

OHRNET

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FOUR SONS - ONE FATHER

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

Four sons are mentioned in the Torah as challenging us to explain about the Exodus from Egypt and all the rituals connected with it.

These four sons are understood by our Talmudic Sages as representing a broad cross-section of Jewish youth and we read about them and their challenges in the Hagadah we recite at the Pesach Seder.

There is a wise son and the wicked one, the simpleton and the one who does not even know what to ask.

Perhaps we can think of the father facing these challenges as the collective leadership of our people, which has the responsibility to guide every member of a young generation in learning from the Exodus what it means to be a Jew.

The challenge of the wise son who wishes to know more and more about the deeper meanings of the guidelines given by G-d to His chosen people is answered not only on Pesach eve but every day of the year in the *yeshivot* and day schools throughout the world where Torah is taught.

The cynical taunting of the wicked son who has abandoned Torah Judaism for some watered-down substitute who mocks such rituals as a Pesach sacrifice is answered by the eloquent spokesmen of Torah Jewry who warn him that such an attitude perpetuates exile forever.

The simpleton, who is not necessarily lacking in intelligence but rather in knowledge, represents so many young Jews today whose familiarity with Jewish tradition is sparse but whose curiosity about it has already been aroused.

But whom does the fourth son represent with his inability to even ask a question?

To our deep regret he represents the vast majority of a lost generation who are not only ignorant about Judaism but are also totally unconcerned about it.

In regard to these last two sons the father dealing with them is the *kiruv* outreach movement in which Ohr Somayach is proud to play a major role. Those lacking knowledge are being given an opportunity in programs tailored to their needs to catch up on the learning they missed out on in their early years. For those who don't yet have even the desire to learn – hundreds of thousands of them on university campuses or at the beginning of careers – innovative programs have been developed to reach out to them and kindle the spark of Jewish consciousness buried deep within their souls.

Four sons – and one father who dreams of the day when all his children will join him at the Seder table filled with answers rather than questions.

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The Flame

**This is the law of the elevation offering...
on the flame, on the Altar..." (6:2)**

In this verse, the Torah writes the word "Altar" – *mokda* with a small *mem*. The Altar symbolizes man's service of G-d. Just as the flame always seeks to rise, likewise the hope of all prayer is to ascend to the highest places. However, fire also symbolizes pride and arrogance, the character traits that desire to rise and aggrandize themselves over others.

The essence of prayer is humility. When we understand how small we are, we have a chance of relating to how great G-d is, since true prayer and love of Torah is hidden in the heart, unrevealed to world, not trumpeted to all with extravagant gestures and posing.

Just like that the little *mem*, the elevation of the Altar of the heart is in proportion to its humility.

• Source: *The Kotzker Rebbe in Iturei Torah*

A Safe Haven

"...the Kohen who performs its sin-offering service shall eat it; it shall be eaten in a holy place; in the Courtyard of the Tent of Meeting..." (6:19)

Returning to the faith of our fathers has an advantage and a disadvantage. You've seen the bankruptcy of a lifestyle that glorifies the instant and the trans-

SHEMINI

High As A Kite

"G-d spoke to Aharon saying: Do not drink intoxicating wine, you and your sons with you when you come into the Tent of Meeting..." (10:8-9)

Statistics show a lower rate of alcoholism among Jews than their neighbors. This could be due to genetics. However sociologists surmise that there are other factors at work. For example, Jews meet alcohol in the context of *holiness* rather than in the local pub: A Jewish boy is introduced to alcohol at the ripe old age of eight days when the *mohel* places a few drops of wine into his mouth to mollify the pain of the circumcision.

Alcohol appears on the Shabbat table every Friday night with *kiddush*, and again the following morning in the daytime *kiddush*. On Saturday night during the *havdala* service we take our leave of Shabbat over a cup of wine. There are the four cups of wine to be drunk on Pesach and (many) more on Purim. The cycle of Jewish life embraces alcohol as part of a holy life.

Another controlling factor in the Jew's consumption of alcohol is the perception that being drunk does not befit a Jew. There is a Yiddish maxim that loosely translates as "Jews don't drink."

However, together with a rise in social dysfunction

sient; this is what brought you to the immutable and the ultimate. On the other hand, you are what you eat... and what you see and what you hear and what you do. The negative spiritual experiences of a previous life are a dormant but ever-present threat to your continued spiritual growth.

