

A Fresh Retrospective

Usually, it is when you are reading these words, rather than when they were written, that is significant. This time, take note that this Lead Tidbit has begun DURING the Purim Seuda, and continues to be written as Purim day turns into the pre-Pesach season. It is being written after most of the world's Jews have said L'HITRA'OT to Purim 5771 and only we in Jerusalem are still in the Purim mode. Even in Hawaii, where Shabbat lingers about 12 hours beyond our havdala (of course, it also begins about 12 later than in Israel), Purim is more than half a day in the past. But in Yerushalayim, as of this writing, Purim is still clinging to our thoughts and feelings.

Before we look forward to Parshat Para, HaChodesh, the month of Nisan, and Pesach, let's take a look at a phenomenon of two and a half mellenia ago, that is still - sadly - alive and well in the end of the 58th century (what most of the world calls the 21st).

Haman is elevated to a position of high honor; one of his preqs is that everyone must bow to him. Mordechai does not. This does not immediately catch Haman's attention. Rather it is the others of the king's inner circle who notice Mordechai's not bowing from their prostrate perspective. They ask him repeatedly - daily - why he does not bow in fulfillment of the king's orders. Megila commentaries suggest various answers he gives them - the common thread of them involves Mordechai's Jewishness.

That this would irk Haman is understandable. But he doesn't even notice... yet. But it also irks the others. Different people with different backgrounds, perhaps, regular people. Nice people. Cultured people. Who knows?

Jerusalem Shabbat in/out times for Sh'mini-Para

5:18pm / 6:31pm (see page 3 for other zmanim)

Checked and double checked for Parshat Sh'mini - Para

ParshaPix Explanations on p.35



Word of the Month BIRKAT ILANOT, the b'racha said only once a year, during Nissan, on fruit trees in blossom - is coming up. The possible problem this year is that Nissan has been "delayed" by the year's two Adars. It is wise, then, for us to try for this b'racha as early in the month of Nissan as possible. It might be that many fruit trees will be beyond their flowering stage later in Nissan. This is a heads-up for those who are enthusiastic about this b'racha (as we all should be). Once the flowers have fallen from the trees and the fruits have begun to develop, the b'racha cannot be said. We will have more on this topic IY"H in next week's issue.



Candles	Sh'mini	Havdala	Summer Time next week
5:18pm	Yerushalayim	6:31pm	6:22 / 7:36
5:35pm	S'derot	6:33pm	6:40 / 7:38
5:33pm	Gush Etzion	6:31pm	6:38 / 7:36
5:35pm	Raanana	6:33pm	6:39 / 7:39
5:34pm	Beit Shemesh•RBS	6:32pm	6:39 / 7:37
5:35pm	Netanya	6:33pm	6:39 / 7:38
5:35pm	Rehovot	6:33pm	6:39 / 7:38
5:33pm	Be'er Sheva (& Otniel)	6:32pm	6:37 / 7:37
5:34pm	Modi'in• Chashmona'im	6:32pm	6:39 / 7:37
5:18pm	Petach Tikva	6:33pm	6:22 / 7:38
5:18pm	Maale Adumim	6:31pm	6:22 / 7:36
5:34pm	Ginot Shomron	6:32pm	6:38 / 7:37
5:33pm	Gush Shiloh	6:31pm	6:37 / 7:36
5:33pm	K4 & Hevron	6:31pm	6:38 / 7:36
5:33pm	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:31pm	6:38 / 7:36
5:35pm	Yad Binyamin	6:33pm	6:40 / 7:38
5:36pm	Ashkelon	6:34pm	6:40 / 7:39
5:22pm	Tzfat	6:31pm	6:27 / 7:36
5:34pm	Zichron Yaakov	6:33pm	6:39 / 7:38

Rabbeinu Tam Havdala - Sh'mini-Para - 7:07pm

add 1hr for Apr 1

Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI
17-26 AdarB • March 23 - Apr 1

Earliest Talit & T'filin	4:50-4:38am
Sunrise	5:41-5:29am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 8:07-7:59am)	8:43-8:36am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:13-9:07am)	9:44-9:38am
Chatzot (halachic noon)	11:46-11:43am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)	12:17-12:15pm
Plag Mincha	4:36-4:40pm
Sunset (based on sea level: 5:52-5:58pm)	5:57-6:03pm

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Champion 3-letter word is a palindrome

Yochanan Gamliel went to a Simchat Torah Brit

Mother of Triton, Proteus, Nereid...

It's mentioned in the sedra; its _____
is the absolute largest but relatively
the smallest

Great Wall of China, Stonehenge, Statue
of Liberty, Panama Canal, Sydney Opera
House, Pink and White Terraces NZ...

350 5th Ave., Machu Picchu, Grand Canyon, Taj Mahal...

First Korean-American to be mayor of a major US city

no cruel & unusual punishment

👉 One of the best ways to apprise a
man of the foolishness of his agrue-
ment is to allow him to keep on building
upon it by emphasizing and expanding
its several points until, in the very
process of magnification, his blown up
absurdities strike him in the face.
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LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

What we do know is that these people told Haman about Mordechai's not bowing to him. And this filled Haman with rage. But the people who told Haman about Mordechai made a point of telling Haman that Mordechai was Jewish and that his refusal to bow was based on his Judaism. And so Haman was loathe to give the meglomaniac's reaction of "off with his head". Not enough for this insolent non-bower. Haman desired to destroy every man, woman, and child - the nation of Mordechai.

But it doesn't stop there. Haman goes to the king and gets royal approval for his plot to kill all the Jews in the kingdom. Why would a king readily agree to such a dastardly plan? Could it be merely the promise of silver? Or was there some deep hatred of the Jews within him as well?

And what about the "normal" people of the kingdom who were looking forward to the great day of "kill the Jews". Maybe it was impossible to rescind a royal decree (idiotic, no?), but decent people shouldn't join in - especially when Haman was long gone by the time the appointed day came.

Change the names, places, and times and we are still describing a Jew-hatred that is still with us.

Our observance of Purim is forever. We will always celebrate G-d's hand in our victories. But Purim's sober (pardon the choice of words) side is

with us - at least until the Complete Geula.

Now, let's look ahead. With our calendar and towards the future in general.

Parshat Para is our reminder to purify ourselves. To "clean up our act". Not just with the ritual of the Para Aduma potion, but in a complete spiritual way. The haftara talks about a new heart and a new spirit. In talks about our being infused with G-d's spirit, about keeping the Torah, about living in Eretz Yisrael.

It inspires us to see the upcoming month of Nisan and to strengthen our commitment to G-d and our resolve to become better people - as individuals and as a nation.

Parshat Para is the "get ready" parsha.

HaChodesh after it is the "get set". If Para focused on the individual Jew's purification process, HaChodesh's focus is on national rebirth. If we could do everything over, how would we do it better this time around? The clock is set back to the last days in Mitzrayim. We receive the first communal mitzva, we receive the orders of the day (night) for the Exodus. It is springtime and rebirth is in the air. The challenge is not just to "been there, did it", but to see everything as a new experience and to make the right choices, day by day.

And then we have a "go" for Nisan.

Sh'mini

Parshat PARA

26th of 54 sedras; 3rd of 10 in Vayikra

Written on 157.2 lines in a Torah, rank: 42

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, more p'sukim, fewer words

MITZVOT

17 mitzvot of 613; 6 positive; 11 prohibitions

Sh'mini & Para - STATS

Sh'mini is the Shabbat after Pesach in all 12-month years (seven year-types). They makeup 63.16% of the years. 12 of every 19-year cycle.

