

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SAV/SHABBAT HAGADOL

Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 7:21-8:3, 9:22-23

MARCH 23-24, 2018 8 NISAN 5778

**DEDICATION: In memory of Gerald Werman – Yosef Mordechai Ben Rachel
And in memory of Joe D Bibi – Yosef ben Milo
And in memory of Norman Pollanky – 14 Nisan**

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EDITORS NOTES

In our class this week we looked at two areas of this week's portion which deal with miracles.

The first is the command to keep a fire lit on the mizbeyach – the Alter. The Gemara tells us *“Although the fire descended from heaven, it is a misvah to add a humanly produced fire to it as well.”* The rabbis explain that the fire on the Alter was of a miraculous and divine nature. They then ask, that if this was so, why was still a commandment for the kohen to add to the fire each morning through natural means. If in any event Hashem would perform a miracle and have fire descend from heaven in order to ignite the flame of the Alter, why then was it necessary for the kohanim to go through the unnecessary motions of kindling the fire?

The Sefer Hachinuch offers a unique explanation. *“When Hashem decides to perform a tremendous miracle, He does His best to disguise it and make it appear as if it is a regular occurrence... We find that at the splitting of the Red Sea, the verse wrote that a strong wind blew, in order to give in the appearance of a natural phenomenon. This is also the reason why Hashem commanded the Kohanim to light the fire on the Alter even though it descended from heaven, in order to disguise the miracle in the cloak of the mundane.”*

Rabbi Abittan referred to this as, Hashem exercising plausible deniability thus allowing people to maintain free choice as to believe or not believe.

My daughter Aryana suggested at dinner that, hiding the miracle prevents us from sitting back and remaining passive. We must always remember that man was placed in the world to work it and watch it. It is up to us to actively take part in the world around us and through our own effort work to achieve our goals. Perhaps this is a reason why the kohen was still commanded to kindle the flame on the Alter, so that

we should never forget the importance of our own actions.

We seem to visit the other extreme later on in the Perasha when we are introduced to the Korban Todah [The Thanksgiving offering]. See my brother Victor in Sod HaPerasha on Birkat Gomel and Rabbi Sacks below on being thankful. Here we are taught that one who experiences a personal miracle brings a sacrifice with lots of bread all which must be eaten relatively quickly. The Rabbi suggested that this requires the giver to invite many guests to consume all of the food and when they ask why have they been invited, details of the miracle are told over. The rabbi would suggest that anyone who experienced a personal miracle should make a seudah hodaah, if only a breakfast after prayers in the synagogue, in order to replicate the sharing of the story.

Today without the Temple to offer a sacrifice, we require four individuals to make the blessing of Gomel in the synagogue. These are one who successfully sailed across the ocean, one who traveled through the desert, safely reaching his destination, one who was released from jail and one who was bed ridden for three days or more and recovered. The question is asked, “why these four”?

We suggested that in each of these cases where the rabbis look at the survivor as experiencing a miracle, the person may not consider it a miracle at all and if in fact something extraordinary occurred, they might thank the one who they see as saving them before ever thinking of Hashem. The one crossing the sea or the desert may experience nothing perceived as dangerous and even if danger is presented, they may thank the captain and excellent crew for handling a storm, or the caravan leader and his security team for protecting them from robbers along the way. Even the one who is ill no longer looks at his recovery as miraculous. We mentioned that we live in a day and age where people take a quadruple bypass for granted and fully expect to be back at work the following week and if there is anyone to thank it's the doctor. The released prisoner turns to the president or governor who signed their release or to the lawyers who got him out with appreciation. In all these cases, it seems it is very easy to forget that there is something miraculous taking place and

Hashem is at the center of that miracle. We lose sight of the miracles in our daily life and must remind ourselves of them.

So one of the messages we see this week is that Hashem makes sure that He is hidden in the action or the coincidence but it's up to us to remember that Hashem is responsible and to find him.

My daughter Mariyah was presented with an interesting question, During the Seder, we say part of Hallel prior to the meal and the balance of Hallel after the mea Why do we split Hallel ?

Sefer Abudarham written in 14th century Spain, in its comments on the Haggadah suggests that we divide Hallel in order to elevate the second cup of wine. We should keep in mind that on any holiday or Shabbat, we typically use two cups – one for Kiddush and one for birkat Hamazon. Haham David Abudarham explains that as we all know at the seder, we have four cups of wine and each cup must relate to and be elevated in kedusha – in holiness. The first cup of wine is the one we hold and through which we recite the Kiddush. The second cup relating to the end of the first part of the seder of Magid is elevated through the first part of the Hallel. The third cup us the kos shel beracha or the cup of blessing we hold when reciting the birkat hamazon and the fourth cup relates to the remaining part of the Hallel.

To further understand the divide between the first part of the seder and the second part of the seder, or between the second cup and the fourth cup, we turn to the great sage and defender of the Jewish people, Don Isaac Abarbanel who writes a century later in the Zevach Pesach. The sage explains that the division has to do with what we remember while saying Hallel.

