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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON VAYIKRA – PURIM - 5784

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Home Weekly Parsha VAYIKRA

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

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

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

begin their Torah experiences by studying the book of Vayikra.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

fw from allen.klein@gmail.com

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>

subject: Covenant and Conversation

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

The Dimensions of Sin

VAYIKRA

Our parsha, which deals with a variety of sacrifices, devotes an extended section to the chattat, the sin offering, as brought by different individuals: first the High Priest (Ex. 4:3-12), then the community as a whole (Ex. 4:13-21), then a leader (Ex. 4:22-26) and finally an ordinary individual (Ex. 4:27-35).

The whole passage sounds strange to modern ears, not only because sacrifices have not been offered for almost two millennia since the destruction of the Second Temple, but also because it is hard for us to understand the very concepts of sin and atonement as they are dealt with in the Torah.

The puzzle is that the sins for which an offering had to be brought were those committed inadvertently, be-shogeg. Either the sinner had forgotten the law, or some relevant fact. To give a contemporary example: suppose the phone rings on Shabbat and you answer it. You would only be liable for a sin offering if either you forgot the law that you may not answer a phone on Shabbat, or you forgot the fact that the day was Shabbat. If, for a moment, you thought it was Friday or Sunday. So your sin was inadvertent.

This is the kind of act that we don't tend to see as a sin at all. It was a mistake. You forgot. You did not mean to do anything wrong. And when you realise that inadvertently you have broken Shabbat, you are more likely to feel regret than remorse. You feel sorry but not guilty.

We think of a sin as something we did intentionally, yielding to temptation perhaps, or in a moment of rebellion. That is what Jewish law calls be-zadon in biblical Hebrew or be-mezid in rabbinic Hebrew. That is the kind of act we would have thought calls for a sin offering. But actually, such an act cannot be atoned for by an offering at all. So how are we to make sense of the sin offering?

The answer is that there are three dimensions of wrongdoing between us and God. The first is guilt and shame. When we sin deliberately and intentionally, we know inwardly that we have done wrong. Our conscience – the voice of God within the human heart – tells us that we have done wrong. That is what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they had sinned. They felt shame. They tried to hide. For that kind of deliberate, conscious, intentional sin, the only adequate moral response is teshuvah, repentance. This involves (a) remorse, charatah, (b) confession, vidui, and (c) kabbalat he-atid, a resolution never to commit the sin again. The result is selichah umechilah, God forgives us. A mere sacrifice is not enough.

However, there is a second dimension. Regardless of guilt and responsibility, if we commit a sin we have objectively

transgressed a boundary. The word chet means to miss the mark, to stray, to deviate from the proper path. We have committed an act that somehow disturbs the moral balance of the world. To take another secular example, imagine that your car has a faulty speedometer. You are caught driving at 50 miles per hour in a 30 mile an hour zone. You tell the policeman who stops you that you didn't know. Your speedometer was only showing 30 miles per hour. He may sympathise, but you have still broken the law. You have transgressed the speed limit, albeit unknowingly, and you will have to pay the penalty.

That is what a sin offering is. According to Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch it is a penalty for carelessness. According to the Sefer Ha-Chinuch it is an educational and preventive measure. Deeds, in Judaism, are the way we train the mind. The fact that you have had to pay the price by bringing a sacrifice will make you take greater care in future.

Rabbi Isaac Arama (who lived in Spain in the 15th century) says that the difference between an intentional and an unintentional sin is that in the former case, both the body and the soul were at fault. In the case of an unintentional sin only the body was at fault, not the soul. Therefore a physical sacrifice helps, since it was only the physical act of the body that was in the wrong. A physical sacrifice cannot atone for a deliberate sin, because it cannot rectify a wrong in the soul.

What the sacrifice achieves is kapparah, not forgiveness as such but a “covering over” or obliteration of the sin. Noah was told to “cover” (ve-chapharta) the surface of the Ark with pitch (Gen. 6:14). The cover of the Ark in the Tabernacle was called kapporet (Ex. 25:17). Once a sin has been symbolically covered over, it is forgiven, but as the Malbim points out, in such cases the verb for forgiveness, s-l-ch, is always in the passive (venislach: Lev. 4:20, Lev. 4:26, Lev. 4:31). The forgiveness is not direct, as it is in the case of repentance, but indirect, a consequence of the sacrifice.

The third dimension of sin is that it defiles. It leaves a stain on your character. Isaiah, in the presence of God, feels that he has “unclean lips” (Is. 6:5). King David says to God, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” – “me-chatati tahareni” (Ps. 51:4).

About Yom Kippur the Torah says:

“On that day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you [letaher etchem]. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins.”

Lev. 16:30

Ramban says that this is the logic of the sin offering. All sins, even those committed inadvertently, have consequences. They

each “leave a stain on the soul and constitute a blemish on it, and the soul is only fit to meet its Maker when it has been cleansed from all sin” (Ramban to Lev. 4:2).

The result of the sin offering is *tehora*, cleansing, purification. So the sin offering is not about guilt but about other dimensions of transgression. It is one of the stranger features of Western civilisation, due in part to Pauline Christianity, and partly to the influence of the philosopher Immanuel Kant, that we tend to think about morality and spirituality as matters almost exclusively to do with the mind and its motives. But our acts leave traces in the world. And even unintentional sins can leave us feeling defiled.

The law of the sin offering reminds us that we can do harm unintentionally, and this can have psychological consequences. The best way of putting things right is to make a sacrifice: to do something that costs us something.

In ancient times, that took the form of a sacrifice offered on the altar at the Temple. Nowadays the best way of doing so is to give money to charity (*tzedakah*) or perform an act of kindness to others (*chesed*). The Prophet said so long ago, in God’s name:

“For I desire loving-kindness, not sacrifice.”

Hosea 6:6

Charity and kindness are our substitutes for sacrifice and, like the sin offering of old, they help mend what is broken in the world and in our soul.

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>date: Mar 21, 2024, 9:30 PM subject: The Truth About Anti-Semitism Is Hard for Jews to Accept - Essay by Rabbi YY
The Truth About Anti-Semitism Is Hard for Jews to Accept

October 7th Demonstrates the Cause of Jew Hatred

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The Uniqueness of Jew-Hatred

RABBI YY JACOBSON

Hatred of the Jew has been universal, permanent, and deep.^[1] Death for the Jews has been desired and plotted by the tyrants of every age. Pharaoh, Sancheriv, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, the Roman Caesars, the Turks, the Christians, the Muslims, Stalin, Hitler, and almost every great power that ever lived and flourished, defined the Jew as a target for abuse or complete annihilation. Jews have been expelled from nearly every country in which they resided—England, France, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Italy, Greece, Lithuania, Spain, Portugal, Bohemia, Moravia, Russia, Poland and the countries

of the Middle East and North Africa, and of course, from their ancient homeland, Eretz Israel. It is estimated that every 22 years Jews have been exiled from another country.

Throughout the centuries, many millions of Jews were murdered, including millions of infants and children. The Babylonians and Romans killed three million Jews. The Christians and the Muslims in their Crusades, inquisitions, conversion decrees, blood libels, and general religious fervor over a span of 15 centuries slaughtered millions of Jews, often wiping out entire communities. Chmelnitzky and his bandits beheaded 300,000 Polish Jews during 1648-49, while Hitler put to death a third of our people, including one-and-a-half million children. In nearly every country, Jews have, at some time, been subjected to beatings, torture, and murder solely because they were Jewish.

And though many of us thought that the evil of anti-Semitism perished in a post-Auschwitz world, we have been rudely awakened during the last few years as it once again rears its ugly face, particularly among Arab nations and in Europe.

Then came October 7th, 2024. 1200 Jews were murdered brutally, Jewish children burned alive, Jewish women were tied down, raped, and beheaded during the horrific crime, and so many people here in America celebrated such unspeakable horrors, and are now blaming Israel for trying to avoid a second Holocaust, which Hamas would crave to commit.

Why such hatred and fear of a people who never constituted more than a small minority? Why did almost every great culture and civilization see us as their ultimate enemy? Are we such an evil people as to threaten the well-being of virtually every civilization for the past 4,000 years? Why is it that otherwise sophisticated and educated men and women of academia are filled with irrational hatred toward Israel for literally trying to defend its citizens from murder while ignoring the horrors perpetrated en masse by its Arab neighbors?

Most scholars and historians, including many Jews themselves, choose to view this ongoing obsession not as something uniquely connected to Jews or Judaism but rather as a multitude of isolated events erupting as a result of distinct circumstances.

For example, why do millions of Muslims hate Jews today? Why would the leader of Hamas speak about the need to murder every Jew alive? Because — the common explanation goes — we are occupiers occupying their country, and they yearn for liberation. If Israel would only grant the Arabs independence and hope, the venom would dissipate.

But why did they kill us before the "occupation" of 1967? Why did six Arab countries try to destroy Israel at a time when there were no settlements or settlers? Because during the War of Independence in 1948 between the newly created State of Israel and its Arab neighbors, hundreds of thousands of Arabs fled their homes and ended up in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza. The Arabs were seeking to return to their homes inside pre-1967 Israel.

But why did the Arabs initiate this war against Israel in 1948 and thus create, through their own error, the refugee problem? Why did they not accept the United Nations partition of Palestine and accept the reality of Jewish existence in the Jews' ancient homeland? And why were scores of Jews murdered during the 1920s and 1930s? For this, we must search for yet another explanation. The excuses go on and on.

The attempt removes the notion of anti-Semitism from anything distinctly Jewish. The Germans, we are told, hated the Jews because they were scapegoats for the humiliating defeat of Germany in World War I and a depressed economy, and so many Christians wanted the Jews dead because they claimed we killed their god. Stalin murdered Jews because he believed they were capitalists, while Europeans of the Middle Ages were repulsed by the Jew because of his economic success, and on and on.

Yet this approach is unconvincing. To deny that there is a single pervasive cause for anti-Semitism and to reject that an underlying reason has sparked the hatred of billions of non-Jews for four millennia contradicts both common sense and history. Anti-Semitism has existed for too long and in too many disparate cultures to intellectually maintain a claim that each culture hated the Jews because of some distinct factor disconnected from them being Jewish. To believe that Jew-hatred is just another form of racial or religious bigotry, lunacy, ethnic hatred, lack of tolerance, xenophobia, resentment of affluence, and professional success is to turn a blind eye to the core cause of this unique loathing. Of course, various factors may exacerbate anti-Semitism and cause it to erupt at a given time, but these factors do not explain the origin and genesis of this hatred. In "Why the Jews?" Authors Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin put it well: Economic depressions do not account for gas chambers.^[2]

Haman's Attempt

The famous Purim story, recorded in the biblical Book of Esther and read during the upcoming Purim festival, relates one more attempt made some 2,400 years ago to exterminate the Jewish people, this time by a Persian minister named Haman.

Haman approached the then-king of Persia, Achashverosh, and offered him a tremendous sum in exchange for permission to arrange a "Final-Solution." He desired that every member of the Jewish nation, men, women, and children, be put to death. The king responded:^[3] "The money is given to you (Haman), and the nation (of Israel) is yours to do with, as you see fit."

