



# *I'll Have a Hillel, Please!*

BY RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER

The name John Montagu may not mean very much to most people but I am sure that his *title* will have a lot more name recognition. Montagu lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and he was an earl in the English aristocracy – his official title was the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich. Legend has it that he was so addicted to the gaming tables, especially card playing, that he resented every moment that was taken up with the “unimportant” things in life, such as eating, so he came up with a brilliant idea. He asked his butler to bring him some roasted meat in between two pieces of bread, and that way he would be able to continue gambling while he ate, and also not get the cards greasy from the meat. And thus the “sandwich” was born, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Now, it may seem like an odd choice to talk about sandwiches on Passover, but even before we get to that I have a slight quibble with the name “sandwich”. Sandwiches should not be called sandwiches at all. Rather, they should really be called “Hillels”. You see, just over two thousand years ago lived one of the greatest Rabbis in Jewish history. He was called Hillel (or Hillel the Elder), and he led the Jewish People through very turbulent times. Among the many laws and traditions that he instituted was eating a sandwich on Seder night. True, it was not a traditional sandwich made of two slices of bread — it was made with matzah instead — but it was definitely a sandwich. The ingredients were two pieces of matzah with bitter herbs in between and some of the Passover offering. Imagine, over seven hundred years before the Earl of Sandwich had his epiphany, we Jews were eating, well... sandwiches!

Sandwiches have come a long way since the Earl of Sandwich's day. They are often works of art with exotic ingredients, and bear little resemblance to the original, but methinks that the earliest prototype, created by Hillel, was actually rather an odd combination, because the two ingredients that we use today, matzah and bitter herbs, represent two diametrically opposed concepts in Jewish philosophy. On the one hand, the matzah represents independence, the dough that did not have time to rise before we were rushed out of Egypt to freedom. The bitter herbs, on the other hand, represent the bitterness and the struggles of enslavement. Why would Hillel want to combine the two together? What was Hillel trying to teach us? Hillel's message is short, simple and deceptively deep — in life there is no such thing as *only* good or *only* bad. In our lives we experience both good and bad within each other continuously. And within the good and within the bad we have to find G-d, and remain connected to G-d. *Especially when it is hard to do so.* That is why Hillel instituted eating a sandwich made of foods that represent both the good and the bad, to remind us of that fundamental idea.

Somewhat ironically, in the same era that the Earl of Sandwich was “discovering” the sandwich, there lived a Rabbi who was both a brilliant Talmud scholar and an equally brilliant orator. His name was Rabbi Yaakov Wolf Kranz – more commonly known as the “Maggid from Dubnow” (the city that he lived in). He was famous for his ability to explain complicated concepts using parables and stories so that even the simplest layman was able to understand them. And the Maggid from Dubnow had the most

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of Ohrnet Magazine is intended to span a period of five weeks. The Torah portion for each week will not be identical in Israel and outside of Israel beginning with the end of Pesach. Pesach ends on Friday (Apr. 29) in Israel and on Shabbat (Apr. 30) outside of Israel. On that Shabbat the Torah reading will be Achrei Mot in Israel, while a special Pesach Torah reading takes place outside of Israel. Subsequently, on the following Shabbat the Torah reading in Israel will be Kedoshim, whereas it is Achrei Mot outside of Israel.

## METZORA

### Miser-Able

“And if he is poor and his means do not extend...” (14:21)

One of the well-worn canards about Jews is that we are mean. Truth be told, proportionately more Jews give to charity than any other religion.

A 2013 poll of 4,000 people showed that nearly four in ten atheists did not donate at all, compared to three in ten Muslims and Christians, whereas more than four in ten Jews donate, and that's talking about secular Jews. *Tzedaka* is in our genes. In fact, there is no word for charity in Hebrew. *Tzedaka* comes from the root *tzedek*, meaning “right”. It literally translates as “righteousness.” What the world calls charity, to a Jew is no more than doing the “right” thing.

The Talmud (Yoma 41b) notes that in all cases, a rich person who is obliged to bring an offering fulfills his obligation by

bringing that of a poor person. In all cases except one in this week's Torah portion of the Metzora offering, a rich person who brings a poor person's offering does not achieve atonement.

Why, of all offerings, should it be that a rich person who became a *metzora* cannot acquit himself with the offering of a poor person?

Our Sages teach that the affliction of the *metzora* was due to stinginess (Arachin 16a). Thus, if after a rich man has transgressed the sin of avarice and has been punished with *tzara'at*, and in spite of his wealth he remains miserly, attempting to fulfill his obligation with the offering of a poor man, it is clear that he has not yet learned to mend his ways. He is still able to be a miser.

• Source: Meshech Chochma

## ACHAREI MOT

### Out on a Limb

“He shall don a sacred linen Tunic; linen breeches shall be upon his flesh...” (16:4)

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 49b) states that the first garment that the *kohen* puts on when he begins the Divine service is the breeches. It learns this from the phrase “upon his flesh” in the above verse. For the breeches to be “upon his flesh” it must mean that they are the first garment to be put on.

Which begs the question: Why then didn't the verse list the breeches before the sacred linen Tunic?

The answer lies in the description of the linen Tunic as “sacred.” All the vestments of the *kohen* were holy; why then is the Tunic singled out specifically as “sacred?”

In the service of the Beit Hamikdash the *kohen* used his whole body — his thighs, his legs, his shoulders, his arms, and his torso. The service of the Beit Hamikdash sanctified those limbs that performed the *avoda* service, and the limbs in turn sanctified the clothes that covered them.

The holiness of the Tunic is because it covered the *kohen's* whole body, whereas the breeches covered only the lower half of the body, and thus fewer limbs, and, consequently, had relatively less sanctity.

Similarly, a Sefer Torah has more sanctity than *tefillin*, and *tefillin* more than a *mezuzah*. This is because there are more words of Torah in a Sefer Torah than in *tefillin* and more in *tefillin* than in a *mezuzah*; the more words of holiness, the more these words sanctify the physical vessel that contains them.

• Source: Ha'amek Davar

## KEDOSHIM

### I-Sight

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” (19:17)

One of the most difficult emotions to deal with is resentment. Resentment can come from many different sources. It can result from someone genuinely wronging us. Or we may feel wronged by someone even though an objective third party would say that we were being over-sensitive. Resentment can come from plain old jealousy of someone who is brighter than us, or seems to have an easier life, or is more successful. Or resentment can come for no good reason at all. It may result from the way that someone speaks or dresses or expresses himself.

The spiritual masters teach that this is the worst kind of hatred. In Hebrew it is called “*sinat chinam*”, literally translated as “free hate”. Hate that has come from no injustice, real or perceived, but is just the way someone feels.

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart.”

In this week's portion the Torah categorically prohibits that gnawing worm called resentment.

The Torah says that we mustn't feel resentment. But isn't that more easily said than done? How are we supposed to put this into action?

First of all, we cannot work on our feelings until we understand them. This requires objectivity and the help of someone who is impartial to help us objectivize our emotions. Only when we can delineate our feelings will we have a chance of changing them.

