

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### An Offering You Can't Refuse

*"When a person among you brings a korban to Hashem..." (1:1)*

You can see who someone really wants to be by the way they dress up on Purim.

One year, I went to Meah Shearim and bought a completely authentic *Chassidic* outfit: knee britches with white knee-length socks, the classic unique shoes, the shirt with wide cuffs and the buttons that do up the other way round. The only thing I stopped short of was a *shtreimel*, which would have set me back a few thousand dollars. There is just so much you can do for accuracy...

At the beginning of Megillat Esther, Achashverosh throws a party to end all parties. His party costume was the vestments of the High Priest. Was Achashverosh poking fun at the Jewish People and their prophecies of the end of his all-mighty kingdom? Or maybe there was something deeper?

The Torah hints to four mighty empires who will subjugate the Jewish People. Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Each of these empires successively snatched world domination one from the other. Eventually, the last of those empires, Rome and its cultural heirs, the Western world, will return the dominion to the Jewish People. When that happens, the prophet Yeshayahu, Isaiah, foresees that, "*The lost ones will come from the land of Ashur...*" and the final exile will end. The name Ashur is related to the Hebrew word "*ishur*." An *ishur* is a certification. Each nation that takes the kingship from the Jewish People seeks to "certify" itself as being the true and final recipient of the crown of the world. But they can only do this by proclaiming themselves as the true heirs. They each claim to be the "New Israel."

They claim that the testament of faith of the Jewish People is old and that they have a new one. That, in essence, was what Achashverosh was attempting to do at his millennial party. He was certifying himself as the New Israel. His party was a grotesque replication of the Temple service. He took out the holy vessels of the Temple and used them at his party of inauguration. He was dressed as the Kohen Gadol, the high priest.

*"When a person among you brings a korban to Hashem..."*

He even went so far as to name his ministers after the offerings of the Holy Temple. *Olah, Chatat, Shlamim*. The vestments of the Kohen Gadol were made with deep kabbalistic powers. Achashverosh was trying to utilize those forces of holiness for his own means, to set his seal on world domination using the higher spiritual forces. This was no fancy-dress party.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Bava Metzia 23-29

Rava said, “The obligation to return a lost object to a person who claims and describes the object he lost by giving proper ‘signs’ is a Torah obligation.”

There is both a positive mitzvah and a “negative command” to return a lost object to its owner, as the verses state, “You shall return it to him” and “You shall not ignore it.” (See Devarim 22:1-3)

The *gemara* asks if the obligation to return the lost object based on *simanim* (signs that identify the object) is of Torah origin or is a Rabbinical decree. Rava explains that it is of Torah origin since there is a verse that teaches returning the lost object to one who gives proper signs: “It shall be with you until your fellow person seeks it out” (Dev. 22:2). “Would I ever think to return it to someone who *doesn’t* seek it out?” asks Rava rhetorically. Rather, the words in the verse “*ad drosh achicha oto*” need to be understood in a manner that is different than at first glance. The intent of these words is that the finder “seeks out and checks out” the person who claims he lost it, by demanding proper identification of the object. In this way, the finder is certain that he is not giving the lost object to a fraud, but is in fact returning the lost object to its true owner.

▪ *Bava Metzia 28a*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* – the Laws of the Priests – deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called a *korban olah*, a burnt-offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the person bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards, it is slaughtered, and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the Altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the Altar.

A similar process is described involving burnt-offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal-offerings are described. Part of the meal-offering is burned on the Altar, and the remaining part is eaten by the *kohanim*. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace-offering, part of which is burned on the Altar and part eaten, can be from cattle, sheep or goats.

The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the Prince and by the average citizen, are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal-offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt-offering – the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the “questionable guilt” offering, and offerings for dishonesty – are detailed.

# Q & A

## Questions

1. Who does the word "eilav" in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week's Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an olah atone for?
4. Where was the olah slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-kohen perform?
6. Besides the fire the kohanim bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are torim (turtledoves) and bnei yona (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is melika?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a "satisfying aroma"?
11. Why is the term "nefesh" used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will mincha offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the mincha. What is meant by "honey"?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning shelamim, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the kohen may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the mizbe'ach. For which korban may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a chatat?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burned while in the wilderness? Where were they burned during the time of the Beit Hamikdash?
19. What two things does a voluntary mincha have that a minchat chatat lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a korban asham?

