Torah must penetrate the entire world and turn it into an oasis of goodness and holiness.

Cruel Ambition; Deadly Surrender

The events of September 2001, like those of September 1941, dramatically altered our view of the world. Both ushered in a new era of violence, bloodshed, grief and terror. The first was by Nazi Germany; the second was by radical Islamists. Yet the roots of the two wars were very different: The Germans personified a culture possessing fins but no scales. Their ambitions, achievements, and love of life were impressive, yet their morality and sense of ethics were horrifically skewed. While they loved and nurtured their dogs, appreciated poetry, philosophy, and scientific advancement, they sent millions to die in gas chambers.

September 11, 2001, on the other hand, was perpetrated by people with a deep faith and commitment to the will of Allah, yet with a hatred for all progress and advancement, and a desire to destroy all who do not adhere to their dark vision of the world. They died for what they believed to be the ultimate in morality and holiness; yet their perception of G-d was horrifically skewed: theirs was a god who wanted them to die, as long as they can kill others.

People somehow delude themselves into thinking that Hamas and the people living in Gaza are two distinct entities and that Hamas took control of Gazans. They forget that Hamas does not control Gaza; rather, Gaza thinks Hamas. Hamas was elected by the people of Gaza in 2006, and more than 70 percent of Arabs living in Gaza and in the West Bank support the murders of October 7th, 2023.

Many young Muslims are being taught today to develop scales but no fins: to surrender their lives to Allah, without appreciating that G-d wants them to live, and not to die; to build the world, not destroy it, and to respect other peoples, not blow them up. To create a "kosher" world, we need scales, but we also need fins. Muslim leaders, parents and educators must begin to teach their youth to love their own lives more than they hate the lives of others.

They must discover that the love of G-d does not require a love for blood.

Israel and the Jewish people stand at the forefront of this conflict. This is not a time to back down but to stand with unwavering commitment to the sacredness of life and the fight against those who gleefully want to see us dead. With clarity, we ought to call out the evil we are facing and fight to eradicate it.

[1] Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, escaped Nazi-occupied France with his wife, via Portugal, and arrived to these shores in June 1941. This journal of the Rebbe (among many more), dated Elul 19, 5701 (equivalent to September 11, 1941) was discovered in his study after his passing in June 1994 and published in Reshimos #39, pp. 6-8. I'm sharing my exposition based on the ideas presented in the above journal. [2] Leviticus 11:9. Deuteronomy 14:9-10. – In 1941, Sep. 11 coincided with the Torah portion of Reah. [3] Niddah 51b.

Perceptions

By Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Parshas Shemini

Oh So Humbling

THERE IS A minhag for tzaddikim to fast on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, even though we normally do not fast on a Rosh Chodesh. The reason for the exception? Because it was the day that Nadav and Avihu were struck down by God for bringing a "strange fire" on the eighth day of the inauguration ceremony. Just like that one of the happiest days in Jewish history became one of the saddest.

Their deaths alone were sufficient reason for national mourning. But what made it so much more upsetting was how close we were to achieving one of the greatest feats of mankind when it happened. It is one thing to put a man on the moon, but something more fantastic to build a structure that God would be willing to dwell within. Even the Second Temple didn't achieve that.

Must it always be that way? Must we always only come close to redemption and then prevent it through some mishap? Because although the Jewish people had already left Egypt and had already received the Torah at Mt. Sinai, having God dwell in a structure, the work of their own hands, the Mishkan, was a higher level of redemption. The deaths of two great people at its inauguration greatly marred that.

The answer is, yes, that is the way redemption works, as the GR"A explains:

In the beginning, Moshiach will be revealed and after that, concealed, and the Jewish people will undergo birth pangs and great pains, as occurred during the first redemption. (Biyur HaGR"A, Tikunei Zohar, Tikun 22)

For example, when Moshe Rabbeinu first came down to Egypt and spoke about redemption, the Jewish people could finally see an end to their slavery. But when Pharaoh

not only ignored Moshe's demand for Jewish freedom but instead increased their slavery, the Jewish people lost all hope in going out. The next time Moshe came and spoke about impending redemption, they wouldn't even give him the time of day. They couldn't, being so broken.

