

Erev Pesach on Shabbos Guide
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

This year, the first day of Pesach falls on Sunday, which means that Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos. This causes changes to many Pesach observances. Below is a simplified guide to the practices of Erev Pesach that falls on Shabbos.

THURSDAY

Since Erev Pesach is Shabbos, the fast of Taanis Bechoros is pushed forward to Thursday. A bechor, or the father of a minor bechor, is obligated to fast on Thursday, but he can discharge his obligation by making or attending a siyum.

Thursday night - Bedikas Chometz.

Regular bedikas chometz is performed with a beracha. After completing the bedikah, one recites the first bitul.

FRIDAY

Friday morning davening is regular, without tachanun because it is the month of Nissan. Although on Erev Pesach Ashkenazim do not say the prayers of mizmor lisodah and lamenezach in davening, they do say these parts in the Friday davening since it is not Erev Pesach.

Make sure to have sold your chometz by now.

Burning the Chometz.

We burn chometz on Friday morning even though one may own chometz until Shabbos morning. Place the chometz that is to be eaten on Shabbos in a secure place and make a mental note where that chometz is located. We do not recite the second bitul after burning the chometz, but instead we recite it on Shabbos morning when we finish eating the chometz.

Doing Melacha on Erev Shabbos.

There is no limitation on doing melacha-work on this Friday because it is not Erev Pesach.

Eruvei Chatzeiros.

The minhag is to renew an eruv chatzeiros with neighbors on Erev Pesach. This year it should be renewed on Erev Shabbos.

Seder Preparations.

Ideally, all of the seder preparations should be performed on Friday, including roasting the zroa and the egg, preparing the saltwater, making the charoses, checking and washing the marror, grinding the horseradish. Make sure to open the boxes of matzos and bottles of wine as one would before every Shabbos. Although this is unusual in today's world, if you need to separate challah from your matzah, remember to do it before Shabbos.

Shabbos Food Preparations.

If you are preparing chometz-dik food for your Shabbos meals, do not make sticky chometz-dik food that will stick to your pots or plates. (Presumably, most people will prepare Pesach-dik food for all meals.)

Shabbos Candles.

Be careful not to place the Shabbos candelabra on the tablecloth on which one is serving chometz since one will be unable to remove the candles in order to remove the cloth.

One should kindle the Shabbos lights near where one intends to eat the Friday night meal.

SHABBOS

Friday Night Meal.

One is required to recite hamotzi at the first two Shabbos meals using two "breads" (lechem mishneh). One may use matzah for lechem mishneh, but many poskim consider the matzah that one intends to use for the seder as muktzah. Many, however, refrain from eating Pesach-dik matzah so close to the seder.

If one wants to make motzi on chometz in one part of the house and eat the Pesach-dik meal in another, one may, since his intent when washing and making hamotzi was to eat his meal in this way. He should return to the original place for bensching. Each person should eat at least one kebeitzah of bread (egg size) to fulfill the mitzvah of seudas Shabbos and to justify his making netilas yadayim with a beracha. (Since one

may not weigh on Shabbos, one who wishes to weigh his chometz should do so before Shabbos.)

If eating egg matzah, grape matzah or matzah cookies (matzah ashirah) for the meals, Ashkenazim should eat as much matzah ashirah as one would eat with this type of a meal (i.e., certainly more than the egg size mentioned above). Sephardim should eat four egg sizes of the matzah ashirah. (Note that someone who has the custom not to eat matzah after Purim or Rosh Chodesh may still eat matzah ashirah.)

According to most poskim, one may eat regular (non-Pesach-dik) matzah for the Friday evening meal. Thus, this is an option for someone who does not want chometz in their house and cannot eat the amount of matzah ashirah mentioned above.

If one is serving on chometz plates a hot meal that was cooked in a Pesach-dik pot, one should pour the hot food into a Pesach-dik plate or platter before pouring it into the chometz-dik plates. (Presumably, however, most people will be serving the meals on disposable dishes.)

Shabbos Morning.

Daven early. One is required to eat one meal in the morning. There is a recommendation (hidur) to eat two meals on the morning of Erev Pesach, separated briefly.

For those who wish to eat two meals in the morning, I suggest:

Immediately after davening, make kiddush, hamotzi, eat a piece of fish, and bensch.

Take a break, and begin the next meal with enough time to finish eating the main course (at least) before the latest time to eat chometz. Some poskim prefer eating the meat also with the first morning meal before breaking. One who follows this approach should not eat so much that he cannot eat the next meal.

Bitul chometz.

When one has completed the eating of the chometz, recite the second bitul chometz. Dispose of the remaining chometz into the toilet (taking care to crumble it into small pieces and only flush a small amount at one time -- it will take a bit of time) or in a public garbage (if it is within the eruv), but do not place it in your own garbage can. One may continue eating the meal without new brachos, notwithstanding that he may no longer eat chometz.

Shabbos Afternoon.

Since most people follow the opinion of davening mincha before seudah shelishis, one should daven mincha early.

Seudah Shelishis.

In the early afternoon, one may serve a heavy Pesach-dik meal (meat, potatoes, fruits, vegetables, etc.) without any hamotzi at all. If you eat "gebrotzt," it is recommended to eat kneidlich at this meal. It is permitted to eat kneidlich even if you have a minhag not to eat matzah from Purim or from Rosh Chodesh. Sephardim may serve matzah ashirah at seudah shelishis.

Some people, usually Sephardim, have a custom of cooking whole matzos and serving them for seudah shelishis. These matzos require netilas yadayim. The beracha before eating these matzos is hamotzi and they require bensching afterward. An Ashkenazi may follow this approach, as well as someone who customarily does not eat matzah for a month before Pesach. This is because one cannot fulfill the mitzvah at the seder with cooked matzah. An Ashkenazi has no requirement to have cooked matzah available, while some Sephardim follow the approach that they are required.

If one eats kneidlich or matzah ashirah for seudah shelishis, one should complete eating seudah shelishis before the "tenth hour," which is a half hour before "mincha ketana," or three quarters of the day. Some authorities contend that even those who eat only fruit and vegetables for this seudah shelishis should eat before the tenth hour. All agree that one may eat a small quantity of fruit or vegetables after this point.

It is advisable to take a nap Shabbos afternoon, but one should not mention that he is taking a nap in order to be awake for the seder. Some poskim consider this preparing on Shabbos for after Shabbos.

Most poskim contend that one should not move one's seder matzos before Shabbos is over. Since many people who are eating at someone else's house take their own matzah to the seder, they should not carry these matzos until Shabbos is over. Also remember not to begin preparations for the seder until Shabbos is over and one says, "Baruch HaMavdil bein Kodesh l'kodesh."

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Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

God calls out to Moshe from the inner sanctuary of the Mishkan. Yet, as Rashi points out to us, the sound of God's voice, so to speak, was loud and strong, however it was limited to the area within the Mishkan. Those who were outside of that sanctuary heard nothing. The message imparted here is a clear and simple one. Not everyone hears God's voice, nor can it be heard everywhere.

There was a long period of time in English and American society that those who entered the clergy were said to have responded to a "calling." In our jaded, materialistic, dysfunctional world of today a "calling" is something to be mocked at as being naïve and impractical. Yet the Torah emphasizes here that Moshe responded to such a "calling" and that in fact this became the name and title of one of the five books of Moshe.

Leading and teaching the Jewish people can certainly be viewed as a profession and a career. But if that is all it is then it is deficient in its spiritual potential and its ultimate chance of success. Unless one hears, so to speak, the voice of God calling one to public service and Torah teaching, the soul of the matter will always be compromised.

Moshe is able to be the incomparable Moshe that he is because he hears the Lord calling out to him even if no one else apparently does so as well. All his life he responds to that call and remains faithful to the task and challenge that leading the Jewish people poses for him.

Midrash teaches us that Moshe first heard the voice of God, so to speak, at the encounter at the burning bush. There the Lord called out to him in the voice and tone of his father Amram and Moshe was able to hear it without being overwhelmed. Much later in Jewish history, the Lord told the prophet Eliyahu that he could hear His call in the still small voice that reverberates within our consciences.