In 13-month years, Sh'mini is either Para or HaChodesh. It is Para in 4 of the seven year-types of Shana M'uberet. 20.51% of all years. It is HaChodesh in the other three year-types. 16.32% of all years.

Para matches up with Ki Tisa (41.81%), Vayakhel (alone, 3.31%), Vayakhel-P'kudei (18.05%), Tzav (16.32%), and Sh'mini (20.51%)

As you can see, this year's match-up is approx. once in 5 years (on average). Last time was 5768, three years ago. Next scheduled: 5774.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-counts of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition) - Rambam counts positives (248) and prohibitions (365) separately. X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva is counted.

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.

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 is not always 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.

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 K.G. 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 out how their son spent his time in their absence. He 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 most recently - eating and drinking, no - on Taanit Esther, to atone for and effect a TIKUN of the improper, inappropriate eating and drinking at Achashveirosh'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/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'lammim, 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 corresponds to 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. Although neither was a kohein gadol, they had been anointed to the k'huna 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 that 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.]

MitzvaWatch

With Mitzva #152 above, we have an example (there are others) of a mitzva that has a specific, narrow context and application from the Torah, but the scope of the mitzva is much wider. 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, approx. 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.

SDT: *Two of the other "traditions" as to what Nadav and Avihu did wrong are that they decided a point of halacha on their own, in the presence of their "rebbe" (Moshe Rabeinu), and that they did not consult with anyone in this halachic matter. It behooves us to learn a serious, sobering lesson (among others) from all of the possible flaws in the actions of Nadav and Avihu. One must be careful when it comes to deciding the correct halacha for oneself and his family. Consulting a Rav is a good "habit".*

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 4 p'sukim - 10:12-15

[P> 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

[P> 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 first Order of Mishna. Our antediluvian (before the Flood) predecessors were not permitted to eat meat. Only No'ach - AFTER offering Korbanot of the kosher animals on the Teiva (Ark) to G-d - was given permission to eat meat, provided that the animal be dead first, before taking its meat. In other words, using animals for sacred purposes then 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 (5th of the 6 orders of the Mishna), begins with Masechet Z'vachim which deals with animal sacrifices, then Masechet M'nachot - offerings from the plant world (olive oil,

flour, wine...), and then - and only then, Masechet Chullin 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 ruminant - 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].

MitzvaWatch

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.

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, fries them up on his camping gear, 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, that there are scales and fins and that 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 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.]

[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.

Maftir - 2nd Torah 22 p'sukim; Bamidbar 19

Parshat Para is read on the Shabbat before Parshat HaChodesh which presents us with the mitzvot of Korban Pesach, because the most common and important time for ritual purification on the part of most of the people was around the beginning of Nissan, as part of one's preparation to be in Jerusalem for Pesach and to bring and eat K.P. Parshat Para from Parshat Chukat, contains to mitzvot of Para Aduma - that is, the preparing of the potion from the ashes of the Red Heifer, the general mitzva of the concept of ritual limpurity from contact with a corpse, and the mitzva of purifying oneself with the Para Aduma potion.

Haftara 33 p'sukim Yechezkeil 36:16-38

S'faradim end 2 p'sukim earlier

The Haftara takes the concept (from the Maftir) of an individual becoming TAMEI and requiring purification with special water as

an analogy for the people of Israel who defiled themselves with the sin of idolatry and other sins, and their (our) need for a purification process with "G-d's spiritual waters of the Torah".

[In Va'eira, we find G-d's promise to take us unto Him and then He will bring us to Eretz Yisrael, in the haftara, the order is switched.]

There is a "hard" message in this haftara, among others.

G-d expresses His great disappointment with the people of Israel. And He punished them (us) very harshly. But then He says that His name was being desecrated among the nations of our dispersion, because the nations mockingly asked about the great nation of G-d and how low it had sunk.

So G-d decides, so to speak, and announces that He will redeem the people of Israel, even if they (we) don't deserve it, for His own sake.

This is hard reproach, indeed. But rather than discourage us, it should spur us on to put the lie to this prophecy - so to speak - by being worthy of redemption on our own merit.

The last p'sukim refer to a multitude of sheep - for sacrifices... This is a reminder of the large number of sheep brought to Yerushalayim for Korban Pesach.

Diarei Menachem

In our parsha we are given commands about the kinds of animals that we are allowed to eat and about those we are forbidden to eat. Interestingly, the Torah does not indicate that there are any health reasons behind these directives. The reasoning is of a different genre, as in the case of the law forbidding eating even the smallest of crawling creatures: "Every teeming creature that teems upon the ground - it is an abomination... Do not make yourselves abominable by means of any teeming thing; do not contaminate yourselves through them lest you become unclean (V'NITMEITEM) through them" (Vayikra 11:41-43).

The Hebrew expression for that detestable state of abomination alludes to the soul, the NEFESH, clearly indicating that the unclean state of a crawling insect affects the spiritual purity of the individual. It is something abhorrent, to be loathed and consequently rejected. From the sequence of the text, we are clearly expected first to recognize intellectually the negative character of the creepy-crawler and then to control our affective desire to eat it.

Our rabbis noted that the Hebrew word V'NITMEITEM is written without an Alef such that it can be read as V'NITAMTEM - "[lest] you become dulled". As tiny as the insect may be, its consumption is just the beginning of the slippery path. Because its ingestion is so unnoticeable people are in danger of becoming dulled to the significance of the prohibition and they soon find themselves eating all sorts of forbidden foods. No wonder that the Talmud tells us that if a person contaminates himself a little, he becomes contaminated a great deal; conversely; if a person sanctifies himself a little, he becomes sanctified a great deal (Yoma 39a)

VEBBE REBBE

QUESTION: *We have a minyan of exactly ten men during the week, and everyone is committed to coming every day. Recently a tzaddik came to town, and three people went to daven with him, leaving us without a minyan. There are many shuls in town, but we are trying to keep our shul going and hope it will grow. Was it right for our members to leave us without a minyan?*

ANSWER: While a major part of the concept of MAKOM KAVU'A is to be consistent about davening in one's normal minyan (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 90:19), one may certainly normally decide for himself when he is justified to daven elsewhere. Yet, there is precedent for one's counterparts to prevent him from leaving them without a minyan.

Firstly, after stressing the importance of davening with a minyan, the gemara (B'rachot 8a) says that one who does not daven with the community is a bad neighbor. Partially based on this source, the Rivash (518, accepted by the Rama, OC 54:22) says that when there is a problem putting together a minyan, the community can fine those who do not regularly take part in the minyan. The Mishna B'rura (54:73) cites the Eliya Rabba who says that even those who learn and daven in a Beit Midrash (which is better for their learning and normally for their davening) should come to the local

shul to make sure they have a minyan. The Peulat Tzaddik (Salah, I, 178) goes as far as to say that even if the local Beit Kneset does not have a Sefer Torah, if the majority of the minyan does not plan to go to the next town, one should stay to keep the minyan going.