If this analysis shows that we have been genuinely wronged, the proper mode of conduct will depend on the circumstances. It may involve a direct confrontation, or a rebuke from a third party, or legal recourse in a *Beit Din* religious court. When we act to deal positively with our resentment in one of these ways, the poison of the resentment is very often vitiated or extinguished.

However, there may be circumstances where a genuine grievance has no outside recourse, and we may just have to forgive and forget. In this last scenario, (and in the others too) we should remember that it is G-d who runs the world, and we should analyze why G-d has put us in our present situation.

As far as jealousy is concerned, we should remember that each of us is on our own separate “monorail” in life. The fact that someone else has something that I don't have, be it brains or money or looks, in no way means that they are taking away from me. The root of jealousy is a lack of trust in G-d's

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Providence. Each of us is born with unique capabilities with which to fulfill our potential in this world. If G-d hasn't given me something, it's because I don't need it to complete my mission on this earth.

And as far as *sinat chinam* is concerned, we should remind ourselves, that we are all created in G-d's image. If there is something that I hate about my fellow for no objec-

tive reason whatsoever, it means that I am despising the image of G-d.

However, if we look carefully with a positive eye at those whom we resent and try to divorce our egos from our emotions, we might begin to see all kinds of positive traits that they possess.

It all depends on our I-sight.

## EMOR

### Bored with Breathing

"And you will bring a new *mincha-offering* (meal-offering) to G-d." (23:16)

Are you "burned out"? You seem to hear that phrase a lot these days. I'm "burned out" from this; I'm "burned out" from that; I'm bored with this; it's just lost its excitement for me.

Why do people "burn out"?

Take two people working hard. One is self-employed and the other is working for someone else for a salary. There's a big difference between them. Someone who works for a salary often has no special, personal interest in the company other than that he wants it to exist in order to provide him with a living. And his "apathy" only increases if the company as a whole doesn't excel in profits, and there is no bonus to look forward to.

Someone who is self-employed, on the other hand, will likely put his very soul into his work. He *is* the company. He enjoys the moments of triumph and he grieves over the disasters. But bored and burned out? Virtually never.

Unlike the salaried employee whose remuneration is fixed from the beginning, with only limited scope for profit participation, the self-employed person knows that the sky's the limit. The company's success is *his* success.

When we learn Torah we should think of it like it was our own business. In your own business, if things aren't going right, who is there to put them right? Only yourself. If it takes extra time at the office, we would certainly, and gladly, put in

the extra hours.

When we sit down to learn, do we mentally "punch in"? Are we waiting for the next coffee break? For the check at the end of the month? Or do we feel the exuberance and challenge of our learning as though it was our own business?

How does the Torah refer to the monumental event of its being given at Sinai?

"And you will bring a new *mincha-offering* to G-d."

Why is the reference so oblique? It's true that at the festival of Shavuot there is a command to bring a new *mincha-offering* to G-d. But is that the most conspicuous aspect of Shavuot? How about the giving of the Torah? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to spell out that on this day the Torah was given at Sinai? And yet it is with these few covert words that the Torah hints to the central event of Judaism.

Why?

The Torah doesn't specify the date of its giving because it doesn't want us to feel that it was given as a "one-off" event. Rather, it wants us to feel like it's being given to us *every day*, and for us to receive it every day as though we were hearing it for the first time at Sinai.

The Torah is our life's breath. Even though a person breathes millions of times in the course of his life, does anyone get tired of breathing? Why not? Since we understand that our life depends on breathing, it's not a subject for boredom. Boredom can only set in when a person sees something as optional. Breathing isn't optional; it's obligatory.

This is the way we should feel about the Torah, for it is our life and the length of our days.

## PARSHA Overview

### 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 *korbanot* 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 the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

### ACHAREI MOT

G-d instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the *Mishkan*. On Yom Kippur, the *Kohen Gadol* is to approach the holiest part of the *Mishkan* after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is "for G-d" and is offered in the Temple, while the other is "for *Azazel*" in the desert. The Torah states the individual's obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations. Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman's monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

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# TALMUD Tips

## Kiddushin 37 - 71

Rabbi Yaakov said, “There is no reward in this world for fulfilling a mitzvah.”

The *gemara* explains that we see that Rabbi Yaakov holds this opinion from what he teaches in a *beraita*, that whenever the Torah stipulates the reward for fulfilling a particular mitzvah, it refers only to the reward for the mitzvah in the World-to-Come. Although this concept is a matter of dispute between Tana'im, the Rambam cites the view of Rabbi Yaakov as the halacha. (Laws of Teshuva 8:1)

The Rambam raises an apparent question on his ruling from the beginning of the next chapter, since we see, as we see in many verses in the Torah, that we are promised reward in this world for mitzvah fulfillment, such as peace and success (and punishment in this world for transgressions). We say twice daily, in the second paragraph of the *Shema*: “I (G-d) will give the rain of your Land at its time, the early rain and the latter rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine and your oil. And I will give grass in your field for your livestock, and you will eat and be satiated. (Deut. 11:14-15) This seems to indicate a reward in this world for mitzvah observance, contrary to the teaching of Rabbi Yaakov, and the ruling of the Rambam in the previous chapter.

The Rambam explains the matter in depth and with great clarity. He writes that “G-d gave us this Torah, which is a tree of life. Whoever fulfills what is written within it and comprehends it with complete and proper knowledge will merit the life of the World-to-Come.” This is the ultimate reward for the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*. However, there are also “benefits” in this world that we are promised, not as an ultimate reward, but to help and enable our mitzvah observance, such as being bestowed with wealth and peace. This is not a “reward” inasmuch as it is an “opportunity”. As the Rambam states, “He will grant us all the good that will reinforce our performance of the Torah, such as plenty, peace, an abundance of silver and gold, in order that we not be involved throughout all our days in matters needed by the body; but, rather, we will be able to dwell unburdened and have the opportunity to study wisdom and perform *mitzvot* in order that we will merit the life of the World-to-Come.”

• Kiddushin 39b

“It is a mitzvah to listen to the words of the Sages.”

The question under discussion in the *gemara* is what is the source for the statement of Rava that “*devarim sheblev einam devarim*” — i.e., whatever is in one’s heart (i.e., not

verbalized) doesn’t have the power to contradict that which he actually says.

The *gemara* attempts to provide a source for Rava from a *mishna* that deals with a get for divorce. It states that if a man refuses to divorce his wife despite her being forbidden to him, the Jewish court forces him to agree to give the get and say “I want to give the get”. (This is necessary because a get must be given by the husband willingly.) The *gemara* suggests this a proof for Rava, since we can assume in his heart he does *not* want to give the get, despite the words that the court force him to say that proclaim that he wants to give it. This would prove that whatever is in one’s heart (i.e., not verbalized) doesn’t have the power to contradict that which he actually says. However, the *gemara* rejects this from serving as a proof, since “it is a mitzvah to listen to the words of the Sages”, and perhaps that is why he is saying that he wants to give the get.