God is heard, so to speak, in the voice of our ancestors, of Jewish tradition and family bonds. Many Jews today are completely unaware of their own family heritage and certainly of the greater heritage of Israel as a whole. And very few of us are strong enough psychologically and spiritually to hearken to our inner voice, still and small as it is.

So we wander through life seeking direction and guidance and turn to others to help us find ourselves. First, we should look inward for the Godly GPS implanted within us. That is our Mishkan, the place where God's voice can be heard. Searching for it elsewhere, in the voices of strangers, outside of our Mishkan will be frustrating and fruitless. Since the voice of God, no matter how powerful and strong it may be, is still described as being a small voice, it is obvious that one pay attention and strain to hear it. This effort always characterized Moshe's life, the loyal servant of God, who was attuned to hear the calling that guided him, and through him, all of Israel and humankind as well.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Why Do We Sacrifice?

Essays on Ethics • Vayikra •

The laws of sacrifices that dominate the early chapters of the Book of Leviticus are among the hardest in the Torah to relate to in the present. It has been almost two thousand years since the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system came to an end. But Jewish thinkers, especially the more mystical among them, strove to understand the inner significance of the sacrifices and the statement they made about the relationship between humanity and God. They were thus able to rescue their spirit even if their physical enactment was no longer possible. Among the simplest yet most profound was the comment made by Rabbi Shneur

Zalman of Liadi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. He noticed a grammatical oddity about the second line of this Parsha:

Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: "When one of you offers a sacrifice to the Lord, the sacrifice must be taken from the cattle, sheep, or goats."

Lev. 1:2

Or so the verse would read if it were constructed according to the normal rules of grammar. However, the word order of the sentence in Hebrew is strange and unexpected. We would expect to read: adam mikem ki yakriv, "when one of you offers a sacrifice." Instead, what it says is adam ki yakriv mikem, "when one offers a sacrifice of you."

The essence of sacrifice, said Rabbi Shneur Zalman, is that we offer ourselves. We bring to God our faculties, our energies, our thoughts and emotions. The physical form of sacrifice – an animal offered on the altar – is only an external manifestation of an inner act. The real sacrifice is mikem, "of you." We give God something of ourselves.[1]

What exactly is it that we give God when we offer a sacrifice? The Jewish mystics, among them Rabbi Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls that each of us has within us – the animal soul (nefesh habeheimit) and the Godly soul. On the one hand we are physical beings. We are part of nature. We have physical needs: food, drink, shelter. We are born, we live, we die. As Ecclesiastes puts it:

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: as one dies, so dies the other. Both have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is a mere fleeting breath.

Eccl. 3:19

Yet we are not simply animals. We have within us immortal longings. We can think, speak, and communicate. We can, by acts of speaking and listening, reach out to others. We are the one life-form known to us in the universe that can ask the question "why?" We can formulate ideas and be moved by high ideals. We are not governed by biological drives alone. Psalm 8 is a hymn of wonder on this theme:

When I consider Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which You have set in place,
what is man that You are mindful of him,
the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You made him a little lower than the angels
and crowned him with glory and honour.
You made him ruler over the works of Your hands;
You put everything under his feet.

Ps. 8:4–7

Physically, we are almost nothing; spiritually, we are brushed by the wings of eternity. We have a Godly soul. The nature of sacrifice, understood psychologically, is thus clear. What we offer God is (not just an animal but) the nefesh habeheimit, the animal soul within us.

How does this work out in detail? A hint is given by the three types of animal mentioned in the verse in the second line of Parshat Vayikra (see Lev. 1:2): beheimah (animal), bakar (cattle), and tzon (flock). Each represents a separate animal-like feature of the human personality.

Beheimah represents the animal instinct itself. The word refers to domesticated animals. It does not imply the savage instincts of the predator. What it means is something more tame. Animals spend their time searching for food. Their lives are bounded by the struggle to survive. To sacrifice the animal within us is to be moved by something more than mere survival.

Wittgenstein, when asked what was the task of philosophy, answered, "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." [2] The fly, trapped in the bottle, bangs its head against the glass, trying to find a way out. The one thing it fails to do is to look up. The Godly soul within us is the force that makes us look up, beyond the physical world, beyond mere survival, in search of meaning, purpose, goal.

The Hebrew word bakar, cattle, reminds us of the word boker, dawn, literally to "break through," as the first rays of sunlight break through the darkness of night. Cattle, stampeding, break through barriers. Unless constrained by fences, cattle are no respecters of boundaries. To

sacrifice the bakar is to learn to recognise and respect boundaries – between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. Barriers of the mind can sometimes be stronger than walls.

Finally, the word tzon, flocks, represents the herd instinct – the powerful drive to move in a given direction because others are doing likewise.[3] The great figures of Judaism – Abraham, Moses, the Prophets – were distinguished precisely by their ability to stand apart from the herd; to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to refuse to capitulate to the intellectual fashions of the moment. That, ultimately, is the meaning of holiness in Judaism. Kadosh, the holy, is something set apart, different, separate, distinctive. Jews were the only minority in history consistently to refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith.

The noun korban, “sacrifice,” and the verb lehakriv, “to offer something as a sacrifice,” actually mean “that which is brought close” and “the act of bringing close.” The key element is not so much giving something up (the usual meaning of sacrifice), but rather bringing something close to God. Lehakriv is to bring the animal element within us to be transformed through the Divine fire that once burned on the altar, and still burns at the heart of prayer if we truly seek closeness to God.

By one of the ironies of history, this ancient idea has become suddenly contemporary. Darwinism, the decoding of the human genome, and scientific materialism (the idea that the material is all there is) have led to the widespread conclusion that we are all animals, nothing more, nothing less. We share 98 per cent of our genes with the primates. We are, as Desmond Morris used to put it, “the naked ape.”[4] On this view, Homo sapiens exist by mere accident. We are the result of a random series of genetic mutations and just happen to be more adapted to survival than other species. The nefesh habeheimit, the animal soul, is all there is.

The refutation of this idea – and it is surely among the most reductive ever to be held by intelligent minds – lies in the very act of sacrifice itself as the mystics understood it. We can redirect our animal instincts. We can rise above mere survival. We are capable of honouring boundaries. We can step outside our environment. As Harvard neuroscientist Steven Pinker put it: “Nature does not dictate what we should accept or how we should live,” adding, “and if my genes don’t like it they can go jump in the lake.”[5] Or, as Katharine Hepburn majestically said to Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, “Nature, Mr Allnut, is what we were put on earth to rise above.”

We can transcend the beheimah, the bakar, and the tzon. No animal is capable of self-transformation, but we are. Poetry, music, love, wonder – the things that have no survival value but which speak to our deepest sense of being – all tell us that we are not mere animals, assemblages of selfish genes. By bringing that which is animal within us close to God, we allow the material to be suffused with the spiritual and we become something else: no longer slaves of nature but servants of the living God.

[1] Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Likkutei Torah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1984), Vayikra 2aff.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 309.

[3] The classic works on crowd behaviour and the herd instinct are Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (London: Richard Bentley, 1841); Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1897); Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1916); and Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).

[4] Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984).

[5] Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 54.

Parshat Vayikra: On Taking Responsibility and Making Amends
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“And the Lord called to Moses and He spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying...” (Leviticus 1:1)

What may cause the countenance of a particular individual to glow with a special charismatic radiance which sets him apart from all others? Let us explore the origin of Moses’ “rays of splendor” (Exodus 34:29), sometimes inaccurately rendered as “horns” because the Hebrew word keren can mean either ray or horn. As a result of this mistaken translation, Michelangelo’s Moses is depicted with two horns protruding from his forehead and the typical anti-Semitic canard is to portray every Jew with horns. I believe that a deep understanding of this phrase – in correct Hebrew translation – will shed interesting light on radiant appearances in general and on Moses’ unique personality, in particular.

The book of Leviticus opens with the verse, “And the Lord called to Moses,” the first word being the Hebrew “Vayikra,” which means “and He summoned” or “called out to.” It is fascinating that a small “aleph” is the Masoretic, traditional way of writing the Hebrew VYKRA, so that the text actually states “Vayiker, and He chanced upon,” as if by accident. Rashi comments: “The word VaYiKRA precedes all (divine) commandments and statements, which is a term of endearment used by God when He speaks to the heavenly angels; however, God appeared to the prophets of the idolatrous nations of the world with a temporary and impure expression, as it is written, ‘And He chanced upon (VaYiker) Balaam.’”

