On Friday night (April 21st) after dark, count:

יום אחד עשר יום שלוש שבטי ישראל ארבעה ימים כלowied.

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This Shabbat we bench Rosh Chodesh Iyar, which will be on WED & THU (April 26,27). R’Ch Iyar is always 2 days in our fixed calendar because Nissan has 30 days. Iyar has 29 days, so the following R’Ch (of Sivan) is only one day.

The molad is WED (Apr 26) 7h 48m 11p. which is 8:28am Israel Summer Time. Actual (astronomical) molad is W (Apr 26) 3:17pm
Ranges are 11 days, Wed-Fri.  
23 Nisan - 3 Iyar • April 19-29

- Earliest Talit & T'filin: 5:14-5:02am
- Sunrise: 6:06-5:55½am
- Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma: 9:22-9:16am (Magen Avraham: 8:44-8:37am)
- Sof Z'man T'fila: 10:27-10:22am (Magen Avraham: 9:55-9:50am)
- Chatzot: 12:38¼-12:36½pm (halachic noon)
- Mincha Gedola: 1:11-1:10pm (earliest Mincha)
- Plag Mincha: 5:49-5:54¼pm
- Sunset: 7:16-7:23pm (based on sea level: 7:11-7:18pm)

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The Newer Face of the Omer Period

Once upon a time, a long time ago (and IY"H soon in our future), the Omer period from Pesach to Shavuot was a happy time. We count from the second day of Pesach when the Barley Omer offering is made, up to (but not including) the New Mincha to HaShem (Sh'tei HaLechem) of Shavuot.

When the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, a vacuum of Omer feelings and emotions was created. That vacuum was filled by the mourning of the tragic deaths of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva. Further mournful mood was added in the wake of the Crusades.

The bright spots of the Omer period were Rosh Chodesh Iyar and Sivan, Pesach Sheni - but mostly it has been Lag BaOmer that gives a break to the mild mourning of the Omer. Then Lag BaOmer took on a life of its own, fed by a Kabbalistic and Chassidic joy that is intense.

And in more recent times - in our time - we have three significant additions to the Omer calendar - of a different nature.

Yom HaSho'a v'HaG'vura is a major reminder of yet another tragic event in a tragedy-filled Jewish History.

At the same time, it marks episodes of heroism - both physical as well as spiritual, which shine brightly in one of the darkest periods of our history.

And then comes Yom HaAtzmaut, marking and celebrating the establishment of the State of Israel. This is not just a bright point in an otherwise mournful period of the calendar. If we take DAYEINU from the Hagada and use it to describe the progression from the Exodus from Egypt and the passage through the Midbar, highlighting the miracles of the Splitting of the Sea and of the sustenance (and miraculous food and water and protection during the sojourn in the wilderness, Matan Torah, and then our entry into the Land of Israel, conquest and settlement and the building of the Beit HaMikdash - if we use Dayeinu for that, then we can see the 40 year period and the 440 further years until the first Beit Hamikdash, with many many years of Mishkan through out.

And we can also see the longer sojourn throughout Jewish History from the birth of our Nation with the Exodus and the Sinai Experience - from way back then all the way through history with its ups and downs, until today and tomorrow.

Then Yom HaAtzmaut is not just a bright spot on a dark background - it is a gift from G-d of a partial Geula, of several stages of Geula. And He is watching us to see if we thank Him for the massive ingathering of the Exiles - even with its problems. So too the restoration of Jewish sovereignty - even with its problems, as something to proclaim ZEH HAYOM ASA HASHEM ... And then there is Yom Yerushalayim. Neither day marks the complete Geula, but both should cause us to thank Him.
Sh'mini

26th of 54 sedras; 3rd of 10 in Vayikra
157.2 lines in a Sefer Torah, rank: 42nd
6 Parshiyot; 3 open, 3 closed
91 p'sukim - ranks 41st (4th in Vayikra)
1238 words - 41st (5th in Vayikra)
4670 letters - 41st (5th in Vayikra)
tied with Chukat, which has fewer p'sukim but more words than Sh'mini

MITZVOT

17 mitzvot; 6 positive; 11 prohibitions

Ponder this... It is "obvious" that the CHATAT of a calf is an atonement for the Sin of the Golden Calf and/or an indication that G-d has forgiven the people for the Golden Calf. In one context the Golden Calf was called "the calf that Aharon made". Therefore, the calf on the Eighth Day is his CHATAT. The calf of the people is an OLAH, rather than a CHATAT. OLAH is brought for thoughts of certain sins; CHATAT is for acts. Those of Bnei Yisrael who DID whatever we will call it, the EIGEL, were killed. The rest of us were "guilty" of indecision, fence-sitting, confusion - "sins" of thought. Our calf was an Olah. Aharon's OLAH was a ram, reminding us of Akeidat Yitzchak. No sin associated with that. (Olah often not about sin.) Our CHATAT was a goat, reminding us of our former collective sin of the selling of Yosef and deception of Yaakov with the help of goat’s blood.

Kohen - First Aliya

16 p'sukim – 9:1-16

[S> 9:1 (31)] On the 8th day, Aharon was commanded to offer the first set of sacrifices (not counting the korbanot that were brought during the previous preparatory week). Specifically, "personal" korbanot - an EIGEL (calf) as a CHATAT and an AYIL (ram) as an OLAH.

Then the People offer a goat as a CHATAT and a calf and a lamb as OLOT. Then a bull and ram as SH'LAMIM.

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SDT The Kohen Gadol removes his gold garments before entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, because the "accuser does not become the defender". Why then would we not make the same argument against Aharon's offering of a calf as a Korban? Rashi indicates that the super-sensitivity involved here applies inside the Mikdash's inner sanctum, but not
outside (at the Mizbei'ach).

Here's a general answer to this question and others. Horns from the bovine family of animals are not acceptable as a Shofar. On the other hand, look at these korbanot. And the fact that the Para Aduma is considered an atonement for the Golden Calf.

The KG didn't enter "inward" with gold, but what greeted him inside was an ARON plated with gold, gold rings, gold-covered poles, a solid gold lid, and K'RUvim of gold.

Bottom line: If G-d commands us to use gold, we use it. If He says no, we don't. Calf, cow, yes, no. Fine with us. Yes AND no, just as G-d commands. Apply your own logic and do what you decide is best - WRONG. Not up to us. Halacha tells us what is appropriate.

Carrying this a step further into the realm of MASHAL - analogy.

Picture this: A nine year old boy is left home alone while his parents are out shopping. They return an hour later to find that their son was busy with his new box of 128 Crayola crayons, drawing beautiful colorful pictures... all over the kitchen's white walls. After yelling at the kid, making him clean the walls, and grounding him until his 30th birthday, the parents do two, seemingly contradictory things. First, they confiscate his crayons - if this is what you do with them, you shall not have them! And then, the next afternoon, they sit the boy down at the kitchen table, give him several sheets of paper and return his crayons to him. But not for his own use. He is to use his crayons to draw some nice, colorful pictures which they will all take over to the senior citizen's residence in the neighborhood and brighten up the rec room there with the drawings.

