

CELEBRATING OUR 25<sup>th</sup> YEAR!

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE • WWW.OHR.EDU

# OHRNET

SPECIAL

PESACH

EDITION

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PARSHIOT TZAV - SHMINI - TAZRIA-METZORA - ACHREI MOT-KEDOSHIM

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PESACH  
SPECIAL

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## Minimum Entropy

BY RABBI NOTA SCHILLER,  
ROSH HAYESHIVA

“Seder” means *order*. Why then is the Pesach ritual meal with the Haggada called “Seder”?

Shakespeare said that studying nature, the honeybees in particular, taught people about *order*. E. M. Foster disagreed. He felt that only a man-made work of art had internal *order*. In the middle of the US Civil War, Henry Martyn Robert, reacting to a disorderly meeting, sat down to compose “Robert’s Rules of (Parliamentary) *Order*.”

Pesach is a special time to celebrate our national liberation and our personal liberation. The austerity of the unleavened bread of this Festival signifies discipline and focus. This leads one to understand that discipline and focus, i.e. *order*, help us achieve and appreciate our freedoms. How?

Life is a mixture of times of *order* and times of chaos. But we are potentially able to give order to the chaos.

Pesach represents a time for us to provide order to the chaos of energies. It is a time to give them focus, purpose and definition. After all, what is liberation other than being freed from the tyranny of immediate wants and desires? We are able to succeed in this freedom by choosing according to objective criteria. For thousands of years we have a specific name for these objective criteria: “Halacha”.

So Shakespeare and Foster were both correct. There is order and there is chaos. The Halachic imperative is to order that which is potentially chaotic. And, in a sense, as Henry Martyn Roberts did, we are always in the middle of a “Civil War,” and that is the time to make “Seder”, to make *order*. To celebrate freedom.

חג פסח ושמחה  
*Best wishes for a happy and healthy Pesach!*

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Tzav

## Once More, With Feeling

“...he (the kohen) shall separate the ash...” (6:3)

**H**ave you ever tried to start singing a song in the middle? Well, it’s possible, but quite difficult. How about getting your computer to load a program while leaving out the first ten lines of code? That’s not just difficult; it’s impossible.

A *sugya* in the Gemara is a lot like a computer program or a song.

You have to sing it from the top.

When you come back to a *sugya* in the Gemara that you have already started, the *yetzer hara* always says to you, “Well, we know what happened up till here, let’s go on! Or as we say in Yiddish ‘*Veiter!*’” (Yes, the *yetzer hara* speaks Yiddish as well. He’s fluent in every known language.)

Chances are you don’t know what happened up till here — well, not well enough to carry on. Not to be able to carry all the nuances of the *sugya* in your head. One of the things I do with my students is that I try to always start the *shiur* with a review of the *sugya* up to that point.

“But Rebbe, we know the *sugya* already. Let’s go on!

“...he (the kohen) shall separate the ash of what the fire consumed of the elevation offering on the Altar, and place it next to the Altar.”

The first service of the *kohen* in the Beit Hamikdash was to scoop a shovelful of ash from the innermost ashes of the Altar. These ashes had to be from the offering of the previous day.

Just as the *avoda* (service) of the Beit Hamikdash requires a connection to yesterday’s *avoda*, so too should our *avoda* in Torah connect today’s learning with yes-

terday’s, and ensure that we begin the song of the Torah “once more with feeling.”

**Shemini**

### A Chant of Love

“Aharon raised his hands toward the people and blessed them.” (9:22)

**O**ne of the most awe-inspiring experiences is the *Birkat Kohanim*, when a very large number of *kohanim* bless the many thousands of people at the Western Wall in Jerusalem during *Chol HaMo’ed* on Pesach and Succot.

Most of the time, prayer at the Wall is a segmented affair. This group starts as that one finishes, while yet another group is somewhere in the middle.

Apart from the daily moments of silence at the dawn’s break when everyone begins together the Silent Prayer of eighteen blessings, I can think of no other time when the whole of the Kotel is as unified as it is by *Birkat HaKohanim*.

The haunting chant of the *Kohanic* blessing evokes deep and powerful feelings in the heart of every Jew, however religious he may be. It is a chant that echoes down the years. It is a living witness to the unbroken chain of Jewish tradition that links us to Sinai.

The first appearance of that chant is in this week’s Torah portion. Aharon completed his first day of service in the Sanctuary and he then blessed the people with great joy. Such was his desire to bless the people that G-d rewarded him and his descendents that they should bless the Jewish People thus throughout the generations.

*continued on page twenty-one*

#### EDITOR’S NOTE:

Since the “8th day of Pesach” falls this year on Shabbat outside of Israel, although the Torah reading in Israel is *Parshat Shemini* that week, there is a special Torah reading outside of Israel, and *Parshat Shemini* is read there a week later instead. Israel will continue to be “a week ahead” of the Diaspora for the following weeks, until we all return to the same point when *Parshiot Behar* and *Bechokotai* are read outside of Israel, and *Parshat Bechukotai* is read in Israel.

Therefore, since we are on a production schedule for Israel, we recommend that you keep the Ohrnet Magazine you receive this week, and also after Pesach, for the *following week* outside of Israel. In Israel, however, the planned schedule is to send out the Ohrnet Magazine according to the local schedule. For any clarification, please write to [ohr@ohr.edu](mailto:ohr@ohr.edu)

*Chag kasher v’sameach!*

BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

### Avodah Zara 58-76 - Horayot 2-14

*Rabbi Yochanan said: "Go, go", we tell a nazir, "around, around; don't come near the vineyard."*

Even when there is no Torah prohibition against doing a particular act, our Rabbis sometimes enacted a decree to forbid certain actions in order to prevent a person from transgressing a Torah command. Although the Torah does not forbid a *nazir* from entering a vineyard, the Rabbi Yochanan taught that we tell him not to enter. Since he is not allowed to eat the fruits of the grapevine, he might come to eat from the forbidden fruits there, even if he does so unwittingly. Rabbi Yochanan's sage advice here is that a *nazir* should be told to "Stay away!" from a vineyard, even if this involves inconvenience, such as going around the vineyard instead of taking a shortcut through it. As one might easily imagine, this teaching may find practical application in making smart and correct choices in our daily lives. Even if the Rabbis did not make a special enactment in a particular case, it might very well be a "Talmud Tip," and perhaps even halacha, to avoid certain situations.

• Avoda Zara 58b

*Rava said, "You have the fear of your king upon you, whereas we will not have the fear of a king upon us."*

The Sage Rava told this to a gentile governor named Bar Shishach, who challenged Rava regarding the pleasures of the Jewish People in the World-to-Come. Bar Shishach engaged himself in ultra-physical worldly pleasures, and taunted Rava, "Do you have something like this in your Afterlife?" Rava answered, "We have better than this!" Rava then told him how, as powerful as he was, he was still subservient to the fickleness of his king. The Jewish People, although we are certainly the People of the One true King Above, will not be subservient to any human power in the World-to-Come. (Our *sugya* cites answers that two other Sages, Rav Papi and Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak, say they would have given Bar Shishach replies from prophecies in Tehillim and Yeshayahu. Rava, instead, chose to offer a proof based on logic, rather than one requiring belief in the words of the Jewish prophets.)

• Avoda Zara 65a

*Rav Nachman said in the name of Rabba bar Avuha, "Even new eating vessels purchased from gentiles require tevilah in a mikveh according to Torah law."*

Although the *gemara* explains the source of "*tevilat keilim*" (ritual immersion) as referring to vessels already used by gentiles with non-kosher food, we can apply this source to new vessels as well: Once the used vessels have been kashered in the appropriate way, they are considered as new and nevertheless need *tevilah*, as taught in a *beraita* in our *sugya*. It follows that vessels that are new to begin with should also require *tevilah* in a *mikveh*.

• Avoda Zara 75b

*Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: When G-d told Moshe that the elders he appointed to the first Sanhedrin should "carry the burden of the people with you" (Bamidbar 11:17), this teaches that they must be like Moshe, devoid of any disqualifying features.*

• Horayot 4b

Rabbi Chiya bar Aba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: From where do we learn that the Holy One, blessed is He, does not withhold reward even for someone who uses decent and wholesome speech? From the daughters of Lot. The older daughter called their son "Moav" (implying "from my father" — Rashi), speaking in a brazen and undignified manner. As a result, G-d told Moshe that he could cause trouble for the nation of Moav. On the other hand, the younger daughter called her son "Ben Ami" (using "clean" language, not wanting to make known that he was from her father — Rashi). For this she was rewarded that G-d told Moshe not to cause any trouble to Amon, her son's nation.

