

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYIKRA

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 43:21-44:23

MARCH 7-8, 2014

6 ADAR il 5774

Remember to move your clocks one hour ahead on Saturday night.

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH

We wish Uri Lemberger a happy birthday - Friday, March 7th – Abal 120

Candle lighting this Friday evening is at 5:34 p.m. Mincha at 5:35

SHABBAT 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:32AM

Sermon By Sam Yusupov

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30

Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom

Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library

Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Kiddush this Shabbat

Donated By Mr and Mrs Maurice Borenstein in honor of their daughter Molly's Bat Mitzvah y
Mincha follows Kiddush with amidah not before 12:35 PM

Shabbat Ends – 6:34PM

Return for Arbit – 6:50 PM

Kid's Movie Night follows at 7:45 - Pizza and Fun! – This week's Family Movie Night is sponsored in memory of Yosef Mordechai Ben Ester – Jerry Werman and we'll feature: MEGILLAS LESTER ... Imagine if you found yourself going back in time to the times of Achashveirosh. Imagine if you were at his grand feast, and had the opportunity to change the course of the Purim story. Join Lester on his quest to save Purim in this revolutionary, full-length, animated film. The whole family will enjoy this unique and humorous take on the Purim story and learn an important lesson in the process!

A NIGHT OF 100 KOSHER WINES & 36 SCOTCHES

HOSTED BY: Young Israel of Long Beach - Saturday, March 08, 2014 08:00 PM - 10:30 PM

This Sunday March 9th is the 7th of Adar – The traditional Yahrzeit of Moshe Rabeynu
This year it culminates the 12 months and the Yahrzeit for Chantelle's father Jerry Werman
Yosef Mordechai Ben Rose

Although some have the custom to fast on the 7th Adar, in practice most of us don't
So for those who are around Sunday morning, we'll have a class at 9AM and breakfast at
The Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach – Please join us

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

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

Please note that Thursday is Taanit Esther – see notes in newsletter

Pre-Purim Carnival at the YILB, 120 Long Beach B'lv'd this

Sunday, March 9th. The fun starts at 3:00 PM

SCOOTER THE CLOWN will entertain

There will also be a fantastic costume contest & refreshments. Please come in costume to win some prizes

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7PM –

Daily class with Rabbi Colish at 6:30AM

NEXT WEEK FOR PURIM

Although we change the clock this Saturday night, we will still pray Mincha Gedolah Next Shabbat – We are looking for sponsors for a nice Kiddush to be followed by a class and then Mincha at 1:20PM. Shabbat ends at 7:44 and we will return for Arbit and Megilah at 8:30 allowing those driving from far to join us. Our Congregation Purim Party Follows.

Family Purim Bash

Come in costume and ready to celebrate Purim Saturday Night March 15th. Arvit and Megilla followed by a delicious feast sponsored by the Sisterhood. Don't miss out on an awesome evening of Face Painting Fun, Costume Contest, Scavenger Hunt and Stump the Rabbi!

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame. This week only Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 5:30 PM so we can pray mincha and arbit. Beginning the following Monday March 17th Mincha only at 4PM through October 30th – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes

Someone's calling your name

I polled a bunch of people on the opening verse of this week's portion and many mistakenly change the words "and (He) called to Moses and G-d Spoke to him" to the more natural sounding, "And G-d called to Moses and spoke to him". It would seem that the G-d should have been listed at the outset as the one doing the calling. Why is G-d missing in some small way from the act of Vayikra?

I recall discussing this with Rabbi Abittan z'sl, who told me the following story. (This version is posted on ShemaYisrael)

Rav Yaakov Yosef HaCohen of Polone, who is also known by the title of his book the Toldot Yaakov Yosef is best known as the author of the first Hassidic work ever published. But Rab Yaacov Yosef did not start out as a Hassid. He was a brilliant scholar and student of Kabbalah and considered by many a Mitnaged or Anti Hasid. And then he met the Baal Shem Tov. In his book, he repeats the phrase, "I have heard from my teacher", 249 times. He is one of the foremost sources for teachings from the Baal Shem Tov.

