

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

APPROPRIATE OBLMOVITIS

“...and throw the blood on the Altar...” (1:5)

Of the great battles of history, the struggle to get out of bed in the morning ranks with El Alamein and Gettysburg.

Many early-morning Napoleons have met their Waterloo when faced with the supreme effort of raising themselves from the torpor of slumber into the harsh light of day.

In 1858, the Russian writer Ivan Goncharov published the novel *Oblomov*. The eponymous central character famously fails to leave his bed for the first 150 pages of the novel, and *Oblomov* has become a Russian archetype of sloth and inertia.

On the other hand, we need no wake up call on the first day of our vacation. We spring out of bed with all the alacrity and enthusiasm of an athlete. Similarly, our self-sacrifice in being the first in the lunch queue or the opening morning of the spring sales is legion.

Once there was a certain scribe who went off to learn Torah in the Beit HaMidrash. While he was gone, someone came to buy a pair of *tefillin* from him. His children said that their father wasn't home, and so the would-be buyer went and bought from someone else. When the scribe returned and found out what had happened he was furious that no one had come to fetch him from the Beit HaMidrash.

A few days later, the scribe was again learning in the Beit HaMidrash when a tax inspector came knocking at the door of his home. Remembering their father's previous wrath, the children hastened to summon him to the house. His reaction when confronted with this unwelcome visitor needs no description.

“...and throw the blood on the Altar...” (1:5)

In Judaism, we have “*do mitzvot*” and “*don't-do mitzvot*”, and G-d has given us the character traits to accomplish both.

Every *korban* (offering) required that both the blood and the fat be placed on the altar. Blood represents alacrity, and thus it atones for running to do a “*don't-do*” mitzvah — for example when we rush to say a juicy piece of gossip rather than tarry and avoid it.

Fat symbolizes lethargy, and it atones for indolence and non-performance of “*do mitzvot*” — when we wear the snooze button down on our alarm clock instead of getting out of bed to go to shul.

“*Do mitzvot*” require alacrity to begin and finish them. “*Don't-do mitzvot*” need all the sluggardliness of a bed bug to keep us far from trouble.

Goodnight and Shabbat Shalom!

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* — the Laws of the Priests — deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called *korban olah*, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remaining part is eaten by

the *kohanim*. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burnt on the altar and part eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats. The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the “questionable guilt” offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

ISRAEL Forever

A CALL FOR PURITY

“Let the pure ones come and study the pure.” This is how our Sages established the age-old tradition of Jewish children beginning their study of Chumash with the Torah portion we will hear read in synagogues this week. *Vayikra* is the chapter dealing with sacrifices to Heaven that had to be of the purest nature, with no physical or moral blemish attached to them. What could be purer than a child taking his first tiny step into the world of Torah? It is only natural then that the pure should meet the pure.

How important is this message of purity and sacrifice to Israeli society today? The flood of investigations of high-ranking officials casts a dark shadow on the sense of responsibility that the public has a right to expect from its elected and appointed leaders. Purity of behavior and sacrifice of self-interest will hopefully be strengthened by reflecting on the above-mentioned tradition and the Torah reading which inspired it, for only thus can we secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

TOMBS OF THE SANHEDRIN

In the northern part of Jerusalem are the Sanhedria and Sanhedria Murchevet neighborhoods. Their names are derived from their proximity to what is known as the Tombs of the Sanhedrin.



Tradition has it that there are buried the members of the Great Sanhedrin, Jewry's highest court of law and the ultimate religious, judicial and political authority in Eretz Yisrael.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Who does the word “*eilav*” in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week’s Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an *olah* atone for?
4. Where was the *olah* slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-*kohen* perform?
6. Besides the fire the *kohanim* bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are *torim* (turtledoves) and *bnei yona* (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is *melika*?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a “satisfying aroma”?
11. Why is the term “*nefesh*” used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will *mincha* offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the *mincha*. What is meant by “honey”?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning *shelamim*, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the *kohen* may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the *mizbe’ach*. For which *korban* may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a *chatat*?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burnt while in the wilderness? Where were they burnt during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*?
19. What two things does a voluntary *mincha* have that a *minchat chatat* lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a *korban asham*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2,14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (*torim*), and doves (*bnei yona*).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the *Mishkan* Courtyard (*azarah*).
5. 1:55. - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bnei yona* are too old and *torim* are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one’s fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal’s food is provided by its owner, so its innards are “kosher.” Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with “theft.”
10. 1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, G-d regards it as if he had offered his *nefesh* (soul).
12. 2:1 - The *kometz* (fistful).
13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
14. 2:12 - On Shavuot.
15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the *alya* (fat tail). The lamb’s *alya* is burned on the altar but the goat’s is not.
16. 3:8 - The *chatat*.
17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the *karet* (excision) penalty.
18. 4:12 - a) Outside the three camps. b) Outside Jerusalem.
19. 5:11 - *Levona* and oil.
20. 5:15 - Two *shekalim*.