Should the boy have used his crayons to write an apology to his parents for his misdeed? No. Better use a pen or a pencil. The crayons are too sensitive. They are associated with his "sin". But, at his parents' "command", he uses those very same crayons to effect a TIKUN for what he had done wrong.

So too, gold no and gold yes. Cow horn no, and calf/cow offerings yes. And, similarly - and just over a month ago - eating and drinking, no - on Taanit Esther, to atone for and effect a TIKUN of the improper, inappropriate eating and drinking at Achashveirush's parties. AND, eating and drinking, YES, even to excess, on Purim day, for the same atonement and the same TIKUN. Fasting when required AND eating and drinking for the sake of Heaven, and L'SHEIM MITZVA, are both the proper thing to do. But we don't make these things up on our own - we follow G-d's commands.

**Levi - Second Aliya 7 p'sukim - 9:17-23**

The Torah continues the details of the opening set of sacrifices, the accompanying Mincha, the Sh'lamim, what parts go on the Mizbei'ach. This short Aliya concludes with Aharon raising his hand(s) to the people and blessing them.
The Torah spelled YADAV, his hands, without the second YUD, making the word resemble YADO, his hand. From here comes the tradition of the kohanim holding their two hands together as one during Birkat Kohanim.

**SDT** Baal HaTurim says that the three parts (3 p'sukim) of Birkat Kohanim correspond to the three kinds of korbanot that Aharon brought on this first day of official functioning of the Mishkan. May G-d bless you and protect you... from sin (CHATAT), the second pasuk uses words that tie in with OLAH, and the SHALOM of the final pasuk for the SH’LAMIM.

**Shlishi** Third Aliya

**12 p'sukim - 9:24-10:11**

A Divine Fire descended and consumed everything on the Mizbei’ach. The people reacted to this miracle with praise to G-d and reverence for Him.

Then Nadav and Avihu, two sons of Aharon (who had been assisting Aharon), took censers with fire and offered incense before G-d. The fire was their own, not that of the Mizbei’ach. A Divine Fire struck them dead, consuming them from within, leaving them outwardly unmarked.

Moshe's words of consolation to Aharon are met with Aharon's silence. Moshe calls two cousins, Misha'el and Eltzafan, sons of Uziel, to remove the bodies.

- That Aharon would not be allowed to become TAMEI to his sons is known from the rules of Kohein Gadol. But neither were Elazar and Itamar allowed to tend to the bodies of their brothers. Although neither was a kohein gadol (yet), they had been anointed to the k’hana which gave them the status of KG. Hence, the cousins, who were Leviyim had to be called.

- According to the opinion that the 8th day refers to the 8th day of Nissan, it was Misha'el and Eltzafan who were on their seventh day of ritual impurity from contact to the bodies of Nadav and Avihu, who were the ones who "complained" to Moshe about not being able to participate in Korban Pesach (the first annual one). They were "rewarded" with the parsha of Pesach Sheini, set down in the Torah in the context of their story. According to the other opinion, the people who said LAMA NIGARA were others were were TAMEI.

(Almost in reaction to the tragedy,) the Torah next sets down several rules (mitzvot) for kohanim, to save them from endangering their lives. Kohanim may not enter the Mikdash with long hair (a monthly trim was required) [149,L163 10:6], nor with torn garments [150,L164 10:6]. They may not leave the Mikdash while performing their sacred work [151, L165 10:7].

**[P> 10:8 (4)]** Furthermore, kohanim may not enter the Mikdash while under the influence of wine [152,L73 10:8]. Violations of any of the above would be a show of disrespect to G-d. [Some commentators infer from this last prohibition that Nadav and Avihu had drunk wine before they entered the
Mishkan. Others offer different reasons for their deaths.

With Mitzva #152 above, we have an example (there are others) of a mitzva that has a specific, narrow context and application from the Written Torah, but the scope of the mitzva is much wider, in the Oral Law. The Written Word forbids a Kohen from doing sacred service while having recently drunk wine. Sefer HaChinuch gives a second definition for mitzva, based on the Oral Law. Namely, a halachic authority may not render a decision (psak) while under the influence of alcohol. (It seems that this prohibition does not apply to Divrei Torah and the like - only to halachic decisions.) This prohibition is NOT a case of Rabbinic extension of the scope of Torah Law (there are plenty examples of that); it is part of the Oral Law on the D’Oraita level.

It is further interesting to note that the Sefer HaChinuch, whose final paragraph of each Mitzva presents its applicability - who, when, and where, says that this mitzva [152] applies to men and women in the time of the Beit HaMikdash, that is for the first part of the mitzva. As to the second application of the mitzva, this, says the Chinuch, applies in all times and all places, to men AND women who are qualified to render halachic decisions. Noteworthy is that the Chinuch, about 800 years ago, acknowledged the permissibility of a woman being qualified to poskin halacha. We have yet to catch up to him, but there is progress in that direction.

**R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya**

4 p’sukim - 10:12-15

[10:12 (9)] Moshe next commands Aharon, Elazar, and Itamar to eat the Minachot and parts of the various offerings of the day. (Some was to be eaten only by them, in the area of the Mishkan; other parts could be taken “home” and shared with their families.) This was an unusual command, since generally, kohanim who have suffered a close loss would not eat of the sacred foods on the day of the burial. Nonetheless, Moshe tells them that he was thus commanded to tell them.

**Chamishi 5th Aliya**

5 p’sukim - 10:16-20

When Moshe realizes that the CHATA’OT (sin offerings) were burned, he gets angry with Elazar and Itamar (and Aharon, says Rashi, but to avoid a brother-brother confrontation and shaming Aharon, Moshe addresses his nephews) for not eating of the korbanot, as they were instructed to do. Aharon defends his sons' behavior by explaining that the loss of their brothers would make a "business as usual" attitude unacceptable in G-d's eyes. Moshe accepts Aharon's words.

**Shishi - Sixth Aliya**

32 p’sukim - 11:1-32

[11:1 (28)] Two and a half sedras
devoted to sacred meat (i.e. korbanot), and now we have the presentation of the animals we may and may not eat.

There is a "neat" parallel among the beginning of the book of Vayikra, the story of No'ach immediately after the Flood, and the fifth Order of Mishna. Our antediluvian predecessors were not permitted to eat meat. Only No'ach - AFTER offering Korbanot to G-d of the kosher animals he had taken onto the Teiva - was given permission to eat meat, provided that the animal be dead first, before taking its meat. In other words, first using animals for sacred purposes, allowed personal, profane use. That's what we find in Vayikra. Two and a half sedras of Korbanot FOLLOWED by "these are the animals you may eat..." And this is what we find in Mishna. Seder Kodashim begins with Z'veachim which deals with animal sacrifices, then M'nachot - offerings from the plant world (olive oil, flour, wine...), and then - and only then, Chulin with the laws of ritual slaughter, meat-in-milk, and various other mitzvot relating to the "secular" use of animals.