What if there are other shuls in town? The Aruch HaShulchan (54:26) says that in that case, people do not need to go out of their way to insure the viability of a minyan at a specific shul. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe, OC III, 16) says that the minyan at all shuls is worthy of preservation. His main source is from the aforementioned Eliya Rabba, instructing "learners" from the Beit Midrash to come to the shul. Since even learners should normally daven with a minyan (see Rama, OC 90:18), it must be talking about a case where there is a minyan in the Beit Midrash and still they are to leave their place to make sure that the town's shul has a minyan. Since there is a preference for one to daven in his own Beit Midrash over a local shul (Shulchan Aruch, OC 90:18), we also see that keeping an existing minyan justifies giving up a religious preference, which is extremely instructive for our case.

Contemporary poskim agree with Rav Feinstein's approach. Shevet HaLevi (X, 9) told yeshiva students in a town that did not have a stable minyan in the local shul to go to ensure their minyan (and considered it educational). Rav Shternbach (Teshuvot V'Hanhagot II, 62) speaks of one who

wants to daven in a slow minyan in the city instead of the fast minyan in the suburb where he lives, and told him to stay.

The extent to which one should go to preserve an existing shul when there are others may be related to the halacha that one does not knock down an existing shul until a new one is in place (Shulchan Aruch, OC 152:1). The Taz (152:1) says that this does not apply if there is another proper shul in town with room for the displaced, whereas the Magen Avraham (152:5) says that even when there is another shul in town one cannot take a shul out of use without a ready replacement.

All of the aforementioned poskim discuss cases where without the minyan continuing, there will be people who will not find or agree to take part in an alternative minyan. If, in your case, everyone or almost everyone has little problem davening elsewhere for the day, it is not reasonable to "hold people hostage" and never allow them to miss once even for a good reason. It is reasonable to ask them to look for someone to replace them (a parallel to the Shulchan Aruch's mention of hiring a replacement).

Rav Daniel Mann, Eretz Hemdah Institute

PARSHAT PARA, PARSHAT HACHODESH, SHABBAT HAGADOL [1] by Dr. Meir Tamari

"Judaism is not a religion in the usual sense of the term but a nation-religion" (Shmot, 6:7, S.R. Hirsch). This is such a very difficult concept for religious and spiritually minded people to accept that rejecting it has led throughout the ages, even today, to seeing Pesach as liberation from slavery, overcoming one's yeitzer hara or escaping from any form of exploitation. However, even the first words of Israel's redemption, "to rescue you from the afflictions of Egypt and bring you to the Land" (Shmot 3:8), make it quite clear that Pesach marks a national redemption from slavery, one meant to result in the nation being brought to settle in the Promised Land. While slavery definitely has harmful spiritual effects, it is the physical and material hardships suffered that are stressed both in the Torah and the Midrashim. The phrase 'who took you out' which is repeatedly used to describe Yetziat Mitzrayim is the plural form showing that it is the national entity that is being redeemed rather than simply thousands of individuals, and that that liberation of slaves was merely a prelude to the Exodus from a land, Egypt, to be brought to a Land, Eretz Yisrael. Even the detour to Matan Torah at Har Sinai was not meant as an

end in itself but to provide Israel with the constitution for a social-political entity living in a definite territory.

Spiritual, religious and ritual avoda need preparation and forethought if they are to be meaningful, sincere and lasting. "Just as a craftsman is paid for his acquired knowledge and the time spent in preparing his tools, so too the preparation for mitzvot is as important as the actual observance" (Menachem Mendel of Kotsk). We therefore have to consider the perspectives that these three Shabbatot shed on the truths and significance of Pesach, the Seder and Redemption.

The Torah reading for Parshat Para deals with the purification, through the sprinkling of the (potion with the) ashes of the Red Heifer, upon one who had become impure through contact with a dead body. Since any person who was tamei was not permitted to eat of the Korban Pesach, it is appropriate to read this parsha before Pesach to make everybody aware of the necessity for purification at this time. It should be noted that when the whole nation is in a state of impurity, then tum'a was abrogated and the korban pesach has to be brought in its appointed time -- such is the spiritual greatness of a nation-religion. After 1967 when Israeli sovereignty was re-established over Har Habayit, a pre-requisite for Korban Pesach, the question arose whether the korban has to be brought since tum'a hutra b'tzibur.

The haftara from Yechezkiel intro-

duces a startling perspective to this question of tum'a and purification, one that is pertinent both to Pesach and to our own times. Galut is the Torah's punishment for Israel's sins and traditionally, redemption comes either when the designated time for the punishment is over or when Israel does t'shuva. However, Yechezkiel prophesies that Israel's galut causes a Chilul Hashem as it would seem to show His inability to redeem Israel, therefore G-d will gather in the exiles and re-establish them in their Land simply as an act of sanctifying His Name. "Not for your sake but for My Name which has been profaned among the nations whither you have gone. Therefore I shall sanctify My Name, I will take you from among the nations and I shall gather you out of all the countries and bring you to your own Land. In that day that I cleanse you from your iniquities, I will cause cities to be re-inhabited, desolate ones rebuilt and the land that was desolate shall be tilled. Then the nations shall know that I have built that which was desolate" (Yechezkiel 36). Based on this prophecy, Harav Kook taught that continuing to live in galut has itself become a sin, atonement for which is the return to our Land; t'shuvah, atonement, needs the return, t'shuvah, to EretzYisrael.

A timely reminder of the type of Chilul Hashem caused by galut and requiring rectification before redemption can come, is provided by the following halakhic insight. "In galut Israel deals immorally in their business dealings

with the nations. These then object to their redemption and Hashem, the Perfect Judge, has to concur. However, if Israel were to be holy in business then the same nations will petition Him to redeem this moral and honest people and He will willingly agree; 'Tzion will be redeemed through justice'" (Sefer Mitzvot Gadol, mitzvot hasheivat aveida).

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

SH'MINI

The Stork and the Heron

I don't think that parents tell this one to their children anymore, but they used to when I was a boy. When children once inquired about where babies come from, they were told that the stork brought them.

The stork is a migratory bird that was very familiar to people living in central Europe. The stork would suddenly, almost mysteriously, appear in the spring after a long absence during the cold winter. The stork would nest on rooftops, adjacent to, and often right on top of, the chimneys of the house.

Since every child was witness to the absence and ultimate return of these large white birds with long beaks, it was only natural that parents would avoid telling their children the "facts of life" for as long as they could get away with, attributing the appearance of new babies to the stork.

Interestingly, the stork makes its appearance in this week's Torah portion, Sh'mini. The Torah, however, does not stoop to the once common myth that the stork was responsible for the delivery, if not production, of new babies. Indeed in next week's Torah portion, Tazri'a, the opening verses contain a fairly explicit account of the biology of conception and childbirth.

But the Torah does enumerate the stork as one of the numerous "unclean" birds; that is, as one of the species of birds that a Jew is forbidden to eat.

The Hebrew term for the stork is "chasidah", upon which Rashi has a fascinating commentary. He begins by identifying the chasidah as "a large white fowl" and applies the old French name tziconia to it. A quick consultation with a children's book on zoology informed me that the European white stork, which nests on rooftops and in trees and is a symbol of childbirth, is technically classified in Latin as ciconia ciconia.

Rashi was apparently very familiar with this bird. He continues to suggest the reason why the ciconia ciconia, or stork, is called "chasidah" in Hebrew. After all, that Hebrew term means "the kindly one", the one who does acts of chesed (loving-kindness). The reason, already offered in the Talmud, is that the stork "is kind to her friends"; that is, generous and protective of other members of its own species.