• Horayot 10b

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### TZAV

1. What separated the *kohen's* skin from the priestly garments?
  2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the *mizbe'ach*? How often were they completely removed from the *mizbe'ach*?
  3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the *mizbe'ach*, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
  4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the *mizbe'ach* may not be *chametz*. But is the *kohen's* portion allowed to be *chametz*?
  5. When a *kohen* is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
  6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the *korban* of Aharon and his sons?
  7. What is the difference between a *minchat kohen* and a *minchat Yisrael*?
  8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatat*?
  9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
  10. Can an animal dedicated as an *asham* be replaced with another animal?
  11. How does an *asham* differ from all other *korbanot*?
  12. Unlike all other *korbanot*, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the *mizbe'ach*?
  13. What three types of *kohanim* may not eat from the *asham*?
  14. In which four instances is a *korban todah* brought?
  15. Until when may a *todah* be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
  16. How does a *korban* become *pigul*?
  17. Who may eat from a *shelamim*?
  18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the *Ohel Moed*?
  19. Other than *Yom Kippur*, what other service requires that the *kohen* separate from his family?
  20. What are the 5 categories of *korbanot* listed in this *Parsha*?
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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Tzav's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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1. 6:3 - Nothing.
  2. 6:4 -A) Every day. B) Whenever there was a lot.
  3. 6:6 - Two.
  4. 6:10 - No.
  5. 6:13 - A *korban mincha* — A tenth part of an *ephah* of flour.
  6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
  7. 6:15 - The *minchat kohen* is burned completely. Only a handful of the *minchat Yisrael* is burned, and the remainder is eaten by the *kohanim*.
  8. 6:19 - If he is *tamei* (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
  9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
  10. 7:1 - No.
  11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
  12. 7:3 - The tail.
  13. 7:7 - A *t'vul yom* (a *tamei kohen* who immersed in a *mikveh* yet awaits sunset to become *tahor*); a *mechusar kipurim* (a *tamei* person who has gone to the *mikveh* but has yet to bring his required offering); an *onan* (a mourner on the day of death of a close relative).
  14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
  15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. b) Until midnight.
  16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
  17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
  18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
  19. 8:34 - The burning of the *parah adumah* (red heifer).
  20. *Olah* (6:2); *mincha* (6:7); *chatat* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).
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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### SHEMINI

1. What date was “*yom hashemini*”?
2. Which of Aharon’s *korbanot* atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What *korbanot* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatat* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkat kohanim*?
6. Why did Moshe go into the *Ohel Mo’ed* with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three *chatat* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.
11. Which he-goat *chatat* did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the *chatat*. Why?
14. Why did G-d choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrut*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only *one* sign of *kashrut*? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called *chasida* in Hebrew?
19. The *chagav* is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Shemini’s questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

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1. 9:1 - First of *Nissan*.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a *korban chatat*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatat*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *mincha*.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a *chatat* offered on the courtyard *mizbe’ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanot*, before descending from the *mizbe’ach*.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the *Shechina* to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the *Mishkan* after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a *halachic* ruling. Also, a *kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, approach the *mizbe’ach*, or perform the *avoda*.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of *Rosh Chodesh*, and of Nachshon ben Amiv nadav.
11. 10:16 - The *Rosh Chodesh chatat*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninut* (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the *kohanim* eat the *chatat* are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4,5,6,7 - Four: Camel, *shafan*, hare and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with *chesed* (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher *chagav*.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern).

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### TAZRIA

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?

### METZORA

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented "before G-d" (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara'at* in one's house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected of having *tzara'at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?

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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Tazria-Metzorah's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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### TAZRIA

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.

### METZORA

1. 14:2 - At night.

2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara'at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara'at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n'sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe'ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara'at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### ACHREI MOT

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshat Acharei Mot* was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?
2. How long did the first *Beit Hamikdash* stand?
3. What did the *kohen gadol* wear when he entered the Holy of Holies?
4. How many times did the *kohen gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
5. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *azazel*. What is *azazel*?
6. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *kohen gadol*?
7. What is the penalty of *karet*?
8. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
9. What is the difference between "*mishpat*" and "*chok*"?
10. May a man marry his wife's sister?

### KEDOSHIM

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the Jewish People?

2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. The Torah obligates one to leave the "*leket*" for the poor. What is "*leket*"?
5. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands, "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal"?
6. In verse 19:13, the Torah commands, "Do not wrong your neighbor." To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
7. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
8. How does one fulfill the command "*v'hadarta p'nei zakein*"?
9. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
10. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which type of death penalty is it referring?

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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Achrei Mot - Kedoshim's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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### ACHREI MOT

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the Holy of Holies except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:3 - 410 years.
3. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *kohen*.
4. 16:4 - Five times.
5. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
6. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
7. 17:9 - The person's life is shortened and his offspring die.
8. 17:13 - Non-domestic kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
9. 18:4 - A "*mishpat*" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "*chok*" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as G-d's decree.
10. 18:18 - Not during his wife's lifetime.

### KEDOSHIM

1. 19:2 - Because it contains the fundamental teachings of the Torah.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain that are accidentally dropped while harvesting.
5. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
6. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
7. 19:17 - Causing embarrassment.
8. 19:32 - By not sitting in their seat nor contradicting them.
9. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — the entire Jewish People will never be "cut off."
10. 20:10 - "*Chenek*" (strangulation).



TZAV

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burned on the altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon's sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham guilt-korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

SHEMINI

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in

the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

TAZRIA

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail.

METZORA

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara'at*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week and involves *korbanot* and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara'at*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara'at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

*continued on page ten*

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## LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

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### Gilgal — The First Korban Pesach in the Land We Love

**A**lthough you will probably find nothing on the map or in geography books about this place, it was the most important site in the first years of the nation of Israel in *Eretz Yisrael*. Here is where the Israelites under Yehoshua camped after their miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, and here is where they placed the twelve large stones which they had removed from the river bed to serve as a remembrance for generations of that miracle. (*Yehoshua 4:20-24*)

The name “Gilgal” comes from the Hebrew word for “removing.” Gilgal became the name for this site because here is where Yehoshua carried out a mass circumcision for all those who had been born during the



40 years in the wilderness, where the climate made such an operation too dangerous to life. “Today I have removed from you the shame of Egypt,” said G-d, “and the place shall be called Gilgal.” (*Yehoshua 5:9*)

This removal of the foreskin, which distinguished them from their former masters, made the entire Jewish nation eligible to offer a *korban Pesach*, the first one in forty years.

The *Mishkan* (Sanctuary), which the Israelites had carried with them throughout their wandering in the wilderness, stood in Gilgal for 14 years, until the Land was conquered and divided amongst the tribes, after which it was transferred to Shiloh.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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*continued from page nine*

### ACHAREI MOT

**G**-d instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the *Mishkan*. On Yom Kippur, the *Kohen Gadol* is to approach the holiest part of the *Mishkan* after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is “for G-d” and is offered in the Temple, while the other is “for Azazel” in the desert. The Torah states the individual’s obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations. Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman’s monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

### KEDOSHIM

**T**he nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught. *Prohibitions:* Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone’s property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one’s parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing. *Positive:* Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree’s fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe *kashrut*, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## Wining, Dining, and Reclining

**From: Russell**

*Dear Rabbi,  
Would you please discuss the mitzvah of reclining  
at the Seder meal?*

Dear Russell,

While partaking of the four cups of wine, and the *matza* at the beginning of the meal, and the *korech* “sandwich” (of *matza*, *maror*, and *charoset*), and the *afikomen matza* at the end of the meal, one must do so in a reclining position. This may be done on a couch, or even while sitting and leaning on the arm of a chair, on another chair, or even on another person.

One reason for this is because this is how royalty of old ate, and on this night Jews are to conduct themselves as aristocracy. Additionally, Rambam explains that each person must regard himself as if he just came out of the slavery of Egypt, so when he feasts on this night he must do so in a reclining position in the manner of free men.

One must recline on his left side and eat and drink with his right hand. One reason for this is that leaning on the left ensures that the food and drink will go down the “food” pipe and not the windpipe. Also, it enables one to handle and partake of these *mitzvot* with the right hand. Even left-handed people recline to the left.

Although a son would not normally recline in his father’s presence, as a sign of respect, on this occasion he does recline at his father’s table since his father forgoes his own honor in lieu of this special night and its *mitzvot*. A disciple before his foremost rabbi does not recline while dining at his rabbi’s table unless his rabbi gives him leave to do so. Among Sefardic Jews the general custom is for women to recline. Among Ashkenazim, however, while all

women are considered as queens and princesses, the customary decorum is not to recline.

