

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet
Shabbos Tzav Shabbos Hagadol
שבת פרשת צו

שבת הגדול

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Pesach And Locusts

Over the past weeks the plague of locusts in a relatively minor form infested our area of the world. The locusts apparently did do great though not catastrophic damage to crops in Egypt before crossing the Sinai peninsula and turning north to invade Israel. The Israel Agricultural Ministry sprayed extensively from the air to destroy the streams of aggressive locusts and achieved success in controlling the situation without any great harm to Israeli crop fields.

Since this event happened in our season of the Pesach holiday and since the plague of locusts is listed in the Bible as being one of the ten plagues that the Lord visited on Egypt leading to the exodus of the Jews from slavery, the arrival of the locusts in Egypt and here received wide public interest and media coverage.

This led me to think about the plagues as recorded in the Bible that befell the Egyptians. Were they all miraculous completely or were they natural or at least semi-natural events that the Lord ordered to occur at that time and at that place? Rambam seems to view almost all miracles as being miraculous as to the time and place of occurrence while the event itself is part of the order of nature.

He allows only for rare exceptions. Other great rabbinic scholars took issue with this view and saw the entire matter of miracles in the Bible as being outside the purview of nature entirely. The matter of miracles thus remains miraculously mysterious until today though most Jews probably follow the latter view presented here than the Maimonidean opinion previously advanced.

What if Pharaoh would have possessed pesticides and airplanes with sprays that could overcome the plague of locusts that invaded his country? If he would have possessed an extensive electricity grid throughout his country, would the plague of darkness truly have affected him and the Egyptians? If he would have had an outstanding medical dermatological faculty, would he have been able to deal with the plagues of lice and boils? In other words, were all of those plagues that visited the Egyptians and finally broke their hold on the Jewish people effective only because they happened thousands of years ago - to a country and civilization then lacking modern technology and scientific knowledge? Or, would the plagues have been of so miraculous and supernatural a nature that they would be uncontrollable even today as well?

The answer to this intriguing question is naturally dependent upon ones view and definition of miracles. In Marl Twain's famous book, "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court," the Yankee wins the duel with Merlin the Magician by simply introducing more modern technology and scientific knowledge into a mainly illiterate tenth century civilization.

What was a miracle to King Arthur is electricity to the nineteenth century Connecticut Yankee. Yet, can we not view electricity as being a miracle? We are able to explain how electricity operates but not why it works that way. In halacha the great rabbinic scholars are still wrestling with achieving an halachic understanding of electricity. The mystery of electricity itself renders it to be almost miraculous in its essence.

I have felt that the mystery of God's handiwork, in nature and our vast universe that is slowly being revealed to us through our advancing technology and scientific knowledge and research, is itself miraculous. The more we know, the more amazed we become at the complexity and beauty and order of our world and its mysteries.

Judaism views nature itself as being purely miraculous. That is really the root cause as to why it has been so difficult to define miracles to everyone's satisfaction. If everything is miraculous then really nothing is miraculous in the popular sense of the word. That is really the basis of

Rambam's view. Only the locality and the time of the event make it extraordinary. The event itself is only one item in the continuing and ongoing miracle of nature and creation.

So, we could say that the fact that Pharaoh did not possess crop-spraying airplanes is what made his plague of locusts miraculous and dreaded to him and his society, while our experience with the locust swarms that invaded our country is merely an interesting newspaper item. However, I feel that the fact that 3325 years later the people of Israel commemorate their exodus from Egypt in the same manner and precise detail as did their ancestors is certainly to be considered miraculous.

Shabat shalom

Chag kasher v'sameach

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Tzav / Shabat Hagadol

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.

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

Virtual Reality

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying: ‘This is the law of the Olah.”
(6:2)

Imagine you are walking through a field.

Behind you some cows lazily are chewing grass. Ahead of you is a fence. In the fence is a narrow gate. You saunter towards the gate and without too much attention exit the field. You're just about to go back and close the metal gate when you see one of the cows that has been following you nuzzle up to the gate.

There is a blinding blue flash. The cow convulses in paroxysms. Thousands of volts course through its body. The air fills with the smell of burning flesh. A few seconds and it's all over. The cow is very quiet and very dead. Nothing can be heard except the birds singing away in blatant disregard to this scene.

What would you feel like? Wouldn't you think, "That could have been me"? That should have been me?"

The korban was the ultimate virtual reality experience.

An essential purpose of a korban was that a person who did a sin should see the death of the animal. He should see its lifeblood thrown on the corners of the altar. He should see its limbs being burned and he should think to himself "That should have been me. I am the one that they should really be doing this to."

Perforce we are sent into this world, and perforce we are taken from it. We do not own our lives. Our lives are always in the Hands of the Maker. When we do evil, we remove our *raison d'être*. We remove the reason for our lives. It is as though we tear up our contract with G-d. G-d has a deal with each of us: He gives us life and the ability to sustain ourselves and all He asks is that we use the world in the correct manner. When we renege on the deal we remove ourselves from the world.

However, G-d in His infinite kindness and goodness allows us a way back. Through the process of teshuva we can return to Him as though we had never sinned. G-d accepts the body of the animal instead of the body of the one who has sinned. The main point of the korban is to awaken in the heart thoughts of regret for evil actions; thoughts of returning to G-d.

It was the ultimate in virtual reality.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Tzav

Command Aharon and his sons. (6:2)

Rashi quotes Toras Kohanim that comments, "Tzav, the word, 'command,' can only be meant to express urging on, *miyad u'le'doros*, for the immediate moment and for future generations. (Furthermore) The Torah must especially urge in a situation where there is a loss of money." The Kohanim sustain a financial loss because they are not paid for their service. In order to perform it, they must be readily available, thus precluding any other form of livelihood. The Torah makes this point within the context of the Olah - Elevation/Burnt Offering, because the loss of income in this case is especially significant. With other offerings, the Kohen receives both the meat and the hide. With the Olah, they receive only the hide. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh adds that the concept of *ziruz*, urging, connected with *zerizus*, alacrity, applies not only when a loss of money is incurred, but, indeed, under any circumstances which entail extreme distress. That extra nudge is necessary, or there is a possibility that one will slack off and look for an excuse to justify his lack of participation.

Zerizus, alacrity, that extra push inherent in mitzvah observance, is applicable to all mitzvos. Hashem commands us to love Him, "with all of

your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your material abundance" (Devarim 6:5). Some individuals go all out for mitzvah performance, their commitment overwhelming, until it involves their checkbook. Once the mitzvah impinges upon their material wealth, they suddenly must "think twice," or "things are not the way they used to be"; they say anything to circumvent spending their hard-earned money. The Torah teaches us that absolutely nothing should stand in the way of serving Hashem - especially money. One who understands that *zerizus* is not an added aspect to mitzvah observance, but the actual mitzvah, will slowly, over time, evolve into a person to whom *zerizus* is a natural component of his psyche.

Horav Yehudah Tzadkiah, zl, applies this idea in his interpretation of a well-known Mishnah in Pirkei Avos 5:23. Chazal say, "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven." Why does the Tanna require an example from the animal kingdom to affirm the various qualities which he proposes a Jew should reflect? Why must one be bold as a leopard or swift as a deer? What is wrong with simply writing, "Be bold, light and strong?" He explains that the Tanna is teaching us an important lesson. It is not enough simply to act swiftly, be strong, etc. One must incorporate these qualities into his being to the point that they define him. His swiftness must be natural, his strength and boldness a part of his nature - just as these qualities define the deer, the lion and the leopard. These animals do not require an extra push to be swift, strong, or bold. It is intrinsic to their makeup. They act this way naturally.

The problem is that we confuse the qualities and apply them at the wrong time, such as being in the right place at the wrong time or the wrong place at the right time. Iturei Torah, quoted by Ish L'Reieihu, offers a meaningful analogy. A businessman was once sitting in the *bais ha'medrash* studying Torah. During this time, a buyer from out of town came to his house with a proposition which would have earned him a considerable profit. When the buyer knocked on the door and discovered that the businessman was unavailable, he decided to go elsewhere, to another source. When the businessman returned from his study period in the *bais ha'medrash*, his family informed him of his missed opportunity. Naturally, he was quite upset with them for not having informed him of the visitor. "But you were in the *bais hamedrash*," they countered. "You do not worry about that," he said. "If someone comes looking for me - call me!"

Ten weeks later, the IRS came visiting to discuss a number of tax issues with the businessman. Apparently, a few of his accounts were delinquent. As per their father's instructions, they immediately sent him to the *bais hamedrash*. Well, we can imagine the businessman's reaction. "An opportunity for profit materializes and you do not call me, but when the tax collector shows up, you send him to the *bais hamedrash*. Where is your common sense?"

There are mitzvos *asei*, positive mitzvos, and *lo saasei*, prohibitive mitzvos. We require contrasting attitudes towards the varied mitzvos. Concerning mitzvos *asei*, the positive mitzvos, one must employ *zerizus*, alacrity, while regarding the prohibitive mitzvos, one should act with indolence. Regrettably, we turn the tables, applying alacrity when we are in a rush to perform an *aveirah*, sin; and suddenly we become lazy when a mitzvas *asei* beckons our attention.

A primary component of alacrity is the recognition of the value of every passing moment. One who is slothful does not value the Heavenly gift of "the moment." "If not today - tomorrow" is the attitude of one who has no sense of time and no realization of how much can be achieved in even the smallest amount of time. It was towards the end of 1943, when the blueprint for the opening of Yeshivas Ponevez was still on paper. While it was a reality in the brilliant mind of its visionary founder, Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl, the Ponevezer Rav, it had not yet reached fruition. The Rav became seriously ill and his health had reached the critical stage. The doctors were concerned about an infection in his throat, and they absolutely forbade him from speaking.