The Toldot Yaakov Yosef was visiting the Baal Shem Tov discussing various thoughts in Torah. The Baal Shem expressed the belief that everything that happens in the world and we notice is a message relevant to us. "If something occurs in the world, and one becomes aware of it; we should consider this a message being sent from Heaven", he explained. The Baal Shem Tov added that this is true even if it seems to be very insignificant, and even if it seems entirely natural, still, since everything that happens in

the world is ordained by Hashem, even your becoming aware of this event is also ordained by Hashem, so it means that it contains some message.

As they were discussing this concept, a gentile worker passed by and peeked through the open window and said, "Good Morning Rebbe, is there anything that needs fixing today?" He was a worker looking for a job.

"No, not today; everything seems to be in order," the Baal Shem replied.

The workman could not accept the answer, he needed work. So he blurted out, "Rebbe, if you look hard enough you'll always find something that needs repair.

The Baal Shem turned to Rav Yaakov Yosef and said, "Do you realize that we have just been sent a message from the Ribono Shel Olam. If you look hard enough, you can always find something that can be fixed up. Never think you're perfect."

Rav Yaakov Yosef was not ready to accept this idea. "If Hashem has such a lofty message, is He going to send it through a goyishe laborer? I can't accept that."

The Baal Shem Tov looked at him and retorted, "You can, you just don't want to."

Rav Yaakov Yosef left the Baal Shem Tov's house, reflecting upon the conversation. As he was standing there, a farmer passed by with a wagon load of hay. As he drives by, a few bales of hay become loose and fall off the wagon. The goy stops his wagon and gets off and looks at Rav Yaakov Yosef and asks, "Can you help me lift these bales of hay back on the wagon? They're too heavy for me to lift alone."

Rav Yaakov Yosef replied, "I'm sorry, but they're too heavy for me too."

The goy looked at him and said, "You can. You just don't want to!"

That did it. He was convinced. He ran back into the home of the Baal Shem Tov willing to admit that a Heavenly message can come through a goyishe wagon driver or repairman or from anywhere, we just need to want to hear it.

Rabbi Abittan explained that Hashem is always calling out, but calling through various messengers. It's up to us to pay attention.

Rabbi Abittan would go on to clarify that the verse which opens the portion of Yitro begins Vayishma Yitro and Yitro heard to which the Rabbi asked, "didn't the whole world hear", as we read in Az Yashir – the song of the sea? He would explain that the world may have heard something, but they didn't listen and thus in reality didn't hear anything worth hearing. They weren't listening while Yitro was.

This week we see that Moshe heard everything, no matter the source and understood that in everything there was a message, in everything there was a lesson. No matter what is calling out, no matter what is happening in the world, we must understand that it's G-d speaking to us. Vayikra - And it called out – it can be anything. And if we really listen we will realize – Vaydaber Hashem Elav - and G-d spoke to him saying.

The Rabbi would remind us that the Chafetz Chaim noted that all modern inventions were only provided for us to better understand Hashem, His Torah and His world. In our times it's so much simpler to appreciate. We live in a world of communications: of radio waves, of phone conversations, of television and texts all in some way being broadcast and floating through the air. But we don't see any of it. To us it's all invisible. We don't hear it. It all can mean nothing.

But we must realize that the world is filled with hidden sounds, images and words. They are floating by us and all around us, but to access them, we need to tune in to the right station, to the right number, to the right frequency.

Rabbi Abittan would repeat to us time and again that each of us was someone special. One is supposed to look at the world as if it was created only for him. If so, then that person needs to do something, be someone, and make life worthwhile. To do so, he needs to tune in and hear the message and then to act. But to hear the message he needs to actively listen to what may sound like a whisper.

I am reminded of the words in the book of Melachim when Hashem says to Elijah: "Go out and stand in the mountain before the L-rd, Behold! The L-rd passes, and a great and strong wind splitting mountains and shattering boulders before the L-rd, but the L-rd was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake-not in the earthquake was the L-rd. After the earthquake fire, not in the fire was the L-rd, and after the fire a still small sound. And as Elijah heard, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and he went out and stood at the entrance to the cave, and behold a voice came to him.

So let's pay attention to the voice; let's pay attention to the call. "Can you hear me now"? It's asking us.