The Rambam (Laws of Divorce 2:20) elaborates as to what is actually taking place in the mind and soul of the man in this case, and he writes why this is different from someone pressured into doing something that the Torah does not require him to do, such as selling or giving away something that he owns.

He explains: “When someone’s evil inclination has taken a hold on him to avoid fulfilling a mitzvah, or to commit a sin, and he is beaten until he does what he is obligated to do or refrains from what he is forbidden to do, he is not considered as acting against his will. Rather, it is he who has coerced himself with an evil attitude to act against his true will. We therefore view the man who is forced to divorce his wife as one who *truly wishes* to be a part of the Jewish People, and *truly desires* to fulfill the *mitzvot* and to refrain from transgressions, but who is the helpless victim of his evil inclination. Once he has been pressured to the point where his evil inclination is subdued and he declares his consent, we consider it as his having divorced of his own free will.”

• Kiddushin 50a

Shimon Ha’amsoni (others say it was Nechemia Ha’amsoni) was explaining the significance of each and every time the word “et” appears in the Torah. However, when he reached the verse “et Hashem Elokecha tira” (Deut. 6:13) — fear the L-rd your G-d — he stopped. His students said to him, “Our Rabbi, what will become of your explanations of the word “et” that you taught until now?” He replied,

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

## Gilgal — The First Korban Pesach in the Land We Love

Although you will find nothing on the map or in geography books about this place, it was the most important site in the first years of the Jewish People in Eretz Yisrael. Here is where the Israelites under Yehoshua camped after their miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, and here is where they placed the twelve large stones which they had removed from the river bed to serve as a remembrance for generations of that miracle. (Yehoshua 4:20-24)

The name Gilgal comes from the Hebrew word for “removing”. Gilgal became the name for this site because here is where Yehoshua carried out a mass circumcision for all those who had been born during the 40 years in the



wilderness, where the climate made such an operation too dangerous to life. “Today I have removed from you the shame of Egypt,” said G-d, “and the place shall be called Gilgal.” (Yehoshua 5:9)

This removal of the foreskin which distinguished them from their former masters made the entire nation eligible to offer a *korban Pesach*, the first one in forty years.

The Mishkan (Sanctuary), which the Israelites had carried with them throughout their wandering in the wilderness, stood in Gilgal for 14 years until the Land was conquered and divided amongst the tribes of Israel, after which it was transferred to Shiloh.

### TALMUD TIPS *continued from page four*

“Just as I received reward for explaining, so too I will receive reward for abstaining from explaining.” Then Rabbi Akiva came and taught that the word “et” in the verse “et Hashem Elokecha tira” teaches to include Torah scholars (i.e., just as the verse teaches the mitzvah to fear G-d, likewise it teaches to fear Torah scholars).

This *beraita* on our *daf* is based on the idea that every word and letter in the Torah has meaning. Therefore, the existence of the word “et”, which does not have any particular translation, in any verse of the Torah, must be there to include something else that is not mentioned explicitly in the verse. This is why these Sages sought to explain what each “et” in the Torah is meant to teach. Shimon Ha’amsoni “feared” to equate the fear of anything else to the fear of G-d, and therefore could not attribute any meaning to the word “et” in the verse that appears in the command to fear G-d. (Rashi)

Since there is nothing superfluous in the Torah, including the word “et”, the Sage Shimon Ha’amsoni toiled to explain the meaning of each “et” in the Torah. Doing so was a show of the “honor of the Torah”. And likewise, when he abstained from attributing meaning to the word “et” in the verse commanding fear of G-d, his abstention was also a show of “honor of G-d and His Torah”. Rabbi

Akiva, however, felt it correct to explain that the word “et” in this verse teaches to include fear of Torah scholars as well as fear of G-d, since fearing Torah scholars is *also* showing honor to G-d and His Torah, because Torah scholars dedicate their lives to the study of G-d’s Torah. (Maharsha)

• Kiddushin 57a

A man who says to a friend, “Go out and marry a certain specific woman to me”, and then the friend goes out and marries her for himself — what he did is done (i.e., she is married to him), but he treated him in a treacherous manner.”

This first part of this statement is taught in the first *mishna* of the third chapter of our Tractate, while the end of the statement is taught in a *Tosefta* cited by the *gemara*. *Tosefot* questions why the Tana of the *mishna* found it necessary to teach that she is married to the second person. After all, he proposed to her for himself, and isn’t it obvious that she is marrying him?

*Tosefot* answers that the *mishna* must be speaking about a very specific case: the friend told the woman that he was sent by another man to effect the marriage between her and the *other man*, and while speaking with her he said to her the words we still say nowadays under the *chupa* when

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# THE MYSTERY OF THE MAROR

BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

**W**ith all of the cleaning, scouring, and scrubbing the Jewish nation is collectively doing to properly get ready for Pesach, many jokingly (we hope only jokingly!) sigh that they can really feel the *avdut le'cheirut* — the sense of going from servitude to freedom — that is required of us at this time of year, the “Season of Redemption”. Yet, one of the proper ways to commemorate this, evoking the bitterness that our ancestors felt from their enslavement at the hands of the cruel, sadistic Egyptians, is the consumption of *maror*, bitter herbs, at the Seder.

Although essentially a Biblical commandment (*Bamidbar* 9:11), the *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 120a) explains that nowadays, since we do not have the *Korban Pesach*, this mitzvah is currently Rabbinic.

The question is: Which bitter herb best fits the mitzvah’s criterion? Many will instantly answer: “Why, horseradish of course. This is the tradition from the *alter heim*, what our *zaydies* and *bubbies* used for *maror* back in Europe.”

Although this is certainly true, on the other hand it turns out that, technically speaking, with all factors considered equal, horseradish may not currently be the optimal choice for *maror*.

In fact, the *Mishnah* (*Pesachim* 39a) lists five different types of herbs that are classified as “*maror*” and may be used as such at the Pesach Seder. However, the *Gemara* (ad loc.), and later codified by the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chayim* 473:5), and cited by many authorities, maintains that the herb that best fulfills the criteria is “*chazeret*”, a.k.a. “*chasah*”. This refers to lettuce (*salatin*), which starts out soft (the leaves) and ends up hard (the stalk), similar to the enslavement in Egypt that started out “easy”, as a paying job, and deteriorated into total subjugation and inhumane enslavement. Also, lettuce, when it starts to grow is very sweet; the longer it is left in the ground

the more bitter it becomes. The *Gemara* explains that the reason lettuce is referred to as “*chasah*” (even to this day in modern Hebrew) is because G-d was “*chasah*” — had mercy — on the Jewish People in Egypt, and redeemed them from slavery.

If so, why is there a tradition for using horseradish instead? Indeed, although several early authorities mention using horseradish at the Seder, it was not actually as *maror*. Rather, they included horseradish as an ingredient in *charoset*! So how did this vegetable become the most commonly used bitter herb for *maror*?

The main reason was due to lettuce’s lack of availability around Pesach time throughout Europe and Russia over the years, especially with the ground still frozen in many areas. This reason, coupled with lettuce’s tendency to be insect-infested, placed horseradish, although further down the *Mishnah*’s list of acceptable vegetables, as the bitter herb of choice as *maror* for the Seder.