One does not recline while eating the *karpas* or the *maror* since these foods are intended to recall the “bitter times” of exile which preceded redemption. However, if one does not recline while partaking of the mitzvah wine and *matza*, he must drink or eat again. The custom is to be lenient regarding one who forgets to lean while drinking the third and fourth cups of wine. One who forgets to lean for the *afikomen* does not repeat eating it since the *afikomen* can’t be eaten twice.

Even though it is not normally common for us to recline at a meal nowadays, our Sages nevertheless decreed this custom of reclining at the Seder in order to emphatically recall the miraculous redemption from slavery to freedom. Similarly, even though it is compulsory to lean only for the four cups of wine, the *matza* and the *afikomen*, it is nevertheless praiseworthy to recline throughout the entire Seder (except for during the *karpas* and *maror*, as above) in order to emphasize these themes of royalty and liberation.

Some commentators maintain that the mitzvah of reclining at the Seder includes commemorating the occasion by wining, dining and reclining in the company of many other participants. When noble and distinguished people hold a banquet they do so with much ceremony and in the presence of a large number of guests. So too, we are to celebrate this momentous occasion in this way. This also parallels the way in which the Seder was celebrated in ancient times when the actual sacrificial Passover lamb was eaten together in large groups, which magnified the joy in, thanks for, and praise of, G-d’s mighty and wondrous salvation.

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## ANATOMY OF A MITZVAH

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

### From Renewal to Redemption

“This month (Nissan) shall be for you the beginning of months;  
it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.” (Shemot 12:2)

“**K**iddush HaChodesh” — the sanctification of the New Month — was the first commandment given to the Jewish People as a nation before leaving Egypt. Determining the beginning of a new month, whether a month would have twenty-nine or thirty days (based on testimony), when it would be necessary to add a thirteenth month (a second Adar), and the yearly holidays, were all established by an authorized Jewish Court (Beit Din). Because of the difficult circumstances of exile there was a great risk that the Jewish Court would one day lose its authorized status. To solve this problem Hillel HaNassi II and his Beit Din sanctified all future months before it would become too late (circa 500 CE).

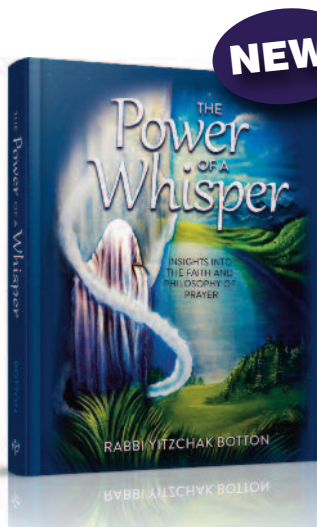
Although today we follow a fixed calendar, it is important to understand the eternal lessons latent within the concept of *Kiddush Hachodesh*: 1) The Torah calls Nissan the first month of the year. 2) The Jewish calendar follows the cycle of the moon. 3) The sanctity of the months and holidays are determined by the Jewish People.

The month of Nissan is called *Chodesh Ha’Aviv* (Spring), a time of renewal, as well as *Chodesh HaGeu-*

*lah*, a time of redemption. G-d infused the power of redemption and renewal in this month. That is why we were redeemed from Egyptian enslavement during Nissan, and it is also why in this month we were given the commandment to sanctify the new moon.

The moon, which (from our perception) goes through a cycle of growth and decline, also symbolizes the process of redemption and renewal. Thus, the Hebrew word for month is *Chodesh*, which means “renewal.” During each month the moon is diminished and then restored to its original grandeur. The Jewish People are compared to the moon, and likewise go through a similar process of exile and redemption. In the end, like the moon, we will be restored to our true position of honor and glory.

Mankind represents the pinnacle of Creation. We have been given both the privilege and the responsibility of completing and perfecting ourselves as well as the world around us, and in doing so we become G-d’s partner in this magnificent miracle of Creation. Time itself has been placed into our hands. Through fulfilling our Divine mission in this world, mankind together with the dimensions of time and space all become eternally sanctified.



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## WHAT'S IN A WORD? Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

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BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

### Defining Freedom

**T**he Holiday of Passover, when the Jewish People were emancipated from slavery in Egypt, is described in our liturgy as *Zman Cheiruteinu*, “the Time of our Freedom.” However, as we shall see in the coming lines, the word *cheirut* is not the only Hebrew word for “freedom”. When the Bible refers to freeing slaves it uses two other words for “freedom”: *chofesh* and *dror*. An additional, conceptually-related word is *hefker* (“ownerless”), which is also related to freedom. We will seek to understand the differences between these four words and what lies at the roots of these words.

We begin with the words *dror* and *chofesh*. The word *dror* first appears in the Bible when discussing the freeing of slaves in the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25:10). Rashi, based on *Rosh Hashana* 9b, explains that the word *dror* is related to the word *dar* (“dwells”), and refers to one who *dwells* within his own domain, and does not fall under others’ control.

*Dror* is also a type of bird whose very essence expresses this notion. Ibn Ezra explains that the *Dror Bird* happily sings when free to its own devices, but if captured and stuck in man’s domain, it refuses to eat until it dies. *Sefer HaAruch* also tells that the *Dror Bird* is suicidal when it loses its freedom. Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim* explains that a *Dror Bird* is called so because it builds nests inside people’s homes without fear of being captured, as if it were completely *free* from the possibility of capture (see also *Beitzah* 24a). In this way, *dror* denotes being “free as a bird.”

When the Torah calls for “pure myrrh” to be used in the anointing oil (Exodus 30:23), the word *dror* is used for “pure”. Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach and Nachmanides explain that this is because the Torah requires use of myrrh that is *free* from outside impurities and forgeries. Interestingly, the word *dror* can sometimes be abbreviated as *dar*, like in Esther 1:6 when it refers to Achashverosh granting merchants a special tax exemption (see *Megillah* 12a).

The word *chofesh* also appears in the Bible in the context of freeing slaves (most notably in Ex. 21, Deut. 15, and Jer. 34), although it means “vacation” in Modern Hebrew. In terms of their mutual association with

the concept of “freedom”, Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) explains that *dror* and *chofesh* do not refer to the exact same phenomenon. *Chofshi* refers to freedom from an obligation to work, while *dror* refers to the freedom from subjugation to a specific person who lords over him. The word *cheirut* does not appear in the Bible in the context of freedom. Nonetheless, it is the standard word for freeing a slave in Rabbinical parlance. In the *Birkat HaChodesh* prayer, which we say on the Sabbath before Rosh Chodesh, we beseech G-d to redeem us from *avdut* (“servitude”) to *cheirut* (“freedom”). Moreover, the Mishnaic term *shichrur* is a cognate of *cheirut* that refers to the formal act of freeing a slave, and the Mishnaic phrase *eved she’nishtachrar* refers to a freed slave. On Passover Night we strive to act like *Bnei Chorin* — “free men.”

Although the Bible itself never uses the word *cheirut* in the context of freedom, Rabbinical tradition (*Avot* 6:2) finds a Scriptural allusion to such a meaning. The Bible describes the Tablets that Moshe brought from Mount Sinai as “the work of G-d, and the writing was the writing of G-d, engraved (*charut*) on the tablets” (Ex. 32:16). The root for the Hebrew word which means “engraved” is generally spelled *CHET-REISH-TET*. However, in this context a variant spelling is used, replacing the ultimate *TET* with a *TAV*. Because of this slight deviance from the norm, the Rabbis found something deeper alluded to in this verse: “Do not read it as not *charut* (‘engraved’), but as *cheirut* (‘freedom’), for the only person who is truly free is one who occupies himself with Torah study.” It seems fairly clear that if the ultimate purpose of the Exodus was to give the Jewish People the Torah at Mount Sinai, then the word for freedom resulting from the Exodus should appropriately be *cheirut* — and the holiday which celebrates that freedom should be termed *Zman Cheiruteinu*.

Nevertheless, our understanding of *cheirut* does not address its meaning vis-à-vis the other words for “freedom.” Why did the Rabbis decide to use the word *cheirut* for “freedom” instead of the words found in the Bible?

The British philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997) famously differentiated between two distinct types of

*continued on page twenty-two*

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# PESACH Q&A?