Turning to the Talmud, we are taught that we recite Hallel when celebrating the salvation of the Jewish people. And our Hallel has us focus on five topics of our redemption. These are Yetziat Mitzrayim – The Exodus of Egypt, The splitting of the sea and the crossing of Yam Suf, Matan Torah at Har Sinai – The receiving the Torah, Mashiach and finally techitat HaMetim – the resurrection of the dead. These topics are mentioned each for a specific reason.

The first three, Yetziat Mitzrayim, Yam Suf, and receiving the Torah, are all mentioned in the first two chapter of Hallel. We say, "Asher Ge'alanu, Who Has Redeemed Us", drinking the second cup and then go into the misvah of eating the matzah, which reminds us of the past miracles – especially yesiat misrayim which leads to the cross of the sea and finally to the

Divine revelation at Sinai. This ends the first half of the seder.

We conclude the second half of the seder with the remaining chapters which speak of resurrecting the dead and Mashiach. These are events which will happen in the future. These chapters are said at the end as we will raise the fourth cup and open the door for Eliyahu HaNavi Zachur LaTob who arrives to join us at the seder. Any time Eliyahu comes to join us, we pray that he will stay and with him will come Mashiach Sidkeynu BimHerah Beyameynu, Amen – Speedily in our days. What a beautiful way to end the Seder with this cup and the words, LeShanah HaBa'Ah BeYerushalayim. In our home the final song we sing is Yerushalayim Shel Zahav recalling this dream.

Think Before We Do – Sav 5777

Mother always told us to think before we do.

The early parshiot of the book of Vayikra – Leviticus deal primarily with the sacrifices offered in the Mishkan and later the Temple. Many rabbis when faced with giving a speech or class of sacrifices breathe a sigh of relief because these portions often fall during the weeks of Shabbat HaGadol and Passover when one can replac the talk on the weekly portion with thoughts related to the time period we find ourselves in. Even in a leap year, these portions often mesh with Purim, Shabbat Zachor, Shabbat HaChodesh where we can more easily give over a timely message.

Last week and this week though, we tried to break this unwritten rule and really focus on the idea of korbanot - sacrifices slaughtered and burned on the altar. It behooves us to examine the words of Maimonides in Moreh Nevuchim as to the reason for sacrifices in replacing pagan sacrificial custom and demonstrating the folly in zoolatry and the glorification of animal deities which was heavily practiced in ancient Egypt. Forms of animal worship included the Egyptian Capricorn as it related to the Nile and Aries worship as it related to Ra and the Mesopotamian worship of the great bull or Taurus. We must then examine the Ramban – Nachmanides who vehemently disagrees and explains that the various actions involved in bringing a korban relate to different aspects of man's need for exoneration. This leads to a discussion of the future Third Temple and the questions as to whether sacrifices will return or if we are so removed from sacrifices as to no longer require them. Many cite Rav Kook's statement that, "only grain offerings will be offered in the reinstated Temple service." Yet they fail to also quote his words where he states, "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.'

As to what will be, perhaps Rav kook states it best when he writes,"... I agree with you that we should not approach the practical aspects of sacrifices before the advent of revealed divine inspiration in Israel."

But with at least 20% of the Torah devoted to the laws of sacrifices, there must be tremendous lessons for us. And we must remember that although in our exile we are unable to return to Temple Service, Hashem has given us an opportunity and substitute. The rabbis teach us that by actively engaging in the study of korbanot, it is considered as if we actually offered these sacrifices ourselves.

Let us try to relate one lesson of bringing a sacrifice, first to our daily lives, to our shabbat service and to the holiday of Pesach which quickly approaches.

The Torah teaches that one bringing an offering leans his hands on the head of the offering, he confesses his sin and then he slaughters the bull. The Kohen takes the blood and throws it on the alter. Most assume that it is the Kohen who slaughters, but it appears based on the words of the rabbis that it is preferable for the one offering to do the slaughtering. In fact the Zohar explains that not only permissible for the non-Kohen to perform the shechita, but it is actually forbidden for the Kohen to slaughter the korban.

We have explained many times the words of Rabbi Abittan, z'sl, that the kavana, the thoughts one should have, when wearing tefillin each day upon our head and bound to our arm is an internal declaration and a demonstrative one before all that our intellect represented by the tefillin of the head should always supersede our actions, represented by the tefillin on our arm. Our actions and emotions – the tefillin of the arm rests upon our hearts – are always to be bound to our intellect and Heaven above. Throughout our day, we must remind ourselves that our emotions and passions should never be in control.

We can perhaps find a similar message in the chametz we are commanded to remove from our possessions and refrain from consuming and the matzah (unleavened bread) we are commanded to eat on Pesach. We are reminded that we left Egypt in such a hurry that our dough did not have time to rise.

On a deeper level, leavened dough symbolizes ego, which blows up like water and flour exposed to yeast and heat. This chametz represents our emotions and passions taking over. Matzah, on the other hand, is flat and symbolizes humility, controlling and keeping in check our emotion and passions and allowing our intellect to reign.