This interaction seems quite understandable. Achashverosh, no less a miserable anti-Semite than Haman, happily embraces the idea of a world devoid of Jews. Yet the Talmud feels it necessary to illustrate the situation employing a parable.

A Mound and a Ditch

Here is the Talmud's parable:^[4]

"Achashverosh and Haman are compared to two people, one of whom had a mound of dirt in his field, and another one who had a ditch in his field. The owner of the ditch said to himself, 'How I wish the owner of the mound would give me his mound in exchange for money, so that I can fill my ditch.' And the owner of the mound said to himself, 'How I wish the owner of the ditch would sell me the use of his ditch, so that I can remove the mound of dirt from my field and dump it into his ditch.'

"After some time," relates the Talmud, "these two men encountered one another. The owner of the ditch said to the owner of the mound, 'Sell to me your mound!' The owner of the mound responded: 'Please, take it for free.'"

The Talmudic illustration is clear. Achashverosh is compared to the owner of the mound—the mound being a metaphor for the Jewish people who lived under his rule. He desperately seeks to get rid of it. Haman is seen as the owner of the ditch, eagerly attempting to obtain the mound. When Haman offers to purchase the "mound" for money, Achashverosh gladly gives it to him for no payment at all, enthusiastically consenting to the annihilation of the Jews.

But here is the question: Parables quoted in Talmudic literature are never meant as entertainment, but rather as tools to clarify and crystallize an abstract or complex concept. But what is so difficult to understand about a story of two people who despise the Jews with similar intensity and eagerly cooperate to destroy them? Why do we need a parable about a mound and a ditch to clarify the situation between Haman and Achashverosh?^[5] It is not like this is the first or last instance of a king craving to kill the Jews. Sadly, this has happened repeatedly, from Pharaoh to Achashverosh and subsequently. Did the Talmud find it to be so strange to require some parable?

And even if it is difficult to understand what transpired between Haman and Achashverosh, how is it explained by

means of this seemingly simple and superficial parable of a mound and a ditch?

Moreover, the parable doesn't fit the story it attempts to illustrate. In the parable, the owner of the mound seeks to dispose of his mound, while the owner of the ditch craves to obtain the mound and fill it with it. In the actual story, however, both the owner of the "mound," Achashverosh, as well as the owner of the "ditch," Haman, wish to dispose of the "mound"—the Jewish people—and get rid of it completely. You can't fill a ditch with a mound you crave annihilating!^[6]

Two Layers of Anti-Semitism

What the Talmud is attempting to convey via this parable is an answer to the question of why. Why, nearly always and nearly everywhere, have Jews been hated? Why did Haman crave to kill every single Jew, down to an infant? Why would King Achashverosh be so eager to purge his country of all Jews? What have the Jews done to attract such profound universal animosity? Why are they obsessed with us? From the Russian Czars to the Christian Popes, from the Muslim rulers to the Third Reich, from Voltaire to Wagner, to Martin Luther, to Yasser Arafat, the great and perhaps only common denominator between all of the above was this: The Jew evoked the profoundest disgust.

It is this question — perhaps one of the great questions of history — that the Talmud is attempting to confront in this little passage.

Anti-Semitism, the Talmud is telling us, sees Jews as a "mound." The anti-Semitism harbored by many non-Jews throughout history sees the Jew as a stranger in world history, a foreign creep, a "mound" that obstructs one's free movement and enjoyment in his orchard. The Jew somehow "irks" him—and he is not even sure why. This Jew hater feels uncomfortable with the presence of the Jew. The Jew is a mound that does not belong here. The Jew may attempt to do everything possible to assuage the annoyance the anti-Semite feels toward him; he may try to do everything to eclipse his Jewishness. But it is usually to no avail: As long as the Jew is alive, he will remain, in many a non-Jewish eye, an irritable, cumbersome "mound."^[7]

But why? Why can't they just see us as another ethnic group doing its own thing? This crude bigotry, says the Talmud, is born of a deeper and subtler space within the consciousness of the anti-Semite. Jewish existence opened a "ditch," a vacuum, in the heart of the human race, and every non-Jew, in one way or another, is aware of this void, causing him to look at the Jew either with admiration and affection, or with hate and repulsion, or with a mixture of the two.

Confronting a Ballad of Eternity

"What is the meaning," asks the Talmud, "of the term Mount Sinai? Sinai, in Hebrew, means hatred. Sinai is the mountain that gave birth to Jew-hatred." (Talmud Tractate Shabbat).^[8]

Some 3,400 years ago, at the foot of a lone mountain, the Jewish people received a gift that transformed their lives and destiny for eternity. Whether religious, secular, or assimilated, that moment imbued Jewish life with a unique richness and nobility. The gift of Torah inculcated Jewish life with tremendous moral and spiritual responsibility, but it simultaneously granted the Jewish mind, the Jewish family, and the Jewish community—rich and poor alike—a taste of heaven. The day-to-day life of the Jew became imbued with a depth of meaning and a sense of purpose born of an appreciation of the Divine present in life, love, family, pain, values, and money.

When the non-Jew encounters the Jew, he is, consciously or subconsciously, struck by a grandeur of spirit, a depth of living, a resonance of eternity, an echo of the Divine, that is not easily described but very palpable. There is something about the Jew and Judaism that is larger than life, and the non-Jew feels it, sometimes more acutely than the Jew.

The Jewish presence, challenging the world with a call from the infinite living moral G-d, opened a hole, a "ditch," a mental and emotional void in the heart of humanity, craving the fullness and richness of life that the Torah has given the Jew. The Jewish people opened a profound wound in civilization, allowing it to experience its own meaninglessness. At Sinai, Jews redefined their lives by the notion that there is one G-d, who makes moral demands on all of humanity. Thus, at Sinai, the Jewish nation became the target of the hatred of those who could never forgive the Jew for creating the "void" that grows from a sense of inner guilt when you are living an empty life, an immoral life when you hurt your fellow man, or you worship yourself. Concepts such as basic human rights, the notion that the sick and the elderly should be cared for—not murdered or left to die—and the idea of society assisting the poor and disadvantaged are not easily embraced by the barbarian. The concept that we are all responsible to a moral G-d that there is right and wrong, limits to power, and that each of us has a duty to righteousness is toxic to the human-animal who cherishes the moral jungle. So the non-Jewish response to this "ditch," the void, and the guilt exposed by the Jewish presence came—and still comes—in two different forms.

Two Responses to Moral Guilt

Many non-Jews from various religions and cultures responded by elevating their lifestyles to a higher plateau. They saw the Jew and his Jewishness as a model that they could, in their own way, emulate. They assuaged the feelings of emptiness and moral guilt by creating a life and value system grounded in the Torah's weltanschauung. The American nation is a great example of that. Founded on the Judaic ethic of respecting the liberty and individuality of every human being formed in the image of G-d, most of the Founding Fathers and so many of its citizens were and are authentic Philo-Semites, cherishing and celebrating the Jew and his Jewishness.

John Adams wrote, "I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize man than any other nation." He wrote as a Christian, but added that even if he were an atheist and believed in chance, "I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization."[\[9\]](#)

Leo Tolstoy wrote: "The Jew is that sacred being who has brought down from heaven the everlasting fire, and has illuminated with it the entire world. The Jew is the religious source, spring, and fountain out of which all the rest of the peoples have drawn their beliefs and their religions."[\[10\]](#)

This path, though, requires extraordinary discipline and sacrifice. Living with the G-d of the Torah is a tremendous burden. It demands that one challenge his or her ego, laziness, and selfishness on a daily basis; it requires one to surrender many instincts, cravings, lusts, and natural dispositions. It is rewarding and fulfilling, but not easy. Sadly, most non-Jewish cultures and civilizations in the past opted for an easier and more instinctive method through which to "fill" their mental and psychological "ditch": Rid the world of the Jew, they said, and the void will be gone. Many people simply can't cope with the burden of being good. However, when they act in bad ways, they can't cope with the resultant feelings of guilt. Try as they may, they can never cut themselves loose from the standards of absolute morality dictated by the Torah. Stuck in this "Catch-22" situation, people turn, with their mounting frustrations, against the Jews, whom they perceive as personifying humanity's collective conscience. Deep down, they know that Judaism got it right, but it is too difficult to embrace.

This is the "soul" behind anti-Semitism. It is a form of resentment and hostility directed toward the cause of a profound emptiness in life. Adolf Hitler once remarked that his

mission in life was to "destroy the tyrannical G-d of the Jews" and His "life-denying Ten Commandments."[\[11\]](#)

Herman Rauchenberg had been Hitler's personal confidante, but he abandoned Nazism and attempted to alert the free world to the scope and danger of the Nazi threat. He wrote: It is against their own insoluble problem of being human that the dull and base in humanity are in revolt against anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, Judaism, together with Hellenism and Christianity, is an inalienable component of our Christian Western Civilization—the eternal "call to Sinai," against which humanity again and again rebels.[\[12\]](#)

This means that anti-Semitism is not only a "Jewish problem," it is a disaster for every moral and decent non-Jew as well. Watch how a nation, religion, or political movement treats Jews, and you will have an early and deadly accurate picture of that group's intention toward others. Anti-Semites wish to destroy the perceived embodiment of that higher call to the good, the Jews. But they do not hate the Jews alone. They hate whatever and whoever represents a higher value, a moral challenge. Anti-Semites begin with the Jews, but they never end with the Jews alone.

Haman's Rage

Not all anti-Semites were aware of the "soul" of their hatred. Some, like Achashverosh, were only cognizant of the outer component of their Jew-hatred, seeing the Jew as a "mound" that disturbs and obstructs. They were unaware of the underlying motives behind their hatred.

Haman, on the other hand, was aware of this truth. He understood that he despised the Jews because they generated a "ditch" in the depths of his heart. That is why when the entire Persian elite bowed to Haman daily, excluding one Jewish rabbi, Mordechai, the Bible tells us[\[13\]](#) that Haman "was filled with rage."

Why? Imagine thousands of people prostrating themselves before you on a daily basis, except one old ultra-religious man with a white beard. Big deal! Why was Haman so perturbed by the sight of one obstinate Jew not falling on his knees to worship him?

Because Haman, in a very deep place, knew that Mordechai had it right. Mordechai's behavior resonated in Haman's inner heart. It exposed the truth that Haman was not a demi-god.

He thus approached Achashverosh and said: I have a ditch in my heart, which I cannot bear anymore. I must rid the world from its Jewish presence. Achashverosh, a far less intelligent and complex person, responded: Great! The Jews, for some reason or another, always irked me regardless. I'd be more than

happy if you could remove this cursed mound from my presence.

The Conclusions

History has proven that appeasing and trying to bend over backward to those who hate us will not supplant their hate with love. Why? Because the animosity stems from too deep a place for it to be transformed through money or appeasement. It may be hard for us to accept, but the real Jew hater is driven by deeply powerful forces; for him the Jew disturbs the core of his existence.

We can bend over backward, but it will not change a thing. We can shorten our noses, we can assimilate, we can compromise—yet as long as we are alive, the anti-Semites will remain restless. There is nothing we can do or not do to change the anti-Semitism. It is the anti-Semite who must change himself.