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

Selected Laws of Purim – Courtesy of Edmond J Safra Synagogue New York

Esther's Fast:

One should fast on the day before Purim in remembrance of the fast that Queen Esther and the Jews took upon themselves as they prayed to succeed in their battles. This year the fast falls out on Thursday, March 13. The duration of the fast is from the break of dawn to night fall. (APX 6:00 am – 7:20 pm – Please check your local time)

- Boys below age 13 and girls below age 12 are not required to fast
- Pregnant and nursing women are not required to fast
- Sick and very weak people are not required to fast
- Washing face, hands, and feet and even showering with hot water is permitted
- In case of discomfort one may rinse his/her mouth with mouthwash.

Reading of the Megilla:

The Mitzva of reading the Megilla on Purim is incumbent upon every Jewish man and woman. Children who have reached the age of understanding (approx. 9 or 10 years old) are encouraged to read it too. One should do all he can to fulfill this commandment. This Mitzva is to be performed twice. The first time is on Purim eve, and the second time is during the day of Purim (anytime between sunrise and sunset).

The reading should be from a proper scroll. If someone does not have a scroll, he or she should listen to the reader who is reading from one. Under no circumstances should the scroll be replaced by a printed book. The listener who is following the reading from a Megilla, can read from it quietly along with the reader, but if he or she is following from a book, one should not read from it but follow silently.

The reader may read on behalf of all those people present, providing that he is 13 years old or above, and that it is understood that he is doing it on their behalf.

Before reading the Megilla three blessings are recited by the reader only: Al Mikra Megilla, Sh'assa Nissim, and Shehehianu. During the daytime reading, the Shehehianu blessing is omitted - provided that it

was recited the night before. In both the reading of the night and the day, the reader recites the blessing of Harab Et Ribenu after the reading. The listener should not recite the blessings but only answer Amen. No interruption is allowed during the reading of the Megilla. There is an obligation to hear every word of the Megilla.

One is not allowed to eat before the reading of the Megilla. Therefore, supper and breakfast should be eaten only after the reading. It is customary for the listeners to recite five verses aloud which are then repeated by the reader. These are:
Chap. 2:5 / Chap 6:1 / Chap 8:15 and 16 /Chap 10:3

It is customary to stamp one's feet only the first time and the last time Haman's name is mentioned, and not other times.

During prayer (Amida) and the Blessings after the Meals (Birkat Hamazon) one should recite Al Hanissim and Bimei Mordekhai. If a person forgets to recite this addition, it is not necessary to repeat the prayer or the Blessing after the meals.

Gifts to the Poor:

- It is incumbent upon every Jewish man and woman to give one gift to two different poor persons. Money may be given in lieu of the gifts, if it is as valuable as the gifts.
- Husband and wife can join together to give the gift in their name.
- Children under 13 are not required to give these gifts. Children above 13 may join their parents in doing so.
- If there are no poor people available, one can give it to any needy person or institution.
- The gifts or money has to be given during Purim day and not at night.
- One may fulfill the Missva by giving food to needy people.

Daily Halacha: The Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135-1204), in Hilchot Megila (2:17), writes explicitly that the obligation of Matanot La'ebyonim takes priority over the other obligations of Purim (listen to audio for precise citation). He emphasizes that it is preferable to spend less on Mishlo'ah Manot and the Purim meal in order to increase one's spending on Matanot La'ebyonim. There is no greater joy, the Rambam writes, than helping the needy, bringing joy to their hearts and lifting their downtrodden spirits. One who does so, the Rambam adds, follows the example of the Almighty Himself, who revives lowly spirits and brings hope to those in despair.... One should not be afraid of being a "trend setter" in this regard. Even if one feels that his friends anticipate costly, lavish

Mishlo'ah Manot packages, he should nevertheless endeavor to set the trend among his peers of cutting back on Mishlo'ah Manot in favor of Matanot La'ebyonim.

The suggested amount this year is minimum \$10.00 per Matana, minimum 2 matanot, for a total of \$20.00 for each person wishing to fulfill the Misva.

Additional note: Rabbi Abittan often explained that it is difficult to do the mitzvah of matanot l'evyonim because it is hard to find an evyon – destitute person. An ani – poor person - might be a person that that doesn't have enough money to support himself for the year or a steady job, but an evyon would be someone who can't afford more than the next 6 meals. At the time we would visit certain people the rabbi knew were living on social assistance in Shaya's Hotel. Rabbi Colish and Rabbi Yaakov Seigal reminded us to look into where money was going. B'H, I have pre-donated funds to be distributed Purim day to eveyonim, Rachmana Atzlan there are many in the Holy Land and any of you can participate

Sending of Food to Friends:

- Men and women should send at least two varieties of food to at least one friend. Here also, the entire family can join together in fulfilling the Missva.
- The food must be sent during Purim day, and not at night and must be received on Purim day as well.