Then there was the time that the Jewish people witnessed the incredible miracle of the splitting sea and the satisfying experience of seeing their enemy washed away by it. They even sang Shirah after it. But, by the end of the parsha, they found themselves defending the nation from a very humbling attack from Amalek.

And part of the confusion of the people in the Purim story emphasized in Megillas Esther, is how something good happens only to be followed by something bad. Mordechai saved the king's life and is recorded in the chronicles for having done so, and that is followed by Haman's rise to power.

In recent times we have the situation of Eretz Yisroel. Even people who did not believe that becoming an official nation in 1948 had much to do with geulah still waited to see how things would play out over time. Now they have joined so many others who are disappointed to see how bad the situation has become in Eretz Yisroel between the wars with neighbors and those within the country. Whatever steps forward we took toward redemption seemed to have been reversed through sin, wars, and politics.

God forbid. That is only the way it looks. The GR" A elsewhere says that the redemption process always goes forward, even when it looks like it is going backward. Being human, we like success to come pleasantly, or at least only with difficulties we can anticipate and plan for. Being God, success comes for us in whatever way He deems necessary for an individual or the nation.

Some of the reasons for the kind of difficulties we would rather avoid are kabbalistic and go back to before Creation, so Sheviras HaKeilim, the breaking of the vessels. But a more obvious reason is the importance of humility in any redemption process. Humility is redemption, because it frees us of the kind of ego that interferes with our ability to be who truly are, instead of who we think we need to be.

Would you pour drink into a dirty glass, especially if its residual taste would interfere with the one you want? Likewise, the light of God only flows "down" to people who are humble. The attack on the Jewish people on October 7 made different people feel different things. But the most important thing it made people feel was humility, and to the extent that it did, that is how much more ready we are for the redeeming light of God. May it finally end this exile and bring the final redemption we have been anticipating for millennia now, without further need for any of the humbling events we have experienced until now. Have an amazing Shabbos.

History is changing quickly. Prophecies are coming true. We need to know what to work on during these challenging times. Subscribe to Thirtysix.org Plus for Strategy For the

End of the Days at www.thirtysix.org or write to thirtysixorgplus@thirtysix.org.

From **Allen.Klein@gmail.com**

I am posting this article from 2010 because in the Amazon Brazil, Chabad has posted amazing selection of fishes available only there, photos at the end of this article.

Example Pirarucu fish weights 200 kilos

Kosher conundrums

Two men set out on a quest to collect their chains of tradition via oral, video and photographic evidence.

By GIL STERN STERN HOFFMAN

JULY 30, 2010

In the Jerusalem Talmud's tractate Ta'anit, Rabbi Hananya son of Rabbi Abahu said that there were 700 species of kosher fish and 800 species of kosher grasshoppers and an uncountable number of birds in the Land of Israel, and all of them went with the nation of Israel into the Babylonian exile and later returned with it, except for one fish called the shibuta.

For years there was a dispute about the identity of the shibuta, which the tractate Hulin suggests had a brain that tastes like pork. Some thought it was the mullet or the sturgeon until Bar-Ilan University neurology professor Ari Zivotofsky proved in a scientific journal that the shibuta was a freshwater Iraqi fish in the Euphrates River bearing the contemporary Arabic and Farsi name shabut.

Last Thursday, more than 250 people feasted on the shibuta at a special meal at Jerusalem's Eucalyptus Restaurant opposite the Old City walls, marking what was apparently the first time that the fish was eaten in the Holy Land in some 2,600 years. The fish were brought here from Turkey, where a Muslim professor who read Zivotofsky's article had obtained them for him.