There is a positive mitzva to check the signs of kashrut of a mammal to determine its kashrut status [153,A149 11:2]. It is forbidden to eat of animals that lack one of the signs of kashrut (split hoof and cud chewing), and of course, those that lack both] [153, A149 11:2]. The Torah names three animals that chew their cud but do not have split hooves - the camel, shafan, arnevet, and one that has a split hoof but is not a ruminent - the pig. We may not eat their meat, and handling their carcasses renders one TAMEI, ritually unclean.

Likewise, one is required to examine fish for scales and fins [155,A152 11:9]. It is forbidden to eat non-kosher fish [156,L172 11:11].

Think about this: If the Torah only prohibited fish without scales (for example) and not commanded us to examine the fish to see if it's kosher, we would have to examine fish for scales to determine if they are kosher anyway. Why, then, is examining fish for its kosher signs a mitzva among the 248 positive members of the 613? The question, and the answer as well, is that there are some mitzvot that it was "unnecessary" for G-d to command us; we would do them anyway. However, "G-d wanted to benefit Yisrael, therefore He heaps upon us Torah and Mitzvot". This is the mishna of Rabbi Chananya b. Akashya at the end of Makot, the one borrowed for the end of each chapter of Pirkei Avot and borrowed to finish many shiurim.

There are other ways to look at this issue. The positive mitzvot and prohibitions of kashrut interact as in the following example:

A guy goes down to the lake to fish. He catches some fish, cleans them, grills them on his camping grill, and enjoys a delicious fresh fish dinner. A friend of his then comes by for a shmooze. When he tells the friend about his dinner, the friend asks him about the fish - what
kind was it? Was it kosher? The guy says - oops, I don't really know. He rummages through his trash bag and finds the fish's skin. To his relief, there are scales and fins and therefore the fish was indeed kosher. No violation, of course, of the prohibition of eating non-kosher fish, but a violation (non-fulfillment) of the positive command to check for the signs of kashrut. And that is a Torah "violation" (or, at least, non-fulfillment).

With birds, the Torah lists 20 kinds of birds (not species, families, genus, etc. - but kinds) that are not kosher [157,L174 11:13]. All the rest of the birds are kosher. How do know if a particular bird is in one of the forbidden families or not? Usually, the answer is TRADITION. We eat chicken etc. because we have an unbroken tradition.

Finally, the Torah specifies four types (8 families) of locust that we may eat. Checking their identities is a mitzva [158,A151 11:21]. All other insects are not permitted to us. We (most of the Jewish community) have lost the ability of identifying kosher locust, so we don't eat any of them. [Some Yemenites have the necessary traditions to identify the kosher varieties. As to whether they eat locust or not, ask your Yemenite friends. And an interesting additional question is whether we can eat locust that one with a Tradition identified.]

[S> 11:29 (10)] Next the Torah deals with the ritual impurity of creeping things [159,A97 11:21].

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 15 p'sukim – 11:33-47

Minding the laws of "purity" of food and drink is a mitzva [160,A98 11:34]. (It is one of the details of these laws that "requires" us to wash for karpas at the Seder table, and in general before wet food, all the time.)

[S> 11:39 (9)] Once again, the Torah presents the rules of the carcass of animals and the resulting ritual impurity from contact of various types [161,A96 11:39]. The Torah reiterates the prohibition of eating "creepy things" [162,L176 11:41], as well as worms and insects that infest fruits and vegetables [163,L178 11:41], seafood and other life-forms that inhabit the water [164, L179 11:43], and maggots that develop in rotting food material [165,L177 11:44].

All of the above is meant to elevate the Jew's soul to the sanctity that G-d wanted us to attain. For us, there is a direct link between body and soul, the spiritual and the mundane. The laws of kashrut bring the point home. The last 3 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

Haftara 40 p'sukim Shmuel Bet 6:1-7:17

...story of Uza who touched the Aron to prevent it from slipping (as he perceived it) and was struck dead as a result... Parallels Nadav & Avihu... Rabbi Jacobs z"l says that both sedra and haftara contain very joyous celebrations that were "marred" by the deaths of people with noble motives. Note: Uza's father was Avinadav, a
Common to both stories is the misguided attempt of perhaps well-meaning individuals to serve Hashem as they saw fit, but in doing so, ignored G-d’s wishes. Aharon’s sons decided on their own to offer the ketoret, when they were not bidden to do so. The entire ritual of that holy day was detailed beforehand and every rite that was to be followed was one that had been commanded to Moshe. Hence, the Torah refers to their offering as an EISH ZARA, an “alien fire”, unacceptable to G-d especially on the day when the formal laws of the worship of Hashem were to be set in motion.

The sin of Uza we read of in the haftara is even more difficult to understand and yet it too reflects a certain cavalier attitude to serving G-d. The Holy Ark rested upon a cart pulled by two oxen, a custom unknown in Israel (for the Ark was always carried upon the shoulders of the Levi’im as we learn in Bamidbar 7:9 – BAKATEIF YISA’U) but practiced by the Philistines when they transported the Aron (see Shmuel Alef 6:11). When the oxen stumbled, Uza grabbed hold of the Ark itself in an attempt to steady it and prevent it from falling. Although a seemingly innocent act, it was a trespass of the most holy of things. Rather than steady the animals, rather than seize the cart, rather than hold on to the poles that were there for precisely that purpose, Uza shows an improper familiarity with the Holy Ark by grabbing hold of this sanctified appurtenance from whose adorning K’ruvim G-d’s voice was heard by Moshe. I recall the words of Chief Rabbi Dr. J. Hertz who explained homiletically (so no one should take offense) that when people might slip and fail to uphold the holy Torah, the job of her teachers and supporters is
to strengthen those who slip and might need inspiration and explanation - but never to put our hands on the eternal Torah and “touch” it or change it in order to make it more “palatable” to the people.

For thousands of years we have borne the yoke of Torah and successfully passed down its morality to the next generation. There may be different ways to teach and inspire different generations but never have we - or should we - change our Holy Torah to fit the preferences or changing attitudes of each different generation.

'Torah tziva lanu Moshe MORASHA kehillat Ya’akov’ - the Torah is a “Morasha”, a “heritage” to all of our nation. Our job is to keep it alive and pass it down to the future in the exact same state that we received it. Unchanged, undefiled and, therefore, eternal.

Probing the Prophets, weekly insights into the Haftara, is written by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

And Aharon was silent! (Vayikra 10:3) How so, after seeing his two sons die in front of his eyes? Moreover, this terrible happenstance occurred during the peak of the celebration of the dedication of the Mishkan - and in front of the whole, joyful crowd!