The Ponevezer Rav was noted for an uncanny ability to do what needed to be done whenever the need arose. The time to open the yeshivah was now. The fact that he was critically ill and unable to speak should not detract from the focus on what needed to be done - immediately. Indeed, if it did

not happen now - it might never open. He quickly wrote a note to his son, Rav Avraham, to immediately summon Horav Shmuel Rozovsky, zl, and the yeshivah should open - now - with whatever students he had been able to assemble at that point. The matter was of the greatest urgency. "Who knows," he said, "if the yeshivah does not open at this critical juncture, whether it will ever open."

His vision proved correct. The Ponovezer Rav had learned the value of time from his revered Rebbe, the Chafetz Chaim, zl, to whom every moment was infinitely precious. He was wont to say that the Chafetz Chaim merited longevity, not only because the Heavenly Scribe had written him into the Book of Life for a life to exceed ninety years. It was because he valued every moment allotted to him, using it for tzarhei Shomayim, Heavenly endeavors. The Chafetz Chaim was extremely frugal, spending only on what he absolutely needed. He viewed money as a product of the time expended in earning it. Thus, something would have to have great significance before he purchased it. It represented time that he deferred from his Torah study. Therefore, it had better be worth the effort.

Probably the greatest lesson concerning the significance of time is derived from a comment often reiterated by the Alter, zl, m'Slabodka, Horav Nossou Tzvi Finkel, zl, to his son, Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl, when he was a very young student in yeshivah. In every correspondence to his son, the Alter would write, "My dear son! Every endeavor that presents itself; every situation which you confront; every ordeal with which you must contend, think to yourself, 'How would I respond to this issue, if it was the last day of my life, and this was my last decision?'"

We feel that if we do not do it right the first time, we can always return and redo it. It does not always work that way. At best, one will have succeeded - the second time around. If we would know that it is the last day of our life, and everything, all our hopes and aspirations are hinging on what we are about to do, we would act differently. This is how we should live our entire lives.

And the fire of the Altar should be kept aflame on it. (6:2)

The commentators interpret this pasuk homilectically. "And the fire of the Altar shall be kept aflame on it." One in whom the fire/passion to serve the Almighty burns within him should be careful to see to it that it remains bo, "within him" - not externally, to hurt others. In other words, one should go to great strides to see to it that his religious observance does not impinge on others. An observant Jew should be especially sensitive to the feelings of those around him. They quote the passage in the Talmud Succah 28a, which notes that Yonasan ben Uziel, the student of Hillel HaZakein, the Elder, was so passionate and fervent about his Torah study, that when he studied Torah, a bird that would fly over him would immediately be emolliated.

The question is asked: If this is the great devotion to Torah study evinced by Yonasan ben Uziel - the student - what was the level of his revered Rebbe - Hillel HaZakein? Certainly, it was even more elevated, and perhaps more extreme. The Sefas Emes explains that Hillel HaZakein's level of Torah study was so exalted, that if a bird flew over him, it would not become burned! Hillel HaZakein's fire burnt bo, "internally, within him."

The greatness of a person is determined by his ability not to cause any pain or discomfort - either physical or emotional - to anyone who comes within his proximity. If one's frumkeit negatively affects others, his religious observance is sorely lacking. In the apartment of Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, author of the Michtav M'Eliyahu, there was a container of air freshener displayed prominently on the kitchen counter. It created a stir, since the students who had occasion to visit the Mashgiach could not fathom the need for such a utensil in their Rebbe's home. Once, on Purim, when everyone was in an alcoholic-induced stupor, such that their courage was emboldened, one of the students sprayed some freshener and asked, "What brachah, blessing, does one recite on this?" Rav Dessler immediately countered, "I think that it states explicitly in halachah that one does not recite a blessing over something which does not belong to him." The subject was closed, and it remained that way.

Sometime later, after the passing of the Rebbetzin, the mystery was solved. Only then was it discovered that, every two weeks, a man came to pick up the couple's laundry to be washed. Being a true scion of the famous Kelmer mussar movement, of character refinement, the Rebbetzin would not allow another Jew to be compelled to smell the unseemly odor of dirty laundry. She would spray the soiled laundry with air freshener to spare the man this indignity. This was a prime example of internalized frumkeit.

And (he) shall take up the ashes... upon the Altar, and shall put them down at the side of the Altar. (6:3)

There are people who live in the past, resting on the laurels of eras gone by, the achievements of yesterday, the successes that have been long over. One lives in the past when he does not have much of a present to speak of, and even less of a future to which to look forward. This does not mean that one should forget the past. Absolutely not. The past is a critical component in establishing the present and preparing for the future, but one must live in the present.

The mitzvah of Terumas HaDeshen which was carried out by the Kohen was the first service of the day. It was comprised of removing a portion of the previous day's ashes from the Mizbayach, Altar, and shortly afterwards, placing logs of wood on the main Altar fire. The ashes were scooped up with a shovel and placed on the floor of the Chatzeir, Courtyard. These ashes were from the burnt flesh of the korbanos of the previous day. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, sees a theological pattern of lessons to be derived from the symbolism surrounding the Terumas HaDeshen service. He suggests that by taking a portion of "yesterday's" service and placing it on the side of the Altar prior to the commencement of "today's" service, the Kohen publicly affirms that today we will continue to serve the Almighty as we did yesterday, in accordance with the dictates of His will.

The lesson goes further and deeper. The removal of the ashes is meant to introduce the new day's service in terms of what had been accomplished on the previous day. As a permanent reminder of these past achievements, the removal of these ashes from the camp conveys the important message that, at the same time, the Jewish nation must begin its task anew each day. The start of every day summons us to set upon our task with full, renewed devotion, as if we had never accomplished anything before. The memory of yesterday's achievements must not detract from - or subdue the energy which we expend in carrying out today's service. Emphasis on what has already been accomplished can spell demise to what has yet to be done. The one who rests upon his past laurels often does so in smug complacency. He does not begin the service of today with renewed vigor, fresh devotion, completely committed to the task at hand, as if it were the very first day of his life's work.

The ashes were removed from the camp, so that every trace of yesterday's devotion was gone. Today's service was to begin on untouched ground. Rav Hirsch, thus, views the law that demands the Kohen to wear humble, worn garb upon handling the products of yesterday's functions as significant and endemic to the idea that we have stated. The past must recede into the background. It must not clothe us in pride, as we set out upon the new task to which we are summoned every new day. A certain aspect of the past, however, must not be ignored. Memories of the past are a vital link to bygone eras, experiences that have influenced and inspired our lives, and, for some, as we will see, make a difference in the quality of our lives. Indeed, we must acknowledge the fact that after all is said and done, all that we really leave over for the next generation is memories. A person lives - and dies - and all that is left of him are the memories of his life. We had better see to it that our children are left with good memories of a life filled with positive achievement.

I had occasion to read a chapter in Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski's, "Generation to Generation." He relates the story of Morris, a Jewish patient who was suffering from advanced cancer, and how the memories of the past were therapeutic for his present. Morris had undergone surgery and was suffering a great deal of pain. What made things worse was the fact that this pain was destined to accompany him in the months that followed until what would probably be his untimely death. Pain medication did

alleviate some of the discomfort, but he paid the price by having a clouded mind.

Rabbi Twerski attempted to take Morris's mind off of his debilitating pain. He tried a form of light hypnosis which would allow his patient to go back in time and recall some pleasant experiences. It worked. Morris recalled himself at age thirteen riding a bike in the countryside. He remembered scenery, the solitude, the breeze on his face, and, above all, the fun and peace and quiet. After a few of these relaxing memory sessions, Morris declared, "I am hungry." This was truly a breakthrough, since he had not had much of an appetite for weeks.

The technique was continued. Morris began acting like a new person, especially after Rabbi Twerski taught him how to hypnotize himself. He related his memories, episodes of life that had long been forgotten, or stored away in the back of his mind. This went on for a short time until Morris succumbed to his disease. The memories did not prolong his life, but somehow they eased his pain and raised the quality of his life. He died peacefully - which in and of itself is a blessing.

Our minds are obsessed with the future. The future is our symbol of hope, our analgesic for coping with life. If the present becomes too difficult, we look forward to the future as an escape, as a source of enjoyment, as a pleasant repast from the pressures of the present. Rabbi Twerski writes that, when a person is suddenly confronted with the realization that his present is going to change drastically - as a result of disease, financial/family upheaval - he will become increasingly despondent. Why? Because, all of a sudden, he has no future for which to look forward to. Sadly, he feels that, for him, there is no future - period. This results in depression, complete loss of motivation and a withdrawal from the daily activities that keep many of us going. Additionally, when a person falls victim to this form of helplessness, the pain which he experiences becomes much more aggravated. Everything simply hurts more.

As Rabbi Twerski observes, however, there is a solution to this very real and all-too-common problem. Filed away within the countless brain cells of our mind are the many memories of our life's experiences. Via the medium of a relaxation technique, he is able to penetrate the barriers that time put into place.

One does not have to, *chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid, be seriously ill to experience the gift of the "past," memories of days gone by and experiences heretofore consigned to oblivion. Open a diary, a photo album, get together with old friends and rediscover the past. It can enrich our lives by recapturing and reliving the enjoyable moments of our lives. The trick, however, is to "re-live the past," not to "live in the past."

