

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SHEMINI

In Israel Tazria Mesorah

Rosh Hodesh Iyar will be celebrated on Sunday & Monday, April 22 & 23.

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DEDICATIONS : In Memory of Loraine Bat Victoria – 4 Iyar

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Editors Notes

I decided to try to get the newsletter out early as today is the 27th of Nisan when we commemorate Yom HaShoah. Please see two articles that follow. The first is by a dear friend, Phil Rosen and is addressed to his children, the second by Rabbi Sacks.

So many of you have written or called asking me how the Seders went. They were simply inspiring. A couple of days before, Baruch Abittan suggested I take a look at two short video presentations given by Charlie Harary on Pesach, one of them made with the assistance of my own daughter Aryana. If you've never seen a Charlie Harary video, then you need to. He has videos for each of the holidays and others on basic Jewish concepts. He is incredibly moving.

I used one of his two Passover presentations to introduce each night of the Holiday. On the first night as we sat down and before we began, I told everyone the single biggest question that Jews have on Passover, a question more popular than even the Mah Nishtana, a question that some ask after five minutes, some after ten and the rest when we pass an hour.

You've all heard it. "What is it that takes so long? We said Kiddush, we washed once, and we've been going through this Hagada

forever. We all know the story. We were slaves. G-d sent Moses and 10 plagues. Pharaoh let us go and G-d split the sea. Now let's eat!

Charlie gives an incredible example which relates so well to today. He speaks of his grandparents who are Holocaust Survivors and in the face of those evil people who publicly deny that the atrocities ever happened, they suggest to him. Every year on Yom HaShoah, get together with your children. Tell them about us. Tell them how you saw the numbers tattooed on our arms. Tell them the stories. Show them the pictures, Recall for them our relatives who never made it out. Speak about those who did and what we went through. Describe in detail.

And when you have grandchildren, tell them and make sure your children will tell their children and grandchildren and your grandchildren will tell their great grandchildren that they are alive because we survived and it really happened. No one could make this up!

And in hundreds of years, if someone steps forward and tries to deny it, your children will step forward too and say that they know because their ancestor was there and told his children who told their father. They will never forget.

I know in our house we will all recall a woman Chantelle brought into our lives and sort of adopted who passed away last year. Her name was Sara Lew and each

Friday, Chantelle and the kids would visit her, bring her a Challah and hear her stories. Sara, who from 1939 to 1945, was in a series of Polish ghettos and in five concentration camps had many stories.

She would tell us that, "So long as my eyes are open, I feel the pain. It's important the world should know. Most of us are gone already." Her mother, father and two brothers were killed by the Nazis. She would tell of Dr. Josef Mengele, the notorious Angel of Death, who would sometimes appear in front of her eyes.

In an interview posted in the New York Times in 1999, she explained. "You are supposed to go on with your life, get a new family, and new troubles and new aggravations, That's what life is." She concluded that "The first miracle was to survive," she said. "The next miracle will be to publish." She eventually published a book shortly before she passed away which tells of her life from Bialystock to Brooklyn. She published it so that we who knew her should be able to tell over.

So on Yom HaShoah, try to get to a memorial service. We'll be hearing Rabbi Shmuel Burstein, Author of "The War Against God and His People." Try to hear from a survivor. Make sure your children are with you. And if you can't get out or there is nowhere near you to go to, sit with your kids. Read a book together, Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust by Yaffa Eliach. Elie Wiesel's Night, Small Miracles of the Holocaust

by Yitta Halberstam, Judith Leventhal or so many others. Go to YouTube, hear Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau speak of his experience, You might consider watching the 1978 TV mini-series Holocaust (I found it posted on YouTube in 59 parts). Or perhaps a movie - Life Is Beautiful (1997), Schindler's List (1993), Jakob the Liar (1999) - that can lead to discussion. But more than anything, you'll need to talk about it. Nothing can replace talking!