The only way to preserve and nurture your fledgling spirituality is to connect to a wellspring of spirituality, a strong community, or a yeshiva.

On the other hand, someone who grew up religious may lack the newfound zeal of the *ba'al teshuva*, but his or her Jewish observance is not assailed by a previous lifestyle.

"...the Kohen who performs its sin-offering service shall eat it; it shall be eaten in a holy place; in the Courtyard of the Tent of Meeting."

A sin-offering could only be eaten in a holy place, whereas a peace-offering could be eaten throughout the city of Jerusalem.

A peace-offering was brought as a demonstration of thanks and closeness to G-d. The peace-offering symbolizes someone who grew up religious, its eating doesn't require the intense sanctity of a holy place.

A sin-offering, however, which symbolizes the returnee to Judaism, demands a safe haven of the highest elevation to nourish and protect it.

• Source: *Nachal Binyamin in Iturei Torah*

amongst Jews including depression and lack of self-esteem, there has been a concomitant rise in substance abuse, including alcohol.

A happy person doesn't need a chemical crutch.

The Ba'al Shem Tov said that if a Jew knew what it meant to be a *Ben Olam Haba*, someone who has an eternal existence, he would be so happy that he would rush out into the street and start to do the *Kezatzke* (*Cossack dance*) like a *meshugenne*.

The essence of Jewish happiness is to know that with every mitzvah, every word of Torah and of kindness, we are building an eternal existence. That knowledge is more inebriating than the most potent liquor.

In this week's Torah portion, G-d warns Aharon that the *kohanim* must refrain from alcohol while performing the Temple service or adjudicating legal matters. This was not just a concern for motor efficiency or clear thought. The *kohen* is the epitome of Divine service; his high should come only from Torah and serving G-d. He should need no external chemical help; as the saintly Chazon Ish wrote over half a century ago to a world in great darkness, "There is no sadness for he who knows the light of truth..."

• Based on *Rebbe Bunim m'Pshiske*

Windbag

“This is the law of the Metzora... (14:2)

One of the causes of the spiritual affliction called *Tzara'at* was gossip and slander. The Torah considers these sins very grave. Habitual gossip and slander is equivalent to all three cardinal sins of idol worship, murder and adultery. Someone who habituates himself to this kind of speech forfeits his place in the future world. (*Erchin 15b*)

Primarily, we are physical creatures; at best our soul is a lodger in the house of the body. We find spiritual concepts abstruse and difficult to grasp. A blood-strewn battlefield makes more of an impression on us than the silent holocaust of character assassination.

For this reason the *metzora* is brought to the *kohen*. This person who was so cavalier with his words, who did not understand the power of speech, stands in front of the *kohen*, and with one word the *kohen* decides his fate,

“*Tahor* “or “*Tamei*”. “Pure” or “Impure.” Just one word can return him to the society of man, and just one word can banish him to solitude and ostracism.

“*For behold, He forms mountains and creates winds; He recounts to a person his conversation...*” (*Amos 4:13*)

Ostensibly the first half of this verse has little to do with the second. However, the prophet is answering the question, “Of what importance is a word? Words have no substance.”

“...*behold, He forms mountains...*”

G-d created lofty mountains, vast expanses of imperious rock. “...*And creates winds...*” — and yet the wind, which has no substance whatsoever, wears them down to an anthill. “*He recounts to a person his conversation.*” This fact should remind us that even though our words are as formless as the wind, they have the power to reduce great worlds to nothing.

• Sources: *Dubner Magid and Mayana shel Torah in Iturei Torah*

PARSHA Overview

Tzav

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burnt on the altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon’s sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony

for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

Shemini

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

TALMUDigest

Mo'ed Katan 23-29

- Stages of mourning and when mourner for wife may remarry
- Marital relations on Shabbat during the *shiva* mourning period
- Rending of garments as expression of mourning
- Burial of a child and condolences
- When death occurs a day before a holiday
- Rending garments for relative, sage or anyone else if present at death
- The funeral of two sages and the eulogy said about them
- The punishment of Bar Kipok and Bar Avin for preparing insensitive eulogies
- The miraculous occurrences upon the deaths of some of the sages
- Garments rended in mourning which cannot be repaired
- Rending garments on death of parent and teacher with Elisha as source, and for heads of Sanhedrin and sad tidings with David as source
- Rending garments for blasphemy, destruction of Sefer Torah and for Beit Hamikdash
- Adding one tear to another when a second cause for mourning occurs
- Details on the place where to rend the garment and what repair is permitted
- The folding of the beds and other laws concerning the mourner's home
- Practices instituted in funerals to avoid shaming the poor and others
- When it is permitted to do work in a city where a Jew is being buried
- The danger of overdoing mourning
- The atonement power of the death of the righteous
- The significances of the age of the deceased and how many days of illness preceded it
- The confrontation of Sages with the Angel of Death
- The condolences offered by the Sages to Rabbi Yishmael upon death of his sons
- How to take leave of the living and of the dead