The Purim Feast:

- There is an obligation to have a feast during the day of Purim and not at night. The entire family should join and celebrate the victory of the Jews against Amalek (Haman).
- Festive mood is appropriate on Purim, and one may drink to the point where he or she is unable to distinguish between "Blessed Mordekhai" and "Cursed Haman", as long as it does not impair you. But don't drink and drive afterwards!

ED NOTE: Maybe a bit of wine would suffice especially for those of us who don't really drink anymore.

- According to one's custom and tradition, one may or may not work on Purim. However, it is recommended to refrain from doing day-to-day work.
- It is customary to wear holiday clothes in honor of Purim.

Half a Shekel – "Zecher Le'mahasit Ha'shekel"

- Some have the custom to give three silver half-dollars to sedaka in remembrance of the half shekel (given for the expenses of the Holy Temple).
- This obligation is incumbent upon males twenty years of age and older. Some hold that one is

obligated from thirteen years of age and above. If someone mistakenly gave before the age of twenty, he should continue

Daily Halacha: To perform the Misva on the highest standard, one should donate the current market value of 10 grams of pure silver. This year, 2014, based on the price of silver, this comes out to about \$8.

Furthermore, if one has a coin that is worth half the unit of currency – such as a half-dollar coin in the United States – it is preferable to use such a coin for the Mahasit Ha'shekel donation. There are silver half-dollars available, which contain 10 grams of silver, and using these coins would be the ideal method of observing the custom of Zecher La'mahasit Ha'shekel.

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.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“He called to Moshe and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying.” (Vayikra 1:1)

From the very beginning of the book of Vayikra, we learn about the character trait of humility, and how critical it is in the service of Hashem. The first word of Vayikra is written with a small aleph. Moshe Rabenu wanted to leave it out completely, because vayikra tells us that Hashem appeared to him when he was awake and spoke to him face to face. Without the aleph it says “vayikar” which means that his conversation with the Almighty was really only a chance meeting. Although Hashem told Moshe to write it with an aleph, Moshe nevertheless, because of his great humility, wrote it with a small aleph.

One might have thought the Torah would praise Moshe because of his other great traits, but it chose to praise him for his humility. The small aleph sets the tone for the entire perashah as we are introduced to the world of korbanot, which cause a person to humble himself before Hashem.

Rabbi Yechiel Spero tells a beautiful true story about a great Rabbi, Rabbi Salman Mutzafi. Rabbi Mutzafi, a great Sephardic Sage, was known for his humility. He abhorred honor and refused to be called Hacham.” Only one time did he reluctantly agree to that appellation. When he came to Israel in the year 1935, he brought with him his entire library. He had a tremendous love and appreciation for his holy books.

At the border, the authorities informed him that he had to pay a large tax, well beyond what he could afford. Only a Hacham, they explained, was exempt from the tax. He was then faced with a terrible dilemma. If he didn't admit that he was indeed a scholar, he would be confronted with the prospect of leaving his beloved books behind.

Reluctantly, he admitted that he did learn and teach from those books. The authorities then labeled his books as belonging to a Hacham, and he was able to bring them into the country without paying the tax.

However, when he arrived at his home after a long journey he told the story with great frustration and pain to the sadik Rav Tzadka Chutzin. With tears of regret, Rav Salman lamented, “It would have been worthwhile to leave my entire library behind at the border just so that they would not call me a Hacham.” Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"If a soul will bring a sacrifice" (Vayikra 2:1)

When a person brings a regular sacrifice, the Torah uses the word adam, a man, but when a poor person brings a sacrifice then the word used is nefesh, soul. The Rabbis tell us this means that G-d considers this poor man who struggled so hard to bring a sacrifice as if he brought his very soul to Hashem.

This lesson is not limited only to donating to charity. Rather, anyone who is limited in any field and nevertheless tries his hardest to do something in the service of G-d, even though the actual accomplishment may be modest, Hashem considers the effort as if the person brought his whole self close to G-d.