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:12)

The Midrash teaches that *le'asid lavo*, in the future End of Days, all *korbanos*, sacrifices, will be *bateil*, nullified; all prayers will also be nullified, with the exception of the *Korban Todah*, Thanksgiving offering. The sound of *today*, gratitude, will continue to resonate - even when all others have been halted. We wonder what purpose gratitude will serve in the End of Days: What need will there be for requiring gratitude? There will no longer be any pain or sorrow, hunger or thirst, illness or personal trauma. There will be no questions, no accidents, no issues that need resolving. Everything will be good. People will be good. Indeed, the opposite of what Chazal are saying should be true: The very first *korban* to be nullified with the advent of the End of Days should be the *Korban Todah*. After all, we will have no reason for it.

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, *zl*, explains that, while veritably we will have no reason for offering a *Todah* for present miracles, we will have more reason to offer a *korban* for the past experiences which we now realize had actually been beneficial. We will now see with an unimpeded clarity of vision how those circumstances, which we once had thought were hurtful, painful, shameful were, in fact, the best things that have happened to us. In many instances, they changed our lives for the better. We will also discover that we had been wrong concerning situations that presented themselves as good. Perhaps, to the casual observer, they had appeared favorable, but, at the time, we had been privy to only part of the picture. Had we known more then, we would not have been that overjoyed.

We have all experienced episodes in our lives which we judged superficially according to the course of prior events, with our limited subjective vision. One day, we will see that we interpreted these events inaccurately. Would it not be best if we would just place our trust in the Almighty, Who has been here from the beginning and will be here until the very end? Clearly, His perspective is far better than ours.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:12)

Life is wonderful. This is especially true when one considers the alternative. In any event, the fact that the Torah has us bringing a *Korban Todah*, Thanksgiving-offering, upon being saved from serious illness, released from prison, or having survived a dangerous journey indicates that staying alive is a good thing. It is definitely something which we should make the most of. It is, therefore, perplexing that Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel debated one another for two and one-half years concerning the very same issue: Would it have been better not to have been created, or is creation beneficial? Clearly, there are reasons pro and con. The conclusion is more or less an impasse: We would have been better off had we not been created, but now that the option has been taken from us and we are here, we should be introspective and refine our actions. In other words: Make the most of it.

In his wonderful volume of insights from Horav Yaakov Weinberg, *zl*, "Forever His Students," Rabbi Baruch Leff ponders the obvious question. What do Chazal mean when they question the benefit of man's creation? Are they questioning Hashem? As the ultimate Source of all good, He created us. Is there any other conclusion for our existence other than Hashem's act of altruism? Are we to think for one moment that Hashem created us to be miserable, to fail in life? What else could Ben Shammai and Bais Hillel be debating? There must be some deeper interpretation of this Chazal, because, after all is said and done, it seems that the dispute revolves around Hashem.

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that the debate between Bais Hillel and Bais Shammai in no way concerns Hashem's decision to create mankind. That decision was a pure act of altruism with a goal to provide an opportunity for mankind to benefit and receive reward. The debate focuses on us. From our perspective, should we have second thoughts? Should we feel that we would have been better off not being created, not letting Hashem down (so to speak)?

The foibles of mankind are many and complex. Every person is destined to sin. We are not perfect - even though some of us have personal visions of grandeur. Thus, Bais Hillel and Bais Shammai wonder about all of the benefits of being created our way - from our vantage point, the disadvantages. Imagine, the "disappointment" and "pain" that our Heavenly Father "experiences" when we - the fruits of His labor - sin egregiously. So, is it really worth it?

Rav Weinberg explains that as Hashem's "children," our relationship with Him is unique. If an infant were to be acutely aware of the enormous pain his mother experiences during childbirth, he would probably declare that the benefits of being born do not outweigh his mother's pain. Why should she suffer so much for him? Even if the mother would argue and claim that she was willing to endure the pain if it meant having a child, the child, on the other hand, should contend that he would never want to be the cause of his mother's suffering. While he understands his mother's yearning for a child, he is concerned with the hurt and pain - not the ensuing benefits.

This is how we should feel *vis-à-vis* our relationship with the Almighty. True, Hashem's creation of the world was an incredible act of kindness, and we certainly appreciate everything that He has done. It is the "us" about which we are concerned. We are unsure whether we should feel awkward, even remorseful and filled with regret, concerning the "pain" through which we are putting Hashem. Chazal conclude that, indeed, there is merit to the way we feel. From the human perspective, we should have eschewed existence, since it involves sin and disappointment. We know that we are not going to make Hashem happy - all of the time. So, why would we want to be created? The choice, however, was never given to us. In His infinite wisdom, Hashem decided that it was "worth it." With this in

mind, we are able to develop an altogether different - and perhaps frightening - perspective on the concept of sin.

When we act inappropriately by breaching the code of discipline as prescribed in the Torah, we are sinning against Hashem, Who is our Creator and also our loving Father in Heaven. While Hashem is certainly above the human concept of emotion, we nonetheless, on some level, have "hurt" Him with our actions. Children should want to please their parents - not hurt them. When we sin, we cause our Parent in Heaven "distress." It is not something that courses through our minds when we transgress, but maybe it should. It will certainly change our attitude.

***Ha'Bocheir b'amo Yisrael b'ahavah.
Who chooses His people Yisrael with love.***

The blessing declaring Hashem's love for us immediately precedes Shema Yisrael. Why are these two juxtaposed upon one another? What connection is there between Hashem's love for us and Shema Yisrael? In his Kavanas HaLev, Horav Hillel Lichtenstein explains that Chazal are conveying a powerful, practical message. A major part of Klal Yisrael gropes around in spiritual darkness, oblivious to Hashem's love for them. Indeed, they claim that the Almighty does not love them. Otherwise, how could He allow us to remain in exile amidst persecution and misery? Clearly, this is not an expression of love. Apparently, this attitude demonstrates the blindness that has enveloped them. Our response to those who refuse to see is: Shema Yisrael! Hear O' Yisrael! Open up your ears and listen - Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One! Once a person becomes attuned to this verity, he will begin to see Hashem everywhere in his life. He will sense the Almighty's Presence in every aspect of his endeavors, and he will begin to realize and acknowledge Hashem's love for His People. He will proclaim Ha'Bocheir b'amo Yisrael b'ahavah.

In loving memory of Mrs. Fanny Brunner Feldman by her family

**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Tzav**

"The Practical Mystic"

The world did not know that he was a mystic. He was an accomplished diplomat, who knew how to deal with people in positions of great power. Some characterized him as a shrewd, and even manipulative, manager of men. His name was Dag Hammarskjold, and he was the second Secretary-General of the United Nations.

He died in an airplane crash in September of 1961 and was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It was as an astute and successful politician that the world knew him.

It was only after his tragic and untimely death that his personal journal was discovered. It was subsequently published under the title *Markings*, and it revealed a rare depth of introspection, which some described as poetic, whereas others saw in it poignant expressions of mystical experiences.

For me, Hammarskjold was but a 20th century example of my own favorite type of hero, the person who combines worldly skills with a private spiritual essence. He was a man who lived in the world of action, dealing with the obstinate problems of international relations, but he drew his inspiration from sources within his innermost being.

The Jewish biblical tradition knows of quite a few heroes of this type--men who were engaged in the affairs of the world, but also in touch with the deep wellsprings of their souls. Surely, the Patriarch Abraham was one such person, and King David was clearly another.

Another 20th century example of an individual who could harmonize his profound inner inspiration with the demands of life as a public figure was Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, of whom I have written frequently in this weekly column. He too was characterized by many as a mystic, and indeed his written works testify to his mystical bent. But he was engaged in public affairs in an era of history which demanded political acumen, diplomatic skill, and the courage to act upon religious and nationalistic convictions.

Rav Kook's commentary on a passage in this week's Torah portion, Tzav (Leviticus 6:1-8:36), offers a very creative analysis of the symbolism of the Temple sacrifices which illustrates the combination of inner inspiration and outer action which I find so fascinating, so rare, and so very necessary. At the beginning of the Parsha we read of the Olah offering, the Olah being that sacrifice which was totally consumed by the fire upon the altar. As we read the details of this offering, we learned that its service involved three different locations, with descending sanctity:

1. Upon the altar, of which we read "... It is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar is kept going on it." (Verse two)
2. Next to the altar, of which we read "The priest... shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar, and place them beside the altar." (Verse three)
3. Outside the camp, of which we read "He shall then take off his vestments and put on other vestments, and carry the ashes outside the camp..." (Verse four)

We then read that "the fire on the altar shall be kept burning, not to go out" and that "every morning the priest shall feed wood to it." (Verse five)

Rav Kook sees the three different locations as metaphors for three different stages which are necessary in what he calls the prophetic life, but which we can readily apply to the life of every human leader.

The first stage is "a blaze of sacred flames inside the human soul", corresponding to the fire on the altar. This is the deep inner experience which can be superficially described as introspective insight, but which is in truth a mystical moment.

The prophet, or genuine leader, must not allow that experience to remain buried internally. He must raise it to the surface of his being and integrate these "flames" into his external character and unique personality. This integration is the second stage.

But he cannot stop there. He must now take the person whom he has become by virtue of incorporating the profound spiritual experiences into his very human self and connect to the outside world, far away from the mystical cocoon which he has heretofore enjoyed.

In this third stage, when he engages the real world with all its imperfections, he must be ready to change his vestments. He must put on not only new clothing but a new persona. In the words of the Talmud (Shabbat 114a), "the clothes worn by a servant while cooking for his master should not be used when serving his master wine".

Yet, even during this third stage of interaction with the mundane affairs of the world, the fires on the altar continue to burn. The sources of warmth, illumination, and inspiration are ever present, even if they are in some manner far removed.