The picture portrayed by Rashi’s Midrashic commentary suggests that as Moses was writing the Torah dictated by God, he was too humble to accept for himself the more exalted and even angelic-suggesting divine charge of VaYiKRA; therefore, he wrote the less complimentary VaYiker relating to himself, while retaining his faithfulness to God’s actual word VaYiKRA (“and He summoned”) by appending a small aleph to the word VaYiKRA.

The Midrash goes one step further. It poignantly, if albeit naively, continues this picture by suggesting that Moses, having completed his writing of the Five Books, was then left with a small portion of unused divine ink; after all, the Almighty had dictated VaYiKRA and Moses had only written VYiKRA, rendering the ink which should have been used for the regular size aleph as surplus. The Midrash concludes that the Almighty Himself, as it were, took that extra ink and lovingly placed it on Moses’ forehead; that is what gave rise to Moses’ “rays of splendor.”

Behind this seemingly simplistic but beautiful description lies a world of profound thought. The Midrash is teaching that because Moses did not transfer all of the divine ink to the Torah parchment – obviously not, if we understand the ink to symbolize the divine will – there must have been many layers of ideas deeply embedded within the actual letters of Torah which Moses understood, but which was too profound for him to successfully communicate to others. As Maimonides explains in Section iii of his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Moses was on the highest level of the ladder of prophecy; only he – and none other of his contemporaries – was able to fully comprehend the divine will. Moses wrote down and explained as much as he felt could at least be understood by Joshua and the elders; the rest, he retained within his mind and within his soul. The aspects of Torah which Moses retained within himself but did not write or speak are graphically expressed by the midrash as the extra ink placed upon his forehead.

Most people are less than they appear to be – or, at least, are less than what they would like us to think they are. They immediately try to impress us with what and whom they know, dropping names and terms which imply that they are far more learned and knowledgeable than they actually are.

As another Midrash describes it, they are like the pig who extends his cloven hoof as if to advertise, “You see how kosher I am, you see how kosher I am.” If we look more deeply at the pig, however, we will readily discern that it is not kosher all, because it lacks the second necessary condition for kashrut: a double digestive tract. Based upon this Midrashic image, Yiddish folklore refers to any individual who tries to impress others at a first meeting with how much he knows (when in

actuality he knows very little), as “chazir fissel kosher,” (the pig’s cloven hoof gives an external appearance of being kosher).

Most people are less than they appear to be – and wear artificial masks as cover-ups in order to make a false impression; indeed persona, the base word for personality, is the Greek word for mask. There are, however, those rare individuals who are more than they appear to be, who have much more knowledge, insight and sensitivity than they would ever wish to – or feel that they are able to – communicate to others. It is that inner wisdom, hidden from the outside world of externals, which causes a charismatic glow of radiance to emanate from the countenance of such people. In the case of Moses, the concealed depths of his spiritual and intellectual understanding were of such a highly charged nature that they emanated rays of splendor which necessitated him to wear a mask – not to exaggerate who he was, but rather to minimize the divine sparks which his inner self naturally and automatically projected (Ex. 34:33).

Once we understand that the Torah which Moses received from God contained much more, eternally more, than he ever communicated in either written or oral formulations, we may begin to understand the powerful source for an unending and constantly regenerating Oral Tradition. Indeed, “Whatever creative interpretation a learned and devoted scholar-student may expound was originally given to Moses at Sinai” (Vayikra Raba 22:1). And at the same time, we now understand the real source of charismatic rays of splendor.

Shabbat Shalom

[CS – Adding late breaking post:

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org

date: Apr 3, 2025, 8:13 PM subject: Rav Frand - Charoses - Hashem Does Not Abandon Us

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayikra

Charoses - Hashem Does Not Abandon Us

This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: Pekudai Pesach 2025 – Here We Go Again: Erev Pesach on Shabbos. Good Shabbos & Chag Kosher V’somayach!

Rather than speaking about the parsha, I want to share with you a beautiful ha’ara (insight) on the Haggada from the sefer Yerech Lamoamidim by Rav Yerucham Olshin Shlita, one of the Lakewood Roshei Yeshiva.

Most people’s sedarim start with the obvious question about ha lachma anya being written in Aramaic, and then discuss the ma nishtana, and then the arba bonim – the chochom, the rasha, etc. Then it kind of peters out. Here is a very beautiful ha’ara on charoses.

According to the Mishna in Mesechta Psachim, Rav Eliezer bar Rebbi Tzadok says that charoses is a mitzva. The Chachomin argue and say that charoses is just to counteract the kappa in the marar. But Rav Eliezer bar Rebbi Tzadok says that it is a mitzva. You need to use charoses. The Gemara asks, what is the mitzva? Rav Levi says that charoses is zecher l’tapuach (in remembrance of the apple). Rav Yochanan says that charoses is zecher l’tit (in remembrance of the mortar).

Abaye says that in order to fulfill both opinions, charoses must contain apple to give it a certain tang, commemorating the apple trees, and it must be thick like cement, commemorating the tit. The charoses is a double symbol – of the tapuach (apple) and of the tit (mortar).

The zecher of the tit is a remembrance for the terrible shibud (slavery) that they experienced in Mitzrayim. As the Maharal writes, there is nothing more difficult than working with tit – making the mortar and even needing to find the straw. The charoses is a zecher for the shibud Mitzrayim.

What is the tapuach? Chazal describe the wondrous births of Jewish children in Mitzrayim: “In reward for the nashim tzidkonios (righteous women) in that generation, the Jews were redeemed from Mitzrayim” (Sotah 11b). What did these nashim tzidkonios do? They carried hot water for washing as well as fresh cooked fish to their husbands who

were working in the fields, to revive them from their heavy work, and through this they brought more children into the world, despite the shibud and harsh decrees.

The women subsequently gave birth painlessly under the apple trees, far from the Mitzrim. That is what the pasuk means in Shir Hashirim, tachas hatapuach orrarticha (I roused you under the tapuach). Hashem then sent malachay hashorays (angels) down from shomayim (heaven) to act as midwives and care for the babies. That is what Chazal mean by zecher l’tapuach.

Rav Yerucham Olshin’s question is, how can something be a symbol of two opposite things? On the one hand, charoses needs to be thick, zecher l’tit like mortar, which is a symbol of the shibud. On the other hand, zecher l’tapuach commemorates the open miracle that they gave birth to the babies without labor pain and with malachay hashorays from shomayim caring for the babies. How can something simultaneously be zecher l’tit and zecher l’tapuach?

Rav Yerucham Olshin answers using a vort that we have said in the past. By mechiras (the sale of) Yosef, the pasuk says that Yosef was taken down to Mitzrayim by Yishmaelim. The Torah publicizes that these Yishmaelim were transporting spices to sell in Mitzrayim. Why were these Arabs that bought Yosef carrying spices? It was in order to teach us the reward of the righteous. Rashi quotes Chazal that the typical practice of Arabs is to sell foul smelling oil. Some things never change. So why were they selling spices? They should have been selling oil.

Rashi explains that that the Ribono Shel Olam is precise in His execution of punishment. Yosef needed to be sold and transported to Mitzrayim. However, Hashem did not want Yosef to suffer from foul smelling oil during the trip down to Mitzrayim. Therefore, Hashem arranged through hashgacha pratis (Divine providence) that this caravan would be loaded with the pleasant aroma of spices instead of oil.

Rav Mordechai Pogromansky (whom Rav Gifter always used to quote as being the illuy (prodigy) from Telshe) asks, do you really think Yosef was thinking that even though he was being taken to Mitzrayim as a slave, at least the caravan smelled of good spices? Did he really care? Imagine if a person is put in prison but is given a great pillow. Wonderful! He is behind bars and he has lost his freedom but at least he has a nice pillow. When a person is being taken to jail, what difference does it make to him if he is being transported in the back of a Lincoln Town Car or the back of a paddy wagon? It is unlikely that Yosef, who had to psychologically deal with his separation from his parents, his family, his homeland, to say nothing of his freedom, would be very consoled by the fact that he had the “luck” of being in a pleasant-smelling caravan! What is this Rashi teaching us?