This should be encouraging to all of us in all our endeavors. If we don't pray so well or read Hebrew fluently and we still try our best, it means that much more to Hashem. If we can't grasp all the subject matter of a class and we still try our best to attend, it's as if we brought our vnab (soul) to our Creator. This should inspire us onward to improve and expand our involvement in studying, praying and community work since it is so precious in the eyes of Hashem. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com

The Small Alef

The Book of Vayikra receives its name from the first word in the Sefer – "Vayikra" ("He called"). The Sefer begins with G-d calling Moshe and summoning him into the newly-constructed Mishkan, to issue the commands relevant to the Korbanot (sacrifices).

Anyone who looks at the way this word – "Vayikra" – is written in the Torah will immediately notice something peculiar: the final letter, "Alef," is written considerably smaller than the other letters of the Torah. This in itself requires explanation, but the significance of this small letter might be even more far-reaching than it at first appears. Although the numerical value of the letter "Alef" is 1, if we spell the word "Alef" ("Alef," "Lamed," "Peh"), and combine the values of its letters, we arrive at 111 – the number of verses in Parashat Vayikra. This might allude to the fact that the message of this small "Alef" is the essential message of this Parasha. If we understand the small "Alef," then we can understand the fundamental concept underlying all of Parashat Vayikra.

The construction of the Mishkan served to rectify the sin of the golden calf. Anytime a Jew commits a sin,

he drives the divine Presence from his soul; he banishes the spark of Kedusha, the piece of G-d within him, and sends it away to exile. Teshuba (repentance) means making ourselves worthy of once again receiving that spark, and being a repository for the Shechina. And thus after the sin of the golden calf, God's presence left Beneh Yisrael, and they needed to build the Mishkan in order to bring Him back. But this process needed to unfold gradually, step by step. Beneh Yisrael could not receive the divine presence all at once. After falling so low after the sin of the golden calf, the process of the Shechina's return had to proceed slowly. A person leaving a dark room needs time to adjust to light. He cannot have the lights turned on all at once instantaneously. His eyes are simply unable to handle the drastic transition.

The Tasher Rebbe of Montreal, in his Abodat Aboda, explained that this is the symbolism underlying the small "Alef" at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra. Moshe Rabbenu was at the 50th level of Kedusha, the highest stature attainable by a human being. God instructed Moshe that in order to bring Beneh Yisrael back to where they needed to be, he would have to lower himself so the spiritual light he radiated would be smaller. After the darkness of the golden calf, Beneh Yisrael could not immediately receive the brightest spiritual light. And thus God appeared to Moshe on a lower level of prophecy, symbolized by the small letter "Alef."

This explains the comments of Rashi to the first verse of Sefer Vayikra, where he writes that the word "Vayikra" is a "Lashon Hiba" – a term that connotes love and affection. The Tasher Rebbe explained that the entire concept of Parashat Vayikra, G-d's willingness to restore His Shechina among Beneh Yisrael in the Mishkan, is a great act of love. Beneh Yisrael betrayed Him in the worst way, worshipping a foreign deity just weeks after receiving the Torah, and yet He was still prepared to return to them. He always gives us the opportunity to return and repair our relationship with Him. And He even ensures that the process will unfold at the right pace, step by step, so that it will be effective.

This is why the small "Alef" embodies the essence of the Parashat Vayikra. The concept underlying Korbanot is that we have the ability to restore our relationship with Hashem after falling. This entire book is a "Lashon Hiba," an expression of great love by G-d, who is always prepared to welcome us back in Teshuba, and is always prepared to help us along this process.

Rabbi Wein UKRAINE AND US

Ukraine occupies a very tortured and bloody place in the history of Eastern Europe. Sandwiched between Poland, Austro-Hungary and Russia and being neither Polish nor Russian in language, faith and ethnic culture, it always found itself in a very bad neighborhood.

Stalin and Khrushchev starved five million Ukrainians to death in the 1920s to enforce their agricultural collectivization program. Much of Ukraine served as the battlefield between the German and Russian armies during World War II and its landscape remains scarred by those battles even today, seventy years later.

Unspeakable atrocities occurred daily in Ukraine in World War II with both German and Russian armies being guilty of inhuman behavior on a vast scale. Ukrainian nationalism was squashed by the heavy hand of the Soviet Union until the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Ukraine declared its independence then and has been searching for a way to build for itself a form of democratic government, a working economy and a better life for its citizenry.