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## Q

1. What is the holiday of Pesach called in the Torah?
2. Why did our ancestors carry dough when they left Egypt?
3. Where is there a hint in the Torah to the four cups of wine we drink at the Seder?
4. What do we do on Pesach Eve to remember the Korban Pesach?
5. What do these numbers represent – 10, 50 / 40, 200 / 50, 250?
6. How many mornings on Pesach do we say the entire Hallel?
7. How do we refer to Pesach in our *kiddush* and in our *tefillot*?
8. What are the three prohibitions regarding *chametz*?
9. When is the eating of matza obligatory according to the Torah?
10. What was the date of the crossing of Yam Suf?
11. How many days of Chol Hamo'ed are there in Eretz Israel and elsewhere?
12. Is there any limit to what may be done during Chol Hamo'ed?
13. How many times do we wash our hands during the Seder?
14. What cannot be done after eating the *afikomen*?
15. Why do we recline when drinking wine and eating matza?
16. What unusual thing do we do to stimulate children to ask questions?
17. What is the meaning of *datzach*, *adash*, *beachav*?
18. Who are the four sons alluded to in the Torah as requiring us to inform them regarding Pesach?
19. What is the meaning of *Dayenu* that we sing?
20. What is the Torah term on which the word Haggadah is based?

## A

1. *Chag Hamatzot* (The Festival of *Matzot*).
2. They left in such a hurry that there was no time for the dough to rise.
3. The four expressions of redemption found in *Shemot* / Exodus 6:6-7.
4. Place a shankbone or other piece of meat on the Seder plate.
5. The number of plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten in Egypt and at the Sea according to three different Sages.
6. One morning in Eretz Israel and two everywhere else.
7. *Zman Cheiruteinu* (The Season of Our Freedom).
8. To eat, to benefit from and to possess.
9. On the first night of the holiday at the Seder.
10. The seventh day of Pesach – the 21st day of the month of Nisan.
11. In Eretz Israel 5 days and elsewhere only 4.
12. Definitely! Study the laws or consult a rabbi.
13. Twice - once before dipping *karpas* into salt water and once before eating matza. (A third time is *mayim achronim* before saying *birkat hamazon* – Grace after meals.)
14. We cannot eat nor drink wine.
15. In order to express our sense of nobility as free men.
16. We dip a vegetable in salt water before saying the Haggadah.
17. These are acronyms formed by the first letters of the ten plagues.
18. The wise son, the wicked one, the simple one and the one who does not know how to ask.
19. "It would have sufficed for us" – a reference to all the stages of benevolence which G-d granted us.
20. "*Vehegadeta levincha* – And you shall relate to your child" (*Shemot* 13:8).

BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

## Children Putting *Mezuzot* on Their Rooms

*Q: I wanted my children to be involved in the mezuzah ceremony, so I let my nine-year-old son affix his mezuzah on his own bedroom door. When I saw how excited he was by this opportunity, I let him put one on the playroom door as well.*

*When I told over this story at the Shabbos table, one of the guests suggested that I should ask a rabbi whether a child under Bar Mitzvah can put up a mezuzah. He said that maybe I would need to remove them and put them up again by myself. Is that correct?*

**A:** The Rambam writes: “Minors should be educated to affix a mezuzah to their rooms.” Consequently, several authorities opine that a child is allowed to put a mezuzah on his own door if he is old enough to understand the significance of the mitzvah. They add that even after he becomes Bar Mitzvah, he would not have to remove it and re-affix it.

Incidentally, if you had your son in mind when you made the *beracha* on all the *mezuzot* that were to be placed, he should not make his own *beracha*.

Nevertheless, several other authorities dissent from this view and do not allow a child to place a mezuzah,

even on his own room. In deference to these opinions, some authorities rule that if he did place the mezuzah as a child, he should take it down and re-affix it after his Bar Mitzvah.

Although the playroom is generally used by children more than by adults, it is no different than any other public room of the house. As such, you or another adult should have put the mezuzah on its doorway. However, once your son has placed it, it does not have to be removed. Even so, some authorities suggest that when the mezuzah is taken down for routine checking, it should be replaced by an adult.

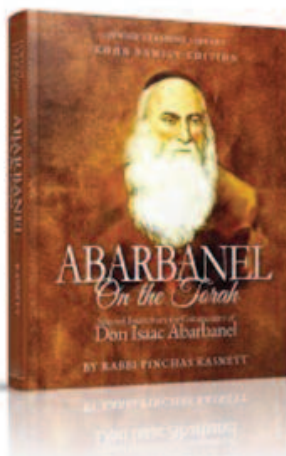
- Sources: Rambam, *Hilchos Sefer Torah* 5:10; Chovas HaDar 1:6:25; Agur B’Ohalecha 7:15, 8:8:15-16, 22; Sha’arei HaMezuzah 16:4-5; Mezuzos Beisecha 289:2

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BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

## Animal Nature: Rejected but Represented

### Parshat Tzav

In a fascinating paradox, the two parts of kosher animals which are repeatedly prohibited are the parts that are given separate, prominent, and repeated mention in the realm of *korbanot*. We are instructed not to eat blood or *chelev*, a particular layer of reserve fat. But the blood of the *korban* is specifically placed on the altar, and the fats of the animal are often recited separately as part of the offering process. Why are these improper for consumption and proper for offering?

Blood and fat are the two poles of the animal organism: the essence of the animal is concentrated in the blood — for the blood is the *nefesh*; the *chelev*-fat is the final product of the organic life of the animal — reserves the animal prepares for its own needs. The blood, the *nefesh*, flows to all the other organs, and, with its rich deposits, allows each one to perform its function. *Chelev*, fat reserve, is one of the end-products of this process. *Chelev* is blood converted for selfish purposes, whereas *chalav* (milk) is blood converted for other-directed kindness. Both are related to the root *chalaf*, to change or exchange.

All of the organs, flesh, and material of the animal may be consumed by man. After assimilating them, man dominates them and harnesses them for Divine and human purposes. But the blood — the animal life force — may never become part of the human. Similarly, the *chelev*, the selfish animal aim, may also never become part of human nature. They are forbidden for our consumption so that we may devote ourselves to G-d, as humans, and without any selfish motives.

This reason for the prohibition of blood and *chelev* appears to be the reason for their exemption from the impure status accorded to dead animals. The highest form of *tumah* is a dead human corpse. It corresponds to the highest potential being lost. The more an animal corpse resembles a human one, the more likely it is to carry more severe forms of *tumah*. Dead insects, fish and birds are not subject to the same law. Similarly, even regarding a dead animal which does transfer *tumah*, its blood and *chelev* do not. This is because the blood — the animal nature, and the *chelev* — the selfish animal aim, have no resemblance to human nature and human aim. The Torah treats animal blood and *chelev* as wholly inconsistent with man, and, therefore, they do not transfer

*tumah*.

In a *korban*, the blood can *symbolically represent* the essence, the life-blood, of the human being, and the *chelev* can *represent* human aims. But we are never to *absorb* or *assimilate* animal nature by consumption. In the *korban*, where the blood is merely representative, it symbolizes the life force of man, now devoted to G-d. The *chelev*, again, merely representative, symbolizes the surrender of all attainment to a higher purpose. In this context, both man's means and ends are placed on G-d's altar: man's blood, ones' energy, potential, and very life, along with the *chelev*, his goals and aspirations.

• Sources: *Commentary, Vayikra 7:23, 3:17*

### Shemini

#### Presumptuous Offering

“And Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his pan, put fire into them and placed incense upon it, and they brought near before G-d strange fire which He had not commanded them.” (Vayikra 10:1)

On the day the Mishkan was consecrated, Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, were punished for bringing an offering, a “strange fire,” which was not commanded. Although their intention was praiseworthy, indeed the Mishkan is considered sanctified by the death of these “close ones of G-d” (Vayikra 10:3) – their actions were misguided. Rav Hirsch explains that presumptuousness was the compass that led them astray.

The text is full of clues. They are introduced not by name, but as “the sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu.” Even though they were the sons of Aharon, they did not consult with their father. Or, as the celebrated sons of Aharon, they felt they were under no obligation to seek advice from their father, or anyone else. Indeed, “each man took his pan,” indicating that each one acted on his own initiative and did not even consult one another.

Their offering was motivated by the great joy in witnessing the fire descending to the Mishkan; they were inspired, responding with love. (Torat Kohanim) The problem lies in the fact that the entire nation witnessed this glorious revelation of G-d's nearness, and yet Nadav and Avihu felt compelled to express their sentiments, separately, by their own offering. Two aspects of their offering are emphasized in the text: their very “drawing near” was misguided, and the actual offering was illegal

*continued on page twenty-four*



BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

## Binyamin Liao

Age: 40 - Chengdu, China

Chongqing University BSEE Electrical Engineering

The *Midrash* in *Shemot Rabbah*, *Parshat Yitro*, states that all the present and future souls of the Jewish People stood at Mount Sinai.