We can now comprehend why the sinner must lean with his hands on the head of the korban - sacrifice and confess his wrong doings. In this manner, he demonstrates that he recognizes that his failures are the result of not utilizing his head and brain like a human being but rather like an animal. As Rabbi Pinchas Friedman goes on to explain, an animal lacks the wisdom, understanding and knowledge to place the brain in its head in charge of the desires and cravings of its heart. An animal's entire behavior is controlled solely by the urges in its heart. The sinner must then slaughter the animal severing the head from the heart and the body and again demonstrating that he deserved to be punished in this manner measure for measure. Rather than having his brain reign over his heart, he separated and disconnected the brain from the heart. Nevertheless, we take solace in the fact that Hashem has mercy on us and allows the animal to stand in our place.

Let us close with a final related thought. We sit at the seder not as slaves, but as free men. We recline when we eat and we are considered like kings. The rabbis tell us that when Bilaam sought to curse the children of Israel, he had but a moment within the window of Hashem's anger. In that moment what could he say? The rabbis tell us, the word Kalem – meaning, "annihilate them", Kaf, Lamed, Mem. Hashem reversed the curse into a blessing and rearranged the letters into the reverse, Mem, Lamed, Kaf – Melech – King, as we read Uruat Melech Boh.

These three letters symbolize the three main parts of a person wherein our souls reside. They are Mem – Moach or Brain and intellect, LaMed – Lev or Heart and emotion and Kaf – Kaved or Liver representing our blood and animalistic soul and cravings.

Bilaam's curse was that we follow the route of Kalem. Our cravings should guide and influence our emotions and subsequently our heart will impose its will on our brain. When the brain becomes subservient to the heart and bodily desires it is in fact cut off from them. This is G-d forbid the road to destruction. Hashem in His mercy, reverses this within the blessing. And this should be our goal always, that our brains direct our hearts, our emotions, our passions and ultimately our actions.

Rabbi Isaac Wahnon, who is visiting from the Darchei Horaah L'Rabbanim Kollel in Israel, commented as we gave this class that we can be reminded of this in the weekly prayer of Lecha Dodi. We state Mikdashe Melech Ir Melucha – Kumi Sei Metoch Hafecha. We typically translate this as - Sanctuary of the King, city royal, Arise, go out from amidst the turmoil. The word Hafecha though translates as opposite so we are asking Hashem to protect us from the opposite of Melech or the curse of Kalem. A beautiful kavana or thought to have each week as we sing this song.

How important is this message repeated again and again. We must recall our education in the laws of sacrifice imagining our own hands on the head of the bull and severing its head remembering that the origin of sin comes when we sever our own brain from our body and allow ourselves to be led by our animal inclination, our passions and desires. From the prohibition of leaven and the command to eat Matzah, reminding us to rid ourselves of negative ego and uncontrolled emotion. From our daily binding of tefillin on our head and arm, reminding us that our actions and desires should always be bound to and governed by our intellect. And finally from the song we recite each Friday evening of lecha dodi, reminding us that the Melech – the king should reign supreme; that our brain should rule over our heart and actions and chas veshalom, never the opposite.

Yes, mother knows best in reminding us again and again, to think before we do!

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Kasher VeSameyach

David Bibi

The Moment That Made Israel a Nation MEIR SOLOVEICHIK

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/moment-made-israel-nation/>

‘Jews do not shoot at Jews.’ So the young Menachem Begin confidently assured a worried young man on June 20, 1948, just after Israel became the world’s newest nation. A ship under the control of Begin’s militia, the Irgun, had come ashore at Kfar Vitkin with badly needed arms and ammunition for the fledgling Jewish state. A disagreement ensued between Begin and Israel’s leader, David Ben-Gurion, as to the allocation of the arms on the Altalena. Ben-Gurion ordered Israeli Defense Forces to surround the ship. A boy assisting in the unloading of its cargo fretted that those who had just come ashore might be fired upon. Begin

assured him that this was inconceivable. Whatever might happen, Jews do not shoot at Jews.

He proved badly mistaken. A firefright did break out, and the Altalena fled back to the Mediterranean, landing near what is now Tel Aviv’s Frischman Beach on June 22, with Begin on board. David Ben-Gurion ordered the ship shelled. Sixteen members of the Irgun were killed. Standing on the ship while being fired upon—with dear friends of his dying—Begin ordered those aboard the Altalena not to fire back, declaring milkhemet ahim le-olam lo, never a war between brothers. After leaving the smoldering Altalena, with much of its arms cache lost forever, Begin went on the radio and again ordered his seething followers not to seek revenge. After wrongly predicting that Jews would never shoot at Jews, Begin now enunciated an even more extraordinary principle: Jews do not shoot at Jews, even when those Jews are shooting at them.