What is Outbrain

The shibuta was just one of 18 courses at the "mesora dinner" cooked by renowned chef Moshe Basson and organized by Zivotofsky and Jerusalem dentist Ari Greenspan in an effort to pass along the chain of tradition of which animals, birds, fish and locusts are kosher and which are not, a quest the two Aris have been working on for the past 28 years.

The quest began when Zivotofsky and Greenspan were 18-year-old students at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Alon Shvut and were invited to study shehita, ritual slaughtering of animals. When someone newly religious asked them to slaughter a pheasant that she recalled was tasty, they found out that the world's top arbiter of Jewish law, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, had forbidden eating them, because there was no chain of tradition about what bird a pheasant really was.

Because a bird is kosher only if there is a chain of tradition called a mesora that it has always been kosher, each community had its own customs regarding whether local birds were permitted to be eaten.

Shortly after learning about Feinstein's rejection of the pheasant, the two Aris overheard a Yemenite student in the yeshiva talking about how the top rabbi of Yemenite immigrants, Yosef Kappah, had spoken that week about slaughtering that very bird, which the Talmud says should be on the table of kings.

Zivotofsky and Greenspan went to the North during the First Lebanon War and bought two pheasants, which Kappah and Greenspan slaughtered while Zivotofsky took pictures. Kappah signed a document that said he saw great rabbis slaughtering the bird in Yemen, and the chain of tradition was formally passed on.

"This was a real eye opener for us," Greenspan said in an interview at his dental office in the capital's Malha Technological Park. "We realized that now we had the mesora and the great Rabbi Moshe Feinstein didn't.

The mesora is a link in the chain and now we were a part of it."

Feinstein died before he could hear about the discovery, but his son-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Tendler, later came here and ate pheasant with Greenspan and Zivotofsky.

THE TWO ARIS realized that in an industrial food age, the old rabbis and ritual slaughterers (shohetim) who remembered which local birds and locusts were kosher were passing away. So they began interviewing these holders of tradition and collecting their chains of tradition via oral, video and photographic evidence.

"We understood that we were on the cusp of Jewish history," Greenspan said. "The Jewish state brought together old shohetim from around the Jewish world, but they were disappearing while everyone was only eating chicken. So after we made aliya, we started to visit these old men and women and learn from them."

From the pheasant, Greenspan and Zivotofsky moved on to birds like the partridge and the guinea fowl. Then they started working on locusts, controversial fish like the swordfish and then on mammals like red deer and water buffalo.

The meal Tendler attended was the first "mesora dinner" at Eucalyptus in 2002. The restaurant's location at the time had room for 70 people, but double showed up, including top rabbis from around the world, who listened to lectures about the history of each animal as they ate them.

"That meal made us realize how important what we were doing was and how much interest there was in it," Greenspan said. "It's not about an orgy of slaughtering and meat. It's about tradition and part of the experience is eating the food. All of this craziness is just to teach about the mesora."

The next mesora meals were held in New York in 2004 and Los Angeles three years later at the request of the Orthodox Union, America's top kosher certification organization. The meals were held following well-attended conferences in each city in which Zivotofsky and Greenspan presented

their findings about the animals, including the shibuta, which debuted at the meal in LA.

Thursday's meal was the culmination of years of research studying the chain of tradition and months of work in obtaining the animals around the world, slaughtering them and preparing them.

For instance, after failing to find adult pheasants here, Greenspan and Zivotofsky received them from the rabbinate in Rome. After Israeli locusts being raised for the meal died a week before it due to the heat wave, Greenspan's cousin brought 250 from a research institute outside London.

Other attendees at the meal brought kingclip fish from South Africa. Water buffalo for a carpaccio dish came from a farm in the Negev and were slaughtered at Tnuva's slaughterhouse in Beit She'an. The deer was tested for disease at the Veterinary Institute in Beit Dagan.