I recognize that Elie Wiesel more than thirty years ago, criticized any attempt to dramatize the Holocaust, writing, "But the Holocaust is unique; not just another event...Auschwitz cannot be explained, nor can it be visualized...The Holocaust transcends history." Toward the end of a Times OpEd, he continued, "The Holocaust. The ultimate event, the ultimate mystery, can never be comprehended or transmitted. Only those who were there know what it was; the others will never know."

Still though, we must try!

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

PS ... Mr. Harary used the Holocaust example which we can relate to in our times to elaborate on the Seder. The Exodus introduces G-d to the world, a G-d who has a personal and caring relationship with mankind. Pharaoh cannot accept this G-d. He tells Moses he has no idea who G-d is. But eventually as the story ends, asks Moses to intercede so that G-d will bless Pharaoh.

We have gone from a world of idolaters to a world that accepts a living G-d who created and sustains us. The Exodus was where it started.

We have the responsibility to bring that Exodus to life. At the first Seder, they spoke of the miracle of the first nine plagues. The following year in the desert, they spoke of the Exodus, the splitting of the Sea, the Well and the Manna. And year after year, generation to generation, each house, each family spoke of it, acted it out in song and in action, linking us to the past.

Baruch Hashem with the help of Chantelle and the kids, of Rabbi Colish, of my friend Sam and his family, of Baruch and all those who stepped up to the plate, we were able to bring it to life and inscribe a memory into the minds of all who came, most especially the children.

We began the Seder at 8:30 on Friday night and didn't complete it until 12:30 and aside from one couple who completed the Seder while we ate, everyone else stayed. And the next night we went on until 1:30. As I said it was inspiring, but I guess we'll get to the Seder stories next week.

Phil Rosen ... A Letter to My Children ... April 13, 2010

So today is Yom Hashoah - local ceremonies, ceremonies in schools and then its over. But for me and thousands of other second generations it's never over. It haunts us and always will.

We lived mostly normal lives growing up. But just mostly. There were giant pieces missing. I had no grandparents. My father had one living relative - his brother. Nearly everyone else (his parents, 2 brothers, a sister and many cousins) were murdered in a concentration camp. Murder is an understatement. They were gassed and their bodies were burned. They didn't have a

chance. Yom Hashoah is a day to remember; so let's remember. Think about Shiya and Perel, my grandparents who were in their 40s when they were killed, Leon and Gittel Masha, aunt and uncle in their 20s and Reuven Noach Rozen, 12 years old. They were fine people and good Jews. They were killed solely because they were Jews.

I always wonder what life would've been like had they survived. My parents gave us a very normal life. But every once in a while... I would wake up in the middle of the night (even back then I couldn't sleep) and find my father staring at the pictures of his mother and father that hung in our living room (and that currently hang in our living room). And there would be tears in his eyes (unlike me he never cried). And sometimes he would call me by one of his brothers' names - Henry or Leon or Noychele (Reuven Noach) or Pinyale (Pinchas) who survived in a Siberian camp, only to be killed as a soldier in Israel's War of Independence. When my brother, sister or I did something good in school (always my brother or sister) or sports (me) the pride they had was almost beyond normal. We were everything to them.

My father survived because of a series of miracles. And so my survival and yours is because of an additional series of miracles. And if I ever seem over-protective of you, that's why.

One very special thing my father taught us was to care about Jews all over the world, in every nook and cranny. As you know I spend lots of time worrying about Israel and Jews in trouble. The Jews who survived felt and feel that the whole world abandoned them - for 6 years the concentration camps existed, thousands of Jews were tortured and murdered every single day and no one, no one did a damn thing. Simply

amazing. And the argument that no one knew is just not true. A few years ago I was on a business trip to Munich. On my way back from a meeting outside of town I saw a sign to Dachau - 15 kilometers away. I asked the driver if the camp was inside of town; he said he didn't believe there was a camp there. So I changed my plans and had this driver pick me up at 8am the next day and we drove the 10 minutes to Dachau.