This was his greatest moment. The survival of the newly born state was anything other than assured, and shooting back, however justified the self-defense might have been, would have torn the people apart. In his memoir *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*, Yehuda Avner quotes Begin explaining his motivation: “Twenty centuries ago we faced the bitter experience of the destruction of our Second Temple, the destruction of our capital Jerusalem. And why? Because of our senseless hatred of each other, a hatred that led to civil war and to our utter ruin: behiya le-dorot [a weeping for generations].” This time, civil war did not take place, and the nascent Jewish state flourished into the mighty, vibrant, “start-up nation” we know it to be today.

This coming month, millions of Israelis and Jews around the world will celebrate the 70th anniversary of Israel’s birth. Far fewer will mark, a month later, the 70th anniversary of the Altalena affair, and Begin’s decision on that day. Yet it is perhaps the second-most important moment in 1948, one that defined Israeli democracy forever.

Herein lies a lesson. Statesman, leaders, great men of history, are usually remembered for what they achieved. Yet often their greatest moments are best understood by what they chose not to do. We speak of George Washington as the father of our country, and in that context we recall what he accomplished: expelling the British from Boston, crossing the Delaware in the dead of night, conquering Cornwallis at Yorktown, leading the Constitutional Convention, becoming the first president of the United States. Yet it may well be that these achievements pale in

comparison to Washington's decision not to seize power and to resign his commission once victory over the British had been secured. In today's democratic age, we take this moment for granted, but Washington's resignation was best understood by his enemy George III. "If he does that," said the monarch, "he will be the greatest man in the world." Similarly, Menachem Begin is remembered for what he did: the Osirak strike, peace with Egypt, leading a rebellion against the British. Yet it was what Begin did on the Altalena—or rather, what he asked his fellow Jews not to do—that will ensure his immortality.

While Washington's resigning of his commission may not be the moment Americans associate first and foremost with his life, our country nevertheless accords it the honor it deserves: John Trumbull's magnificent depiction of the moment hangs in the Capitol today. But precious little has been done to remember the events surrounding the Altalena. A small stone stands near Frischman Beach, bearing the names of the 16 dead and emblazoned with Begin's *milhemet ahim le-olam lo*. Nearby, bizarrely, is a cartoonish statue of Ben-Gurion standing on his head, one of the most popular photo sites in Tel Aviv. As the Jerusalem Post notes, "it's likely that few of the people taking selfies with 'the old man' realize that right behind it is the site of one of the seminal events of Israel's early history." Recently, a memorial has been established at the grave of the Altalena's dead, but it is visited only by those who know the story already.

Perhaps the truest memorial to the Altalena—albeit only an implicit one—can be found at the grave of Menachem Begin himself. Begin requested that he be buried on the Mount of Olives next to the graves of Moshe Barzani and Meir Feinstein, two Jewish fighters who had blown up a grenade in a cell in 1947—embracing each other and dying together right before their scheduled execution by the British. These two young men's families came from opposite ends of the earth: One was an Iraqi Kurdish Jew, the other an Ashkenazi of Eastern European descent. For Begin, their deaths in each other's arms embodied the notion that Jews are bound by blood, that too often that blood has been shed by our enemies, and that we must never shed it ourselves.

After June 22, the burnt and wrecked hull of the Altalena sat offshore for a year until Ben-Gurion ordered it sunk in 1949. In 2011, the suggestion was made that it be raised and restored, a monument to one of the most important moments in the birth of the Jewish state. The moment to raise it has surely come. Let the Altalena stand, publicly, off the shores of Tel Aviv. Let the people of the vibrant democracy

that its founders created discuss and debate the events surrounding that moment. Let children board the Altalena and stand where the boat's passengers—survivors of Hitler's Holocaust—had once stood, looking longingly toward the approaching shore, bringing weapons to their brethren. Let students stare at the shore and imagine being fired upon by those they had come to join as brothers in arms. And let them imagine one man standing firmly on the deck, amid the hurtling shells and dying comrades and followers yearning to return fire, and telling them resolutely, in words that would define a nation, that Jews do not shoot at Jews.

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Tsav- Duties of the Kohen regarding the korbanot, Inauguration of the mishkan

- 1- Duties of the priest regarding Korban Olah & Mincha (removing the ashes, separating, burning, eating)
- 2- Minchat habitin, korban hatat, korban asham (where its slaughtered, what parts are brought, who eats it)
- 3- Korban Shelamim (Shelamim brought to give thanks, Shelamim brought for a neder)
- 4- Moshe inaugurates the mishkan anointing Aharon, his kids, the mishkan and its kelim
- 5- Aharon and his sons bring korban hatat with a bull as part of the inauguration
- 6- Aharon and his sons bring a korban with a ram. Moshe sprinkles the blood on them as part of the inauguration
- 7- Continued. Moshe sprinkles blood on Aharon and his sons. They cook and eat the korban.

Getting ready for the Seder

Pesach is just a week or so away. Below are some ideas to help us have a more productive holiday.

- When cleaning our homes we can regularly remind ourselves that we are fulfilling a mitsva de'orayta of ridding our house of hametz on Pesach. This can make our cleaning more meaningful.
- Think of ways to get the kids pumped up for the seder.
 - o Tell the kids in advance that you are excited to hear their ideas on the seder table. Maybe this will give them an extra push to listen in class because they know their parents are waiting to hear what they have to say. It also shows the kids that we are giving importance to the seder night (and not just going through the motions).