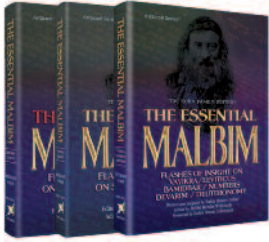
In fact, the Chasam Sofer and, later, the *Mishnah Berurah* ruled that even with lettuce available, if one does not know how to properly check for bugs it is still preferential to eat horseradish for *maror*. More recently, the Steipler Gaon was known to be very stringent with using horseradish and not lettuce, and is quoted as saying that “it is preferable not to eat *maror* at all than to eat lettuce, because if one mistakenly eats even one bug he violates four Torah prohibitions”. Certainly while fulfilling a mitzvah one would not want to, G-d forbid, commit transgressions!

Yet, nowadays, the recent influx of the “Gush Katif” type of “Greenhouse Grown Bug-Free” Romaine lettuce allows us to enjoy the best of both worlds: Romaine lettuce for *maror* that is much easier to check and ensure that it does not contain any uninvited “guests”. Fascinatingly, it turns out that the not-so-bitter truth is that the optimal bitter herb for *maror* nowadays is the not-so-bitter, but bug-free, Romaine lettuce.

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# Pesach, Lavan & Yaakov

BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

In the Pesach Haggadah we are supposed to relive the experience of transitioning from slavery to freedom. A major part of this process is telling over the story of *yetziat Mitzrayim*; this section of the Haggadah commences with the verse, “*Arami oved avi vayered Mitzrayima.*” “An Arami destroyed my father, and he descended to Mitzrayim.” The commentaries point out that “*Arami*” refers to Lavan, and they ask why we begin retelling the story with these words, referring to Yaakov Avinu’s stay at Lavan’s house. A possible answer might be that the verse explicitly says “*vayered Mitzrayimah*” — and he descended to Mitzrayim — but there are many other verses that also say we went to Mitzrayim. In what way is the story of Lavan connected to the mitzvah of retelling the story of *yetziat Mitzrayim*?

The commentaries explain that one of the reasons why the Torah includes the stories of the *avot* is to teach us to follow in their righteous ways. As *Chazal* tell us, “*Derech erez kadmah laTorah*”, appropriate behavior precedes the Torah. Before delving into the *mitzvot* of the Torah we must fix our character traits. Therefore, the Torah begins with the stories of the forefathers. On a deeper level, though, *Chazal* teach us the principle, “*ma’asei avot siman l’banim*”, the actions of the forefathers are a precursor for the children (Midrash Tanchuma, see Ramban on Bereishet 12:6). Every detail that is mentioned regarding the *avot* hints to what will follow to their descendents. Perhaps a few examples will crystallize this idea.

The story of the abduction of Dina and the retaliation that followed by Shimon and Levi illustrates this principle, as it hinted to the story of Chanukah that occurred more than a thousand years later (see Ohr Gedalyahu, *Vayishlach*). How so?

The city of Shechem attempted to deny any differences between themselves and the Jewish People by accepting upon themselves circumcision. The Greeks, too, outlawed the performance of circumcision to deny any differences between themselves and the Jews. In both circumstances, their intentions were to infiltrate the Jewish world and influence them with their corrupt thinking by encouraging them to intermingle with the other nations.

Just like the war between Shimon and Levi with Shechem resulted from Dina’s abduction, the war between the *Chashmonaim* and the Greeks also started from the attempted abduction of the *kohen gadol*’s daughter, Yehudit.

Just like Shimon and Levi defeated the entire city of Shechem by themselves, the few *Chashmonaim* defeated the mighty army of Greece.

Following the story of Dina, Yaakov asked his household to get rid of any *avodah zarah* from their midst and ascend to Bet El to build a *mizbe’ach*. Similarly, following the *Chashmonaim*’s victory over Greece they purified the Beit Hamikdash from the Greek’s *avodah zarah*, and rededicated the Beit Hamikdash.

Based on this principle, the Vilna Gaon explains that the

story of Yaakov and Lavan is the precursor for *yetziat Mitzrayim*. Yaakov’s stay at Lavan’s house mirrored the Jewish nation’s enslavement in Mitzrayim. Furthermore, Yaakov’s escape from Lavan mirrored the Jewish People’s escape from Mitzrayim.

Yaakov worked tirelessly day and night tending to Lavan’s sheep, as Yaakov said regarding his working conditions, “*I was consumed by the heat during the day, and frost by night, and my sleep drifted from my eyes.*” In Mitzrayim, too, the Jewish People worked day and night under ruthless conditions for Pharaoh.

Lavan changed Yaakov’s wages time and time again, as Yaakov said to his wives, “*Your father [Lavan] mocked me and changed my wage ten times, but G-d did not let him harm me.*” In Mitzrayim, Pharaoh also tricked the Jews to work for him by promising wages, but then ordered them to work without compensation.

Just as Yaakov left Lavan’s house with great wealth, the Jewish People left Mitzrayim with great wealth.

When Yaakov left Lavan’s home, Lavan chased him. Similarly when the Jewish People left Mitzrayim, Pharaoh and his army chased after them. Furthermore, just like Pharaoh began his chase on the third day (because the Jewish people were supposed to go for just three days) and caught up with them on the seventh, Lavan also chased Yaakov on the third day of his absence and caught up with him on the seventh.

The Vilna Gaon explains that this is the reason why the Pesach Haggadah tells us to “*go out and study what Lavan wanted to do to Yaakov*”. In order to understand the story of *yetziat Mitzrayim* we need to study the *ma’asei avot siman lebanim* that preceded it; this was the story of Yaakov in Lavan’s home.

Interestingly, when the Chida addresses the connection between *yetziat Mitzrayim* and the story of Lavan, he quotes the Alshich who says that Lavan’s actions directly caused the enslavement in Mitzrayim. The Alshich explains that when Lavan switched Leah for Rachel in their marriages with Yaakov, Yosef — Rachel’s firstborn — was no longer Yaakov’s firstborn. This being the case, Yaakov’s favoritism toward Yosef, had Yosef been his firstborn, would have been normal. Since, however, Lavan manipulated Yaakov’s marriage, Yaakov also married Leah, and she bore him Reuven, his actual firstborn. Thus, the favoritism Yaakov showed Yosef (the youngest of the brothers at the time) was unfounded, and thus led to their brothers’ jealousy. This jealousy led to Yosef’s sale to Mitzrayim — the eventual cause for Yaakov’s, and essentially the entire Jewish nation’s, descent to Mitzrayim (see the Chida’s *Geulat Olam* and the Alshich’s *Torat Moshe on Devarim 26:5*).

Combining the Vilna Gaon’s answer and the Chida’s answer together clearly explains why the story of Lavan and Yaakov is the perfect place to start with. This was the both the root of how it happened, by serving as the *ma’aseh avot siman l’banim*, and also the direct cause.