Keen students of the parsha long

ago began to wonder why a bird that was so kind and passionate should be listed among the unclean fowl. After all, it is commonly assumed that those animals which are prohibited to be eaten are each representative of some undesirable character trait. Here is a bird which deserves to be called "chasidah", pious one. Why should it be considered unclean?

One such keen student, and it is difficult to ascertain his identity, long ago suggested that the problem with the chasidah is that, although she is kind, she is kind only to her friends. She shows compassion only for other members of her own species. To those who are not her friends but belong to a different species, she is indifferent and, often, even cruel.

Being kind in a discriminatory fashion is a negative character trait. Hence, the stork is treif, forbidden.

What a powerful and relevant lesson for each of us! Barely two weeks ago, we witnessed the effects of a devastating earthquake and tsunami wreaked upon the islands of Japan. We also observed all the graphic and horrible images of human misery and suffering. We all were summoned to contribute in any way we could to assist the Japanese victims.

But who among us can deny not having at least had a fleeting temptation to look away from that human suffering because it occurred so far away from us, to people who are unrelated to us? It is only natural

that our response would be, "Charity begins at home", and that we would turn to the needs of our own friends and close ones, blotting out the cries and tears of those of an "alien species".

The message that Rashi gives us is clear. Such a reaction is treif. It is utterly wrong to ignore the suffering of human beings just because they are different or distant from us. The chasidah is sympathetic and charitable, but only to its own kind. We are not allowed to emulate the chasidah.

Just after the chasidah is listed in this week's parsha, in Vayikra 11:19, we find mentioned another bird, the anafah. Rashi describes the anafah as an ill-tempered large fowl, an angry bird, and hazards a guess that it is the heron, with which he was personally familiar, living in north central Europe.

If the stork symbolizes the evil of discriminatory generosity, the heron symbolizes the evils of anger.

Anger is judged very negatively by Jewish tradition. Our Sages tell us that it is by the manner in which a person controls his anger that his true character can be assessed. The Talmud tells us that a person who becomes angry is susceptible to grievous errors, so that even the wisest of men can make mistakes if he permits himself to become angry.

Our Sages offer an example of a wise man who fell prey to anger and then erred. That wise man was none other than Moshe Rabeinu himself,

and the incident happened in our very Torah portion, Sh'mini. "And Moshe diligently inquired for the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt; and he was angry with Elazar and Itamar..." (Vayikra 10:16) In the immediate subsequent verses, it became clear, as Aharon, Moshe's brother, pointed out, that Moshe "rushed to judgment" and was mistaken. To his credit, Moshe was not too embarrassed to admit his mistake.

Malbim, a brilliant and often creatively insightful 19th century commentator, suggests with regard to these verses that there is a reciprocal relationship between anger and error. Yes, when one is in a state of anger, his judgment is clouded, and he is prone to error. But it is also true, he argues, that when one is blinded by error, he is prone to anger. Often, seeing the facts clearly precludes the angry response.

Once again, we have seen the great wisdom that can be accessed by merely "scratching the surface" of the biblical text. On the surface, this week's biblical portion offers us the names of two species of fowl which are ritually excluded from the Jewish menu. But beneath the surface, these two birds, the stork and the heron, open up two vast chapters in the comprehensive book of Jewish ethics. From the stork, we learn how important it is that our charity be inclusive and extend even to populations far-removed, geographically, ethnically or religiously, from us.

And from the heron, we learn about the dangers of anger and about the dynamic relationship between our intellectual powers and our emotional passions. Sometimes, intellectual faults lead to sinful emotions. More frequently, unbridled emotions compromise our intellect in ways which can be disastrous.

Two lessons from two birds: Be sensitive to the needs of all human beings whether they resemble you or not, and control your anger, lest you fall into the snares of errors and mistakes.

Praying with Passion

Giving more meaning to our T'fillah
One Week at a Time

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P'sukei d'Zimra: Y'HI CH'VOD

Hashem prevails

ה' הִפִּיר עֲצַת גּוֹיִם, הִנִּיא מַחְשְׁבוֹת
עַמִּים. רַבּוֹת מַחְשְׁבוֹת בְּלֵב אִישׁ,
וְעֲצַת ה' הִיא תִקּוּם. עֲצַת ה' לְעוֹלָם
תִּעֲמַד...

Meaning: translation...

...Hashem annuls the counsel of nations; He balks the designs of peoples. **Many designs are in man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem - only it will**

prevail. The counsel of Hashem will endure forever...

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

The End of the Story

Many thoughts are in man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem - only it will prevail.

Insight: Deeper meanings...

All Part of Hashem's Plan

In May 2010, a car bomb was planted in Times Square, N.Y. According to an explosives expert, it came within a "millisecond" of causing "mass casualties." Several hundred could have been killed or maimed by a fireball exploding from the Nissan Pathfinder which was found loaded with a volatile cargo of firecrackers, fertilizer, gasoline, propane and alarm clocks. The propane-fueled explosion would have lasted only a few seconds. It wouldn't have brought down any buildings, but with flames shooting as high as 30 feet, it would have seared the lungs, hair and faces of anyone within a 50-yard radius. "Had that detonator functioned correctly, we would have had a huge explosion", said the expert, a 35-year veteran with the New York Police Department, the last 20 of which have been served as a member of the bomb squad.

The man accused of driving the bomb-laden SUV into the heart of New York claimed he received explosives training in Pakistan. He

expressed surprise that the bomb did not detonate, for he had carefully designed it so that the fireworks would trigger a chain-reaction that would rupture the tanks and create a deadly fireball.

The most carefully laid, "fool-proof" plans of man simply cannot come to fruition if they are contrary to Hashem's will. What RABOT MACHSH'VOT B'LEV ISH, VAATZAT HASHEM HI TAKUM reveals is that, not only does Hashem's will ultimately prevail, but also, the actions we take toward achieving our ill-conceived plans become the actual catalyst for Hashem's desired result.

This is exemplified in the story of Yosef HaTzadik who dreamed a prophecy that he would become king and his brothers would bow down to him. His brothers' determination to prevent the fulfillment of that dream led them to sell him to caravan merchants, who brought him to Egypt. There, he became viceroy and thus arrived at the position in which his brothers would indeed be forced to bow before him.

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Only One Way to Get There

Imagine being inside a maze. There is only one way out of it, but in seeking that exit, you must negotiate many, many false turns. Your instincts tell you to turn right at the next corner - something from that direction draws you. You walk confidently around the

corner, only to bump into a blank wall. Now you must backtrack and find a different way. So this time, you turn left, and that leads you to the next intersection. You must keep on choosing, doing your best to figure out which path will lead to your goal, but often, you run up against a wall. After all is said and done, after you've tried all the false paths that seemed right to you in the moment, you find the exit.

Hashem designed life in a way that is similar to this maze. Some people may have the spiritual strength and sensitivity to make the correct turn at each corner. Most people, however, convince themselves that a particular direction is correct, they put their strength and energy into pursuing that direction and find that it leads them into a brick wall.

For each person, there is one path that will lead to Hashem's ultimate goal, and that is the path that, come what may, he will ultimately walk. However, Hashem did provide His chosen nation with a map to the maze; by following the Torah, the path of life becomes straight and clear.

Realize...

that Hashem not only loves you and knows what's best for you... Hashem will always lead you in the right direction, and you can feel the security and tranquility that fact engenders...