And the prophet, or leader, must ever seek to renew himself, by returning each and every morning to the altar's hearth, to place new kindling wood there, and to rejuvenate his soul.

This brilliant application of the detailed laws of the Temple sacrifices to the psyche of the prophet/leader can be found in the first volume of Rav Kook's commentary on the Siddur, or daily prayer book, *Olat Riyah*. It is masterfully summarized in Rabbi Chanan Morrison's *Gold From the Land of Israel*.

Some readers might find it odd, and others might even find it improper, for me to be comparing the saintly Rabbi Kook to the worldly Dag Hammarskjold. But I have long followed Maimonides' advice to accept the truth from every source, and I find much spiritual truth in the words of this Swedish diplomat.

This was a man wise enough to say, "The longest journey is the journey inwards".

This was a man sufficiently spiritual to say, "God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in Him, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason."

This was a man who could offer us this sage advice: "In our age, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action."

Rav Kook, using the ritualistic terminology of the ancient Temple sacrifices to be found in this week's Torah portion, delivered a similar

message, and offered us the identical sage advice: "The road to holiness passes through the world of action". But he would add, "And back again!"

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Violence and the Sacred

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-Ikkarim*.

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 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)

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chief Rabbi.org.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Tzav

Double Entendre In the Word "Hoda'ah"

Among the sacrifices mentioned in this week's parsha is the Thanksgiving Offering. The Medrash says that in the future, all the sacrifices will be nullified, except the Thanksgiving Offering -- for there is always need to give thanks.

Rav Yitzchok Hutner z"tl, makes a very interesting point. "Todah" [thanks] comes from the word "Hoda'ah", meaning giving thanks. However, the word "Hoda'ah" also means to admit (as in the expression Hoda'as ba'al din k'meah edim dami [An admission of a litigant is like one hundred witnesses]).

Rav Hutner says that it is no coincidence that the word for thanking and the word for admitting are one and the same. In order for a person to give thanks, he must be able to admit that he needed help. The first step in being grateful to someone for doing something for you is the admission that you needed help and that you are not all powerful. Therefore, the Hebrew word for thanks and for admission are the same.

How do we know whether the word "Hoda'ah" means admission or thanks? Rav Hutner says that we need to look at the preposition that comes after the word. The word "Hoda'ah" -- meaning admission -- is always followed by the Hebrew preposition "'sheh..." (that). The word "Hoda'ah" -- meaning thanks -- is always followed by the Hebrew word "al ..." (for).

We daven [pray] a Blessing of Modim in Shmoneh Esrei, called the Blessing of "Hoda'ah". How does it read? "Modim anachnu lach sheh..." This indicates, that the first thing we must do is not thank G-d, but admit to G-d that we are dependent on Him. Once we come to that understanding, then we can come to the end of the blessing where we say "Nodeh lecha... ..al..." -- We thank You for... Birkas HaHoda'ah is thus a two-stage blessing. It is a Hoda'ah of admission at the beginning which climaxes with a Hoda'ah of thanking at the end.

We Can't Appoint an Agent to Say 'Thank-You'

I recently saw a beautiful insight in the Avudraham. When the Chazan says Modim, the congregation recites a prayer known as "The Rabbis' Modim". Why is that? The Avudraham says that for all blessings in the Shmoneh Esrei, we can have an agent. For 'Heal Us', for 'Bless Us with a Good Year', and so forth we can have a messenger -- the Shliach Tzibbur [the agent of the congregation (chazzan)] can say the blessing for us. However, there is one thing that no else one can say for us. We must say it for ourselves. That one thing is "Thank You". Hoda'ah must come from ourselves. No one can be our agent to say 'Thank You'.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Tzav: The Prohibition of Cheilev

"Do not eat any of the hard fat (cheilev) in an ox, sheep, or goat." (Lev. 7:23)

Some commentaries (Maimonides, Guide, III:48; Sefer HaChinuch, mitzvah 147) explain that the Torah prohibits eating these fats for health reasons. Yet, if this were true, why is only the cheilev of these three animals forbidden?

Curiously, we find that the mitzvah of kisuy ha-dam, covering the blood after slaughtering, only applies to non-domesticated animals and fowl. Why does the Torah not require kisuy ha-dam also for cattle, sheep, and goats? Why do these two mitzvot, both of which pertain to the preparation of kosher meat, apply to two mutually exclusive groups of animals?

Domesticated and Wild Animals

If we analyze the degree of sensitivity one should have when taking the life of an animal for food, we should differentiate between two categories of animals. The first category consists of animals that we do not feed and raise. These are wild animals that are hunted and killed. All birds are included in this category, as they usually need to be trapped. [Of course, this was more applicable in the days when chickens and other poultry were allowed to roam freely, not cooped up in small cages.]

We should feel embarrassment when we must stoop to such ignoble and cruel behavior. Therefore, when stalking and killing untamed animals and birds, the Torah commands us to cover the blood, a sign of our inner

shame at this merciless act. "If any man... traps a wild animal or bird that may be eaten and sheds its blood, he must cover the blood with earth" (Lev. 17:13).

The second category of animals is comprised of domesticated beasts: cattle, sheep, and goats. We raise and feed them for their milk, wool, and labor. Not to kill these animals for food after they approach old age and are much less productive, requires a higher and more refined sense of ethical sensitivity. Regarding this category of animals, who become a burden to their owner in old age, the Torah does not require that their blood be covered after their slaughter. We need not feel the same extent of embarrassment as when taking the life of a wild animal.

Nonetheless, the Torah created for domesticated animals a special prohibition to remind us that we should only take their lives for our essential needs. This is the purpose of the prohibition of cheilev. We are permitted to slaughter these animals for their meat, to give us energy and strength, but they should not be killed for the sake of their fats. We should not kill them merely for the pleasure of eating their fatty meat, so pleasurable to the palate of the gastronome. The prohibition of cheilev emphasizes that we should only take their lives out of genuine necessity.

Why does the Torah not prohibit eating the fats of birds and wild animals? We should feel ashamed at this cruel act, regardless of whether our intent is for pure enjoyment or true need. If the Torah distinguished between their meat and their fats, this would only obscure the moral impact of covering their blood, a sign of our profound embarrassment over spilling the blood of a free animal, no matter what the circumstances.

(Gold from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Otzarot HaRe'iyah vol. II, p. 95)
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Mass Gratitude: Parshat Tzav – Shabbat Hagadol

By Shmuel Rabinowitz

March 21, 2013 Thursday 10 Nisan 5773

A person who was saved out of the grasp of danger feels a deep need to share his feelings of gratitude with those around him.

Among the many details regarding the laws of sacrifices that Parshat Tzav deals with is one sacrifice that is still significant for us today, as members of the Jewish nation who have lived for many years without a Temple or sacrifices.

A person who was in a dangerous situation and was saved from it, such as someone who was dangerously ill and recovered, or an innocent person who was imprisoned and released, must – as is taught in our parasha – bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Temple.

This sacrifice is unique in that it includes a tremendous amount of bread – 40 large loaves – to be eaten by the person who experienced the miracle. He must eat all these loaves within a short period of time: by midnight of the night after bringing the sacrifice.

If we assume that the person brought the thanksgiving sacrifice in the morning of that day, then he would have only about 16 hours to eat this huge amount of bread.

Of course, a person cannot eat such an amount in such a short time, and therefore he is allowed to invite anyone he wants to eat the bread with him, as long as all the loaves are eaten by midnight.

What is the purpose of this massive feast? And why is it connected to the thanksgiving sacrifice and not with any other kind of sacrifice? Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (the Netziv), who was among the greatest of Torah scholars in the previous century and the Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin in Russia, provides us with an explanation that teaches us the value of thanksgiving.

When a person experiences a miracle – he was saved from death or from some other immediate danger – he is full of gratitude to God. It could be that he had already despaired from his situation and saw in his mind his impending death. Now that he has been rescued from the danger, recovered or released, he expresses his gratitude by bringing the thanksgiving sacrifice to the Temple.

But this is not enough. A person who was saved out of the grasp of danger feels a deep need to share his feelings of gratitude with those around him. We are all familiar with this phenomenon.

When a person is saved from a great danger, such as a terrorist attack or a grave illness, he is not satisfied with quietly expressing the thanks and wonder that fill his heart; he feels the need to share them with his acquaintances and sometimes even with those with whom he is not acquainted.

Sometimes in these cases, a person even makes a great effort to reach the media and share with the world the miracle that he experienced. This is a natural, familiar and even healthy phenomenon, which benefits the person himself and those around him who share in the miracle that he experienced.

The Torah recognizes this healthy need and provides a manner of expression through the large amount of bread that comes with the thanksgiving sacrifice.

This person, who has just left the Temple holding 40 large loaves of bread which need to be eaten within the next several hours, turns to his acquaintances – and if he has none in Jerusalem, he even turns to strangers – and asks them to join him in eating the bread. Of course, these people will ask him why he is celebrating, what happened that caused him to host this feast. And he will answer them by telling the story of this wonderful miracle that happened to him and the danger from which he was saved.

Through these loaves of bread, the Torah brings the person's feelings of gratitude to a peak. By sharing his private miracle with great publicity, the person is giving the utmost expression to his feelings and the transcendent sense that he was saved from danger. Thus, many other people will learn of the goodness of God, who supervises man and helps him in his time of need, and will also learn to turn to God in times of distress and ask for salvation.

