

Toras fish

The Torah newsletter that shines bright in a dog eat dog world!

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l

Covenant & Conversation

Why sacrifices? To be sure, they have not been part of the life of Judaism since the destruction of the Second Temple, almost 2,000 years ago. But why, if they are a means to an end, did G-d choose this end? This is, of course, one of the deepest questions in Judaism, and there are many answers. Here I want explore just one, first given by the early fifteenth century Jewish thinker, R. Joseph Albo, in his Sefer ha-Ikkarim (The Book of Principles, 1425).¹

Albo's theory took as its starting point, not sacrifices but two other intriguing questions. The first: Why, after the flood, did G-d permit human beings to eat meat? (Gen. 9: 3-5). Initially, neither human beings nor animals had been meat-eaters (Gen. 1: 29-30). What caused G-d, as it were, to change His mind? The second: What was wrong with the first act of sacrifice -- Cain's offering of "some of the fruits of the soil" (Gen. 4:3-5). G-d's rejection of that offering led directly to the first murder, when Cain killed Abel. What was at stake in the difference between Cain and Abel as to how to bring a gift to G-d?

Albo's theory is this. Killing animals for food is inherently wrong. It involves taking the life of a sentient being to satisfy our needs. Cain knew this. He believed there was a strong kinship between man and the animals. That is why he offered, not an animal sacrifice, but a vegetable one (his error, according to Albo, is that he should have brought fruit, not vegetables -- the highest, not the lowest, of non-meat produce). Abel, by contrast, believed that there was a qualitative difference between man and the animals. Had G-d not told the first humans: "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves in the ground"? That is why he brought an animal sacrifice. Once Cain saw that Abel's sacrifice had been accepted while his own was not, he reasoned thus. If G-d (who forbids us to kill animals for food) permits and even favours

killing an animal as a sacrifice, and if (as Cain believed) there is no ultimate difference between human beings and animals, then I shall offer the very highest living being as a sacrifice to G-d, namely my brother Abel. Cain killed Abel as a human sacrifice.

That is why G-d permitted meat-eating after the flood. Before the flood, the world had been "filled with violence". Perhaps violence is an inherent part of human nature. If there were to be a humanity at all, G-d would have to lower his demands of mankind. Let them kill animals, He said, rather than kill human beings -- the one form of life that is not only G-d's creation but also G-d's image. Hence the otherwise almost unintelligible sequence of verses after Noah and his family emerge on dry land: Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart, "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood . . . Then G-d blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them . . . Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything . . . Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of G-d, has G-d made man." (Gen. 8: 29 -- 9: 6)

According to Albo the logic of the passage is clear. Noah offers an animal sacrifice in thanksgiving for having survived the flood. G-d sees that human beings need this way of expressing themselves. They are genetically predisposed to violence ("every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood"). If, therefore, society is to survive, human beings need to be able to direct their violence toward non-human animals, whether as food or sacrificial offering. The crucial ethical line to be drawn is between human and non-human. The permission to kill animals is accompanied by an absolute prohibition against killing human beings ("for in the image of G-d, has G-d made man").

It is not that G-d approves of killing animals, whether for sacrifice or food, but that to forbid this to human beings, given their genetic predisposition to violence, is utopian. It is not for now but for the end of days. In the meanwhile, the least



¹ Rabbi Joseph Albo, Sefer Halkkarim III:15.

TORAS FISH IS THE OF-FISH-AL PURIM PUBLICATION YOU'VE PROBABLY BEEN HERRING ABOUT. IT'S BEEN CALLED "ALL WET" BUT REEL-LY IS A SWIMMINGLY SWELL NEWSLETTER (ALTHOUGH WE DO GE-FILTER IT) THAT COULD CREATE OPPOR-TUNA-TY FOR YOU. START READING THIS AND DORSAL OPEN FOR YOU! IT'LL DOLPHINATELY BE WORTHWHILE AND IF YOU DON'T THINK SO, DON'T BE KOI - LET MINNOW AND WE'LL SEA IF WE'RE GILTY (OR IF WE CAN BLAME IT ON SALMON ELSE!)