Maharal on the Sedra

A Reason for the Dietary Laws

Vayikra 11:7 - And the swine, for it has a split and separated hoof, but it does not chew its cud; it is impure to you.

Tiferet Yisrael 8:133:

There are those who give a natural reason for commandments, saying the Torah forbids pig because it gives rise to a deleterious condition in the body. This is certainly true, but not the reason for the prohibition. Likewise, forbidden fats and blood and ever more so creeping animals and predatory birds, and they give natural reasons for all of them. According to this, the Torah is a medicine book or a science text, God forbid. On the verse "houses all filled with good" [D'varim 6:11], Rabbi Yirmia said in the name of Rav [Chulin 17a] dried pork bellies were permitted the first seven years of the conquest. If the prohibition of pork was rooted in health concerns, how was this permitted? If certain fats were forbidden, how were they permitted in the case of the fetal calf found in a ritually slaughtered cow [Chulin 74a]? Natural reasons for these prohibitions do not apply. These forbidden foods are not fitting for man according to His order which He may choose to suspend. The Torah follows the spiritual goal appropriate for the behavior of man.

MDK: Here Maharal goes toe to toe with Rambam [Moreh N'vuchim 3:48], emphatically denying natural explanations for the kashrut restrictions. When I practiced as a mohel, I made a point to explain to parents who usually thought otherwise that our mila was not a hygienic medical procedure, but rather a commandment from Hashem. At the same time, as a pediatrician, I counseled my non-Jewish parents that circumcision is an optional cosmetic procedure. I actually became proficient at saving infected foreskins.

Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr

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WISDOM & WIT
 by Shmuel Himelstein

Our Sages tell us that a person who walks on the right side of his Rebbe is a boor and ignoramus. The Modzhitzer Rebbe was asked to explain this. What is so bad about walking to the right of one's Rebbe?

He explained: "Our Sages tell us that a pedagogue should push people away with his left hand, and with his right hand draw them closer. One who walks to the right of his Rebbe is only interested in having his Rebbe draw him closer, but does not want the Rebbe to find and point out any of his faults. Such a person will never learn how to improve himself, and will always remain a boor and an ignoramus."

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The Priestly Benediction

*Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 284–285;
 Otzerot HaRe'iyah vol. II, pp. 211–212*

The inauguration of the Mishkan concluded with a blessing from the Kohen Gadol: "Aharon lifted his hands towards the people and blessed them. He then descended from preparing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings" (Vayikra 9:22).

When Was the Blessing Recited?

From the Torah's account, it would seem that Aharon blessed the people before he completed the service in the newly dedicated Mishkan. The Sages, however, explained that the actual order was different. First, Aharon completed the offerings and descended from the altar. Only afterwards did he bless the people (Torat Kohanim; Megila 18a).

If the priestly benediction was performed at the end of the Temple service (which nowadays is recited at the end of the Amida prayer), why does the Torah imply a different order?

The True Honor of Kohanim

When discussing the contribution of

the kohanim to the Jewish people, and the corresponding honor they receive, we must distinguish between their current state and their future potential. We may respect an individual kohen for his scholarship and piety, but the true honor we bestow to kohanim is in recognition of their holy influence over the entire nation. We honor them primarily for their future potential, for what a kohen should and can be - "for he is an emissary of God of the hosts" (Malachi 2:7). Even if the kohen is undeserving of such honor in his present state, "You must strive to keep him holy... he will be holy for you, since I am holy" (Vayikra 21:8). His holiness is due to his potential benefit to the nation, as a member of the sanctified family.

[This, by the way, is similar to the honor we give to rabbis and teachers. We respect them for their erudition and also as representatives of the institution of the rabbinate. This honor is in recognition of the overall contribution of the rabbinate to the welfare of the people. The rabbi on his part should realize that he is primarily honored for what he ought to be, and should do his best to fulfill this expectation.]

Two Roles of the Kehuna

The function of the kohanim is not only to serve in the Mikdash. The kohanim are also expected to teach and elevate the people, as it says, "From the kohen's lips they will guard knowledge, and they will seek Torah from his mouth" (Malachi 2:7). These two roles are interrelated, since the source for

their spiritual influence on the people originates in the holiness of their service in the Mikdash.

There is one duty of the kohanim that combines both of these roles: the priestly blessing. This blessing is part of the Mikdash service, and at the same time, reflects their interaction with the people. The kohanim recite the blessing with outstretched arms, a sign that their efforts to uplift the people are an extension and continuation of their holy service in the Mikdash.

Bridging the Past and the Future

The blessing also forms a bridge over time, connecting the past with the future and the actualized with the potential.

The kohanim can best fulfill their mission to uplift the people after they have participated in the Temple service and experienced the unique elevation of soul gained through this holy public service. Their blessing will then reflect the highest level of influence and inspiration the kohen is able to impart. Thus, the blessing indicates the present state of the kohen, while being based on his past service, and extending - like his outstretched arms - to his future potential influence.

Now we can resolve the apparent contradiction between the Torah's account and actual practice. The text implies that the kohanim complete their service after blessing the people. The service referred to here is not their service in the Mikdash, but their role in uplifting the people, which is truly their

primary mission. In practice, however, Birkat Kohanim needs to be based on the holy services that they have already performed. Therefore, it is recited only after they have completed their service in the Mikdash.

The Impact of Prayer

A similar phenomenon is found at the end of the Amida, when we say, "May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable before You" (T'hilim 19:15). It would appear more logical to recite this plea before praying. In fact, the verse does not refer to the prayer about to be recited, but to our heartfelt aspiration that we should be able to apply the influence of this prayer on the coming day. Like the priestly benediction, this request forms a bridge between two states. It is based on the prayer service just performed, but it looks forward to the future influence of this spiritual elevation on our lives.

CHIZUK AND IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

After Nadav and Avihu are killed, their father, Aharon, and brothers are instructed not to observe public signs of mourning such as letting their hair grow or rending their clothing.

At the end of that same pasuk (10,6), the rest of the Jewish people are told that they should weep and openly mourn the loss of Nadav and Avihu.

Between these two instructions are four words that seem to dangle: V'AL KOL HA'EIDA YIKTZOF, "And G-d will get angry at the entire congregation." What's that going on - the kohanim violating their rule and openly mourning, or the rest of the people failing to do so?

The Or HaChayim says it's referring to the latter. The only reason that Aharon and his sons aren't openly mourning is because they were told not to. But the rest of the nation must show proper appreciation for Nadav and Avihu, who the gemara says were greater than Moshe and Aharon.

A failure to appreciate the greatness of righteous people - which includes expressing grief and mourning when they are taken from us - is a failure to appreciate the source of their greatness, the Torah.

To say "how sad", when people like Nadav and Avihu are taken, and then go on with our lives, is a Chilul Hashem that warrants Hashem's anger.

Similarly, to say "how nice" at the fact that Eretz Yisrael is for the first time in 2000 years under Jewish sovereignty is to fail to appreciate that this is the land our Creator chose as his most precious prize, together with the Torah, to give to the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

While not everyone can merit to live in Eretz Yisrael, everyone must be aware of what it has always meant to Am Yisrael. And a decision not to live here must be a conscious one that involves tremendous soul-searching.

Just as Am Yisrael had an obligation to


recognize and appreciate the greatness of Nadav and Avihu, we have an obligation to cherish the beauty and kedusha of Eretz Yisrael, especially these days, when Jewish sovereignty over the land, even over Yerushalayim, cannot be taken for granted.