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# Abarbanel

## ON THE PARSHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

### Metzora

#### A Spiritual Disease with a Spiritual Cure

In Parshas Tazria Abarbanel emphasized that the affliction of *tzara'at* was the physical manifestation of a spiritual imbalance in the individual which resulted from his transgressions. These physical symptoms create a state of *tumah*, or ritual contamination, which can be “transmitted” to others. It is nothing like a natural infectious disease where the physical symptoms are transmitted to others. Rather, what is transmitted is not a physical disease, but, rather, a state of ritual contamination. We are warned not to come in contact with such an individual, as the Torah warns us, “...you shall not contaminate your soul, your inner essence...” (Leviticus 11:44) Normal infectious diseases harm the body but not our inner essence.

This explains why an individual afflicted with *tzara'at* does not consult a physician. He deals only with the *kohanim*, who are the experts in dealing with ritual contamination. Only they are entrusted with the ability to declare an object or a person ritually contaminated or ritually pure.

Parshat Metzora begins with a detailed description of the ritual purification process required to restore the individual to a state of spiritual balance. Since his condition of *tzara'at* resulted from transgressions, one dimension of the process was to bring sacrificial offerings to atone for them, whether they were accidental or purposeful transgressions. This is necessary since the foundation of our religious faith and understanding is that everything that happens to a member of the Jewish nation is a result of Divine Providence, in order “...to grant to each man according to his ways and the consequences of his deeds.” (Jeremiah 32:19) Thus, each afflicted individual will understand that his behavior was the source of his affliction. After having brought the offerings for the intentional and unintentional transgressions, whether or not he was aware of them, he then brings the elevation-offering, which was totally consumed on the Altar, to demonstrate his renewed connection to G-d.

The Torah then describes in detail how the *kohen* applies blood from the guilt-offering to the right ear, the right thumb and the right big toe of the afflicted individual. He then places oil on the same areas, and applies oil to the head as well. Abarbanel explains that the main reason for this ritual was to impress upon us that the true cure was Divine; purely the result of repentance and proper performance of the commandments. The individual had no need whatsoever for natural medical interventions and treatments. Actually, in order to emphasize the purely Divine nature of the cure, the “treatments” of the *kohen* were exactly the opposite of what doctors would normally do. Normal medical practices involved blood-letting. Here the *kohen* does not extract any blood. Rather, he ritually places blood on those areas where the symptoms first appeared. Similarly, the oil teaches us that unlike accepted

medical practice, it is not necessary to empty excess fluid. Rather, we place oil on the individual to emphasize again the miraculous nature of the cure. Finally, whatever oil remains is placed on the head. As it says in Ecclesiastes: “...let your head never lack oil”. (Ecclesiastes 9:8) The oil is a metaphor for the wisdom, which hopefully has been imparted to the afflicted individual as a result of his experience.

### Acharei Mot

#### The Yom Kippur Service

##### One Goat to G-d, One Goat to Azazel

“Aharon shall bring near his own sin-offering bull, and provide atonement for himself and for his household. He shall take the two he-goats and stand them before G-d... Aharon shall place lots upon the two he-goats: one lot ‘for G-d’ and one lot ‘for Azazel’. Aharon shall bring near the he-goat designated by lot for G-d, and make it a sin-offering. And the he-goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be stood alive before G-d, to provide atonement through it, to send it to Azazel to the Wilderness.” (Leviticus 16:6-10)

“Aharon shall lean his two hands upon the head of the living he-goat and confess upon it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel, and all their rebellious sins among all their sins, and place them upon the head of the he-goat, and send it with a designated man to the desert. The he-goat will bear upon itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land, and he should send the he-goat to the desert.” (Leviticus 16:21-22)

This unusual procedure, performed only on Yom Kippur, is extremely difficult to understand. First of all, who, what or where is “Azazel”? Secondly, what was the purpose of the lots? Aaron could have just designated one for an offering and the other for Azazel without the lots. Thirdly, why is the confession of the sins of the people recited over the goat that is sent away? It makes more sense for the confession to be recited over the goat that is sacrificed as a sin-offering. Finally, transgressions are not simply burdens that can be taken off the back of one and placed on the back of another.

Abarbanel begins with a deeper level of understanding that is hinted at by these verses. The two goats, which look exactly alike, represent Yaakov and Esav, who started their lives on the same spiritual level. Just as one goat is an offering to G-d and the other is sent out to a barren wilderness, Yaakov ended up choosing a life of dedication to the service of G-d while Esav separated himself from the spiritual life, and in essence chose a life of spiritual wilderness and desolation. This total separation into two very different nations came about through Divine Providence. This is symbolized by the two lots. Even though a lottery seems to be a chance event, in reality the outcome is orchestrated. As the verse in Mishlei (16:33) indicates, “When the lot is cast in the lap, its entire judgment has been decided by G-d.”

Continued on page nine



The confession which the *Kohen Gadol* makes on the goat to be sent away is meant to induce fear of G-d and repentance on behalf of the nation. Their intentional transgressions are transferred to this goat, as if to say that they belong to the progeny of Esav, not to the progeny of Yaakov.

Abarbanel then offers another explanation which he feels is more correct, as it is closer to the simple meaning of the verses. The two goats represent the entire Congregation of Israel, albeit from two opposite perspectives. When the nation is serving G-d properly they are symbolized by the goat which is sacrificed, whose consumed innards represent the inner thoughts of the nation, and whose blood is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, representing the highest form of devotion and connection to G-d. They then merit the ultimate reward in the World-to-Come. This is the meaning of the expression “a lot to G-d”. The word “lot” is actually a reference to reward or merit granted to the individual, whether for his righteousness or for his evil behavior. This reward can be understood as “one’s lot in life”. As the prophet Daniel states (12:13), “As for you, go to your end; you will rest; then arise for your portion (“lot”) at the end of days.” One’s lot is not coincidental; it is a result of Divine Providence. When the nation does not follow G-d’s path, then its lot and portion is to go to Azazel, that is, to be distanced from G-d’s holiness. They will be punished and suffer for their insolence by being sent into exile. The word “Azazel” is comprised of two separate words, “az” and “zel”. “Az” refers to insolence, while “zel” is Aramaic for “going”. This insolent nation will be exiled from the Divine Presence and will experience

shame and dreadful disgrace.

However, the verses also indicate that this exile will not be permanent; it will not destroy the Jewish nation. The goat designated for Azazel will be “stood alive before G-d”. The people will hold on to their faith and observance until the time comes for their redemption from the evils that they have endured. The end of that verse reads, “to provide atonement through it, to send it to Azazel to the Wilderness”. Abarbanel proves that grammatically one can read those words as “from sending it to Azazel to the Wilderness.” Now the meaning of the verse is that atonement will be provided for the nation from having been sent to Azazel, i.e. the horrors of exile will be their atonement.

Finally, the verse tells us that the goat will be sent with “a designated man” to the desert. The Hebrew word for “designated” is very similar to the Hebrew word for “in his time.” The reference is to Nebuchadnezzar, a great and powerful man in his time, who will send the nation into a spiritual desert. The last verse in the section states that the he-goat will bear upon itself all their iniquities to an *uninhabited* land. The Hebrew word for “uninhabited” (*gezrah*) has the same Hebrew root as the word for “decree”. This is a reference to G-d’s decree of the Babylonian exile, which will reduce the Land of Israel to desolation.