- o Candy- Most importantly, CANDY! Go to the store, buy a big bag of taffies, a box of bazookas, and a bag of lolly pops. Every time a kid says an idea on the seder table give them a candy. If you really want to get in to it you can get small prizes from amazing savings to raffle off and give out tickets every time a child says an idea (much easier than sitting there begging your shy son to read ma nishtana while you are holding everyone up and grandpa wants to push things along)!
- o Buy Props – Go to Eichlers. Get a bunch of frogs and little matza ball men or a bag of little toy animals to leave out on the seder table. Bring a pillow to the seder table so you can lean. Make it fun!
- o Nap - I've heard many people recommend trying to get your kids to take a nap the day of the seder so they can stay up late. I thought it was impossible but I tried it one year and it worked. Worth a shot.
 - Learn about the holiday. Especially about the makot. Focus on trying to build Eemunah.
- o Read the Me'am Lo'ez on parashat Va'era and Bo (discusses all interesting midrashim about the makot)
- o Read through parashat Va'era and Bo in the Humash
- o Listen to classes. Rabbi Mansour has a great series called Haggadah with the Malbim where he goes through and explains each line of the haggadah. Below is a link <http://www.learntorah.com/lt-shiur-details.aspx?id=1951>. Search on learntorah.com for other Pesach classes as well.
- o Buy a haggadah with persoochim to read in advance for ideas to say over on the table or at least to put us in the right head (Note, focus your hidooshim on the miracles that Hashem did for us as the Rambam says this is the main part of the mitzvah).
 - Rabbi Mansour has a Sephardic Heritage Haggadah from artscroll
 - Rabbi Mersky has a Haggadah with Perooshim called Hegyoney Halacha (comes in Hebrew or English)
 - Also, the Sephardic Children's Haggadah is really great (and not just for children). It lays everything out in a very simple format explaining why we do each thing that we do. I highly recommend it.

The more we put in to the holiday the more we will get out of it!

The Back Up Plan for Maggid

Many times the seder doesn't always go the way we want. We have things we want to say but either we feel uncomfortable to say it or we don't want to hold up the crowd. So here is the move. Right after eating the egg and other items there is usually a short break

to bring out the food. At that point you pull the kids over to the kids table. You say whoever comes to the table to listen will get prizes (or tickets or candy). And this is the point where you have their attention. No one is rushing you and there are no adults so no need to feel embarrassed to speak or hold anyone up. And here is our opportunity to give them over the lessons of emunah. Tell them the story (on most tables unfortunately we spend a lot of time on ma nishtana and telling ideas about the four sons and then we rush through the main part not understanding what we are reading). Read the 4 main pesookim to the kids and explain each one in simple English. And then just tell the story. Talk about each miracle. Give them the details. Ask the kids to give you details about the makot. Say one ticket for anyone that can name an animal that came in the arov. One ticket for anyone who can name an animal that died on the dever. One ticket for anyone who can name different details about every maka. The details are what help us visualize the makot. And we can reiterate the whole lesson of the makot is that Hashem runs the world. Hashem runs the world. Just keep repeating it. Tonight we all have an added ability to have the lessons of emunah penetrate our minds and heart. This is our chance to take advantage and instill emunah in our children for the year. Let us not waste it. The whole thing won't take more than 5-10 minutes and you'll have taken advantage of telling over the story to our children. By the time you are done the line for the food will have just cleared out and you will be able to make your plate get right back into action at the table without missing a beat.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

“And the flesh of his feast thanksgiving peace offering must be eaten on the day of its offering.” (Vayikra 7:15)

The Gerrer Rebbe zt"l asks: since the thanksgiving offering is a form of shelamim (peace offering), why must it be eaten on the day it is offered, unlike a regular peace offering which may be eaten for the next day as well?

This offering was brought to thank Hashem for a miracle that happened to an individual Jew. However, new miracles happen each and every day, and it would be inappropriate to partake of a sacrifice for yesterday's miracle when new ones have just occurred.

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser tells a true story that illustrates this idea. Years ago in Europe, an observant soldier in the Austrian army was granted a one-day leave to visit his parents. His orders required him to return to the base before evening. However, that evening would be Purim, and the

soldier's mother insisted vehemently that he remain at home for the reading of the megillah. Knowing that his failure to report on time to his base would be regarded as a serious offense, the soldier argued that he couldn't possibly stay. A heated controversy ensued in the house, until the family decided to bring the problem to the Rabbi. Upon hearing the question, the Rabbi didn't hesitate for a moment. His reply was "obey your mother."

The soldier remained at home until Purim morning after the second megillah reading. In great trepidation, he traveled back to his base and fearfully approached the entrance. To his utter amazement, the base was totally deserted. The soldier later found out that every single one of his comrades had contracted food poisoning from the previous night's meal. They had all required hospitalization.

