

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SAV/SHABBAT HAGADOL/PESAH

MARCH 22-23, 2013

12 NISAN 5773

DEDICATIONS: In memory of my Father in law, Yosef Mordecha Ben Rachel, Jerry Werman who passed away this week. A number of you asked about visiting. Chantelle will be returning from her brother in Riverdale and receiving people at our home 1233 beech Street, Atlanntic Beach NY, on Saturday night from 9-11 and on Sunday from Noon to 5. May all those mourning in klal Yisrael be comforted from Heaven.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100 – Continues Wednesday, April 3rd

Congratulations to my nephew Alfred Sutton who is in Israel with the family celebrating his Bar Mitzvah. And for this week, Happy Birthday Cynthia, Happy Birthday Alison, Happy Birthday Grandma

Editors Notes

If you have not seen this yet, and you probably did because I got at least 10 mailings with it, I found it amusing: "As you gather around the Passover Seder next week, please remember there are a group of Jews who will have nothing to eat this Pesach They are called Ashkenazim

Earlier this week in recalling my father in law Gerald Werman who passed away on Monday, Yosef Mordechai ben Rachel a'h, I asked a question in giving a halacha at minyan one morning. As we approach Passover, "What's the most important part of the Seder?" Although the answer is one I heard often from Rabbi Abittan, I realized later that it was a question I posed in a previous newsletter based on a note I received from Gutman Locks in Jerusalem. And Mr. Locks does a much better job than I could do writing this:

"Although the holiday of Passover is, by far, the most memorable and beloved holiday of the entire Jewish calendar, it also brings the greatest number of details, requirements and restrictions. Observing each of these elements is crucial during this week of preparation and especially for the Seder itself. To list them all would (and does) fill an entire book.

"There are the Torah commandments and there are the rabbinical commandments. There are also the customs that, surprisingly, vary tremendously between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim. There are the unique customs that have developed around the diaspora. For example, Indian Jews eat different

foods on Passover than Temanni Jews, and some Jews will dip their matzah in their soup, while others would be aghast at such a move! Some will eat beans, and some would never do such a thing. There are strict requirements as to the minimum amounts of matzah, bitter herb and wine that must be consumed, and only within a specific period of time. And perhaps most important of all are the amazingly strict requirements not to have any leavening or related products in our possession for the entire week. Confusing this even more is that some authorities say certain foods are leavened while others swear that they are not.

"On and on, the list of requirements that ensure a successful Seder can certainly seem overwhelming. It is no wonder that the favorite question a sharp student will ask his rebbe right before the Seder is, "What is the most important thing that I must watch out for?"

"Last Pesach, right before leaving the Kotel to rush home for the Seder, a rabbi friend of mine asked me that very question. To his great surprise, I immediately answered, "Make sure that the children have a good time." He looked at me as if I might be joking; his face was all twisted up. He wanted to know some great Kabbalah about the four cups of wine, or maybe how to lean to the side when drinking them. Or maybe I could give him some great Chassidic teaching on how to do teshuva (repentance) while trying to gulp down that impossibly hot horseradish. AAGHHHH! But, no, I simply said, "Make sure that the children have a good time."

"The next afternoon, he came up to me, smiling. He's a smart guy and he took my words to heart. He said, "It was the best Seder ever. The kids were great. Everyone was laughing. We all enjoyed ourselves tremendously. But tell me, how can you really say that keeping the kids happy was the most important thing to watch out for? After all, this is a very serious holiday."

"I explained, "There is only one reason we have the Seder at all: to remember the Exodus from Egypt. And there is only one reason why we must remember

the Exodus from Egypt: so we will remain Jews. If we forget our past, there will be no reason to go on as a people. There is only one way for us to remain Jews, and that is to raise Jewish families. Without the children coming back next year, there won't be any Jewish families. It's for the kids' sake that we go through all this each year and, God willing, we will get to do it for them again next year, too. And if they have a good enough time, then surely someday we will even get to do it for their kids."