In summary, the ritual of the two goats hints at the reward and punishment of the nation, the providential bitterness of exile and the eventual redemption resulting from the atonement of that very exile.

*Continued on page nineteen*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW *continued from page three*

### KEDOSHIM

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught. *Prohibitions:* Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone’s property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one’s parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing. *Positive:* Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree’s fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe *kashrut*, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

### EMOR

The *kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The *kohen gadol* (High Priest) may not attend the funeral of even his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *kohanim*. The physical irregularities that invalidate a *kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *kohanim*, may be eaten only by *kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old and is free from any physical defects. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of G-d by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the *omer* of barley is offered in the Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the menorah and baking the *lechem hapanim* in the Temple. A man blasphemes G-d and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

# PARSHA Q&A

## 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 of having *tzara’at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara’at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara’at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara’at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara’at*: a) returns and spreads; b) does not return; c) returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara’at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow): a) two times or two consecutive days; b) three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who “has not washed his hands”?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one-time flow?

## Answers to Metzora’s Questions

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

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*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled.
14. a) 14:44-45 - It is called “*tzara’at mam’eret*,” and the house must be demolished; b) 14:48 - The house is pronounced *tahor*; c) 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 - a) He is *tamei*; b) he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tmei’im*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

Our very close friend, member of staff, and integral part of the Ohr Somayach family Paul Laster needs a refuah shleimah.

**Please daven for R' Avraham Pesach ben Gisha Breina**

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# PARSHA Q&A

## ACHREI

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshat Acharei Mot* was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?
2. How long did the first *Beit Hamikdash* stand?
3. What did the *kohen gadol* wear when he entered the Holy of Holies?
4. How many times did the *kohen gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
5. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *azazel*. What is *azazel*?
6. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *kohen gadol*?
7. What is the penalty of *karet*?
8. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
9. What is the difference between "*mishpat*" and "*chok*"?
10. May a man marry his wife's sister?

## KEDOSHIM

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the

Jewish People?

2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. The Torah obligates one to leave the "*leket*" for the poor. What is "*leket*"?
5. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands, "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal"?
6. In verse 19:13, the Torah commands, "Do not wrong your neighbor." To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
7. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
8. How does one fulfill the command "*v'hadarta p'nei zakein*"?
9. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
10. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which type of death penalty is it referring?

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## Answers to Acharei Mot & Kedoshim's Questions

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

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## ACHREI

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the Holy of Holies except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:3 - 410 years.
3. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *kohen*.
4. 16:4 - Five times.
5. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
6. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
7. 17:9 - The person's life is shortened and his offspring die.
8. 17:13 - Non-domestic kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
9. 18:4 - A "*mishpat*" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "*chok*" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as G-d's decree.
10. 18:18 - Not during his wife's lifetime.

## KEDOSHIM

1. 19:2 - Because it contains the fundamental teachings of the Torah.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain that are accidentally dropped while harvesting.
5. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
6. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
7. 19:17 - Causing embarrassment.
8. 19:32 - By not sitting in their seat nor contradicting them.
9. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — the entire Jewish People will never be "cut off."
10. 20:10 - "*Chenek*" (strangulation).

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## Pesach – Temple Service

From: Harry

Dear Rabbi,  
All the recent events regarding the Temple Mount in Jerusalem have awakened my interest as to what role the Temple played in our past. As the holiday of Pesach approaches, could you perhaps describe what it was like in Temple times?

Dear Harry,

The number of people who went up to Jerusalem on Pesach was far greater than on any other festival. There are several reasons for this.

For one, on each of the three pilgrim festivals, three *mitzvot* were performed: the actual pilgrimage of being in Jerusalem, the offering of the festival sacrifice and the rejoicing in G-d on the holiday. Pesach, however, had special Pesach sacrifices in addition to the regular festival sacrifices, and this was a great incentive for all Jews to come to Jerusalem from far and wide.

In addition to the positive incentive to partake of the special Pesach sacrifice, there is also severe punishment, *karet* — being spiritually cut off from the Jewish People — for one who intentionally refrains from bringing this special offering, thereby refusing to participate in the collective remembrance of the redemption from Egypt. This was yet another reason for many people to arrive.

Thirdly, while women are generally exempt from time-bound *mitzvot*, Pesach was the only festival in which women were required to appear. This also added to the many additional people in Jerusalem for Pesach.

The Talmud relates that King Agrippa once wished to know how many people were in Jerusalem during the pilgrim festival. He asked one of the *kohanim* to set aside one kidney from each Pesach offering, and the number came to one million, two-hundred thousand. But this was not the full number of Jews since there was not a single Pesach lamb that was shared by less than ten people. That means that there were literally many millions of Jews in Jerusalem during Pesach!

People seeing Jerusalem today may wonder how it could have absorbed so many millions of pilgrims, *kohanim*, and *levi'im* — in addition to its normal population. How could this small city accommodate them all, how could they all have celebrated in its midst, and how could they all have entered into the Temple courtyard in order to sacrifice the Pesach offering?

Our Sages recall that when the Jewish People were at

home in their Land and the Divine Presence dwelt among them, no person ever said, “There is no room for me in Jerusalem” or “There is no room for me to sacrifice on the Temple Mount”. Yet this is nevertheless not listed as one of the ten miracles which took place in the Sanctuary. This is because it is a *natural* characteristic of the city, that there is room within it for all her children who come from near and far. But if they should cease to come, Jerusalem “shrinks” and seems too small to be home for all.

The excitement in anticipation of the pilgrimage commenced thirty days before Pesach when people began to discuss and learn the numerous and intricate laws and customs of the holiday, during which time people traveled from great distances in order to arrive before the festival.

Four days before Pesach there were already large numbers of pilgrims in the city, and each group of people who shared one lamb would send a representative to ensure the animal was unblemished, as dictated in the Torah, “On the tenth of this month (of Nisan) a lamb shall be taken for a father’s household and it shall be guarded by you until the fourteenth (the eve of Pesach).”

By the time the fourteenth of Nisan arrived, the population of Jerusalem was so numerous that the noise of man and beast that filled the air could be heard far off, and the hillsides were snow-white with sheep. At this time, everyone procured for themselves animals for the various and numerous sacrifices of Pesach, which were five — three of them were common to all the pilgrim festivals, and two were additional ones that were special for Pesach:

- The *burnt-offering brought in honor of appearing in the Temple* on any festival, in fulfillment of the verse, “They shall not appear before Me empty-handed”. This was consumed on the Altar and not eaten.

- The *peace-offering in honor of the festival*, in fulfillment of the verse, “You shall celebrate three festivals a year for Me,” where the word “celebrate” refers to offering a sacrifice in honor of each of the festivals. This offering was eaten.

- The *peace-offering of rejoicing* referred to in the verse, “You shall rejoice in your festivals”, where “rejoicing” is expressed by feasting on meat in honor of the three special pilgrimages.