Over the last twenty years it has had its ups and downs and never really achieved for itself the blessings that it hoped independence from the Soviet Union would achieve. The Russian bear has now reappeared on its eastern border and once again threatens Ukrainian independence and territory.

Putin, in his inimitable fashion, mocks the impotence of the United States and the West and things look fairly bleak for the future of Ukrainian independence. There is no one in the Ukraine, I believe, that thinks that the United States or the European Union is prepared to ride to Ukraine's rescue. And so, like many other countries, ours included, Ukraine has the bad fortune of having to live in a very bad neighborhood.

The history of Ukraine and the treatment of its Jewish population is also a sad and bloody one. The great pogroms of 1648 and 1649 that killed hundreds of thousands of Jews were led by the Ukrainian nationalist Bogdan Chmeilitzki. There is a statue in his honor in the main square of the city of Kiev. To Ukrainians he is a national hero. To the Jews he is recorded in our history as a villain first-class, a murderer of women and children and is listed together with Haman and Hitler in the unsavory pantheon of Jew haters and anti-Semites.

In World War II and the ensuing Holocaust, a substantial number of Ukrainians served in the SS, were camp guards in the concentration and killing camps and were willing collaborators with the Nazis in rounding up the local Jewish population for deportation and murder. Now naturally the Ukrainians were no different than most of the populations of Europe in the 1940s.

France and Holland, Belgium and Poland were also countries rife with collaborators who helped the Nazis eradicate their Jewish populations. Much of this has been smoothed over by the West, though to me it explains the almost knee-jerk reaction of enmity of the European Union to the State of Israel and to the Jewish people, its faith and religious rituals.

The current spate of banning ritual kosher slaughter and the opposition to circumcision represents only the tip of the iceberg, underlying the true feelings and policies of Europe towards the Jews – a legacy of fifteen-hundred years of persecution and hatred. Still Ukraine holds a very prominent place in this sad and unreasonable story of the oppression of the Jews.

We are told that there are still approximately two-hundred-thousand Jews living in Ukraine as of today. There has already been a call by smaller Jewish communities in Ukraine asking Israel to send security forces to their communities to help protect them from the ongoing anti-Semitic acts and expected violence. It will be interesting to see what if anything Israel can or will do to defend those Jews who still live in Ukraine. After all, if Israel is not a Jewish state but just a state where Jews live then why should it be more concerned over the fate of people living in Ukraine than are any of the other countries of the world.

A great deal of Jewish money and effort has been invested over the last twenty years in attempting to revive Jewish life in Ukraine. The results are murky and mixed. What is pretty clear though is that most Ukrainians would prefer their country to be judenrein.

I cannot judge other Jews for their motives and behavior, their actions and inaction. Nevertheless, it seems to me that those Jews living in Ukraine and who somehow have not previously absorbed the lessons of Jewish history regarding Ukraine and the Jews would do well now to think again about remaining there.

Whatever the future of the Ukraine will be, it should be obvious that there really is no Jewish future possible there. It is perplexing and fascinating at one

and the same time to witness how the Lord is staging this drama for us in this season of the year.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

Leaders make mistakes. That is inevitable. So, strikingly, our parsha implies. The real issue is how he or she responds to those mistakes.

The point is made by the Torah in a very subtle way. Our parsha deals with sin offerings to be brought when people have made mistakes. The technical term for this is shegagah, meaning inadvertent wrongdoing.[1] You did something, not knowing it was forbidden, either because you forgot or did not know the law, or because you were unaware of certain facts. You may, for instance, have carried something in a public place on Shabbat, either because you did not know it was forbidden to carry, or because you forgot it was Shabbat.

The Torah prescribes different sin offerings, depending on who made the mistake. It enumerates four categories. First is the High Priest, second is “the whole community” (understood to mean the great Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court), a third is “the leader” (nasi), and the fourth is an ordinary individual.

In three of the four cases, the law is introduced by the word im, “if” – if such a person commits a sin. In the case of the leader, however, the law is prefaced by the word asher, “when.” It is possible that a High Priest, the Supreme Court or an individual may err. But in the case of a leader, it is probable or even certain. Leaders make mistakes. It is the occupational hazard of their role. Talking about the sin of a nasi, the Torah uses the word “when,” not “if.”