The Camp was smack in the middle of the City with very old apartment buildings, 5 and 6 stories high, and a slew of retail establishments all around the Camp. The Camp wasn't open yet so we drove around the camp from the gallows to the crematorium. When the camp opened there was a German school group visiting the camp - 50-70 teenagers. I asked if I could join their tour. The teacher agreed. So my driver and I joined.

The teacher was germanic in the precision of her description of the camp during the war. It was a torture camp, not an extermination camp like Auschwitz. The teacher described the many tortures the prisoners went through in great detail. She said they hung the prisoners from their hands or legs, but in a way to break their shoulders or knees or ankles. She said there was screaming non-stop 24 hours a day.

At the end of the tour she asked me if I wanted to say something (I guess my yarmulke gave it away). I said no, but I would like all the kids to sit on the ground and tell me what they hear. They did. Kids started to yell out - I hear a child crying, I hear a car starting, I hear a wife yelling at her husband. As they yelled these out, it became clear to the teacher and then the kids what this exercise was all about - if we can hear these sounds, the people

who lived anywhere near the camps heard the screaming from inside. They all knew. Everyone knew.

So my lesson on this Yom Hashoah is Care - care about your brethren, care about those that are suffering. Don't ever let yourselves be silent. And don't ever forget. Shiya and Perel, your great-grandparents, Leon, Gittel Masha and Noach, your great-aunt and uncles. Please. Remember.

A CALL TO REMEMBER FROM THE DEPTHS OF OUR JEWISH SOUL Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

(Today), the 27th of Nissan, we will be commemorating Yom HaShoah, the day set aside in the Jewish calendar for Holocaust remembrance.

During the nightmare years of the Shoah one moment stands out for what it taught about the human spirit. It concerns a man almost unknown in Britain, the Polish-Jewish physician Janos Korczak.

Early on in his medical career, Korczak was drawn to the plight of underprivileged children. He wrote books about their neglect and became a kind of Polish Dickens. In 1911 he founded an orphanage for Jewish children in Warsaw. It became so successful that he was asked to create one for Catholic children as well, which he did.

He had his own radio programme which made him famous throughout Poland. He was known as the "old doctor". But he had revolutionary views about the young. He believed in trusting them and giving them responsibility. He got them to produce their own newspaper, the first children's paper in Poland. He turned schools into self-governing communities. He wrote some of the great works of child

psychology, including one called The Child's Right to Respect.

He believed that in each child there burned a moral flame that if nurtured could defeat the darkness at the core of human nature. When the time came for the children under his care to leave, he used to say this to them: "I cannot give you love of man, for there is no love without forgiveness, and forgiving is something everyone must learn to do on his own. I can give you one thing only: a longing for a better life, a life of truth and justice. Even though it may not exist now, it may come tomorrow if you long for it enough."

In 1940 he and the orphanage were driven into the Warsaw ghetto. In 1942 the order came to transport them to Treblinka. Korczak was offered the chance to escape, but he refused, and in one of the most poignant moments of those years, he walked with his 200 orphans through the streets of Warsaw to the train that took them to the gates of death, inseparable from them to the end.

Janos Korczak's actions were not unique; there are many inspirational and tragic stories of similar bravery and determination in the face of such adversity. What draws me to Korczak's story is that it was about children. The Nazis were determined to not just wipe out the Jews of their generations, but to exterminate the Jewish future.

They failed and many of those children who survived have spent the years since telling their stories, educating Jews and non-Jews about the dangers of intolerance and the need to respect the dignity of difference. These survivors made a commitment to live for what the victims of the Shoah died for.

As a people, we not only share a covenant of faith we also share a covenant of fate. Today, as the number of Shoah survivors sadly declines, the duty of remembrance falls on our generation and on future generations not yet born.

Yom HaShoah is a vital day in the Jewish calendar, providing us with a focal point for our remembrance. We cannot bring the dead back to life, but we can bring their memory back to life and ensure they are not forgotten. We can undertake in our lives to do what they were so cruelly prevented from doing in theirs.

In doing so we make a great affirmation of life. We ensure that out of the darkest night, the light of the survivors and their memories remains. Faced with destruction, the Jewish people survived. *Lo amut ki echyeh*, says the Psalm: "I will not die, but I will live."