Rabbi Abittan would tell us that although it's important to have guests, the guests are not nearly as important as the children. It's the children we need to relate to, it's the children we need to tell, it's the children we need to continue this unbroken chain. They should sit next to us. They should participate. They should take fond memories of the Seder. The Misvah of VeHigadeta LeBincha – and you should tell your children – takes precedence over any one else as the Seder.

My father in law knew it was always about the children. He was their go to guy. When it came to reports, they had a built in family writer who would not only do the report but teach them more than they could have ever learned in researching the report themselves. He always had a smile. And his one liners could entertain anyone for hours. There was no subject he wasn't well versed in. But he never preached. He asked, he prodded, he listened. He made each of them important and that's why they loved him so much. And there was nothing he held back. Jonah remarked that when people were just realizing the power of licensing, Jerry who had sold hundreds of millions of dollars in licensed shoes, explained to Jonah who was just a little boy, the why's, how's, and what's of licensing. When Jonah as a student, wanted to understand the process of working with factories overseas from design, production, sales and distribution, Jerry didn't just explain it to him. He took him to China, from meeting to meeting, from factory to factory, from restaurant to bar. Jerry's preferred career would have been to teach. He fulfilled that dream more than any other way in what he gave his children, his grandchildren, his nephews and nieces. He gave them a love of knowledge connecting generation to generation.

So this Pesach let us remember that it's all about the kids. It's all about them having a good time, It's all about continuing the chain. It's all about generation to generation.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameyach

David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Additional instructions regarding the Olah - ascent offering, and the Mincha - meal offering are detailed.

2nd Aliya: The special meal offering of the Kohain Gadol and the special inaugural meal offering of the regular Kohain is described. This was the same offering in both cases; however, the Kohain Gadol brought his offering every day while the regular Kohain did so only on the day of his inauguration into the service of the Bais Hamikdash. Additional laws of the sin offering, and the guilt offering are detailed.

3rd Aliya: Additional laws of the peace offering are detailed along with those portions of the offering that must be shared with the Kohain.

4th, 5th, 6th, & 7th Aliyot: The remainder of the Parsha describes the first seven days of the inaugural process for Aharon and his four sons. Moshe functioned as the Kohain Gadol to officiate over the inaugural process, and Aharon and his sons were forbidden to leave the Mishkan the entire time.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"In order to give pleasure to the One who formed us and to fulfill the will of our Creator." (excerpt from Leshem Yihud)

The above is an excerpt from the prayer we say before doing Bedikat Hamess. We feel a special uplifting feeling as we begin this annual ritual, but it's much more than a ritual. Our great Sages had tearful eyes when they performed bedikah and later the burning of the hamess. On the High Holidays we return to Hashem with fear, worried about the coming year. Now as we rid our homes of physical hamess and our hearts of the spiritual impurities that hamess represents, we return out of love.

The Sar Shalom of Belz z"l teaches that when we draw water for the baking of the matzot we are actually taking back the sins that we threw into the water at Tashlich some six months ago. Our Sages teach us that when we do teshubah out of love our sins turn into misvot. Now that we are returning out of love our sins are now misvot.

Everything about Pesah is an exhibition of the love that the Jewish people have for

Hashem. Pesah is a time when not only is the fervent commitment to halachah on clear display, but also a host of additional stringencies that have been

so faithfully passed down through the centuries. Every community has its own demonstration of this love.

Our community has a stringency which some people think is really a joke. We do not eat chick peas. What is the reason? The reason is that chick peas are called "humus" and humus sounds like hamesh! We don't want to eat even a sound-alike of hamesh. It's not a joke; we love Hashem so much we don't want to eat a sound-alike.

