

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYIKRA/HAHODESH
MARCH 24, 2012 1 NISAN 5772

DEDICATIONS : Happy Birthday this week to Alison and to her grandmother !

WE ARE PLANNING TWO COMMUNAL SEDERS. INTERESTING IN JOINING, HELPING, DONATING – PLEASE CONTACT SAME SHETRIT, DAVID BIBI OR RABBI COLISH

FRIDAY NIGHT

- Mincha at 6:55 – Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 6:53)

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- Shharith: 9:00 followed by Kidush (Please say Shema by 9:16 AM)
Kiddush this week is sponsored by Rabbi Dr. Chaim and Lisa Abittan in honor of the birth of their daughter Penina Shoshana.
- New Shabbat morning program with Leah Colish for teens and preteen girls. Instead of snoozing, do some SOULSCHMOOZING. Shabbat mornings 11:00 AM in the Social hall.
- Shabbat Morning Children's Program continues this week with Orah Burstyn from 11:00 – 12:00 in the Rabbi's Study upstairs. Snacks, Stories, Prayers and Games. Ages 4-7. Supervised play from 10:45 - 11:00.
- Pirkei Avot With Reb Aharon at 5:45
- Throughout the Spring and Summer, during the Pirkei Avot Class, there will be a simultaneous Torah Class for the boys of the Shabbat Shacharit Club with Rabbi Colish. Delicious ice cream for all participants.
- Mincha 6:20 Sharp
- Seudah Shelishi with a class at 6:50 by Baruch Abittan – More on "The Kabbalah of Time and Secret of Creation: The Inherent Importance of Every Jew"
- Arbit at 7:45pm followed by Havdalah – Shabbat ends at 7:53pm

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

- Shharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

- "Mystical Torah Insights" 9:00 – 9:30 Sunday Mornings with breakfast with David Bibi or Rabbi Colish
- Kosher Kitchen Series 9:30AM – Led by Rabbi Colish –
- 6:30 AM class – new topic. "The Revealed Zohar on the Weekly Parasha"
- Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav –
- "Sephardic Women's Prayer" Tuesday nights. @ 8PM with Rabbi Colish. - deep insights, simple translations and a how to guide. This week at the BIBI HOME IN ATLANTIC BEACH

Please note that the Pre pesach shabbat dinner scheduled for next Friday night has been cancelled

**The Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach
Passover Seders 2012**

**1st Seder Friday, April 6th 2012 at 8:00 pm
2nd Seder Saturday, April 7th 2012 at 8:00 pm**

Join us for one night or both!!

\$50 per person per Seder

\$36 per Child 13 and under

Kids Prizes, Hagadahs, Shmurah Matzah, Share the Experience

We need your RSVP by Wednesday March 28th in order to prepare

Please email to SephardicCongregation@gmail.com or fax to 212-289-2101

**Please reserve seats for _____ adults at \$50 each per
night and for _____ children at \$36 each per night
We will be attending _____ Friday Night / _____ Sat night /
_____ Both Nights**

**We will not be attending but will sponsor
_____ Adults/ _____ Children**

Please charge my credit card number

_____ Exp _____
Security _____ Or I am sending Ely a check _____

Name _____

Billing Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

**Anyone needing a reduced rate or a sponsored seat(s),
please reserve seats and speak with Ida this week.**

ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

Editors Notes

I want to thank all of you for responding so warmly to my appeal last week. (see last week's newsletter if you have no idea what I am talking about). To those who have sent money for our Passover fund, I thank you. I estimate that we have raised about half of what I hoped to raise and I am sure that the rest of you who wanted to send something or simply forgot will send something this week. Let us be your messenger and help you fulfill your offer that you make during the Seder that all who are hungry, let them come and eat.

As a reminder, please make your checks out to The Sephardic Congregation Passover Fund, and send your donations to The Sephardic Congregation - P.O. Box 567 • Long Beach, New York 11561. You can also email me an amount with your name, credit card number and expiration. Do it now and thanks. Email me at DavidBibi@gmail.com

I want to thank all of you for your advice and suggestions and a special shout out to Mrs. Batya Travis who with her family is going down to Fort Bragg in North Carolina to make Pesach Seder for 70 Jewish soldiers who are away from home. The stories I have heard this week have been positively inspiring. The Jewish people are amazing.

My daughter Mikhayla who has been in Jerusalem for Seven Months wrote the following last night based on a class with Rav Milston before she left for London. As I write this, Mikhayla has arrived in London for the weekend, so all you British subjects, say Hi to her if you get to meet her.