The Shoah survivors are among the most inspiring people I have had the privilege to meet. Remarkably, despite coming eyeball to eyeball with the angel of death, despite the unimaginable losses each of them suffered, so many of them fulfilled the words of Moses' great command *Uvacharta Bachayim*, 'choose life' (Deut. 30: 19). In doing so, they chose life not just for themselves, but for their children, grandchildren and all future generations of Am Yisrael.

Yom HaShoah calls on us to remember from the depths of our Jewish soul. Janos Korczak was right. Whilst we can remember the past, we cannot write the future. Only our children, the future of our community, can do that.

Rabbi Aron Tendler Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st & 2nd Aliyot: The Parsha begins on Nissan 1, 2449. The seven-day inauguration of Aharon and his sons was completed and the ceremonies for the Mizbeach's consecration had begun. Over 40 offerings would be brought on that first day, each requiring the direct ministrations of Aharon. Aharon blessed the nation with the standard priestly blessing after which Moshe and Aharon blessed the nation with the special Bracha of Psalm 90.

3rd Aliya: The deaths of Nadav and Avihu are recorded at the very same time that fire descended from heaven to light the Mizbeach. Their cousins removed the bodies of Nadav and Avihu from the courtyard of the Mishkan. Moshe instructs Aharon and his two remaining sons, Elazar and Isamar, that they are forbidden to overtly mourn the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in the standard manner. It is from here that we are taught the standard practices of tearing Kriyah and of mourners not cutting their hair.

4th & 5th Aliyot: Moshe instructs Aharon and his sons to continue the service of the Mizbeach's consecration. The first recorded difference in Halachik rulings is recorded between Moshe and Aharon as it pertained to the eating of the Rosh Chodesh offering. (Note 16-20, Stone Edition ArtScroll pg. 595)

6th Aliya: The basic laws of Kosher and non-Kosher animals, fish, and fowl are recorded. Note that verses 11:4-7 is one of the established proofs for the divine authorship of the Torah.

7th Aliya: The basic laws of purity and impurity are recorded. It is important to clarify that the Torah

does not associate "Tumah" impurity and "Taharah" purity with good and bad. The entire process involves the concept of life and death and the symbolic emphasis that the Torah places on serving G-d with optimism and vigor. So long as there is life there is the opportunity to grow in our relationship with G-d.

The question of "Why are we commanded to keep Kosher?" is answered in 11:44-47. The Torah clearly states that the reason to keep Kosher is to emulate G-d's sanctity. Sanctity "Kedusha" means being set apart and different. Just as G-d is apart from all things and divine in every way, so too are we to be set apart from all other nations and be different in the manner of our eating.

Being that tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh, the Haftorah is exclusive for a Shabbos that coincides with Erev Rosh Chodesh. The Haftorah is from Shmuel I Capt. 20. It describes the emotional parting between Yehonasan the son of Shaul, and Dovid, the future king of Israel. The Gemara states that the greatest love ever manifested between two people was the love that existed between Yehonasan and Dovid.

Dovid had already been anointed by Shmuel to succeed Shaul as king, and his relationship with his mentor, King Shaul, had deteriorated to the extent that Dovid had to flee for his life. Yehonasan, wanting to ascertain the extent of Shaul's hatred for Dovid, devised a plan, whereby Dovid would be absent from Shaul's Rosh Chodesh meal. If his father acted lovingly in asking about Dovid's absence, then it would be safe for Dovid to return. If not, Dovid would flee. In the end, Dovid was forced to flee Shaul's wrath. The extraordinary aspect of Yehonasan's love for

Dovid was the fact that he protected Dovid with his life, even though he knew that Dovid would succeed Shaul as king, rather than himself.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Take a young goat as a sin offering and a calf and a sheep."