Prophecy Outside of Eretz Yisrael

Is there prophecy outside of Eretz Yisrael? This question arises in our *gemara* as a result of a eulogy which Rabbi Abba made on the passing of Rabbi Huna.

"Our teacher," he declared, "was worthy of the Divine Presence resting upon him (of attaining prophecy) but being in Babylon prevented him from reaching this level."

When Rabbi Nachman bar Rabbi Chisda heard this statement about prophecy being limited to Eretz Yisrael he challenged it from the passage introducing the prophecy of Yechezkel: "There was, indeed there was, the Word of G-d to Yechezkel ben Buzi Hakohen in the Land of the Chaldeans." (*Yechezkel* 1:3)

This challenge did not find favor in the eyes of his father who gave him a reprimanding tap on his shoe for asking too many questions. He pointed out to him that the double language "there was, there was" indicated that this was an exception to the rule.

Rashi offers two explanations for it being an exception. One is that this was a one-time prophecy that was and would not occur again. His other explanation is that since "there was" prophecy for Yechezkel when he was in Eretz Yisrael, "there was" prophecy for him outside the Land as well.

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi in his classic "Kuzari" (Section 2:14) offers a third approach. Since Yechezkel was prophesying regarding Eretz Yisrael, he enjoyed prophecy even abroad.

The best-known example of prophecy being limited to Eretz Yisrael is found in the Book of Yonah, which we read as the *haftarah* for the Torah reading at Mincha on Yom Kippur. When ordered by G-d to go to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh to call upon its residents to repent, the Prophet Yonah, who had great reluctance to undertake this mission, attempted to flee by ship from Eretz Yisrael so that he would not attain prophecy and would be relieved from this responsibility.

• *Mo'ed Katan* 25a

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TALMUDigest

Chagigah 2-8

- Who is obligated in the mitzvah of bringing a sacrifice on visiting the Beit Hamikdash on a Festival
- The lame, the blind, the half-slave, the mute and the deaf
- Why little children are brought to Yerushalayim once in seven years
- How to view the differences of opinion among Sages
- The eyes of Rabbi Yossi ben Durmaskis
- What determines insanity
- Women, hermaphrodites, children and slaves
- The uncircumcised, the spiritually impure and the half-blind
- Why some Sages wept upon reading certain passages
- When a good deed can be counterproductive
- The secret of the Sage Rava and the charades of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya
- The “weeping”, as it were, of G-d
- Blessing from a blind sage
- The “one-day-a-year scholar”
- Why the Prophet Shmuel was not brought to Yerushalayim right away
- The minimum value of the sacrifices brought on Festival
- Nature of the sacrifice brought by our ancestors in the wilderness
- If a sacrifice must be brought every time one enters the Beit Hamikdash during the Festival
- From which funds must sacrifices be purchased
- Allocating funds for sacrifices on basis of size of family and amount of resources

Counterproductive Charity

In the closing words of his Divinely inspired *Kohelet*, the wisest of men, King Solomon, writes: “For G-d shall bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.” (*Kohelet* 12:14)

Why should there be judgment on deeds that are good just as there is judgment for evil deeds?

The answer given by Rabbi Yannai is that there can be a combination of good and evil in the same deed and G-d shall discern the evil that overshadows the apparent good. The example he offers is that of one giving charity to a poor man in public and thus causing him great embarrassment.

Rabbi Yannai once witnessed a man giving charity to a poor man in public and reprimanded him by declaring that it would have been preferable for him to not have given him charity and thus avoided embarrassing him.

Maharsha raises an interesting point. The rule is that when there is a clash between the fulfillment of a positive command and transgressing a prohibition, the positive command has priority. Since giving charity is a positive command, should it not therefore override the prohibition of simultaneously embarrassing another?

His simple answer is that this rule applies only when there is no way to fulfill the positive command without transgressing the prohibition. In Rabbi Yannai’s case the charity could have been given discreetly to avoid embarrassment.