- The *Chagiga*, which was also a peace-offering, and was eaten specially for the Pesach Seder meal in order that the special Pesach lamb would later be eaten with the composure of satiety.

- The *Pesach-offering* itself, which consisted of a perfectly unblemished male lamb or goat, and was relished sizzling hot off the roast at the end of the festive Seder meal!

May we merit partaking of the sacrifices and special Pesach offerings in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem speedily in our days! Amen.

BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

## Rabbi Yona Vogel

Age: 61 - West Hempstead, Long Island, New York  
SUNY at Oneonta — BA in Political Science

The well known Yiddishe phrase: “*A mentch tracht und G-tt lacht*” (Man plans and G-d laughs) is quite applicable to the subject of this profile. In fact, if one can be a bit more anthropomorphic, Hashem must be having an exceedingly long laugh at Yona Vogel’s expense.

Raised in a non-observant home in West Hempstead, NY, Yona’s plans did not include moving to Israel and becoming a yeshiva student, rabbi, scribe and author of religious texts. He had a typical Long Island Jewish upbringing at the time of his youth — afternoon Hebrew School and then a Bar Mitzvah, which marked the end of his Jewish education. After that his attachment to Jewish tradition was eating matzah on Passover and fasting on Yom Kippur.

In college, Yona majored in Political Science and during his senior year was an exchange student at the University of Alexandria in Egypt. His hope was to become an international lawyer and diplomat, and solve the problems between Israel and the Arabs. After spending six months in Alexandria learning some Arabic and a lot about Arab politics, Yona came to Israel for the summer of 1976 to get an idea about the Israeli side of the equation. He had been accepted into law school and planned to start in the fall of that year. Those were his plans. But, his life soon took a detour. While in Jerusalem he met someone who had been studying at a seminary for *ba’alei teshuva* and who asked him if he would like to learn more about his religion, living for free as long as he wanted. Having no money, and being of a curious turn of mind, he agreed. She took him to Ohr Somayach where he was met at the door by Rabbi Meir Schuster and was placed in Room 8 of the “Mili” building.

While still in college he had thought about his heritage and decided that he should be “more Jewish”. That meant to him to do whatever he knew to be Jewish. But he didn’t know much. Now that he was in a yeshiva he figured that he should go all the way. That same day that he came to the Yeshiva, he decided to take on all the *mitzvot*. He still planned go back the States to attend law school at SUNY Buffalo in September. As the summer progressed and he became more engrossed in leaning, he postponed his entry

into law school. In February of 1977 he returned to New York and made plans to spend another year in the Yeshiva. He applied for and received a deferment from law school for a year. He came back to Israel before Pesach, and as *hashgacha* (Divine Providence) would have it, he met an Israeli young lady, who grew up observant in the Bayit Vegan neighborhood of Jerusalem, and after a few dates they decided to get married. After the marriage in January of 1978 Yona decided that it was impractical for him to go to Buffalo with an Israeli wife for at least three years. He decided to stay in Israel. The young couple then moved to the Ohr Somayach branch in Zichron Yaacov. He learned there for eight years. During that time he developed a very close relationship with Rav Mendel Weinbach ז”ל, one of the founders of Ohr Somayach.



After getting *smicha* from the Rabbanut of Israel, Yona became a *sofer* and a *magiah* (checking STA”M). He also wrote a classic *sefer* in English on *safrut*, *Mishnas Sofrim*. In 1986 the family moved back to Jerusalem. While living in the Har Nof, a largely English-speaking neighborhood, he saw a need for a learning program in English for men who worked. He started Machon Daniel in 1989. He eventually opened a branch in Beit Shemesh and one in Sha’ari Chesed. About 200 men attend *shiurim* and learn in the *Batei Midrashim* of the various branches of Machon Daniel. A number of the *rebbeim* there are Ohr Somayach alumni.

Yona and his wife have had, *bli ayin hara*, much *nachat* from their children. The boys are learning full-time. His oldest son recently received “*Yadin Yadin*” (certification as a rabbinic court judge), another son won first prize at a nationwide Torah competition, another is a published author of *sefarim*, and he has a daughter who is a well-known designer of modest clothing for women.

Not content to rest on his laurels, Yona is presently writing a new *sefer* on *chinuch*. Working in the field of *safrut*, he is involved in obtaining for clients the highest quality *tefillin* and *Sifrei Torah*.

In sum, Rabbi Yona Vogel can look at his life and share the laugh with Hashem.

BY RABBI RICHARD JACOBS

# All Four One & One Four All

Given that the primary purpose of the Seder night and the Haggadah is to instill fundamentals of Jewish faith in the next generation, it's of little surprise that we find educational principles embedded in the text of the Haggadah.

The paragraph of the "four sons" guides us with how to relate to different types of children, which path in *chinuch* to follow, and what to teach.

For the *chacham*, the wise son, with particular talents in learning, a quick and good understanding, and who asks of the "testimonies, statutes and laws" — let him apply his talents to Torah learning and not be distracted by other wisdoms. What becomes of those who are successful in these other disciplines? The modern world is full of new and wondrous discoveries, but the way of the world is that while the new flourish, the old flounder — the new overwrites the old. Not so when it comes to Torah, where the Sages of times gone by are well remembered and live on, as their words in the Talmud and commentaries are debated and analyzed in *yeshivot*.

To the *rasha*, the wicked son, disconnected from tradition, not following halacha, and all too often in our days associating with friends who are a negative influence — don't address his challenges head on, but also don't despair and cut him off. Recognize that there is an issue, yet realize that he is there at the Seder and may absorb from the words of Torah around him.

The *tam* is usually translated as the simple son, but this doesn't do him justice. The *tam* is someone who doesn't have natural talents in learning. We know that the secret to success in Torah is hard work, toil and perseverance. We see that there are *gedolei* Torah who showed limited promise as a child, and yet, despite this, or perhaps, even *because* of it, with resolute determination develop to become a flowing river of Torah. King David tells us, "The testimony of G-d is trustworthy, making the simple one wise." (Tehillim 19:8)

And finally, the child who does not know to ask, who is usually inaccurately portrayed as a young child, not yet old enough to be able to pose a question. In reality he is

the partner of the *rasha* who doesn't ask. Not because he is not able to ask, but because he is not interested. In many ways he is more challenging to deal with — the *rasha* kicks and screams against the Torah, indicating the pain of his *neshama*, while the child who doesn't ask shows no outward indication that there is a problem to deal with. Here too don't despair. The Haggadah quotes the same verse in answering both of these children, but in the case of the child who doesn't ask makes one small addition — "*at patach lo*" — you (singular, feminine) open him up, initiate with him. You (singular, feminine), like the mercy of a mother opening up the mouth of a reluctant baby so that she can feed him and he will grow strong.

Four sons — four different educational principles. However, there is a curiosity in the translation. "The Torah speaks of four sons: one (*echad*) wise, one (*echad*) wicked, one (*echad*) simple and one (*echad*) who doesn't know how to ask." The word "*echad*" when used in sequence like this often means "whether" — whether this, whether that...