Rav Mordechai Pogromansky explains that herein lies a very fundamental lesson. The smell was not the point. Rather, Yosef must have felt abandoned. However, the ability to see the yad (hand of) Hashem within ‘tzoros’ (trials and tribulations) mitigates the sense of abandonment. People throw up their hands in despair when there seems to be no hope. If a person can see the silver lining in the cloud — but more importantly — if a person can see the yad Hashem in the cloud, then he will have the attitude: “I am going to get out of this! I have not been forsaken by the Ribono Shel Olam.” True, the situation remained very bad but when Yosef saw the strange phenomenon of an Arab caravan transporting spices, he realized that the Ribono Shel Olam was still with him and watching over him, regardless of the gravity of the situation. The nature of such a sign may be insignificant but the presence of the sign that Hashem still cares is of tremendous importance. Yosef had hope because he saw that the Ribono Shel Olam was watching over him.

Rav Yerucham Olshin is saying that it was the same thing in Mitzrayim. The shibud Mitzrayim was terrible. Their children were killed, etc., etc. It may have seemed as if Hashem abandoned them. It went on for generation after generation for over two hundred years. They must have felt, “Keili, Keili, lama azavtani” (My G-d, my G-d, why have you forsaken me)?

Therefore, Hashem did things during the shibud Mitzrayim that demonstrated that He still cared about them. The Ribono Shel Olam

performed nissim (miracles) for them. The women had babies without tzar leida (labor pain). Malachay hashorays came to act as midwives and care for the babies. These were nissim gelyyim (open miracles) occurring in Mitzrayim during the shibud, while experiencing a truly horrible existence.

So, is there a contradiction between zecheh l'tit and zecheh l'tapuach? Rav Yerucham explains that there is not a contradiction because in fact charoses is a zecheh for both. During the tit experience, they also experienced the tapuach, when Hashem demonstrated that He has not forgotten them.

That is something that we have also seen in our time, during the last sixteen months. As we all know, October 7 was a horrible, horrible day. And it has not ended. There are still 59 hostages in Gaza. The number of people killed and wounded and the soldiers that have been killed then and since then is horrible.

At the same time, we all should remember that Hashem has performed nissim gelyyim for us during this terrible period. So many missiles were shot at Eretz Yisroel that caused almost no damage. The exploding paggers. How many karbanos (sacrifices) would there have been from the attempted simultaneous bus bombings that blew up prematurely in empty parking lots (and then even more were discovered) instead of blowing up during rush hour? The entire strategic situation in the Middle East has changed. Hamas is half dead. Hezbollah is a shadow of its former self, seemingly unable to continue to fight. Syria collapsed. Iran is on its heels.

So, during this terrible tzara, while we are very much experiencing the tit, we are also experiencing tachas hatapuach orrarticha. We need to keep this in mind. Hashem made nissim. We need to be makir (recognize) that.

On a personal level also, even if a person experiences a difficult situation, every once in a while, he may see the yad Hashem demonstrating that Hashem is still taking care of him. That is why Rav Eliezer bar Rebbi Tzadok holds that charoses is a mitzva, zecheh l'tit and zecheh l'tapuach – a zecheh for the terrible shibud but also a zecheh for the yad Hashem that the Ribono Shel Olam showed us even during the shibud Mitzrayim.

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[CS – Adding this

Are There "Dark Forces" ?

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

How we confront our guilt in the aftermath of sin or moral failure is a defining pillar of avodat Hashem and of religious identity. Accepting responsibility and atoning for aveirot should be a cathartic moment and should foster profound spiritual growth. By contrast, denying responsibility and evading ownership of sin, often leads to recidivism and a deepening moral decline.

The modern world has waged an unrelenting campaign to erase guilt from our emotional landscape, discouraging feelings of personal responsibility while urging us to externalize blame by shifting it to others. Yet guilt is indispensable for moral growth and self-improvement. It serves as the quiet but insistent voice of a healthy conscience, guiding us toward accountability, teshuva, and transformation. Without it, the path to ethical refinement is obstructed, leaving us adrift in a world devoid of moral clarity.

For this reason, the Torah's description of the korban chatat, or sin offerings, is profoundly symbolic. It captures a delicate "guilty" moment in the spiritual life of a religious soul. The words the Torah uses to describe this moment, and this sacrifice are iconic, imparting lessons about moral accountability and the process of recovery from sin.

Sins of the 'Nefesh

Surprisingly, the Torah introduces the section discussing sin offerings with the Hebrew word nefesh, typically referring to our souls. One

might assume that the section describing sin would begin with ishor adam, terms that reflect our physical and material bodies which are responsible for our desires and our sins.

Evidently, as the Midrash comments, sin is not merely a product of our physical bodies and fleshly desires. Every sin carries a psychological undercurrent, rooted in our psyche and souls. That underlying psychological need manifests itself through a physical sin.

Sin is born from the fusion of body and soul, shaped both by physical desires and the deeper currents of emotional insecurity. It is not merely a lapse of the flesh but a reflection of the psyche, a struggle that unfolds within the entirety of the human experience. To underscore the integrated nature of sin, the Torah attributes transgression not only to the body but also to the soul "nefesh".

Moral improvement and recovery from chet requires that we understand the root of our shortcomings. If we continue to compartmentalize and assign blame solely to our physical desires, we only address the symptoms of sin, not the root cause. Moral and religious growth demands that we dig deeper, unearthing the psychological foundations of our behavior. Why do we act this way? Why do we find ourselves trapped in cycles of behavior that ultimately leave us frustrated, ashamed, and diminished? What unseen forces within our souls draw us back to the toxic behavior we seek to escape

Life Whole

Just as we do not separate body from soul when examining the roots of sin, we likewise avoid such divisions when reflecting on our broader religious experience. Life unfolds as a seamless whole—our moments of spiritual inspiration and our struggles are woven into a single, unified existence. Hashem fused our immortal neshamot with our fleeting, physical bodies, desiring that we experience life as a whole, rather than fragmenting it into separate spheres of the spiritual and the material. We strive to stand before Hashem in wholeness, in every moment, with every facet of our being. The tone of our experiences may shift—tefillah, Talmud torah and other mitzvot carry a different resonance than the mundane rhythms of daily life—but we are always standing before Him, always striving to live in accordance with His will. We do not divide life into compartments—one for sacred moments, another for spiritual recess. Instead, we embrace a continuous, unbroken journey of devotion. We must be the same person in shulas we are in the workplace, the same person who studies Torah as the one who strives to be a devoted family member. Though the expressions of our service may vary, each remains an integral part of a unified, holistic devotion to Hashem's will. There are no pauses in this mission, no intermissions from religious life. Our commitment is unwavering, weaving through every

role we embrace and every moment we live, where body and soul unite as one.

Dueling Forces

Judaism adamantly rejects dividing life into separate realms. The notion of splitting existence between body and soul or distinguishing between religious and non-religious moments is known as dualism—a philosophy foreign to Jewish thought. Instead, Judaism embraces a holistic vision, in which every aspect of life is intertwined with faith, and every moment is an opportunity for divine connection.

Dualistic cultures not only divide human experience into separate realms but also interpret history through a dualistic lens. The most popular expression of dualism divides existence into forces of good and evil, or light and darkness. This doctrine offers a simplistic answer to the perennial challenge of evil: how could an all-powerful and compassionate Hashem permit its existence? Dualism resolves this dilemma by proposing that evil is an autonomous force, inherently embedded within creation, locked in an unending struggle against the forces of good.

Scapegoating Jews

Tragically, throughout history, this stark division between forces of good and evil has fueled the demonization of Jews and unleashed relentless violence against us. Branded as the embodiment of darkness, we became convenient scapegoats for humanity's suffering. After all, if

pain and misfortune exist, there must be a hidden culprit—and our distinct customs and cultural separateness made us an easy target. This demonization served as a gruesome justification for the most barbaric acts against our people. By eradicating Jews—the so-called source of evil, our enemies convinced themselves they were serving a higher moral cause. No cruelty was too extreme, no atrocity too heinous.