Pesah is a time when we show Hashem the longing in our hearts and the infinite love that we have for Him. In the merit of the love exhibited by the Jewish people, may we all merit to properly and joyfully fulfill all of the misvot of this great holiday. And as we celebrate our redemption from Egypt, may we also merit to celebrate our redemption from our current exile. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

We say in the Haggadah that Laban the Aramite "wanted to destroy my father" [Ya'akob] and Ya'akob ultimately went down to Egypt. How did Laban try to kill Ya'akob, and what is the connection with Ya'akob going down to Egypt?

We can understand this by remembering that Laban was a very effective sorcerer, steeped in all forms of tum'ah (impurity). The Rabbis tell us that not only did Laban want to hurt us physically, but even spiritually, using magic and impurity, did he attempt to destroy us. He was able to affect us through his daughters Rachel and Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah, because some of his impurity was passed on to us through his children. Hashem, with His infinite wisdom, saw that the only way we would be cleansed from Laban's influence was to go to Egypt and work for all those years, thereby eradicating any trace of impurity from Laban. The Torah calls Egypt "kur habarzel", the Iron Furnace, and the Rabbis say that the word barzel is an acronym for Bilhah Rachel Zilpah Leah, thereby hinting that the furnace of Egypt was to purify us from any effect passed down to our matriarchs from Laban.

This answers another very fundamental question. We celebrate Pesah as the time of our freedom from Egypt, and thank Hashem for it profusely. However, didn't He bring us to Egypt in the first place? If so, why such gratitude for taking us out? According to the above, Hashem brought us to Egypt so that we would be purified and cleansed from Laban's influence, thereby allowing us to become His nation, untainted by any negative influence. We therefore celebrate Pesah with gratitude to Hashem both for bringing us down to Egypt and for taking us

out. We should likewise have full appreciation for everything Hashem does for us, even if we do not see the good in it. Happy Holiday and Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

WHY WORRY?

Sometimes you just can't help it. You are in a position where the decision you are about to make – whether it is a choice of school, career, or mate – should have a great effect on your future. The greater the potential effect on your life, the more nervous and uncertain you might become as you ponder the possibilities and avoid the finality of decision.

Bitachon- trust in Hashem – is the remedy. You should always realize that your life and everything in it come from Hashem. Knowing that He only wants what is best for you will make it easier to accept whatever He dishes out. It will also make it easier for you to decide on what course of action to take at any of life's many crossroads. This feeling of trust will make you feel safe, knowing that He is watching out for you.

When a big decision gives you the jitters, consider that worrying will not improve the situation. On the contrary, worrying sometimes makes you see things in a negative light. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, zt"l, said, "Smile: a smile causes the sun to shine." The glow will be felt by you and by those around you. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

HAGGADAH TIDBITS

"This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt"- Wasn't the matzah actually what they ate upon leaving Egypt? When Ibn Ezra was imprisoned in India, he was only fed matzah and no hamesh. The reason for this is that matzah takes very long to digest, and one could remain satiated with a smaller amount. Likewise, the Egyptians gave the Jews matzah to eat.

"And I gave to Esav Mount Se'ir"- Why do we mention Esav in the Haggadah? Hashem promised to Abraham "Your descendants will be strangers in a strange land." Hashem also promised, "To your descendants I will give this land [of Israel]." Therefore we mention that Esav was given Mount Se'ir and never became a stranger in a strange land. Thus he has no claim to the land of Israel.

"Rabbi Akiba said, 'We can show that each plague... was made up of five different plagues'" - What is the purpose of trying to maximize the number of plagues that Hashem brought upon Egypt? When we were taken out of Egypt, Hashem promised, "I will not strike you with any of the sicknesses that I brought on Egypt." The more sicknesses we can attribute to the plagues in Egypt, the fewer sicknesses that Hashem may bring upon us if we sin.

"We therefore are obligated to thank, praise, adore...Hashem" - There is a principle learned in the Gemara that one is only obligated to thank Hashem for miracles going back two generations. Why, then, are we obligated to thank Hashem for the miracles involved in the Exodus? It seems that it would just be an optional "nice thing to do." In the preceding paragraph in the Haggadah, we read that each person must view himself as if he personally was taken out of Egypt. Since the miracles were actually done for us and not only for our ancestors, "We therefore are obligated..."