During the dedication of the Mishkan, the Jewish people were required to bring many sacrifices. The Midrash says the goat comes to atone for the sin of the brothers who sold Yosef. The calf comes to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf. We understand why the sacrifice of the calf was necessary now. They were about to dedicate the Mishkan, a place where the presence of Hashem was to dwell. The sin of the Golden Calf was tantamount to idolatry, which was a direct affront to Hashem, so amends were very much in order. But why bring up the sale of Yosef now by requiring a goat to atone for the brothers' dipping Yosef's coat in the goat's blood? It was not a recent occurrence.

Rabbi Y. Frand explains that an underlying element of jealousy led to the sale of Yosef. The brothers felt that Yosef was trying to undermine them, and they decided it was their duty to sell him. Nevertheless the Torah says that jealousy caused their error. Now, at this time when the Mishkan will be dedicated, the Kohanim will be singled out from all the rest. One family will wear special garments and perform the services in the Mishkan. The Kohanim were an easy target of jealousy. This then was an exceedingly appropriate time to bring sacrifices to atone for the sin of selling Yosef. This would impress upon the people the

extreme danger of giving in to jealousy. It had led to a disaster in the past and it could lead to disaster in the future unless it was nipped in the bud.

The dedication of the Mishkan, therefore, is a time to remember that in Judaism there are roles. There are roles for Kohanim, and for Levites. There are roles for men and a role for women. There are rich and there are poor. Everyone must be content with the role Hashem has assigned to him which will go far to end jealousy.

There are rich and there are poor. Each one has his test. The rich may not squander their money and must give enough to charity. They must try to be humble. The poor must accept their role with love, not to steal, and not to be jealous of the rich.

The layman must learn Torah every day and try to earn a livelihood. He must like and respect the man who learns Torah all day in Kollel. The person who learns in Kollel must learn with all his might and not waste a minute. He must be able to live in poverty and respect and love the layman. The woman's role is not like men. They must raise their children, be modest, and run their home. The man must take care of his wife and give her respect.

As we enter the time of the Omer, it is a time to honor each other, which can only happen when there is no jealousy.

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

On the opening day of the Mishkan, Moshe told his brother, Aharon, "Step up and do the Divine service, for this is why you were chosen." The Midrash tells us that Aharon was reluctant to come forward because he kept on

visualizing the Golden Calf before him, and he thought it was a sign that he was not fully forgiven. Hashem reassured him that he was indeed forgiven, and he was the one picked to lead the service.

We learn from Aharon a wonderful trait. If a person does something wrong, don't be so sure it's forgotten so quickly. Generally, we tend to forgive ourselves much faster than we forgive others. When someone wrongs us we may hold a grudge or just remember it in our hearts, but if we do the same thing to others and we ask their forgiveness, we feel, "Let bygones be bygones." If we would realize that just as we don't forget so quickly, maybe others are the same way, we would be more hesitant before we do something wrong. And even if something did happen through us we would remember it longer, just like Aharon did, so that we would be more regretful, and this would lead to a complete reconciliation. Shabbat Shalom.

ETHICS OF THE FATHERS

It is customary to study Pirkei Abot (Ethics of the Fathers) during the six weeks between Pesah and Shabuot, one chapter every Shabbat.

"Shimon the Righteous used to say, "The world stands on three things: On the study of Torah, the service of G-d and deeds of kindness." (Abot 1:2)

Instead of saying that the world stands on these three things and then enumerating them, shouldn't he have just said, "Study Torah, serve Hashem and do kindness"?

There is no question that over the years the world has progressed immensely. Modern technology has changed our

lifestyle so drastically that the generation before us appears antiquated and primitive. Regardless of our great accomplishments, humanity continues to progress and develop even more sophisticatedly. With all this progress and advancement, some claim that Torah and its lifestyle should be modified to the contemporary modern age.

Shimon Hasaddik's message is that regardless of the progress and forward movement the world is making, there are three things in which the world must "omed"- stationary- remain the same as in previous times without being altered, modernized or modified in the minutest way. They are Torah, service of Hashem and acts of kindness. In regard to these, the Jew in all generations must practice and observe them in accordance with the old established, authentic ways of our Rabbis of previous generations. (Vedibarta Bam)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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Nadab and Abihu
 The Torah in Parashat Shemini tells of the terrible tragedy that struck on the day of the Mishkan's inauguration. On the very first day when Aharon and his sons served as Kohanim, the two older sons – Nadab and Abihu – were killed after bringing an incense offering in the Mishkan.