I am deeply grateful to her Rabbis and to the administrators for making this a special year for her.

Mikhayla writes: "Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: When a soul will sin unintentionally from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, and he commits one of them."

The korban chatet, a sin offering, is brought by a person for a sin that person has done accidentally. If the sin was done on purpose, then that person would be liable for "karet" or being spiritually cut off by Heaven.

What is this sin offering exactly? And how can we understand someone being liable to bring an offering if the sin was only done unintentionally? Why are we accountable for that which we did by accident? And why does the pasuk write a "soul" rather than a "person" who will sin?

The Sefer Hachinuch (13th century) writes how our hearts are very often led by our actions. If one sins, it can't just be corrected with speech. If someone hurts you physically or emotionally, saying I'm sorry alone isn't going to do much to change the person who sinned. But to act, to take from yourself, to take your own animal or your own food and bring it to the Kohen, has a greater effect on you. Only through action can a person internalize what they have done and hopefully not do it again. When we sin, we sin with our thoughts, our speech, and our actions. We sin with both our soul and with our bodies.

According to the Ramban – Nahmanides – a 13th century sage, our "nefesh" or "soul" represents our philosophy. Any sin we do has an effect on us. It damages us, even if it's done by

accident. It may not be our fault, but it becomes our problem. If a person eats food from a restaurant with a health rating of an A and gets sick, he can't just blame it on the restaurant and take no responsibility. He's sick now and has to deal with it. So too, the soul has been hurt and the soul needs to be repaired. It has to be rectified. It's irrelevant whose fault it was.

Rav Hirsch – 19th century - writes that a person who has to give a korban shogeg – a sacrifice because of an accident committed - after the sin, because that person wasn't paying attention or thinking straight at the time of the sin and this lacking has a lot to do with the person. That korban is given because of a lack of focus or seriousness. People don't arrive a half hour after their plane has taken off to the airport. If something is important to you, you do all that you possibly can to get it done and the same goes with things that are important not to do, you'll keep away from it with everything. It's easy to switch the light off on shabbat by accident, would it be so easy if that light was the switch to an atomic bomb?

Rav David Tzvi Hoffman explains that even though it may have been done by "accident", this accidental sin is really just a sin. There are two types of shogeg, the first is that you didn't know the law. If you drove through a red light and you got pulled over by a cop, do you really think the cop is going to care whether you knew the law? And if you say you didn't, he'll pull you off the road! The second aspect is if you know the isur (something forbidden) exists, but you didn't know the exact details. You weren't careful, you didn't check it out. It's negligence. We still are accountable; the responsibility is ours.

The Alshich Hakadosh – 16th Century - takes a different view of the giving of the korban. If a person sins by accident, there must be something wrong with their soul. It's meant to be an alarm, a wakeup call. "When a soul sins by accident, it originates from a sin that he did in the past." A person has to take that wakeup call and realize that something is wrong. Tzadikim don't just sin by accident. Things we do by accident have nothing to do with our thoughts; it's our body acting without thinking. As if it's natural. What starts out requiring thought becomes rote through lack of focus.

The Kotzker Rebbe – early 19th century - agrees with this idea of the Alshech, but spins it with our good actions as well. If a person does a good act "by accident" it means that their previous actions were really in the name of G-d. He brings a midrash which tells of a father and son who are out in the fields. The father in his forgetfulness leaves seeds and according to the mitzvah of shochecha (leaving that which one forgets), the seeds must be left for the poor. The father, upon realizing he has done this mitzvah begins to smile. The son, in confusion, simply doesn't understand. How could the father smile at this loss of these precious seeds? "We must be doing something right.", responds the father.

The father understood and accepted that this "mistaken" mitzvah came his way, because his previous mitzvot were all done with the right intentions. The Kotzker Rebbe gives us reason to read into everything that happens in our lives. To keep tabs on our actions and to ask ourselves, why?

The Netivot Shalom – 20th century - explains that a person who has a strong connection with his Creator, will not sin, not even by accident. An accidental sin is a sign for a lacking in the relationship with G-d. There's no time out, the moment we stray is the moment we'll sin.

Sefat Emet – 19th century - describes the relationship between the body and the soul. Depending on how we live our lives, we bring the life of the soul into our body. Each soul is here for specific reasons. The job of the soul is to figure out why and take action through the body. The correction of the soul is dependent on the action of the body. An accidental sin is the prime example of the body ruling the soul.

The accidental sin is an under achievement of the soul, if a person sins like this it shows which part of them is actually leading. Behind each korban, beyond the technicalities, we get insight into the roles we must take in this world. Who are we going to let lead us, our bodies or soul?

Whenever someone would ask, "What's in Sefer Vayikra?" My automatic response was "korbanot." I never really cared to know or even ever really learned the exact details or what else the Torah is trying to teach us through these korbanot.

According to Ramban, after Sefer Shemot where we have truly experienced G-d's greatness by the exodus and the receiving of the Torah, Sefer Vayikra is about finally learning how to live that life close to G-d. To give a Korban isn't paganism, but to "mekarev", to get close to G-d.

Pesach is coming, very soon we'll be sitting around the seder table. Rabbi Kalonymous Kalmish

Shapira, the Piaseczno Rebbe – May Hashem avenge his blood - writes in Chovat Hatalmidim – the responsibilities of the student - about the excitement which comes over a person at this time of year. We're preparing for Pesach. We're washing and scrubbing and cleaning to make sure that not a crumb is left of chametz. We do what's important to us and we go the extra mile to even clean the ceilings of our homes! Who has chametz on their ceilings, I'm not so sure. But the point is that as Jews, Pesach is the time where we get to really express our love for G-d. Passover is a time where we make sure not to make any mistakes; not to do anything by accident.

Throughout these next two weeks, we should take what we learn from the korbanot in this week's parsha into account. Look at our actions; ask ourselves why we do them? Instead of having to worry because of our accidental sins, we should get excited by our accidental good deeds.

The korban had to be handed over to the Kohen to offer. The Kohen and the Temple were in Jerusalem. The point of the korban was for the Jews to make their way to Jerusalem. The path to take was to make their way to get closer to G-d.

I thank my mother and father for giving me the opportunity to live in old city of Jerusalem. I thank them for having allowed me to spend these past seven months and more time to come in the holiest place on earth. People come here to visit from all over the world just to capture a few sparks and I have so fortunate to live here. Here we are in the city and home of Kohanim, the Holy City of Jerusalem; a place that I call home.

"L'shana haba'a b'Yerushalayim!"
Next year in Jerusalem ...

Mikhayla Bibi

The following is by Elie Wiesel in response to the tragic murders of three beautiful children and the parent of two of them in France this week

Will the hatred of the Jews ever finally vanish? Will Jewish children always be in danger?

This time, a murderer slew four Jews: a teacher and three young children.

When a blood-thirsty Jew-hater wants to kill Jews, he goes first to the Jewish schools. Jewish children are his primary target.

It's always been this way. This is what Pharaoh, King of Egypt did, what Hitler did. And this is what happened now.

This is the background to the tragedy that occurred in the French city, Toulouse.

I have visited that city many times. The Jewish community there is old and well-established – it dates back to the Middle Ages – but it is dynamic.

In the streets, you can see Jews wearing yarmulkas. Nobody thinks of anti-Semitism. Spiritually, it is one of richest Jewish communities in France.

Obviously, the terrible murderous attack evoked tears and rage among both Jews and non-Jews. The President, his ministers, and other political figures in France, as well as all the newspapers, have demanded that the murderer be found and punished.

It often happens like this. Jewish blood is spilled and, temporarily,

sympathy for Jews grows; the world warms to them.

But the pain does not go away, nor does the anger. We think about the martyrs: Rabbi Yochanan Sandler, his sons Aryeh and Gavriel, and Miriam Monsonego. We say, as is Jewish tradition: "May G-d avenge their blood." That will be the response from Above.

Our own answer must be concrete and to the point. When we are persecuted, our response must be: We will remain Jewish – and do everything to become more Jewish.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st & 2nd & 3rd Aliyot: The instructions for offering a "Oleh" - burnt offering (fully consumed on the Alter) is detailed. This offering could be brought from a bull, or male sheep or goat. The less expensive "Oleh", using a Turtle Dove or common dove, is described. The Mincha, an offering made from baked, fried, or deep fried matzoh type crackers is detailed.

4th Aliya: The Korban Shlomim - the peace offering, brought from male or female cattle, sheep, and goats is described.

5th Aliya: This aliya describes this Korban Chatas - the sin offering. Three unique sin offerings are described:

1. When the High Priest sinned
2. If the King sinned
3. If the entire nation sinned because of a wrong ruling by the Sanhedrin - High Court. Note: A Korban Chatas could only be offered if the sin was unintentional.

6th & 7th Aliyot: The Korban Chatas of a commoner is

detailed, as well as the specifics of the Korban Asham - the guilt offering. This Korban was offered in instances where intentional wrong doing was implicated; such as not fulfilling an assumed oath, or doing something questionable without first ascertaining the law. Additionally, a type of Asham was offered in instances of dishonesty and swearing falsely.

Maftir HaChodesh: This additional section from Shemos, Parshas Bo, Chapter 12, is read on the Shabbos before the month of Nissan, or on the Shabbos of Rosh Chodesh Nissan. This section is an account of the very first Mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a nation. It includes the concept of Rosh Chodesh - the New Moon, as well as the basic laws of Pesach and the Paschal Lamb. Being that Pesach starts on the 15th of Nissan, this section is read about two weeks before Pesach begins. As with Parshas Parah, Chazal wanted the reading of this Parsha to be a reminder that Pesach is almost upon us! Only two more weeks to make the necessary arrangements to get to Yerushalayim and bring the Paschal Lamb! Only two more weeks and your house had better be in order! (are you panicked yet?)

It is interesting that Hashem selected the Mitzvah of the New Moon as the first national Mitzvah. Basically, the Mitzvah required two eye witnesses to testify before Beis Din that they had seen the tiny sliver of the new moon's crescent that is the very first exposure of the moon's new monthly cycle. The Beis Din would then declare the start of the new month.

The most obvious consequence of this procedure was the 29 or 30 day month, otherwise identified by a one or two day

Rosh Chodesh. A two day Rosh Chodesh is comprised of the 30th day of the previous month and the 1st day of the new month. A one day Rosh Chodesh means that the preceding month was only 29 days long making Rosh Chodesh the 1st day of the new month. This would have an immediate effect on the scheduling of Yomim Tovim and other calendar ordained activities. It underscores from the very inception of the nation that the Beis Din, representing the Rabbinic leadership of the nation, were the single most important factor in guaranteeing the practice of Torah throughout time. It was as if G-d would wait for Beis Din to notify Him when His Yomim Tovim were to be.

This week's Haftorah is from Yechezkel - Ezekiel Chapter 45 and is related to the reading of Parshas Hachodesh. The latter chapters of Yechezkel describe the future Bais Hamikdash and the service that will take place once Mashiach has come and the Jews have returned to Eretz Israel. The Haftorah describes the offering that the Prince (the King or the High Priest) will bring on Rosh Chodesh - the New Moon.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"When a person among you will bring an offering to Hashem." (Vayikra 1:2)

Early in our history, we had the ability to bring sacrifices to the Holy Bet Hamikdash in Jerusalem. These brought us great benefit. Our Sages teach us that today we have a remnant of that benefit, and that is our daily prayers. It is interesting that recently the Prime Minister of Israel, Binyamin Netanyahu, sent a message about the importance of decorum in shul and no one even noticed it! What? – you ask – when did the Prime Minister

speak about decorum in shul? OK, he didn't make an explicit reference to shul, but he implemented a new policy that should provide food for thought for G-d-fearing Jews.

According to the policy, no cell phones are allowed in his inner office. If you're invited to meet with him, then you will be asked to deposit your phone in a large container at the doorway known as the aquarium. According to senior officials, the Prime Minister got sick and tired of the use, or abuse, of cell phones in his office during important meetings. People would take phone calls, send messages or play games when the topic bored them. You really can't blame the Prime Minister for getting upset. Can you imagine someone having the nerve to put the Prime Minister on hold to take a call?!

The message to those of us who are fortunate enough to meet three times a day with the Commander-in-Chief (Hashem) is obvious. We have a serious problem with cell phones in shul, and it's not just with someone occasionally forgetting to turn off his phone.

We consciously keep them on (even if only on vibrate so as to benevolently avoid disturbing others) and answer them during prayers. Even if we're really "frum, " we'll mutter "Uh uh" to the party on the other end of the line so as to not actually talk. Some people waiting for hazarah to start are typing messages in the open.

Praying requires concentration and we get distracted easily. We need to learn decorum from the Prime Minister. Every shul should have an "aquarium" at the door, where people can deposit their phones. If we would be insulting the Prime

Minister by answering the phone in his office, I don't want to think how infinitely more insulting it would be to our Creator. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"He called to Moshe." (Vayikra 1:1) The first word of this week's perashah, Vayikra, is written with a small alef at the end. The Rabbis tell us that this was a compromise between Hashem and Moshe. When Hashem called out to Moshe, which signifies a very special honor, Moshe, who was extremely humble, didn't want to write it that way. He asked Hashem whether he could skip the alef and write "vayikar", which means "He chanced" upon Moshe. Hashem said, "No, but you may write it with a small letter."

With this, we can understand a very amazing Midrash. We know that Moshe had rays of light shining from his face. The Midrash says that this came about when Moshe took the leftover ink from his quill and put it on his face. It gave him a special light. What ink was leftover, and how could ink produce light? In a homiletic approach we can understand it based on the previous thought. Moshe was a self-effacing, extremely humble person. He wanted to make sure that no attention is called to his greatness. Therefore, he wanted to write "vayikar?", and finally wrote "vayikra" with a small alef. When a person makes himself smaller, he eventually becomes greater, because people who are humble are those we appreciate and acknowledge. This was the light on Moshe's face. Those that toot their own horns, however, are usually known as precisely that: people who make a lot of noise.

We know many people who suffer from "I" trouble, always punctuating their sentences with "I" this and "I" that. We also know

those who are quiet, self-effacing, looking to stay out of the limelight. We know whom we'd rather be with. That's also who we should try to be. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Making Sacrifices for Our Children

Ironically, there are many Jewish schools that omit the Book of Vayikra from their curriculum, figuring that it is too detailed, intricate and difficult for their students. These schools would rather focus their attention on the exciting stories of the Torah, rather than burden the students with the complex laws of the sacrifices.

This is ironic because the Midrash records a tradition to do just the opposite – to make Vayikra the first section of Humash that schoolchildren are taught. The Midrash writes, "Let the pure ones come and study that which is pure." According to this tradition, the best introduction to the world of Torah study for children is precisely the subjects of Vayikra.

Why would the Book of Vayikra be the first section of Humash taught to children?

One explanation might be that the study of Vayikra sends a powerful message not to the children – but to their parents. Communities adopted this custom because they wanted the schoolchildren to return home and report to their parents that they learned about sacrifices. One of the critical foundations of Torah education is sacrifice. Parents must make enormous sacrifices to provide their children with a proper Torah education. Tuition expenses require parents to work long hours and to forego on luxuries. Without doubt, the cost of Jewish education causes many families

to live on a much lower standard of living than they would otherwise enjoy. Appropriately, then, the very first subject children were taught was sacrifices – conveying to parents the message that they must be prepared to make significant sacrifices for the sake of their children's education.

The story is told of a family in early 20th-century Poland that was struggling to make ends meet. The father decided that the family should relocate to the United States where he could open a business and support the family more comfortably than he could in Poland. He sailed to the United States to open a business and get settled, planning to bring his family over after his initial arrangements were completed. Unfortunately, World War I erupted while he was in America, and international travel was brought to a halt. As a result of the war's upheavals, the family was separated for ten years. During this time, the wife worked very hard to support herself and her two children, and to pay for their Torah education. One day, she was notified that one of her sons was a child prodigy and has the potential to become a leading Torah scholar. The school informed the mother that the child's level far exceeded that of the other students, and she would have to hire private tutors to study with him so he could realize his potential. The mother promptly took on a nighttime job delivering milk. After a full day of work and caring for her children, when the children were in bed, she would go around town delivering milk in order to earn some extra money for her son's tutors.

Her efforts paid off. That boy grew to become Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, one of our generation's leading Torah sages. One can only wonder whether he

would have attained this stature without the monumental sacrifices made by his mother on behalf of his education.

In order to educate our children, we must be prepared to make significant sacrifices. Besides the financial sacrifices, we might have to forego on certain activities for the sake of our children's spiritual growth. Parents might enjoy watching television, but they need to consider the harmful effects a television could have on their children. Parents certainly deserve a luxurious family vacation, but many vacation spots must be labeled as off-limits because of what the children might be exposed to at these locations. We can't have our cake and eat it, too. If we want our children to grow to become committed, conscientious Jewish adults, we have no choice but to make sacrifices for their education.

The Torah says that as Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son at the Akeda, an angel called to him "from the heavens" and commanded him to withdraw his sword (Bereshit 22:11). Curiously, the angel did not descend to Abraham and speak to him on earth, but rather called to him from the heavens. Rav Moshe Siman-Tov explained that the area around Abraham Abinu at that moment was so sacred, that even the angels could not approach him. When a parent makes a great sacrifice for the sake of his or her children, this sacrifice generates intense Kedusha. Abraham was prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, and thus he generated such a high level of sanctity that even the angels had to keep their distance.

This is a crucial message that parents must remember at all times. Every time a parent writes out a check for the child's

education, this creates Kedusha. Every time parents decide against purchasing a luxury item so they can afford their tuition payments, they generate more holiness. And every time parents scratch an idea for vacation out of concern for their children's spiritual wellbeing, they produce sanctity.

This is one of the fundamental lessons of Vayikra. Torah education requires sacrifice. As parents, we must accept this basic truth and be prepared to make sacrifices for our children's growth. Indeed, education begins with Vayikra – with the awareness of the central role of sacrifice in the educational process.

Rabbi Wein

God calls out to Moshe from the inner sanctuary of the Mishkan. Yet, as Rashi points out to us, the sound of God's voice, so to speak, was loud and strong. However it was limited to the area within the Mishkan. Those who were outside of that sanctuary heard nothing. The message imparted here is a clear and simple one. Not everyone hears God's voice nor can it be heard everywhere.

There was a long period of time in English and American society that those who entered the clergy were said to have responded to a "calling." In our jaded, materialistic, dysfunctional world of today a "calling" is something to be mocked at as being naïve and impractical. Yet the Torah emphasizes here that Moshe responded to such a "calling" and that in fact this became the name and title of one of the five books of Moshe.

Leading and teaching the Jewish people can certainly be viewed as a profession and a career. But if that is all it is then it is deficient in its spiritual potential and its

ultimate chance of success. Unless one hears, so to speak, the voice of God calling one to public service and Torah teaching, the soul of the matter will always be compromised.

Moshe is able to be the incomparable Moshe that he is because he hears the Lord calling out to him even if no one else apparently does so as well. All of his life he responds to that call and remains faithful to the task and challenge that leading the Jewish people poses for him.

Midrash teaches us that Moshe first heard the voice of God, so to speak, at the encounter at the burning bush. There the Lord called out to him in the voice and tone of his father Amram and Moshe therefore was able to hear it without being overwhelmed. Much later in Jewish history, the Lord told the prophet Eliyahu that he could hear His call in the still small voice that reverberates within all of our consciences.

God is heard, so to speak, in the voice of our ancestors, of Jewish tradition and family bonds. Many Jews today are completely unaware of their own family heritage and certainly of the greater heritage of Israel as a whole. And very few of us are strong enough psychologically and spiritually to hearken to our inner voice, still and small as it is.

So we wander through life seeking direction and guidance and turn to others to help us find ourselves. First we should look inward for the Godly GPS implanted within us. That is our Mishkan, the place where God's voice can be heard. Searching for it elsewhere, in the voices of strangers, outside of our Mishkan will be frustrating and fruitless.

Since the voice of God, no matter how powerful and strong it may

be, is still described as being a small voice, it is obvious that one has to pay attention and strain to hear it. This effort always characterized Moshe's life, the loyal servant of God, who was attuned to hear the calling that guided him, and through him, all of Israel and humankind as well.

Ricky Cohen

FREEDOM A Child and An Angel

There was once a small child who had the good fortune of being visited by an angel. As the child sat coloring the angel pulled up a chair next to him.

When the child raised his head and saw the angel sitting there, he offered him a crayon and asked if he would like to help him draw a picture of his mom and dad, his sister, his house and a friend. The angel quickly obliged and began to color.

After a while the child looked up again, and was puzzled and a little disappointed, in what the angel had drawn.

All the child could discern were outlines of the figures and the frame of the house. The child thought that maybe the angel needed another crayon, so he handed him one. But after a few minutes he raised his head again and saw nothing more than the same outline and the same frame made bolder by the second crayon.

The child shrugged his shoulders and was silent for a few minutes more, then finally asked the angel when he planned to complete the picture.

The angel smiled at him and said: "I can never finish, dear child – it is not my mission."

With that, the child took back the picture and began to color in the house and all the figures.

(Excerpted from "I Once Asked a Wise Man" by Ricky Cohen publication date Sept 2012)

A child enjoys something that an angel does not: the child has freedom. Freedom is the most curious and complex element of our lives – reserved only for mankind. Freedom is not something granted to a group or an individual. It will not be bestowed, nor can it be taken. Freedom will never be imposed or mandated from above or from the outside, and it will be considered as remaining unrealized until it becomes central to every man's day to day life, and every child's vocabulary.

Emancipation is the removal of physical shackles and is defined by one man no longer being physically enslaved to another. It is an event, noted by a moment in time.

Freedom is not the description of a physical event. Rather it is the description of the status of the spirit, the mind, and the heart. It is the quest of humanity, the purpose of our existence, and our most resilient challenge.

When the Jewish nation was emancipated from the slavery of ancient Egypt, we did not become free, rather, we were poised to begin our quest for freedom. Under the blanket of stars in the desert sky, we began by learning about each other - how to interact successfully; to give and to share. We then learned how to relate to our Creator – to be one with Him but to stand independently. We failed more often than we succeeded. We ignored imperatives, embraced directions

in life that went nowhere, and stumbled as we attempted to understand the elusive value of freedom. That experience continues today.

Passover will remain on the calendar as long man continues to work at freeing his spirit, mind and heart. The physical emancipation was the easy part. Intellectual, spiritual, and emotional freedom is an ongoing process that requires a top of mind, unrequited effort.

So how does one become free? By making choices and taking risks.

You must Risk to Give, Risk to Ask and Risk to Act.

As I mentioned in the article titled: "Ask and Don't Tell" the beginning of the journey to freedom is the ability to question. Questioning that which surrounds your life, like the natural wonders of our world, that which touches your life – what you study and learn, and ultimately the direction of your life - who you are and what you want out of your life, are the truest facilitators of freedom. It's hardly a surprise that questions begin the re-emersion into freedom experienced during the Passover Seder.

The article titled: "The River" described the courage to take action and grow. True belief in G-d, life, and oneself is not expressed in words or feelings, it is about action.

One who is enslaved physically has no ability to act independent of his master. One who is frightened or lazy has no ability to act as a result of the enslavement of his mind and his heart. Take risks to live.

Interestingly, that which allows a person to enter the freedom zone altogether is giving. When you

touch the pain of another and attempt to mitigate his pain with your love, insight, or friendship, you move beyond yourself and begin to understand the essential human component of "us". Giving to another enables you to learn how to connect rather than judge, and to ultimately value yourself as an essential contributor to a world of other essential contributors. That may be why sharing the pascal offering (korban pesach) is one of the first expressions of our nationhood, and why words of outreach to the poor and needy are the first words spoken on the seder nite. You want to taste freedom? Help someone else.

Angels have it easier than children and a lot easier than adults. They have no ability to choose and they're never challenged with an action other than that which they have been mandated to do. Emancipation doesn't relate to them but they will never be free. Man is emancipated and with continued very hard work, he/she will become more and more free. Give, Ask, and Act.

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The laws of sacrifices that dominate the early chapters of the book of Vayikra / Leviticus, are among the hardest in the Torah to relate to - for it has been almost 2000 years since the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system came to an end. But Jewish thinkers, especially the more mystical among them, strove to understand the inner significance of the sacrifices, the statement they made about the relationship between humanity and G-d. They were thus able to rescue their spirit even if their physical enactment was no longer possible.

Among the simplest yet most profound was the comment made by R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. He noticed a grammatical oddity about the second line of this week's sedra:

Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: when one of you offers a sacrifice to the Lord, the sacrifice must be taken from the cattle, sheep or goats. (Lev. 1:2)

Or so the verse would read if it were constructed according to the normal rules of grammar. However, in Hebrew the word order of the sentence is strange and unexpected. We would expect to read: adam mikem ki yakriv, "when one of you offers a sacrifice". Instead what it says is adam ki yakriv mikem, "when one offers a sacrifice of you". The essence of sacrifice, said R. Shneur Zalman, is that we offer ourselves. We bring to G-d our faculties, our energies, our thoughts and emotions. The physical form of sacrifice – an animal offered on the altar - is only an external manifestation of an inner act. The real sacrifice is mikem, "of you". We give G-d something of ourselves.

Let us stay with this idea and pursue it further. In sacrifice, what do we give G-d? The Jewish mystics, among them R. Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls each of us has - the animal soul (nefesh ha-behamit) and the G-dly soul. On the one hand we are physical beings. We are part of nature. We have physical needs: food, drink, shelter. We are born, we live, we die. As Kohelet / Ecclesiastes puts it:

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. Both have the same breath; man has no advantage

over the animal. Everything is a mere fleeting breath. (Ecclesiastes 3: 19)

Yet we are not simply animals. We have within us immortal longings. We can think, speak, communicate. We can - by the acts of speaking and listening - reach out to others. We are the one life form known to us in the vast universe that can ask the question "Why?" We can formulate ideas and be moved by high ideals. We are not governed by biological drives alone. Psalm 8 is a hymn of wonder on this theme:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? Yet You made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet...

Physically, we are almost nothing; spiritually, we are brushed by the wings of eternity. We have a G-dly soul.

The nature of sacrifice, understood psychologically, is now clear. What we offer G-d is (not just an animal but) the nefesh ha-behamit, the animal soul within us.

The verse uses three words for the animals to be sacrificed: behemah (animal), bakar (cattle) and tzon (flock). Each represents an animal-like feature of the human personality.

Behemah is animal instinct itself. The word refers to domesticated animals. It does not imply the savage instincts of the predator. What it means is something more

tame. Animals spend their time searching for food. Their lives are bounded by the struggle to survive. To sacrifice the animal within us is to be moved by something more than mere survival.

Wittgenstein, when asked what was the task of philosophy, answered "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle". The fly, trapped in the bottle, bangs its head against the glass, trying to find a way out. The one thing it fails to do is to look up. The G-dly soul within us is the force that makes us look up, beyond the physical world, beyond mere survival, in search of meaning, purpose, goal.

The word bakar, cattle, in Hebrew reminds us of the word boker, "dawn", literally to "break through", as the first rays of sunlight break through the darkness of night. Cattle, stampeding, break through barriers. Unless constrained by fences, cattle are no respecters of boundaries. To sacrifice the bakar is to learn to recognize and respect boundaries - between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. Barriers of the mind can sometimes be stronger than walls.

Finally tzon, flocks, represents the herd instinct - the powerful drive to move in a given direction because others are doing likewise. The great figures of Judaism - Abraham, Moses, the prophets - were distinguished precisely by their ability to stand apart from the herd; to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to refuse to capitulate to the intellectual fashions of the moment. That ultimately is the meaning of holiness in Judaism. Kadosh, the holy, is something set apart, different, separate, distinctive. Jews were the only

people in history consistently to refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith.

The noun korban, "sacrifice", and the verb le-hakriv, "to offer something as a sacrifice" actually mean "that which is brought close" and "the act of bringing close". The key element is not so much giving something up (the usual meaning of sacrifice) but rather bringing something close to G-d. Le-hakriv is to bring the animal element to be transformed through the Divine fire that once burned on the altar, and still burns at the heart of prayer if we truly seek closeness to G-d.

By one of the great ironies of history, this ancient idea has become suddenly contemporary. Darwinism, the decoding of the human genome, and scientific materialism (the idea that the material is all there is) have led to the widespread conclusion that we are animals, nothing more, nothing less. We share 98 per cent of our genes with the primates. We are, as Desmond Morris used to put it, "the naked ape". Homo sapiens exists by mere accident. We are the result of a random series of genetic mutations who just happened to be more adapted to survival than other species. The nefesh ha-behamit, the animal soul, is all there is.

The refutation of this idea - and it is one of the most absurdly reductive ever held by intelligent minds - lies in the very act of sacrifice itself as the mystics understood it. We can redirect our animal instincts. We can rise above mere survival. We are capable of honouring boundaries. We can step outside our environment. We can transcend the behemah, the bakar and the tzon. No animal is capable of self-transformation; but we are.

Poetry, music, love, wonder - the things that have no survival value but which speak to our deepest sense of being - all tell us that we are not mere animals, assemblages of selfish genes. By bringing that which is animal within us close to G-d, we allow the material to be suffused with the spiritual and we become something else: no longer slaves of nature but servants of the living G-d.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"You shall observe the month of Springtime (aviv) and perform the Pesach offering for Hashem, your G-d, for in the month of Springtime Hashem your G-d, took you out of Egypt at night" (Devarim 16:1)

Now I am going to tell you what the Alter of Slabodka, R' Noson Zvi Finkel, said on this pasuk. The Alter asked, "why does the Torah tell us that we left Egypt in the spring?" It is true that in springtime the land is beautiful as all of nature begins to bloom. But wouldn't we have been just as happy if it were pouring rain or even hailing when we left Egypt? After being enslaved there for 210 years we would have been overjoyed to leave in any kind of weather.

The spring month of grain ripening was chosen by Hashem in order to enhance the happiness of the occasion. Thus, even in a mountain-heap of joy of liberation when we were loaded with the wealth of Egypt, yet we were expected not to overlook the fact that the spring season was a time of happiness and the weather was enjoyable.

Therefore, just as we must thank Hashem for all the Hesed He does for us, so also we must

thank Him for every extra detail of that Hesed. Hashem wanted to shower kindness upon us so He made it a beautiful spring day when He redeemed us from Egypt. It was the time of splendor (ziv). Therefore, our gratitude to Him was even more emotional and exuberant that it would otherwise have been.

When someone does us a kindness we should also examine all the details of that Hesed. This will bring us to a further and deeper appreciation of that person. Which will bring out strong emotions of love for this person. This should all lead to our profuse and boundless Gratitude/Hakarat Hatob. Which is one of the most important reasons why Hashem has sent us any good fortune, in order to afford us the glorious opportunity to show our Gratitude, which is our perfection.