What the SAGES Say

“When a person commits a sin and then commits it once again he relates to it as if it is no longer a sin.”

• Rabbi Huna - *Mo’ed Katan* 27b

“Said G-d to Israel, ‘You made Me a distinctive entity in the world in your declaration of *Shema Yisrael* and I will make you a distinctive entity in the world in My declaration that ‘*Who is like Your people Israel, one nation in the world*.’”

• Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah - *Chagigah* 3a

“Whoever studies Torah during the night is blessed by G-d with a special grace during the day. Some say that whoever studies Torah in this world will be blessed by G-d with a special grace in the World-to-Come.”

• Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - *Chagigah* 12b

“If the evil inclination tries to persuade you to sin by assuring you that G-d will anyway forgive you, don’t listen to him.”

• Rabbi Yehuda ben Rabbi Nachmeini - *Chagigah* 16a

TALMUDigest

Chagigah 9-15

- How long can one still bring his Succot Festival sacrifices
- Irreparable sins
- That extra Torah study that makes the difference
- Torah laws and how explicit is their source
- Limitations on teaching certain Torah subjects
- The problem of teaching rules of forbidden sexual relations to three people
- Creation of Adam, light and the sea and all that was created on the first day
- The order of creation on the first day
- The order of creation of heaven and earth
- The invisible foundations of the earth
- The seven heavens and what they contain
- Importance of Torah study at night and danger of interrupting Torah study with idle talk
- How the haughty Nebuchadnetzer was put in his place
- The esoteric prophecy of Yechezkel and who is qualified to study it
- The faces, wings and numbers of heavenly angels
- The mysterious two chairs described by Daniel
- The 18 curses of the Prophet Yeshayahu and one more
- Sages who mastered *Maaseh Merkavah*
- Four Sages who entered the “Orchard” and what happened to them
- The exchanges with the Sage Ben Zoma
- The adventures of Acheir, the sage who went wrong

Danger of Missing Out

A Jew who missed offering his Festival sacrifices on the first day can make this up on the succeeding days. But if he fails to do so until the Festival is over he has missed out. In regard to such a person the *Mishna* applies the passage: “That which is crooked cannot be straightened and that which is missing cannot be counted.” (*Kohelet* 1:15)

Another application of this passage is found in a *beraita*. The reference there is to one who failed to recite the *Shema* in the morning or evening or who failed to say his morning or evening prayers or who did not join his comrades in performing a mitzvah.

Maharsha explains that the “crooked which cannot be straightened” refers to one who failed to recite the *Shema* or say the *Shacharit* morning and *Ma'ariv* evening prayers throughout that day and night. The second half about “that which is missing cannot be counted” refers to one who did pray but failed to join others in a minyan.

The reason the *Mincha* service is not mentioned, although missing it comes under the same category of “that which is crooked”, is because of the *beraita*'s interest in keeping the prayer part parallel to the *Shema* part which is recited only morning and night.

• *Chagiga* 9a-b

PARSHA Overview

Tazria

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous disease that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week. If the disease remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail.

Metzora

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara'at*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week, and involves offerings and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara'at*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara'at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house; if it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and how one regains a state of ritual purity.

TALMUDigest

Chagigah 16-20

- How Rabbi Akiva knew where the Divine Presence was
- Angels, men and demons
- What to avoid looking into and looking at
- Don't fall for the pitch of the evil inclination
- The debate that spanned generations
- The tragic tale of the Sage Yehuda ben Tabai and the witness
- What happened to the Sage Menachem
- Offering the Festival sacrifices on Yom Tov and doing *semicha*
- The source for opportunity to offer Shavuot sacrifices even after Yom Tov
- The prohibition against certain forms of labor during Chol Hamoed
- Why eulogies and fasting were permitted on day when belated Shavuot sacrifices were offered
- Washing hands and immersion for different levels of sanctity
- Washing for bread or any other food
- If such washing requires intention
- The role of intention in regard to immersion
- The two who made immersion in a mikveh with just enough water for the first and how waters connect
- The status of those who practice the restraints of sacrificial purity even in regard to ordinary food
- Lapses in attention to guarding purity
- When the boss cannot rely on the purity of his workers
- The differences between sacrificial and *terumah* standards in acquiring impurity and regaining it

Forced Admission

A man may be tempted to sin when his evil inclination promises him that G-d will forgive him. The Prophet Micha (7:5) warns such a man "trust not such an evil force" and "have no confidence in the forgiveness of G-d". There is no Divine forgiveness without repentance, and even if one sins with the commitment to later

repent, he may be prevented by Heaven from achieving that repentance.