Our Sages mention many different reasons why Nadav and Abihu – who were great Sadikim – were deserving of such a harsh punishment. These include offering a Ketoret (incense) offering that was not required, and entering the Mishkan after drinking wine. Still, it is difficult to

understand why they were punished so harshly. For one thing, many of the laws governing the Mishkan and the Kohanim had not yet been issued, and thus Nadab and Abihu should have seemingly been excused for their failure to observe these restrictions. Furthermore, the day of the Mishkan's inauguration was a unique occasion when many of the standard procedures did not apply. Was it unreasonable for Nadab and Abihu to assume – albeit mistakenly – that they were allowed to bring Ketoret, and to enter the Mishkan after drinking, on this special day?

Different explanations have been offered for why God dealt so harshly with Nadab and Abihu. One insightful answer was suggested by the Maggid of Duvna (Rabbi Yaakov Krantz, 1741-1804), who drew an analogy to a king who ordered his servants to build for him a special city that would be the crown jewel of the kingdom. When the city was built, he instructed his servants to offer incentives to bring the greatest and most accomplished professionals to populate the city. The king was particularly adamant that the very best physician in the kingdom should be brought to the city, so the residents would know that their health is in the very best hands.

The royal servants located the most skilled and renowned physician, and brought him to live in the new city. His arrival was marked by great fanfare, and a special royal reception was held in his honor.

Even before the reception ended, the physician was called to duty. People rushed in and informed the doctor that a certain man had taken gravely ill. The doctor quickly went to the patient, and after looking him over for a few

moments, he assured everybody that he could cure him.

The physician was left to treat the patient, and after a short while he emerged from the room. Visibly distraught, the doctor informed the crowd outside the room that the patient had died. Despite his best efforts, he was not able to save the man.

Needless to say, the townspeople were stunned. After all the fanfare, all the pomp and circumstance surrounding the doctor's arrival, he failed in his very first try. He said the man's condition was curable, but ultimately was unable to do the job. The people later approached the doctor and asked him to explain what had happened.

"The truth is," the physician said, "I knew full well from the moment I looked at the man that he had no chance of surviving. He suffered from an illness that has no cure. Nevertheless, I decided to give an optimistic prognosis, in order to send a message to everyone in the city. I saw how I was greeted with such honor, and I realized what the people's expectations were. Knowing that the man touted as the world's greatest physician would be living among them, the people were likely to disregard their health. They would figure that no matter what happens to them, there is a doctor here who could cure them. I wanted to make it clear from the outset that my skills are limited. You must all continue to take care of yourselves. I am not a miracle-worker, and I do not have a remedy for every ailment. This is the message I wanted to convey already on the first day."

The Maggid explained that this is the same reason why God reacted so harshly to Nadab and Abihu's sin. The construction of the Mishkan offered Beneh

Yisrael the opportunity to achieve atonement through the offering of sacrifices. People may have misunderstood this to mean that they no longer needed to be vigilant in their observance of God's laws. After all, they may have thought, sins can be "magically" erased by bringing a sacrifice in the Mishkan. God was concerned that the people would see the Mishkan as a kind of automatic antidote to sin, and thus neglect the Misvot. Like the townspeople in the Maggid's parable, they would rely too heavily on the rituals of the Mishkan, and thus would see no need to rely on their own behavior.

And so on the very first day of the Mishkan's operation, God killed two Sadikim for a minor offense. He wanted the people to see that these two exceptionally righteous men were punished gravely for a relatively minor infraction, and were not saved by the special offering they brought in the Mishkan. The people would then come to realize that the Mishkan is not a magical cure, and that there is no magical cure for our spiritual ills. Although God has mercifully granted us ways to earn atonement, ultimately, we bear accountability for our actions. As significant and powerful as the Mishkan and its sacrifices were, it did not excuse the people from their responsibility to conduct themselves properly and strictly adhere to the Torah's commands. They were given a "doctor," an exceptional means of achieving atonement, but this did not absolve them of their responsibility to carefully observe each and every Misva, down to the last detail.

Rabbi Wein

The parsha deals with the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan. In general it can be stated that the eighth day after any event can be a time of challenge. The eighth day of life is the day of circumcision of male Jewish children. The eighth day – the day after the week of rejoicing of a young newly married couple - was and is the day when real married life with all of its joys and challenges begins.

The eighth day after the beginning of the holiday of Pesach in Israel is the day when we return to our ordinary lives and tasks and many times that is a moment of at least temporary depression. And here in the parsha the eighth day is transformed from the day of joy and supreme attainment to one of tragedy and silence.

The eighth day is a difficult day. But the main lesson here is that life is in reality a series of 'eighth days.' The eighth day is unpredictable, it can bring pain and sadness but it can also be inspiring and joyful, productive and worthy. So the eighth day syndrome has become a metaphor for life in general and certainly for Jewish life particularly.

Because of the potential problems and difficulties that the eighth day may bring, the Torah begins the parsha with the word "vayehi" which is not necessarily an expression of happiness. Here it will refer to the untimely deaths of the two sons of Aharon. But in general it serves as a warning to humans to view life cautiously and realistically. The Torah always teaches us to drive defensively in all areas of living.

Aharon's reaction to the tragedy that has befallen him is

noteworthy. The Torah emphasizes that he keep silent. Many times events occur in human lives that are so shocking, sudden and overwhelming that humans are left speechless. Silence then is really a reflex reaction. But here the Torah records Aharon's silence as an act of bravery, restraint and holiness and not as a reflex reaction to the destruction of half of his family.

It indicates that Aharon had plenty he could have said and could have taken Heaven to task, so to speak, but instead he himself chose to remain silent. The Talmud in many instances advocates the supremacy of silence over complaint, in fact over unnecessary speech generally. There is much to complain about from our human viewpoint of life and its events. Heaven however states that the fact that we are alive and functioning should be sufficient to stifle any complaints.

This hard judgment is also one of the primary lessons of the eighth day. Aharon's unspoken heartbroken complaint and his unanswered, in fact unasked, question hang in the air of Jewish history – mysterious and unfathomable. This also is true of all eighth day challenges that face us - the righteous and faithful shoulder on.

The great Rebbe of Kotzk said famously: "For the believer there are no questions; for the non-believer there are no answers." We are all eighth day Jews. Let us also shoulder on to build the Jewish people in strength, compassion and belief.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

The second half of Exodus and the first part of Leviticus form a carefully structured narrative. The Israelites are commanded to construct a sanctuary. They carry out the command. This is followed by an account of sacrifices to be offered there. Then, in the first part of today's sedra, the cohanim, the priests, are inducted into office.

What happens next, though, is unexpected: the dietary laws, a list of permitted and forbidden species, animals, fish and birds. What is the logic of these laws? And why are they placed here? What is their connection with the sanctuary?

The late R. Elie Munk (The Call of the Torah, vol. 2, p. 99) offered a fascinating suggestion. As we have mentioned before in these studies, the sanctuary was a human counterpart of the cosmos. Several key words in the biblical account of its construction are also key words in the narrative of creation at the beginning of Genesis. The Talmud (Megillah 10b) says about the completion of the sanctuary, that "On that day there was joy before the Holy One blessed be He as on the day when heaven and earth were created." The universe is the home God made for man. The sanctuary was the home human beings made for God.

R. Munk reminds us that the first command God gave the first human was a dietary law. "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." The dietary laws in Shmini parallel the

prohibition given to Adam. As then, so now, a new era in the spiritual history of humankind, preceded by an act of creation, is marked by laws about what one may and may not eat.