- Enforcement of justice through *cherem* excommunication
- Penalties for showing disrespect to Torah scholar
- Public and discreet performance of *mitzvot*
- The greatness of King David and King Saul
- The Torah scholar deserving of excommunication
- The impact of the *cherem*
- The *kohen* and the mourner in regard to cutting hair on Chol Hamoed
- Cutting nails and shaving mustache
- What may be washed and what may be written
- Predestination of marriage partner and weddings on Chol Hamoed
- Preparing religious articles for private or public use
- The seven-day and thirty-day mourning periods in relation to Yom Tov in between
- When death takes place during the Yom Tov period or right before it
- How long the mourning if death is known only after thirty days
- For which relative is mourning required
- The laws of rending garment as expression of mourning
- Activities forbidden to the mourner
- Learning and teaching Torah as a mourner
- *Tefillin* for the mourner
- Greeting by the mourner and to the mourner
- Differences between mourning for a parent and other relatives

THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD

A word is much more than “just a word”, our Sages teach us. In our *gemara* we find that when the Sage Shmuel paid a condolence visit to his brother Pinchas who had lost a child, he asked him why he allowed his fingernails to grow although it was permitted to cut them. The rebuttal of Pinchas that “If such a tragedy as mine had befallen you, would you also show such disregard for mourning?” is described by the *gemara* as an example of “an error proceeding forth from the ruler” (*Kohelet* 10:5). The result of this apparent slip of the tongue was that Shmuel himself soon became a mourner because “there is a covenant for the lips” — a spoken word has the power to effect fulfillment. As proof of this power Rabbi Yochanan cites the statement made by the Patriarch Avraham, on his way to offer his son Yitzchak as a sacrifice, to the two young men accompanying them. “Stay here,” he told them and I and the lad will return to you” (*Bereishet* 22:5), and did indeed result in their both returning.

Tosefot raises the question as to why Rabbi Yochanan cited

an example of the spoken word achieving a good result as proof that such power existed in regard to achieving a negative result such as in the case of Shmuel. Would it not have been more appropriate to cite the proof brought in another *gemara* (*Berachot* 19a) that “one should never open his mouth to Satan” — not say something of a harmful nature to himself such as declaring that whatever he has suffered is still insufficient to atone for his sins?

Maharsha explains the difference between these two sorts of power of the spoken word. In the case of the *gemara* in *Mesechta Berachot*, the person speaking includes himself in the tragedy of which he speaks, thus giving the prosecuting angel — Satan — the opportunity to accuse him of self-incrimination and thus weakening the ability of the Divine Attribute of Mercy to intervene on his behalf. In the case of Shmuel, as in the case of Avraham, the statement is being made about someone else, for good or otherwise, and is considered as being an unconscious prophecy whose utterance effects its fulfillment.

• *Mo'ed Katan* 16-22

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“No one is suspected by the public of wrongdoing unless he committed either the entire deed or part of it, or contemplated doing it, or rejoiced when another did it — unless he has enemies who can be assumed to have spread a false rumor about him.”

• *Rabbi Reuven ben Atzroboli - Mo'ed Katan* 18b

BIRTHDAYS

From: Martin Appel

Dear Rabbi,

What is the Jewish perspective on birthday celebrations? The Torah refers explicitly to only one such celebration, that of Pharaoh. Do we have a tradition for birthday celebrations, and if so, what is it?

Dear Martin,

The Talmud Yerushalmi relates that when the Amalekites attacked the Jewish people, they chose soldiers whose birthday fell out on the day of the battle. They perceived that a person's birthday is a lucky day for him, and therefore he will be successful in battle.

The Ben Ish Chai (Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad) writes that some people celebrate their birthday

because the day is a good sign for that person. He personally celebrated birthdays in his home. Rabbi Yisrael Lifshitz (author of the Tiferet Yisrael commentary on the Mishna) instructed his children that when one of them has a birthday the others should visit and bless him. Similarly, distinguished members of Jerusalem's Jewish community used to visit Rabbi Shmuel Salant on his birthday and offer him their blessings.

Others emphasize the more serious side of birthdays. Rabbi Avraham Binyamin Sofer (author of the responsa Ktav Sofer) used to seclude himself on his birthday and 'soul-search'. The day a person is born he receives the most precious gift of all — Life! Therefore, it is a day for introspection, a day for asking, "Am I using this gift to its utmost potential?"

Sources:

- *Ben Ish Chai, Parshat Re'eh 17*
- *Talmud Yerushalmi, Rosh Hashana 3:8*
- *Iggeret Tiferet Yisrael 6, Sefer Mayim HaHalacha*
- *Sefer Chut HaMeshulash*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A SPECIAL HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Yosef Friedenson, one of the last surviving students of the famed Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin, was recently interviewed by telephone in connection with the ceremony celebrating the restoration of that yeshiva. This 84-year old editor of the New York-based Yiddish-language monthly "Dos Yiddische Vort" sentimentally told a reporter of the Jerusalem Post that in his hometown of Lodz in central Poland every young man dreamt of going to this Yeshiva.

The Yeshiva was founded in 1930 by the rabbi of Lublin, Rabbi Meir Shapiro, who is also remembered as the founder of the Daf Yomi learning program. The Nazis occupied the building when they invaded Poland in 1939, stripped the interior and burned the vast library in the city square. After the war it was used by a med-

ical school but was returned to the Jewish community in 2004. The above-mentioned ceremony took place when renovations on the building were completed and a synagogue was made available for the small local Jewish community and Jewish visitors passing through.

For Friedenson this was another milestone in his personal triumph over the Nazis who killed so many of his Yeshiva colleagues. Many survivors will never forget how the young Friedenson entertained them in the liberated concentration camp with a brilliant imitation of the dead Feuhrer whose demagogic speeches were constantly broadcast in the camp.

Hitler is dead but Chachmei Lublin and this special survivor live on.

VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION

Question: Although I try to attend the weddings of friends and neighbors I sometimes receive an invitation to a faraway out-of-town wedding. I have no possibility of attending such a simcha but don't wish to hurt the feelings of those who invited me. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The right thing to do is to drop a short note to the inviters wishing them Mazal Tov, explaining your difficulty in physically participating in the wedding but

assuring them that you will be celebrating in spirit.

You will be surprised how much such a note received before the *chatuna* ceremony adds to the joy of the family to which it is sent. It serves as a confirmation of your relationship and warms the heart of those who are nervously preparing for the big day.

A token gift accompanying such a note is not essential but certainly will achieve an even greater measure of virtual participation in the wedding.

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