Rav Ovadia MiBartenura begins his commentary on *Mesechet Avot* (The Ethics of the Fathers) in the following way: "... since this *mesechta* is not based on the explanation of the *mitzvot* of the Torah like other *mesechtot*, but is all ethics and advice; and since the nations of the world also wrote works that are founded in the ways of ethics, i.e. how a person should act towards his fellow man, therefore the *Tanna* begins this *mesechta* with the words: 'Moshe received the Torah from Sinai...'" to inform you that the behaviors and ethics taught in this *mesechta* were not formulated by the *Tannaim* from their own intellect, but were spoken on Mount Sinai."

The ancient Chinese philosophers wrote extensively about the ideal way of life. Notions of virtue and righteousness run deep in Chinese culture. Values of respect, compassion, humaneness, righteousness, decency and altruism were incorporated into this philosophy. Mao Tse-tung, following the success of his communist revolution in 1949, sought to uproot the traditions of the past, which he felt were impediments to his view of society. His war on the Chinese past reached its climax in the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. He did an effective job. By the time Binyamin was born in the 1970s, ancient Chinese wisdom had been all but erased, and a new religion of utilitarianism replaced it. Whatever worked was "good" and what didn't work was "bad". In this philosophy, Binyamin grew up.

But, he thought differently. Even as a young boy he understood that there had to be a righteous way to live and he wanted to find that way. His mother taught him how to read the ancient Chinese symbols and to decipher the teaching of Lao Tzu. He gained a deeper level of understanding of the ancient wisdom, but while it was poetic and beautiful, its teachings could not be applied to specific situations or rules. The individual was left unguided

and had to find his own path in life. School and work did not foster independent or unconventional thought. Binyamin studied hard and eventually graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. He worked in the field of hi-tech and succeeded. But he was still bothered by questions: "Why am I here on this earth? What are my life's goals? Am I here just to make computers less vul-

nerable to hackers, to make a better machine? Is that all there is to life?" Another question that he pondered endlessly was: "How does a righteous person act in a given situation?" This last question was illustrated in stark relief when, as a young man, he was buying some fruit in the market. He asked the seller politely to give him a sample to taste. For some unexplained reason, the seller flew into a rage, berating Binyamin, and flung a piece of the fruit at Binyamin's head. Binyamin didn't know how a righteous person should react. Should he shout back? Should he also throw a piece of fruit at the man? He stayed silent, but was confused. What was the proper response?

He was working in Network security in Shanghai when a friend suggested that he apply for a work visa for Australia. Although he really didn't have a great desire to leave China, he applied anyway. About a year later he received a letter from the Australian Government telling him that his application was accepted.

Although he spoke virtually no English, Binyamin decided to move to Melbourne. As he would say now, "*mishaneh makom, mishaneh mazal*" (changing location changes one's luck). At first it didn't look like that. Because he didn't have the language skills he couldn't find a job. He spent almost his first two years in Australia just learning English. With his savings almost exhausted, he got a job in IT with the Melbourne City Council. He then moved to Sydney where he found work in IT with the Forestry Commission of New South Wales.

As the years passed, those questions took on greater and greater urgency. One day, by chance, someone gave



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# The OHRNET Challenge

## Ohr Somayach's Ohrnet Magazine is proud to announce the historic OHRNET CHALLENGE

For the Torah portions of the next few weeks we have a different question related to the articles of Rabbi Yitzchak Botton and Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein. Whoever sends us the answers to these questions will be entered in our sweepstakes to win a copy of Rabbi Botton's or Rabbi Klein's book.

Each learned answer submitted earns the right to one entry in our grand raffle. Answers should be sent to [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu) and should include your name and mailing address. The Final Deadline for all answers is May 1st and the winners will be announced in these pages thereafter. One lucky winner will receive an autographed copy of Rabbi Yitzchak Botton's *The Power of a Whisper* (Menucha Publishers), while another lucky winner will get a signed copy of Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein's *Lashon HaKodesh: History, Holiness, & Hebrew* (Mosaica Press).

Good Luck!

### What's in a Word Synonyms in the Hebrew Language:

1. What is the difference between *tzivah* and *pakad*, which both mean "he commanded"?
2. What is the difference between *sheketz* and *to'eivah*, which both mean "abomination"?
3. What is the difference between *yoledet* and *chayah*, which both mean "mother who gives birth"?
4. What is the difference between *metzora* and *tzarua*, which both mean "leper"?
5. What is the difference between a *par* and a *shor*, which both mean "bull"?
6. What is the difference between the word *shaatnez* and *kilayim*, which both mean "forbidden mixture"?



### Anatomy of a Mitzvah:

7. How many positive and how many negative commandments are there in the Torah?
8. What do the positive commandments and the negative commandments correspond to?
9. How many words are there in the Ten Commandments, and what is significant about that number?
10. What Aramaic word is *mitzvah* connected to, and what do we learn from it?
11. What is the first *mitzvah* that was given to the Jewish People while still in Egypt?
12. What is the last *mitzvah* that is recorded in the Torah?

## PESACH SPECIAL

BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

### Searching for Chametz

The unique energy of Pesach is freedom. As we say in the prayers, Pesach is *zman cheroteinu* (the time of our freedom). Our national freedom, though, is not the entire picture. On Pesach night the halacha demands that every individual views himself as though he personally left Mitzrayim. Even though we are no longer physically enslaved, we all have areas in which we need to improve, and we are all enslaved to our own *yetzer hara* (an inner degree of inclination to transgress). Pesach, being *zman cheruteinu*, is the auspicious time to overcome our spiritual weaknesses and leave the bondage of our inner Mitzrayim (Michtav M'Eliyahu II p. 17). This is one way we can literally fulfill the requirement to see ourselves as though we left Mitzrayim.

Based on this theme, the commentaries mention that *chametz* symbolically represents the *yezer hara*. The puffed-up *chametz*, in relation to the flat matzah, represents the *yetzer hara's* tools to make us sin. Some say it represents pride, how one raises himself in his, and in others', eyes, and produces a lack of will to work on one's self, thinking that he is already perfect. Others mention that the gradual rise of *chametz* represents the *yetzer hara's* gradual tightening hold on a person, from merely overindulging in what is allowed to eventually fulfilling heinous sins (see Maharsha on Berachot 17a).

The commentaries explain that the mitzvah of searching for *chametz* also symbolically hints at the search for the *yetzer hara* within. The halacha says: *In the beginning of the night of the fourteenth one has to search for chametz with candlelight in the holes and cracks of every place into which he brought chametz.* In light of the ideas above, let's analyze this halacha through the eyes of the commentaries of the Alshich, the Shlah and the Chida.

*In the beginning of the night of the fourteenth* — The night of the fourteenth refers to the fourteenth year of a person's life, i.e. right after his bar mitzvah. The Gemara says that it is only then that the *yetzer tov* (inner drive to do what is good) is put inside the person (Nedarim 32b). It is at this time that the main battle with the *yetzer hara* begins.

*Search for chametz* — Therefore, immediately upon receiving his *yetzer tov* one should begin to search his heart for any *chametz* (*yetzer hara*) and dispose of it. Hence, the halacha writes "*beginning of the night,*" as one should not wait until he is older. However, if he did not do so immedi-

ately, he should still rid himself of it when he is older, as the halacha says: *If he did not search on the night of fourteenth, he should search in the day;... if he did not search during the day, he should search on Pesach; if he did not search on Pesach then he should search after Pesach.* It is never too late to work on oneself and change for the better.

*Holes and cracks* — One has to search every corner of his heart for *chametz*. Since any trace of *chametz* is forbidden to own and eat, no place suspected of bearing *chametz* can go unchecked. The *halachot* pertaining to *chametz* are unique in that they require us to search, destroy, and nullify the *chametz* from one's heart. Furthermore, unlike other forbidden foods, there is no concept of nullifying *chametz* on Pesach. One reason for this is that we don't give the *yetzer hara* any room to exist, no matter how small it may be (Teshuvot Radbaz III 546). This is especially so because this is exactly how the *yetzer hara* entices a person to initially commit a small sin, which leads to indulging in the most severe transgressions (see Shabbat 105b).

*Through candlelight* — The Chida explains that candlelight represents Torah, as it says "*Ner mitzvah v'Torah ohr*" (the candle is the mitzvah and Torah is light). One should search his ways through the light of the Torah to see whether his actions are in line with what G-d requires of him. The halacha dictates that the light used for checking should be that of a candle, and not a torch. The commentaries explain this to be because a torch doesn't allow close scrutiny of holes, while a single-wick candle permits one to analyze every little crevice. This teaches that any behavior suspected of being governed by the *yetzer hara* must be checked. In the words of the Chazon Ish: With every movement one needs to seek the counsel of the four volumes of the Shulchan Aruch.