And yet a person may be persuaded to believe that his secret sin will remain unknown. To destroy this illusion four categories of witnesses are listed who will testify against him:

The stones and walls of his home will testify as the Prophet Chabakuk (2:11) warns: "The stone shall cry out of the wall."

Two Heavenly angels who accompany him shall testify, as King David states (*Tehillim* 91:11): "For He shall appoint angels to accompany you."

Man's soul will testify as the Prophet Micha (ibid.) cautions: "Keep the doors of your mouth shut from what lies in your bosom."

Man's organs and limbs will testify, as the Prophet Yeshayahu (43:10) quotes G-d as declaring "You are my witnesses."

Although it is obvious that G-d needs no witnesses in His trial of man for "He is both judge and witness" (*Avot* 4:22), it is His desire to have man admit his sin. Maharsha points out the different sins to which man will admit as a result of irrefutable testimony.

Refers to the futility of man's attempt to commit a sin hidden from public knowledge such as eating in the privacy of his home while the entire community is fasting because of lack of rain. (See *Ta'anit* 11a). His sinful act will inevitably be revealed.

Refers to those violations of prohibitions that create angels who accompany him and will testify against him in the judgment of the hereafter.

Refers to the sins of speech for man's power of speech is an expression of the soul that G-d breathed into him. (See Targum Onkeles on *Bereishet* 2:7)

Refers to the positive commands which man failed to do since the 365 positive *mitzvot* correspond to the parts of man.

• *Chagigah* 16a

ASK! the Jewish Information Service

Pesach Potpourri

Dat's a Nisaname

From: Mark

Dear Rabbi,
I have heard that the names for the months of the year are not from the Torah but rather were acquired during one of the exiles, so that Nissan is not the 'real' name of the month. What then is the Torah's name for the month that Passover is in, and what is the significance of the different names?

Dear Mark,

The Torah refers to the month that has become to be called Nissan as "*haChodesh haRishon*" or the first or head of the months. This is because it is always to be reckoned as the first of the months of the year, and all other months are referred to by their position relative to it, i.e., the second, third, fourth etc. By referring to this month as the first we are reminded of the great miracles of the Exodus that occurred in it, as does our reference to each consecutive month recall that event. This is similar to the Torah's referring to the days of the week by number culminating in the Sabbath such that the "name" of each day actually elevates the status of the seventh. Consequently, we don't reckon the months according to where they come in the year — recall that the year begins with Rosh Hashanah in Tishrei, which is

the seventh month — but rather we count them from the month of our deliverance.

The month of Passover is also referred to as "*Chodesh haAviv*" which means the month of spring, since the Torah requires that the calendar be calibrated such that this month always occurs in the season that the Exodus occurred. The redemption is then celebrated in the time of year when all living things undergo renewal and renaissance, and bounty is abounding in the world. The early commentators suggest a hidden meaning in this name for the month that connects both ideas: "*Aviv*" is spelled *alef-vav*; *yud-vav*. *Alef-vav*, "*av*", means father, a reference to the head; *yud-vav* according to *gematria* has a numerical equivalent of twelve. Thus we see a hint that the head of the months occurs in spring.

The name Nissan is Babylonian in origin, its having been brought back with the Jews from their exile in Babylon. However, this name is also connected with the themes of Exodus and spring. Nissan recalls the word "*nes*" meaning miracle. Also, insofar as it is similar to the word *nitzan*, which means bud, it recalls spring, regarding which the verse says, "The buds have appeared in the Land" (Song of Songs 2).

The sign of the Zodiac for this month is Aries, a ram. This is because this sign is clearly visible in the stars during this month. It is for this reason that the ancient Egyptians worshipped the ram as a symbol of fertility, proliferation, wealth and power. The Egyptians, whose entire purpose in life was directed toward riches and physical strength thus deified the ram, bowed down to

continued on page thirteen

WHAT'S the Right Thing TO DO?

Driver's Dilemma

Question: As a driver of a public transportation bus I am faced with a dilemma. During busy hours my bus rapidly fills up to the point where even standing room hardly exists. As I approach the next stop where more people are waiting I have a conflict as to whether I should pass them by to spare my present passengers further inconvenience, or open my doors to those who have been waiting so anxiously for their bus to arrive. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Your sensitivity to the needs of your passengers is certainly commendable.