BITTER-SWEET

We memorialize the bitterness of Egypt, the harsh labor and persecution with the maror, bitter herbs, which we eat on Pesah night. Hazal teach us that while there are a number of vegetables that are suitable for the misvah of maror, leaf lettuce is preferred. Among the vegetables, leaf lettuce provides the most apt comparison with the type of labor to which the Egyptians subjected the Jewish people. At first the Egyptians convinced the Jews to work with them. Later on, they embittered their lives with harsh labor. At first, the lettuce seems almost sweet to the palate, but subsequently its bitter taste is manifest. The reason for preferring leaf lettuce for maror is enigmatic. We seek to remember the bitterness of the Egyptian exile. Yet, we eat a vegetable that recalls the "sweet" beginning of our bondage. Is the memory bitter or sweet?

Harav Yosef Zundel Salant z"l notes two forms of suffering. One type of suffering is inflicted upon a person by others. This is difficult to bear, but it is more tolerable than the pain that is self-inflicted when one had a part in creating his own misery. Had the Egyptians originally conscripted the Jews into slave labor without pretext, the Jews might have been able to accept the concept of bondage, as painful as it would have been. The circumstances preceding the Egyptian slavery were different. The Jews had never thought their "good" friends and neighbors would actually enslave them. The sweetness compounded the bitterness, for the Jews

had participated in bringing the misery upon themselves.

Perhaps this is the idea behind the custom of dipping the maror into the sweet haroset. We recall the bitterness with which we lived as a result of accepting the Egyptian friendliness. The Egyptians smiled at us, making us feel good. If we would only learn the lesson from the message of the maror, it might prevent other tragedies from occurring - even in our own time. (Peninim on the Torah)

TELL ME A STORY

Why is the text for the Seder's discussion of the Exodus called "Haggadah"?

It is generally assumed that the name derives from the language of the verse in the Torah which obligates us to retell the story of our redemption on this night (Shemot 13:8). That verse reads, "And you shall tell (vehigadta) your child on that day." Thus, "Haggadah" simply means telling (Abudraham and Malbim). However, other commentators offer several other possibilities. Rashi (Shemot 13:5) teaches that one should engage a child in the discussion of the redemption through dibrei aggadah (stories) – words that speak to, and carry the heart – rather than halachic or philosophical approaches. Hence, the title "Haggadah" since a good deal of the text is the story of our Exodus from Egypt. Abudraham points out that Targum Yerushalmi renders the word "higadti (Debarim 26:3) as "I give praise." Thus, it is the message of tribute to Hashem embodied in the tale of our redemption which may account for the name Haggadah. Ma'asei Nissim states that the root of the word Haggadah means pulling, or drawing out. The term is used here with respect to the mouth. It means to imply that there should be a continuous flow of speech regarding the Exodus on this night, and one should make an effort to bring to light as much as possible concerning this subject, as we say later in the Haggadah, "The more one tells about the Exodus, the more he is praiseworthy."

I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT!

"And [Ya'akov] went down to Egypt, compelled by the spoken word." (Pesah Haggadah)

The most common interpretation of this phrase is that it refers to the Covenant which Hashem made with Abraham. Hashem promised Abraham that he would become a great nation, but first his descendants would be strangers in a strange land and would be enslaved there for four hundred years. Since the descendants of Abraham needed to go into exile before they could become a nation,

Ya'akob was "compelled by the word" of Hashem to go down to Egypt.