Joel Rebibo, Beit El


Hummingbird


320 species of this smallest of all birds - the smallest of which is the Bee Hummingbird... as small as they are, their brains are twice as large as our own, relative to body size... they lick, not suck, nectar from flowers flicking their tongues about 12x per second... they remember and recognize flowers they have visited and return to them only after giving them enough time to replenish their nectar. They communicate vocally... they see in a wider range of colors than other birds... they beat their wings up to 200x a second. This is physically demanding... they have the largest heart relative to size of any animal their flying technique is closer to a bumble bee's than to that of any other bird... as they hover their wingtips trace a figure eight pattern rather than up and down... thus enabling them to fly forwards, backwards and even upside down. To maintain their strength they visit an average of 1500 flowers daily (from The i book of animals)


ParshaPix explanations

 The CALF (upper-left) 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.

 The RAM (to the left of the calf) was also part of those EIGHTH DAY korbanot.

 As was the goat (to the calf's right). All three animals are also referred to without being named (in Parshat R'ei they are named) as kosher animals.


 The 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. And it also is forbidden for a posek to render a halachic decision "under the influence".


 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.


There are three pairs of images that represent a kosher and a non-kosher example of three different classes of animals. We suggest that if you are reading this (which you obviously are), then keep the answers to yourself for a while and see how well your family and Shabbat guests do.


 The first not kosher / kosher pair is


for mammals. Both are football helmets of NFL teams. Chicago Bears represent the non-kosher mammals and the St. Louis 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, others, people-types, etc. Kosher and non-kosher is only part of the analysis.


 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 represents 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 - except that when the dorsal fin is above the waterline, one can hear ominous music (just kidding). The scales of a shark are called placoid scales and they are of dermal origin. In order for scales to qualify a fish as kosher, the scales 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.

 The 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.

 The car with the Head & Shoulders logo is our TTriddles symbol for a non-kosher fish. Yes, there are fins, like the 1960 Plymouth Fury has. 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.

 Lower-right is a photo of a potential Para Aduma, found in Israel. Notice that its red color is NOT like a fire-truck but is a dark brown-red similar in color to soil. Aduma, adama - definitely related words and related colors. May we be ZOCHEH to a successful Para Aduma and the purification it will facilitate.

 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.

Portion from the Portion

And Aharon lifted his hands and blessed them

After the seven days of installment, Moshe calls Aharon and his sons to OHEL MOED for the eighth day. After bringing a number of sacrifices, Aharon lifts up his hands and blesses the people.

When thinking about the blessings that the Kohen gives to the people, we may wonder a bit. We all know that the kohanim have no possessions of their own and they own no land. Everything they receive from the gifts of the people. So when they bless the people, is it sincere? We could think that they have ulterior motives every time they raise their hands to bless. Maybe they are blessing the nation hoping that all the people will prosper so they will have more possessions to give over to the kohen. If the people's field grows well then the percentage that is given to the kohen (T'RUMA) is much greater than if they have no crop at all. And if their sheep's wool grows long, then the amount given to the kohen from the first shearing is more plentiful.

But according to the Divrei Shaarei Chayim, this verse teaches us otherwise. Aharon was not commanded here by Hashem to bless the nation. Rather he spontaneously raised his hands to bless them. It was his own initiative from the goodness of his heart out of true concern for the welfare of the nation. He wanted them to have all the goodness Hashem

could bestow on them. It was because of this blessing, that Aharon chose to give to the nation, that he and his children merited receiving the 24 gifts from the nation. It was also because of this blessing that Hashem saw his true personality - that he was a person who wanted to bestow blessings on others. For that reason, he and his descendants throughout the generations were worthy to bless the nation. Aharon's blessings and the blessings of his descendants throughout the generations are not tainted. On the contrary they are very sincere.

I am not from a family of kohanim, though my maternal grandfather was a Levi, but I would like to take this opportunity to bless my son Michael and his Kallah Michal that the blessings of the kohanim throughout the generations should rest upon them.

**The Jerusalem Institute
of Jewish Law
Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean**

Lesson # 556

Jewish authorities appoint a court of less than 3 judges

As shown in prior lessons, an individual judge may not judge in the first instance without the consent of the litigants. May the community appoint one or two individuals as judges so that they may compel the litigants to appear before them? Bach (Rabbi Joel Sirkis,

1570-1640) states that if the community accepted one wise person to be the judge it is obvious that the litigants cannot withdraw from him. Sma (Rabbi Joshua Falk, 1555-1614) holds that if one or two persons are appointed by a community to act as judges, then they are in the same position as the recognized expert who may judge by himself. Urim (Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz, 1690-1764) states that in his city of Metz there was a decree of the city council that a single judge may judge by himself. The following is an excerpt from a responsum of Radvaz (Rabbi David Ibn Avi Zimri; 1465-1574)

“On what do they rely in Egypt when there is one Jewish governor or Jewish judge? Is it not taught that a person should not judge by himself? Only Hashem judges by Himself. The same is in Jerusalem and in the entire kingdom. If it is to be argued that the answer is because the judge is an expert and has obtained authorization, is it not written in Rambam that if one is a recognized

expert or has received authorization from the court that he may judge by himself, but it is not equivalent to a court, and though it is permissible, the Sages have commanded that he sit with other judges, or it is taught that one may not judge by himself since only Hashem judges by Himself. The answer given by Radvaz is that this practice is of very long standing going back almost to the beginning of the Arab reign in Egypt. The caliph of Egypt married a Babylonian princess. When she came to live in Egypt she inquired whether the Jews had their own leader, the caliph

replied that they did not. She then informed him that in her father's country, there were many Jews and they had a leader known as the Exilarch who was descended from King David and that her father was blessed through him and gave him great honor since he was descended from kings and prophets. The caliph immediately issued a command to bring a Jew from Babylonia who was descended from King David. The Jews of Babylonia sent a wise and understanding person from the family of the Exilarch and he was appointed governor of all the Jews in the kingdom of Egypt. From that time on the chain of Jewish governors in Egypt commenced.

The governor received authority from the caliph to govern the people with the staff and with the lash as it is written, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah”. After there were no longer descendants of King David in Egypt or there were no descendants worthy to be appointed, the governorship passed to those who merited it on account of their wisdom and good deeds. They were able to judge individually in monetary cases, to punish, to flog, to put under a ban and to excommunicate according to the exigency of the hour.

The Puah Institute

for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

Suing the Doctor in Halacha and Secular Law

Last week we read Rabbi Shlomo Dichovsky's opinion in the case of a doctor who encouraged parents to continue with a pregnancy which resulted in the delivery of a child with a birth defect. In his opinion, the doctor may not be held legally responsible and may not be sued, even if he had instructed the couple not to undergo extensive prenatal testing.

Rabbi Dichovsky explained that there are three partners in the creation of a child - HaShem, the mother and the father. The doctor is not included, and therefore cannot be blamed for any "damages" caused by the birth of a child born with a defect or disability. In addition, the doctor cannot be found negligent if he advised the couple to continue with the pregnancy due to the fact that it is halachically complex to terminate a pregnancy.

In this vein, it seems clear that a child born with a defect cannot sue his parents for bringing him into the world, since their only alternative would have been to terminate his life. The same may be said regarding the parents' case against their doctor: They cannot force the doctor to terminate life. Therefore, both would appear to be meaningless court cases. However, in American, British and Israeli secular law it was determined that a doctor may indeed be held liable for the birth of a child with a congenital birth defect.