The first thing to do is to make sure that there is really no more comfortable standing room by announcing to your present passengers that unless they move to empty places in the back of the bus they will be depriving those at the next stop from the opportunity to board the bus.

If you are convinced that there really is no more room and

that taking on more passengers will literally turn your bus into a human sardine can, you have no choice but to bypass those waiting at the next stop. This situation may roughly be compared to the Talmudic dilemma of the two people walking in the desert and threatened with death from thirst. One of them has a canteen of water that will sustain him until he reaches civilization. If he shares his water with the other, both will live a bit longer but both will surely die before reaching their destination. The ruling of Rabbi Akiva is that since the Torah commands, "Your brother shall live *along with you*", the indication is that your life comes first and that therefore there is no obligation to share your water at the expense of your life.

The passengers who have acquired a place on your bus by paying their fare have no responsibility to discomfort themselves for the sake of those waiting, and you do have a responsibility to serve those passengers in reasonable fashion.

ISRAEL *Forever*

A Great Shabbat!

“Have a great Shabbat!” This has quickly become the popular way of wishing a fellow Jew an extraordinary spiritual and physical experience on the sacred day of rest.

Although every Shabbat can indeed be a great one if properly utilized, the title “Great Shabbat” is traditionally accorded to the Shabbat before Pesach, which is known as “Shabbat Hagadol” (the Great Shabbat).

There will be no special Torah reading in the synagogue this Shabbat, only a special *haftarah*, but this is called the Great Shabbat because of the great miracle that took place on the Shabbat before the

Exodus 3319 years ago. That is when our ancestors prepared themselves for the instant transformation from slaves in a corrupt idol-worshipping country into a holy nation. They did so by taking the very animal worshipped by the Egyptians and defiantly binding it in preparation for a sacrifice to be offered four days later. The inability of their Egyptian masters to prevent this is considered a great miracle that memorialized this day as the Great Shabbat.

There is much to be improved in Israel in regard to private and public observance of Shabbat. It is to be hoped that this Great Shabbat will inspire all Jews to make every Shabbat a great Shabbat in Israel forever.

The HUMAN SIDE of the Story

The Missing Pesach Silver

In the little Lithuanian town of Vabolinikas there lived a saintly woman by the name of Batsheva Shach. Her charitable deeds were legendary. Despite her own limited means she would deliver baskets of food at the doors of poor families in town and quickly depart before anyone became aware of her good deed.

Her charitable activities reached their peak when the need arose to provide funds for the wedding of an orphaned girl. As she racked her brain for some way to help the poor *kallah*, her eyes fell upon the closed cabinet containing silver vessels that her husband had given

her as an outright gift. These were precious vessels that were used only on Pesach and she was sentimentally attached to them. Without even informing her husband she opened the cabinet and delivered the vessels into the hands of the trustees collecting for the wedding.

When Pesach came and her husband opened the cabinet in order to decorate the Seder table, he asked his wife where the vessels were. Her reply was that those vessels helped establish a Jewish home.

This was the woman whose son, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, was destined to become a leader of world Jewry.

LOVE OF THE LAND

THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

Tomb of Shimon Hatzadik

The world-renowned Yeshivat Ohr Somayach is the dominating structure on Shimon Hatzadik Street that takes its name from its proximity to the Tomb of Shimon Hatzadik a short distance away.

Simon Hatzadik was the last of the members of the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah* (Men of



the Great Assembly) and succeeded Ezra as the *Kohen Gadol* of the Second *Beit Hamikdash*.

Many Jews visit this tomb on the *Yahrzeit* of Shimon Hatzadik and also on Lag B'Omer when they find it difficult to travel to Meron to be at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

PARSHA Q&A

TZAV

1. What separated the *kohen's* skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the *mizbe'ach*? How often were they removed from next to the *mizbe'ach*?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the *mizbe'ach*, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the *mizbe'ach* may not be *chametz*. But is the *kohen's* portion allowed to be *chametz*?
5. When a *kohen* is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the *korban* of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a *minchat kohen* and a *minchat Yisrael*?
8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatat*?
9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an *asham* be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an *asham* differ from all other *korbanot*?
12. Unlike all other *korbanot*, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the *mizbe'ach*?
13. What three types of *kohanim* may not eat from the *asham*?
14. In which four instances is a *korban todah* brought?
15. Until when may a *todah* be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a *korban* become *pigul*?
17. Who may eat from a *shelamim*?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the *Ohel Moed*?
19. Other than *Yom Kippur*, what other service requires that the *kohen* separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of *korbanot* listed in this *Parsha*?

Answers to Tzav's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -A) Every day. B) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A *korban mincha* — A tenth part of an *ephah* of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The *minchat kohen* is burnt completely. Only a handful of the *minchat Yisrael* is burnt, and the remainder is eaten by the *kohanim*.
8. 6:19 - If he is *tamei* (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
10. 7:1 - No.
11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
12. 7:3 - The tail.
13. 7:7 - A *t'vul yom* (a *tamei kohen* who immersed in a *mikveh* yet awaits sunset to become *tahor*); a *mechusar kipurim* (a *tamei* person who has gone to the *mikveh* but has yet to bring his required offering); an *onan* (a mourner prior to the burial of the deceased).
14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. b) Until midnight.
16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the *parah adumah* (red heifer).
20. *Olah* (6:2); *mincha* (6:7); *chatat* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).

PARSHA Q&A

SHEMINI

1. What date was “*yom hashemini*”?
2. Which of Aharon’s *korbanot* atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What *korbanot* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatat* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkat kohanim*?
6. Why did Moshe go into the *Ohel Mo’ed* with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three *chatat* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.
11. Which he-goat *chatat* did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the *chatat*. Why?
14. Why did G-d choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrut*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only one sign of *kashrut*? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called *chasida* in Hebrew?
19. The *chagav* is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

Answers to Shemini’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 9:1 - First of Nissan.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a *korban chatat*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatat*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *mincha*.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a *chatat* offered on the courtyard *mizbe’ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanot*, before descending from the *mizbe’ach*.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the *Shechina* to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the *Mishkan* after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a *halachic* ruling. Also, a *kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, approach the *mizbe’ach*, or perform the *avoda*.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of *Rosh Chodesh*, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.
11. 10:16 - The *Rosh Chodesh chatat*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninut* (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the *kohanim* eat the *chatat* are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4,5,6,7 - Four: Camel, *shafan*, hare and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with *chesed* (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher *chagav*.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern).

PARSHA Q&A

Tazria

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?

Metzora

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented "before G-d" (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara'at* in one's house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara'at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?

Answers to Tazria-Metzora's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

Tazria

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.

Metzora

1. 14:2 - At night.

2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara'at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara'at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n'sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe'ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara'at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.

ASK! *the Jewish Information Service*

continued from page eight

it and worshiped it. Therefore, the Jews, whose lives are to be directed to G-d and His service, were commanded to slaughter the ram at the apex of its power and influence, and bring it as an offering to G-d. To both Israelite and Egyptian the sign of the month was a ram — for the ancient Egyptians it was a symbol of idolatry, but for Israel it is a symbol of the service of G-d.

Clean Mean Matzah Machine

From: Debra

*Dear Rabbi,
What is the difference between hand-made and machine-made matzah?*

Dear Debra,

Since the Exodus, Jews have zealously carried out all the fine details concerning the baking of the matzah, whose method has remained basically unchanged for all those years. Careful and agile hands have performed each process from making the dough until the baking was complete.

About one hundred and fifty years ago, a machine was invented for baking matzah. Most of the processes were done by this machine, and the *matzot* were untouched by human hands. The rabbinical authorities at that time and afterward were divided in their opinions as to whether *matzot* baked by machinery should be permitted on Passover.

Those who rejected using machine matzah argued that when making matzah we must be fully conscious of the fact that we are performing a mitzvah.

A machine has no such intention. They also claimed that the intricacy of the machinery makes it impossible to ensure that no pieces of dough remain in the apparatus that would render the matzah *chametz*. Furthermore, the fast-moving metal parts of the machine generate heat that might cause the dough to ferment. Also, the time limit for the process of making dough that has been handed down to us by tradition is specifically regarding hand-made dough. Since we have no such tradition regarding the time limit for machine-made dough, they claimed, we have to take a strict view and retain the original method.

Those in favor of using machine-baked matzah — and they are in the majority — argued that since it is baked more quickly, there is less of a danger of it becoming *chametz* than when the work is done by hand, providing that special care is taken to ensure that the parts of the machinery are kept clean and that no pieces of dough remain which could be transferred from one batch to the next. In addition, they produced counter-arguments to all of the above claims so that their opinion has finally generally been accepted as correct and is followed by many who fulfill the mitzvah on Passover by eating matzah that has been baked by machinery.