Was it just happenstance, however? Of all people, Aharon the Kohen Gadol must have understood in one sudden flash that his two sons, who brought a "strange fire before G-d", were the victims of their own careless passions. For in their desire to come closer to G-d, Nadav and Avihu transgressed in a way that Aharon had been warned about endless times.

For concerning the Mishkan, the sacrifices, and the seven days of preparation, Moshe had repeatedly cautioned Aharon and his sons that. "You shall protect G-d’s charge, so that you shall not die: for so have I been commanded" (8:35). And the Torah comments - oh, so many times! - how Aharon and his sons did exactly as commanded by the word of G-d (Rashi: not to the right nor to the left).

Clearly, notes R’ Shmuel Kohl. Aharon understood at that moment of distress that there was nothing to say. Like lyov in his grief. Aharon could have uttered a mournful cry: but that alone may have stirred a rebellion among the masses of onlookers. Indeed, in tandem with Kohelet. Aharon taught us that. "There is a time to be silent and a time to speak up" (Kohelet 3:7).
The Light of Holiness

The great moment has come. For seven days - beginning on the 23rd of Adar - Moshe had consecrated Aharon and the kohanim. Now, on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the time has arrived for Aharon to begin his service, ministering to the people on behalf of God:

It came to pass on the eighth day, that Moshe called to Aharon and his sons, and the elders of Israel, and he said to Aharon, take a young bull for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before the Lord.

What is the significance of the "eighth day", the phrase that gives our sedra its name? To understand the profound symbolism of the number eight, we have to go back to Creation itself.

In the beginning, when all was "waste and void", God created the universe. Day by day, the world unfolded. First, there were the domains: light and dark, the upper and lower waters, sea and dry land. Then there were the objects that filled the domains: plant life, the sun, moon and stars, then the fish and birds, and finally the land animals, culminating in mankind. Then came Shabbat, the seventh day, the day of limits and of holiness, on which first God, then His covenantal people, rested in order to show that there are boundaries to Creation ("Why is God's name Shaddai? Because He said to the universe, Enough - she'amar la'olam dai). There is an integrity to nature. Everything has its proper place, its ecological niche, its function and dignity in the totality of being. Holiness consists in respecting boundaries and honouring the natural order.

Thus, the seven days. But what of the eighth day - the day after creation? For this, we have to turn to Torah she-b'al peh, the oral tradition.

On the sixth day, God made His most fateful decision: to create a being who, like Himself, had the capacity to create. Admittedly, there is a fundamental distinction between human creativity ("something from something") and Divine creativity ("something from nothing"). That is why human beings are "the image of God" but not - as Nietzsche argued - gods themselves.

Yet the ability to create goes hand in hand with the ability to destroy. There cannot be one without the other. Every new technology can be used to heal or harm. Every power can be turned to good or evil. That is why, unlike all other elements of Creation, the Torah prefaces the making of man with a reflective statement - "Let us make . . ." -
as if to signal the risk implicit in creating a being with the power of speech, imagination and freewill: the one life form capable of disobeying God and threatening the order and orderliness of nature.

The danger immediately becomes clear. God tells the first man not to eat of the fruit of one tree. The nature of the tree is irrelevant; what matters is its symbolic function. It represents the fact that Creation has boundaries - the most important being the boundary between the permitted and forbidden. That is why there had to be, even in paradise, something that was forbidden. When the first two human beings ate of the forbidden fruit, the essential harmony between man and nature was broken. Humanity lost its innocence. For the first time, nature (the world we find) and culture (the world we make) came into conflict. The result was paradise lost.

The Sages were intrigued by the chronology of the narrative. According to them, the entire drama of the creation and disobedience of Adam and Eve took place on the sixth day. On that day, they were made, they were commanded about the tree, they transgressed the command and were sentenced to exile. Not only were they condemned to leave the garden. Also, as the day reached its close and night began to fall, they experienced darkness for the first time.

In compassion, God allowed them a stay of sentence. They were given an extra day in Eden - namely Shabbat. For the whole of that day, the sun did not set. As it too came to a close, God showed the first human beings how to make light:

With the going out of Shabbat, the celestial light began to fade. Adam was afraid that the serpent would attack him in the dark. Therefore God illuminated his understanding, and he learned to rub two stones against each other and produce light for his needs.

This, according to the Sages, is the reason we light a havdala candle at the end of Shabbat to inaugurate the new week.

There is, in other words, a fundamental difference between the light of the first day ("And God said, Let there be light...") and that of the eighth day. The light of the first day is the illumination God makes. The light of the eighth day is the illumination God teaches us to make. It symbolises our "partnership with God in the work of Creation". There is no more beautiful image than this of how God empowers us to join Him in bringing light to the world. On Shabbat we remember God's Creation. On the eighth day (motsa'ei Shabbat) we celebrate our creativity as the image and partner of God.

To understand the full depth of what the sages were saying, it is necessary to go back to one of the great myths of the ancient world: the story of Prometheus. To the Greeks, the gods were essentially hostile to mankind. Zeus wanted to keep the art of making fire secret, but Prometheus stole a spark and taught men how to make it.
Once the theft was discovered, Zeus punished him by having him chained to a rock, with an eagle pecking at his liver.

Against this background can we see the revolutionary character of Jewish faith. We believe that God wants human beings to exercise power: responsibly, creatively, and within limits set by the integrity of nature. The rabbinic account of how God taught Adam and Eve the secret of making fire is the precise opposite of the story of Prometheus. God seeks to confer dignity on the beings He made in His image as an act of love. He does not hide the secrets of the universe from us. He does not seek to keep mankind in a state of ignorance or dependence. The creative God empowers us to be creative and begins by teaching us how. He wants us to be guardians of the world He has entrusted to our care. That is the significance of the eighth day. It is the human counterpart of the first day of Creation.

We now understand the symbolic significance of the eighth day in relation to the Mishkan. As we have noted elsewhere, the linguistic parallels in the Torah show that the construction of the Mishkan in the wilderness mirrors the Divine creation of the world. The Mishkan was intended to be a miniature universe, constructed by human beings. Just as God made the earth as a home for mankind, so the Israelites in the wilderness built the Mishkan as a symbolic home for God. It was their act of creation.

Thus it had to begin on the eighth day, just as Adam and Eve began their creative endeavour on the eighth day. Just as God showed them how to make light so, many centuries later, He taught the Israelites how to make a space for the Divine presence so that they too would be accompanied by light - God’s light, in the form of the fire that consumed the sacrifices, and the light of the Menorah. If the first day represents Divine Creation, the eighth day signifies human creation under the tutelage and sovereignty of God.

We can now also understand the significance of the other major theme of Sh’mini, namely the list of permitted and forbidden foods.