The proper method of dealing with Jew hatred in all of its manifestations is not to attempt to eclipse or deny one's Jewishness and the unique role of the Jewish people in history. The gentile, instinctively and accurately, feels the "otherness" of the Jew; the non-Jew innately senses the holiness embedded within the Jewish soul. When the Jew denies this holiness, when the Jew, embarrassed by his Judaism, tells the world, "I am just like you," the non-Jew senses a lie, a secret conspiracy. The world will forever dislike Jews who dislike themselves.

What can we do about anti-Semitism? We can and must stand guard against it. We must protect ourselves in every possible way. We must fight hatred with unwavering determination, resolve, dignity, and purpose. We must never duck or show weakness, which only intoxicates our haters into thinking they might prevail. We must never be ashamed of who we are and what we stand for, as it is not our evil triggering the animosity; it is our goodness and holiness that drive our haters mad. Israel must declare the truth that the entire land is an eternal Divine gift to the Jewish people, as the Bible states hundreds of times, and that every attempt to hurt a Jew will be dealt with in the most powerful way.

Most importantly, our primary and eternal hope remains in our relationship with G-d, the sole master of the universe. As long as we are connected with the core of all reality, our existence is guaranteed. Trying to eliminate anti-Semitism by appeasing them produces no results. The hate is simply too deep. And we are, as the Midrash puts it, "a lamb surrounded by seventy wolves." The lamb ought to be strong, decisive, powerful, and unapologetic, but we always need the protection of our Divine creator to deal with these odds.

That is why, when Mordechai and Queen Esther learned of Haman's decree, the first thing they did was engage in fasting, prayer, repentance, and good deeds. Only after three days of fasting and introspection did Esther use her position as the beautiful wife of the king and attempt to influence him, in the midst of a drinking party, to obliterate the decree against the Jews. Now, if Esther wished to impress her husband, she should have gone to a beauty parlor not fast for three days!

To answer this question, the Talmud offers the parable of the mound and the ditch. Mordechai and Esther both knew that this hatred was not coming from some misunderstanding or social malady. They keenly grasped that we were dealing with a mound and a ditch! No bending over backward will help the crisis. What we need most is the Creator of the world, who guarantees that as long as we remain connected to His truth, we will live and thrive. Esther knew, as every Jew knows deep down in his heart that salvation will not come from a man who sees the Jews as an eternal "mound." Salvation will come from G-d. Therefore, the first and foremost objective is strengthening her relationship with G-d. Only afterward are we called to follow the course of nature and attempt to influence world leaders to help secure the survival of the Jewish people. For G-d wants us to work through the venues of nature.

Once we have secured our relationship with G-d, through the Torah and its Mitzvos, can we hope that G-d will manipulate the hearts of the Jew-haters to assist rather than destroy the Jews.

When the non-Jew encounters a Jew who is proud of his otherness, who cherishes and embraces his Jewishness and its unique role in history, more often than not the non-Jew is overtaken by a sense of admiration and respect; he can begin to appreciate the Jew, learn from him and adore him.

(This essay is based on an address, a "sicha," by the Lubavitcher Rebbe presented on Purim 5725-1965.[14])

[1] For a comprehensive discussion of this subject, the history and dynamics of antisemitism, as well as a convincing refutation of many of the popular reasons given for antisemitism, see *Why The Jews?* (Prager and Telushkin, Simon and Schuster, 1983.) [2] *Ibid.* p. 21 [3] Esther 3:11 [4] Megilah 14a. [5] See Maharsha, Benayahoo to Talmud Megilah *ibid.* and Chasam Sofer - *Toras Moshe L'Purim* for their symbolic explanations of this parable. [6] Of course, one may answer that the parable is an imperfect one and it is just here to illustrate the point that the owner of the mound is willing to dispose of his mound without receiving payment. Yet anyone familiar with the Talmudic literature is aware of its extraordinary profundity and meticulousness. It is thus clear,

that the comparison between Haman and an owner of a ditch seeking to fill it is precise and meaningful. Yet in the actual story, Haman's role is reversed, seeking to dispose of the mound and not have it remain in his territory? [7] Perhaps we can add: The Mound represents the significance and the dignity that Judaism confers upon all peoples; and that is why, as a dictator who wanted to subjugate his populace, he couldn't stand the Judaic disciple, which affords such tremendous rights to all peoples. [8] Shabbas 89a. See Eyon Yaakov to Ein Yaakov ibid. -- The explanation for anti-Semitism that follows has been articulated by Maimonides in Igeres Taiman chapter 1. [9] Quoted in Why The Jews? p. 30, see reference there. Cf Faith After the Holocaust (Eliezer Berkowitz, Ktav, 1973) pp. 114-127, where this point is brilliantly demonstrated. [10] Quoted in Why The Jews? p. 30, see reference there. [11] Quoted ibid. [12] The Beast From the Abyss, by Hermann Rauchning [13] Esther 3:5 [14] Sichos Kodesh 5725 pp. 444-454.

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Rav Frand - A Humble Man With a (Potentially) Not So
Humble Childhood

Rav Frand

A Humble Man With a (Potentially) Not So Humble Childhood

Parshas Vayikra

Posted on March 21, 2024 (5784) By Rabbi Yissocher Frand |
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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1286 Oy! I Forgot To Have Kavanah in Sh'monei Esrei – Now What? Good Shabbos!

The Medrash Rabbah, on the opening words of Sefer Vayikra (“Vayikra Hashem el Moshe...”), mentions that Moshe Rabbeinu actually had ten different names. However, Hashem made it a point to call Moshe only by the name he was given by Basya, Paroh's daughter. The Torah says that she called him Moshe “Ki min hamayim mishe-seyhu” (Shemos 2:10). The simple reading of this Medrash is that the reason HaKadosh Baruch Hu chose to use that name was to give everlasting honor to Paroh's daughter. She, in effect, saved the life of Moshe, going against her father's decree and the “law of the land” that all Hebrew boys were to be drowned. Thus, even though he had a name Tuvia and a name Avigdor among many other names, Hashem addressed him by the name

Moshe, given to him by the woman who risked her life and saved him from death by drowning.

The Kesav Sofer, however, gives an interesting alternative interpretation of why Hashem specifically called Moshe by the name Moshe. The Gemara in Masseches Nedarim (38a) says, “The Holy One Blessed be He does not cause prophecy and Ruach haKodesh (the power of His Divine Presence) to rest on anyone who is not mighty, wealthy, wise, and humble. This is all learned out from Moshe (who was all of the above).”

We can understand that modesty and humility are prerequisites for being a recipient of prophecy and Ruach haKodesh. But where do we find in Yiddishkeit that a person's strength or wisdom should be a factor in his ability to receive Divine prophecy? We normally do not give special consideration to gevurah. Chochma, perhaps yes, but gevurah, no. The Kesav Sofer explains that if a person is a 90-pound weakling and is not very bright and is not very successful, and as a result he is also not very wealthy, the fact that such a person is modest is no ‘kuntz’. It does not demonstrate a major accomplishment. What, after all, does he possess that would justify his strutting around proudly? It is only right that a person who does not have anything going for himself should be modest!

The Gemara (Pesachim 113b) states that one of the four categories of people who are intolerable is the poor braggart (dal gayeh). He is impoverished, and nevertheless he thinks of himself in haughty terms.

On the other hand, a person who has all these attributes: He is a “gibor“. He is a “chochom“. He is an “ashir“. And yet, he remains an “anav” – that, according to the Kesav Sofer, is real humility. This person has what to be proud of and even what to be arrogant about, and yet he maintains his modest bearing – that is a real anav. It is not “gevurah” or “chochma” or “ashirus” per se that is required. Humility qualifies a person for nevuah and Ruach haKodesh. Nevertheless, true anivus is tested when a person has what to be arrogant about and nevertheless maintains his humility.

When a person is Rav Moshe Feinstein, zecher tzadik l'vracha, and knows kol haTorah kulah and has reviewed Shulchan Aruch 150 times and knows every comment of the Pri Megadim and nevertheless, when he is walking on the street on the Lower East Side and someone calls out “Hey, Moshe!” (calling out to somebody else with the name Moshe) this Gadol HaDor turns around and thinks the fellow is calling out to him—that demonstrates humility! Rav Moshe, zt”l, was a humble person despite the fact that he had so much going for him. The same is true of virtually all the Gedolim. They are

men with tremendous intellect and nevertheless they are humble. That is true anivus.

Rav Yosef Salant (the Be'er Yosef) comments on the Chazal that the Matriarch Sora was a beautiful woman. The Gemara says (Megilla 14a) that Yiska daughter of Charan (mentioned in Bereshis 11:29) was really Sora and two explanations are given for this derivation. The first explanation is she'sachsa b'Ruach haKodesh (that she spoke with Divine Inspiration). The second explanation is that she is called Yiska because everyone talked about her beauty (she'haKol sochin b'yofya). There cannot be two more diametrically opposed praises than these two interpretations. One is "She possesses Ruach haKodesh"; the other one is "She was a knockout beauty!" We don't usually put those two accolades in the same sentence. The Be'er Yosef explains: No, because she was the talk of the town as the most beautiful of women and nevertheless, she did not let those praises go to her head, that is why she merited to speak with Ruach HaKodesh.

That brings us full circle to where we began: Moshe Rabbeinu grew up in the palace of Paroh. He was a prince. He had the world on a platter and had everything going for him.

Nevertheless, he was an anav. That is why Hashem chose to address him with no other name than the name he was given by Paroh's daughter. Basya bas Paroh put him in the palace and gave him every excuse in the world to think of himself proudly as the Prince of Egypt. Nevertheless, Moshe retained his humility. To highlight this personality accomplishment, Hashem chose to always address him by the name he was given by the Princess of Egypt, Basya bas Paroh!

A "Kutzo Shel Yud" Differentiates the Daled from the Reish
The following thought on Parshas Zachor comes from thesefer Bnei Yisoschor, who often presents matters in a "Chassidic fashion".

The Bnei Yisoschor sums up the essence of Amalek with the words "M'dor dor" (which is the conclusion of the pasuk "...A war for Hashem with Amalek from generation to generation (m'dor dor)) (Shemos 17:16). This pasuk actually does not appear in Parshas Ki Seitzei, from which we read Parshas Zachor. It appears in Parshas B'Shalach – the first time the Torah describes the battle of Klal Yisrael with Amalek. (This section is read as the Krias haTorah on Purim morning.) How do these two words contain the essence of Hashem's battle with Amalek and explain the essence of Amalek's hatred for Israel?

The Gemara (Chulin 139b) asks: "Where in the Torah (in the "Chumash") do we find an allusion to Haman?" This famous Talmudic passage cites the pasuk in Parshas Bereshis after

Adam ate from the Etz Hada'as. Hashem questioned him: "Hamin (spelled Hay-Mem-Nunlike Haman) ha'etz asher tze-vee-see-cha l'bil-tee echol mi-menu achalta?" (Did you eat from the tree from which I forbade you to eat?) (Bereshis 3:11) The Bnei Yisoschor asks two questions. First, why do we need an allusion to Haman in the Torah? Second, this is not the only place where the letters Hay-Mem-Nun appear as a stand-alone word in the Torah. Actually, if we had to pick the most appropriate allusion to the wicked Haman in Chumash, we would not pick Bereshis 3:11 where the vowels make it into a different word (Hamin rather than Haman). Rather, we would pick Shemos 16:35 ("And the Children of Israel ate the Mann (es haman) for forty years..."). The word haman in that pasuk sounds exactly like the name Haman in the Megilla!