Today, when the Temple does not exist, a person who was in danger and was rescued recites before a quorum (usually in the synagogue during the Torah reading) the blessing of, "Blessed are Thou... Who bestows good to sinners, even as He has bestowed to me every good." It is also customary to hold a "thanksgiving feast" and share with family and friends the story of the miracle, just as was done by the person who brought the thanksgiving sacrifice with the many loaves of bread.

This Shabbat, adjacent to the holiday of Passover, is called Shabbat Hagadol – the Great Shabbat. This name was given to the Shabbat before Passover because of the great miracle that occurred during that Shabbat when our forefathers were in Egypt, just days before their final liberation and exodus to freedom.

On the night before the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites celebrated the first Passover by eating the Passover sacrifice. This sacrifice was a roasted lamb brought ceremoniously to the family table on the evening of the holiday. But while we may think today that eating the Passover Seder is a festive event and even one that whets the appetite, about 3,300 years ago this eating came with no small amount of fear. The nation of Israel was not yet liberated from the chains of Egyptian slavery. They were living in a land that was full of pagan worshippers – whose main symbol was a lamb.

The children of Israel had received a directive from Moses to take a lamb for every family a few days before the holiday and slaughter it and eat it on the evening of the holiday. They feared that their Egyptian neighbors would not look kindly upon the slaughtering and festive eating of a lamb, and the fear of the Egyptians' wrath deterred them from fulfilling the commandment.

But the Jewish nation courageously withstood this trial, overcame their fear and ate the Pascal lamb. And, to everyone's surprise, their pagan neighbors saw the Jews slaughtering, roasting and eating the lambs and did not react with anger and violence after all.

This miracle was the opening act of a wondrous chain of miracles that occurred during the exodus from Egypt. In its memory, the Shabbat adjacent to Passover is called Shabbat Hagadol.

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Mitzvah number 25 is the positive commandment to halt from performing work on the first day of Passover, as the Torah says: "The first day will be a sacred holiday" (Vayikra 23:7).

The excitement in the carriage was great, as the parents rode for the first time to visit their daughter who had been wed several months earlier. Their hearts were filled with anticipation of seeing their daughter happy and blissful. But when they saw that their daughter's face was worried and sad, they were gripped with anxiety. In answer to their question, the daughter said that definitely her husband was a man of pleasant conduct, patience and good character. But as of late she has been very worried by bizarre behavior that he has been exhibiting. She told that her husband gets up every night at midnight, goes to the Mikveh, prays in an extraordinary fashion and then reads from a book which he hides under the mattress. The parents were alarmed and asked her to show them the book she mentioned. The father picked up the book, opened it to the first page, and read its name, "Toldot Yaakov Yosef," which was written by Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonne, the dedicated student of the holy Baal Shem Tov. The father shuddered when he understood that his son - in - law belonged to the cult of the Hassidim. He ran over to his young son - in - law and demanded that he immediately grant his daughter a divorce, as he would never have agreed to the match had he known this beforehand. To his surprise, the young man adamantly refused, stating that there were no legitimate grounds to force him to part from his righteous wife. He added that all the father's claims against Hassidism were based on lack of knowledge of Hassidism and its great Rabbis.

The argument between the two became stormy and attracted a gathering of the people of town, all of which belonged to the camp of the "Misnagdim" - those opposed to Hassidism. Tempers flared and the clamor of the dispute intensified. Suddenly, everything became quiet. The old Count of the town approached the scene. The Count, renowned for his great fondness for the Jews, heard the voices of the argument from his nearby castle and decided to come down and see what the Jewish residents were so worked up about. After he had settled into a chair which was brought in his honor, those present told him of the argument which had arisen between the young man and his father - in - law over the former's joining Hassidism. When the Count heard about the book which the son - in - law read in secret, he jumped up excitedly from his seat and began to tell: "Many years ago I was a senior officer in the Czar's army. Once as we were about to move our camp, we made an roll call of all the soldiers in order to make sure all were present, but three were discovered to be missing. I sent a party to search for them in the nearby town of Polonne, and soon afterwards they returned, all excited. The told that they found the missing soldiers in a house, fixed in their places and completely unable to move, with an old Jew sitting next to them. When I heard this, I thought that these soldiers had probably gotten drunk, and that their imaginations were getting the best of them. So I decided to go and see for myself, and it really was just as they described. I knocked on the door of the house until the old man opened the door. I told him that these three soldiers must continue with us, and therefore I request that he release them. The Rabbi answered that they probably stole something from the house, and as long as it was in their pocket they couldn't go. We searched in their pockets and, indeed, we found stolen silver goblets, and as soon as we took them out of their pockets, they could move normally and they ran out of the house." The Count was visibly moved, and after a short pause continued:

"The old man told me that this night is Passover, the night the Nation of Israel became a nation, and therefore there is a special safeguarding over the Jewish People on this night, and consequently they didn't succeed in stealing." The Count gazed at the Jews who listened riveted to his story, and continued: "I bowed my head before the old Rabbi and asked that he bless me. He gave me blessings for a long life and for other things, on the condition that I always treat the Jews well. The Rabbi then added, 'There

will come a day when a controversy will arise among the Jews over my character, and then it is your duty to recount all you saw tonight, and with that my blessing for long life will terminate.'" The Count paused momentarily and said, "I know that at this moment I am sentencing myself to death, but I owe this debt to the holy man you are disputing about, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef from the town of Polonne."

That very day the Jews of the town escorted the beloved Count to his final resting place, as the sadness of his passing intermingled with the great joy which enveloped the home of the young bride with her husband and her parents.

Rabbi in Bnei Tzvi Yeshiva High School, Acclaimed Speaker, Posek, Rosh Kollel in Bet-El
Shiur Delivered on 5770

To be filed Under "Nachas From The Children" – Leora's Handiwork

\$27 Million Raised at NY Gala Dinner for the Israel Defense Forces

March 20, 2013

\$27 million was raised Tuesday night at the Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF) National NY Gala Dinner, where over 1,400 prominent business and philanthropic leaders from across the country gathered at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel to demonstrate their support for the soldiers of Israel.

FIDF Chairman Emeritus Arthur Stark was the chair of the Gala, and author and nationally syndicated radio host Dr. Monica Crowley served as the evening's Master of Ceremonies.

Among the guests in attendance were FIDF National Chairman, Nily Falic; FIDF National President, Julian Josephson; FIDF National Director and CEO, Maj. Gen. (Res.) Yitzhak (Jerry) Gershon; Former IDF Chief of the General Staff, Lt. Gen. (Res.) Gabi Ashkenazi; Founder and President of The Fellowship, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein; Israeli-American luxury fashion designer, Elie Tahari; President of the New York Yankees Randy Levine and his wife, Mindy; American real estate tycoon and media proprietor Mort Zuckerman; and Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

One of the evening's outstanding guests included Cpt. Ziv Shilon, a 25-year-old commander of the Givati Brigade, who just a couple of months ago was badly injured in a Hamas attack near the Gaza security fence when an explosive device went off. Cpt. Shilon was also joined at the Gala by more than 30 soldiers and officers from various IDF units as well as soldiers from the United States Armed Forces, including Maj. Justin Constantine, a wounded U.S. Marine Corps veteran.

Notable among the \$27 million in donations was \$1 million pledged by the Genesis Philanthropy Group; \$130,000 pledged by Elie Tahari; \$100,000 pledged by American real estate tycoon and media proprietor Mort Zuckerman; \$1.08 million pledged by FIDF National Board Member Harry Gross; \$1.3 million pledged by National Board Member and Young Leadership Chairman Tony Felzen on behalf of FIDF NY Young Leadership; and dinner sponsorships purchased by the Major League Baseball and the Yankee Foundation.

The evening culminated with the heartfelt words shared by bereaved mother, Nelly Barak, who tragically lost her son, Hanan Barak Z^L, a tank commander, in 2006. Hanan and another soldier were killed when a group of terrorists fired an RPG at his tank and then abducted his soldier, Gilad Shalit, the IDF soldier released last October after five years of captivity by Hamas in Gaza.

The funds raised during the evening will provide much needed services such as academic scholarships to former combat soldiers, financial support for soldiers in-need and Lone Soldiers from around the world, weeks of rest and recreation for entire IDF units, as well as educational, cultural, and recreational facilities.

{Andy Heller-Matzav.com Newscenter}

Why is This Pesach the Earliest Since 1899?

By Rabbi Dovid Heber, Star-K Kashrus Administrator

This year, 5773, Pesach begins on the night of March 25, 2013. Pesach has not occurred so early in the Gregorian calendar since 5659 when Pesach began on the night of March 25, 1899 – 114 years ago! Why is this so uncommon and why does it happen this year?

In general, the Jewish holidays (and Hebrew dates) of the sixteenth year of the 19-year cycle fall on the earliest dates in the civil calendar, since it is two years after the most recent leap year. [Note: The holidays and dates that occur between Tishrei and Shevat fall earliest in the 17th year of the 19-year cycle, e.g., this coming Rosh Hashanah, etc.]. Furthermore, the last time leap years were two years apart (causing dates in the second of the two to be exceptionally late within the civil year) were years #6 and #8 of the 19-year cycle. Therefore, since year #16 is eight years later and follows the longest period after such a pair of leap years (the only other pair is #17 and #19), the Jewish calendar is the earliest possible within the 19-year cycle.

But why is this year's Pesach even earlier than Pesach of other years that occurred during the 16th year of the 19-year cycle (e.g., 5754/1994)?

