

# OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIKRA-TZAV-PURIM · 8-15 ADAR II 5765 · MAR. 19-26, 2005 · VOL. 12 NO. 25

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

Vayikra

### ROOT AND BRANCH

*“And he called...” (1:1)*

If you look at a tree and see healthy branches, you can be sure that its roots are strong. When a young child takes his first steps in learning Torah, you would think that he starts by learning “In the beginning of G-d’s creating the heaven’s and the earth...” and from there he slowly works his way to the end of the Five Books.

However, many Torah education experts start not with the Book of Bereshet but with the volume that we start reading in synagogue this week, the third of the Torah’s volumes, Vayikra.

What is the reason to start with Vayikra?

Firstly, it’s easy to misunderstand the opening chapters of the Torah. They contain many deep mystical ideas which are understood only by the wisest and holiest people in each generation.

However, there is another reason. The Book of Vayikra is principally concerned with sacrifices. By teaching our children the book of Vayikra first, we are inculcating the knowledge that Torah can only thrive in someone who is prepared to sacrifice his time, his ego, and his pursuit of worldly pleasure to achieve its crown.

In a similar vein, Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin (the founder of the Daf Yomi cycle of Torah study that recently completed its 11th seven-year cycle on March 1st) explains the saying of our Sages “Be watchful of the children of the poor, for from them the Torah will come forth.” A Torah education does not come cheaply. For someone who has trouble making ends meet, the self-sacrifice required to give one’s children a good Torah education is considerable. The Torah of these children comes through difficulty, from self-denial. Because the Torah of the “children of the poor” is earned through hardship and self-sacrifice, it has a staying power which lasts for generations.

If the branches look strong, the roots must be stronger.

• Based on the *Avnei Ezel in Mayana shel Torah*

Tzav

### THE EVERLASTING EMBER

*“The fire on the Altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning; he shall prepare the ‘olah’ offering upon it and shall cause the fats of the ‘shelamim’ offering to go up in smoke upon it. A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished” (6:5,6)*

In every Jewish heart there glows an ember. In every Jewish soul there is a spark of holiness that can never be extinguished.

Those of us whose lives are dedicated to reaching out to our brothers and sisters who seem so far away from the faith of our forefathers must pattern ourselves after the *kohen* in the Holy Temple.

The *kohen* brought two offerings every day: The *olah* offering and the *shelamim* offering. The *olah* offering represents the *mitzvot* between us and G-d. The *olah* was the only offering in which none of its meat was consumed by man. It all “went up” on the altar. *Olah* means to “arise.” The *olah* symbolizes man’s striving to connect to G-d which is the purpose of *mitzvot* like prayer, *tefillin*, *brit mila* and Shabbat.

The *shelamim*, as its name suggests, represent the creation of *shalom*, peace, between man and his neighbor. These are represented by *mitzvot* such as charity, kindness and correct speech.

In the dark world of materialism in which we live we should know that our daily job is to kindle the wood on the altar of the Jewish soul, to inspire and awaken the heart to connect to both to G-d and man in deeper and more meaningful ways.

For “an everlasting fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished.” All we need to do is fan the embers, however small they may seem.

• Based *Torat Moshe in Mayana shel Torah*

# Each To Their Own

---

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

The story of Purim is a real roller coaster. It contains almost everything required for a “good read”. It has intrigue, murder, a sensitive and wise hero, a cold and evil antagonist, a powerful king, a beautiful queen, parties galore, an assassination attempt and plenty more.

And yet, the fact that the Megillah is included in Tanach is not merely an indication that it made it onto the “Shushan Times Best Seller List,” but rather that it contains powerful and personal messages for every single Jew in every single generation. In fact, one of the wonders of the Megillah is that every year new messages come to light and its eternal significance is emphasized anew. As I was studying the Megillah this year I was hit by a seemingly insignificant piece of narrative that takes place. Mordechai is patiently explaining to Esther why it is imperative that she risk her life and attempt to have an unscheduled audience with Achashverosh. After presenting his very compelling argument, Mordechai adds “And who knows if it wasn’t for this moment that you became the queen?”