## Answers

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2,14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (torim), and doves (bnei yona).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the Mishkan Courtyard (azarah).
5. 1:5 - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, bnei yona are too old and torim are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one's fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal's food is provided by its owner, so its innards are "kosher." Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with "theft."
10. 1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, G-d regards it as if he had offered his nefesh (soul).
12. 2:1 - The kometz (fistful).
13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
14. 2:12 - On Shavuot.
15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the alya (fat tail). The lamb's alya is burned on the altar but the goat's is not.
16. 3:8 - The chatat.
17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the karet (excision) penalty.
18. 4:12 -
  - a. Outside the three camps.
  - b. Outside Jerusalem.
19. 5:11 - Levona and oil.
20. 5:15 - Two shekalim.

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## BIRKAT HAMAZON (PART 17)

### BLUEPRINT OF JEWISH DESTINY

*“Anyone who recites Birkat HaMazon is blessed through it.”*  
(Zohar HaKadosh to Parshat Terumah)

The requests continue: The Compassionate One, may He send us the Prophet Eliyahu, who is remembered for good, to proclaim to us good tidings, salvations and consolations.

The “good tidings, salvations and consolations” that the Prophet Eliyahu is going to declare is that the Mashiach’s arrival is imminent. As the Prophet Malachi so stirringly declares in Hashem’s Name (3:23), “Behold, I will send Eliyahu the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem.” The Rambam (*Hilchot Melachim* 12:2) writes that Eliyahu will come to return the Jewish Nation to the Ways of the Torah as a prelude to the Mashiach’s arrival. And once the Mashiach has revealed his presence to us our long and miserable exile will finally be over.

How, exactly, are we going to hear the great announcement of the Mashiach’s arrival? The Kotzker Rebbe once sent one of his Chasidim to open the door for *shefoch chamatcha* on Seder night. The Chasid was frozen to the spot incapable of even the simplest action of opening the door. When the Rebbe asked him what the problem was he said that he is certain that Prophet Eliyahu must be waiting right outside the door of the Kotzker Rebbe and he was too scared to open the door to see. Answered the Rebbe “You’re wrong. The Prophet Eliyahu enters through the heart not the door!”

Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (1696-1743) was one of the greatest scholars in his generation. He was born in Morocco and moved to Jerusalem a few years before his untimely passing. He authored several brilliant works, the most famous is his all-encompassing commentary on the Torah entitled *Ohr HaChaim* – which is how he is commonly referred to – that reveals the extent of his breathtaking depth and breadth of Torah scholarship. Asking why our present exile is taking so long the *Ohr HaChaim* cites a *midrash* that the redemption from Egypt took place through the merits of Avraham Avinu. The redemption from the Babylonian exile was in the merits of Yitzchak Avinu. And it was the merits of Yaakov Avinu that redeemed us from the Greek exile. The Final Redemption that will herald in the Messianic Era will be in the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu. Explains the *Ohr HaChaim* the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu means in the merit of the Torah. That until there is an explosion of Torah learning throughout the Jewish world we cannot be redeemed.

However, there is a glimmer of light in the darkness of our present exile. The *Sefat Emet* writes (*Sefat Emet HaShalem*, Tractate *Rosh Hashanah*) that in the same way that the redeemer came a little while before the redemption from Egypt actually happened, so too, will our Final Redemption unfold.

There is a delightful story that is told about the revered Rabbi Levi Yitzchak from Berditchev, whose overwhelming love for every single Jew was legendary. One Yom Kippur night he turned to Hashem and cried out, “Beloved Father in Heaven! Our Sages teach that whoever quotes something in the name of the person who originally said it brings the redemption (Tractate *Megillah* 15a). Well, I, Levi Yitzchak, want to quote something in *Your* Name, “And Hashem said, ‘I have forgiven because of your words’ (*Bamidbar* 14:20). Now You must redeem us!”

May we all merit to experience it very, very soon.

# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### The Kidneys Advisory

The kidneys are vital organs that essentially act as the body's filtration system, ensuring that toxins are removed from the blood. They are thus responsible for filtering waste products and other excess substances from the blood, which are then expelled in urine. Additionally, the kidneys play a crucial role in maintaining a balance of electrolytes, regulating blood pressure, and controlling red blood cell production through the secretion of hormones, thus making them crucial overall health and function of both man and animal. One of the oft-repeated instructions for ritual sacrifices given in the Book of Leviticus is that the kilayot (“kidneys”) of an animal sacrifice must be burnt on the altar along with various fats from the animal’s body. In fact, of the thirty-one times that the word kilayot appears in the entire Bible, fifteen of those instances refer to this specific rule (Lev. 3:4, 3:10, 2:15, 4:9, 4:7, 8:16, 8:25, 9:10, 9:19). In the essay before you, we explore the etymology of the word kilayot, and compare it to its two possible synonyms in Biblical Hebrew – atzeh and tuchot.