The Rabbis offer another novel explanation of this phrase. When Ya'akob heard that Yosef was still alive and living in Egypt, he said, "I will go and see him before I die." He began his travels to Egypt. Hashem then appeared to him on the way and told him, "Do not fear to go down to Egypt." This shows us that Ya'akob had second thoughts and did not really want to leave Eress Yisrael and travel outside the land to Egypt. In spite of this, he did not go back on his original words, "I will go and see him before I die." This is the way of the sadikim, to fulfill everything that comes out of their mouths, even voluntary statements. Thus, Ya'akob went down to Egypt, compelled by his own words. (Haggadah Gedolei Yisrael)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Following G-d's Example of Respect

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

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

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

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

We must learn from G-d's example of sensitivity. If G-d, the judge of the world, avoids causing people embarrassment for their mistakes, then certainly we must do the same. It is very wrong to embarrass or insult somebody because his or her level of observance is lower than ours. We are certainly no more righteous than G-d Himself. And if He is concerned for the feelings of sinners, then we, too, must be respectful to all people regardless of their level of observance. And besides, the vast majority of Jews who are not meticulously observant – certainly in our community – are lacking due to deficient knowledge, or because of their upbringing. There are very few who knowingly disregard Torah and Misvot in order to rebel against G-d. Is it right for us to look disdainfully upon those who do not have the background or knowledge that we have?

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

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

Rabbi Wein

The parsha of Tzav more often than not coincides with the Shabat preceding Pesach – Shabat Hagadol, the "great Shabat." At first glance there does not seem to be any inherent connection between the parsha of Tzav and Shabat Hagadol and Pesach. However, since Judaism little recognizes randomness or happenstance regarding Jewish life, and certainly regarding Torah itself, a further analysis of the parsha may reveal to us an underlying connection between Tzav and Pesach.

I feel that this underlying theme lies in the description that the parsha contains regarding the consecration of Aharon and his sons as the priests and servants of

God and Israel. Judaism teaches us that freedom equals responsibility. Freedom without limits or purpose is destructive anarchy. The entire narrative of the Torah regarding the construction of the Mishkan and the institution of public worship/sacrifices came to emphasize to the freed slaves from Egypt their newfound responsibilities.

The rabbis cogently and correctly defined freedom in terms of obligations and study of Torah, as opposed to the alleged freedom of hedonism. The consecration of Aharon and his sons coinciding with the consecration and dedication of the Mishkan itself brought home to the Jewish people the requirement of community service and national unity.

Look at the freedom movements that have arisen in the Middle East over the past few years and the chaos and deaths of tens of thousands of people that followed in their wake. The inability to create unity, to develop a moral and tangible national goal mocks all pretenses of positive freedom. Without Aharon and the Mishkan the promise of the freedom of Pesach would have remained permanently unfulfilled.

Part of the lesson of the Great Shabat is that without Shabat, Jewish freedom is only an illusion. Shabat is truly the epitome of freedom. The absence of workday activities, the sense of family and friends, and of the contentment that Shabat engenders all combine to create a vision of true freedom that is attainable and real.

The Great Shabat that precedes Pesach gives it its true meaning and places the anniversary of our freedom from Egyptian bondage into holy perspective. Freedom to toil 24/7 is only a different form of slavery. When Saturday looks like Tuesday but only more so since school is out and the burdens of car pooling and "having a good time" are even greater, then that cannot even remotely be related to true freedom.

In reality every Shabat is the Great Shabat and the Shabat preceding Pesach is even more so. Shabat Hagadol represents the miracle that blessed our forefathers in Egypt when they took the Paschal lamb and the Egyptians did not object. But the true and ultimate miracle of Shabat Hagadol is Shabat itself. It has preserved the Jewish people throughout the ages in the face of opposing innumerable odds and challenges. It is in the realization of our freedom that we are able to properly appreciate and give tribute to Shabat - Shabat Hagadol, the Great Shabat that we now commemorate so joyfully and gratefully