Even today, a modern version of this ancient slander persists. Once again, we are cast as the ultimate villains, blamed for the alleged sins of Western civilization—from colonialism to genocide. The script has changed, but the underlying doctrine of demonization and hatred remains the same.

Free Will, Not "Forces"

We completely and utterly reject any notion of hidden forces of evil and darkness. Everything in this world was created by Hashem, and every human being was fashioned in His image. People possess free will—the divine gift of moral choice. Hashem entrusted humanity with this freedom, allowing each individual to choose between right and wrong, between light and dark. With this personal agency, some bring goodness and light into the world, while others unleash cruelty and suffering. Individuals or societies, however wicked, do not embody some mythical force of darkness.

There is no larger or cosmic force fueling their assault upon humanity and virtue. They are simply evil people and immoral cultures—nothing more. They may speak in the name of religion or ideology, but in truth, they represent only barbarity and cruelty. They have abused the gift of free will and moral conscience to vandalize Hashem's world and strike humanity. It is both our moral duty and historical calling to stand against evil and to defeat it. Hashem desires the triumph of justice, and ultimately, He will ensure that wickedness is vanquished from the world. There is no grand narrative of battling forces of light and darkness, of good versus evil. There is only one force—Hashem's will—and in the end, it will prevail, triumphant and eternal. We live life as a unified whole, indivisible in our essence. One G-d created all things, and He desires that we live our lives as one. When people, cultures, or religions undermine the world He created, He expects us to rise up and defeat them.

The writer, a rabbi at the hesder Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, was ordained by YU and has an English literature MA from CUNY. His most recent book, "To be Holy but Human: Reflections upon my Rebbe, Rav Yehuda Amital (Kodesh) is available in bookstores and at www.mtaraginbooks.com.]

[CS – Replacing with this week's, which came out after Allen had gone to print]

Passover Will Forever Remain the Spring of Civilization - Essay by Rabbi YY

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Passover Will Forever Remain the Spring of Civilization

Moses Didn't Only Free Slaves; He Changed the Vocabulary of Humanity

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

It's the Mentality

An old Jerusalem Jew spent his life as a collector for a Yeshiva. He would walk around the city of Jerusalem every day asking for money. He would wake up every morning at the crack of dawn, immerse himself in the mikvah, and pray. He would then start his daily rounds of collecting. From building to building, he would drag his weary feet, trudge up and down the winding staircases of the old city's archaic buildings. "If only," he would sometimes think to himself, "there were no buildings in Jerusalem, just single-story homes. How much easier my life would be!"

One day, one of his steady customers asked him, "Reb Meilach, what would you do if you won the Mega Million Lottery?"

Meilach thought for a moment and replied: "I would install elevators in all the buildings, that way I would not have to climb the steps anymore."

What If?

"If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our children's children would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt." -- The Haggadah

Really? We would still be slaves in Egypt? It seems far-fetched to declare that if G-d had not taken us out of Egypt 3337 years ago, we would still have been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

The Pharaonic Egyptian dynasty has long been a relic of history. Between 1313 BCE and 2011 CE, some water came under the bridge. David killed Goliath; Plato wrote the Republic; Julius Caesar was stabbed on the steps of the Roman senate; Constantine embraced Christianity; Mohammad decided he was the last prophet; Shakespeare wrote Hamlet; George Washington declared independence; the Wright brothers flew an airplane; Sergey Brin built Google; Trump won the election. A few other things happened as well during the last four millennia.

Yet, we sit down at the Seder and in complete seriousness state that if not for the Exodus we would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt?

The Soul of Slavery

As much as we commemorate the physical suffering of our Jewish nation at the hands of their tyrannical Egyptian oppressors at the Seder, the true bondage the Jewish people were subjected to was not only of a physical nature. To be sure, the physical suffering was tremendous. Jewish children were slaughtered. The Egyptian taskmasters would mercilessly beat down on their subjects who were tasked with impossible and useless jobs.

Yet, the slavery ran much deeper. The physical slavery was a byproduct of the human spirit lying dormant, concealed under the natural notion of man at the time that all of history is cyclical. Egypt was the superpower of the time, Pharaoh was the demigod; the concept of a human spark, which dreams and aspires for a better tomorrow, did not exist. People did not know that freedom is enshrined in the genome of their soul, that they are crafted in the Divine image, the source of all love and bliss.

"No slave was able to escape from Egypt," says the Midrash (Mechilta Exodus 18:11). It was not only that the slave was unsuccessful in staging a rebellion; rather, it was much more tragic: No slave possessed the ambition to break out of the shackles. The very walls that retained the slaves were also the walls that stunted the human soul. No man could even entertain the idea of rising against injustice and exploitation. There existed no such concept as the inner wisdom of the soul reflecting the frequency of infinite oneness, the greatness of each heart that soars aloft and pushes us to discover new horizons. The noble idea that the human person, carved in the image of a free G-d, was destined to truly be free, lay dormant in the psyche of men. Despair and surrender filled the human core.

Symbol of Pyramids

Every country has a symbol which captures its soul. Egypt was represented by the Pyramids. They still remain the longstanding hallmark of Pharaonic Egypt—and are the only one of the seven wonders of the ancient world to survive in modern times. In the pyramid, there is only one stone that stands alone on top, while all the rest are just rows that serve the row on top of it. Each row of stones serves the row above it. All but the stone at the peak.

The image of pyramids graphically depicts the prevailing mentality in Egypt and the rest of civilization: Egyptians saw themselves as rows of stones subservient to the stones on top of them. Every person saw himself as a stone serving the one on top of him, while the higher stones were merely serving those on top of them. There was only one stone on top, the Pharaoh, who legally had no one above him. He was the god.

This view of life was a given. Wherever fate placed you in the hierarchy of the pyramid, that is where your eternal destiny lay. No person even dared to dream otherwise. The soul of humanity was stagnant.

Even nature conceded—the Egyptian Nile irrigated the land's entire vegetation without any dependence on the annual precipitation. Nothing was dependent on human investment and creativity. Human labor would not make it or break it. All was fixed in its preordained role.

The Language of Freedom

Moses did not only free slaves; he introduced a new vocabulary: the vocabulary of freedom.

Moses breathed new life into a shackled world. A new belief that spirit can dominate matter, that every person is intrinsically a free spirit with endless horizons, and can never be completely dominated. That each person is an end in and of himself; that his or her existence has infinite value; that each of us is a temple for the Divine infinite light.

Moses was the first man to ever stand up to the tyrant Pharaoh and make demands. It was not even what he said; it was that he said something. Demands of a Pharaoh on behalf of slaves? Unheard of. When Moses declared "Let my people go!" a new consciousness was introduced into humanity: that man can aspire to change, to transcend, to go beyond, to transform, to be free, physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

If not for the Exodus from Egypt, human history would have been different. It is not only that the Jews would have remained there for the time; rather, all of civilization would remain in a standstill, with no development and no progress. We would still be enslaved descendants of the ancient Egyptians because the concept of change would have been nonexistent. Like a person living under a rock his entire life, that is how humans experience themselves.

A new language had to be invented. Exodus was not only a national liberation; it was a cosmic event that shaped the future of all humans. It is not only a chapter in Jewish history but rather the very script of the free world. It is the redemption of the human spirit from the shackles of paralysis, emotional death, despair, and hopelessness.

With the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, the whole world woke up from a long winter that was deep and cold. Spring, at last, has arrived.

Awaking from slumber

This is why the Torah instructs us to observe Passover always in springtime. This is no easy task. Our months are lunar, so naturally Passover would fall out at various seasons of the year. We have to go to great lengths in order to ensure that Passover coincides with spring. Why was that so necessary?

The answer is because the season of spring embodies the essence of Passover. Passover will forever remain the spring of civilization. After a frigid winter of hibernation and deadness, the trees barren, and the leaves lifeless, the climate dreary and depressing, spring comes with a new song on its lips. Nature awakens from its slumber.