Nasi is the generic word for a leader: a ruler, king, judge, elder or prince. Usually it refers to the holder of political power. In Mishnaic times, the Nasi, the most famous of whom were leaders from the family of Hillel, had a quasi-governmental role as representative of the Jewish people to the Roman government. Rabbi Moses Sofer (Bratislava, 1762-1839) in one of his responsa[2] examines the question of why, when positions of Torah leadership are never dynastic, passed from father to son, the role of Nasi was an exception. Often it did pass from father to son. The answer he gives, and it is historically insightful, is that with the decline of monarchy in the Second Temple period and thereafter, the Nasi took on many of the roles of a king. His role, internally and externally, was as much political and diplomatic as religious. That in general is what is meant by the word Nasi.

Why does the Torah consider this type of leadership particularly prone to error? The commentators offer three possible explanations. R. Ovadiah Sforno cites the phrase “But Yeshurun waxed fat, and kicked” (Deut. 32: 15). Those who have advantages over others, whether of wealth or power, can lose their moral sense. Rabbenu Bachya agrees, suggesting that rulers tend to become arrogant and haughty. Implicit in these commentators – it is in fact a major theme of Tenakh as a whole – is the idea later stated by Lord Acton in the aphorism, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”[3]

R. Elie Munk, citing the Zohar, offers a second explanation. The High Priest and the Sanhedrin were in constant contact with the holy. They lived in a world of ideals. The king or political ruler, by contrast, was involved in secular affairs: war and peace, the administration of government, and international relations. He was more likely to sin because his day to day concerns were not religious but pragmatic.[4]

R. Meir Simcha ha-Cohen of Dvinsk[5] points out that a king was especially vulnerable to being led astray by popular sentiment. Neither a priest nor a judge in the Sanhedrin were answerable to the people. The king, however, relied on popular support. Without that he could be deposed. But this is laden with risk. Doing what the people want is not always doing what God wants. That, R. Meir Simcha argues, is what led David to order a census (2 Samuel 24), and Zedekiah to ignore the advice of Jeremiah and rebel against the king of Babylon (2 Chronicles 36). Thus, for a whole series of reasons, a political leader is more exposed to temptation and error than a priest or judge.

There are further reasons.[6] One is that politics is an arena of conflict. It deals in matters – specifically wealth and power – that are in the short term zero-sum games. The more I have, the less you have. Seeking to maximise the benefits to myself or my group, I come into conflict with others who seek to maximise benefits to themselves or their group. The politics of free societies is always conflict-ridden. The only societies where there is no conflict are tyrannical or totalitarian ones in which dissenting voices are suppressed – and Judaism is a standing protest against tyranny. So in a free society, whatever course a politician takes, it will please some and anger others. From this, there is no escape.

Politics involves difficult judgements. A leader must balance competing claims, and will sometimes get it wrong. One example – one of the most fateful in Jewish history – occurred after the death of King Solomon. People came to his son and successor,

Rehoboam, complaining that Solomon had imposed unsustainable burdens on the population, particularly during the building of the Temple. Led by Jeroboam, they asked the new king to reduce the burden. Rehoboam asked his father's counsellors for advice. They told him to concede to the people's demand. Serve them, they said, and they will serve you. Rehoboam however turned to his own friends, who told him the opposite. Reject the request. Show the people you are a strong leader who cannot be intimidated.[7]

It was disastrous advice, and the result was tragic. The kingdom split in two, the ten northern tribes following Jeroboam, leaving only the southern tribes, generically known as "Judah," loyal to the king. For Israel as a people in its own land, it was the beginning of the end. Always a small people surrounded by large and powerful empires, it needed unity, high morale and a strong sense of destiny to survive. Divided, it was only a matter of time before both nations, Israel in the north, Judah in the south, fell to other powers.

The reason leaders – as opposed to judges and priests – cannot avoid making mistakes is that there is no textbook that infallibly teaches you how to lead. Priests and judges follow laws. For leadership there are no laws because every situation is unique. As Isaiah Berlin put it in his essay, 'Political Judgement,'[8] in the realm of political action, there are few laws and what is needed instead is skill in reading a situation. Successful statesmen 'do not think in general terms.' Instead 'they grasp the unique combination of characteristics that constitute this particular situation – this and no other.' Berlin compares this to the gift possessed by great novelists like Tolstoy and Proust.[9] Applying inflexible rules to a constantly shifting political landscape destroys societies. Communism was like that. In free societies, people change, culture changes, the world beyond a nation's borders does not stand still. So a politician will find that what worked a decade or a century ago does not work now. In politics it is easy to get it wrong, hard to get it right.