Many explanations have been given of the dietary laws. Some see them as rules of hygiene. Potentially disease-ridden animals are to be avoided. Others see them as a discipline of self-restraint. In the words of Rav: "the commandments were given to refine human beings." Yet others see in them a set of laws that have no logic other than the fact that they were given by God. On this view, the holy - our glimpse of the Infinite - inevitably transcends our understanding.

However, the simplest and most profound explanation is the one given, in Sh’mini, by the Torah itself:

I am the Lord your God; hallow yourselves and be holy, because I am holy . . . I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy . . .
You must distinguish [l'havdil] between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.

A similar statement appears later, in Vayikra 20: 24-26:

"I am the Lord your God, who has set you apart [hivdalti] from the nations. You must therefore make a distinction [v'hivdaltem] between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground - those which I have set apart [hivdalti] as unclean for you. You are to be holy to Me because I, the Lord , am holy, and I have set you apart [va-avdil] from the nations to be My own."

The key words are "holy" (which appears seven times in these two passages) and l'havdil, "to distinguish" (which appears five times).

To be holy is to make distinctions, to recognise and honour the Divine order of creation. Originally, according to the Torah, human beings (and animals) were to be vegetarians ("I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it; they will be yours for food"). After the Flood, humanity was permitted to eat meat, with the exception of blood (which represents the sanctity of life itself). A concession was made to the human tendency to violence. It is as if God had said: If you must kill, then kill animals, not human beings.

However, the people of Israel were to serve as role models of a higher ideal. They were permitted to kill animals for food, but only those that best exemplified Divine order. So, amphibians were forbidden because they lack a definite place. Others were forbidden because they lack clear form - sea creatures that lack a shape defined by fins and scales; land animals that are not ruminants with clearly defined cloven hoofs. Creatures that prey on others are also forbidden. The overall logic of the dietary laws - the laws of a people called on to be holy - is to permit only those animals that are paradigm cases, clear examples, of order.

I cannot do better than quote the insightful words of Leon Kass (in his fine book, The Hungry Soul):

The Levitical dietary laws fit the human animal in his distinctive uprightness: Celebrating the principle of rational separation, they celebrate not only man's share in rationality but also his openness to the mystery of intelligible yet embodied form . . . The low is made high - or at least higher - through acknowledgement of its dependence on the high; the high is "brought down", democratised and given concrete expression in the forms that govern ordinary daily life. The humdrum of existence and the passage of time are sanctified when the hallowed separateness of the Seventh Day is brought into human life when it is commemorated as the Shabbat. Likewise the commonness of eating is sanctified through observance of
Divine commandments, whose main principles remind the mindful eaters of the supreme rule of the Holy One.

Human beings become holy when they become distinction-making animals, when they recognise and act so as to honour the boundaries of nature.

We now see an extraordinary and intimate connection between five themes:

1. The creation of the universe
2. The building of the sanctuary
3. The dietary laws
4. The havdala ceremony at the end of Shabbat
5. The number eight.

The story of Creation tells us that nature is not a blind struggle between contending forces, in which the strongest wins and power is the most important gift. To the contrary: the universe is fundamentally good. It is a place of ordered harmony, the intelligible design of a single Creator. That harmony is constantly threatened by mankind. In the covenant with Noah, God establishes a minimum threshold for human civilisation. In the covenant with Israel, he establishes a higher code of holiness. The principle of holiness, as of creation itself, is the maintenance of boundaries, within which every form of life receives its due.

The sanctuary, with its partitions, represents boundary-making in space. The dietary laws, with their divisions of permitted and forbidden, represents boundary-making in life, in the act of eating, the most natural of human activities. The kohein - the person who most exemplifies holiness - is defined by his ability to make distinctions (the role of the Kohen is "to distinguish [l'havdil] between the holy and the profane, between the unclean and the clean" - note again the key words holy and l'havdil, "to distinguish").

In the ceremony of havdala at the start of the eighth day, we become God's partners in the work of creation. Like Him, we begin by creating light and proceed to make distinctions ("Blessed are you . . . who makes a distinction between sacred and profane, light and darkness . . ."). The eighth day thus becomes the great moment at which God entrusts His creative work to the people He has taken as His covenantal partners. So it was with the Mishkan, and so it is with us.

This vision epitomises the priestly voice within Judaism. It is a vision of great beauty. It sees the world as a place of order in which everything has its place and dignity within the richly differentiated tapestry of creation. To be holy is to be a guardian of that order, a task delegated to us by God. That is both an intellectual and ethical challenge: intellectually to be able to recognise the boundaries and limits of nature, ethically to have the humility to preserve and conserve the world for the sake of generations yet to come. ☪
Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, placed fire on it, and then incense on it... and they brought before G-d eish zara, unauthorized fire which G-d did not instruct them to offer. Fire went forth from G-d and consumed them; they died before G-d (10:1-2).

The commentators discuss the precise reasons for the deaths of Nadav and Avihu at length. The Sifra states that they erred in bringing their own ketoret (frankincense) before G-d, meaning into the holiest parts of the Mishkan - forbidden territory. The Ramban gives the explanation that they offered the regular daily ketoret on the Inner Altar, the mizbach ha-zahav, when they had not been commanded to do so.

Rashi, however, quotes various traditions from Eruvin 63a which are not explicit in the text: that they impinged on Moshe's authority in giving a Halachic decision in his presence (R. Eliezer), and that they entered the Sanctuary under the influence of wine (R. Yishmael). Elsewhere, Sanhedrin 52a brings a different tradition, whereby Nadav remarked to Avihu that they themselves would lead the Israelites once the 'old men' Moshe and Aharon died. Whereupon G-d rejoined with "We will see who will bury whom."

The K’li Yakar examines how these traditions fit into the text that quite clearly states that their deaths were in consequence of: "eish zara, which G-d did not instruct them to offer". The K’li Yakar does not explain eish zara as simply meaning 'unauthorized fire', but more specifically as 'fire brought in unacceptable circumstances'. Zar means strange, not fitting in. It was their element of arrogance, reflected in showing disrespect for Moshe's authority, planning their take-over as Moshe and Aharon's successors, or entering the holiest parts of the Mishkan under the influence of alcohol that made their fire offering strange and quite unacceptable.

This becomes all the clearer when contrasted with their father, Aharon. Earlier, Moshe had to persuade Aharon with "Approach the Altar and perform the service of your sin offering and burnt offering as G-d has commanded" (9:7).

Rashi explains that the persuasion was necessary: Aharon was ashamed to approach the Altar, very likely because of his feelings of guilt over his connection with the Cheit HaEigel. (c.f. Rashi to 9:2). The Degel Machanei Efrayim comments: "It is because you show shame that you have been chosen for this task: G-d despises the proud".