The Fuel behind Revolutions

The story of the Exodus, then, was not a single event occurring millennia ago. It is an ongoing story. Throughout the ages, millions of people, downtrodden and dejected, draw inspiration from the Exodus story to at least dream of a better tomorrow and to actively work for it. Exodus has planted in the human psyche the seed of liberty, the mentality of freedom, the vocabulary of emancipation. Wherever you observe a revolution or a voice yearning for change to the better, for justice and truth, for kindness and integrity, for liberation from anxiety, for an end to exploitation and abuse, you will see the imprint of the Exodus story in it.

Do you ever wake up in the morning and say to yourself (not in words, but energetically in your heart and nervous system), I will not be a victim anymore? My trauma will not define me any longer. Do you ever hear an inner voice: I will confront my darkness and utilize it to grow? My insane trauma has hijacked all of me, but no longer? That is the Exodus playing itself out again in your life. It is the voice of Exodus whispering: you were created to be free.

Nowhere is this truth more evident than in the story of this country, the United States of America, From the Pilgrims to the Founding Fathers, from the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement, Americans have turned to one biblical prophet, and his name was Moses, because his narrative offers a roadmap of promise in a world of peril.

Most of the pilgrims who settled the "New England" of America in the early 17th century were Puritan refugees escaping religious persecutions in Europe. These Puritans viewed their emigration from England as a virtual re-enactment of the Exodus. To them, England was Egypt, the king was the Pharaoh, the Atlantic Ocean was the Red Sea, America was the Land of Israel, and the Indians were the ancient Canaanites. The

Puritans were the new Israelites, entering into a new covenant with G-d in a new Promised Land.

The Pilgrims described their fight for freedom as being like that of Moses. George Washington attributed the success of the Revolution to the same deity who freed the Israelites. American slaves made "Go Down, Moses" their national anthem.

Immediately after passing the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress asked Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams to propose a seal for the United States. Their recommendation (though it never materialized): Moses, leading the Israelites across the Red Sea, while the pharaoh drowns.

The pharaoh has long represented the intransigence of power. The Pilgrims called King James of England the pharaoh; Thomas Paine called King George the same; Civil Rights marchers branded Jim Crow the pharaoh.

At the time of the American Revolution, the interest in the knowledge of Hebrew was so widespread as to allow the circulation of the story that "certain members of Congress proposed that the use of English be formally prohibited in the United States, and Hebrew substituted for it." And when the Pennsylvania Assembly ordered a bell of liberty in 1751, it chose an inscription from Leviticus: "Proclaim Liberty thro' all the Land to all the Inhabitants Thereof."

Lady Moses

Harriet Tubman (1822–1913), that remarkable lady, the African-American abolitionist, humanitarian, and Union spy during the American Civil War, was famously nick named Moses. Why? Because during the horrific era of slavery in the US—triggering the Civil War -- this woman liberated thousands of slaves.

One day, the then adolescent slave girl Tubman was sent to a dry-goods store for some supplies. There, she encountered a slave owned by a different family, who had left the fields without permission. His overseer, furious, demanded that Tubman help restrain the young man. She refused, and as the slave ran away. The overseer threw a two-pound weight at him, but struck Tubman instead, which she said "broke my skull."

Bleeding and unconscious, Tubman was returned to her master's house and laid on the seat of a loom, where she remained without medical care for two days. She was sent back into the fields, "with blood and sweat rolling down my face until I couldn't see." Her master said she was "not worth a sixpence" and returned her to her original owner, who tried unsuccessfully to sell her.

Tubman took all her pain and turned it into one of the greatest human acts of courage, setting free slave after slave after slave.

For this she received the name "Moses!"

Where Would We Be?

Every time your heart moves you to transcend fear, to identify a paralyzing coping mechanism, to be a cycle breaker, to move beyond a barrier, to battle injustice, to respect your spiritual integrity, to react differently to a trigger, to transform your life for the better, to subdue an addiction, to confront a bad habit or attribute, remember that it is all because the Lord has sent Moses to stand up to Pharaoh and take us out of Egypt.

"If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our children's children would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt."

Every time you stand in front of a mirror and declare: I will not settle for mediocrity any longer, I will not be a victim any longer to instinct, to lies, to abuse—that has been triggered the moment Moses stood before the stone atop the pyramid, the Pharaoh, and declared: "Thus said the Lord! Let My people go and they will serve Me!"

Pesach gave us the vocabulary of freedom. Where would we and humanity be without it? What can your future look like with it?

We remember the Exodus daily. Because each day I get to choose between living as a "corpse," as a tortured, miserable soul, a shell of myself; or as a living, breathing, blissful embodiment of a living, infinite and undefined G-d.

Chag Kosher vesomayach!!

Contemporary Pesach

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Many years ago, there existed a land in which man worked to dominate both nature and other men. His labor met with a great degree of success. To this day, certain achievements of this nation have baffled modern scientists. The sages of this nation could explain the phenomena of the cosmos and understood, in a most comprehensive way, extremely sophisticated concepts of construction, irrigation and marketing. Modern science looks with amazement at their undertakings, and to this day does not understand how this supposedly “primitive” nation accomplished much of their technology.

This nation allowed all decisions relative to the agricultural wellbeing of its inhabitants to be made by professionals. These professionals were not dependent on the wind or the clouds, on weather factors that, to this day, evade accurate forecasting. These professionals figured out how to fertilize and water their land despite the vagaries of unpredictable weather. When their river rose, they harnessed its resources and watered and fertilized their fields. The river provided fresh, nourishing soil that guaranteed that their own soil produced when there was no rain and did not deplete its own nutrients. The government authorities controlled the river's blessings as they wished, using reservoirs and ditches built in an exceptional manner.

However, “order” in this country was not only the first duty of a citizen: it was his only duty. The citizens of the state were organized according to a very specific plan. The resulting system completely destroyed the individual's right to self-development, self-reliance, and self-determination. “Normal” humans were no longer born. Everyone was assigned a role from birth, and they were to become “farmers,” “soldiers,” “priests,” or “laborers,” dependent not on their own inclinations but upon “society’s needs” as perceived by the “experts.”

This society was dependent on an agricultural system that required its members to remain on their lands. Therefore, they despised shepherds, who represent a profession independent of any specific land, as they wander nomadically from one pastureland to the next. Not only did the leaders of this people despise shepherds, they exercised mind control, training their society so that everyone despised shepherds. This they did because they could not control the actions or the minds of the shepherds. Free thought, different from what the intellectuals believed, was anathema to this society.

By now I presume that you have figured out that this ancient land was Egypt -- perhaps the oldest culture known to history. Science and the knowledge of heaven and earth was the wisdom of the sages of Egypt. They were able to build pyramids, embalm mummies, and had many other skills that have baffled modern science!

At the same time, and perhaps this was the source of their “success,” Egyptian society utilized highly subtle and highly effective means of mind control. No one interested in their own professional success could consider thinking independently of what was accepted. That would lead to professional ostracism, and, after all, everyone’s goal is professional and financial success.

A friend of mine decided against pursuing a doctorate in an academic area in which he is highly qualified, because of the realization that his independent (and Torah-dik) ideas would probably result in him being unable to ever land a paying academic position. He can easily refute what is accepted in his area of academia as being scientifically inaccurate. He has written a book on the subject, but he cannot find a publisher because his approach is not accepted by those who rule the academic world.

Note that this control of ideas runs completely against the “bible” we were all taught regarding the objectivity and importance of applying the “scientific method” in an impartial manner. This problem exists in a wide range of academic disciplines.

If we apply our minds to learn and use Torah as our means of growth, we will indeed be able to grow as human beings, as Torah Jews, and also as honest scientists.

Let us use the pedagogy of Pesach to grow and to influence others to grow in Torah!

Rav Kook Torah

Vayikra: The Goal of Sacrifices

Sacrifices are not an innovation of the Jewish people. Noah also offered sacrifices to God. However, not all offerings are equal. The Midrash employs the following parable to illustrate this idea:

“There was once a king who hired two chefs. The first chef cooked a meal that the king ate and enjoyed. Then the second chef cooked a meal that the king ate and enjoyed. How can we know which meal the king enjoyed more? When the king subsequently commanded the second chef, “Make for me again the dish that you prepared,” we realize that the second meal was the king’s preferred dish.”