The Bnei Yisoschor says an amazing idea. He cites a Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei Tosfos, which in turn is from the Medrash Rabbah. In Parshas Bereshis (3:11), the Daas Zekeinim says on the above-cited pasuk (Hamin ha'etz...): Hashem told Adam haRishon not to eat from the Etz Hadaas and that on the day he eats from it he will die. However, they ask that on the day Adam ate from the tree, he did not die! The Medrash says that Hashem said to Adam: I was going to hang you on that tree, because you are chayav meesah. But instead, I am going to keep that tree (or perhaps another tree) and that will be the tree upon which I will hang Haman.

The Bnei Yisoschor says that we see from this Medrash that there must be some kind of connection between the aveira of Adam haRishon and Haman. He elaborates: When the Gemara in Chulin asks the question "From where is Haman seen in the Torah?" the Gemara is not merely asking for a word allusion – where is Haman alluded to in the Torah? There does not need to be a remez for Haman in the Torah. The Gemara wants to know: Amalek waged a war against Hashem that started there in the Wilderness; and continued through the time of Shmuel and Shaul; and continues to this very day.

Where did Haman get that koach harah (power of evil), which he uses for evil throughout the generations, throughout eternity, throughout all of history? It is an amazing thing – there is this perpetual power of evil in the world. Where did it originate? The answer is that it all started with the aveira of Adam haRishon. Because of the chet of Adam HaRishon, Amalek was given the power to exist and to do his evil. How is that? (Here is where it gets very novel and interesting.) After Adam sins Hashem curses Adam and says "kotz v'dar-dar" (thorns and thistle) will grow for you" (Bereshis 3:18). The Bnei Yisoschor says that the word dar-dar is spelled Daled-Reish-Daled-Reish. What distinguishes a Daled from a Reish?

The only thing that distinguishes between those two Hebrew letters is the “kotz” (literally thorn). The kotz is like the point at the right side of the roof of the Daled. The Daled comes to a point (as we say in Tractate Menachos (34a) “kutzo shel yud” – the “point” of the letter Yud).

What is the difference symbolically between the Daled and the Reish? The Daled is symbolic of the pasuk Shema Yisrael HaShem Elo-keinu Hashem EchaD, which ends with a large Daled in the Sefer Torah. The pasuk Lo Sishtachaveh l’el AcheR ends with a big Reish. The difference between the pasuk “Hear O Israel the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One” and the pasuk “You should not bow down to other gods” is the difference between the Daled and the Reish. And the difference between the Daled and the Reish is the Kotz.

The aveira of Adam HaRishon was that he mixed up the Daled and the Reish. When he didn’t listen to the Ribono shel Olam, that was the beginning of the confusion between Hashem EchaD and el-acheR. That is where it all started – Amalek is about the confusion of knowing what is right and what is wrong. The thing that distinguishes the Daled and the Reish is that KOTZ. Adam failed to make that distinction. From there began all the confusion that causes our aveiros.

That, says the Bnei Yisoschor, is what the pasuk means when it says “A war between Hashem and Amalek m’dor –dor.” Hashem says that this war, which is going to go on forever, is about dor dor. It is about dar-dar, the inability to distinguish between right and wrong, the inability to distinguish between Hashem EchaD and el-acheR.

A Freileche Purim!

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Then & Now

The Intense Antisemitism of Haman, Hitler and Hamas

by Rabbi Shraga Simmons

March 21, 2024

The greater evil always attacks the greater good.

Hatred of Jews goes far beyond stereotypical prejudice, discrimination and scapegoating. Antisemites are driven to total genocide of the Jews.

The biblical Amalek is the prototype rabid antisemite and arch enemy of the Jews. Amalek attacks when the Jews are riding high on the miraculous Ten Plagues, Exodus from Egypt, and splitting of the Red Sea. (Exodus 17:8)

Everyone was afraid to challenge the Jews. Except Amalek. Ancient Jewish literature (Midrash Tanchuma 9) compares his attack to someone jumping into a boiling hot vat that everyone fears to enter. Although the jumper suffers massive burns, he cools off that vat, enabling others to attack. Amalek self-sacrificed for their primary goal: to show that Jews are vulnerable.

Amalek’s ideological heir and direct descendent (through Agag – Esther 3:1) is Haman, who plotted genocide of the Jews 2,500 years ago in Persia (Iran).

Haman’s hatred is so great that he offers 10,000 kikars (approximately 460 tons) of silver for the right to annihilate the Jews (Esther 3:9).

In the end, the plot fails.

Nazi Tradition

Each generation has its own ideological Amalek. In the 20th century, Hitler murdered six million while proclaiming a “righteous cause”: exterminating “Jewish vermin” to heroically save the world.

For Hitler, genocide was all-or-nothing, “either us or them.” He said: "If only one country for whatever reasons tolerates a Jewish family in it, that family will become the germ center for fresh sedition." (July 21, 1941, cited in Hitler’s Apocalypse, p. 122)

Hitler regarded the killing of Jews even more important than winning World War II. With the Nazi invasion of Hungary in 1944, top German military officers urged Hitler to prioritize railway lines must to transport vital troops and desperately-needed supplies to the battlefield.

Ignoring their warnings, Hitler allocated the precious rail-lines to deport Hungarian Jewry en masse to the extermination camps. This “self-sacrifice to destroy the Jews” proved a key factor in debilitating the German war effort.

Channeling Haman, Hitler harbored a venomous hatred for the holiday of Purim. "Unless Germany is victorious," he proclaimed, "Jewry could then celebrate the destruction of

Europe by a second triumphant Purim Festival." (January 30, 1944, cited in *The Purim Anthology*, 1949)

When Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, he banned the reading of the Book of Esther, and ordered that on Purim all synagogues be closed. On Purim 1942 in Zdunska-Wola, a town in Nazi-occupied Poland, ten Jews were hanged by Hitler's SS, in a sadistic parody of events in the Book of Esther. (Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust*)

Even after their ignoble defeat, Nazis continued to draw "inspiration" from Haman. At the Nuremberg Trials, as Julius Streicher ascended the gallows to be hanged, he shouted "Purimfest 1946." (Newsweek, October 28, 1946)

October 7

Today, 2,500 years after the Purim confrontation with genocidal Persians, the Jewish people face another Persian enemy: the mad mullahs of Iran. The tentacles of the "Iranian octopus" are remote-controlled from Tehran: Hamas, Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and militias in Iraq and Syria. This modern-day Amalek is building nuclear weapons and – with repeated threats to "wipe Israel off the map" – is patiently waiting to strike.

On October 7, Iran's proxy Hamas unleashed the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. The sadistic cruelty was straight out of the Nazi playbook. Hamas terrorists entered the Gaza-border kibbutzim, savagely murdering, raping and pillaging, incinerating many homes along with their inhabitants.

Hamas "justifies" violent jihad as a noble, righteous holy war to "liberate their homeland stolen by the Jews," and follows Mohammed's directive to massacre Jews "wherever you find them" (Koran 2:191).

In the Amalek tradition of self-sacrifice, Hamas invites death and destruction on its own civilians, using them as human shields, both to protect terrorists and to cynically bolster civilian casualties in hopes of stirring global condemnation of Israel.

As Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh declared: "We need the blood of the children, women, and elderly" to "ignite within us the spirit of revolution" against the Jewish state.

Tragically, the Hamas strategy appears to be working. Backed by conspiracy theorists and Holocaust deniers, antisemitism is now fashionably PC in polite society. Alarming, a recent Harvard-Harris Poll shows that 60% of American voters ages 18-24 believe that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, and a majority believe that Israel should "be ended and given to Hamas."

Neutralizing the Final Solution

Fortunately, the Jewish people have a potent weapon to fight back.

In seeking permission to annihilate the Jews, Haman accused them of being "a nation scattered and split (Esther 3:8), a reference to Jewish division and strife. This lack of unity gave Haman the confidence to advance his genocidal plan.

Esther understood that the solution to antisemitism is Jewish unity. She told Mordechai: "Go assemble all the Jews" (Esther 4:16). Haman's threats brought the Jewish people together and triggered a 180-degree shift from disunity to unity.

This idea of shared destiny was formalized in the Purim tradition Mordechai of Mishloach Manot, sending gifts of food to one another (Esther 9:22). The idea is to increase love and friendship, and engrain the message: To prevail, we must work together.

Prior to October 7, Israeli society was polarized. There was tension on the streets, with talk of civil war and splitting into two states.

And like in the Purim story, October 7 triggered a 180-degree Jewish shift: from disunity to unity.

Though we cannot know the reason for all our suffering, it does prove a maxim: The greater evil always attacks the greater good.

During the Holocaust, a Jew was being sadistically beaten by a Nazi guard who scoffed and sneered, "How do you like being a Jew!"

The Jew looked up and proudly said, "I'd rather be in my position than in yours."

The best response to antisemitism is Jewish pride. Truth and goodness will prevail. From darkness will come light.

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Second Zachor Readings

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Birchos haTorah min haTorah

Is birchos haTorah min haTorah?

Question #2: Parshas Zachor

Should a second parshas Zachor reading have a minyan?

Question #3: America, America

Is there an American angle to this halachic discussion?

Foreword

The halachic authorities dispute whether women are obligated to hear parshas Zachor, the Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah #603) ruling that they are exempt, whereas Rav Yaakov Ettlinger (author of Aruch Laneir and posek hador of western and central Europe during his lifetime), obligates them (Shu"t Binyan Tzion 2:8). A third opinion is that, although women are definitely required to observe the mitzvah of remembering what Amalek did to us, they are not required to hear parshas Zachor because it is a time-bound mitzvah midrabbanan (Shu"t Toras Chayim, Orach Chayim #37; Kaf Hachayim 685:30).

There is a second dispute, whether an individual is required min haTorah to hear the reading of parshas Zachor with a minyan, annually, which some rishonim require (Rosh, Berachos 7:20; Terumas Hadeshen 1:108) and others exempt (Sefer Hachinuch). If we combine the strictest interpretation of both rulings, we would conclude that women are obligated min haTorah to hear parshas Zachor annually with a minyan, although I am unaware of any early halachic authorities who rule this way.

In contemporary practice, women strive to hear parshas Zachor. To enable those taking care of children during the morning reading, many shullen schedule an additional reading some time later that day, to facilitate the hearing of parshas Zachor.

Some contemporary authorities have questioned this practice because of the following observation: There are poskim who forbid reading from a sefer Torah in public without reciting a beracha before and after the reading (Toras Raphael, Hilchos Keri'as HaTorah #2). This is based on the ruling of earlier prominent authorities who contend that such readings require the recital of a beracha min haTorah (Be'er Sheva, Sotah 41a; Shu"t Mishkenos Yaakov, Orach Chayim #63). Several early authorities attribute this position to the Talmud Yerushalmi (Shu"t Meishiv Davar 1:16; cf., however, Toras Raphael who disagrees) or other very early sources.