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

Judaism is less a philosophical system than a field of tensions – between universalism and particularism, for example, or exile and redemption, priests and prophets, cyclical and linear time and so on. Rarely is this more in evidence than in the conflicting statements within Judaism about sacrifices, and nowhere more sharply than in the juxtaposition between the sedra of Tzav, which contains a series of commands about sacrifice, and the passage from the book of Jeremiah that is usually (not this year) its haftorah:

When I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: "Obey me, and I will be your G-d and you will be My people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you." (Jer. 7: 22-23)

Commentators have been puzzled by the glaring contradiction between these words and the obvious fact that G-d did command the Israelites about sacrifices after bringing them out of Egypt. Several solutions have been offered. According to Maimonides, the sacrifices were a means, not an end, to the service of G-d. Radak argues that sacrifices were not the first of G-d's commands after the exodus; instead, civil laws were. Abarbanel goes so far as to say that initially G-d had not intended to give the Israelites a code of sacrifice, and did so only after the sin of the Golden Calf. The sacrifices were an antidote to the Israelites' tendency to rebel against G-d.

The simplest explanation is to note that the Hebrew word *lo* does not invariably mean "not"; sometimes it means "not only" or "not just". According to this, Jeremiah is not saying that G-d did not command sacrifices. He did, but they were not the sole or even most important element of the religious life. The common denominator of the prophetic critique of sacrifices is not opposition to them as such, but rather an insistence that acts directed to G-d must never dull our sense of duty to mankind. Micah gave this idea one of its most famous expressions:

With what shall I come before the Lord
And bow down before the exalted G-d? . . .
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
With ten thousand rivers of oil? . . .
He has shown you, O man, what is good.
What does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy,

And to walk humbly with your G-d. (Micah 6: 6-8)

Yet the question remains. Why sacrifices? To be sure, they have not been part of the life of Judaism since the destruction of the Second Temple, almost 2,000 years ago. But why, if they are a means to an end, did G-d choose this end? This is, of course, one of the deepest questions in Judaism, and there are many answers. Here I want explore just one, first given by the early fifteenth century Jewish thinker, R. Joseph Albo, in his *Sefer ha-Ikharim*.

Albo's theory took as its starting point, not sacrifices but two other intriguing questions. The first: Why, after the flood, did G-d permit human beings to eat meat? (Gen. 9: 3-5). Initially, neither human beings nor animals had been meat-eaters (Gen. 1: 29-30). What caused G-d, as it were, to change His mind? The second: What was wrong with the first act of sacrifice — Cain's offering of "some of the fruits of the soil" (Gen. 4:3-5). G-d's rejection of that offering led directly to the first murder, when Cain killed Abel. What was at stake in the difference between Cain and Abel as to how to bring a gift to G-d?

Albo's theory is this. Killing animals for food is inherently wrong. It involves taking the life of a sentient being to satisfy our needs. Cain knew this. He believed there was a strong kinship between man and the animals. That is why he offered, not an animal sacrifice, but a vegetable one (his error, according to Albo, is that he should have brought fruit, not vegetables – the highest, not the lowest, of non-meat produce). Abel, by contrast, believed that there was a qualitative difference between man and the animals. Had G-d not told the first humans: "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves in the ground"? That is why he brought an animal sacrifice. Once Cain saw that Abel's sacrifice had been accepted while his own was not, he reasoned thus. If G-d (who forbids us to kill animals for food) permits and even favours killing an animal as a sacrifice, and if (as Cain believed) there is no ultimate difference between human beings and animals, then I shall offer the very highest living being as a sacrifice to G-d, namely my brother Abel. Cain killed Abel not out of envy or animosity but as a human sacrifice.