The answer is based on the time of tekufos Nissan (the beginning of spring as defined by Chazal). According to Rav Ada (whose tekufos times are used for our calendar), in the 16th year of the 19-year cycle, tekufas Nissan will always occur 15 days, 3 hours, 25 minutes, 7 chalokim (there are 18 chalokim in a minute), and 36 rega'im (there are 76 rega'im in a chalek) after the molad of Nissan. (Within the 19 year cycle, this is the latest time possible. In some other years of the 19-year cycle, the tekufah could even be before the molad.)

The molad of Nissan was shortly after 6 a.m. on Tuesday and Rosh Chodesh was on Tuesday. That is one of the latest times possible for Nissan. This is because this coming year, the molad of Tishrei (exactly six months later) will occur shortly before midday on Thursday and Rosh Hashanah will be on Thursday. This is shortly before the cutoff time of 12 noon. [If the molad of Tishrei would occur at 12 noon or later, Rosh Hashanah would move ahead to Shabbos. The way the calendar works, the previous Rosh Chodesh Nissan and Pesach would have been pushed ahead by two days to Thursday, with Pesach falling after tekufas Nissan. However, that did not happen. The molad is just before the cutoff time, creating the scenario we are in.]

So, in short, there is a domino effect. The "late" (just before the cutoff) molad of Tishrei (which determines the day of Rosh Hashanah) causes a late molad for the previous Nissan (on the morning of Rosh Chodesh), which in turn causes a late tekufas Nissan and an early Pesach.

The exact times this year are as follows: 15 days, 3 hours, 25 minutes, 7 chalokim and 36 rega'im after the molad of Nissan, which occurred on Tuesday, Rosh Chodesh, 21 minutes and 14 chalokim after 6 a.m., bringing us to a relatively late tekufas Nissan on Wednesday morning, the second day of Pesach, March 27, at 9:47 + 3 chalokim + 36 rega'im. This is slightly more than an hour earlier than the latest possible tekufas Nissan. A relatively late tekufas Nissan time (due to the fact that it is year #16 and the molad was relatively late) means a civil calendar date, March 27 (the tekufah and civil calendar date occur around the same time every year, because they are both based on the solar year), that occurs late in the Jewish calendar (16 Nissan; in other years, the tekufah is earlier in Nissan or even in Adar). Stating this the opposite way, a very late Jewish calendar date (16 Nissan) occurs on a very early civil date (March 27). Therefore, Pesach is very early this year.

Of course, all of this was facilitated by making Marcheshvan and Kislev 29 (and not 30) days, thereby causing the "early Pesach."

So, the reason Pesach is the earliest since 5659/1899 is two converging events that infrequently occur: It is the 16th year of the 19-year cycle and the molad was almost the latest it can possibly be on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Thus, the tekufah and civil date are relatively late in the Jewish year, causing the Jewish year to be exceptionally early in the civil calendar.

It is interesting to note that this year, as well as other "early" years, are the basis of a question asked by the Yad Ramah (Sanhedrin 13b).

Pesach must occur during the spring (tekufas Nissan). Therefore, the tekufah must occur on or before the 15th of Nissan as previously indicated. This year, according to Rav Ada, tekufas Nissan occurs on the second day of Pesach, March 27.

The Rambam (Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh 4:2) says that if it is apparent that tekufas Nissan (the beginning of spring) occurs on or after the 16th of Nissan, the year should be converted to a leap year and a second Adar should be added, thereby ensuring that the 15th of Nissan is in the spring (see also Tosafos, Sanhedrin 13b). For these cheshbonos, the calculations of Rav Ada are used.

[It is beyond the scope of this discussion to explain in detail the different ways Chazal calculate the solar year and the tekufos (seasons). Rav Ada's calculation is based on an "average year," which is 235 lunar months (i.e., the number of months in a 19-year cycle) divided by 19. That comes out to slightly less than 365 days, 5 hours and 55.5 minutes. See Sefer Shaarei Zemanim, siman 1, footnote 14, for a discussion regarding the scientific time for the spring equinox, which occurs this year several days before Pesach. It is not considered tekufas Nissan and does not answer the following question of the Yad Ramah.]

According to Rav Ada, the tekufah occurs this year on Wednesday, the 16th of Nissan (March 27). If so, asks the Yad Ramah (Sanhedrin 13b), why hasn't this year been converted to a leap year with the addition of another Adar to ensure that the 15th of Nissan occurs in the spring? How can the first day of Pesach occur before tekufas Nissan (i.e., in the winter)? The Yad Ramah is therefore mechadeish that an extra Adar is necessary only if tekufas Nissan begins on the 17th of Nissan (or later). Therefore, this year (and every 16th year of the 19-year cycle) is not a leap year, as tekufas Nissan occurs before the 17th of Nissan.

Another answer to the question of the Yad Ramah is found in Sefer Shaarei Zemanim (1:5). The Baal Hama'or in Rosh Hashanah (20b) says that Rosh Hashanah can occur on any day that the new moon is visible somewhere on the earth, even if that place is found in the westernmost regions of the globe where the time is 18 hours earlier than Yerushalayim. The Sefer Shaarei Zemanim applies the sevara to Pesach and tekufas Nissan. As long as tekufas Nissan occurs while it is the 15th of Nissan somewhere on Earth, we can say that Pesach begins "bechodesh ha'aviv" and a leap year is not necessary. In theory, the latest possible tekufas Nissan can occur at 11:01 + 36 rega'im on the morning of the 16th of Nissan. According to the Baal Hama'or, then, in the westernmost regions of the globe, tekufas Nissan/spring begins shortly after 5 p.m. on the 15th of Nissan, allowing the first day of Pesach to still fall out somewhere on Earth after tekufas Nissan, bechodesh ha'aviv. Therefore, a leap year is not necessary this year or in any 16th year of the 19 year cycle.

The next time Pesach is scheduled to begin this early, is in 76 years – in 5849, when Pesach begins on the night of March 25, 2089. May we merit long before then the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.

A similar article appears in the Tzav/Pesach 2013 edition of Yated Ne'eman in the Calendar Calculations Column by Rabbi Dovid Heber. The above has been reprinted with permission of Yated Ne'eman.

Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Bedikas Chametz Questions And Answers On Hilchos Pesach

QUESTION:

How extensive does the search for chametz have to be? How is it possible to thoroughly search a whole house in a short period of time?

DISCUSSION:

Halachically speaking, an extensive and thorough search is required in any place where chametz may have been brought during the past year.(1) Since it is almost impossible to properly check an entire house in a short period of time, some people actually spend many hours checking and searching their houses on the night of bedikas chametz, often devoting a good part of

the night to the bedikah.(2) But most people cannot - or do not - spend so much time searching their homes for chametz. How, then, do they fulfill this obligation? Several poskim find justification (limud zechus) for the laxer version of bedikas chametz, as the house has undergone many weeks of meticulous pre-Pesach cleaning and scrubbing and there is no vestige of chametz around. Once the rooms of the house have been cleaned, they may be halachically considered as "a place into which no chametz has been brought." While checking and searching is still required in order to ascertain that no spot in the house was overlooked, the search need not be as thorough and exacting as if no cleaning had been done.(3)

A better suggestion - for those who do not do a meticulous search on the night before Pesach - is to do partial searches earlier. As soon as a certain area in the house is cleaned, the area should be carefully checked for chametz - either at night using a flashlight or in the daytime by natural light. The wife or an older child can be entrusted with this search. If the house is checked in stages, then an exhaustive search need not be repeated on the night before Pesach in the areas that were already checked, provided that it is certain that no new chametz was carried into those areas.(4)

QUESTION:

Is it permitted to get a haircut or do laundry on erev Pesach after midday (chatzos)?

DISCUSSION:

It is Rabbinically forbidden to do melachah, "work," even if it is needed for Yom Tov, on erev Pesach after chatzos. Two(5) basic reasons are given for this prohibition: 1) When the Beis ha-Mikdash stood, erev Pesach was considered a Yom Tov, since the Korban Pesach was brought on that day. It retains the status of Yom Tov today even though the Korban Pesach is no longer offered.(6) 2) To give everyone a chance to properly prepare for the Seder.(7) Certain forms of personal grooming and certain households chores that are halachically classified as "work" are forbidden to be done on erev Pesach after chatzos. Thus it is forbidden to get a haircut or a shave,(8) to sew new clothing(9) or to do laundry(10) on erev Pesach after chatzos. One must arrange his schedule so that these tasks are completed before midday. L'chatchilah, one should even cut his nails before chatzos.(11)

If, b'diavad, one could not or did not take care of these matters before midday, some of them may still be done while others may not: sewing or completing the sewing of new clothes may not be done at all; a haircut and shave may be taken only at a non-Jewish barber; laundry may be done only by a non-Jewish maid or dry cleaner.(12) Other chores, such as ironing clothes,(13) polishing shoes, cutting nails, sewing buttons and other minor mending,(14) may be done with no restrictions.

QUESTION:

May one use other beverages - besides wine- to fulfill the mitzvah of drinking the four cups?

DISCUSSION:

The poskim agree that anyone who can, should use only wine(15) for fulfilling this mitzvah. This is because the four cups on Seder night are supposed to be drunk derech cheirus - in the manner of a man just freed from long captivity- which means drinking an alcoholic beverage.(16) Indeed, some poskim go so far as to allow wine only, even if one dislikes wine or if the wine will give the drinker a temporary headache, etc.(17) But many other poskim hold that if one dislikes wine, or if wine makes him dizzy or ill etc., one is not required to drink it.(18) Indeed, some poskim are of the opinion that such people should not force themselves to drink wine, since for them it is not derech cheirus to drink something that they dislike or that makes them ill.(19) This applies especially to women and children under bar/bas mitzvah, who are not accustomed to drink wine in such volume.