We say each day in the blessing of Modim in the Amidah, "We thank Hashem...for all Your miracles that are with us every day." Sometimes these miracles are obvious, but it's important to remember that hidden ones are occurring constantly as well. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"This is the law of the olah offering" (Vayikra 6:2)

This week's parashah continues to discuss the various types of korbanot (offerings) that were offered in the Mishkan and in the Bet Hamikdash. The first one to be discussed is the olah, which was totally burned on the mizbe'ah. Our Rabbis explain that this is also an allusion to one who is haughty and arrogant, about whom the gemara states that Hashem distances Himself from that person. What is the Torah's definition of haughtiness, and in contrast, humility?

The Hazon Ish zt"l was once asked if he was aware that he is the gadol hador (the greatest Sage of the generation). He answered, "Yes I am aware." "If so," he was asked, "how is it possible for you to remain so humble, and to conduct yourself with such modesty with everyone you encounter?"

He answered, "It is because I realize that if anyone else had been blessed with the same gifts that I have been blessed with, he would have reached perfection." In other words, his humility was that he didn't credit himself for his accomplishments, but rather he recognized that it was all to Hashem's credit.

Rabenu Yonah, in Shaarei Teshubah, says that Hashem is disgusted by a haughty person and does not give him any Divine assistance in battling the yeser hara (evil inclination). Since this type of person tends to take credit for himself and doesn't acknowledge Hashem's help, so Hashem steps back, so to speak, and allows him to fend for himself.

It is ok to be proud of our accomplishments, but only if we also recognize Hashem's involvement.

We should never allow it to make us feel superior or more special than anyone else. By maintaining a correct attitude and perspective, we will merit to receive Hashem's continued support and assistance in all of our endeavors. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Following G-d's Example of Respect

The Torah in Parashat Sav continues its discussion of the various forms of Korbanot (sacrifice). Among the interesting and meaningful laws relevant to the sacrifices is the location where they were offered. The Torah stipulates that the Ola sacrifice, a voluntary offering generally brought when somebody did not commit a sin but entertained thoughts of sin, was prepared at the same location as the Hatat – the sin-offering. A person bringing an Ola would bring his animal to the same section in Bet Ha'mikdash where sinners would bring a Hatat sacrifice to atone for their wrongdoing.

The reason why this was done, the Rabbis explain, is to avoid humiliating the sinner. If there was an area designated exclusively for Hatat offerings, then anyone who brought his Hatat would be easily identified as a sinner, and he would suffer embarrassment. G-d did not want sinners to be subject to humiliation, and He therefore instructed that the Hatat and Ola would be brought to and sacrificed at the same location, such that nobody would know who was bringing an Ola and who was bringing a Hatat.

If we had been the ones deciding, I imagine that some of us would have done just the opposite, and would have specifically designated a spot exclusively for the sinners bringing their Hatat offerings. If they are guilty of wrongdoing and are thus required to bring a sacrifice for atonement, then to the contrary – let them be humiliated!

But this is not the Torah's perspective, and this is not the Torah way. G-d shows sensitivity, compassion and respect to even the sinners of our nation, because He loves them despite their wrongdoing. He wants the sinners to offer a sacrifice and earn atonement, not for them to suffer humiliation.

We must learn from G-d's example of sensitivity. If G-d, the judge of the world, avoids causing people embarrassment for their mistakes, then certainly we must do the same. It is very wrong to embarrass or insult somebody because his or her level of observance is lower than ours. We are certainly no more righteous than G-d Himself. And if He is concerned for the feelings of sinners, then we, too,

must be respectful to all people regardless of their level of observance. And besides, the vast majority of Jews who are not meticulously observant – certainly in our community – are lacking due to deficient knowledge, or because of their upbringing. There are very few who knowingly disregard Torah and Mitzvot in order to rebel against G-d. Is it right for us to look disdainfully upon those who do not have the background or knowledge that we have?

Moreover, the way to influence people to positive change is through respect and kindness, not through insults and hostility. There are some neighborhoods in Israel whose residents pelt their fellow Jews with rocks if they drive through the streets on Shabbat. Can we imagine someone deciding to become Shabbat observant because he or she is hit by a rock? Is there any chance of such measures achieving desired results? Wouldn't it be far more effective to greet them with Kibbeh and other delicious Shabbat foods, and show them the beauty and warmth of Shabbat?

G-d makes a point of showing respect to those who have sinned, and we must ensure to do the same.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
PESACH**

One of the more amazing things about the holiday of Pesach is that even though it is over 3700 years old it is relevant and current to our world today just as it was when it was originally celebrated by the Jewish people in Egypt long ago. It naturally speaks to every generation in a different tone and nuance, but its basic message of human freedom and Godly service has never changed.

Its rituals and commandments are the key to its longevity and survival over all the centuries and, in spite of all of the challenges and difficulties that are so replete in Jewish history. In fact, were it not for these rituals and commandments the holiday itself, if not even the Jewish people, would have long ago disappeared into the ash heap of history.