On the other hand, when there is no obligation to read from the Torah, many authorities forbid reciting a beracha when reading from a sefer Torah, considering it a beracha levatalah, one recited in vain (Elyah Rabbah 566:3; Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav Orach Chayim 566:7; Chayei Adam 31:11; Meishiv Davar 1:16; Shu"t Har Tzvi, Orach Chayim #52, #69, #70). This may potentially create a conundrum: It would be forbidden to recite berachos for an extra reading of parshas

Zachor because of concerns about beracha levatalah. Yet, some authorities prohibit reading from the Torah in public without a beracha. Thus, we have a predicament whose obvious solution is to avoid extra public reading from a sefer Torah. On the other hand, we want to have an extra reading to facilitate fulfilling the mitzvah for those who cannot be in shul for the regular reading.

Other readings

A similar, but not identical, shaylah occurs on several other occasions, depending on various local customs. Many have the minhag to read sefer Devarim, or sections thereof, from a sefer Torah on the night of Hoshana Rabba. Similarly, many Chassidic kehillos read, on the first twelve days of Nisan, the passage in parshas Naso describing the dedication of the Mishkan, called parshas hanesi'im. There was also a custom that, upon completing the writing of a new sefer Torah, the sofer read from the brand new sefer Torah in front of the assembled (Toras Raphael). Other customs of reading from a sefer Torah on various occasions are recorded in different halachic sources (e.g., Shu"t Tashbeitz 2:39; Levush; Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak 8:84). Explaining the sources for this discussion and suggesting resolutions is the topic of this article.

Introduction

After the Rambam wrote his Sefer Hamitzvos, in which he listed his opinion of the count of the 613 mitzvos, the Ramban wrote an extensive commentary disputing dozens of points made by the Rambam. The Ramban also listed 34 mitzvos, 17 mitzvos aseih and 17 mitzvos lo saaseh, which he felt should be included in the count of the mitzvos according to the Rambam's rules, but were omitted. In the Ramban's listing of the "missing" mitzvos aseih, he includes the mitzvah (#15) to recite a beracha prior to reading the Torah.

Although it is unclear whether the Ramban here is counting a mitzvah to recite birkas haTorah prior to studying Torah, or a mitzvah to recite it prior to reading from a sefer Torah, several authorities assume that he meant the latter. In other words, although reading the Torah in public is not required min haTorah, when doing so, the requirement to recite a beracha is. All halachic authorities agree that the beracha after an aliyah is only a mitzvah midrabbanan.

Beracha before leining

The major discussion on this topic stems from the writings of three prominent acharonim, the Be'er Sheva (commentary to Sotah 41a), the Mishkenos Yaakov (Shu"t Mishkenos Yaakov, Orach Chayim #63) and the Toras Raphael (Hilchos Birchos haTorah #2).

These acharonim base themselves on a careful analysis of a passage of Gemara:

Rav Yehudah said, “What is the source from which we know that there is a requirement min haTorah to recite birkas hamazon after eating: ‘When you have eaten and been satisfied, you shall bless Hashem, your G-d, for the wonderful land that He gave you’ (Devarim 8:10). What is the source from which we know that there is a requirement min haTorah to recite birkas haTorah before Torah: ki sheim Hashem ekra, havu godel lei’lokeinu (Berachos 21a, based on Devarim 32:3), in which Moshe told the Jewish people, ‘I am about to sing praise to Hashem. Prior to my doing so, I will recite a berocha (ki sheim Hashem ekra) to which you should answer amen’” (havu godel lei’lokeinu) [Rashi, Berachos 21a s.v. Ki].

(1) What did Rav Yehudah mean when he required a “berocha before Torah?” Was he referring to:

(a) What we usually call talmud Torah or limud Torah, or

(b) Before reading from a sefer Torah, what we usually call kerias haTorah?

(2) If he meant what we usually call limud Torah, what type of limud Torah is included?

The Gemara (Berachos 11b) cites a four-way dispute among amora'im what type of limud Torah requires birkas haTorah:

(a) Only the written Torah.

(b) The written Torah and the halachic midrashim on the written Torah.

(c) In addition to the above, also before studying Mishnah.

(d) In addition to everything mentioned above, also before studying Gemara.

The Gemara concludes that we recite birkas haTorah prior to any type of Torah learning. However, this does not teach us whether this is required min haTorah or only midrabbanan.

Let us return to the passage of Gemara quoting Rav Yehudah's ruling that birkas haTorah is min haTorah and is derived from the pasuk in parshas Ha'azinu.

Rabbi Yochanan then adds to, and somewhat disagrees with, Rav Yehudah's statement by claiming that, with the use of two applications of the principle of kal vechomer, we can derive that reciting a berocha before eating is min haTorah, as well as a berocha recited after learning. The Gemara ultimately refutes the applications of kal vechomer and, therefore, Rabbi Yochanan's two rulings. Thus, recital of a berocha before eating and after learning are not required min haTorah.

The question that concerns the Be'er Sheva and the Mishkenos Ya'akov is:

To which berocha after Torah is Rabbi Yochanan referring? The only time we ever recite a berocha after Torah is the berocha recited after kerias haTorah. This implies that the “berocha before Torah,” which both Rav Yehudah and Rabbi Yochanan agree is min haTorah, means the berocha recited before reading the Torah in public. The Be'er Sheva and the Mishkenos Ya'akov, therefore, conclude that the requirement min haTorah of birkas haTorah applies when reading the Torah in public. This includes:

(A) What we call kerias haTorah on Shabbos, Mondays, Thursdays and holidays.

(B) The mitzvah of hakheil, when the Jewish king reads selections of sefer Devarim to the entire Jewish people on chol hamo'ed Sukkos in the year following shemittah (Mishnah Sotah 40b).

(C) When the Yisraelim who were on ma'amados, “Temple Duty,” read the Torah daily, during their rotation at the Beis Hamikdash (Mishnah Ta'anis 26a).

These acharonim conclude that the mitzvah of reciting birkas haTorah before we begin studying Torah every day is only midrabbanan.

Because the Be'er Sheva and the Mishkenos Yaakov conclude that both Rav Yehudah and Rabbi Yochanan agree that there is a requirement min haTorah to recite a berocha prior to any public reading of the Torah, this applies even if someone already recited birkas haTorah earlier in the day. The earlier recitation fulfilled only a mitzvah midrabbanan, while the subsequent reading of the Torah in public requires recital of a berocha min haTorah.

However, as mentioned above, many authorities prohibit reciting birkas haTorah on a reading of the Torah that was not instituted either by the Torah or by Chazal. An interesting historical example is when the Netziv was asked, in the 1880's, by a rav in Cincinnati the following shaylah: The community was dedicating a new sefer Torah, and the convenient day to schedule the dedication was Sunday, when people were off from work. In honor of the auspicious occasion, one of the organizers included a reading of the Torah, complete with berachos. The rav in Cincinnati strongly opposed this, contending that the berachos would constitute berachos levatalah, since Chazal never established reading the Torah on a Sunday that is not a Jewish holiday. The Netziv agreed with the rav's ruling, commenting that it is permitted to read from the Torah, providing that no berachos were recited. However, according to the Be'er Sheva and the Mishkenos Yaakov, it is prohibited min haTorah to read from the Torah in public without reciting birkas haTorah.

Family feud

On the other hand, in response to a similar shaylah, Rav Raphael Shapiro, the Netziv's son-in-law, author of *Toras Raphael*, ruled that it is prohibited to read from the Torah altogether. This is because some authorities prohibit reciting a beracha on this reading, and others, the *Be'er Sheva* and the *Mishkenos Yaakov*, rule that it is prohibited *min haTorah* to read the Torah without first reciting a beracha. The *Toras Raphael* concludes that the only solution is not to read from the Torah in public when it is not required.

Birchos haTorah min haTorah

At this point, we can address our opening question: Is birchos haTorah *min haTorah*?

The answer is somewhat complicated. According to the *Ramban*, there is definitely a requirement *min haTorah*, at times, to recite birchos haTorah. However, it is uncertain whether this means before studying Torah every day, or before reading the Torah in public. Among the rishonim, we find a dispute whether birchos haTorah before studying Torah every day is required *min haTorah*, a dispute that the *Toras Raphael* analyzes at great length. And we have two very prominent achronim, the *Be'er Sheva* and the *Mishkenos Yaakov*, who contend that the requirement to recite birchos haTorah is *min haTorah* only before reading the Torah in public, but not when studying the Torah, in which case the requirement is only *miderabbanan*.

Later authorities

The question concerning whether we may read from the Torah in public to fulfill a custom without reciting birchos haTorah is discussed in some more recent teshuvos and articles. For example, *Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak* (8:84) discusses the custom, particularly but not exclusively, among Chassidim, of reading from a sefer Torah on the first twelve days of Nisan the portion of parshas Naso that describes the offerings that the nesi'im brought when the Mishkan was dedicated. Those who observe this custom do not recite a beracha before reading the Torah, nor should they, since most authorities rule that such a beracha would be *levatalah*, since no takkanas chachamim is observed. However, according to the *Toras Raphael*, it would seem that this should not be read with a minyan present, in order not to violate (according to the *Be'er Sheva* and the *Mishkenos Yaakov*) the mitzvas aseih of reading from a sefer Torah without a beracha.

Disputing the analysis of the *Toras Raphael*, the *Minchas Yitzchak* explains that, although these early poskim ruled that the requirement to recite birchas haTorah before *keri'as haTorah* is *min haTorah*, they never stated that it is required to

recite a beracha prior to a reading that is optional. The *Minchas Yitzchak* concludes that since many great talmidei chachamim read from the Torah parshas nesi'im in the month of Nisan without reciting a beracha, this is the accepted halacha, not the ruling of the *Toras Raphael*.

Another, similar reason why these practices do not conflict with the ruling of the early achronim is that, in these instances, each individual would like to read the Torah by himself, and the public reading is simply because of efficiency. Therefore, this is not considered a public reading of the Torah and there is no requirement to recite birchos haTorah (*Shu"t Teshuvos Vehanhagos* 1:380). Rav Moises Shternbuch, who suggested this last approach, was referring to the custom of reading the book of Devarim on the night of Hoshanah Rabbah, which is also performed without a beracha.

Parshas Zachor

At this point, we can address the second of our opening questions: Should a second parshas Zachor reading have a minyan?

Now we can understand our conundrum: If a second parshas Zachor reading is scheduled and there is a minyan in attendance, the *Toras Raphael* would certainly require the recital of a beracha. According to the *Be'er Sheva* and the *Mishkenos Ya'akov*, it would seem that it is prohibited to read the additional reading of parshas Zachor without first reciting a beracha, because this violates the mitzvas aseih of the Torah. On the other hand, if no one is required to still hear the reading of parshas Zachor, many authorities would rule that reciting a beracha is a beracha *levatalah*. According to the *Netziv*, there would be nothing wrong with reading from the Torah when Chazal did not require it, as long as no beracha is recited. Thus, in his opinion, the second reading may take place as long as no beracha is recited. However, according to the *Toras Raphael*, we should, perhaps, not read the Torah in public at all, to avoid getting involved in the dispute. A simple solution might be not to have a minyan when the second reading takes place.

America, America

Is there an American angle to this halachic discussion?