However, there are still many meticulous Jews who take great effort and expense to eat only hand-made matzah for the whole of Passover. And even among those who don't eat only hand-made matzah, many are careful to use it to fulfill the special matzah-eating on the first night of Passover at the Seder.

*The Ohr Somayach family wishes
you a Chag Kasher v'Somayach.*

מַעַל יְדֵי עַם

Be Fruitful

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Pesach comes and goes and I am sure that it has an impact on us all. But... so much work and so much upheaval and then, in a puff of time, it is gone. It seems a little unfair. After all, the preparations seem to take much longer than the actual Yom Tov! But, of course, we know in our heart of hearts that the real preparation is spiritual, and that it is supposed to carry us through this Pesach and all the way to next Pesach.

But, the month of Pesach — Nissan — is famous for something else as well. In Nissan we are commanded to make a *beracha* over the trees — “*Birkat Ha’ilanot*”. The *beracha* must be made over a fruit tree that has blossom on it, and one of the reasons why it is recited in Nissan is because the month of Nissan is the time that the trees begin show some life after the bleak winter. In my more impetuous days I once asked the Bostoner Rebbe why it was that we make the *beracha* over budding trees and not over trees that are almost ready to be harvested and weighed down with luscious fruit. He told me that making the *beracha* over a fruit-laden tree is far too late. The essence of what we are doing is recognizing G-d’s blessings *even when they are not so easy to see* and utilizing those blessings to their fullest, so that, when the time comes, we too will proudly bear the fruits of our labors.

What is so important about Nissan? It is the beginning of the year, it is the beginning of the Jewish People and it contains our potential for the whole year to come — and, just like the fruit tree we have to grow and reach upwards to G-d and not let anything get in our way.

The Biala Rebbe often relates the story of how when he was a young child, he fled the Nazis together with his family, and eventually arrived in Siberia. There, the Communist prison guards attempted with all their might to prevent them from fulfilling *mitzvot*. Nevertheless, his father, the Chelkas Yehoshua, *zatzal*, constantly defied them. He smuggled in a Sefer Torah and some other *sefarim*, organized clandestine *minyanim*, and baked *matzot* from the meager flour rations they were granted. Once the Rebbe overheard the guards saying to his father, “We see that we will never be able to influence you. You are old, and set in your ways. *But your children will be ours, you will see.*” When the Chelkas Yehoshua heard this, he uttered a deep and terrible groan that resounded in his

son’s memory for many years to come. What was so terrible about what he had just heard? Because, as we all know, it is the children who represent the nascent beginnings of the next generation. They are the buds on the latest branch of the Jewish People. They haven’t yet blossomed, they hadn’t yet evolved into their final shape, but without them there is nothing.

Today, when the Biala Rebbe participates in the Bar Mitzvah celebrations of his grandchildren, he always retells this story, and makes a public declaration of gratitude to G-d for having protected him and allowed him to keep the Torah and pass it on to his children and grandchildren. When we realize what a precious gift the Torah is to us, and what a privilege it is for us to be G-d’s chosen nation, every moment of Torah study becomes that much more meaningful. The Torah is something our ancestors fought to preserve, uphold, and transmit to the next generation.

When I asked the Bostoner Rebbe about the *beracha* I fear that I was being a little flippant. But when he answered me he was being anything but. He was teaching me that being Jewish is all about the potential that is extant within every single one of us, and it is all about wanting nothing more than to draw out that potential. I think that’s what Nissan and *Birkat Ha’ilanot* is all about. It is an acutely personal moment. Each person has to come to the realization and to verbally acknowledge that there is “nothing lacking in His world”. What we are saying, in effect, is that we may not be able to see the blessing right now but that does not mean that it is not there. It is just “waiting to come to life” and to blossom and grow into something truly majestic.

If we can absorb and act upon the inspiring message that the Bostoner Rebbe is passing down to us we can raise ourselves to new levels of appreciation and awareness not just of what Nissan is supposed to mean, but of what every day of the year is supposed to mean. We can appreciate every word of Torah and every mitzvah that we learn and fulfill in our time-restricted schedules. We can appreciate every act of *chesed* kindness that we successfully achieve in a day that has no spaces in it. We can watch our spiritual buds begin to flower and mature into beautiful ripe fruit that will be a source of wonder to all who see it.