That is why G-d permitted meat-eating after the flood. Before the flood, the world had been "filled with violence". Perhaps violence is an inherent part of human nature. If there were to be a humanity at all, G-d would have to lower his demands of mankind. Let them kill animals, He said, rather than kill human beings – the one form of life that is not only G-d's creation but also G-d's image. Hence the otherwise

almost unintelligible sequence of verses after Noah and his family emerge on dry land:

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart, "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood . . ." Then G-d blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them . . . "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything . . . Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of G-d, has G-d made man." (Gen. 8: 29 – 9: 6)

According to Albo the logic of the passage is clear. Noah offers an animal sacrifice in thanksgiving for having survived the flood. G-d sees that human beings need this way of expressing themselves. They are genetically predisposed to violence ("every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood"). If, therefore, society is to survive, human beings need to be able to direct their violence toward non-human animals, whether as food or sacrificial offering. The crucial ethical line to be drawn is between human and non-human.

The permission to kill animals is accompanied by an absolute prohibition against killing human beings ("for in the image of G-d, has G-d made man"). It is not that G-d approves of killing animals, whether for sacrifice or food, but that to forbid this to human beings, given their genetic predisposition to violence, is utopian. It is not for now but for the end of days. In the meanwhile, the least bad solution is to let people kill animals rather than murder their fellow humans. Animal sacrifices are a concession to human nature (on why G-d never chooses to change human nature, see Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, Book III, ch. 32). Sacrifices are a substitute for violence directed against mankind.

The contemporary thinker who has done most to revive this understanding (without, however, referring to Albo or the Jewish tradition) is René Girard, in such books as *Violence and the Sacred*, *The Scapegoat*, and *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*. The common denominator in sacrifices, he argues, is:

. . . internal violence – all the dissensions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels within the community that the sacrifices are designed to suppress. The purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric. Everything else derives from that. (*Violence and the Sacred*, 8).

The worst form of violence within and between societies is vengeance, "an interminable, infinitely repetitive process". Hillel (whom Girard also does not quote) said, on seeing a human skull floating on water, "Because you drowned others, they drowned you, and those who drowned you will in the end themselves be drowned" (Avot 2: 7). Sacrifices are one way of diverting the destructive energy of revenge. Why then do modern societies not practice sacrifice? Because, argues Girard, there is another way of displacing vengeance:

Vengeance is a vicious circle whose effect on primitive societies can only be surmised. For us the circle has been broken. We owe our good fortune to one of our social institutions above all: our judicial system, which serves to deflect the menace of vengeance. The system does not suppress vengeance; rather, it effectively limits itself to a single act of reprisal, enacted by a sovereign authority specializing in this particular function. The decisions of the judiciary are invariably presented as the final word on vengeance. (Ibid., 15)

Not only does Girard's theory re-affirm the view of Albo. It also helps us understand the profound insight of the prophets and of Judaism as a whole. Sacrifices are not ends in themselves, but part of the Torah's programme to construct a world redeemed from the otherwise interminable cycle of revenge. The other part of that programme, and G-d's greatest desire, is a world governed by justice. That, we recall, was His first charge to Abraham, to "instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (Gen. 18: 19).

Have we therefore moved beyond that stage in human history in which animal sacrifices have a point? Has justice become a powerful enough reality that we need no longer need religious rituals to divert the violence between human beings? Would that it were so. In his book *The Warrior's Honour* (1997), Michael Ignatieff tries to understand the wave of ethnic conflict and violence (Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Rwanda) that has scarred the face of humanity since the end of the Cold War. What happened to the liberal dream of "the end of history"? His words go to the very heart of the new world disorder:

The chief moral obstacle in the path of reconciliation is the desire for revenge. Now, revenge is commonly regarded as a low and unworthy emotion, and because it is regarded as such, its deep moral hold on people is rarely understood. But revenge – morally considered – is a desire to keep faith with the dead,

to honour their memory by taking up their cause where they left off. Revenge keeps faith between generations . . .

This cycle of intergenerational recrimination has no logical end . . . But it is the very impossibility of intergenerational vengeance that locks communities into the compulsion to repeat . . .