There is one more reason why leadership is so challenging. It is alluded to by the mishnaic sage, R. Nehemiah, commenting on the verse, "My son, if you have put up security for your neighbour, if you have struck your hand in pledge for another" (Proverbs 6:1):

So long as a man is an associate [i.e. concerned only with personal piety], he need not be concerned with the community and is not punished on account of it. But once a man has been placed at the head and has

donned the cloak of office, he may not say: I have to look after my welfare, I am not concerned with the community. Instead, the whole burden of communal affairs rests on him. If he sees a man doing violence to his fellow, or committing a transgression, and does not seek to prevent him, he is punished on account of him, and the holy spirit cries out: "My son, if you have put up security for your neighbour" – meaning, you are responsible for him . . . You have entered the gladiatorial arena, and he who enters the arena is either conquered or conquers.[10]

A private individual is responsible only for his own sins. A leader is held responsible for the sins of the people he leads: at least those he might have prevented.[11] With power comes responsibility: the greater the power, the greater the responsibility.

There are no universal rules, there is no failsafe textbook, for leadership. Every situation is different and each age brings its own challenges. A ruler, in the best interests of his or her people, may sometimes have to take decisions that a conscientious individual would shrink from doing in private life. He may have to decide to wage a war, knowing that some will die. He may have to levy taxes, knowing that this will leave some impoverished. Only after the event will the leader know whether the decision was justified, and it may depend on factors beyond his control.

The Jewish approach to leadership is thus an unusual combination of realism and idealism – realism in its acknowledgement that leaders inevitably make mistakes, idealism in its constant subordination of politics to ethics, power to responsibility, pragmatism to the demands of conscience. What matters is not that leaders never get it wrong – that is inevitable, given the nature of leadership – but that they are always exposed to prophetic critique and that they constantly study Torah to remind themselves of transcendent standards and ultimate aims. The most important thing from a Torah perspective is that a leader is sufficiently honest to admit his mistakes. Hence the significance of the sin offering.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai summed it up with a brilliant double-entendre on the word *asher*, "When a leader sins." He relates it to the word *ashrei*, "happy," and says:

Happy is the generation whose leader is willing to bring a sin offering for his mistakes.[12]

Leadership demands two kinds of courage: the strength to take a risk, and the humility to admit when a risk fails.

[1] Lev. 4: 1-35.

[2] Responsa Chatam Sofer, Orach Chayyim, 12.

[3] This famous phrase comes from a letter written by Lord Acton in 1887. See Martin H. Manser, and Rosalind Fergusson, The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs, New York, Facts on File, 2002, 225.

[4] Elie Munk, The Call of the Torah, Vayikra, New York, Mesorah, 1992, 33.

[5] Meshekh Chokhmah to Lev. 4: 21-22.

[6] This, needless to say, is not the plain sense of the text. The sins for which leaders brought an offering were spiritual offences, not errors of political judgment.

[7] 1 Kings 12: 1-15.

[8] Isaiah Berlin, The Sense of Reality, Chatto and Windus, 1996, 40-53.

[9] Incidentally, this answers the point made by political philosopher Michael Walzer in his book on the politics of the Bible, In God's Shadow. He is undeniably right to point out that political theory, so significant in ancient Greece, is almost completely absent from the Hebrew Bible. I would argue, and so surely would Isaiah Berlin, that there is a reason for this. In politics there are few general laws, and the Hebrew Bible is interested in laws. But when it comes to politics – to Israel's kings for example – it does not give laws but instead tells stories.

[10] Exodus Rabbah, 27: 9.

[11] "Whoever can prevent the members of his household from sinning and does not, is seized for the sins of his household. If he can prevent his fellow citizens and does not, he is seized for the sins of his fellow citizens. If he can prevent the whole world from sinning, and does not, he is seized for the sins of the whole world" (Shabbat 54b).

[12] Tosefta Baba Kamma, 7: 5.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"A man of you that shall bring an offering" (1:2)

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

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

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

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

"A Kingdom of Cohanim" by Rabbi Miller ZT'L

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