The Godly instinct that has made ritual a daily part of the life of every Jew has been the surest method of Jewish survival and continuity. It is what binds the generations one to another in families and nationally. Without it, the disconnect between generations and

the circumstances of society would be so great that it would be impossible to overcome.

The night of the Pesach Seder is the greatest example of the power of ritual and tradition to preserve human relationships and to bind disparate generations together. It is no exaggeration to say that the Jewish world is founded on the night of the Pesach Seder. Without it, we are doomed to extinction. With it, we become immortal and eternal.

I myself have always been privileged to celebrate Pesach and the Seder at home. I only went to a hotel for Pesach once in my lifetime when my wife was ill, and we had no other choice. I am not here to decry all of the Pesach programs that exist and prosper worldwide. I understand and appreciate why they are so popular and in our generation of relative affluence in the Jewish world, it is completely rational to use these services.

But it is completely ironic that in our time, because of technological advances, all sorts of automatic appliances, Pesach kitchens and an unbelievable plethora of prepared Pesach foods and products, that giving one's family the unforgettable experience of a Pesach at home is slowly disappearing from the Jewish scene in many parts of the world.

Let me hasten to say again that I do not criticize anyone for any reason who celebrates Pesach at a hotel or with any sort of organized program. There are many circumstances in life that justify these choices. However, for the purposes of Jewish continuity and survival, I feel that it is important for children to remember a family Pesach at home, to recall how their parents and grandparents conducted a Seder and to be able to give personal expression to the glory of the holiday and to the memory of our history.

At the Pesach Seder there is a potential for uniting hundreds of years of family memories. Grandparents remember their grandparents and the little great-grandchildren, whose sole interest is to extort their elders for the return of the afikomen, are united in binding together hundreds of years of family life and Judaism. A Seder at home with the family provides the optimum setting for such an emotional and spiritual experience.

Eighty years ago, I attended the first Seder that I can recall. It was in the house of my grandfather who was educated in the great yeshiva of Volozhin and who was a rabbi of a congregation in Chicago as well as being one of the heads of the yeshiva that then existed in Chicago. That Seder is one of my earliest

memories in life. I remember the deference that my father and uncles paid my grandfather and I recall how my cousin and I hesitatingly recited the four questions to him and the delight that shown on his face when we did so.

There were about 30 people at my grandfather's Seder that year. Only my cousin and I still survive but I have tried to pass on the memory of that Seder to my own grandchildren and now great-grandchildren. By so doing, a whiff of Volozhin, and even of Egypt and Sinai, may be transmitted to them and from them to their generations as well. Like all else in Judaism, Pesach is memory. And memory is the most powerful tool for the preservation of a Jewish way of life.

I wish you and your families a happy and kosher Pesach.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Giving Thanks

The first words we are taught to say each morning, immediately on waking, are Modeh/modah ani, "I give thanks." We thank before we think. Note that the normal word order is inverted: Modeh ani, not ani modeh, so that in Hebrew the "thanks" comes before the "I." Judaism is "gratitude with attitude." And this, according to recent scientific research, really is a life-enhancing idea.

The source of the command to give thanks is to be found in this week's parsha. Among the sacrifices it itemises is the korban todah, the thanksgiving offering: "If he offers it [the sacrifice] as a thanksgiving offering, then along with this thanksgiving offering he is to offer unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and loaves of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil" (Lev. 7:12).

Though we have been without sacrifices for almost two thousand years, a trace of the thanksgiving offering survives to this day, in the form of the blessing Hagomel: "Who bestows good things on the unworthy", said in the synagogue, at the time of reading of the Torah, by one who has survived a hazardous situation. This is defined by the sages (on the basis of Psalm 107), as one who has survived a sea-crossing, or travelled across a desert, or recovered from serious illness, or been released from captivity.[1]

For me, the almost universal instinct to give thanks is one of the signals of transcendence[2] in the human condition. It is not just the pilot we want to thank

when we land safely after a hazardous flight; not just the surgeon when we survive an operation; not just the judge or politician when we are released from prison or captivity. It is as if some larger force was operative, as if the hand that moves the pieces on the human chessboard were thinking of us; as if Heaven itself had reached down and come to our aid.

Insurance companies sometimes describe natural catastrophes as "acts of God". Human emotion tends to do the opposite.[3] God is in the good news, the miraculous deliverance, the escape from catastrophe. That instinct – to offer thanks to a force, a presence, over and above natural circumstances and human intervention – is itself a signal of transcendence. Though not a proof of the existence of God, it is nonetheless an intimation of something deeply spiritual in the human heart. It tells us that we are not random concatenations of selfish genes, blindly reproducing themselves. Our bodies may be products of nature ("dust you are, and to dust you will return"), but there is something within us that reaches out to Someone beyond us: the soul of the universe, the Divine "You" to whom we offer our thanks. That is what was once expressed in the thanksgiving offering, and still is, in the Hagomel prayer.