In order of preference, this is what should be done:

1. Mix grape juice(20) together with the wine. As long as some taste of wine remains in the mixture [depending on the type of wine used], it is considered drinking derech cheirus.(21)

2. Drink only grape juice. Under extenuating circumstances one can fulfill his obligation by drinking any chamar medinah,(22) which is a type of beverage served to important guests.(23) Since there are various views as to what exactly constitutes chamar medinah, a rabbi should be consulted.

QUESTION:

At many Seders the recital of the Hagadah takes a long time. Is it permitted to drink during that time?

DISCUSSION:

It is permitted to drink water or soda between the first and second cups.(24) A shehakol is recited over the water, unless the water was on the table during Kiddush, or if one intended during Kiddush to drink water or soda during the recital of the Hagadah.(25) Coffee, tea, milk, or fruit juices may also be drunk between the first and second cups,(26) but only if they will not require their own berachah. In order for them to be covered by the ha-gafen recited over the first cup, they would have to have been on the table during Kiddush or one would have had to intend to drink them while reciting Kiddush. Since these beverages are considered chamar medinah, reciting a separate berachah and drinking them would make it appear as if one is adding an additional cup to the four prescribed ones.(27)

Wine and other intoxicating beverages should be completely avoided between the drinking of the first two cups. It is permitted, however to drink wine and all other beverages after the second cup is drunk and throughout Shulchan Orech when the meal is served.

Footnotes:

1. 1 O.C. 333:3.
2. 2 Several gedolim, among them the Gaon of Vilna, the Chasam Sofer and the Brisker Rav, were reported to have spent a good part of the night searching their houses for chametz.
3. 3 Sha'arei Teshuvah 433:2; Da'as Torah 433:2; Chochmas Shelomo 433:1; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Mevakshei Torah Ohr Efrayim, pg. 532); Kinyan Torah 2:122; The basic idea is quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 432:12.
4. 4 Siddur Pesach K'hilchaso 13:1.
5. 5 See Pnei Yehoshua (Pesachim 50a) for a third reason for this prohibition.
6. 6 Mishnah Berurah 468:1. According to this reason, even when erev Pesach falls on Shabbos it is forbidden to do work on Friday.
7. 7 Be'ur Halachah 468:1.
8. 8 Mishnah Berurah 468:5.
9. 9 Rama O.C. 468:2.
10. 10 Mishnah Berurah 468:7.
11. 11 Mishnah Berurah 468:5. Some mention that it is proper to shower/bathe and polish shoes before chatzos as well, but this is not mentioned by the poskim.
12. 12 Mishnah Berurah 468:7. Towels and children's clothing which became dirty (or were discovered to be dirty) after chatzos and are going to be needed during Yom Tov may be machine-washed even by a Jew.
13. 13 Orchos Rabbeinu 2, pg. 56, quoting an oral ruling by the Chazon Ish.
14. 14 Rama O.C. 468:2 and Mishnah Berurah 8. Lengthening and shortening a hem is also permitted.
15. 15 The wine of choice is one that is favored by the drinker. If he has no preference, then any red wine (including Tokay wine) may be used; O.C. 472:11. One who mixes two wines in order to produce a red color should preferably pour the white wine into the red and not vice versa; based on Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 318:65.
16. 16 Some poskim hold that in addition to derech cheirus, the drinking must also be derech simchah, and only wine meets that criterion; see Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos 472; Chok Yaakov 472:25; Mikraei Kodesh 35.
17. 17 Harav M. Feinstein (Kol Dodi 3:8); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Halailah Hazeh, pg. 9).
18. 18 See Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:243, who reports that the Brisker Rav and the Tchebiner Rav used grape juice for the four cups; Harav C. Kanievsky (quoted in Siddur Pesach K'hilchaso 2:3, note 25) reports the same about the Chazon Ish; Harav Y.Y. Fisher (Halailah Hazeh, pg. 9); Chazon Ovadia, pg. 125.
19. 19 She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 118:1, based on the wording of the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch Harav 272:17 that the drinking of the four cups must be "pleasant".
20. 20 Preferably, one should not use reconstituted grape juice, since many poskim hold that ha-gafen is no longer recited on it; Harav S.Z.

Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 1:4); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 116).

21. 21 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Mevakshei Torah Ohr Efrayim, pgs. 445 and 571); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Halailah Hazeh, pg. 9).
22. 22 Mishnah Berurah 472:37.
23. 23 Igros Moshe O.C. 2:75.
24. 24 Mishnah Berurah 473:16.
25. 25 O.C. 174:2.
26. 26 While this is permitted, it is not appropriate to take "coffee breaks" while the Hagadah is being recited.
27. 27 Shulchan Aruch Harav 473:13. See Mishnah Berurah 473:16.

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Some Kitniyos Curiosities

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: A certain rav told me that he was unhappy that some kosher for Pesach apple sauce products contain vitamin C, which he claims is kitniyos. But I see some reliable Ashkenazic hechsherim containing vitamin C. Does that rav have his facts wrong?

Question #2: My sister married a Sefardi, who eats rice on Pesach. Does this mean that I will be unable to eat in their house on Pesach, even if I avoid eating the kitniyos?

Question #3: I grew up in a Sefardi home where we ate kitniyos, but have kept the practice not to eat kitniyos since I married an Ashkenazi man. We will be visiting my parents for Pesach, who now have two sets of Pesach pots, one set that they keep kitniyos free to accommodate the Ashkenazi family members. May I help my mother cook kitniyos food on Yom Tov that I may not eat?

Although the Torah's prohibition against eating, benefiting from, and owning chometz on Pesach applies only to leavened foods made from the five grains (wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye), Ashkenazic Jews and many Sefardim have accepted the practice of not eating rice and other grain-like products on Pesach, even when these foods are not one of the five grains. We refer to this as the prohibition against eating kitniyos.

The poskim provide several reasons for this custom, including:

(1) Chometz grains often are mixed into the kitniyos (Tur Orach Chayim 453; see Taz 453:1 and Mishnah Berurah 453:6).

(2) One can bake kitniyos varieties into a type of bread, or cook them into cereal, that might confuse unlettered people, leading them to think that one may eat chometz on Pesach (Taz 453:1, quoting Smak).

(3) Kitniyos varieties bear a physical resemblance to the five grains (Gra ad loc.).

Contemporary Kitniyos Question

A contemporary application that is germane to large-scale food production is the question whether products grown on a medium of soybeans, corn, or other kitniyos are prohibited as kitniyos or not. Some modern poskim refer to these products as "kitniyos shenishtanu," kitniyos that have undergone a transformation, and therefore permit their use. According to this opinion, Vitamin C, sweeteners, enzymes, thickening agents such as xanthan gum, and a variety of other modern food production aids may be used in Pesach products, even though their major source is kitniyos.

The basis for this shaylah is a dispute among early poskim whether a prohibited substance that has completely transformed remains non-kosher. The Rosh (Berachos 6:35) quotes a dispute whether musk, a fragrance and spice derived from the gland of several different animals, is kosher or not. He cites Rabbeinu Yonah as permitting musk, even if it originated as a non-kosher item, because it has become a new substance and thus becomes permitted. Rabbeinu Yonah rallied support for his thesis from the halacha

that, if meat or some other prohibited substance lands in honey, it eventually metamorphosizes into honey and becomes permitted. Rosh, after quoting Rabbeinu Yonah's opinion, concludes by saying, "I think even his proof needs to be proved," implying that, if the source of honey was a non-kosher item, the Rosh would consider it non-kosher. Nevertheless, the Rosh in a responsum (24:6) quotes Rabbeinu Yonah approvingly. Because this teshuvah is an interesting insight in the laws of Pesach, I quote it verbatim:

"I never saw anyone who prohibited using honey on Pesach out of concern that flour may be mixed in, because this is uncommon, and, if some mixed in before Pesach, it would be permitted. Furthermore, if we began prohibiting honey because of prohibited admixtures, then we must prohibit honey all year round, since some say that they add non-kosher meat that turns to honey. However, Rabbeinu Yonah wrote that, even if they added non-kosher meat, it is permitted to consume the honey, since the meat dissolves and becomes honey -- we look at what it became."

In this responsum, we see the Rosh favorably quoting Rabbeinu Yonah's position that prohibited substances become permitted when they metamorphosize. Rabbeinu Yonah assumed that although honey has meat added to it, halachic practice still permits it. Thus, custom demonstrates that a transformed product is no longer viewed as its original source.

Although Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 467:8) permits honey purchased from a non-Jew on Pesach, he states that it is permitted, "because we do not assume that any problems occurred," implying that he disagrees with Rabbeinu Yonah's reason (Gra; Chok Yaakov). The Rama there prohibits this honey, so he certainly disputes Rabbeinu Yonah's reason. This is further borne out by a ruling elsewhere in Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 114:12) where the Rama prohibits the use of saffron in places where wine or meat is added to it, even though it appears as pure saffron.

The Magen Avraham (216:3) cites proof against Rabbeinu Yonah from the Gemara (Bechoros 6b) that says it is a chiddush that the Torah permits milk, since it is formed from animal blood. Thus we see that had the Torah never permitted milk, we would consider it prohibited blood, despite its obvious physical change. Similarly, reasons Magen Avraham, musk should remain non-kosher despite its physical change, and also honey, or any other forbidden material that underwent a transformation.

Nevertheless, some poskim, including the Taz (Orach Chayim 216:2) and Elyah Rabbah (216:4), rule like Rabbeinu Yonah. How do they respond to Magen Avraham's proof that milk would be prohibited as blood, despite its radical change, had the Torah not expressly permitted it?