Halachically these cases are problematic: The doctors involved were practicing medicine within the correct framework and held perfectly valid licenses. In some cases the doctor had even warned the parents that the fetus was defective - a flawed diagnosis - and B'H, a healthy baby was delivered, proving that it was not the doctor's diagnosis that created the unhealthy child; rather, it was a Divine decree.

In summary, if a doctor has completed medical school and is licensed as a doctor, he cannot be sued for making a wrong diagnosis or treatment.

This issue is complex and emotive - our short pieces here are not intended to be halachically binding. In each individual case a competent Rabbi who has an understanding of medicine as well as the intricacies of halacha should be consulted. But Rabbi Dichovsky did make a valid and important point in his lecture at the recent Puah Institute annual conference: The culture of litigation that suggests that all problems can be solved by finding the "guilty" party and suing him does not actually solve the problem, and may actually stand in contradiction to the halacha, or the directives and spirit of the Torah.



Last issue's (TZAV-Zachor) TTtriddles:

$$[1] 13 = 13 \times 7 + 13 - 7 - 13/13$$

First let's do the arithmetic on the right side of the statement: Remember that multiplication and division go first

- then addition and subtraction. 13×7 is 91 and $13/13$ is one. The right side now reads $91+13-7-1$, which is $104-7-1$ which is 96. Now we have $13=96$, which is a false statement. However, look at the 13 again and try to see it differently. Like this: $\overline{13}$ which is Hebrew (handwriting). TZAV = 90 +6, which indeed is 96, so the statement is true. If you look carefully at the TTriddle in the hard copy, you will notice that the 1 of 13 is a bit shorter than the 3, or should we say that the VAV is shorter than the TZADI, just as it is in the word TZAV, rather than the number thirteen. (And know that TZAV does NOT have TZAV p'sukim as the siman at the end of the sedra claims; it has 97 in our Chumashim.)

[2] Aharon and 5 times B'nei Yisrael

TZAV ET... occurs only six times in the Torah (and nowhere else in Tanach). At the beginning of Parshat Tzav we find the one and only TZAV ET AHARON. The other five times (four in Bamidbar and once in Vayikra) it is B'NEI ISRA'EL that is the object of TZAV ET. And if you want to include the one occurrence of V'TZAV ET, then the object would be YEHOASHUA in D'varim (the book, that is).

[3] Your wife, Aharon, Leviyim, pan, staff, leaders

KACH ET... The command to TAKE: In B'reishit, the angels tell Lot to take his wife and two single daughters and leave Sodom. In Sh'mot, G-d tells Moshe to tell Aharon to TAKE your staff and throw it down in front of

Par'o. In Parshat Tzav, G-d tells Moshe to TAKE Aharon and his sons... In Bamidbar, we find KACH ET several times - the Leviyim, twice, Aharon, Moshe's staff again, the firepan, and the leaders of the people. (In Megila, Achashveirosh told Haman to TAKE the crown, royal robes, horse, etc. and dress Mordechai and parade him throw the city of Shushan.)

And that's it for TTriddles (slow week), but we've got a TTreader Feedback for you...

TTreader FEEDBACK

WP writes: Okay, so you blew the halachic times on the front page - it happens. At least you had Vayikra's times labeled Vayikra and not Tzav. That would have been worse. And the times on page three were all correct, as best as I can see. But that's not why I'm emailing you. I looked through the whole issue a couple of times, certain that I would see some stats for Tzav being Zachor and Zachor being Tzav. What's the story?

TT statistician here: You are right and we are ashamed that we neglected to give the stats on Tzav-Zachor. We'll give them now - even though we're past that Shabbat, because they are interesting. We'll give the less exciting stats on Sh'mini-Para in the Sedra stats column on page 5.

Here's the scoop. Of 14 different year-types of our fixed Calendar, only one type gives us Tzav and Zachor on the same Shabbat. This year's type is

M'UBERET (13 months, 2 Adars), started on Thursday (MON, TUE, Shabbat are the other three possibilities), and SHALEIM (Marcheshvan and Kislev both have 30 days, the year has 385, the most possible). There are seven year-types of M'UBERET (and it follows that there are seven year-types of P'SHUTA, as well), four different year-types begin on THU, and six year-types that are SHALEIM. But only one year-type that combines these three factors and results in the unique Tzav-Zachor. This kind of year occurs 6.66% of the time, which is an average of once in 15 years. That's the average; the distribution is uneven. Last MEM-HEI-SHIN year we had was 27 years ago, 5744. But the next one is scheduled for three years from now. (Remember always that when a proper Sanhedrin is established and the calendar goes back to Method A (eyewitness testimony and discretionary powers to fine-tune the calendar, "scheduled" years won't necessarily happen just that way.)

In a 12-month year (which account for 63% of the years), Zachor is T'tzaveh 58.8% of all years and T'ruma is Zachor 4.33% of all years. 13 month years account for 37% of years. Vayikra is Zachor 30.1% of all years and Tzav is Zachor (as already mentioned) 6.66% of all years.

Now look at TZAV. 63.16% of the time (all 12 month years), it's Shabbat HaGadol - its own haftara being pre-empted. It's Zachor another 6.66% of the time and Para 16.32%,

when its haftara is also pre-empted. That leave only 13.85% of the years is the regular haftara of Tzav read. In Jerusalem, that drops just below 10% of the time, because Shushan Purim can fall on Tzav, pre-empting the haftara yet again. This is less frequent than the regular haftara of Mikeitz (which is most often pre-empted by the haftara for Shabbat Chanuka.

SH'MINI Adapted from
Unlocking the Torah Text
by **Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

Sanctuary Sobriety

Context: In the shadow of Nadav and Avihu's tragic death, God turns to their father, Aharon, and commands:

"Do not drink wine or intoxicating beverage, you and your sons with you, when you come into the Tent of Meeting, and you will not die; this is an eternal decree for your generations. In order to distinguish between the sacred and the profane and between the impure and the pure, and to teach the children of Israel all of the statutes that God has spoken to them through Moshe."

While the text seems to clearly prohibit the consumption of any alcoholic beverage during the Kohen's fulfillment of his functions as priest and educator, the Talmud, after extensive debate, limits the full biblical prohibition to the ingestion of "intoxicating amounts" of wine. In further discussion, many halachists delineate additional, less severe penalties both for the consump-

ption of other intoxicating beverages and for smaller amounts of wine. Finally, most scholars extend the requirement of sobriety during the teaching and application of the law to all teachers and not only to the Kohanim.

Moving beyond the technical aspects of the law, numerous commentaries focus on its potential motivation. The Torah's concern, they say, centers on the debilitating effects of alcohol. An individual who is inebriated to any degree will neither be able to properly execute the Sanctuary service nor appropriately engage in halachic discussion and decision making. The Torah therefore prohibits the consumption of wine as a safeguard against possible intoxication.

Questions: Why are these commandments necessary?

Given the intricate detail of the Sanctuary service; given the clear repeated divine warnings concerning the potential consequences of error in that service; given the overwhelming specter of Nadav and Avihu's death as an apparent result of ritual deviation; given the fact that proper halachic decisions clearly require one's full faculties; why would anyone assume that these functions could be performed in a state of intoxication? Why must the Torah state the obvious?