They may sound innocuous but those words are very sharp, perhaps even sarcastic and acerbic. What possessed Mordechai (our sensitive and wise hero) to be quite so severe? Because he wanted to stress in the clearest possible way to Esther that it is G-d who is in charge of destiny. In other words Mordechai is saying, “What do you think? That being the queen will save you from the approaching genocide? Well, think again!”

Esther hears those words and understands the message.

And that should give us all pause for thought. What about us? Do we hear our messages or do we ignore them and continue on our merry way without too much thought as to who is running our world and what is required of us? In Ethics of the Fathers Hillel says, “In a place where there are no leaders, strive to be a leader”. Hillel is teaching us that someone has to take responsibility, and if there is no one prepared to do so, then you be the one.

But there is a deeper, more personal meaning hidden behind the words. Very often, when one is in private, there is a feeling that if I can’t be seen it does not really matter too much how careful I am, not in my relations to other people and not with my relationship to G-d. Hillel wants us to know that nothing could be further from the truth. In public and in private we must strive to reach a level of symmetry where the inner persona and the outer one reflect the same character. And it is that lesson that Mordechai is trying to convey to Esther. Esther is being told that it is not enough to feel the pain and the sorrow of the Jewish People in public. That same anguish must be apparent in private as well, to the point that she must be prepared to give up her life if need be to save them.

There is a story told about a small town in Siberia where once a father and a son came to the Rabbi each one laying claim to the one coat in the house. The father stayed home while the son went off to work each day. The father said that he needed the coat; otherwise he would freeze to death as there was no heating in the house and the walls were insufficient to keep out the winds. The son, on the other hand, claimed that his need was far more pressing because he was out working all day in the exposed fields. The father retorted that as the son was working after a while he would warm up and not need the coat anyway. The son replied that even though their house was full of unplugged holes it was still preferable to be indoors as there was always some shelter to be found. The Rabbi, being unsure as to who should have the coat, told them to come back in two days time when he would give them an answer. On their way home both the father and the son begin to assess the claim of the other one and they came to the realization that perhaps the other was right after all. So, on their return to the Rabbi two days later they were still arguing, but this time, each was claiming that the other one should take the coat!

On hearing both of them present their cases once again, the Rabbi asked them to wait a few moments. He left the room only to return almost immediately with a coat that he gave to them, telling them that now they would both have a coat to wear. Of course, both the father and the son thanked the Rabbi profusely and began to leave. As they got to the door the son turned around and asked the Rabbi why he hadn’t just given them the coat two days ago. The Rabbi answered that when they were both fighting because each one thought that he needed the coat more, the Rabbi thought to himself that he also needed his coat. But when they returned with each one wanting to manage without the coat, the Rabbi thought to himself that he could also manage without his coat!

That is the significance of the seemingly severe and extraneous sentence that Mordechai added when speaking to Esther. It’s not enough to say “I’m okay”. The Jewish People are all interconnected with each other and there can be no such thing as one person shirking his responsibility because he thinks that the effect will be negligible. Purim and the Megillah are teaching us that even though we seem to live in a world where very few of us are prepared to accept responsibility, that does not remove our accountability both to ourselves and to the Jewish People. We must learn that in Judaism “each to their own” is an anathema.

And that sounds like a very powerful message for this Purim: If I don’t take responsibility, even if I think that I am under-qualified, who will?

## Vayikra

The Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), also known as *Torah 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 *korban olah*, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one 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 burnt on the altar and part eaten, can be either 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.

## 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.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### IN PURSUIT OF AN APPLE

Many legends of the land are connected to the *Shemita* year when observant Jews faithfully obey the restrictions imposed by halacha on agricultural efforts and consumption of agricultural produce.

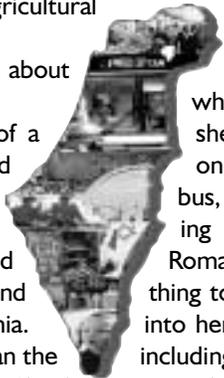
One of these legends of our own generation is about an apple and a Romanian gentile housemaid.