Not until the early 1990s did a major piece of medical research reveal the dramatic physical effects of thanksgiving. It became known as the Nun Study. Some 700 American nuns, all members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States, agreed to allow their records to be accessed by a research team investigating the process of ageing and Alzheimer's Disease. At the start of the study the participants were aged between 75 and 102.[4]

What gave this study its unusual longitudinal scope is that in 1930 the nuns, then in their twenties, had been asked by the Mother Superior to write a brief autobiographical account of their life and their reasons for entering the convent. These documents were analysed by the researchers using a specially devised coding system to register, among other things, positive and negative emotions. By annually assessing the nuns' current state of health, the researchers were able to test whether their emotional state in 1930 had an effect on their health some sixty years later. Because they had all lived a very similar lifestyle during these six decades, they formed an ideal group for testing hypotheses about the relationship between emotional attitudes and health.

The results, published in 2001, were startling.[5] The more positive emotions – contentment, gratitude, happiness, love and hope – the nuns expressed in

their autobiographical notes, the more likely they were to be alive and well sixty years later. The difference was as much as seven years in life expectancy. So remarkable was this finding that it has led, since then, to a new field of gratitude research, as well as a deepening understanding of the impact of emotions on physical health.

Since the publication of the Nun Study and the flurry of further research it inspired, we now know of the multiple effects of developing an attitude of gratitude. It improves physical health and immunity against disease. Grateful people are more likely to take regular exercise and go for regular medical check-ups. Thankfulness reduces toxic emotions such as resentment, frustration and regret and makes depression less likely. It helps people avoid over-reacting to negative experiences by seeking revenge. It even tends to make people sleep better. It enhances self-respect, making it less likely that you will envy others for their achievements or success. Grateful people tend to have better relationships. Saying "thank you" enhances friendships and elicits better performance from employees. It is also a major factor in strengthening resilience. One study of Vietnam War Veterans found that those with higher levels of gratitude suffered lower incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Remembering the many things we have to be thankful for helps us survive painful experiences, from losing a job to bereavement.[6]

Jewish prayer is an ongoing seminar in gratitude. Birkot ha-Shachar, "the Dawn Blessings" said at the start of morning prayers each day, are a litany of thanksgiving for life itself: the human body, the physical world, land to stand on and eyes to see with.

Gratitude also lies behind a fascinating feature of the Amidah. When the leader of prayer repeats the Amidah aloud, we are silent other than for the responses of Kedushah, and saying Amen after each blessing, with one exception. When the leader says the words Modim anachnu lakh, "We give thanks to You," the congregation says the a parallel passage known as Modim de-Rabbanan. For every other blessing of the Amidah, it is sufficient to assent to the words of the leader by saying Amen. The one exception is Modim, "We give thanks." Rabbi Elijah Spira (1660–1712) in his work *Eliyahu Rabbah*, [7] explains that when it comes to saying thank you, we cannot delegate this away to someone else to do it on our behalf. Thanks has to come directly from us.

Hence the transformative idea: giving thanks is beneficial to the body and the soul. It contributes to both happiness and health. It is also a self-fulfilling

attitude: the more we celebrate the good, the more good we discover that is worthy of celebration.

This is neither easy nor natural. We are genetically predisposed to pay more attention to the bad than the good.[8] For sound biological reasons, we are hyper-alert to potential threats and dangers. It takes focussed attention to become aware of how much we have to be grateful for. That, in different ways, is the logic of prayer, of making blessings, of Shabbat, and many other elements of Jewish life.

It is also embedded in our collective name. The word Modeh, "I give thanks," comes from the same root as Yehudi, meaning "Jew." We acquired this name from Jacob's fourth son, named by his mother Leah who, at his birth said, "This time I will thank God" (Gen. 29:35). Jewishness is thankfulness: not the most obvious definition of Jewish identity, but by far the most life-enhancing.

[1] Berakhot 54b.

[2] On this idea, see Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, New York, Doubleday, 1990.

[3] Not always, of course. There was a memorable episode of *The Simpsons* in which Bart Simpson, before beginning his Thanksgiving meal, turns to heaven and says in place of grace, "We paid for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing."

[4] See Robert Emmons, *Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

[5] Danner, Deborah D., David A. Snowdon, and Wallace V. Friesen. "Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80.5 (2001): 804-13.

[6] Much of the material in this paragraph is to be found in articles published in *Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life* @ <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu>. See also Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness*, Sphere, 2007, 87-124.

[7] *Eliyahu Rabbah*, Orach Chayyim 127:1.

[8] The classic study of this is Roy Baumeister and others, "Bad is stronger than good," *Review of General Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2001, pp. 323–370.

Behind the Scenes - (Norman D. Levy - based on Rabbi Miller's Duties of the Mind)

"People think of lightning as something terrible. However, those who have investigated this phenomenon know that lightning also causes an essential fertilizer to be produced. The lightning unites oxygen and nitrogen in the air, resulting in nitrates that mix with rain to fertilize the soil".

Sometimes on the surface, things might seem terrible but with faith, it is actually Hashem orchestrating blessing behind the scenes."