Nadav and Avihu did not show such shyness and modesty. They offered an eish zara when they themselves showed unacceptable attitude and behavior. Where: in the interior of the Mishkan, where the Sh’china was most
intense. When: in the public ceremony of the inauguration of the Mishkan, when "fire came forth from G-d and consumed the burnt offering... the people saw, raised their voices in praise, and threw themselves on their faces." In the circumstances this was an unacceptable display of familiarity with G-d.

This is a crucial message to those serving in Jewish public positions today. Unacceptable attitude and behavior towards those they represent creates a Chilul HaShem, an act that brings the service towards G-d into disrepute. For as is well-known, the public tends to judge the cause of Torah according to the conduct of its representatives.

The reason why certain animals chew the cud is because these types of animals feed on vegetation. And it is not in their interest to chew their food properly and slowly in one certain place. This would make them vulnerable to predators that wait to pounce on them and eat them, or to the elements, the blazing sun or driving rain.

Thus, by biting off their food and swallowing it immediately, they are able to eat quickly and run for safety. This is a great benefit for these vulnerable animals. Later on, when these animals come to safer ground or more comfortable surroundings, the food comes back up from their stomachs, they grind it and then digest it properly. Therefore, "chewing the cud" is a safety mechanism for these types of animals against predators and the hostile elements.

And the reason why kosher animals also have spilt hooves and not sharp, strong claws, is because their feet serve as accessories for them to stand and walk, unlike predators, which require claws to rip apart their prey. Additionally, their split hooves enable them to flee from predators and afford them good grip even on mountainous terrain. Thus, these animals can run and jump when escaping any threat.

G-D in His love for His People, requires us to abstain from eating all predatory animals. When food is digested by a person it becomes a part of him, and his nature becomes

Kosher - You Are What You Eat

by Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher
Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

The Torah only allows us to eat animals that have split hooves and also chew the cud. Animals that chew the cud but do not have split hooves or vice versa may not be eaten.

What is the relevance of these physical signs to the issue of eating the animal that has or doesn't have these signs? Are these just CHUKIM (statutes) from G-D which we must obey without understanding the reason?

The Sefer Kol Bo explains the significance of these Kosher signs.
similar to that of which he ate. Thus, G-D does not want us to derive our nourishment from animals that have predatory character traits. G-D does not want us to be affected by the traits of animals that hunt and kill.

G-D only allows us to eat and absorb into our bodies those animals which survive without killing other animals. These Kosher animals, which are pursued but are not pursuers, inject into us the positive trait of non-aggression.

The Torah teaches that you are what you eat. Thus, in order to ensure that our spiritual sensitivity which is the trademark of a Jew, remains unblemished, the Torah instructs us to eat only Kosher animals.

The virulent anti-Semitism in Europe and the Balfour Declaration influenced Landau and he immediately joined the Polish Mizrachi movement. The impact that he had on that movement far surpassed his shortened life span. Almost single-handedly he brought the Mizrachi youth movement into existence and ran the Mizrachi movement in Poland, devoting most of his energies to encouraging Aliya and establishing hachsharot for their eventual settlement on kibbutzim. In 1925, Landau and his family went on Aliya, settling in Jerusalem and quickly establishing himself as the leader of Hapoel Hamizrachi. Two years later, exhausted, he suddenly took ill and died at the young age of thirty-six.

His ideal he expressed in the phrase he had coined 'Torah V'Avoda', which soon became the slogan of Hapoel Hamizrachi, the religious labor movement and its youth organization Bnei Akiva. Later, it was also reflected in the ideas of Yitzchak Breuer of Aguda and in the labor party Poalei Agudat Yisrael. There is nothing in his Torah V'Avoda of the teachings of Harav A. Yitzchak Hakohen Kook who was a founding member of Agudat Yisrael and started Degel Yerushalyim, a non-political movement aimed at nothing less than establishing the social and moral agenda of Judaism as the rule in the envisaged new state. He inherited his love for Eretz Yisrael from Chassidism and his zealously for redemption, from a lifelong connection with Kotsk, with its emphasis on truth.

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disseminating Judaism. This Torah V'Avoda signified the synthesis of three seemingly different ideological factors: Torah, Zionism and Socialism. Landau, however, proclaimed it to be in reality, expression of one single truth, Torah. Since the Talmud teaches that the Torah was created for the sake of Israel, it is therefore self-evident that the rebuilding of the land must be governed by the ultimate goal, the national renaissance. Torah V'Avoda is Landau's fundamental blueprint for the regeneration of Eretz Yisrael. He himself explained this in his writings which we can summarize as follows:

Torah, which is the inheritance of Israel, contains two major conceptual ideas. First, there are its laws and statues to which each and every Jew must adhere. Each individual, not the nation of Israel as a whole, relates to them in a totally personal manner, whether they are in the Diaspora or in our homeland. Secondly, the Torah must also be seen as the spirit of our nation, the source of our culture and the essence of our souls. It is within this category that the public - nationalistic ideals that the Torah espouses are to be found.

Avoda as economic activity is temporary and individualistic but we have to make Avoda one of basic and organic requirements in our nation's revival. Avoda that would nurture and contribute to our nation's revival through producing national unity and contribute immeasurably to our rebirth. Nation combines the spiritual factors of the conglomerate with its physical needs.

In the Diaspora, Israel abandoned this unity and Jews, both as the collective and as individuals, have been forced to live according to the will and whims of others. Dispersed, scattered, and subjugated to foreign nations, caused us to rely upon others for our well-being. Placed within the care of other nations and needing them for our safety we became lowly and degraded and were used only to suit the needs of others. We became 'a nation destroyed'. Avoda will enable the collective "I" to create and produce independently, to go from a scattered and separate people into a collective nation in its full sense and meaning. With this concept the nation begins to rebuild itself. Independent, in spirit, in physical labor, and activity.

The revival of our nation lies at the very root of Torah and Avoda. Torah is the life-giver, creating a world which integrates all aspects of life and its intricacies from the most mundane to the most holy. Physical and economic well-being, as well as the spiritual condition, all are given expression through the medium of Torah. The observance of the Jewish religion, its commandments, statutes and laws which pertain to the individual in Eretz Israel and in the Diaspora, is incumbent upon the individuals and the nation. Thus, the Torah in its truth cannot be a source of life unless it is followed by the individuals and the collective. Torah creates and revives our nation while Avoda forces us to move our ideas from the potential into the real. The combination of the two will lead to the very goal towards which we are striving - the revival of our nation!
Eleazar’s Plea

Oh Ithamar
My courage is withered
Resolve in retreat
Our brothers are consumed
In a flash of flame

Advised by their demise we survive
To carry their mantle
Without respite of grief
Bearing garments
Of obligation and eminence
Together, we are posted
Between God and the people
At the tip of dissipation
Or the edge of distinction
Let us bind our futures as one
Realize our role
Glorify God, guide our generation
Bless them with shining peace

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

And Aharon was Silent

He was an old man, and in many ways came from a very different world than I. And yet he taught me more than anyone else ever did. One of the things he taught me was that no one suffers as much as a parent who loses a child.