In addition to the word kilayot in the Bible referring to “kidneys” in the anatomical sense, the word is also used in a more abstract sense to refer to one’s innermost thoughts and motives. It is in this cognitive sense that Hashem is said to have the ability to examine man’s heart and kidneys (Jer. 11:20, 17:10, 20:12, Ps. 7:10). In such contexts, the term kilayot is often translated into English as “reins” (which is related to the English words renal and adrenaline).

Besides for the aforementioned instances of kilayot in the Bible, this word also appears in the Mishnah (Chullin 3:2, 4:1, Tamid 4:3). Interestingly, the word kilayot always appears in the Bible and Mishnah in plural form, although theoretically, its singular form should be kilyah. In the Talmud, the Hebrew/Aramaic word kulya refers to “a single kidney” (Pesachim 64b, Chullin 93a, 97a, 126b, 128b–129a, Bechorot 39a, Kritot 14a, 23a).

Rabbi Moshe Tedeschi Ashkenazi (1821–1898) in his work *Otzar Nirdafim* (§344) connects the word kilayot to the word kele (“jail, incarceration”), spelled with a final ALEPH. He accounts for this connection by explaining that as internal organs, the kidneys are embedded deep within a person’s body, as though they are “hidden” or “jailed” inside. Indeed, Ibn Ezra (to Ps. 7:10) understands that the term kilayot can sometimes be meant metaphorically as a reference to the thoughts and beliefs “hidden” deep within a person’s consciousness.

In a similar vein, Ibn Ezra (to Ex. 23:25, Lev. 3:4 and Ps. 16:7, 139:13, cited by Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim*) connects these two meanings of the word kilayot by postulating that the bodily kidneys are the seat of libidinous desire, leading him to explain kilayot as cognate with the verbs derived from the root KAF-LAMMED-(HEY) that refer to “desiring/longing” in the Bible (II Sam. 13:39, Ps. 119:3, 119:81). A similar point is made by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ex. 23:18 and Lev. 3:4), who writes that the kidneys are the most profound source of sensuous desire, making them the organs of the evil inclinations and impulses. In line with this, Nachmanides (to Lev. 1:9) writes that burning the kidneys on the altar is so central to the sacrificial rites needed to achieve atonement squarely because the kidneys are instruments of the sort of desire that cause sin in the first place.

In one particular passage, the Bible stipulates that with animal sacrifices, one should remove the fat from opposite the atzeh (Lev. 3:9). This word atzeh only appears once in the Bible, thus making it a hapax legomenon. Yet, Rashi (to Ex. 29:22, Lev. 3:9) and Rashbam (to Lev. 3:9) explain that atzeh means the same thing as kilayot. From where does Rashi’s explanation come?

The Talmud (Brachot 61a) teaches that the two kidneys provide eitzah (“advice”) to the heart, with one kidney advising a person to perform good and the other, to perform evil. The Talmud (there) further posits (based on

Ecc. 10:2) that the kidney on the right advises for the better, while the kidney on the left advises for the worse. When citing this tradition, Rabbi Elazar Rokeach of Worms (late 12<sup>th</sup> century Asheknazic scholar) in Sodi Razi adds that the kidneys are also the source of happiness, as it says “and my kidneys shall rejoice” (Prov. 23:16).

Based on the Talmudic tradition, the Talmud (Chullin 11a) explains that the aforementioned Biblical term atzeh refers to none other than the "kidneys," which are the anatomical body part that are said to provide eitzah. This explication of the word atzeh – which clearly serves as the basis for Rashi’s understanding of atzeh as synonymous with kilayot – seems to be based on spelling of atzeh as AYIN-TZADI-HEY, which can also be read as eitzah.

For more about these Hebrew words for “kidneys” and other possible related words, please visit us online for the full version of this informative essay: [http://ohr.edu/this\\_week/whats\\_in\\_a\\_word/](http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/)

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## TAAMEI HAMITZVOS

### Reasons behind the Mitzvos

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

*“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)*

#### REMEMBERING AMALEK

Mitzvos in Sefer HaChinuch: #603: To remember what Amalek did to us. #604: To annihilate them. #605: Not to forget what Amalek did.

#### THE READING OF PARASHAS ZACHOR (Devarim 25:17-19):

*Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you departed from Egypt. [Remember] that which they met you on the way and smote those at the back of your [encampment], while you were tired and weary [tired and thirsty from travel, and worn out from the ordeal of escaping from the Egyptian army], and he did not fear Hashem. Therefore, when Hashem Your God relieves you of all your enemies around you in the land that Hashem your God is giving to you as an inheritance, wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens; do not forget!*

We were very far from Amalek’s territory and posed no threat to them (See Malbim). However, the Amalekite people are heretical and hate Hashem and all that represents him in this world. They understood that Hashem had just redeemed for himself the Jewish People and was leading them to establish Hashem’s Kingdom in Eretz Yisrael, and they sought to prevent that from occurring. They succeeded to some extent, as their attack caused our neighboring nations to lose their fear for us.

We are commanded to remember Amalek and realize that whoever attacks the Jewish People is despised by Hashem, and in accordance with that enemy’s wickedness and that harm that he causes, so shall be the magnitude of his downfall. For this reason, since Amalek perpetrated a great evil against the Jewish People by initiating a battle against them, Hashem commanded us to eradicate them (Sefer Chinuch). There is a dispute amongst the Rishonim whether this mitzvah would apply today if Amalek would be identified, or whether it will only apply when Mashiach arrives.



## REMEMBERING TO REMOVE HASHEM'S ENEMY

On a simple level of understanding, the main mitzvah concerning Amalek is to annihilate this enemy of Hashem and His People. Doing so requires much effort and is only possible when the Jewish People have their own kingdom. Hashem knew that this would take many centuries, so He commanded us to remember it by reading the passage of Amalek at least once a year so that we do not forget it with time. In the words of Rambam: "Hashem commanded us to remember what Amalek did to us by attacking us without any prior provocation. We are therefore required to feel constant enmity toward Amalek and to remind ourselves of this regularly so that it does not fade with time."

## BEWARE OF THE DOG

The Sages see this mitzvah from a second perspective as well. They compare Amalek's attack to a king who surrounded a vineyard with a fence and placed a watchdog within. The king's son breached the fence and was bitten by the dog. Whenever the king wanted to remind his son about his misdeed to prevent him from repeating it, he would tell him to remember what the dog did to him. So too, when the Jewish people left Egypt after having merited unfathomable Divine kindnesses and open miracles, they complained impudently that Hashem was not amongst them upon experiencing thirst in the wilderness. This breach of trust was like breaching the king's vineyard, and "the dog," Amalek, promptly smote them. When Hashem commands us to remember what the dog did to us, He means to remind us never to breach the faith of our relationship with Him (*Midrash Tanchuma*).

Hashem juxtaposes the mitzvah to remember Amalek to the mitzvah to maintain precise scales and weights, and the Sages infer from this that the punishment for dishonesty in business matters is the attack of the enemy. *Rav Hirsch* explains, based on the above Midrash, that dishonesty is rooted in a lack of faith that livelihood comes from Hashem, and the fitting punishment for this is an attack by the nation that represents lack of faith.

## THE ONGOING BATTLE

On a deeper level of understanding, *Rav Moshe Alshich* explains that every nation has an angelic counterpart in Heaven. Amalek is a scion of the wicked Esav, and his angelic counterpart is none other than Satan, who is also the evil inclination within each person. The feud between Yaakov and Eisav – good and evil – continues constantly between every Jew and his evil inclination. If a Jew sins, he increases the power of Amalek, and if he repents and acts righteously, the power of Amalek decreases. When we all conquer the spiritual Amalek by overcoming our evil inclinations, Hashem will immediately remove the physical Amalek from the earth. The evil in the world will be replaced with righteousness, and the Messianic kingdom of peace and holiness will become firmly established. This is why whenever the prophets often stress that repentance must precede the coming redemption. When Hashem commands us to remember Amalek, He means to remind each individual Jew to do his share in ridding the world of evil by emerging victorious over his personal moral struggles. We emerge with the following explanation of the mitzvah to remember Amalek: We must remember Amalek's attack so that we will cling to our faith in Hashem (reason two) and thereby overcome the spiritual Amalek within each of us (reason three), and eventually merit to remove Amalek from the world (reason one).

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