To go one step further, if the Torah's fundamental concern is potential error in the Sanctuary service or in halachic deliberation, why frame the prohibition as a ban upon alcoholic beverages? Why not simply reiterate a general warning that these disciplines must be approached with awe, reverence and caution?

Finally, if this law is based on the

potentially debilitating effects of alcohol, why is a difference drawn in the Talmud between wine and other intoxicating beverages? Shouldn't all substances that could potentially lead to inebriation be equally prohibited?

Approaches:

A. An astute observation made by a museum guide during one of my first trips to Israel can help us frame an answer to these questions.

"You can deduce," he said, "common practice within a society from the legal edicts enacted by its government."

"Centuries from now," he continued to explain, "when the ruins of this museum are excavated, archaeologists will not find signs in the rubble stating 'No bicycle riding.' Since it is not current common practice in our day to ride bicycles through museums, legal postings prohibiting such behavior are not necessary and will not be part of the archaeological record.

"Excavators will, however, find 'No smoking' signs. This discovery will lead them to correctly surmise that smoking was likely to occur in public buildings during the twentieth to twenty-first centuries and that the administrators of this museum moved to prevent such activity."

B. This comment may well shed light on the Torah's concern for the sobriety of the Kohanim.

God finds it necessary to prohibit the consumption of wine during ritual and intellectual religious activity in response to "common practice" of the time.

The use of alcohol and other psychoactive drugs was an integral component of the religious rites of many ancient

cultures. Rather than viewing inebriation and similar "escapist" behaviors as impediments to spiritual search, these societies considered the use of psychoactive substances an essential prerequisite of that very search.

Archaeological evidence, in fact, traces the use of psychoactive drugs in every age and on every continent from prehistoric times to the present. In modern times, the term entheogen (meaning literally "generating the divine within") has been coined to refer to vision-producing drugs taken to bring on a spiritual experience. The use of such substances, many have believed across the ages, enables man to loosen the shackles of his earthly existence and truly encounter the Divine.

In direct opposition to this approach, normative Judaism preaches an "earthly" encounter with our Creator. As we have consistently seen, one of the Torah's primary messages is that God is to be found and experienced in this world, with our feet firmly planted on the ground. The S'forno maintains that Moshe, our greatest prophet, achieved his greatness specifically because of his ability to relate to God without relinquishing his physical senses.

The ban on alcoholic consumption in specific settings, therefore, does not emerge solely from apprehension over alcohol's potentially debilitating effects. A much more fundamental philosophical issue is reflected in this prohibition.

God's message to His people is once again clear: I am not to be found in the mists at the summit of Sinai. I am not to be encountered in esoteric visions or "out of body" experiences. You are to find Me in your world through

performance of My mitzvot, through the sober study, application and living of My law.

C. We can now also understand, as well, the distinction made in the law between wine and other intoxicating substances. Wine, even more than other psychoactive materials, has long occupied a particular place in religious ritual. This fact is evidenced at both extremes within Jewish law. On the one hand, because of the unique status of wine in pagan culture, the Torah mandates the prohibition of yayin nesech (wine that has been used for idolatrous purposes and is, therefore, prohibited to all Jews at all times). On the other hand, wine, in moderation, finds its positive place within Jewish practice, used to mark special occasions and events.

Had the Torah's only concern been for potential error on the part of the Kohanim, all intoxicating beverages would have been treated equally. By singling wine out for special attention, however, the Torah communicates that there is more to this prohibition than meets the eye. Wine used properly and in moderation, the Torah teaches, like all of God's physical creations, enhances our appreciation of the Divine. When used to escape reality, however, all psychoactive substances undermine our spiritual search, which is predicated on creating a union in our lives between heaven and earth. ❖

Parsha Points to Ponder

Sh'mini

1) Why does the Torah use the word EIGEL instead of the usual PAR to describe the cow which Aharon was to offer as part of the final step of the initiation of the Kohanim (9:2)?

2) Why does the Torah say that Aharon's sacrifice would atone for him AND THE NATION (V'KAPER B'ADCHA UV-AD HA'AM) and then that there would be another offering for the nation (KORBAN HA'AM V'KAPER BA'ADAM - 9:7)?

3) Why does the Torah conclude the section regarding non-kosher insects with the seemingly irrelevant statement BECAUSE I AM G-D WHO TOOK YOU OUT OF EGYPT (11:45)?

Parsha Points to Ponder

by Rabbi Dov Lipman

Parsha Points to Ponder

Suggested answers

1) Da'at Zekainim MiBaalei HaTosfot explain that Aharon brought disgrace to the Kehuna through his involvement in the golden calf which was called an EIGEL, so now he was instructed to use an EIGEL to restore honor to the Kehuna.

2) The Ohr HaChayim answers that since Aharon was the cause of the Jewish people sinning at the golden calf since it was his idea, no one could receive atonement until the root cause was purified. Thus, once Aharon received atonement, the rest of the nation could also achieve atonement.

3) The Kli Yakar teaches that the closer something is to the ground, the more physical and impure it is. G-D redeemed us from Egypt, a place which was low geographically and, therefore, more impure, to a land which was elevated geographically, Israel, and, therefore, we should stay away from these lowly beings.

Ask OU Kashrut

Q: Why do only a few brands of “hard” cheese, such as cheddar, mozzarella and parmesan, bear well-known kosher symbols? After all, the ingredients in almost all cheeses seem to be kosher; can you please explain?

A: To the surprise of many people, kosher “rennet-set” cheeses – cheeses such as those you listed above, and all cheeses which use rennet or rennet-type enzymes as an ingredient – are only considered kosher when they are made under special on-site rabbinic supervision. This means that a mashgiach, or kosher supervisor, must be present for every kosher cheese production. This law, or halacha, is codified in Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deah 115:2 and is found in the Talmud (Tractate Avoda Zara p. 29 and 35).

The reason for this regulation is that some cheeses were (and still are) made from non-kosher meat-based rennet enzymes. (Rennet is found in the abomasal (fourth stomach) lining of animals, and it is produced by cutting and milling the abomasal flesh, with its rennet, and using the resultant product in cheese-making.) Cheeses produced from this meat-based rennet are definitely non-kosher, as even though only a miniscule amount of rennet is used to make such cheeses, since (non-kosher) rennet is the main ingredient, the rennet is not nullified (“batel”), and it renders the whole cheese non-kosher.

The Talmudic Sages decreed that since

cheese may be made with non-kosher, meat-based rennet, only cheese which has on-site rabbinic supervision that monitors the ingredients and the cheese-making process for kosher compliance is acceptable. Therefore, even if we know that a certain cheese uses microbial rennet or some other kosher rennet-type enzyme, such cheese is deemed non-kosher and may not be consumed unless it was made under on-site rabbinic supervision.

Every rennet-set cheese that bears an OU-D symbol was made under the supervision of a mashgiach who supervised the ingredients and the cheese-making process, and who personally added the rennet to the cheese vat. (Some halachic authorities require that the mashgiach be physically involved in the cheese-making process; this translates into the mashgiach dosing the rennet into the cheese vat, either manually or by electronic activation, as the case may be. Older cheese plants do manual rennet dosing, while newer plants have systems that dose the rennet into the cheese vat via electronic activation. In both cases, the OU requires that the mashgiach dose in the rennet for every vat of cheese that is produced, based upon the specifics of each plant's rennet system.)