In other words, by the fact that God commanded the Jewish people to offer sacrifices, we know that God prefers their offerings to those which Noah initiated on his own accord.

But how do we evaluate the relative worth of different sacrifices? What distinguishes the service of Israel from that of Noah?

Two Goals of Offerings

The key to assessing an offering is to examine its purpose. The more elevated the goal, the more acceptable the offering. Noah’s objective in offering sacrifices after the Flood was very different than that of the Jewish people. Noah sought to preserve the physical world, to protect it from Divine retribution. Noah’s offerings achieved their goal — “God smelled the appeasing fragrance and said to Himself, ‘Never again will I curse the soil because of man’” (Gen. 8:21).

The offerings of the Jewish people aspire to a far greater objective. Their goal is to enable Israel to merit heightened levels of Divine providence and prophecy. The Torah explicitly sets out the purpose of the Temple service: “Make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst” (Ex. 8:25).

Fragrance and Bread

The difference between Noah’s offerings and those of Israel is reflected in the metaphors that the Torah uses to describe them. Noah’s offerings had an “appeasing fragrance” (rei’ach nichoach), while those of Israel are referred to as “My bread” (lachmi). What is the difference between a fragrance and a food?

When an animal consumes vegetation, the plant life is absorbed into the animal and becomes part of it. In this way, the plant has attained a higher state of being. When a human consumes an animal, the animal is similarly elevated as it becomes part of that human being. This transformation to a higher state through consumption parallels bringing an offering with the objective of attaining a higher state of existence. The offerings of the Jewish people are called “My bread,” since the magnitude of change to which they aspire — perfection as prophetic beings — is similar to the transformations of plant to animal and animal to human.

The offerings of Noah, on the other hand, had only an “appeasing fragrance.” They produced a wonderful scent and appealed to the natural senses, but they did not attempt to effect a fundamental change in nature. Their purpose was to maintain the world, to refine humanity within the framework of its natural moral and intellectual capabilities.

In fact, the offerings of the Jewish people encompass both of these objectives. They are described both as “appeasing fragrance” and as “My bread,” since we aspire to perfection in two areas — natural wisdom and Divine prophecy.

This March Coach Bruce Pearl is Speaking Out Against the Madness

By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

The Auburn Tigers are going to the Final Four, the coveted final rounds of the annual March Madness, NCAA College Championship

Basketball. For the first time, three of the final four teams have Jewish head coaches, a statistical unlikelihood. But for Auburn's Coach, Bruce Pearl, being in the spotlight as a Jew is much more than interesting trivia, it is an opportunity he refuses to squander.

Earlier in the tournament, after his Auburn Tigers defeated Creighton, sitting in front of countless reporters in a postgame press conference that would be seen by millions, Coach Pearl opened not by talking about the game or about basketball at all, but rather—with the permission of his players—by invoking the name of Edan Alexander, the 19-year-old Israeli-American held hostage in Gaza:

I get asked a lot how this basketball program has become so competitive over the last eight years. But for me, I believe it was God's plan to give us this success – success beyond what we deserve. To give us this platform. To give me an opportunity to start this conference really briefly and remind the world that Edan Alexander is still held hostage in Gaza right now... Bring the hostages home.

Coach Pearl invited Edan's parents and family to the next game and continued to highlight the plight of the American held hostage in Gaza and all the other hostages as well. He challenged all of America to know Edan's name and fight until he is released. Later in that same press conference, he came back to the topic of Israel and what it means to be an American Jew:

This Jewish American loves his country more than anything else. At the same time, Israel is our ancestral homeland and it's under attack. It's under siege. All it wants to do is live in peace with its neighbors. And, you know what, there are some Arab countries that are actually wanting peace with Israel right now, but there is a segment of the population there in the Middle East who have been doing nothing but attacking Israel for 85 years. October 7 was the worst day since the Holocaust for the Jewish people, and they [Hamas] say they want to do it again and again. We have Americans that are held hostage in Gaza right now. It's unacceptable.

Some were first introduced to Coach Pearl's advocacy at this year's tournament, but if you have been following him for the last several years, you know it is nothing new. He tweets almost daily to his 165,000 followers about Israel, antisemitism, and good versus evil. He isn't afraid to risk turning off fans, criticism from his university or its supporters, or even his job, to stand up as a proud Jew and to speak about what he believes in.

A few years ago, he even brought his Auburn team to Israel, a trip coordinated by the amazing organization Athletes for Israel. In recognition of his devotion and dedication to Israel and the Jewish people, I had the privilege to join Athletes for Israel and NCSY in giving him and his team an award on the Auburn court before the opening game of their season a couple years ago.

Where does Coach Pearl's courage and conviction come from? How does he have the strength to speak out when too many others are silent?

Three years ago, during this same time of year, at a March Madness press conference, Coach Pearl used the opportunity to talk about the war in Ukraine and the threat of Iran to Israel and the story of Purim. He spoke about how his parents named him Mordechai and he feels a responsibility like his ancestor to speak up for and fight for the Jewish people.

Soon after, we hosted him on Behind the Bima to better understand his background and what motivated him to use that moment and platform for our cause. Here are some highlights from that conversation:

BTB: How do your Judaism and faith impact your coaching?

CBP: When I was a little younger I thought it was me, the great coach and the great motivator, and as I got as I've gotten older I realized, no, it's simply God using me in the position and to affect others and affect young people and it's all about Him and my service to Him. And so, the secret sauce for Auburn basketball and our run to the Final Four and winning championships throughout the last five years if I could get my guys to simply do the things that God would have them do what is He going to at least put yourself in position and be blessed.

BTB: Do you pray during games?

CBP: What I do after player introductions—and I've done this my entire career when they introduce me after they introduce the players—I am always crouched over a chair and I'm talking to God...and people are seeing me pray and I am not praying about the game, I am not going to tell you what I'm praying about because that's between me and God but it has nothing to do with victory, it has nothing to do with the basketball team, but I want when my name is called I want them to see me praying.

BTB: What gave you the courage to speak up?

CBP: When I was 15 years old and I was a freshman in high school I was the best athlete in town. I was the first kid picked on the playground the first kid picked for everything and then I had a career-ending injury. When I say "career-ending," I had a really bad knee injury and I was never the same athlete and I honestly believe that God said, "There's way more to you Mordechai than just being the best athlete." I wasn't kind to people, I was very limited in my friend population. I thought a lot of myself. I dominated you. I embarrassed you. Because I could. Because I was stronger than you and I wasn't as nice.

And now all of a sudden when I could no longer be that athlete it was painful, there were a lot of friends that were happy that the king got knocked off the hill but I didn't quit and I got in the school musical and I became the class president and I'm like God, these other kids that aren't very good athletes but they're awesome, they're so much fun, they're so cool, they're so talented. And then I became a champion for the underdog all of a sudden. Now I was still tough and like "You ain't gonna, you're not, you're not messing with these kids that aren't athletes that are just the bandies that are acting diminished, you got to go through me right now." I could still put my hands up and fight, I was going to be their champion, and so it just exposed me to more: there was more to life than just my ability to beat you on the basketball court or hit a home run. You know I believe these things happen for a reason and I want to be at my best when things are at the worst and I want to prepare my teams to also be at their best when things are at their worst.

BTB: How did you first connect to Israel?

CBP: I'm seven years old, it's 1967. My grandfather would go to bed after supper, he was up very early to work, he was always out the door working before the sun came up, but he would come home and he'd have supper and of course we prayed before all of our meals but after supper he would be pretty quick to go to bed. He'd sit in his chair and he'd fall asleep or he'd go to bed pretty early but this one night Papa was up he was watching tv and he was crying. I said what are you crying about? He put me on his lap we talked about Israel. He was afraid to go to bed during the Six Day War because he wasn't sure when he woke up Israel would still be there. So I learned about Israel. I learned about a safe place for the Jewish people and that was that was the beginning of my love.

BTB: Do you pay a price for standing up for Israel?