*Every place into which he brought chametz* — The Alshich explains that these places represent the areas that one struggles with most in his battle with the *yetzer hara*. There are many body parts a person can sin with. The eyes can see inappropriate things, the ears can listen to *lashon hara*, the mouth can eat non-kosher food, the feet can run to do bad, etc. However, not every person sins with all of his body parts. Therefore, the halacha tells us that we are required to search out only the parts in which we brought in *chametz*, i.e. the body parts that don't have a clean track record. The places where one is not prone to sin do not have to be searched, as the Mishna says: Any place that one

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## Seder Highlights: *Urchatz* Everyday?

**H**ave you ever wondered why, at the annual Pesach Seder, at *Karpas*, when we dip vegetables in salt-water to symbolize our ancestor's tears while enslaved at the hands of the cruel Egyptians, we precede it by washing our hands? Isn't hand washing exclusively reserved for prior to "breaking bread"? And furthermore, why is this only performed at the Seder? Is there a specific message this action is meant to convey?

The answer to these questions might depend on a difference of understanding. Rabbi Yaakov Reisher in his *Chok Yaakov* and Rabbi Avraham Danzig in his *Chayei Adam* write that the point of this hand washing, *Urchatz*, is essentially a "*hekker*", a device that highlights that something different than the norm is occurring, to enable children to ask what is different on Seder night.

Rabbi Mordechai Yaffa in his *Levush* understands *Urchatz* somewhat differently. He explains that the dipping of *Karpas* at the *Pesach Seder* is a "*Chovat haRegel*" (Holiday obligation). Ergo, the hand washing is specifically performed at the Seder, as, due to its inherent holiness, "we go the extra mile" to strive for an increase in purity.

Conversely, Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, better known as the famed *Chida*, and Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the renowned *Chasam Sofer*, offer an alternate, albeit fascinating, view.

But in order to properly understand their explanation, we must first digress to a *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (115a). Rabbi Elazer states in the name of Rav Oshia: "Any food item that is dipped in a liquid requires hand washing before eating." On this statement, *Rashi* and *Tosafot* (among others) differ on the correct understanding of his intent. *Rashi* maintains that this ruling is still applicable nowadays, as it is similar to the requirement to wash before eating bread, while *Tosafot* is of the opinion that this law is relevant only during the times of the Beit Hamikdash, as it is conditional to ritual purity, which in this day and age is essentially non-applicable.

Although there are opinions that one may rely on the lenient view, it should be noted that many halachic authorities are of the opinion that even nowadays one should do his utmost to be vigilant with this and wash hands before eating a food item dipped in liquid.

The lenient opinion is taken into account, however, and that is the reason why this washing is without the prereq-

uisite blessing, as opposed to the washing before eating bread. This is due to the halachic dictum of *safek berachot l'hakel*, meaning that in a case of doubt regarding the topic of *berachot* we follow the *lenient* approach and do not make the blessing, to avoid the possibility of making a blessing in vain.

This all ties in to our Seder. The *Chida*, in his *Simchas HaRegel* commentary on the Haggada, explains that this is the background, as well as the reason, for the added 'vav' by *Urchatz* at the Pesach Seder. We find a parallel by the *beracha* that our patriarch Yitzchak bestowed on his son Yaakov (Ber. 27:28), "*V'yitein l'cha*" — "And G-d should give you." According to the *Arizal* the extra conjunctive 'vav' means "*yitein yachzor v'yitein*" — that G-d should *continually and constantly* give.

Likewise, the *Chida* explains the extra 'vav' in *Urchatz*. The *Baal Haggada* is transmitting a message to us. Just as during the Seder we all wash before dipping a vegetable in salt water, that extra 'vav' is telling us: *rachatz yachzor v'rachatz* — that we should *continue* to wash our hands anytime we want to eat a food dipped in liquid, all year round.

The *Chasam Sofer* and his son-in-law, the *Chasan Sofer*, write similarly in their Haggada, that *Urchatz* is meant to be a rebuke and yearly reminder to those who are lackadaisical with the observance of this halacha, in order to remind everyone that this applies year round as well.

Interestingly, Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank, the former Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, opines that the dispute among *Rishonim* as to whether only the head of the family is supposed to wash *Urchatz*, or if everyone at the Seder does as well (the most common custom), might be dependent on this debate on why the hand washing at the Seder was instituted.

The *Chida* continues that although many are aware of this halacha, they do not realize that it even applies to something as ubiquitous as dipping cake into coffee! One might contend that the connection between vegetables in saltwater to tea biscuits in coffee seems tenuous, but actually, from a halachic perspective, they are remarkably similar.

So the next time you get that dunkin' urge, do the conscientious thing by following the Haggada's hidden directive, and head to the sink before diving in to your cup-of-joe.

*Thanks are due to my 12th-grade Rebbe in Yeshiva Gedolah Ateres Mordechai of Greater Detroit, Rav Yitzchok Kahan, for first enlightening me to this passage of the Chida.*

*This article was written l'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikif u'miyad!*

The word for blessing in Hebrew — *beracha* — is connected to *bereicha*, which means a “pool.” “Blessing” is an overflowing pool that enriches and fills our lives.

In the time of the Holy Temple, when the *kohanim* would bless the people they would raise their hands over their heads and make a space between the third and fourth fingers of hands. When they recited the blessing using the ineffable Name of G-d, the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence, would rest on their hands. To this very day the *kohanim* cover their heads and hands with their prayer shawls when they recite the blessing.

But maybe we could also understand a different symbolism behind the covering of their hands.

Our Sages teach us that “blessing only descends on things that are hidden from the eye,” things that the eye doesn’t see. For example, a farmer who starts to weigh his grain may pray that his crop will be large, but if he has already weighed it he may no longer make such a request, since the size of the crop is already revealed to the eye. When the *kohanim* cover their hands they symbolize this idea that blessing descends only on that which is hidden from the eye.

- Sources: *Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 42a; Mishna Berura 128:98*

## Tazria-Metzora

### Boomerang

**“...and he shall be brought to the kohen.” (14:3)**

When a person speaks *lashon hara* it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech, that he considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions. As the nursery rhyme says, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil he awakes a “prosecutor” in Heaven, not only against the target of his speech, but also against himself. An angel stands by the side of each of us, recording our every word. In order to teach those who speak slander the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the *kohen*. But, even as he is on his way to the *kohen*, his body covered with *tzara’at* for all to see, until the *kohen* actually pronounces the word “Impure!” he is still considered pure. Similarly, he cannot regain his former status, although his disease has healed completely, until the *kohen* again pronounces him to be spiritually pure. From this we learn that the speaker of *lashon hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. For with one word he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.

- Source: based on *Ohel Yaakov*

## Acharei Mot-Kedoshim

### G-d’s Waiting Room

**“When you shall come to the Land and you shall plant any food tree, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years it will be forbidden to you.” (19:23)**

With macabre humor, Miami Beach is called “G-d’s waiting room” because it abounds with retirement homes and hotels for the elderly.

Retirement is a western concept, and one that has come under criticism from doctors in recent years. Studies have found that people who don’t retire but stay involved in their work (albeit at a level that befits their age) have longer life expectancies than those who retire and relax into their “golden years.”

My father, of blessed memory, who passed away well into his ninety-third year, was a person who worked hard throughout his life and never retired. Every morning he would still go into the office and do his work. He went in later and came back earlier, but he still kept his life’s routine.

Our Sages teach that G-d conceals our time of death from us so that we should remain active to the last.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian was once passing through the city of Tiberias in Eretz Yisrael. He noticed an elderly man exerting himself, tilling the soil around his fig trees.

“Saba! (Grandfather) Saba!” called out Hadrian, “Why are you working so hard? When you were young you had to toil to make a living, but now its time to relax. Anyway, you will never live to enjoy the fruits of your labors.”

The old man replied, “My task is to try to accomplish whatever my age allows. The Almighty will do as He sees fit.”

“Tell me, please, Saba, how old are you?”

“I am a hundred years old.”

“A hundred years old! And you actually expect to reap what you sow?”

“If I merit to eat the fruit of my labors, well and good; and if not, my efforts will benefit my children just as I have benefited from the toil of my forebears.”

Said Hadrian, “Hear me, Saba! If you ever eat these figs that you are planting, you must surely come and let me know.”

In due course, the figs ripened and abounded with fruits. The old man thought to himself, “I must go and tell the emperor.”