He delivered this lesson to me on a wintry day more than fifty years ago. He was my grandfather, my father's father, and the family had just broken the news to him that his youngest grandchild, my baby cousin, had died. It was a sudden death, totally unexpected, and everyone was distraught. Grandpa too took the news very hard.

He then did something which surprised everyone present. He rose to leave the room, beckoning to me - his oldest grandchild, then fourteen - to accompany him. We both entered a small adjoining room in which there were a few sacred books, including a siddur. He opened the siddur, read from it for several moments, and then looked up to me, and tearfully whispered:

“There is nothing worse in the world than the death of one's own child. A parent never recovers from such a
blow. May the merciful God protect us all from such a fate."

I will never forget those words. I remember them verbatim even today. And a lifetime of experience in the vocation of counseling has confirmed the truth of these words over and over again.

In this week's Torah portion, Sh'mini, we read of just such a tragedy. On a bright and sunny spring day, somewhere in the Sinai wilderness, the Mishkan is being inaugurated. It is an awesome spiritual experience in which "a divine fire descends from on high, in which all the people sing in unison, and fall upon their faces."

It is the moment of a peak experience, for all the people, but especially for Aharon, the Kohen Gadol.

At that very moment, his two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, step forward and commit a sacrilegious act which dispels the mood, and ruins the entire experience. Commentators differ widely as to exactly what was the sin of these two sons of Aharon. Scripture just says that "they offered God a strange fire, something He did not command of them."

God's wrath was expressed instantly. "A fire descended from before Him and consumed them, and they died in the presence of God."

A parent, a father, lost a child. Not just one, but two. Not through a long and debilitating illness but suddenly, unexpectedly. And not in any ordinary set of circumstances, but in the context of an act of sacred worship.

What is Aharon's reaction? Does he moan and groan and rend his clothing? Does he scream out in grief? Or does he vent his anger against the God who took his boys from him?

None of the above. "Vayidom Aharon." Aaron is silent. The silence of shock? Perhaps. The silence of acceptance of fate? Perhaps. Or, perhaps, the silence which results when the range and depth of one's emotions are too overwhelming to express in words. But silence.

If the sage words that my grandfather shared with me in my early adolescence are true, and I have every reason to believe that they are, Aharon remained silent about his grief for the rest of his life. Had he used the words of his ancestor Yaakov, he could have said "I will go down to the grave in my agony."

Soon after this episode in which my grandfather shared his wisdom with me, I had the occasion to read a book which taught me a bit more about a grieving parent. It is quite possible that it was at precisely during the winter of my cousin's death that I was assigned the book
Death Be Not Proud by John Gunther in my English Literature class.

I somehow doubt that this book is still on the required reading lists of many tenth-graders today. But if it is not on those lists I certainly recommend that it be read, and particularly by teenagers who are learning their first lessons about life and its tragic disappointments.

In the book, the author describes his own son, who was taken from him by a vicious disease. He describes his son positively, but realistically. And he rages against the disease, and in some way, the Divine being who took his son from him. He insists to Death itself that it be not proud about its victory over its victim, his dear child.

It has been decades since I have read Gunther's book, and it could very well be that I do not remember it with complete accuracy. But I do recall the poignancy and the power with which the author conveyed the full range of his painful emotions. And I will never forget those passages in which he insists that he will never recover from his loss; that the wounds of a parent's grief for his child can never heal.

Many are the lessons which students of Bible and Talmud have derived from the sad narrative contained in this week's Torah portion. But there is at least one lesson which every empathic reader will surely learn as he or she attends to the opening verses of Vayikra 10.

It is the lesson contained in the mystery of Aharon's reaction when his sons are consumed by a heavenly fire. For within the deafening silence of "Vayidom Aharon" are the depths of the terror which every parent dreads, and some parents have suffered. The dread of bereavement, of the loss of one's child.

As always, in contemplating darkness, light stands out in contrast. Reflection upon death leads to an appreciation of life. The story of the death of Aharon's children should, if nothing else, enable us to appreciate all the more those of our children who are alive and well.

As we embark upon this new post-Pesach spring season, with all the springtime symbols in the way of life and renewal, let us celebrate and appreciate all of our own offspring, may they live and be well.

Previous (TZAV-Pesach) TTriddles:

[1] FPTL: FPTL: Sum of Days we Count

Not a hard one, but nice because this issue 1225 we started counting the Omer and the OU Israel Center Omer Chart is in 1225. If you add up the numbers from 1 to 49, the sum is 1225.
[2] Also M’tzora and Acharei

What other sedras besides Tzav can be Shabbat HaGadol?

[3] Also No’ach and Bo

What other sedras besides Tzav have two-letter names?

[4] Also Vayeira, Chayei Sara, and Vayeishev

What other sedras besides Tzav have the Torah note SHALSHELET on one of its words?

[5] It’s more TZAV than TZAV

Old one. Tzav (=96) has 96 p'sukim. Except it doesn’t; it has 97. Trumah has 96 p’sukim, making it more Tzav than Tzav.

VEBBE REBBE

Doing Kaddish After Lacking Full Participation

**Question:** Can the final Kaddish D'Rabbanan at the end of tefilla be said when there is a minyan only when counting people who are not reciting Pitum Haketoret (e.g., busy taking off their tefillin)? Also, is it proper for one to say Kaddish D'Rabbanan or Kaddish Yatom along with others in shul when they did not participate in the learning session or tefilla after which the Kaddish is being said?

**Answer:** A relatively close case to those you ask about is what is called poress al Shema. This is when people who do not have a minyan for all of davening want to join with others, including those who finished davening, to enable them to take part in Kaddish (relating to P'sukei D'zimra) and Barchu. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 69:1) says that while it is good if there are six who have yet to take part in these devarim sheb'kedusha, it can even be done for one such person. Furthermore, if need be, even one who already took part in a minyan can lead the recitation.

Similarly, the Taz (55:3) infers from several sources that in order to say Kaddish, which relates to a previous text(s) that was recited, it suffices for the minyan to be assembled at the time Kaddish is recited, even if they were not there for the matters to which the Kaddish relates. The Magen Avraham, regarding the Kaddish after learning Torah (69:4) and after Ashrei at Mincha (234:1), says that the minyan must already have been present for the recitations that precede the Kaddish. The Pri Megadim (MZ 55:3) says that the Magen Avraham agrees to the Taz's leniency regarding the Kaddish following P'sukei D'zimra because P'sukei D'zimra/Kaddish is a requirement. In other words, in cases like poress al Shema, where there is a real need for these things to be said, the minyan enables the recitation of Kaddish whenever it becomes possible. In contrast, regarding less critical recitations, we say that the need for Kaddish is created only by a minyan present at the previous
activity.