I'm reminded of the immortal words of Leah Weiss who said, "Are you gonna give me credit for coming up with this theme?" Nope. Not gonna happen. Does anyone ever even read this blurb? Seriously? Don't you have anything more important to do? Like wonder if fish sweat?

bad solution is to let people kill animals rather than murder their fellow humans. Animal sacrifices are a concession to human nature (on why G-d never chooses to change human nature.¹ Sacrifices are a substitute for violence directed against mankind.

The contemporary thinker who has done most to revive this understanding (without, however, referring to Albo or the Jewish tradition) is René Girard, in such books as *Violence and the Sacred*, *The Scapegoat*, and *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*. The common denominator in sacrifices, he argues, is: . . . internal violence – all the dissensions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels within the community that the sacrifices are designed to suppress. The purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric. Everything else derives from that.²

The worst form of violence within and between societies is vengeance, "an interminable, infinitely repetitive process". Hillel (whom Girard also does not quote) said, on seeing a human skull floating on water, "Because you drowned others, they drowned you, and those who drowned you will in the end themselves be drowned" (*Avot* 2: 7).

¹ On why G-d never chooses to change human nature, see Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, Book III, ch. 32.

² René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 8.

Sacrifices are one way of diverting the destructive energy of revenge. Why then do modern societies not practice sacrifice? Because, argues Girard, there is another way of displacing vengeance: Vengeance is a vicious circle whose effect on primitive societies can only be surmised. For us the circle has been broken. We owe our good fortune to one of our social institutions above all: our judicial system, which serves to deflect the menace of vengeance. The system does not suppress vengeance; rather, it effectively limits itself to a single act of reprisal, enacted by a sovereign authority specializing in this particular function. The decisions of the judiciary are invariably presented as the final word on vengeance.³

Not only does Girard's theory re-affirm the view of Albo. It also helps us understand the profound insight of the prophets and of Judaism as a whole. Sacrifices are not ends in themselves, but part of the Torah's programme to construct a world redeemed from the otherwise interminable cycle of revenge. The other part of that programme, and G-d's greatest desire, is a world governed by justice. That, we recall, was His first charge to Abraham, to "instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (*Gen.* 18: 19).

Have we therefore moved beyond that stage in human history in which animal sacrifices have a point? Has justice become a powerful enough reality that we no longer need religious rituals to divert the violence between human beings? Would that it were so. In his book *The Warrior's Honour* (1997), Michael Ignatieff tries to understand the wave of ethnic conflict and violence (Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Rwanda) that has scarred the face of humanity since the end of the Cold War. What happened to the liberal dream of "the end of history"? His words go to the very heart of the new world disorder: The chief moral obstacle in the path of reconciliation is the desire for revenge. Now, revenge is commonly regarded as a low and unworthy emotion, and because it is regarded as such, its deep moral hold on people is rarely understood. But revenge – morally considered – is a desire to keep faith with the dead, to honour their memory by taking up their cause where they left off. Revenge keeps faith between generations . . . This cycle of intergenerational recrimination has no logical end . . . But it is the very impossibility of intergenerational vengeance that locks communities into the compulsion to repeat . . . Reconciliation has no chance against vengeance unless it respects the emotions that sustain vengeance, unless it can replace the respect entailed in vengeance with rituals in which communities once at war learn to mourn their dead together.⁴

³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴ Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, 188-190.

Far from speaking to an age long gone and forgotten, the laws of sacrifice tell us three things as important now as then: first, violence is still part of human nature, never more dangerous than when combined with an ethic of revenge; second, rather than denying its existence, we must find ways of redirecting it so that it does not claim yet more human sacrifices; third, that the only ultimate alternative to sacrifices, animal or human, is the one first propounded millennia ago by the prophets of ancient Israel. No one put it better than Amos:

Even though you bring Me burnt offerings and offerings of grain,
I will not accept them . . .

But let justice roll down like a river,

And righteousness like a never-failing stream (Amos 5: 23-24) *Covenant and Conversation 5775 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

Two fish were in a tank. One says to the other, "You man the guns and I'll drive." ¹

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The portion of Tzav continues its discussion of the sacrificial service. Nachmanides explains that while the previous portion, Vayikra, focuses on the Jews who bring the sacrifice, as the Torah states, “Speak to the children of Israel [bnei Yisrael]” (Leviticus 1:2), our portion “speaks of the rites of the offerings and these are performed by the priests,” as it says, “Command Aaron and his sons” (6:2).

Relative to the former, a person who brings an animal sacrifice performs the ritual of semichah (leaning down on the head of the animal; 1:4). Then the individual explains why he has brought the sacrifice.

Are women permitted to lean on the animal? After all, this mandate is issued only to men, as the literal meaning of bnei Yisrael is “sons of Israel.” To ask pointedly: Does the exemption of women imply exclusion? Two opposing views on this issue are recorded in the Talmud. Rabbi Yehudah maintains that the exemption implies exclusion, yet Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Shimon disagree (Rosh Hashanah 33a).

This question has larger ramifications, bearing on whether the exemption of women from particular affirmative commandments fixed by time – such as dwelling in a sukkah and donning a tallit – means that women are prohibited by Jewish law from performing these commandments.

Maimonides sides with the opinion that exemption does not imply that women are barred from commandments they are not obligated to

¹ Ok, now THAT's funny, right there. Get it? Fish in a tank? Oh, never mind.



perform. However, he contends that women should not recite blessings over these mitzvot. This is probably because the blessing includes the words “v'tzivanu” (You have commanded us; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Tzitzit 3:9).

In contrast, Rabbenu Tam states that women may recite blessings on commandments, even those they are exempt from performing. This is possibly because v'tzivanu is not in the singular form, but is a plural term relating to the community as a whole, of which women are, of course, an equal part (Tosafot, Rosh Hashanah 33a, s.v. “ha”).

By and large, the Sephardic tradition follows Maimonides's position. Women, for example, may eat in the sukkah, yet they do not recite the blessings. The Ashkenazic custom follows the opinion of Rabbenu Tam. Women can, therefore, recite the blessings when eating in the sukkah.

Notwithstanding the position of Targum Yerushalmi that a tallit is specifically designed for men, and therefore prohibited to women, virtually all other authorities disagree (Targum Yerushalmi, Deuteronomy 22:5). Indeed, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein concludes that sincere women may don a tallit (Iggerot Moshe, Orach Chayim 4:49).

While many believe that this portion has little meaning today, as sacrifices are no longer offered, the debate concerning the permissibility of women's offering of sacrifices reveals otherwise, as it is a primary source concerning women's full participation in ritual. What may seem to be far from contemporary is strikingly relevant. ©2022 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

*What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?
Pumpkin Pi!*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“Speak to the children of Israel, when any human being of you shall bring from themselves a sacrifice to God from the cattle, from the herd or from the flock...” (Leviticus 1:2) What does it mean to be a human being? Are we the “social animal” of Aristotle? The thinking being of Descartes (“cogito ergo sum” – I think therefore I am)? The Book of Leviticus presents us with a profound answer to this question that also enables us to better understand the deeply misunderstood sacrificial system outlined in this third book of the Bible.

Leviticus begins with God calling to Moses: “Speak to the children of Israel, when any human being (Heb: “adam”) of you shall bring from yourselves a sacrifice to God from the cattle, from the herd or from the flock...”



The use of the word "adam" is curious. Why does the Torah use the most universal term for a person, evoking the first human who ever lived and from whom every single person in existence is descended? Not only does "adam" seem out of place in this particular context, it is not even needed in order to understand the verse.

The Torah, in fact, long precedes Descartes' observation with the piercing insight, "I sacrifice, therefore I am." The Torah teaches that the essence of the human being, Jew and non-Jew alike, is his need – and his ability – to sacrifice.

Only the human being, among all of God's creatures, is aware of his own limitations, reflecting on his own mortality. And since "adam" is aware of the painful reality that no matter how strong, powerful or brilliant he may be, he will ultimately be vanquished by death, his only hope is to link himself to a being and a cause greater than he, which was there before he was born and which will be there after he dies.

Most people amass wealth and material goods in order to utilize them for themselves, to enjoy them in the here-and-now. But mortality reminds us that our material possessions do not really belong to us; one day we will be forced to leave them and the entire world behind.

Hence the real paradox: only those objects that we commit to a higher cause, which we give to God: to His Temple; to His study halls, synagogues, and schools; to His homes for the sick; to His havens for the poor – only these are truly ours, because they enable us to live beyond our limited lifetime, perhaps to all eternity. Only that which we sacrifice is really ours!

Jewish history, and the City of Jerusalem, emanate from this fundamental truth present in God's initial command to Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac on Mount Moriah, known as the Temple Mount in present-day Jerusalem. Isaac was the first olah – whole burnt offering. In effect, God was teaching Abraham that his new-found faith would only endure in history eternally if he, Abraham, were willing to commit to it his most beloved object, ironically, his very future.

In his willingness to make that sacrifice, Abraham secured his eternity. And by means of the seminal story of the Akeidah, the Bible teaches that the most significant sacrifices of all are not our material goods, but rather are our own selves, our time and our effort, our intellects and our unique abilities. A person must sacrifice "mikem," from yourselves.

Giving a child the gift of a check is hardly as significant as giving a child the gift of our time, our thoughts and our interest. And this, too, God teaches Abraham. God ultimately instructs him not to slay Isaac, but to allow him to live, because the greatest sacrifice we can make is not in dying for God but is rather in living in accordance with His commands and desires.

Isaac in life after he descends from the altar is called by our sages an olah temimah, a whole burnt offering.

Rashi (France, 11th century), suggests another reason for the seemingly superfluous "adam" in our text. The Biblical commentator par excellence teaches that just as Adam, the first human being, never sacrificed stolen goods, since everything in the world belonged to him, so are we prohibited from sacrificing anything which is stolen (ibid., based on Vayikra Rabbah 2:7).

Perhaps Rashi is protecting us against an appealing danger inherent in the idealization of sacrifice. We can only sacrifice objects or characteristics that technically, if even in a limited sense, belong to us. We can only sacrifice in a manner, and for a cause, which He commands. Thus, in detailing the sacrifices in the Holy Temple, the Book of Leviticus helps us discover the deeper teaching of not only what it means to be a Jew, but also of what it means to be a human being. © 2022 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin © 2022 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*



RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

It has often been said that if an individual were to be incarcerated for his evil thoughts, no one would be living outside of a penitentiary. Jewish law strongly corroborates this piece of conventional wisdom: "Thoughts or emotions (dvarim shebalev) are not of significance," since only a person's actions, and not his/her fanciful imaginings, create culpability.

However, this week's Torah reading, which continues our journey into the remote world of ritual sacrifices, specifies an exception from this "common sense" rule of the paramount importance of accomplished deed over intentional design.

According to the text, the peace offering must be eaten on the same day of the sacrifice. When the peace offering is brought to fulfill a vow, then the time period for eating it is extended to the next day, but not to the day after that. Therefore, if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his feast-offering should be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted... it shall be

an abomination (pigul) and the soul that eats it shall bear his iniquity.” (Lev. 7:18)

Rashi’s comment, based on the Talmudic interpretation (B. T. Kritot 5a), expands the waves of the ‘pigul-effect’ to include thought as well as action—not only is it forbidden to eat a peace offering on the third day, but merely thinking at the time of the sacrifice that one will eat it on the third day disqualifies it from being brought as a valid offering.

And since our prayers are linked to the sacrificial ritual – one view in the Talmud maintains that the three statutory prayers we recite each day correspond to the morning sacrifices, afternoon sacrifices, and evening incense (B.T. Berachot 26a) – it is no wonder that almost all our Sages insist that improper thoughts or even a lack of internal devotion will disqualify the prayer, no matter how carefully the words may be articulated. Why are prayers and sacrifices so inextricably bound up with the thoughts of the individual, whereas in the case of most other commandments, the rule of thumb is that “Divine ordinances do not require internal intent (kavannah)?

Perhaps the answer to this question can be found in the Midrash Rabbah (Chukat 8), which reports how a pagan once confronted the great sage Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai about the Biblical commandment of the ‘red heifer,’ the special portion which we also read this Sabbath arguing that it resembled sorcery. “You bring a cow, and burn it and grind it up and then take the ashes; if one of you has been defiled by death, you then sprinkle two or three drops on him and you declare him pure!” Even stronger, while the ashes of this red heifer purify the impure, another individual who touches those ashes becomes defiled by them! His students balked at the simplistic response their Master gave to the pagan: “Our Master, you pushed him away with a reed, but what do you say to us?”

The great Sages responded as follows: “By your lives it’s not death that defiles, and it’s not water that purifies. It is rather the Holy One blessed be He who declares, ‘I made my statutes, I have decreed my decrees.’”

Now, I believe that Rabban Yechonon Ben Zakai is saying something far more profound than merely expressing the arbitrary nature of the commandments. Let us look at another comment found in Midrash Tanhuma B’Shallah and a fascinating insight will hopefully emerge: “There were three things over which the Israelites protested, because they brought suffering and tribulation: the incense, the Holy Ark, and the staff. The incense is an instrument of tribulation, because it caused the death of Nadav and Avihu (Lev. 10:2); therefore, God informed Israel that it is also an instrument of atonement on the Day of Forgiveness. The Holy Ark is an instrument of tribulation, because when Uzzah touched it, he was immediately struck down (2 Sam. 6:7); therefore, God informed Israel that it is also an instrument of blessing of Oved Edom the Gitite. The staff is an

instrument of tribulation, because it brought the plagues upon Egypt; therefore, God informed Israel that it is also an instrument of blessing when Moses did miracles with it.”

In effect, the midrash is explaining that objects – staffs, incense, a holy ark, sacrifices, words of prayer – are not necessarily sacred in themselves. Their purpose is to bring one closer to God; in order for this purpose to be realized, the individual must wholeheartedly utilize them to bring him/her closer to God. As far as ritual objects are concerned, it is not the object that is intrinsically holy, but it is rather what one does with it and how one relates to it in thought and intent that creates the holiness. Therefore, the very same ashes of the red heifer can purify or defile, just as the very same Holy Ark can bring death or blessing—depending on the purpose for which it is utilized.

That is as far as ritual objects are concerned; the situation is radically different concerning ethical actions. When an individual gives charity, or extends a loan, to a person in need, the intent of the donor is of little or no account; his action is intrinsically significant, no matter the motivation. Hence, the Talmud rules that “a person who says ‘I am giving a sum of money to charity so that my son may live’ is still considered a completely righteous individual (zaddik gamur)” (B.T. Pesachim 8a).

Jewish theology is here teaching a critical lesson. The goal of Judaism, is ethical and moral action, to walk in God’s ways—just as He is compassionate, so must we be compassionate” etc. Acts of compassion are intrinsically sacred; they are the very purpose of our being. The purpose of ritual, on the other hand, is in order to bring us close to the God of compassion, a means to an end. “You shall build me a Sanctuary, in order that I may dwell in your midst,” commands God. Therefore, only rituals that are accompanied with proper intent will lead to the desired end and will therefore have eternal significance. ©2022 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

*What was Beethoven's favorite fruit?
BANANANAAAAA!*



RABBI BEREL WEIN **Wein Online**

The Torah reading of this week concerns itself with the tasks of the Priests in the Temple, regarding the sacrifices which were the centerpiece of the entire Temple service. The instructions that are given to the Priests are exact and detailed. In fact, the Hebrew word “tzav” which appears at the beginning of the reading and is where the Parsha gets its name, indicates a command.

The strength of the word is that it is not a matter of negotiation, suggestion, or persuasion. It is simply a command that must be heeded and

fulfilled. Part of the problem that always exists regarding religious worship service is that there is little room left for changing times and society that might influence the structure of the command itself.

To a great extent, for instance, Jewish prayer service, which inherited aspects of the sacrifices in the Temple, has basically remained the same from the time of Ezra to our day. Naturally, it has been tweaked and adjusted, and prayers have been added and deleted as per the custom of the different Jewish communities scattered throughout the exile. However, it is the consistency of the prayer service itself, and the retention of its basic structure by all communities and groups, that Jewish life survived over the long centuries of persecution, and exile.

It is not that innovation is necessarily contrary to established prayer service. It is, rather, that over the centuries, very few innovations have been able to attract more worshipers or more Jews, to be of true spiritual value and of lasting quality and interest. The problem with innovation, as with all things modern and current and up to date, is that in the society dedicated to the new and to innovation, almost automatically introduces ideas and practices that become obsolete in a very short period of time. They do not have staying power, and Judaism is always built for the long run and not for the short moments of seeming pleasure or current correctness.

Traditional Jewish prayer has often been accused by the modernists as being too rigid, and without proper flash and excitement. Non-Orthodox movements constantly change their prayer books to reflect current events over the years, and decades that are the here and now of that society. However, any objective observer of these changes can testify that all the innovation: guitars, women cantors, political quotations, and other innovations that are part of modernistic local prayer services, have proven to be unable to attract worshipers to the synagogue and to any form of intense and meaningful prayer.

Tampering with the old and creating the new has, in effect, destroyed the true concept of Jewish prayer and the spiritual satisfaction that one can gain only with the authentic words of prayer, that have been part of Jewish life for thousands of years. This is the essence of being commanded. It tolerates no major deviations, and by its consistency and historic resonance, creates spiritual connection and the pursuit of holiness. Couple this with the fact that Hebrew as a language does not easily translate into other languages, and that all sense of nuance is usually lost, no matter how good the translation may be, one can, understand why Judaism insists on prayer in its original language and in its original formal form and substance. ©2022 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes,

DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

What do you call it when you feed a stick of dynamite to a steer?

Abominable!

(say it out loud slowly!)



RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

TorahWeb

Kashering utensils has always been an integral part of Pesach preparation. As we prepare our kitchens for the upcoming celebration of Pesach, the deeper lessons behind these intricate laws can guide us in our service of Hashem throughout the year. These halachos are derived from parshas Matos and parshas Tzav. It is not coincidental that we read the pesukim about kashering the Shabbos before Pesach; it is a time to delve into the halachic and hashkafic messages of this area of pre-Pesach preparation.

Chazal derive that there are two fundamentally different ways to kasher, one known as hagala and the other as libun. Hagala is the kashering through boiling water, whereas libun uses an actual flame. We are taught in Maseches Avodah Zara that the appropriate method to use depends upon how the non-kosher or chametz food initially entered into the utensil. The halachic principles of k'bol'lo kach polto -- how it was absorbed is how it can be removed -- governs the laws of kashering. For example, a utensil such as a grill which absorbed taste through use with a direct flame cannot be removed of this absorption by mere boiling water.

The imagery of applying different degrees of heat to remove non-kosher or chametz can be applied in a similar way to the process of teshuva. When negative actions and thoughts become a part of ones being, teshuva requires a similar degree of effort to remove them and thereby "kasher" ones soul. Sins that were committed with less enthusiasm and thereby didn't penetrate as deeply into ones being can be atoned for by a teshuva process commensurate with the original actions. These which entered with more intensity require a greater degree of "heat" to be removed; as powerful as the sin was, so must the teshuva be effective.

In parshas Tzav we are taught that a kli cheres -- an earthenware vessel -- cannot be kasher ed. Earthenware is so porous that once a taste has absorbed into its walls it can never be totally removed. However, this limitation only applies to kashering by hagala, but libun is effective even on earthenware. Tosfos (Pesachim 30b) explain that although taste absorbed in earthenware can never completely be removed, the process of libun is equivalent to remaking the utensil. Since these vessels are originally formed

in a furnace, the libun process mimics this and therefore suffices to kasher earthenware.

The remaking of a vessel that is permeated with non-kosher taste serves as a model for teshuva. Chazal speak of a person changing his name when doing teshuva, since by doing so he demonstrates that he is a new person. When teshuva for specific sins is not sufficient, an entire transformation is necessary. Tosfos describes libun as, "na'aseh kli chadash -- a new utensil has been made." A complete teshuva requires an entirely new outlook on life.

When one purchases utensils from a non-Jew, in addition to kashering those which were previously used one must immerse them in a mikva. Just as utensils undergo a process of purification in a physical mikva before being usable, a soul must be immersed in the symbolic water of Torah. The halachic details of tevila which require a complete immersion and necessitate removal of chatzitzos -- barriers that separate between the utensil and the water of the mikva -- are similarly present in a symbolic way in the tevila in the waters of Torah. A total immersion in Torah study without any barriers completes the process of purification of one's soul.

As we clean and kasher our homes for Pesach, let us look inward and prepare our hearts and souls in sanctity and purity. ©2015 Rabbi Z Sobolofsky & The TorahWeb Foundation, Inc.

How did Darth Vader know what Luke bought him for his birthday?
He felt his presents!

Uncle Darth →



ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

The Temple Treasurer

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

When the time comes for Parshat Zachor, it is with reverence and love that we fulfill the positive commandment of remembering what Amalek did, by reading the section of the Torah which summarizes their attack on us (*Devarim* 25:17-19): “Remember (*Zachor*) what Amalek did to you on your journey after you left Egypt – how, undeterred by fear of G-d, he surprised you on the march, when you were tired and weary, and cut down all the stragglers at the rear. Therefore, when the Lord grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that the Lord your G-d is giving you, you shall wipe out (*timcheh*) the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget (*Lo tishkach*).” Everyone stands up for this reading. Many make a point of hearing it more than once, as there is disagreement how to pronounce one of the words. If someone is unable to fulfill this mitzva on Shabbat Zachor, he can have in mind to fulfill it when listening to *Megillat Esther* on Purim.

Considering how scrupulous we are to hear Parshat Zachor read properly, it is very surprising that the *Behag*, Rav Saadia Gaon, and the *Sefer Yere'im* do not count the mitzva of remembering Amalek as one of the 613. (The *Smag* does not include the admonition of “Do not forget” on his list of negative commandments, though he does count “Remember” on his list of positive commandments.)

Why do some people feel that remembering Amalek is not a mitzva? One answer is that it is a mitzva, but not a stand-alone mitzva. Rather, it is part of the mitzva to wipe out Amalek, as commanded in the next verse (*Devarim* 25:19). For if we do not remember them, we cannot wipe them out. Others believe that remembering Amalek is included in the mitzva of *Talmud Torah* (Torah study), since we are commanded to study the laws pertaining to the subject.

This also helps us understand why, before reading Parshat Zachor, we do not make the blessing of “Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to remember the deeds of Amalek.” Some explain that we do not recite a blessing because this mitzva involves destruction, even if those being destroyed are outstandingly evil. This approach is in line with the rule that a rabbinic court does not recite a blessing at an execution, even though technically they are fulfilling the mitzva of “You shall eliminate the evil from your midst” (*Devarim* 17:7). It also seems to be patterned on the behavior of G-d Himself. According to the

Gemara (*Megillah* 10b and *Sanhedrin* 39b), the angels began to sing as the Egyptians were drowning in the sea, but G-d rebuked them saying: “My creations are drowning in the sea, and you are singing?!”

If remembering Amalek's deeds is part and parcel of the mitzva of wiping them out, then it is very clear that women are exempt from Parshat Zachor. Wiping out Amalek is a military undertaking, which is not in their bailiwick. However, others maintain that even after Amalek is wiped out, there will still be a mitzva to remember its deeds. If this position is correct, women too would be obligated in this mitzva, as it is neither connected to military action nor time-bound. For fundamentally, the mitzva of remembering can be fulfilled at any time of the year. Furthermore, not only is there the positive commandment of “Remember,” but there is the negative commandment of “Do not forget” as well, and women and men's obligation in negative commandments is exactly the same. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

Luke, I am your feter!

A rabbi walks into a bar with a parrot on his shoulder. The bartender says, “Hey, that's cool! Where'd you get that?” The Parrot says, “Brooklyn! They're everywhere!”



HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

Bais Hamussar

After Bnei Yisrael were commanded to bring the korban Pesach, the Torah tells us, "Bnei Yisrael went and did as Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon, so did they do" (Shemos 12:28). Rashi explains that the superfluous "so did they do" refers to Moshe and Aharon. They also fulfilled Hashem's commandment to designate a sheep to be used for the korban Pesach. The Maharal elaborates that the korban Pesach was a mitzvah given to Bnei Yisrael as a merit to make them worthy for redemption.

Thus, one might think that Moshe and Aharon, who were Hashem's emissaries to carry out the redemption, need not perform this mitzvah. Therefore, the Torah informs us that they too fulfilled this commandment.

It would seem that the original assumption is correct. Why should Moshe Rabbeinu have to fulfill this mitzvah if he was never enslaved in Mitzrayim and did not need to be redeemed? It would also appear that he did not need the mitzvah to advance his spiritual level since he had already reached the high level where he was speaking to Hashem as one converses with a friend.

Rav Wolbe (Daas Shlomo Geulah 323) explains that the korban Pesach was consumed exactly at the time when Hashem passed through Mitzrayim and smote the firstborn.

This final plague was an incredible, almost tangible, display of Hashgacha Pratis as Hashem killed only the firstborn and only the Egyptians. Bnei Yisrael also prepared themselves for this moment of revelation in a very tangible way. They "hurriedly ate the korban Pesach with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet and their staffs in their hands." The spiritual impact achieved through witnessing an overt display of Hashgacha Pratis is so great that even Moshe Rabbeinu could gain from it. Therefore, he too prepared himself for the revelation by fulfilling the commandment of korban Pesach.

Leil HaSeder is all about trying to experience that awesome revelation that took place on that very night way back in Mitzrayim. The goal is to achieve a level of clarity where Hashem's hashgacha pratis in our world and our lives, is evident to our corporal eyes. This avodah starts now. Look for Hashem's involvement in your life -- and it's not hard to find -- and you'll be better prepared for the Seder Night.

It's a unique night during which we are given Heavenly assistance to reach levels of emunah -- an assistance that is unavailable during the rest of the year!

The Ramban at the end of Parashas Bo (Shemos 13:16) explains that Hashem does not perform earth shattering miracles in order to demonstrate His Omnipotence to every scoffer. Therefore, He commanded us to perform numerous mitzvos as a remembrance for Yetzias Mitzrayim so that we should frequently remember how He clearly demonstrated His Omnipotence in Egypt. The constant commemoration allows us to relive, to a certain extent, the spiritual level that Bnei Yisrael achieved when they witnessed those miracles in Mitzrayim.

Rashi seems to explain the mitzvos in a different light. The Torah instructs us, "You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt'" (Shemos 13:8). Rashi explains that "this" refers to the matzah and maror set out on the Seder table, i.e. we were taken out of Egypt to perform His mitzvos.

The Ramban understands that the mitzvos were given to remember the redemption, while according to Rashi's explanation the exact opposite is true: The entire redemption was to create a nation that would perform His mitzvos.

Rav Wolbe explains that the Rashi and the Ramban are not arguing. There are two aspects to the mitzvos. As Rashi explained, the purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim was to forge Bnei Yisrael into a nation that would serve Hashem, and their subservience manifests itself with the performance of His commandments. The Ramban is merely adding a reason behind the specific mitzvos given. They were given with the intent of raising Bnei Yisrael to the spiritual levels attained during Yetzias Mitzrayim.

The Seder is a manifestation of our subservience and an expression of our desire to tap into the spiritual revelations which connect us to our Creator. May our service be accepted and our desires be fulfilled!
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Poo-rim Samayach!