He filled a basket with figs and traveled to the palace.

“The Emperor wishes to see me,” he announced to

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## What's In a Word...continued from page thirteen

freedom: “negative liberty” and “positive liberty.” Based on this philosophical distinction, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (Chief Rabbi Emeritus of the United Kingdom) offers a deeper understanding as to the difference between *chofesh* and *cheirut*. He explains that the adjective *chofshi* denotes what a slave becomes when he goes free. It means that he can do whatever his heart desires. The word *chofesh* is related to *chafetz* (desire) and *chapess* (search out). Rabbi Sacks, philosopher, identifies this type of freedom with “negative liberty” because it simply denotes the lack of coercion.

Negative liberty may be worthwhile on an individual level, but on a society level there must be some form of rules — one cannot simply do whatever one pleases. On the other hand, law and order must not be imposed in a coercive manner, because then the masses will resent and resist said law. Instead, the law must be presented and taught in a way in which everyone willingly accepts it of their own volition. When this happens, the law becomes a part of them — engrained in their very essence — for the greater good. To that effect, the Rabbis coined a new term *cheirut*, which denotes a sort of freedom that comes to society where people not only know the law, but study it constantly until it is engraved on their hearts (so *charut* and *cheirut* become one). On the surface, this “positive liberty” seems restrictive, but actually it proves quite liberating.

Truth be told, the *cheirut*-cognate *chorim* does actually appear in the Bible, just not in the context of free-

dom, *per se*. *Chorim* appears thirteen times in the Bible in reference to noblemen and other dignitaries (see Rashi to Jer. 27:20). Rashi (to *Sotah* 49a) explains that *chorin* are people of lineage. The illustrious Wurzbeger Rav, Rabbi Yitzchok Dov Bamberger (1807-1878), explains that *chorim* is related to the Aramaic words whose root is *CHET-VAV-REISH*, which means “white.” He explains that dignitaries are called “white” because their reputation must be untarnished, and because only important people were allowed to wear white clothes in the ancient world. (Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) associates *cheirut* with the Hebrew root *chor*, which means “hole” and uses those exact letters, but we will not delve into his approach here.)

That said, it seems to me that the Rabbis chose to use the word *cheirut* and various conjugations thereof in order to convey the idea of freedom on Passover for a very important reason. They wished to stress that newly-freed slaves begin their new lives with a clean slate, and they have the potential to become important people in their own right. On Passover we recognize and celebrate this potential for greatness. This optimistic, yet challenging, look at a freedman’s bright future warranted the Rabbis’ adoption of a new word for “freedom,” even though the Bible already has two words for that concept.

*Liluy Nishmat* my mother Bracha bat R’ Dovid  
and my grandmother Shprintza bat R’ Meir

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## Parsha Insights...continued from page twenty-one

the guards, and they led him before the Hadrian’s throne.

“Who are you?” asked Hadrian.

“Does the emperor remember years ago in Tiberias, passing by an old man tending his figs? G-d has granted me to eat of those figs that I planted. I have brought the emperor a basketful as a gift.”

Hadrian turned to his servants. “Take the figs from

this elderly man and refill his basket with gold coins.”

His courtiers questioned the emperor’s generosity, “Why such a lavish gift for an old Jew?” Hadrian replied to them, “His Creator honored him with longevity — is it not proper that I too should accord him honor?”

The Creator does not want us to sit and read the newspapers in G-d’s waiting room.

• Source: *Vayikra Rabba* 25:5

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him a book to read. It was the Bible. He had never seen it before. The first part of the book fascinated him. It was The Five Books of Moses. He read it and knew immediately that it was not authored by a human, and contained the ultimate truth. When the man asked him what he thought, he told him that the first part of the Book was amazing and absolutely true. As to the second part, the so-called New Testament, he was not impressed. Binyamin asked him if he also believed that the Bible was the word of G-d. The man answered affirmatively. Why then didn't he keep Shabbat and wear *tzitzit*, keep kosher and do all the numerous other laws contained therein? He answered that he didn't have to because their savior had absolved them from those obligations. This struck Binyamin as absurd, and he just kept re-reading and studying those Five Books.

Up to this point Binyamin hadn't knowingly ever met a Jew. One day, an electrician came to his office to repair some of the wiring. He had a cloth head covering, and some strings sticking out of his pants. Binyamin was curious. He asked the electrician the meaning of those things he was wearing. At first the man avoided a direct answer. Upon repeated questioning by Binyamin, he told him that he was an Orthodox Jew, and that these were articles of clothing that we wear — a *kipah* and *tzitzit*. Binyamin had many questions about them and other things that he had read about in the Chumash. The electrician didn't have many answers, but referred him, instead, to his rabbi. Binyamin met that rabbi, who saw his serious interest in becoming a member of the Jewish People, and he, in turn, referred Binyamin to the Beit Din of Sydney, which supervises conversions. Binyamin was

an eager and serious learner, and completed the requirements of the Beit Din in 15 months and converted.

The next five years were spent working and getting more deeply involved in learning Torah. He read extensively, but had not yet mastered the texts in the original Hebrew. He decided that the only way he could make the progress that he desired was to learn in Yeshiva. Within the past year he met Rabbi Peretz Segal of the Center Program of Ohr Somayach at the Adas shul in Sydney, and decided that Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem was where he needed to be. In January 2018 he made *aliyah* and joined the Center Program. "I like the lifestyle in the Yeshiva. It is very conducive to learning. The rabbis are very devoted and sacrifice a lot for the students. And that itself is a *mechayav* to learn."

Like the righteous converts *Shamaya* and *Avtalion*, the elders who are quoted in the first chapter of the *Pirkei Avot*, Binyamin understands that everything in the Torah, both the Written and Oral Law, including the ethics that are enumerated therein, were given on Mount Sinai, and are the guidelines to life. Although it might take some time, Binyamin is willing to put in the time and effort to master it all.

I returned to the incident in the market place in China. Now that he's Jewish and has read extensively, how would he now react to the seller who threw that piece of food at him? Without any hesitation, Binyamin answered: "To be silent in the face of deprecation, I would cherish that moment as one of the happiest of my life." Said like a true son of *Rabbi Shimon ben Rabban Gamliel* (see *Avot* chapter 1 *mishna* 17).

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Searching for Chametz...continued from page nineteen

did not bring *chametz* into doesn't need to be searched. The Shlah HaKadosh explains that the *halachot* regarding the different places one must check for *chametz* also hint at the different areas in one's life that need to be cleansed of the *yetzer hara*. For example, the halacha states: When there is a hole (in a wall) between a Jew and his friend, each one of them searches up to where his hand reaches, and then he nullifies the rest in his heart. Just like we are required to search for *chametz* in a shared wall between our neighbors, we are also required to search and get rid of any animosity or jealousy there may be between us and our friends. The halacha also says to search one's *pockets* for *chametz*, which hints at the idea of checking one's business dealings to ensure all money that enters one's pockets was earned according to the *halachot* of the Torah. The halacha further requires the searching of a Beit Knesset (place of prayer) and a Beit Midrash (place for learning Torah) for

*chametz*. This represents the requirement to check one's commitment to the *halachot* of praying and learning Torah. Finally, even after one gets rid of all his *chametz* in his vicinity, it is still not enough, as the verse says: And leaven may not be seen in your possession, *in all your borders*. The Alshich explains that this halacha hints at the idea of also helping others get rid of their *yetzer hara*. Since all Jews are responsible for each other's spiritual wellbeing, one should do his best to help people within his borders get rid of their *inner chametz* as well.

Just like the physical preparation for Pesach requires planning, the spiritual preparation demands foresight. Through proper introspection we can enter Pesach spiritually prepared for growth. By keeping the above ideas in mind we can more effectively utilize the special energy of this time, and dispose of our inner *chametz*. May we all merit making the most of this time.

in every respect. The vessels used in the Sanctuary service are required to be communal property, but they used their *own* pans. The fire, too, was not fire from the altar, as is ordinarily required, but was fire from their *own* hearths (the “strange fire”). Their act was inconsistent with the spirit of priesthood, in which the *kohen*, in self-renunciation, stands in loving representation of the nation before G-d. Finally, the content of the offering was highly problematic. *Ketoret* is the only offering that is never brought as a voluntary offering. *Ketoret* symbolizes the person who is completely absorbed in bringing G-d satisfaction, and can only be properly expressed as a goal set by G-d Himself. If given expression by one’s own volition, it entails great arrogance. This is why the fact that “He had not commanded them,” even apart from its legal deficiencies, was sufficient to make it forbidden.