CBP: When I'm out there like this does it hurt me in recruiting sometimes? Absolutely. You know not every great basketball player that grows up in the inner city dreams of playing for a Jewish basketball coach. It does hurt me in some households. But that's a choice I made it and I'm sure we've lost some kids. My coaches have got to realize this is who you work for. This is who I am.

I've become more and more outspoken as I've gotten older because I can see I'm playing the back nine right now. They're not going to fire me right now. I won 28 games this year, we won the SEC, and I'm in a stronger position now. By saying these things are there people that are out there that aren't liking them at all and wish I would just shut up and are waiting for me to have a bad season or two and fire me? Maybe there are. But I'll tell you this, I'm blessed to be a place like Auburn in Alabama and one of the things I don't mind telling you is the Jews all over the world should be grateful in some way to the Evangelical Christian community who is standing with Israel in many ways in prayer and financial support and they provide us a lot of political cover here in this country.

Coach Mordechai's faith and very real and ongoing relationship with God is inspiring. How powerful that he looked into the cameras and said, our team's success is from God so that I could use this moment to

fight for hostages held in Gaza to come home. What an example that he can look back at his life and see a career-ending injury as a blessing and not a curse. Coach Pearl obligates us all to use our platforms and our relationships, not only in private, but also in public, to talk about things that matter, to practice our Judaism with pride, and to do so without fear of being cancelled or fired.

Mordechai is introduced in the Megillah as: “Ish Yehudi haya b’Shushan Habira – There was a Jewish man in Shushan the capital.” What do you mean “a” Jewish man; there was only one? There was a large Jewish population in Shushan! The Megillah is telling us that true, there were many Jews, but most were failing to stand up for their Judaism or practice it. The Jewish community was asleep; there was only one Ish Yehudi, an unashamed, unembarrassed, unapologetic Jew.

As we have entered the month of Nissan, a month of redemption, salvation and freedom, let’s follow the example of Mordechai Pearl, be an Ish Yehudi, and in that merit, may we welcome all the hostages home.

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Vayikra

Soulful Offerings

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

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

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

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

“My son,” he said, “that is a very difficult question. I will look into the matter. But until then I have an idea. I would like to give you some money in order for you to purchase four cups of wine for you and your family.”

The Bais Halevi, then took out a large sum of money, far more than necessary for a few bottles of wine, and handed it to the man who took it with extreme gratitude and relief.

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

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

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

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

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

Refuah Shlaima to Yehuda Boruch ben Sora Menucha

Parshas Vayikra

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rochel bas Yosef.

You Know Who

And he called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him [...] (1:1).

There is an enigmatic Midrash Rabbah on this possuk: “From this verse we see that any talmid chacham that doesn’t have da’as (knowledge) is worse than a dead animal carcass. We learn this from Moshe, who was the paradigm of wisdom and prophecy, took Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt, performed many miracles in Egypt and Yam Suf, ascended to heaven and brought down the Torah, and constructed the Mishkan. [Even with all these impressive accomplishments] Moshe refrained from entering the holy Mishkan until Hashem called to him” (Vayikra Rabbah 1:15).

What does Moshe’s modesty have to do with a talmid chacham who doesn’t have da’as? In fact, the listing of Moshe Rabbenu’s accomplishments may actually serve to disprove the Midrash’s point. After all, perhaps Moshe’s vaunted resume required him to have a level of da’as that a “normal” talmid chacham would not routinely require. So, why do we compare an ordinary talmidchacham to Moshe? It seems rather unfair.

In order to understand this difficult Midrash we must first properly define the term da’as. We first find the word da’as used in the Torah by the Eitz Hada’as (Tree of Knowledge), about which Hashem explains to Adam that its fruits are forbidden to him (Bereishis 2:17). Fascinatingly, the Torah says regarding the creation of man and woman, that although they were both naked they were not ashamed (2:25). Yet, once Adam and Chava sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the Torah says, “Their eyes were opened and they ‘knew’ they were naked” (3:7). We see from here that da’as refers to an understanding of oneself, a self-knowledge as it were. As Rashi (ad loc) explains, they became intellectually aware. True da’as is a real understanding of yourself and who you are. Once a person achieves this self-knowledge he can then relate to others in a objective manner. That is, a person no longer defines himself by how others see him; he has a healthy self-definition. Therefore, all his interactions with others will be pure and impartial because he isn’t concerned about his image and what others think of him.

This objectivity allows him to connect with others in a very pure form that is not clouded by the superficiality of image consciousness and the related complications of emotional insecurity. In other words, his interactions with the world around him aren’t about him. This actually is what the snake said to Chava, “Your eyes will open and you will become God-like [...]” (3:5). The snake was explaining that self-knowledge gives one an understanding of their potential. Man has the potential to create, and in this way man is God-like.

The Midrash is telling us that Moshe Rabbeinu, with the most incredible accomplishments ever achieved, never lost sight of who he was. His modesty was a reflection of his internal self-knowledge that his accomplishments were a fulfillment of his enormous potential, not that it conferred upon him any special privileges. This is why he was chosen as the transmitter of Hashem's Torah – he was able to act as a crystal clear lens for what Hashem wished to convey. Thus, the Jewish people were able to receive the Torah in its purest form, as Moshe never made it about himself.

Often, even accomplished talmideichachamim become delusional that their achievements somehow make them better than others. In fact, many religious people see themselves as having a higher standing than others, and this sometimes causes them to create their own morality of what is right and wrong. The Midrash is teaching us that we must have the self-knowledge of who we are and not take liberties. As the Midrash points out, even Moshe did not enter the Mishkan until Hashem called to him.

Wholly Peace

If his offering is a sacrifice of a peace offering, if he offers it from the cattle – whether male or female – unblemished shall he offer it before Hashem (3:1).

Parshas Vayikra introduces the topic of korbonos (sacrifices), which is discussed throughout much of the book of Vayikra. One of the types of sacrifices that we learn about in this week's parsha is the korban shelamim, known as a peace offering. Rashi (ad loc) explains that this sacrifice is known as a peace offering because it brings shalom to the world. Whereas some sacrifices are wholly burnt on the altar, and others are both burnt on the altar and shared with the Kohanim, the peace offerings are shared by all: the altar, the Kohanim, and the owners all receive their share of the sacrifice.

Fascinatingly, both the Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel translate the words korban shelamim as "holy sacrifice." On the surface this is understandable, as sacrifices are referred to as kodshim and this is a prevailing theme throughout book of Vayikra. Yet, one must wonder why specifically the korban shelamim is called a "holy sacrifice." What is the relationship between this type of korban and the concept of holiness?

There is a common misconception that being kadosh means being connected to Hashem and that we judge holiness by how close a

relationship someone has with Hashem. However, we know this cannot be the precise definition of the word kedushah because we are enjoined to be "kadosh like Hashem is kadosh" (19:1-3). Obviously, Hashem being kadosh isn't judged by His connection to Himself.

Rather the more correct definition of kadosh is to set aside. This is why a woman who gets married is referred to as "mekudeshes." She hasn't suddenly become holy; she is set aside for her husband.

Hashem is kadosh because in essence He has separated Himself from creation; He has acted not in His self-interest, but for the sake of man. Hashem in His perfection has no need for anything. All His actions are for our sake. We are enjoined to be kadosh like Hashem is kadosh: to separate from our own self-interest and self-centered desires, and focus on interests outside our own.

The korban shelamim is the only sacrifice in which all the parties have a share. This korban in particular, as Rashi explains, is different than the other sacrifices in that everyone's interest is being served and it brings peace to the world. This is why both the Targumim translate korbanshelamim as the kadosh sacrifice.

The Talmud (Zevachim 99b) derives from the verse above that prior to the burial of an immediate family member a person may not bring a korban shelamim (this halachic status is known as Aninus). The Gemara explains that this is because the word shelamim originates from the word shalem (whole).

In other words, these sacrifices are only brought when a person is "whole" (i.e. when one's mind is calm and clear). A person who is in anguish over his loss, and is therefore ineligible to bring the korban shelamim. The state of Aninus is when one must focus on his own personal loss and begin the process of recovering from that loss. In fact, the word for self is "ani." Thus he is ineligible to bring a korban shelamim – which is the antithesis of self-interest.

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