Reconciliation has no chance against vengeance unless it respects the emotions that sustain vengeance, unless it can replace the respect entailed in vengeance with rituals in which communities once at war learn to mourn their dead together. (*The Warrior's Honour*, 188-190)

Far from speaking to an age long gone and forgotten, the laws of sacrifice tell us three things as important now as then: first, violence is still part of human nature, never more dangerous than when combined with an ethic of revenge; second, rather than denying its existence, we must find ways of redirecting it so that it does not claim yet more human sacrifices; third, that the only ultimate alternative to sacrifices, animal or human, is the one first propounded millennia ago by the prophets of ancient Israel. No one put it better than Amos:

Even though you bring Me burnt offerings and offerings of grain,

I will not accept them . . .

But let justice roll down like a river,

And righteousness like a never-failing stream (Amos 5: 23-24)

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And now comes the Korban Pesach. The Pass Over – it symbolizes that Hashem is going to pass over your homes. And that's a very important lesson, I'm sure that a great many people never thought of that significance of the Korban Pesach, but that's exactly what it means. Hashem will see the blood of the Korban Peasch on the lintel and on the two door posts. and Hashem will pass over your doorway, and He will not permit the Destroyer to come to your houses to smite you.

It means that you, My people, will be forever. You're insured, you're guaranteed, against the ravages of history. Now this doesn't mean that every Jew is guaranteed eternal existence, it doesn't mean every Jewish family will live forever. We see in America how many Jewish families have disappeared. We saw what happened to the Ten Tribes, when they were rejected. They were cast off by Hashem and

they are lost to this day. But the Am Hashem is going to be forever.

There's always going to be a Jewish People. And that's what the Korban Pesach is saying.

Now we're going to pay attention to the words, "You should not go out from the doorway of your house until the morning, and Hashem will pass through to smite Misrayim."

The Mechilta brings a verse from Yeshaya it states, "Go my people, and come into your chambers." It means, go inside your homes. Come into your chambers "and lock your door after you," "conceal yourself for a little while until the wrath departs." Now that's the reason for being in the house all night.

The question arises, what will it help, because the destroyer did enter the houses of Egypt. He had permission to enter houses, too. The locking of the door behind you, what's that for? If you're already protected behind the doorpost and the lintel that has the blood of the Korban Pesach on it, so is it necessary to lock your doors after you to keep out the Destroying Angel?

And now we come back to our subject, the deliverance from Misrayim. It had to be, a deliverance from the mentality of Misrayim. To be in exile among the nations is not as harmful as if one's intelligence, his intellect, is exiled among the nations. And the Korban Pesach, we must know, was a demonstration of a break with the nations of the world, because it was forbidden in Egypt to eat the flesh of a sheep, it was their sacred animal.

So, when the destroyer saw that the loyal Jews, who obeyed Hashem's instructions that night, had indeed locked their doors and minds to the Egyptian culture and religions, He then Passed-Over their homes. The reason that the destroyer is not going to enter the house of the Bnei Yisrael is only because they go inside, and they don't mingle. So, the purpose of closing the doors was not to be protected from the destroying Angel, but that they shouldn't mingle with the nations. And it was that which rescued them. This is the secret to our survival since that time. A Jew had to go into his house and slam the door against any influence from the outside nations. Because anything good we already have. There's nothing good we can gain from the outside. And if we open the door, the Destroyer will come in & has come in over the ages. Because an open door means we still have some sympathy, we have some sentiments, we still participate in the ways of the gentiles.

We have different ways of thinking. What's considered good manners by them is considered by

us improper behavior. We have entirely different standards. It's very important for us to understand that. Because if you don't learn a lot of Torah, then you're going to have the standards of the gentiles in your mind. It will take a lot of learning before you know what to substitute for the ways of the nations of the world.

But first to get in the mind the principle that this is what prevents the Mashcheet/Destroyer from coming in.

Thus the miracle of the Pesach was not only for this occasion, but it teaches that Hashem will always cause the Destroyer to pass over His loyal ones in all generations."

Adapted from "A Nation Is Born" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L

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