Surprising as this might be, there are several angles to this discussion that involve American Jewish individuals and communities. I mentioned above that the responsum of the *Netziv* was addressed to a rav in Cincinnati, although I have no idea as to the identity of the rav. By doing some research, I was able to determine that the responsum of his son-in-law, the *Toras Raphael*, was addressed to Rav Yehudah Eliezer Anixter, a talmid of the Volozhin yeshivah who immigrated to

the United States in 1871, eventually becoming a prominent rav in Rochester and Chicago, and the author of a sefer titled Chiddushei Avi. The Toras Raphael read one of the responsa in Chiddushei Avi and wrote the author his own responsum, in partial disagreement with Rav Anixter's conclusion. And the above quoted Minchas Yitzchak was penned in reference to Chassidim from America visiting Eretz Yisroel who noted that the method of reading the parshas ha'nesi'im was done differently in Eretz Yisroel from the way it is done in chutz la'aretz, and asked the Minchas Yitzchak which approach is preferred.

Conclusion

In the introduction to Sefer HaChinuch, the author writes that the main mitzvah upon which all the other mitzvos rest is that of Talmud Torah. Through Torah learning, a person will know how to fulfill all of the other mitzvos. That is why Chazal instituted a public reading of a portion of the Torah every Shabbos, twice, and on Mondays and Thursdays. Knowing that the proper observance of all the mitzvos is contingent on Torah learning, our attention to kerias haTorah will be increased, as well as our sensitivity to the recital of its berachos and our kavanah when reciting and listening to those berachos. This should lead to greater respect and attentiveness to the observance of all the mitzvos.

from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein**

<ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com> date: Mar 21, 2024,

7:14 AM Subject: Meshech Chochmah on Vayikra

MESHECH CHOCHMAH

Parshas Vayikra

The Role and Purpose of Korbanos

Introduction: the Rambam and the Ramban

There is a famous dispute between two of the great Rishonim regarding how to understand the purpose of the korbanos commanded by the Torah:

The Rambam writes that korbanos were a form of concession to the people who were not able to conceive of religious worship that did not involve sacrifices. In order that they would fully be able to relate to Judaism, and thereby completely disassociate themselves from other religious systems, the Torah provided a program of korbanos.[1]

The Ramban strenuously disagrees with the above approach, insisting that korbanos are of intrinsic value, playing a central role in harmonizing the cosmic spiritual forces and different levels of Creation,[2] and are not merely preventative or concessional in nature.[3]

Harmony: Bamos and the Beis Hamikdash

The Meshech Chochmah, in his Introduction to Chumash Vayikra, suggests a middle approach to the offering of korbanos, into which both of the above opinions can be incorporated, depending on the setting in which they are being offered:

The Torah commands that there be a central place of worship – initially the Mishkan and ultimately the Beis Hamikdash – where korbanos are to be offered as part of the avodah. The korbanos offered there are achieve the effect of harmonizing the cosmic forces of creation, as discussed by the Ramban. However, under certain circumstances, the Torah also allows for the making of a private altar, known as a bamah. The korbanos offered on these altars do not achieve the above-mentioned spiritual effects, and are provided purely in order to distance the people from the pagan practices of others, as discussed by the Rambam.

Resonance in Rishonim and Chazal

The Meshech Chochmah enlists support for this basic approach from another of the Rishonim, the Ralbag who, in his commentary to sefer Melachim,[4] writes as follows:

The intention [of korbanos] is one of the secrets of Creation, which can be fathomed by those who are dedicated for purposes of this Divine service, after much contemplation. Yet this effect will only be achieved if the service is performed by the kohanim.[5] However Hashem allowed each person to do as he sees fit, to offer [korbanos] on a bamah... in order that they may fully enlisted in the service of Hashem. [This was] on account of what had been ingrained in them from the services of other religions, leading them to think that Hashem would not be for them as a God if they did not serve Him in this way.

We see that the Ralbag clearly distinguishes between korbanos offered in the Beis Hamikdash, where their service relates to the secrets of Creation, and those offered on bamos, which exist solely to enlist the people fully in the service of Hashem in a manner to which they could relate.

Indeed, the Meshech Chochmah writes that this distinction is to be found in the Mishnah itself, for this is the meaning of the statement of the Mishnah in Zevachim[6] that a private altar does not have the effect of “reyach nichoach – a pleasing aroma.” The idea of reyach nichoach reflects all the positive and pleasing spiritual effects of bringing a korban. These exist only in korbanos brought in the Beis Hamikdash.

Rabbeinu Chaim Kohen

With the above idea in mind, the Meshech Chochmah explains the famous opinion of one of the Baalei HaTosafos, Rabbeinu Chaim Kohen. The Mishnah[7] informs us that bamos were

only permitted prior to the time that the Beis Hamikdash was built. After that, korbanos could only be offered in the Beis Hamikdash. With regards to the permissibility of bamos after the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, a simple reading of the Gemara[8] would seem indicate that it is dependent on the question as to whether the sanctity that was imbued in the location of the Mikdash was for all time (קידשה לעתיד לבא), or only for the duration of its existence (קידשה לשעתה). If it was the former, then bamos would remain prohibited, while if it was the latter, they would again be permitted.

However, Tosafos[9] cite Rabbeinu Chaim Kohen as saying that even if the sanctity of the Mikdash was only temporary and no longer remains, bamos are nevertheless prohibited in our times. What is the basis of this prohibition?

The Gemara elsewhere[10] informs us that at the beginning of the time of the second Beis Hamikdash, the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah (Men of the Great Assembly) eradicated the yetzer hara for idol-worship. As such, since the institution of bamos existed solely for the purpose of preventing the Jewish people from lapsing into the pagan practices of other religions, with the concern for such a lapse having been nullified, bamos no longer serve any purpose and thus remain forbidden!

In Tehillim

The Meshech Chochmah proceeds to explain how this distinction between bamos and the Beis Hamikdash can be seen in the words of Tehillim. In chapter 51, David Hamelech states:

כי לא תהפץ זבח ואמתנה עולה לא תרצה

For You [Hashem] do not desire a sacrifice, that I would give it, a burnt-offering You do not want.[11]

This verse expresses the idea that a sacrifice per se, e.g. one that is offered on a bamah, is not something for which Hashem has an essential desire. However, two verses later, David entreats Hashem to build the Beis Hamikdash:

הטיבה ברצונך את ציון תבנה חומות ירושלים

Do good in Your favor unto Zion, build the walls of Jerusalem.[12]

With the Beis Hamikdash having been built, the setting will then exist where korbanos can fulfill their spiritual function of aligning the different spheres of Creation and bringing blessing into the world – and will therefore be something that Hashem desires for their intrinsic value. Thus, David concludes:

אז תהפץ זבחי צדק עולה וקליל

Then You will desire the offerings of righteousness, a burnt-offering and a whole-offering.[13]

As the Shabbos of Vayikra leads us into Purim this year, may the joy and celebration over the eternity of the Jewish people

lead us to merit the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, the healing of our wounds, and the restoration of our national glory, which is the glory of Hashem.

Purim Sameach!

[1] See Moreh Nevuchim 3:32 and 46, (See also Rambam's Commentary to Maseches Avos 1:2, and Mishneh Torah Hilchos Me'ilah 8:8). [2] As the Meshech Chochmah describes it, "ענין עלעקטרי רוהני," a form of "spiritual electricity." [3] Commentary to Vayikra 1:9. [4] Melachim I, Chap, 11, toeles 1. [5] And the requirement that a Kohen specifically do the avodah exists only when it is performed in the Beis Hamikdash, not with a bamah (Commentary of R' Yehuda Copperman). [6] 113a. [7] Zevachim 112b. [8] Megillah 10a. [9] Ibid. s.v. u'mai taama. [10] Yoma 69b. [11] Verse 18. [12] Verse 20. [13] Verse 21. Copyright © 2024 Journeys in Torah, All rights reserved.

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subject: **Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Vayikra: When God Calls Twice – Two Separate Expressions of Summoning**

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

"And God called to Moses and He spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying..." (Leviticus 1:1)

The portion of Vayikra opens with two separate expressions of "summoning": "And God called to Moses and he spoke to him." Why are there two distinct expressions, to call and to speak?

Perhaps one may suggest that this parallels the divine repetition of Moses' name at the burning bush, when the Almighty cries out "Moses, Moses" which the Midrash usually explains as being a repetition of affection. When I look back however upon my own early years, whenever one of my parents called my name twice (at that time it was "Steven, Steven"), it generally meant that I was in trouble for something I had done that was not particularly appreciated by the older generation. Why do we therefore assume that in this case of Moses the repetition reflects affection rather than anger?

The truth is that the Midrash in the beginning of this Torah portion presents another explanation. At the end of the book of Exodus, the Torah describes a cloud which descended upon the Tent of Meeting, a cloud which symbolized the Divine Presence. The Torah likewise insists that no one – not even Moses – could enter this divine cloud without being especially

invited by God to do so. Hence, suggests the Midrash, God had to call out to Moses to permit him to enter the cloud, after which God spoke and communicated a specific message.

This explanation not only interprets the repetition of the divine summons but also provides a most profound and magnificent symbolism expressing the divine challenge to humanity. The Almighty appears as a cloud; we apprehend Him only “through a glass darkly.” Perhaps the reason why our God has neither shape nor form and is not clearly defined in any physical way is in order to teach that those who follow such a God must be prepared to chart new territories and to enter undefined areas. Our God created a world which contains chaos so that we can make order of it and He formed that world with evil so that we may perfect it in the Kingship of God. We must enter the nebulous and the unknown and bring God’s presence into areas in which He is not yet manifest. Egypt was a clearly defined society with a specific caste system of masters and slaves, lordly Pharaohs and abject subjects. We followed an unknowable God into an unknown desert in order to bring out His divine word (dibbur) into the arid wasteland (midbar).

“A voice called out in the desert: prepare a place for the Lord, make a straight pathway in the desert for our God.” (Isaiah 40:3)

And so does the prophet Jeremiah praise Israel:

“I remember the lovingkindness when you were young, the love of your youth; you walked after me in the desert, in a land which was not yet seeded.” (Jeremiah 2:2)

This is the ultimate challenge of the true person of faith: To enter unknown terrain and to bring the divine message of ethical and moral monotheism to a world that does not yet know it. This is the ultimate challenge of our life in Israel, filled as it is with uncertainty and danger. Israel the people, from the backdrop of Israel the land, must sanctify Jerusalem and proclaim from the holy Temple the message of world peace and human justice.

What gives the individual the strength and the courage to walk with God into the unknown and even to make a place for the Almighty in a wilderness? Perhaps if an individual really feels that he is being summoned by God, that he has a divine vocation – that he is being called by God to the extent that he feels a “calling” – then he goes forward into the cloud unafraid.

Given this understanding, I believe we have an even deeper insight into why Moses is summoned twice and why God repeats his name “Moses, Moses.” The Midrash teaches us that every individual has a double image: He/She is the person that he/she is but is also the person whose image is imprinted in the

divine Chariot (merkava) in the highest heavenly sphere.