Chok Yaakov (467:16) answers Magen Avraham's question by pointing out that the Gemara's question is whether the substance called "milk" is always non-kosher because milk originates as blood. Rabbeinu Yonah's point is that a non-kosher substance that has transformed to a kosher substance is now treated as kosher.

As we mentioned before, although Shulchan Aruch, Rama, and Magen Avraham reject Rabbeinu Yonah's approach permitting transformed substances, we find other later authorities permitting them. For example, Chasam Sofer (Shu't Yoreh Deah #117) permits oil extracted from grape seeds retrieved from non-kosher wine because he considers the oil a new product. He bases his approach on the above-quoted Chok Yaakov, who permitted honey made from non-kosher substances.

Does this mean that the Chasam Sofer followed the analysis of the Chok Yaakov and completely rejected the decisions of Shulchan Aruch, Rama, and Magen Avraham? Not necessarily! Perhaps, he contends that Shulchan Aruch, Rama, and Magen Avraham reject Rabbeinu Yonah's approach only when it comes to permitting something prohibited by the Torah, but would rely on it when it comes to rabbinic prohibitions, like stam yeinam.

This compromise position would diverge from the Taz and Chok Yaakov, who accepted Rabbeinu Yonah's approach completely and permitted transformed substances, even when the potential prohibition was min haTorah (as did the Rosh in his Teshuvah).

Two later substantive halachic sources also permitted foods that transformed from rabbinically prohibited substances:

1. Rav Meir Arik permits drinking a coffee-type drink made from roasted dried grape seeds that were the byproducts of prohibited wine (Shu't Imrei Yosher 2:140).

2. The Pri Megadim (Mishbetzos Zahav 216:2) implies that he would rely on Rabbeinu Yonah's position when we are dealing with an *issur derabbanan* (although in Eishel Avraham [ad loc.] he implies that such a transformed substance is *bateil* in a mixture, but will maintain its prohibited identity if it was not *bateil*). The Mishnah Berurah (216:7) quotes the dispute among the *poskim* as to whether a transformed, prohibited substance becomes permitted. He then concludes that one may use musk as a flavoring agent, when it is less than one part in sixty in the final product. This demonstrates that he accepts the concept of "transformed food," *nishtanu*, at least in regard to a rabbinic prohibition.

Many *hechsherim* permit use of *kitniyos shenishtanu*, reasoning that since the Mishnah Berurah permitted even a prohibited substance that has changed when its *bitul* is questionable, he would certainly permit *kitniyos* that changed, as this is a case that does not qualify even as a rabbinic prohibition. Upon this basis, many responsible *hechsherim* permit the use of enzymes, sweeteners, xanthan gum, and citric, ascorbic and erythorbic acid made from *kitniyos*.

Other contemporary *poskim* contend that although these products are kosher *lepesach bedei'evid* (after the fact), one should not *lechatchilah* arrange a *hechsher* upon this basis. Thus, the *rav* mentioned at the beginning of the article was upset that they relied *lichatchilah* on this lenience, feeling that it should be applied only *bedei'evid*.

Bitul Of Kitniyos

There is another reason why these products may be eaten, even if one does not want to accept that *kitniyos shenishtanu* is permitted, or to permit it *lichatchilah*. The *poskim* dispute whether *kitniyos* prohibits other food in which it became mixed. *Terumas HaDeshen* (#113) prohibits eating food in which *kitniyos* became mixed. However, accepted practice is to follow the Rama (453:1) who permits it, even if the *kitniyos* percentage is substantive, as long as it is less than 50% (*Chok Yaakov* 453:6). Thus, even if we assume that a *hechsher* that permits *kitniyos shenishtanu* is mistaken, if one added *kitniyos* to one's food by mistake, one may eat the resultant product. Many authorities rule that one may eat the finished product even if the *kitniyos* was added for flavor and even if added intentionally, provided it was added before Pesach (Shu't Be'er Yitzchak #11). According to this approach, a sweetener made of *kitniyos* will not prohibit the final product, even if we assume that *kitniyos shenishtanu* is prohibited. Therefore, although the *rav* may be unhappy with Vitamin C derived originally from a *kitniyos* base as an ingredient in a Pesach product, one may certainly eat the final product.

This leads us directly to our second question above:

My sister married a Sefardi, who eats rice on Pesach. Does this mean that I will be unable to eat in their house on Pesach?

Although I have read *responsa* from contemporary *Rabbonim* requiring *Ashkenazim* to kasher pots used to cook *kitniyos*, this is by no means without question. As I mentioned above, *kitniyos* that fell by mistake into other Pesach-dik food becomes *bateil*, as long as the non-*kitniyos* food is the majority. Based on this, many authorities contend that *Ashkenazim* may cook in pots previously used for *kitniyos*, since whatever *kitniyos* flavor transferred to food cooked in the pots will certainly be nullified (Shu't Zera Emes 3:48). Others prohibit using pots that absorbed *kitniyos*, stating that the *minhag* is to not use either the *kitniyos* food or the pots in which such food had been cooked (Shu't Rav Pe'alim 3:30; Shu't Maharam Shick, Orach Chayim #241). Still others follow a compromise position, ruling that one should not use the pots within 24 hours of cooking *kitniyos*, but permitting use of the pots after 24 hours without *kashering* (*Kaf HaChayim* 453:27).

By the way, many Sefardim do not eat *kitniyos* on Pesach, and many follow an approach that prohibits some *kitniyos* species. For example, most North African Sefardim (Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian, and Egyptian) do not eat any *kitniyos* on Pesach, following the same custom as *Ashkenazim*; this was also the practice of many Turkish communities

(Shu't Lev Chayim 2:33). Although Iraqi communities usually ate *kitniyos* on Pesach, many families in Baghdad did not eat rice, and most did not eat chickpeas (Rav Pe'alim 3:30). Similarly, the Chida reports that the Sefardim in Yerushalayim, in his day, did not eat rice.

The last question raised above is:

"I grew up in a Sefardi home where we ate *kitniyos*, but have kept *kitniyos*, since I married an *Ashkenazi* man. We will be with my parents for Pesach, who now have two sets of Pesach pots, one set that they keep *kitniyos* free to accommodate the *Ashkenazi* family members. May I help my mother cook *kitniyos* food on Yom Tov that I may not eat?"

Although it should appear that there is no halachic issue here, there is indeed a discussion among *poskim* whether she may help her mother cook. Shu't Zera Emes, authored by Rav Yishmael Cohen, an eighteenth century Italian *posek* of a community that did observe the prohibition of *kitniyos*, prohibits members of his community from cooking *kitniyos* for Sefardim who did not observe the custom. His reasoning is very instructive.

The Rama (527:20) quotes an early *Ashkenazi posek*, the Mahari Weil, who ruled that a person fasting on Yom Tov, perhaps because he had a bad dream, may not cook, either for himself or for someone else. The reasoning of the Mahari Weil is that cooking is actually prohibited on Yom Tov, just like every other *melacha*, and the Torah permits cooking and other food preparation only because Yom Tov is meant for enjoyment. But someone who is not eating on Yom Tov is treating the day as an other worldly day and therefore may not cook either for himself or for others.

Similarly, the Zera Emes reasons that someone who has accepted not to eat *kitniyos* may not cook them on Yom Tov, because as far as he is concerned, one may not eat these foods on Yom Tov. Once we have established that one may cook only if one may eat, the same logic dictates that one may cook only what one may eat. According to this line of reasoning, a cook who does not eat *gebrochts* may not cook *gebrocht* for a household that does.

However, there are grounds to be lenient and allow this woman to help her mother on Yom Tov, even with the *kitniyos* food. The Mishnah Berurah quotes several prominent *poskim* who dispute with Mahari Weil's line of reasoning, contending that not being able to eat does not prohibit one from cooking on Yom Tov. Thus, a person who is fasting may cook, and certainly someone may cook food for other people, even if she does not eat it herself.

Are We Frummer?

One question often raised about *kitniyos* is:

If rice was kosher for Pesach in the days of Chazal, why must we be frummer than Chazal and prohibit what they permitted?

The Mordechai (Pesachim #588) raised this excellent question. He explains that in the days of Chazal, the general public was more knowledgeable and careful, and therefore there was no concern that someone would confuse *kitniyos* with *chometz*. Nowadays, however, we cannot allow room for error, since permitting rice and other *kitniyos* varieties may lead someone to a serious transgression.

Conclusion

The continuing prohibition against eating *kitniyos* applies because of the rule of *al titosh Toras imecha*, "do not forsake the teaching of your mother" (Mishlei 1:8); that is, customs accepted by the Jewish People (see Berachos 35b). In addition to keeping commandments of the Torah and the prohibitions instituted at the times of the Mishnah and Gemara, we are also required to observe those restrictions that Jewish communities accepted (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 214:2).

The Gemara (Berachos 35b) teaches that the *pasuk* (Mishlei 1:8) Listen my son . . . to the teaching of your mother refers to the practices accepted by the Jewish People. Just as a mother has an emotional, instinctive understanding of what is best for her children, Klal Yisroel inherently understands what is best for transmitting to its future generations the spirit of our mission in this world. Therefore, when Klal Yisroel, or a community of Klal Yisroel, adopts a *minhag* such as *kitniyos*, there is an inherent understanding of the need and value for this practice that transcends the

more obvious reasons for customs. This is why practices such as kitniyos remain binding on the descendants of every member of a community who accepted it, even if its original rationale seems out of date. Wishing all a chag kosher vesomayach!

Please address all comments and requests to Hamelaket@gmail.com