Why? As with sex, so with eating: these are the most primal activities, shared with many other forms of life. Without sex there is no continuation of the species. Without food, even the individual cannot survive. These, therefore, have been the focus of radically different cultures. On the one hand there are hedonistic cultures in which food and sex are seen as pleasures and pursued as such. On the other are ascetic cultures - marked by monastic seclusion - in which sex is avoided and eating kept to a minimum. The former emphasize the body, the latter the soul. Judaism, by contrast, sees the human situation in terms of integration and balance. We are body and soul. Hence the Judaic imperative, neither hedonistic nor ascetic, but transformative. We are commanded to sanctify the activities of eating and sex. From this flow the dietary laws and the laws of family purity (niddah and mikveh), two key elements of kedushah, the life of holiness.

However, we can go further. Genesis 1 is not the only account of creation in Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. There are several others. One is contained in the last chapters of the Book of Job. It is this that deserves close attention.

Job is the paradigm of the righteous individual who suffers. He loses all he has, for no apparent reason. His companions tell him that he must have sinned. Only this can reconcile his fate with justice. Job maintains his innocence and demands a hearing in the heavenly tribunal. For some 37 chapters the argument rages, then in chapter

38 God addresses Job "out of the whirlwind". God offers no answers. Instead, for four chapters, He asks questions of His own, rhetorical questions that have no answer: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? . . . Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? . . . Does the rain have a father? . . . From whose womb comes the ice?"

God shows Job the whole panoply of creation, but it is a very different view of the universe than that set out in Genesis 1-2. There the centre of the narrative is the human person. He/she is created last; made in God's image; given dominion over all that lives. In Job 38-41 we see not an anthropocentric, but a theocentric, universe. Job is the only person in Tanakh who sees the world, as it were, from God's point of view.

Particularly striking is the way these chapters deal with the animal kingdom. What Job sees are not domestic animals, but wild, untameable creatures, magnificent in their strength and beauty, living far from and utterly indifferent to humankind:

Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane?
Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? . . .
Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south?
Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? . . .
Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope?
Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? . . .

Nothing on earth is his equal- a creature without fear. He looks down on all that are haughty; he is king over all that are proud. This is the most radically non-anthropocentric passage in the Hebrew Bible. It tells us that man is not the centre of the universe, nor are we the measure of all things. Some of the most glorious aspects of nature have nothing to do with human needs, and everything to do with the Divine creation of diversity. One of the few Jewish thinkers to state this clearly was Moses Maimonides:

I consider the following opinion as most correct according to the teaching of the Bible and the results of philosophy, namely that the universe does not exist for man's sake, but that each being insists for its own sake, and not because of some other thing. Thus we believe in Creation, and yet need not inquire what purpose is served by each species of existing things, because we assume that God created all parts of the universe by His will; some for their own sake, and some for the sake of other beings . . . (Guide for the Perplexed, III: 13).

And again:

Consider how vast are the dimensions and how great the number of these corporeal beings. If the whole of the earth would not constitute even the smallest part of the sphere of the fixed stars, what is the relation of the human species to all these created things, and how can any of us imagine that they exist for his sake and that they are instruments for his benefit? (Guide for the Perplexed, III: 14)
We now understand what is at stake in the prohibition of certain species of animals, birds and fish, many of them predators like the creatures described in Job 38-41. They exist for their own sake, not

for the sake of humankind. The vast universe, and earth itself with the myriad species it contains, has an integrity of its own. Yes, after the Flood, God gave humans permission to eat meat, but this was a concession, as if to say: Kill if you must, but let it be animals, not other humans, that you kill.

With His covenant with the Israelites, God invites humanity to begin a new chapter in history. This is not yet the Garden of Eden, paradise regained. But, with the construction of the sanctuary - a symbolic home for the Divine presence on earth - something new has begun. One sign of this is the fact that the Israelites are not permitted to kill any and every life-form for food. Some species must be protected, given their freedom, granted their integrity, left unsubjected to human devices and desires. The new creation - the sanctuary - marks a new dignity for the old creation - especially its wild, untamed creatures. Not everything in the universe was made for human consumption

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