This double human identity is even given expression in two very similar blessings which we recite at weddings under the nuptial canopy. One blessing reads: “Blessed are you, the Lord our God, who creates the human being.” The second blessing reads “Blessed are you, O Lord, who has created the human being in His image, and in the image of the shape of His form has He fashioned him as an eternal building. Blessed are you, O God, who creates the human being.”

These two blessings are two aspects of every individual. First, each of us is born at a specific time in a specific place to a specific set of parents with a specific physical build and appearance, slated to live for a specific number of years. Second, each of us as a member of a historic nation, has a collective memory which extends backwards to Sinai and the Garden of Eden, as well as collective anticipation which extends forward to the messianic age. It is this second aspect of our personality which links us to eternity and enables us to transcend our specific time and place.

God summons Moses twice and calls out at the burning bush “Moses, Moses” because there are in reality two Moseses: the first person, Moses of Egypt, was a prince in Pharaoh’s court and fell in love with the Midianite Tziporah; the second Moses spoke to God and sacrificed all of his princely comforts to link his destiny with his people and their redemption. Insofar as the first aspect of our transient personality is joined to the second aspect of our transcendent personality we will have the capacity to meet God in the haziness of the nebulous cloud of the unknown. God calls Moses twice because it is the second Moses who has the courage to face uncertainty and, because of that, he has gained eternity.

Shabbat Shalom

from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Mar 21, 2024, 7:26 PM subject: Important Purim Initiative; Returning From a Hospital on Shabbat; Maaser and Matanot La'evyonim?

What’s the Truth about . . . the Korbanot?

RABBI DR. ARI Z. ZIVOTOF SKY

Misconception: Leading authorities including Rambam and Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook maintain that korbanot, animal sacrifices, will not be reinstated in the time of the Third Temple but will be replaced with grain offerings.

Fact: Rambam and Rav Kook never assert that animal sacrifices will not be reinstated in the Third Temple.

Background: Temple ritual and animal sacrifices comprise a large part of the Torah’s text and commandments. Their

description features prominently in the Musaf prayer service of Shabbat and holidays, and the daily prayer service includes a request for the restoration of the sacrificial order. But animal sacrifices have not been practiced for approximately 1,900 years and many contemporary Jews have difficulty relating to the concept of animal sacrifice.

Despite the centrality of korbanot in our liturgy and tradition, some claim that Rambam maintained that in the future there will be no animal sacrifices. This claim is based on Rambam's rationale for why sacrifices were originally instituted. In his philosophical work (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:32), Rambam argues that because human nature is such that people cannot instantaneously abandon existing religious practices, God retained the practice of animal sacrifices. This ancient practice of the idolaters was redirected toward worshipping the true God.¹ Rambam similarly explains (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:46) why particular animal species are used for korbanot in specific contexts based upon sacrificial practices of the ancient world.² In his other writings, Rambam sheds additional light on his vision of the future. In his halachic work, *Mishneh Torah*, also known as *Yad HaChazakah*, he describes (*Hilchot Melachim* 11:1) what Mashiach will accomplish, and it becomes quite clear that he believes there will be animal sacrifices in the future Temple. Rambam writes that Mashiach will build the Temple and gather in the dispersed Jews. Then the laws will "be in effect as in the days of yore," such that sacrifices will be offered³ and shemittah and yovel will be fully observed as prescribed in the Torah. Elsewhere (*Hilchot Meilah* 8:8) Rambam approvingly quotes the rabbinic adage that the world exists due to the merit of the sacrificial service. Rambam's *Yad* is not a history book and it only consists of laws that in his opinion are or will be relevant; of the fourteen books that constitute the work, two (*Avodah* and *Korbanot*) are devoted entirely to sacrifices.

In his third major work, the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Rambam identifies Thirteen Principles of Faith (in the introduction to the tenth chapter of *Sanhedrin*). Based on these Principles, it seems unlikely Rambam believed that there will not be sacrifices in the future. The Ninth Principle is that the Torah and its laws are immutable. If the Torah's laws can never change, then obviously, irrespective of the reason for sacrifices, once they were commanded, they remain in effect for all eternity. In his legal code as well (*Yesodei HaTorah* 9:1), Rambam is emphatic that nothing in the Torah can change and that no prophet can alter a jot of the law. Other authorities do not subscribe so rigorously to this tenet.⁴

Rambam, however, does. Thus, in his view, there certainly will be sacrifices in the future.⁵

The *Meshech Chochmah* (introduction to *Sefer Vayikra*) tries to reconcile the two explanations for sacrifices—that of Rambam (that korbanot are a concession to the idolatry of the ancient world) and that of the Ramban (that korbanot have inherent value). He suggests that sacrifices offered on bamot ("high places" – i.e., private altars that were permissible prior to the construction of the Temple) were in response to idolatrous desires as explained by Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim*. Because the people were weaned from such desires by the time the Temple was erected, the permissibility of that modality expired. However, korbanot in the *Beit Hamikdash* have an intrinsic value, as described in great detail in the *Yad*, and will never be abolished.

Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein (*Tosefet Berachah*, *Leviticus* 1:2) defends Rambam against attacks such as those by the Ramban. He demonstrates that Rambam's position in *Moreh Nevuchim* is based on the words of Chazal in *Vayikra Rabbah* (on verse 17:3) and the *Mechilta* (to verse 12:21), and is even alluded to in the Torah (*Vayikra* 17:7).

Moshe Narboni (thirteenth century) wrote a commentary on *Moreh Nevuchim* in which he explains that Rambam never viewed korbanot as a "concession." Rather, he viewed animal sacrifice as an innate human need that was also practiced by idolaters. Abarbanel (introduction to *Leviticus*, chap. 4) cites and rejects this interpretation, preferring to accept Rambam's thesis at face value—that sacrifices were instituted primarily as a means to wean Bnei Yisrael away from *avodah zarah*. Nevertheless, Abarbanel maintains that Rambam believed that important messages about man's relationship to God are contained within the myriad laws pertaining to sacrifices. Abarbanel proceeds to cite examples of the profound symbolism contained within the intricate halachot concerning korbanot, as found in Rambam.⁶

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ("Two Strains of Maimonidean Thought," in *The Halakhic Mind* [New York, 1998], 91) contrasts Rambam's approach in the *Guide to the Perplexed* and in the *Yad* and notes that the Jewish people have, in general, ignored most of Rambam's rationalizations. In this context (see *ibid.*, note 108) he opines that philosophically, Ramban's interpretation of sacrifices is superior to Rambam's, and in *Al HaTeshuvah* (p. 166-7 in Hebrew, 267-8 in English) Rav Soloveitchik refers to Ramban's approach.

The claim that Rav Kook believed that animal sacrifices will not be reinstated when the Temple is rebuilt⁷ is based on one sentence in his commentary to the siddur. Commenting on the

“Yehi Ratzon” at the end of the Shemoneh Esrei, “v’arvah laHashem minchat Yehuda v’Yerushalayim kimei olam uch’shanim kadmoniyot—then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord as in the days of old and as in the ancient years” (Malachi 3:4; first line of the haftarah for Shabbat HaGadol), Rav Kook wrote: “In the future, the abundance of knowledge will spread to and penetrate even animals . . . and the sacrifices, which will then be from grain,⁸ will be as pleasing to God as in days of old in yesteryear [when there were animal sacrifices] . . .” (Olat Reiyah, vol. 1 [Jerusalem, 1983], 292). This has led some to claim that Rav Kook believed that there will only be vegetarian sacrifices in the Third Beit Hamikdash.

However, elsewhere, Rav Kook states his belief that there will be animal sacrifices in the Third Temple. He writes: “And regarding sacrifices, it is more correct to believe that everything will return to its place, and God willing, be fulfilled when the redemption comes, and prophecy and the Divine spirit return to Israel” (Iggrot HaReiyah, vol. 4 [Jerusalem, 1984], 23-5, letter 994; Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn, Malki Bakodesh, vol. 4 [Jerusalem], letter 1, p. gimmel). It seems that Rav Kook believes that sacrifices will be reinstated, and also that at that time people will have a renewed understanding and appreciation of the role of sacrifices.

Rav Kook thus maintains that in the Messianic Age there will be animal sacrifices. However, he also quotes Kabbalistic sources (see Otzerot HaReiyah, vol. 2 [2002], 101-103 and Kevatzim Mi’ktav Yad Kadsho, vol. 2 [5768], 15-16) that describe some other, far distant future, when the whole nature of the world will change, and animals will be on a human level. Then, of course, no sacrifices will be brought from these “intelligent” animals. It would seem that according to Rav Kook’s understanding, it is about this far-distant period that Malachi (3:4) prophesized. Rav Kook’s vision of an ideal world with only vegetarian sacrifices will come much later in the Messianic period, and follow techiyat hameitim.⁹

It would be quite strange to posit that there will be no animal sacrifices in the Third Temple in light of the fact that Jews have prayed thrice daily in Shemoneh Esrei for nearly 2,000 years “v’hasheiv et ha’avodah lidvir veisecha, v’ishei Yisrael.” In the Musaf service, the sacrifices prescribed by the Torah for that day are clearly delineated, and we conclude with a prayer stating that we hope to merit to one day bring these sacrifices again. Similarly, at the Pesach Seder and in the Musaf of Yom Kippur, we conclude with the fervent prayer seeking the reinstatement of sacrifices in the Temple.¹⁰

Not only do we find the theme of the restoration of sacrifices repeated throughout the liturgy, there is an opinion that there will even be “make-up sacrifices” for all those that were missed during the last 1,900 years! In the standard Musaf prayer, we pray that the Temple be restored so that we can bring the “[Korban] Musaf of this very day [‘hazeh’].” That request might seem strange, given the fact that obviously we cannot offer the sacrifices meant to be offered on that very day. Sefer HaManhig (Hilchot Hallel [twelfth century], 263-4, 1978 ed.) explains that “hazeh” indicates that indeed all missed sacrifices over the generations will be brought, and one should not wonder where all the animals for those make-up sacrifices will come from (more than 25,000 missed Rosh Chodashim!) because the prophet has already guaranteed that the animals will gather together for that purpose (Isaiah 60:7). Taking a different position than that of the Sefer HaManhig, Rabbi Chaim Berlin¹¹ states that all missed Rosh Chodesh korbanot will be offered, not as a Musaf, but as “voluntary offerings.” The notion of offering make-up sacrifices is found in the writings of one of the early Chassidic masters, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov (1783?-1841). He states¹² that with the building of the Beit Hamikdash, it will be mandatory to bring all past-due sin-offerings.¹³ He also explains the perplexing use of the word “zeh”¹⁴ in Musaf by citing the opinion of Menahem Azariah da Fano (1548-1620), who states that in the future, all communal sacrifices that were missed over the centuries will be offered. Elaborating on this topic in his more famous work (Bnei Yissaschar, Ma’amar Rosh Chodesh, ma’amar 2:3,8, cf. 3:7), he explains that after the building of the Third Temple, when the first Rosh Chodesh Nissan comes along, all of the missed Rosh Chodesh Nissan Korbanot Musaf will be offered, and on Shabbat Parashat Naso, all the missed Korbanot Musaf of Shabbat Naso will be offered, et cetera.