The feast also included a pheasant and guinea fowl pastry, quail in caramel sauce, cow udder, fried locusts and shiluah haken soup. The soup commemorated the mitzva of sending away the mother bird, because it featured a fleishig egg that was extracted from a slaughtered hen inside a noodle nest in sparrow, dove and pigeon broth.

"The amount of work that goes into such a meal is incomprehensible," Greenspan said. "I'm a fulltime dentist, but this was also a full-time job. Normally you go to a restaurant, and the chef makes what you order. We had to find all the animals and provide everything for the restaurant."

The food also had to meet the highest kosher standards. To that end, Greenspan and Zivotofsky received assistance from Rabbi Shlomo Machfud, a respected and very busy Yemenite haredi arbiter, who is in charge of all Tnuva slaughtering.

When asked whether it was a problem to mix traditions of Yemenite, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, Greenspan noted that the top work of Jewish law, the Shulhan Aruch, says that if one community does not have the tradition on one bird, it can rely on the tradition of another.

"It's not a custom like kitniyot," Greenspan said, referring to legumes that Sephardim eat on Pessah while most Ashkenazi rabbis forbid them. "It's a function of testimony."

YET THERE ARE still controversies regarding Zivotofsky and Greenspan's efforts, with the most emotional issue being the swordfish.

For at least 350 years, the swordfish was treated as kosher and eaten by Jews in Mediterranean countries and later the US.

In 1951, Tendler ruled it unkosher, because scientists at the time thought swordfish had scales as juveniles but not as adults, and for fish to be kosher, they must have fins and scales. The Chief Rabbinate here and the Conservative Movement in the US never accepted the ruling, which created schisms.

“We have examined them on several occasions in different places and they have always had scales,” said Zivotofsky, who urged participants at last Thursday’s meal to consider whether to eat the fish.

At the meal, a 300-page source book was distributed, which contains Tendler’s explanations and several articles and letters validating the swordfish as kosher.

One animal that was noticeably absent from the feast was the giraffe. There are many myths about why observant Jews do not eat giraffe, most notably that its neck is so long that there is a question about where to cut it or because it is considered an endangered species.

Greenspan and Zivotofsky, who dissected giraffes that died at the Ramat Gan Safari, said they knew exactly where to cut their necks, but there were other reasons why they had never slaughtered a giraffe. They have tried unsuccessfully to purchase giraffes in African countries where it is neither an endangered species nor a protected one.

The problems with giraffes include the strength of the animals, which can kill a lion with one kick; their expense; their lack of taste that is indicated by the fact that Africans do not eat them; and their sheer beauty.

“It would turn too many people off,” Zivotofsky. “But at some point in the future, we still would like to.”

The mesora for the giraffe could include Rabbi Sa’adya Gaon’s translation of one of the permitted animals listed in the Torah as giraffe and stories about wealthy Jewish families eating giraffes at the turn of the century.

Other animals that could be eaten at future mesora meals include the kudu, a southern African antelope whose horns are used for shofarot, and peacocks, which currently lack a mesora, but there is evidence were once considered kosher. The Aris hope to find elderly Persian Jews with knowledge about the bird being slaughtered and eaten in Iran, but they fear it might be too late to find them.

Greenspan and Zivotofsky stressed that their goal was simply to maintain the mesora, not to make rare animals marketable enough to end up regular guests on Shabbat dinner plates. They both stressed that they were perfectly happy eating chicken every Friday night.

“Unfortunately, the era of finding elderly scholars from the old world has passed,” Greenspan said. “That part of history is over, and we were lucky to tap into it. It was a privilege to be at the right place at the right time and that God gave us the gift to record such important information. We will continue traveling and learning and use the knowledge we gain to continue to enlighten the people of Israel.”

AMAZON BRAZIL KOSHER FISH



Matrinxã (Matrisha)



Pacu (Pakoo)



Pescada



Tambaqui (Tambaquey)



Tucunare (Two-canare)



Pirarucu



Aruwana



Curimata



Aracu



Piranha



Jaraqui



Sardinha

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל