

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYIKRA/HAHODESH

Haftarah: Yehezkel 45:18-46:15

MARCH 16-17, 2018 1 NISAN 5778

**Rosh Hodesh Nisan will be celebrated on Shabbat, March 17.  
DEDICATION In memory of - Yosef Mordecha Ben Rachel, Jerry Werman 7 Nisan**

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## EDITORS NOTES

This Shabbat we will do something we rarely do. We will take three Torah scrolls out of the Ark as we do on Simchat Torah and sometimes when Rosh Hodesh falls on Shabbat Hanukah. In the first scroll, we will read the portion of Vayikra and if we look closely when the Torah is taken out, you will see that this first word ends with an extra small Aleph. We typically send six to the Torah for the first scroll. The seventh aliyah or mashlim will read from the second scroll which is the special reading for Rosh Hodesh as this Shabbat also celebrates the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan commemorating the inauguration of the Mishkan. The aliyah concludes with kaddish and finally the last reader will open the third scroll for the special Maftir as we also celebrate this Shabbat as HaChodesh where we read from Exodus that, "This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you." And continue the chapter which details eating the Passover sacrifice, with "your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand"; eating bitter herbs and unleavened bread; and putting blood on the doorposts; and it lists the Passover laws. Again we say kaddish and finally conclude with the Haftara which describes the sacrifices that the Israelites are to bring on the first of Nisan, on Passover, and on other festivals in the future Temple.

This week our family will also commemorate the Yahrzeit of my father in law, Gerald Werman who passed away five years ago this week, Yosef Mordechai ben Rachel a'h,

I thought this morning that its fitting we read from these three scrolls when we remember Jerry. Rashi explains the little aleph at the opening of Vayikra denoting the humility of Moses and my father in law too was a very humble person. But humility should not suppress ability and effort and it did not with Jerry. People I meet even today tell me how he truly was one of the fathers of the shoe industry and one

of the first to recognize the value in cross business licensing. Jerry was always Sameyach BeChelko and he lived a life often with the physical strappings of wealth and at times at the opposite extreme but it was never the things which made him happy, he was satisfied with very little and always appreciated his lot. When I was invited to my granddaughter Chantelle's class last year to read to the children, I thought it was amazing that this little girl was sitting in a classroom where her mother sat, her grandfather sat and where her great grandfather Jerry sat. Through the last years of his life, Jerry battled a terrible illness, but never complained. Everything was done with a smile and his doctor's loved him. Where others might grumble to their physicians, Jerry always had a joke. Rabbi Abittan told us that the lesson of the new moon is to recall that the first to complain at creation was the moon. The Torah tells us Hashem made two great luminaries, the sun and the moon. The moon turned to G-d and said, there cannot be two kings, two great lights. So Hashem told the moon to diminish itself. One can never gain from complaining. And the lesson of the final scroll is that the Jewish people declare the moon, we decide the times, the holidays and the dates, we are potentially above the mazalot and horoscope. And this too was how Jerry lived his life. He wasn't subject to predictions and how things should be and he was committed to ruling over his time in some way. My children will always appreciate that one afternoon and evening each week, it was grandpa Jerry who picked them up from school, took them to an early dinner and then helped with homework. He could have been a college professor and dreamed of it, and in many ways was able to fulfill his dream through his grandchildren. He is sorely missed every day.

His relationship with his grandchildren reminded me of a question I asked a few years back in giving a halacha at minyan one morning. As we approach Passover, "What's the most important part of the Seder?" Although the answer is one I heard often from Rabbi Abittan, I realized later that it was a question I posed in a previous newsletter based on a note I received from Gutman Locks in Jerusalem. And Mr. Locks does a much better job than I could do writing this: "Although the holiday of Passover is, by far, the most memorable and beloved holiday of the entire Jewish calendar, it also brings the greatest number of details, requirements and restrictions.

Observing each of these elements is crucial during this week of preparation and especially for the Seder itself. To list them all would (and does) fill an entire book.

“There are the Torah commandments and there are the rabbinical commandments. There are also the customs that, surprisingly, vary tremendously between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim. There are the unique customs that have developed around the diaspora. For example, Indian Jews eat different foods on Passover than Temanni Jews, and some Jews will dip their matzah in their soup, while others would be aghast at such a move! Some will eat beans, and some would never do such a thing. There are strict requirements as to the minimum amounts of matzah, bitter herb and wine that must be consumed, and only within a specific period of time. And perhaps most important of all are the amazingly strict requirements not to have any leavening or related products in our possession for the entire week. Confusing this even more is that some authorities say certain foods are leavened while others swear that they are not.

“On and on, the list of requirements that ensure a successful Seder can certainly seem overwhelming. It is no wonder that the favorite question a sharp student will ask his rebbe right before the Seder is, “What is the most important thing that I must watch out for?”

“Last Pesach, right before leaving the Kotel to rush home for the Seder, a rabbi friend of mine asked me that very question. To his great surprise, I immediately answered, “Make sure that the children have a good time.” He looked at me as if I might be joking; his face was all twisted up. He wanted to know some great Kabbalah about the four cups of wine, or maybe how to lean to the side when drinking them. Or maybe I could give him some great Chassidic teaching on how to do teshuva (repentance) while trying to gulp down that impossibly hot horseradish. AAGHHHH! But, no, I simply said, “Make sure that the children have a good time.”

“The next afternoon, he came up to me, smiling. He’s a smart guy and he took my words to heart. He said, “It was the best Seder ever. The kids were great. Everyone was laughing. We all enjoyed ourselves tremendously. But tell me, how can you really say that keeping the kids happy was the most important thing to watch out for? After all, this is a very serious holiday.”

“I explained, “There is only one reason we have the Seder at all: to remember the Exodus from Egypt.

And there is only one reason why we must remember the Exodus from Egypt: so we will remain Jews. If we forget our past, there will be no reason to go on as a people. There is only one way for us to remain Jews, and that is to raise Jewish families. Without the children coming back next year, there won’t be any Jewish families. It’s for the kids’ sake that we go through all this each year and, God willing, we will get to do it for them again next year, too. And if they have a good enough time, then surely someday we will even get to do it for their kids.”

Rabbi Abittan would tell us that although it’s important to have guests, the guests are not nearly as important as the children. It’s the children we need to relate to, it’s the children we need to tell, it’s the children we need to continue this unbroken chain. They should sit next to us. They should participate. They should take fond memories of the Seder. The Misvah of VeHigadeta LeBincha – and you should tell your children – takes precedence over any one else as the Seder.

My father in law knew it was always about the children. He was their go to guy. When it came to reports, they had a built in family writer who would not only do the report but teach them more than they could have ever learned in researching the report themselves. He always had a smile. And his one liners could entertain anyone for hours. There was no subject he wasn’t well versed in. But he never preached. He asked, he prodded, and he listened. He made each of them important and that’s why they loved him so much. And there was nothing he held back. Jonah remarked after his grandfather’s passing as I noted above that when people were just realizing the power of licensing, Jerry who had sold hundreds of millions of dollars in licensed shoes, explained to Jonah who was just a little boy, the why’s, how’s, and what’s of licensing. When Jonah as a student, wanted to understand the process of working with factories overseas from design, production, sales and distribution, Jerry didn’t just explain it to him. He took him to China, from meeting to meeting, from factory to factory, from restaurant to bar. Jerry’s preferred career would have been to teach. He fulfilled that dream more than any other way in what he gave his children, his grandchildren, his nephews and nieces. He gave them a love of knowledge connecting generation to generation.

So this Pesach which fast approaches, let us remember that it’s all about the kids. It’s all about them having a good time, It’s all about continuing the chain. It’s all about generation to generation.

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

### **Rabbi Ralph Pelcovitz z"l: An Appreciation By Rabbi Yair Hoffman for the Five Towns Jewish Times**

He was the dean of the Orthodox American rabbinate. A graduate of Yeshiva Torah VaDaas, and a talmid of Rav Shlomo Heiman z"l. He served as the Rav of the White Shul in Far Rockaway for decades. He lived in the Far Rockaway community for six decades. The Torah community mourns the loss of a remarkable Rav: Rabbi Rephoel Pelcovitz z"l.

Rabbi Pelcovitz loved people. He loved his congregants. He was a great talmid chachom. He was an author. He was a translator. His translation of the Seforno is truly a Torah classic and will remain thus for centuries to come. The footnotes in the translation demonstrate his profound erudition and understanding.

Rabbi Pelcovitz prompted people to think and to re-examine aspects of their lives. He combined his persuasive words with a warm infectious smile which helped in this task.

I was privileged to see his remarkable Shabbos parsha notes. The published sefer of his drashos are only a small part of it. The unpublished notes are a treasure trove for any Rav.

Rabbi Pelcovitz had a tell-it-like-it-is style. I sat with Rabbi Pelcovitz to hear what he had to say on contemporary Jewish society. He felt that we are not emphasizing the role of Eretz Yisroel in our Yiddishkeit and our need to support it even more. He was very saddened that Torah Jews were not taking a greater role in helping combat the BDS movement, for example. Below are more of his thoughts from his notes and my conversations with him.  
Bain Adam L'echaveiro

Rabbonim should do more to address mitzvos bain adam l'echaveiro. Who is a frum Jew? How do you define such a thing and how does one reach a point where he is entitled to use the title of "religious frum pious person?" What are the yardsticks? The current yardsticks are skewed, wrong or incomplete. What happens when a secular person asks how could a religious Jew be so unethical, so immoral? Is it not important to teach ourselves that the simplest answer to that question is that it is wrong. He is not entitled to the title of frum Jew. Keeping kashrus, tzitzis and Shabbos does not entitle him to be called a religious Jew if he is dishonest or immoral.  
Yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs

Are the Yeshiva Gedolos today teaching derech eretz to their students? Can you tell, looking at a young man or woman in public, whether he or she is a talmid of a seminary or a Bais Yaakov or could he or she be a student of any college or secular high school? I have noticed that too many young people, especially the boys, lack simple basic fundamental behavior of derech eretz.

Young people need to show respect to an older person, to a teacher or a rav and to their companions – their chaveirim. Some claim that we live in an affluent society – one of entitlement – where the average youngster has never really been confronted with any kind of challenge when it comes to their lifestyle. They have never gone hungry or been denied a new suit or dress. They enjoy many luxuries but do not consider them luxuries.

Has this spoiled them and affected their personalities and character? Are parents aware of this behavior in their children? If so, might it be that they themselves are insensitive in this area. Is the kavod that a student once had for a teacher, 50 or 100 years ago in Europe or in this country – is that still operative today? It would be interesting to ask this of many rabbonim and teachers and compare it with what old-timers would say.  
On the Role of the Jewish People

The Jewish people has always been a curious people. We never built a wall between ourselves and the world to shut ourselves off from knowing what is going on in the world and selecting things that could be instructive and could broaden our horizons. Vegam es haolam nasan belibo, the concealed is in the heart of man, but the ksiv kri of this posuk is that the inquisitiveness was always there.

Historically, the yeshiva movement was always interested in the world. They wanted to know history, the culture of the world. The abysmal am-haratzus of the world around us did not exist. Today in the yeshivish community it is almost like a badge of honor that you do not know what is going on in the world.

We have become very insular. I have spoken to hundreds of parents who are appalled by the isolation and ignorance of their own children. If we are living in this place, in this century, in this time, it is extremely important. It is not for us to copy them, but we should understand and have a broad knowledge of the culture and the world around us.

It should not be an honor that you do not know what is happening, and it is not bitul Torah that you take

time to understand these things. If someone knows the names of philosophers he is not an apikores. Rambam knew of Aristotle.

Rav Pelcovitz z"l built Torah in the Far Rockaway/Five Towns community. Under his aegis the shul grew to be one of the largest shuls in New York. He served as a role model for rabbonim across the country. He was 97 years old upon his passing.

Rabbi Pelcovitz leaves his wife Mrs. Shirley Pelcovitz and children Ethel Gottlieb, Judy Gribetz, Dr. David Pelcovitz and Nachum Pelcovitz and grandchildren Shraga Gross, Oralee Kanner, Carmi Gross, Efrom Gross and Gila Schwerd.

Shivah will be observed at the Pelcovitz home, 781 Caffrey Avenue, Far Rockaway, through Tuesday morning (March 20).  
Yehei Zichro Boruch.

**Arab-Palestinian relations defy conventional wisdom - Ambassador (ret.) Yoram Ettinger  
Western conventional wisdom has systematically failed in assessing Middle East developments.**

For example, in 1978, conventional wisdom turned its back on the Shah of Iran – who was the USA Policeman of the Gulf –providing a tailwind to Ayatollah Khomeini, who transformed Iran into the most critical, clear and present threat to regional and global stability, as well as the homeland security of the USA and Europe. In 1981 and 2007, conventional wisdom aggressively criticized Israel for bombing of the nuclear reactors of Iraq and Syria. Until Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, conventional wisdom considered the ruthless Iraqi dictator an ally of the USA, worthy of intelligence-sharing, dual-use systems and multi-billion-dollar loan guarantees.

In 1994, conventional wisdom awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Arafat, a role model of hate education, terrorism and intra-Arab treachery. In 2010, conventional wisdom misread the volcanic eruption of the anti-Western Arab Tsunami as the Arab Spring, a Facebook and Youth Revolution. In 2012, conventional wisdom turned its back on Egyptian President Mubarak, welcoming the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest Islamic terrorist group in the world.

In 2018, Western conventional wisdom embraces Mahmoud Abbas as a moderate, in comparison to Hamas, highlighting Abbas' talk, rather than focusing on his walk: intra-Arab subversion, the terror-oriented K-12 education system, generous monthly subsidies

to terrorists and their families, and maintaining close ties with enemies and adversaries of the USA.

Western conventional wisdom, on the one hand, and Middle East reality, on the other hand, have constituted a classic oxymoron.

In defiance of Western conventional wisdom, Arab policy-makers are aware of the irrelevance of the Palestinian issue to the turbulence, which has plagued the Middle East since the 7th century, as well as the current (2010-2018) seismic developments, which traumatize every Arab regime from Northwestern Africa to the Persian Gulf and from Syria and Lebanon to Yemen and the Sudan.

Moreover, in contrast to Western conventional wisdom, Arab policy-makers do not consider the Palestinians a crown-jewel, but recognize their intra-Arab subversive, terroristic and unreliable/treacherous track record.

Hence the flood of pro-Palestinian Arab talk, which has never been supported by the Arab walk.

Consequently, every Arab regime - and especially Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Jordan and Egypt– are not preoccupied with the Palestinian issue, but with the immediate and lethal threats of the Ayatollahs and Islamic terrorism, which could topple them and transform their countries into Iraqi, Syrian, Libyan, Yemeni look-alike traumatic arenas.

For example, from 1979-1989, during the civil war in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia demonstrated its order of national security priorities, investing \$1BN annually in the struggle of the Afghan rebels against the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul. This was ten times as much as the annual Saudi foreign aid to the PLO – \$100MN.

Moreover, the Palestinian Authority was not among the top ten recipients of the \$33BN foreign aid from Riyadh from 2007-2017: Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Niger, Mauritania, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Jordan and Tunisia.

While the total Saudi foreign aid from 1985-2015 was \$130BN - according to the Dubai-based daily, Gulf News - Saudi annual foreign aid to the Palestinian Authority was \$100MN-\$200MN, reflecting the inferior weight of the Palestinian issue in the Saudi order of national priorities.

According to Reuters News Agency, Saudi Arabia assigned to Egypt a \$23BN aid package, reflecting the joint Cairo-Riyadh front against a common

enemy: Muslim Brotherhood terrorists. The Toronto-based Geopolitical Monitor reported that a \$12BN package was extended to Egypt by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, in addition to the \$8BN Saudi investment in the Egyptian economy.

While the Palestinian Authority claims that Saudi Arabia has failed to fulfill its commitment to the its limited foreign aid package, Dubai-based Al Arabiya TV reported that Yemen supersedes the Palestinians in the eyes of Riyadh, which has provided the Aden-based regime of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi with \$8.2BN aid in the battle against the Sanaa'-based Iran-supported Houthis.

The Palestinians have also taken a backseat to Jordan, when it comes to Saudi national priorities, as documented by the Saudi-Jordanian Coordination Council, which is unlocking billions of dollars to the Hashemite regime.

The relative marginalization of the Palestinians – who benefit from a \$100MN-\$200MN annual Saudi foreign aid package (whenever it is not suspended by Riyadh) – is gleaned through the CNBC December 18, 2017 report on the House of Saud purchasing a rare Leonardo da Vinci painting for \$450MN, an exquisite palace in France for \$300MN and a royal yacht for \$500MN.

The expanded strategic and economic ties between Israel and the pro-US Arab countries have been a derivative of the Arab order of national security priorities. They have recognized Israel's unique added-value – militarily and commercially - in their battle for survival against domestic and regional threats and challenges.

Furthermore, the pro-US Arab policy-makers do not forget, nor forgive, Palestinian subversion, in collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt during the early 1950s and in collaboration with Islamic terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula in 2018; the murder of Syrian intelligence officers in 1966; the terroristic attempt to topple their host Hashemite regime in 1970; the triggering of a series of civil wars in Lebanon during the 1970s; and the back-stabbing of the most hospitable Kuwaiti regime, through their collaboration with Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion and the plunder of the Emirate.

Therefore, there was overall Arab sympathy with Kuwait's 1991 expulsion of some 300,000 Palestinians; and the 2006 expulsion of more than 50,000 pro-Saddam Palestinians from Iraq following the execution of the Iraqi dictator.

Therefore, the Arab countries were reluctant to act, effectively, on behalf of the Palestinians – militarily, economically or diplomatically - during the Israel-Palestinian wars in Lebanon and Gaza, and during the 1st and 2nd Intifada.

In defiance of Western conventional wisdom, Arab policy-makers have been increasingly aware that overcoming the mounting threats to their survival, mandates adherence to reality, which has underlined the secondary/tertiary – and treacherous - role played by the Palestinians in setting the Middle East agenda

### Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Sefer Vayikra generally deals with the Kohanim and their service in the mishkan. Within the first half of Sefer Vayikra the first 2 parshiot deal with korbanot. The end of the 2nd parasha and the 3rd parasha deal with the inauguration of the mishkan and the 4th and 5th parasha deal with tsaraat. The theme in the 2nd half of Sefer Vayikra is Holiness. Parashat Kedoshim discusses holiness regarding the Jewish people as a whole (i.e., kedoshim tihui). Emor discusses Holiness regarding the Kohanim and Holidays. And Behar discusses Holiness regarding the land of Israel (i.e., Shemita and Yovel).

#### **Vayikra - Laws of various korbanot and how they are brought**

- 1- Details regarding Korban Olah (when brought with cattle and with a sheep). Details include samach, slaughtering, throwing blood, skinning, cutting, washing, cooking.
- 2- Korban Olah (when brought with a bird), Korban Mincha (the solet, oven baked, and pan baked meal offerings)
- 3- Korban Mincha (the deep pan offering). Korban minchat ha'omer.
- 4- Korban Shelamim (when brought with cattle, sheep, or a goat)
- 5- Korban Hatat (details depending on if the sinner is the Kohen gadol, a congregation, or ruler)
- 6- Korban Hatat (for a regular person who sinned), Korban Oleh Ve'yored
- 7- Korban Asham

#### **FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE**

“He shall bring his offering from the turtledoves or from the young doves.” Vayikra 1:4)

At the ceremony to honor Harav Obadiah Yosef zt"l when he became the chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, there was an uninvited guest. Throughout the entire ceremony to coronate the Rabbi, there was a pure white dove that stood near the seat of Hacham

Obadiah. When the ceremony was over, the dove flew away and didn't return.

When the people discussed this with Hacham Obadiah, he revealed to them a secret. This dove was the soul of his dearly departed mother. She came from the upper world to see and to celebrate the honor given to her son because of his knowledge of Torah. "Since she always encouraged me so much to learn, and in the merit of her encouragement I reached this plateau, therefore in Heaven they gave her permission to come and see the happiness of my honor!" Rabbi Reuven Semah

**"On every offering, you shall offer salt."**

The Torah requires that salt should be added to all offerings on the mizbe'ah (Altar), both animal offerings and flour offerings. The Keli Yakar gives a novel explanation of this misvah. He explains that many events occur in the world that seem contradictory, some are good and pleasant while others are not so pleasant. This can sometimes, G-d forbid, cause someone to question Hashem's Oneness, and His exclusive rulership in the world. Salt also can have two opposite effects. It can bring out the flavor of a food and make it enjoyable. However, if too much salt is added, it can sometimes totally ruin the dish. Therefore, salt represents this concept of opposites, and by adding salt to every offering, we are declaring that Hashem is One and that everything comes from Him. Our Sages teach us that nowadays, when we no longer have the Bet Hamikdash, our table serves in place of the mizbe'ah. In fact, the Shulhan Aruch quotes our pasuk and says that it is a misvah to have salt on the table when we eat a bread meal, and that it protects a person from unpleasant occurrences. So, in order to internalize the message of the salt, we should keep this concept in mind. When we dip our bread in the salt, we should mentally acknowledge that Hashem is One and that He runs the world.

Perhaps we can take this even one step further. The Gemara says that when the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed, our prayers replaced the daily offerings. That means that when we pray, it's as if we are offering a sacrifice on the mizbe'ah. While it wouldn't be a good idea to sprinkle salt on the floor when we get up to pray, we can still "salt" our prayers by remembering the lessons that it was intended to teach us, and thereby reap the benefits that come along with it. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

**The Manufacturer's Instructions**

The majority of Sefer Vayikra deals with the difficult topics of sacrifices and Tum'a (ritual impurity), laws that have practical application only when the Temple stands. Surprisingly, we have a tradition that the first

section of the Torah that school children should be taught is the Book of Vayikra. The Sages remark, "Let the pure ones come and study matters of purity." Meaning, it is appropriate for the pure, innocent schoolchildren to begin their study of Torah with the subjects of Vayikra, which involve the purity of the Beit Hamikdash (Temple) and the sacrifices.

Logically, we would have likely advised that Sefer Vayikra be the last of the five books of the Torah that schoolchildren should study. How can a young child appreciate the ritual slaughtering of animals as sacrifices, the collection of the blood in receptacles and its sprinkling on the altar? At first glance, it would seem that a school child's introduction to Torah should begin with the Book of Bereishit, which tells the inspiring stories of our patriarchs, rather than with the technical and esoteric laws of Sefer Vayikra.

One Rabbi explained this tradition by way of an analogy to a man who was ignorant about automobiles and purchased his first car. He drove the car happily for a number of weeks until one day it stopped moving. Frustrated, he called the manufacturer and claimed that the car was defective. The manufacturer told him to check the gasoline indicator in the car, and it turned out that the car had run out of fuel. And so, the manufacturer explained to the man that he must go to a gas station, purchase some gasoline, and put it into his car to make it work again.

The man went to the gas station and saw gasoline for the first time. He angrily called back the manufacturer and said, "This putrid substance will make my car work? I don't want to put this stuff in my brand-new car!"

The manufacturer patiently explained, "Look, I'm the manufacturer; I made this car, and I know how it works far better than you do. Loathsome as gasoline is, you can trust me – who made the car – that it will make the car run." The same is true regarding the human spirit. The Almighty created us; He made the human soul, and He knows far better than anybody else what is most beneficial in nurturing the soul. If our religious tradition teaches us that children benefit the most from first being exposed to Sefer Vayikra, then difficult as it may be for us to understand how this could be, we must accept and follow the instructions of the "manufacturer." He created the soul, and therefore He knows best how to properly nurture it.

This same message can be extended to all the Mitzvot. We often do not understand the spiritual value of a given Halacha, and at times a law or obligation might strike us as odd. It is important to remember to trust G-d, the "manufacturer," who created the human being and knows far better than we ever will how to best care for our souls.

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein  
IT'S THE ZHIDS**

One of the more uncanny peculiarities in human history has been that whenever a sinister unexplained event in the world occurs, the Jews are immediately sought out as the scapegoats and the cause of the event. Unfortunately there is a very long and bitter history to this phenomenon. It is so deeply ingrained in parts of the non-Jewish world that even in our time, despite a long history and in the face of logic and fact this type of canard still persists.

Consider the most recent example of this, the amazingly unbelievable statement made by Vladimir Putin, that the Jews somehow possibly rigged the United States' presidential election in 2016. This comment was immediately followed by the usual pious disclaimer that it could not have been the Russians that were involved because such a nefarious scheme and its execution were beyond the capabilities and imagination of the Russian government.

I am reminded that after the terrorist attack against the United States and the destruction of the World Trade Center, many in the Moslem world and even in parts of the Western world attributed this act of wanton murder and terrorism to Zionism and to Jews. They claim that it was far too sophisticated and well planned to have been executed by Arabs.

It could only be that the Jews were clever enough to accomplish that debacle. Only the Jews are sinister and amoral enough to conceive and execute such sophisticated mayhem. The fact that such nonsense can continue to be perpetuated by supposedly responsible and intelligent people only serves to show how deep the anti-Jewish virus is implanted in our current world.

The Russians have a long history of blaming the 'Zhids' for their woes. Tsar Nicholas II blamed the Russian defeat in the 1904 Russian/Japanese war on the Jews. He further attributed the popular uprising and revolution of 1905 once more on the Jews. In fact, all of the mounting woes of the Romanovs and Russia in pre-World War I, Eastern Europe were ascribed to the Jews.

The "Jewish question" was predominant in all Russian government circles in the 19th and 20th centuries until the Bolshevik revolution. During World War I, in spite of the fact that over 100,000 Jews served in the Russian army and many thousands were killed in the war, the Russian government treated the Jews not only as enemy aliens but also as spies and traitors.

It was not that the German army was successful. It was an ingrained belief of the Tsar and of his army general staff that Jews betrayed the Russian army in the service of the Germans. Because of this, many hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from their homes and forced to attempt to resettle themselves deep in Russia. This draconian policy together with repeated and systematic pogroms committed by Russian forces accounted for the deaths of more than 250,000 Jews in World War I before the Bolshevik revolution and the later Civil War, which in their turn would annihilate thousands of more Jews.

It is almost useless and futile to argue logically against these wildly anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. The poison spread by the Russian Secret Service in the 1890s with their pamphlet on the fictitious Elders of Zion running the world, which, though without sources took root and is tragically alive and well in much of the world today.

All protestations of our innocence and of the fact that all of this is pure bunk simply lands on deaf ears. We are also witness to the fact that the Syrians blame their woes on Israel even though Israel has nothing to do with the Syrian Civil War or the brutality of the regime of Assad. It is not reported widely but almost after every chemical or air attack that the Syrian government mounts against its own citizens, the Syrian media blames it all on Israel.

The fact that there is chaos in Gaza, that there are shortages of fuel and electricity there is attributed to Israel and not to Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. We live in an 'Alice in Wonderland' world where everything is seen through a distorted mirror. The problem is that the world is so accustomed to viewing itself through that mirror that it believes that somehow the mirror actually reflects reality.

But the world is not an amusement park and skewed vision and preposterous conclusions are dangerous to all concerned. We therefore should continue to speak out against such ridiculous statements and accusations and demand that some modicum of reality enter into the world's dealings with the Jewish people and the state of Israel.

## Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Call

It was never my ambition or aspiration to be a rabbi. I went to university to study economics. I then switched to philosophy. I also had a fascination with the great British courtroom lawyers, legendary figures like Marshall Hall, Rufus Isaacs and F. E. Smith. To be sure, relatively late, I had studied for the rabbinate, but that was to become literate in my own Jewish heritage, not to pursue a career.

What changed me, professionally and existentially, was my second major yechidut – face-to-face conversation, – with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in January 1978. To my surprise, he vetoed all my career options: economist, lawyer, academic, even becoming a rabbi in the United States. My task, he said, was to train rabbis. There were too few people in Britain going into the rabbinate and it was my mission to change that.

What is more, he said, I had to become a congregational rabbi, not as an end in itself but so that my students could come and see how I gave sermons (I can still hear in my mind's ear how he said that word with a marked Russian accent: sirmons). He was also highly specific as to where I was to work: in Jews' College (today, the London School of Jewish Studies), the oldest extant rabbinical seminary in the English-speaking world.

So I did. I became a teacher at the College, and later its Principal. Eventually I became – again after consulting with the Rebbe – Chief Rabbi. For all this I have to thank not only the Rebbe, but also my wife Elaine. She did not sign up for this when we married. It was not even on our horizon. But without her constant support I could not have done any of it.

I tell this story for a reason: to illustrate the difference between a gift and a vocation, between what we are good at and what we are called on to do. These are two very different things. I have known great judges who were also brilliant pianists. Wittgenstein trained as an aeronautical engineer but eventually dedicated his life to philosophy. Ronald Heifetz qualified as a doctor and a musician but instead became the founder of the School of Public Leadership at the John F Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. We can be good at many things, but what gives a life direction and meaning is a sense of mission, of something we are called on to do.

That is the significance of the opening word of today's parsha, that gives its name to the entire book: Vayikra, "He called." Look carefully at the verse and

you will see that its construction is odd. Literally translated it reads: "He called to Moses, and God spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying ...". The first phrase seems to be redundant. If we are told that God spoke to Moses, why say in addition, "He called"?

The answer is that God's call to Moses was something prior to and different from what God went on to say. The latter were the details. The former was the summons, the mission – not unlike God's first call to Moses at the burning bush where He invited him to undertake the task that would define his life: leading the people out of exile and slavery to freedom in the Promised Land.

Why this second call? Probably because the book of Vayikra has, on the face of it, nothing to do with Moses. The original name given to it by the sages was Torat Cohanim, "the Law of the Priests"[1] – and Moses was not a priest. That role belonged to his brother Aaron. So it was as if God were saying to Moses: this too is part of your vocation. You are not a priest but you are the vehicle through which I reveal all My laws, including those of the priests.

We tend to take the concept of a vocation – the word itself comes from the Latin for a "call" – for granted as if every culture has such an idea. However, it is not so. The great German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) pointed out that the idea of vocation, so central to the social ethic of Western culture, is essentially "a religious conception, that of a task set by God." [2]

It was born in the Hebrew Bible. Elsewhere there was little communication between the gods and human beings. The idea that God might invite human beings to become His partners and emissaries was revolutionary. Yet that is what Judaism is about.

Jewish history began with God's call to Abraham, to leave his land and family. God called to Moses and the prophets. There is a particularly vivid account in Isaiah's mystical vision in which he saw God enthroned and surrounded by singing angels:

Then I heard the Voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

The most touching account is the story of the young Samuel, dedicated by his mother Hannah to serve God in the sanctuary at Shiloh where he acted as an assistant to Eli the priest. In bed at night he heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli. He ran to see what he wanted but Eli told him he had not called. This happened a second time and then a

third, and by then Eli realised that it was God calling the child. He told Samuel that the next time the Voice called his name, he should reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' It did not occur to the child that it might be God summoning him to a mission, but it was. Thus began his career as a prophet, judge and anointer of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Samuel 3).

These were all prophetic calls, and prophecy ended during the Second Temple period. Nonetheless the idea of vocation remains for all those who believe in Divine providence. Each of us is different, therefore we each have unique talents and skills to bring to the world. The fact that I am here, in this place, at this time, with these abilities, is not accidental. There is a task to perform, and God is calling us to it.

The man who did more than anyone to bring this idea back in recent times was Viktor Frankl, the psychotherapist who survived Auschwitz. There in the camp he dedicated himself to giving people the will to live. He did so by getting them to see that their lives were not finished, that they still had a task to perform, and that therefore they had a reason to survive until the war was over.

Frankl insisted that the call came from outside the self. He used to say that the right question was not "What do I want from life?" but "What does life want from me?" He quotes the testimony of one of his students who earlier in life had been hospitalised because of mental illness. He wrote a letter to Frankl containing these words:

But in the darkness, I had acquired a sense of my own unique mission in the world. I knew then, as I know now, that I must have been preserved for some reason, however small; it is something that only I can do, and it is vitally important that I do it... In the solitary darkness of the "pit" where men had abandoned me, He was there. When I did not know His name, He was there; God was there.[3]

Reading Psalms in the prison to which the KGB had sent him, Natan Sharansky had a similar experience.[4]

Frankl believed that "Every human person constitutes something unique; each situation in life occurs only once. The concrete task of any person is relative to this uniqueness and singularity." [5] The essence of the task, he argued, is that it is self-transcending. It comes from outside the self and challenges us to live beyond mere self-interest. To discover such a task is to find that life – my life – has meaning and purpose.

How do you discover your vocation? The late Michael Novak argued [6] that a calling has four characteristics. First, it is unique to you. Second, you have the talent for it. Third, it is something which, when you do it, gives you a sense of enjoyment and renewed energy. Fourth, do not expect it to reveal itself immediately. You may have to follow many paths that turn out to be false before you find the true one.

Novak quotes Logan Pearsall Smith who said, "The test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves." All real achievement requires backbreaking preparation. The most common estimate is 10,000 hours of deep practice. Are you willing to pay this price? It is no accident that Vayikra begins with a call – because it is a book about sacrifices, and vocation involves sacrifice. We are willing to make sacrifices when we sense that a specific role or task is what we are called on to do.

This is a life-changing idea. For each of us God has a task: work to perform, a kindness to show, a gift to give, love to share, loneliness to ease, pain to heal, or broken lives to help mend. Discerning that task, hearing God's call, is what gives a life meaning and purpose. Where what we want to do meets what needs to be done, that is where God wants us to be.

[1] Hence the Latin name Leviticus, meaning, "pertaining to the Levites," i.e. the priestly tribe.

[2] Quoted in Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling: work and the examined life*, Free Press, 1996, 17.

[3] Viktor Frankl, *The Unconscious God*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1975, 11.

[4] Natan Sharansky, *Fear No Evil*, New York : Vintage Books, 1989

[5] Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, Souvenir Press, 1969, 57.

[6] Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling*, Free Press, 1996, 17-40

### **Rav Kook on the Perasha Animal Sacrifices in the Third Temple?**

[Rav Kook's views on the Temple service are sometimes misconstrued. A superficial reading of a passage in Olat Re'iyah (vol. I, p. 292) indicates that only grain offerings will be offered in the reinstated Temple service. To properly understand Rav Kook's approach, it is necessary to read a related essay from Otzarot HaRe'iyah.]

What will the rebuilt Temple be like? Will we really offer animal sacrifices once again?

Protecting Animals: Some people object to the idea of sacrifices out of concern for the welfare of animals. However, this objection contains a measure of hypocrisy. Why should compassion for animals only

be expressed with regard to humanity's spiritual needs? If our opposition to animal slaughter is based not on weakness of character, but on recognition of the issue's fundamental morality, then our first step should be to outlaw the killing of animals for food, clothing, and other material benefits.

In the world's present state, the human race is weak, both physically and morally. The hour to protect animal life has not yet arrived. We still need to slaughter animals for our physical needs, and human morality requires that we maintain clear boundaries to distinguish between the relative value of human and animal life.

At this point in time, to advocate the protection of animals in our service of God is disingenuous. Is it moral to permit cruelty towards animals for our physical needs, yet forbid their use for our spiritual service, in sincere recognition and gratitude for God's kindness? If our dedication and love for God can be expressed - at its highest level — with our willingness to surrender our own lives and die al kiddush Hashem, sanctifying God's name, then certainly we should be willing to forgo the life of animals for this sublime goal.

The Return of Prophecy: Currently, however, we are not ready for an immediate restoration of the sacrificial service. Only with the return of prophecy will it be possible to restore the Temple order. In a letter penned in 1919, Rav Kook explained:

“With regard to sacrifices, it is more correct to believe that all aspects will be restored to their place. ... We should not be overly troubled by the views of European culture. In the future, God's word to His people will elevate all the foundations of culture to a level above that attainable by human reason.

“It is inappropriate to think that sacrifices only reflect the primitive idea of a worship of flesh. This service possesses a holy inner nature that cannot be revealed in its beauty without the illumination of God's light to His people [the return of prophecy] and a renewal of holiness to Israel. And this will be recognized by all peoples. But I agree with you that we should not approach the practical aspects of sacrifices before the advent of revealed divine inspiration in Israel.” (Igrot HaRe'iyah vol. IV p. 24)

The Future World: In the writings of the Kabbalists, we find a remarkable description of how the universe will look in the future, a world vastly changed from our current reality. All aspects of the universe will be elevated. Even the animals in that future era will be different; they will advance to the level of people

nowadays (Sha'ar Hamitzvot of the Ari z"l). Obviously, no sacrifice could be offered from such humanlike animals. At that time, there will no longer be strife and conflict between the species. Human beings will no longer need to take the lives of animals for their physical, moral, and spiritual needs.

It is about this distant time that the Midrash makes the startling prediction, “All sacrifices will be annulled in the future” (Tanchuma Emor 19, Vayikra Rabbah 9:7). The prophet Malachi similarly foretold of a lofty world in which the Temple service will only consist of grain offerings, in place of the animal sacrifices of old:

“Then the grain-offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to God as in the days of old, and as in ancient years.” (Malachi 3:4)

Hints to the Future: Even in the current reality, we may feel uncomfortable about killing animals. This does not mean that the time for full animal rights has already arrived. Rather, these feelings come from a hidden anticipation of the future that is already ingrained in our souls, like many other spiritual aspirations. Hints of these future changes may be found in the text of the Torah itself. Thus, it says that offerings are slaughtered on the northern side of the altar. Why this side? The north traditionally represents that which is incomplete and lacking, as it is written, “Out of the north, the evil shall break forth” (Jeremiah 1:14). In other words, the need to slaughter animals is a temporary concession to life in an incomplete world.

Furthermore, the Torah stipulates that sacrifices must be slaughtered 'lirtzonchem' — ‘willingly’ (Lev. 19:5). The Temple service must correspond to our needs and wants. As the Talmud in Erchin 21a explains, one must be able to say, “I want to bring this offering.” When the slaughter of animals is no longer generally acceptable to society, this condition will not be fulfilled.

Finally, the Torah describes a person offering an animal sacrifice as adam (Lev. 1:2). This word indicates our current state of moral decline, a result of the unresolved sin of Adam, the first man. An individual offering a grain offering, on the other hand, is called nefesh, or soul (Lev. 2:1). The word nefesh implies a deeper, more essential level of humanity, independent of any temporary failings.

(Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 173-176. Adapted from Otzarot HaRe'iyah, vol. II, pp. 101-103; Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 292)

**AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL****“A man of you that shall bring an offering” (1:2)**

At the outset, we must understand the basic function of the Korban in general. The Korban signifies the sacrifice of one's own body to Hashem. The model of all sacrifices was provided when Hashem commanded Abraham to offer up his son Yitzchak (Beresheet 22), as shall be explained below.

The sacrifice of one's Ego is the true intention of the Korban, and this is symbolized by the slaughtering and offering. “He who slaughters his Inclination” (Sanhedrin 43B) is compared to the slaughter of the Korban: “one whose mind is humble in him is as if he had brought all the Korbanot” (ibid.).

When Abraham was commanded by Hashem to sacrifice his son, the intention was that he demonstrate the sacrifice of what he loved most as a proof that his love of Hashem was superior to any other love. The chief obstacle to righteousness is Arrogance, which drives a man to do solely that which his passions dictate. Thus the criminal is one who follows his own desires, regardless of Hashem's will and of the principles of decent behavior. To slaughter one's inclinations is the true Humility, and this perfection of mind and character-traits is achieved by understanding the Korban.

The Korban is a declaration of the principle: “You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart (i.e. mind), with all your Nefesh (i.e. desire), and with all your might” (Devarim 6:5). By means of offering the Korban to Hashem, one gives himself to Hashem and this is achieved when the Korban becomes part of the “eternal fire” on the Mizbeach (6:6) which symbolizes Hashem's Presence.

Quoted from “A Kingdom of Cohanim” by Rabbi Miller ZT'L