After helping out for a period in the home of a rabbi in Eretz Yisrael, this woman one day informed the rabbi's wife that she was forced to immediately return to her homeland and would no longer be able to work for her. The *rebbetzin* looked around for something to give her as a parting gift and found only an apple, a fruit highly valued in Romania.

No sooner had this Romanian left the house than the rabbi entered and heard from his wife about the gift of the apple. "But this is a *Shemita* apple," cried the rabbi, "and

it is forbidden to share *Shemita* fruit with a non-Jew!"

His startled wife rushed out of the house in desperate pursuit of the Romanian and the apple. She caught up with her at the bus stop just as she was about to get on and signaled to her that she has something which must be returned. The Romanian made believe she did not hear or see her and entered the bus. Intent on retrieving the apple, the *rebbetzin* also entered the bus, paid her fare and approached her quarry. Upon seeing her former employer coming towards her, the Romanian bowed her head and said, "Please don't do anything to me. I'll return everything!" She then put her hand into her purse and pulled out all of the *rebbetzin's* jewelry including some precious heirlooms. Despite the shock of this turn of events, the *rebbetzin* maintained her composure and managed to retrieve the apple as well.



OHRNET magazine is published by Ohr Somayach Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

© 2005 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Vayikra

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”?

### 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?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

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

### Vayikra

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. 1:55. - 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.

### Tzav

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.

## BERACHOT 16 -29

- Errors in recital of Shma
- Location
- Exceptions
- Rabban Gamliel's unusual behavior
- Who is called a Patriarch
- The mourner and buriers in regard to Shma
- Decorum in the graveyard
- The awareness of the dead
- Respect for the Rabbinical authority
- Human dignity and its limitations
- Who deserves miracles
- The evil eye
- Exemptions from Shma and other *mitzvot*
- Ritual impurity and the study of Torah
- Latecomer to the synagogue
- Bodily cleanliness and prayer
- Cleanliness of place
- Modesty of dress
- Interruption in prayer
- Times for prayer
- Making up a missed prayer
- The authors and pattern of prayers
- Respect for the one praying
- An early Maariv
- The revolution against Rabban Gamliel
- A Late Mussaf
- A prayer for success in Torah study
- Parting words of dying Sages
- The components of the Shmoneh Esrai
- Abbreviated prayer
- Forgotten additions
- The mindset of prayer

### SEEING RED

In an essay titled "When Black Hat Sees Red" which recently appeared in the Jerusalem Post, Shira Leibowitz Schmidt of the Chareidi College does a creditable job of lambasting the Israeli media for its irresponsible chareidi bashing. In her effort to trace things back to the Talmud, she is unfortunately way off base, as all learners of this week's Daf Yomi will recognize.

The background for her essay was the tumult in the media over an alleged ruling by a *dayan* in Beersheba, Rabbi Eliyahu Abergil, that it is forbidden for a woman to wear red clothing. Demonstrations by "women in red" were organized and the chareidi bashers had a field day. Not one of these champions of feminine rights even bothered to contact the rabbi involved. Had they done so, as the essay's author did, they would have discovered that what really happened was that a quarrel had erupted in a certain home over the husband's attitude towards his wife's clothing and the rabbi's ruling was specifically directed to them as a guideline on feminine modesty which succeeded in restoring domestic harmony.

So far, so good. But then the essayist suggests that Rabbi Abergil may have been basing this ruling, which later appeared in a collection of his halachic responsa published a decade ago, on a story in the Talmud about a

Sage who ripped a red cape from a woman who he assumed was an immodestly clad Jewess. "The Talmud itself is not happy about it," writes the essayist in the role of apologist. May we suggest that she take another look at that section of the Talmud. There the Sage Abaye explains to his disciple that the reason miracles happened in the days of earlier Sages and not in their own was that the earlier generations had people who were ready to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of G-d's Name. The example he cites is the action of Rabbi Adda. This hardly qualifies as "the Tamud not being happy about it".

When Rabbi Adda, after suffering a fine for embarrassing the woman who turned out to be non-Jewish, criticized himself for lacking patience before acting, he was not expressing any regret for what he had based on his mistaken assumption that the Jewish modesty code was being flagrantly violated. He was only regretful that he did not first investigate whether the wearer of the immodest cape was indeed Jewish.

Rabbi Adda must certainly have been aware that a woman wearing a garment which violated the dress code of Jewish women might be of another faith or at least a rebellious Jewish "woman in red" who would prosecute him for his action. He felt, however, that there was an urgent need to publicly demonstrate in a non-violent way his opposition to such a breach of the modesty in clothing which was then the standard and show that he was willing to sacrifice himself even if it would turn out that he would suffer from his actions.

In conclusion, someone affiliated with the Chareidi College should be more careful in dealing with Talmud sources. Nevertheless, a *yashar koach* to her for exposing the anti-religious hypocrisy of the secular media.

• *Berachot 20a*

### REMOVING THE GUARD

When Rabban Gamliel was temporarily deposed as head of the Sanhedrin and replaced by Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, a radical change took place in regard to the admission of students to the great yeshiva. It had been Rabban Gamliel's order that no student whose "interior was unlike his exterior" – whose righteousness was questionable – could not be admitted. A guard was even stationed at the entrance to enforce this rule.

*continued on page six*

continued from page five

The day Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah took over, the guard was removed and permission was granted for all to enter, resulting in the addition of hundreds of seats.

The issue of selectivity in admitting students to study Torah first appears at the very beginning of *Pirkei Avot*. The *Anshei Knesset Hagedola* (Members of the Great Assembly) – a body of 120 Sages including the last of the Prophets – are quoted as advising “raise up many disciples”. The commentaries point out that this was in opposition to the selective policy later practiced by Rabban Gamliel.

It may be speculated that Rabban Gamliel himself also held this view but saw a need in his time to be selective because of a proliferation of suspicious applicants. There

is no statement by him that it is always wrong to admit without being selective, only a directive issued by him not to do so.

Such an approach might help to explain why he was shown by Heaven in a dream that he had not been guilty of wrongdoing in denying admission to so many applicants. The *gemara* states that this was not intended as a vindication of his policy, only as a comfort for his conscience. Perhaps the idea is that the time had come for a change in policy dictated by new circumstances which allowed a return to the policy initially advised by the *Anshei Knesset Hagedola* without casting any blame on Rabban Gamliel for his selectivity during his reign.

• *Berachot 28a*

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

### Vayikra

*“Sovereign of the Universe, it is well known to You that it is our will to do Your will. Who prevents us from doing so? The leavening agent in the dough (the evil inclination within us) and our subservience to the nations. May it be Your will to save us from these so that we can return to fulfilling Your commandments wholeheartedly.”*

• *Prayer of Rabbi Alexandrai - Berachot 17a*

### Tzav

*“May it be His will that you should have the same fear of Heaven as you have of man. The proof of the need for this is that when a man commits a sin he is only concerned that no one should see him.”*

• *Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai’s parting words to his disciples - Berachot 28b*

### Afterthought - The Unbroken Cycle

*Excerpts from an editorial in the March 3rd edition of the Jerusalem Post and one comment.*

...The closing of one cycle and beginning of another has become a major celebratory event, known as *Siyum Hashas*, in the Orthodox world. On Tuesday night participants filled Tel Aviv’s Nokia Arena, as well as New York’s Madison Square Garden and Jacob Javits Convention center. Last night a special *Siyum Hashas* for English speakers was held in the Jerusalem International Convention Center.

...The remarkable growth of interest in *daf yomi* attests to a renaissance of Jewish learning in the contemporary Orthodox world. The type of talmudic study it involves was once a fairly specialized endeavor for full-time yeshiva scholars. Today, much *daf yomi* learning takes place outside the study hall – in private homes, business and government offices, and even on daily commuter trains to Manhattan.

...The *daf yomi* also represents a far more authentic and positive form of the popularization of traditional Jewish study

than the pseudo-kabbalistic mysticism currently being peddled both here and abroad among both assimilated Jews and naive Gentiles.

...Talmudic study in some form or another is no less essential to Jewish cultural life than synagogue attendance, no matter at what level of Jewish observance.

...“A *daf* is the instrument of our survival in today’s stormy seas,” said Rabbi Meir Shapiro a century ago. And the survival of *daf yomi* itself, through each unbroken cycle, testifies to the enduring spirit of the Jewish people.

### One Comment

The above editorial includes the following:

...The next step would be to see the growth of *daf yomi*, or some form of similarly dedicated Talmud study, spread outside of traditional Orthodox circles, and into the non-Orthodox streams of Judaism.

**Ohrnet** says a hearty Amen to this because we have faith in the Talmudic promise that “the light within Torah study will bring them all back to complete commitment”.

## PURIM: INCENSED OR INCENSE

**From: Lauren in Manchester, England**

Dear Rabbi,

Please share a "vort" (a word/idea of Torah) with me regarding Purim.

Dear Lauren,

Regarding Haman's terrible edict, the Megilla states, "Letters were sent by the hand of the couriers to all the king's provinces, to destroy, kill, and cause to perish all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, on one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and their spoils to be taken as plunder" (3:13). The Megilla then describes Mordechai's reaction: "And Mordechai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and he went out into the midst of the city and cried a loud and bitter cry" (4:1).

Shortly after this, responding to Esther's reluctance to intervene with the king on the Jews' behalf, Mordechai responds, "Do not imagine to yourself that you will escape in the king's house from among all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and rescue will arise for the Jews from elsewhere, and you and your father's household will perish. And who knows whether next year at this time you'll still be queen" (Rashi) (4:13,14).

The question is, just prior to this Mordechai was crying bitterly in the streets on account of the edict. How is he suddenly so sure of salvation? What brought about the turnaround?

The answer is in the incense. One of the ingredients in the anointing oil and the incense used in the tabernacle and the Temple was pure myrrh: "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, take the best spices, pure myrrh etc." (Ex. 30:23). Targum Onkelos translates 'pure myrrh' as '*mera dachia*' (which we will see is related to *Mordechai*). This '*mera dachia*' is also listed among the spices in the incense of which the Mishna states, "As one would grind the incense, another would say, 'Grind thoroughly, thoroughly grind,' because the sound is beneficial for the spices" (Kereitot 6a).

Also, we find that the incense nullifies harsh decrees, specifically protecting those poised between life and death: "Moses said to Aaron, 'Take the censer and put fire from the altar into it. Then take it quickly to the congregation and atone for them, for wrath has gone forth from the Lord, and the plague has begun.' Aaron took it as Moses had said, and he ran into the midst of the assembly, and behold, the plague had begun among the people. He placed the incense on it and atoned for the people. He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague ceased." (Num. 17:11-13)

Our Sages taught that the righteous are compared to pleasant smelling spices (Megilla 13a). That is why Esther was also named Hadassah which means myrtle, while Mordechai is comprised of '*mar dachia*', pure myrrh, one of the main ingredients of the incense. We have seen in the above teaching of our Sages that sound is good for the incense. For this reason Mordechai, whose righteous deeds were pleasing to G-d as incense, cried aloud in the midst of the city. Through his intense prayer and beseeching on behalf of the Jews, Mordechai saw that, as incense offered before G-d, he was able to nullify the harsh decree against the Jewish people. In this way, he 'stood between the dead and the living' much as Aaron used the incense to stay the plague of G-d's wrath.

Therefore, by the time Mordechai communicated with Esther, he was confident that relief and rescue would come to the Jews from somewhere. He was exhorting her not to forsake her people, not for their sake, but for hers – in order that she not be lost from her people after being 'elevated' and accepted into the palace, but that she too should partake of the redemption.

Myriads of 'Esthers', Jewish men and women worldwide, have been 'elevated' to the upper echelons of 'Achashverosh's' palace. On the other hand, we know that the redemption and salvation of the Jewish people as a whole will certainly occur. The question is whether the 'Esthers' will forsake their people, resulting in their families' perishing as Jews, or whether they will strengthen their commitment to G-d, the Torah and their people and partake in the eventual but inevitable redemption.

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### PAYING FOR THE "REST"

**Question:** I was part of a group that spent a Shabbat in a resort hotel. The beautiful Shabbat we expected was ruined by the unexpected spoiling of all the food, forcing us to subsist on bread and water for our meals. When we intended to leave the hotel after Shabbat without paying for our stay, the hotel owner insisted we pay for the rest we enjoyed in his hotel even if the food bill was not coming to him. What is the right thing to do in such a case?

**Answer:** Such a case was brought before Rabbi Yitzchak

Zilberstein, rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak, who ruled that the hotel owner has no claim on his disappointed guests for the rest he affirms having provided them. When a person lacks food he does not enjoy any rest.

As proof of this correlation between food and rest, the rabbi cited the ruling of the *Mishneh Berurah* (582:20) that when Yom Kippur is on Shabbat we delete the phrase in the prayer usually said on Shabbat which asks G-d to "willingly accept our rest". The reason is that when one cannot eat he cannot enjoy a real rest.

## THE BAKER'S MIRACLE

The recent celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz sparked memories not only of those who died but those who were miraculously saved.

In the European city of Gaborova the Nazis were intent on killing all of its Jewish inhabitants by crowding them all into the local synagogue made of wood and setting fire to it. The soldiers surrounded the building and issued a warning that anyone caught outside of it would be shot on the spot.

Among the Jews in the building was Yoel the Baker who had managed to bake some *chalot* for Shabbat before the Nazi roundup began. He was determined to bring those

*chalot* from his bakery in order to offer his condemned brothers the bread they needed for their last Shabbat meal. Ignoring the danger to his life, he jumped out of the synagogue and soon returned with a bag of *chalot* and an invitation for all to wash and enjoy a Shabbat meal.

Then came the miracle. From out of nowhere came a Nazi officer and ordered the guards surrounding the synagogue to leave the area for an important combat mission. He even refused to allow them to spend a few minutes to set the synagogue on fire.

The self-sacrifice of Yoel the Baker for the sake of Shabbat was seen by all as the merit that brought about this miracle.

## ISRAEL Forever

### Vayikra - Zachor

#### REMEMBERING AMALEK AND AUSCHWITZ

“Remember what Amalek did to you.” This is the theme of the special Torah reading we will hear this Shabbat *Parshat Zachor* in addition to the regular weekly portion.

A little over a month ago the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp offered the entire world an opportunity to remember what the Amalek of the last century did to the Jewish People. For the Jewish People themselves there is an opportunity every single year to remember what Amalek did to them over three millennia ago and what that vile enemy's physical and ideological descendants have perpetuated throughout history.

Lest we make the error of viewing our struggles against Amalek and his successors in the narrow confines of nationalistic survival, we read on Purim itself the Torah's account of our first encounter with this perennial opponent. In this section, which is read not only on the Shabbat of *Parshat Beshalach* but also on the day recalling Heavenly deliverance from a descendant of Amalek named Haman, we hear the Divine pronouncement that the war against Amalek is G-d's war. This should serve as a reminder to all enemies who seek a “final solution to the Jewish Problem” because Jews are G-d's Chosen People that they will meet the same fate as Haman and the architects of Auschwitz, while Israel remains forever.

### Tzav - Purim

#### HILL, HOLE AND WILLING EXECUTIONERS

The president of the German Republic publicly apologized, at the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, for the crimes committed by his people against the Jewish People.

The role played by German civilians in these atrocities has already been described by an historian who referred to them as “Hitler's willing executioners”.

This sharing of guilt for planning genocide recalls the parable of our Talmudic Sages for describing the collaboration between Haman and King Achachverosh.

One man had a field whose cultivation was obstructed by a huge hill in its midst. A neighbor had a field with a deep hole in it. One day the latter offered to buy the hill from the former in order to fill his hole. The response was that he could have the hill for free since he wanted to get rid of it anyway.

In similar fashion Haman offered to pay a handsome sum to the king for the right to eliminate the Jews. Permission was granted by the king who also hated the Jews and the money was returned.

Purim reminds us that in addition to the Hamans and Hitlers of history who try to initiate “final solutions”, there are the “willing executioners” who actively or passively aid them. Purim also reminds us that despite such widespread opposition Israel will remain forever.