The root of *korban* is *karev*, to bring near. But such nearness may be sought and earned only by way of acceptance of and obedience to His commandments. This is the lesson that the nation learned on the first day of the Sanctuary service and it is the lesson that informs our service today.

• Sources: *Commentary, Vayikra 10:1*

## Tazria

### A Social Health Danger

For centuries, people have erroneously associated *tzara’at* with leprosy. Clearly, this contention must have been held only by those not knowledgeable in the laws of *tzara’at*. The possibility of *tzara’at* being an infectious disease, requiring quarantine and treatment by the priestly “public health physicians,” is belied by nearly every detail of the laws.

For example, the *kohen* is commanded to have everything removed from the individual’s residence prior to examination, so that the contents of the house will not become impure. This law is intended to save the afflicted from monetary loss. But if the purpose was to disinfect his home, surely we would want to destroy the items. Instead, we go to great lengths to spare them. Furthermore, the *kohen* is supposed to examine liberally, a policy that is senseless if indeed meant to address a public health danger. Even more compelling is the fact that all examinations were suspended during the holidays, when masses of people would congregate in Jerusalem. Surely, a policy of treating and curbing infectious disease would not be held in abeyance during the time of greatest vulnerability and exposure! The list of laws undermining this notion is long. (See *Commentary, Vayikra 13:59* in full).

The purpose of these laws was not to impose sanitary regulation, but rather to promote preservation of the dignity of man in the social sphere. The Torah instructs that *tzara’at* is to remind the one afflicted of the experience

of Miriam, who was similarly afflicted after speaking slanderous words about Moshe. Her punishment was confinement, and is described as the equivalent of a father spitting in his daughter’s face — the confinement was meant to induce feelings of shame. From Miriam’s experience we learn that afflictions of *tzara’at* are regarded as punishment for social wrongdoing, and the required confinement is meant to instill in the afflicted an awareness of his unworthiness.

*Tzara’at* is a punishment not just for slander, but for other cardinal social sins, including haughtiness, deceit, bloodshed, rabble-raising, perjury, sexual immorality, robbery and stinginess. (*Arachin 16a; Vaykira Rabbah, Metzora*) One who discovers a *tzara’at* mark (*nega*), understands that he has been “touched” by the finger of G-d (*nega* means touch). He understands that his social behavior provoked G-d’s anger. On account of his foul social behavior he is removed from the community. Because he incited unrest among his brethren he is separated from everyone. The Jewish law thus provides corrective measures even for those social sins — arrogance, falsehood, slander — that are beyond the jurisdiction of human tribunals.

• Sources: *Commentary, Vayikra 13:59*

## Acharei Mot

### Two Goats Diverged to Bad and Good

On Yom Kippur, two goats stood at the entrance to the Sanctuary. They stood, identical in age, height, appearance and value, and awaited the lots to be drawn. One would become the *seir l’Hashem*, the he-goat offered in the Sanctuary. The other would become the *seir l’Azazel*, the he-goat sent to the wilderness. Each one could have realized the fate of the other, had the lots been reversed.

The *seir l’Hashem* gained entrance to the Sanctuary only at the price of death as an offering. It was then brought to the Holy of Holies, close to the holiest place, on the holiest day of the year. Its partner was left standing alive, unscathed. The *seir l’Azazel* never gained entry into the Sanctuary; in turning its back on the Sanctuary, it preserved its self-centered life, which was ultimately put to an end in the desolation of the wilderness.

Each individual is a *seir*. The *seir*, goat, is a domesticated animal, but shows outward defiance to others. We all have the power to resist, and the moral worth of our life depends on how we use this power. We can use it to resist the sensual temptations of life and become a *seir l’Hashem*. Or we can resist the will of G-d, the Torah, and become a *seir l’Azazel*. *Azazel* is a contraction of two words: *az* (headstrong character) and *azal* (gone). One who is like the *seir l’Azazel* acts with defiant strength, and, as a result, expires and disappears.

The forces of nature and the animal kingdom are un-

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free. They are unchanging in their performance of G-d's will. But in the midst of these, man was created and granted freedom. Freedom to master the forces of nature, and freedom to master his own impulses and drives. But implicit in that freedom is freedom to oppose G-d's will, freedom to succumb to temptation and sensuality. It is only by virtue of this freedom that man achieves any moral worth, for only when there is choice can there be reward. If we were not able to choose between being a *seir l'Hashem* and a *seir l'Azazel*, we would be equally compelled by G-d's law, never deviating, and also never earning our keep.

The choice is not predetermined — not by “height, or appearance or value”, not by social standing, financial status, or upbringing. Anyone can become either a *seir l'Hashem* or *seir l'Azazel*.

A person can decide to go in the way of *Azazel*. Standing at the entrance to the Sanctuary, he defies G-d's will, refusing to give up the life of the animal in him. He refuses to surrender his sensuality, and remains a live animal, unscathed, unmoved by his exposure to the Sanctuary. With his resistance in full force, he has no place in the Sanctuary and is sent to the wilderness.

Or a person can decide to go in the way of *Hashem*. Mustering his resistance, he directs it inward, and fights the drives and impulses that would lead him away from his calling. With the knife of sanctification he destroys the animal within him, and earns his place in the Sanctuary of moral freedom.

• Sources: *Commentary, Vayikra 17:10*

## Pesach

### Responding to the Progressive Son

The Torah not only anticipated the innocent, wondering and inquiring children, but also the fourth son. Not only the children who would harmoniously stand side by side with their parents in devoted observance, but another son, the “wicked son,” who would no longer fulfill, much less celebrate, the *mitzvot*. This progressive son sits at, or passes by, the table with

derisive mockery, and interjects his taunt: *What does this service mean to you? Why do you trouble yourselves each year with these burdensome customs?*

How do we respond to the progressive son, who views the loyal elder generation as backward? We do not directly respond. The Torah instructs us to respond to the other sons directly: *Tell him, open up for him*, but to the progressive son, we are instructed to “say,” not to “say to him.” For his progressiveness has made him immune to your teachings — he has “advanced” to the point of instructing his father! His mission — to move his narrow father beyond his stale views and into the freshness of modernity — will not be derailed by any instruction from that father, however loving, brilliant and complete.

Instead, say *to yourself*. Continue to devote your own life to Divine *mitzvot*. The sway over the progressive son may well have been lost; the key to his heart rests in G-d's hand. Until the time that his disillusionment with his newly embraced set of ideals leads him back to the happiness of the ancient Truth, you have nothing to say to him. But, the less you say to him, the more you resolutely and clearly express what the *mitzvot* are to *you*.

You must pit your determination and conviction against their doubt and wavering. And you must say: *It is a Pesach offering of devotion to G-d, Who passed over the dwellings of the children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and our homes He spared*. This self-response reaffirms the historical foundation of our identity, and the commitment we displayed which merited our salvation. It affirms that real progress is achieved only by joyous fulfillment of His commandments — the first bonds of servitude were broken only with that obedience, and it is that obedience that separated Jew from Egyptian. With clear and resolute loyalty, you save yourself and the other sons from the progressive son's derision, and ensure that the bond of commitment has a stronghold in future generations.

• Sources: *Collected Writings, Vol. 1, Nissan III, pp. 60-65*

## PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

**אחינו כל בית ישראל**  
“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

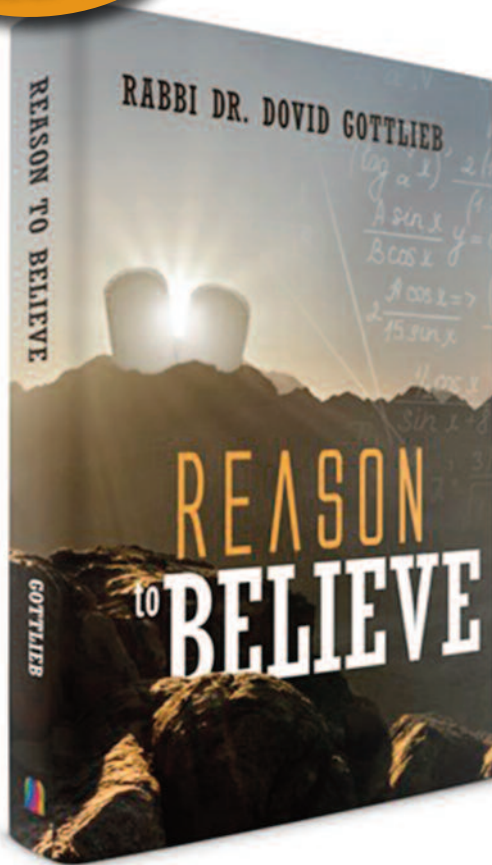
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