Even where the Magen Avraham applies, he only requires the ten to be present during learning to justify Kaddish afterward, but does not require all to participate in the learning (ibid. 69:4). In this regard, the Aruch Hashulchan (OC 55:9) is even more stringent, saying that since Kaddish after learning is optional, the ten people must have learned together.

The best way to avoid machloket in such cases is for the learners to include the minyan in a classic Kaddish-trigger statement, such as the famous statement of Rav Chananya ben Akashya. Similarly, at the end of P'sukei D'zimra, the chazan can read out loud three p'sukim for the whole minyan to hear (see Mishna Berura 55:2). Regarding Pitum Haketoret at the end of davening, if there are not ten davening, it is worthwhile for the chazan to say "Talmidei chachamim..." or the last three p'sukim out loud. If this is difficult, one can rely on the majority opinion (see also Mishna Berura 54:9) that you do not need even a majority of the minyan to be learning before Kaddish D'Rabbanan. Furthermore, the Aruch Hashulchan probably agrees that presence of ten is enough for Pitum Haketoret because it is a set part of tefilla for those who recite it and/or because having one Kaddish D'Rabbanan at Shacharit is important (see Living the Halachic Process vol. I, A-6).

Regarding someone not involved in that which the Kaddish is related to reciting it, we saw that this is possible regarding poress al Shema. The Mishna Berura (54:9) assumes that this is true also for Kaddish after learning, and there is no reason to think that this would not apply to the Kaddish after Aleinu or Shir Shel Yom. The Chelkat Yaakov (OC 20) says it is always permitted to just join others who are anyway saying Kaddish, as it is no worse than answering Amen to a beracha one knows has just been completed. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe, YD IV, 61.8) says that it is permitted as long as the matter that Kaddish is going on is part of the tefilla or part of a learning session that is done as part of a tzibur.

*Rav Daniel Mann, Eretz Hemdah Institute*

This week's Torah reading contains both narrative history and dogmatic Jewish halacha. It relates to us the tragic story of the deaths of the two older sons of Aharon when they apparently willfully mishandled the obligatory incense offering in the Mishkan/Tabernacle. The Torah reading also details for us the list of animals, birds and fish that may be consumed by Jews in accordance with the laws of dietary kashrut. At first and cursory
glance, there seems to be no connection between these two disparate subjects dealt with in this week's Torah reading. Yet we are certainly aware that Torah has to be understood and studied on many different levels and that the Torah is not subject to completely haphazard arrangements of its prose and content matter. So at some deeper, below the surface level, there may be a connection between these two subject matters that find themselves lumped together in one section of the Torah. Without stretching our creative curiosity too far, I think that such a connection can be made regarding the death of the two sons of Aharon and the laws of kashrut that justify their proximity of appearance in the one parsha of this week's Torah reading. And that connection is that obeying or disobeying God's instructions in matters of Jewish ritual holiness carries unforeseen consequences with it. Just as is the case in the physical world touching a live electric wire no matter how noble one's intentions may be for so doing will produce injury and even death to one so doing, so too in the spiritual world of holiness and sanctification there are lethal consequences to behavior that deviates from the express statements of the Torah. And all of Jewish history bears out the truth of this simple statement.

The Talmud states that consuming non-kosher food stops up the hearts of otherwise good Jews. Non-kosher food apparently is a spiritual form of bad cholesterol. It hardens one's heart and makes one less charitable or forgiving. This is a consequence of disobeying God's commandment to Israel to be a holy nation, separate from all others. Just as there were terrible consequences for the sons of Aharon for substituting their judgment over God's commandment, so too is this the case in all other matters of Torah law as well. There are really no rationally accurate reasons that can be advanced for the dietary laws of the Jews. It is all involved in a purely unseen spiritual realm. Bit that does not in any way minimize the real effects and consequences that observance or non-observance of these laws carry with them. All of Jewish history testifies to the corollary effects of kashrut observance on all facets of Jewish life and survival. Essentially put, the Torah tells us that the Jewish people are what they eat. Medical science has proven this to be true physically. The Torah comes to add to this the spiritual element, which is certainly no less important and vital for Jewish life to survive and prosper.

Animals at the top. from left to right: CALF was the first of the one-time special korbanot on opening day of the Mishkan (following the seven inauguration days). It seems obvious that it was meant as part of the atonement for the sin of the golden calf. RAM was also part of those EIGHTH DAY korbanot. As was the goat. All three animals are also
referred to without being named (in Parshat R’ei they are named) as kosher animals • Negation circle over the wine represents the "rules of conduct" for kohanim upon entering the Mikdash, which included not drinking wine on the day of their performing Avoda • The fire is the fire that was used by Nadav and Avihu... It is a strange fire (EISH ZARA) because the flames are blue and green with a touch of orange • Three pairs of images that represent a kosher and a non-kosher example of three different classes of animals • First pair is for mammals. Both are football helmets of NFL teams. Chicago Bears represent the non-kosher mammals and the LA Rams represent the kosher ones. Go through all the teams and see how many animals are included - and how many kosher ones. It’s a fun exercise for NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL. Mammals, birds, fish • Representing the birds are some cartoon characters: Heckle and Jeckle are magpies and are probably in the crow-raven family that is on the list of non-kosher birds. Daffy Duck for the kosher birds. Fish are represented by two characters from Finding Nemo. Nemo, himself, as well as his father, are clownfish. We don’t know if anyone actually eats them, but they do have scales and fins and therefore, no halachic impediment. The other Nemo character is Bruce, a shark who is part of a 12-step group, whose motto is "Fish are friends - not food". Sharks are not kosher - even though they too have scales and fins. No problem with the fins, but the shark has placoid scales and they are of dermal origin. In order for scales to qualify a fish as kosher, they must be able to be easily scraped off without damage to the fish’s skin. With the shark’s scales being part of its skin, they do not qualify. The big hook, in Hebrew, VAV, is for the big VAV of GACHON • Havdala candle represents the repeated theme in the sedra that a major purpose of many of the mitzvot presented is to distinguish - between sacred and profane, between tahor and tamei, etc. • Car with Head & Shoulders logo is our TTriddles symbol for a non-kosher fish. Yes, there are fins, like the 1960 Plymouth Fury had. But there are no scales - KASKESET in Hebrew, which is also the word for dandruff. Head & Shoulders is supposed to get rid of dandruff - hence, no scales. Therefore, such a fish would not be kosher. The giraffe and okapi are most likely kosher animals, being true ruminants and having split hooves. B’TEI’AVON. Strange looking bird is a relative of the chicken but its kashrut status is to be determined. See also a blue marlin which is a kosher fish. The rest of the images in this week’s ParshaPix are all related to a single word, one that more than typifies this week’s sedra. Let’s leave it at that and see how many of the six images you "solve". Plenty of springboards for you and your family to use for discussing the sedra.