This explanation for the word “zeh” was referred to by Sephardic rabbinic authorities too. The Ben Ish Chai (year 2:Vayikra 19) quotes the explanation of the Bnei Yissaschar. Rabbi Yechia Tzalach, the leader of Yemenite Jewry in the eighteenth century, reports¹⁵ asking his teacher about the word “zeh,” who quoted the answer cited in Sefer HaManhig. Rabbi Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowicz of Radomsk (d. 1866; Tiferet Shlomo, Shabbat Kodesh, 63-4), based on “zeh,” says that one missed Korban Tamid and Korban Musaf, as well as individual sacrifices, will be offered in the soon-to-be-rebuilt Temple, as suggested in Joel 2:25.

Some who support the claim that Rambam and Rav Kook believe animal sacrifice will have no place in the Third Temple

attempt to argue that sacrifices were always a concession and that God actually disdains the practice. Examples of oft-cited verses from Tanach that they use are: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” (Isaiah 1:11); “For I spoke not unto your fathers . . . concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifice. But this thing I commanded them: ‘Obey My voice and I will be your God’” (Jeremiah 7:21); “For I [God] desire mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings” (Hosea 6:6) and many others. But as is evident when reading the verses in context, the prophets are not railing against sacrifices per se, but rather against sacrifices that are not accompanied by compassion for others and knowledge of God. In fact, these very same prophets, Ezekiel in particular, prophesized about the renewal of the sacrificial order.¹⁶

It is clear that animal sacrifices have deep spiritual value. Each one of the Avot brought animal sacrifices. In numerous places throughout Nach, the prophets express their longing for the restoration of the Temple service. Finally, the Talmud takes it as a given that sacrifices will be reinstated.

So will there be sacrifices in the Third Temple? The overwhelming majority opinion is that there will be. Rambam and Rav Kook seem to share this view. It should be noted that while Rav Kook envisioned the restoration of the sacrificial rite, in his view, that period would also include a return of prophecy and the Divine spirit to the nation.

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu> date: Mar 21, 2024, 3:16 PM subject: S P E C I A L S - Taamei Hamitzvos - Remembering Amalek

Reasons Behind the Mitzvos: Remembering Amalek By Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

Mitzvos in Sefer HaChinuch: #603: To remember what Amalek did to us. #604: To annihilate them. #605: Not to forget what Amalek did.

THE READING OF PARASHAS ZACHOR (Devarim 25:17-19):

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you departed from Egypt. [Remember] that which they met you on the way and smote those at the back of your [encampment], while you were tired and weary [tired and thirsty from travel, and worn out from the ordeal of escaping from the Egyptian army], and he did not fear Hashem. Therefore, when Hashem Your God relieves you of all your enemies around you in the

land that Hashem your God is giving to you as an inheritance, wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens; do not forget!

We were very far from Amalek’s territory and posed no threat to them (See Malbim). However, the Amalekite people are heretical and hate Hashem and all that represents him in this world. They understood that Hashem had just redeemed for himself the Jewish People and was leading them to establish Hashem’s Kingdom in Eretz Yisrael, and they sought to prevent that from occurring. They succeeded to some extent, as their attack caused our neighboring nations to lose their fear for us.

We are commanded to remember Amalek and realize that whoever attacks the Jewish People is despised by Hashem, and in accordance with that enemy’s wickedness and that harm that he causes, so shall be the magnitude of his downfall. For this reason, since Amalek perpetrated a great evil against the Jewish People by initiating a battle against them, Hashem commanded us to eradicate them (Sefer Chinuch). There is a dispute amongst the Rishonim whether this mitzvah would apply today if Amalek would be identified, or whether it will only apply when Mashiach arrives.

REMEMBERING TO REMOVE HASHEM’S ENEMY

On a simple level of understanding, the main mitzvah concerning Amalek is to annihilate this enemy of Hashem and His People. Doing so requires much effort and is only possible when the Jewish People have their own kingdom. Hashem knew that this would take many centuries, so He commanded us to remember it by reading the passage of Amalek at least once a year so that we do not forget it with time. In the words of Rambam: “Hashem commanded us to remember what Amalek did to us by attacking us without any prior provocation. We are therefore required to feel constant enmity toward Amalek and to remind ourselves of this regularly so that it does not fade with time.”

BEWARE OF THE DOG

The Sages see this mitzvah from a second perspective as well. They compare Amalek’s attack to a king who surrounded a vineyard with a fence and placed a watchdog within. The king’s son breached the fence and was bitten by the dog. Whenever the king wanted to remind his son about his misdeed to prevent him from repeating it, he would tell him to remember what the dog did to him. So too, when the Jewish people left Egypt after having merited unfathomable Divine kindnesses and open miracles, they complained impudently that Hashem was not amongst them upon experiencing thirst in the wilderness. This breach of trust was like breaching the

king's vineyard, and "the dog," Amalek, promptly smote them. When Hashem commands us to remember what the dog did to us, He means to remind us never to breach the faith of our relationship with Him (Midrash Tanchuma).

Hashem juxtaposes the mitzvah to remember Amalek to the mitzvah to maintain precise scales and weights, and the Sages infer from this that the punishment for dishonesty in business matters is the attack of the enemy. Rav Hirsch explains, based on the above Midrash, that dishonesty is rooted in a lack of faith that livelihood comes from Hashem, and the fitting punishment for this is an attack by the nation that represents lack of faith.

THE ONGOING BATTLE

On a deeper level of understanding, Rav Moshe Alshich explains that every nation has an angelic counterpart in Heaven. Amalek is a scion of the wicked Esav, and his angelic counterpart is none other than Satan, who is also the evil inclination within each person. The feud between Yaakov and Eisav — good and evil — continues constantly between every Jew and his evil inclination. If a Jew sins, he increases the power of Amalek, and if he repents and acts righteously, the power of Amalek decreases. When we all conquer the spiritual Amalek by overcoming our evil inclinations, Hashem will immediately remove the physical Amalek from the earth. The evil in the world will be replaced with righteousness, and the Messianic kingdom of peace and holiness will become firmly established. This is why whenever the prophets often stress that repentance must precede the coming redemption. When Hashem commands us to remember Amalek, He means to remind each individual Jew to do his share in ridding the world of evil by emerging victorious over his personal moral struggles.

We emerge with the following explanation of the mitzvah to remember Amalek: We must remember Amalek's attack so that we will cling to our faith in Hashem (reason two) and thereby overcome the spiritual Amalek within each of us (reason three), and eventually merit to remove Amalek from the world (reason one).

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Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg

Admitting Our Mistakes

When the Torah describes the sin offering of the nasi in Parshas Vayikra, it begins (4:22), "asher nasi yecheta - in the case of a leader who sins". Rashi notes that the use of the word asher seems puzzling. The Torah should have said "im nasi

yecheta - if a leader sins," just like it says earlier (4:13), "v'im kol adas Yisrael yishgu - and if the entire congregation of Israel will make a mistake". Why does the Torah use the word asher when discussing the sin of the nasi? Rashi explains that the word asher sounds like "ashrei - fortunate" because fortunate is the generation whose leader feels a desire to bring a korban for his unintentional sins; all the more so, will such a leader regret his intentional sins. A leader who can admit his mistakes is truly worthy of his position.

The haftorah of Parshas Zachor tells the tragic story of King Shaul who was not able to admit his mistake. Hashem tells Shmuel to command Shaul to destroy Amalek, but Shaul does not fulfill the command properly. He leaves Agag alive, and he allows the people to save some of the animals to sacrifice to Hashem.

Chazal say (Yoma 22b), "Shaul was guilty of only one sin, and yet it counted against him, while David was guilty of two indiscretions and yet they did not count against him." Shaul defied Hashem's command by not completely destroying Amalek and he lost the kingship, while David acted inappropriately twice, first when he arranged for Uriah, the husband of Bas Sheva, to be killed in battle, and later when he conducted a census which caused a plague, and yet he retained the kingship.

Why was Shaul punished more severely than David if he only sinned once? The Malbim explains that the difference between Shaul and David lay in their reaction to a prophet's rebuke. When Shmuel confronts Shaul with his sin, Shaul justifies his actions. He initially declares innocently that he fulfilled the word of Hashem (Shmuel I, 15:13). When Shmuel asks him about the sheep, Shaul responds that the people spared some animals to sacrifice to Hashem (15:15). Shmuel then shares with Shaul that Hashem appeared to him and told him to convey to Shaul that He is dissatisfied with his behavior (15:17-19). Incredibly, Shaul still protests. "But I did listen to the voice of Hashem," he argues (15:20-21). Only after Shmuel expresses Hashem's disappointment with Shaul one more time, and he tells Shaul that Hashem has rejected him as king (15:22-23), does Shaul admit his sin (15:24). By contrast, when Nossan the prophet admonishes David for arranging Uriah's death, David immediately admits his guilt. He says simply, "I have sinned" (Shmuel II, 12:13). He does not rationalize his actions even for a moment. This, says the Malbim, is the critical difference between Shaul and David.

It is not easy for anyone to admit their faults. We all make mistakes - whether they be in the realm of *bein adam l'makom* or *bein adam l'chaveiro* or even *bein adam l'atzmo* (in our

middos and attitudes). But what is even worse than making a mistake is not admitting that we have done something wrong, not owning up to the truth.

We have to be honest with ourselves, and sometimes it's not easy. Unfortunately, we do not have prophets who can reveal to us what we have done wrong and to guide us on the path toward improvement. However, oftentimes we know the truth in our hearts, but are not brave enough to admit it and to make amends for what we have done wrong. The story of Shaul highlights the importance of being honest with ourselves and not being afraid to admit our mistakes.

This, in fact, is one of the middos that helped save the Jewish people at the time of Purim. Rav Dessler (Michtav M'Elياهو, vol. 1 p. 76) quotes Rav Simcha Zissel, the Alter of Kelm, who pointed out that the story of Purim actually took place over a span of nine years, from the third year of Achashveirosh's reign through the twelfth year. Most people would not have detected the connection between the feast at the beginning of the story and the evil decree of Haman to destroy the Jewish people. Only Mordechai, through his ruach hakodesh, understood the connection.

Mordechai had told the Jewish people not to attend Achashveirosh's feast, but they were afraid that not attending would anger the king and he might kill them, so they went to the party, against Mordechai's wishes. There seemed to be no negative repercussions from their behavior, but nine years later, Haman decreed that everyone should bow to him. Chazal (Sanhedrin 61b) concede that in truth there was no violation of avodah zara in bowing, and yet Mordechai refused to bow so there should not even be the perception that he was serving avodah zara. There were those that claimed that Mordechai was putting them all in danger because of a chumra. And, in fact, their worst fears seemed to have been realized. Haman was incensed that Mordechai refused to bow to him, so he conspired with Achashveirosh to destroy the Jewish people.

Most rational people would have said that Mordechai was the one who caused the terrible decree. But Mordechai told them that the decree was actually a result of their attending Achashveirosh's party. It seemed so unlikely, and yet, instead of criticizing Mordechai, the Jewish people admitted their mistake, did teshuva, and joined Mordechai and Esther in fasting and tefillah. It was that ability of Klal Yisrael to be honest with themselves and trust Mordechai's wisdom that led to the incredible turnaround and miracle of Purim.

Admitting mistakes is never easy. But sometimes when we take the difficult route of true introspection, we can merit enormous blessing.