Perhaps there are not four sons, but one, with different character traits being dominant at any given time; and, rather than deriving principles for ways of relating to our children and strengthening their *emunah*, we should be asking ourselves:

Do we apply ourselves as fully to Torah learning as we should?

Do we associate with the right people who will be a positive influence on us?

When there is an area of learning that doesn't lend itself to our natural strengths, do we devote enough energy and effort to understanding it?

And when there is an area of Torah that we are not interested in, do we actively look for the opening that will lead us to engagement?

• Sources: based on Rabbi Shimshon Pincus and an idea heard from Rabbi Kalman Rosenbaum

# Abarbanel

## ON PESACH

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

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### Symbolic Meaning of the Mitzvot of Pesach

The root of the symbolic meaning of the Pesach *mitzvot*, and indeed of all the *mitzvot* in the Torah, lies in the fact that it is the duty of all G-d-fearing individuals to strive to use their time wisely to do what it is good and right. Everyone should understand that the seven decades of the average individual's lifetime are analogous to the seven days of Creation. Just as G-d was engaged for the first six days in creative activity, Man should also use the first six decades of his life for creative and productive interaction with the world. Just as G-d "rested" on the seventh day, so too should Man withdraw from material pursuits and connect with higher spiritual pursuits in the last decade of his life.

G-d's removal of the Jewish People from Egypt is comparable to childbirth. Just as the fetus emerges from the darkness of the womb into the light of the world at the cost of the severe pains of childbirth, so too the Jewish People had to suffer the tribulations of servitude before emerging as G-d's chosen people. This emergence took place in the springtime, for just as there are four seasons in the natural world, there are four stages in a man's lifetime; our springtime is a time of emergence, growth and maturation into young adulthood, when knowledge, wisdom and understanding sprouts forth.

Unfortunately, this maturation is paralleled by the emergence of our physical and material desires. The prohibition against eating leavened foods (*chametz*) symbolizes our requirement to distance ourselves from these material temptations. For this reason when we bring a sacrificial offering to G-d we may not add leavening or honey, as the leavening represents succumbing to excessive physical temptation and honey represents the sweetness and pleasure that follows. One is not punished for giving in to negative physical temptation until the age of 13, or the beginning of his fourteenth year. This is symbolized by the total prohibition against eating, owning, or deriving any benefit from leavening which begins on the fourteenth day of the month of Nissan.

The *Mishna* tells us that we are to search for leavened food on the fourteenth of Nissan by the light of a candle, which represents the soul of Mankind, as the verse in Proverbs (20, 27) states, "A man's soul is the candle of G-d." It is our duty to use this candle to search out and eliminate this leavening which symbolizes our negative actions and motivations. However, the flame cannot be so strong as to injure us or burn our homes, nor too weak which would prevent us from finding the leavening in the first place. Our job is to control our relationship with the physical world, not to withdraw from or destroy it. At the same time we must be able to recognize our failings and correct them. The *mitzvah* is to refrain from eating leavening for the entire seven days of the holiday, symbolic of our requirement to control our physical existence for our entire lifespan of seven decades. It is no coincidence that the number seven appears in regard to a wide variety of *mitzvot*:

seven days of wedding celebration, seven days of ritual impurity, seven days of mourning, the seven-year agricultural cycle, and others as well.

On the first and last days of Pesach, *melacha*, or creative activity, is prohibited. The first day represents the beginning of one's life, before he is capable of creative interaction with the world, and the last day represents the last decade of one's life, when one tends to withdraw from the material world and focus on fulfilling one's spiritual goals. However, the middle decades, like the middle days of the holidays, connect us actively to the material world, and refraining from leavening reminds us to take care to manage our relationship with the physical world properly.

The matzah that we eat must be completely pure and free of any trace of leavening. Furthermore, we must guard the flour from any contact with moisture which might result in leavening from the time that the wheat is ground. This symbolizes that Man must protect his spiritual essence from the time that he begins to surround himself with the 'daily grind' of worldly affairs and the quest for his daily sustenance. We are also commanded to eat the matzah with bitter herbs in order to symbolize that for the sake of our spiritual essence we may have to endure a measure of bitterness and pain in our physical existence.

The Pesach sacrifice also represents the triumph of Man's spiritual essence over the physical, as eating it at night, which symbolizes death, alludes to the freeing of the soul from the body. Eating it with a group alludes to the groups of friends and relatives who come to mourn the deceased. Finally, it can only be eaten roasted, since the aroma of roasted meat is swiftly dispersed, which alludes to the transient nature of physical existence.

What is clearly apparent is that the holiday of Pesach hints at Man's creation, his lifespan, the conquest of his evil inclination, the pain associated with his physical existence and the eventual fulfillment of his goal of spiritual connection to G-d. This is why the holiday is described as applying to all generations. We are taught in the Talmud that everyone at the Pesach Seder should view himself as if he were actually part of the exodus from Egypt. This means much more than imagining oneself to be present at an historical event. Rather, it is the root of all the holidays and *mitzvot* of the entire Torah, as this injunction refers to the struggles and obligations over the entire lifespan of an individual.

After Pesach we are commanded to count seven weeks, culminating in the giving of the Torah at the holiday of Shavout. This is another reference to the seven decades of Man's life, all of which should be directed to attaining the spiritual perfection which the nation experienced at the giving of the Torah at Sinai. It was fitting that G-d arranged this when the Jews shed the shackles of Egyptian idolatry and were thus prepared to receive the truth of the Torah at Sinai.

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# PARSHA Q&A

## EMOR

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *kohen gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. If the daughter of a *kohen* marries a “zar” she may no longer eat *terumah*. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a *nedavah*?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of G-d?
12. Apart from Shabbat, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *etrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

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## Answers to Emor’s Questions

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

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1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its mother on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of Nissan.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be complete, because according to the Torah a day starts at nightfall.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidat* (binding of) Yitzchak.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemot* 2:12).
20. 24:21 - Death.



# THE DICHOTOMY OF A JEW

BY RABBI DANI ZWICK

As we celebrate the birthday of our nation on Passover, we are annually confronted with the opportunity to refresh, refocus and rethink our unique role as a member of the “Chosen people”. G-d’s plan from the beginning of time was to designate a nation of leaders and mentors that will serve as a role model for the entire world to learn how to fulfill G-d’s purpose for life. Although the seeds for producing such a nation began way back in the Garden of Eden, it only began to truly take shape with our patriarch Avraham Avinu. It was only to Avraham that G-d promised that this special nation will be formed from his offspring, and only from those who continued in his ways and lived according to his teachings. The final production of this nation occurred only after hundreds of years in the making when G-d fulfilled His promise to Avraham. G-d took the “new and improved” nation of Israel out of the womb of Egypt and brought them in His arms to Mount Sinai to give them the Torah. It was then and there that the pact was made and our job as being mentors for the world began.

As with any high-powered position, to succeed in fulfilling the task one must face difficult challenges. As a wise man once said, “If it’s too easy, you’re probably not doing a good job”. As a nation, the Jewish People have had no shortage of challenges. But individually, there is also a specific challenge that we need to face daily. One that keeps us focused on who we are. And on Passover every year we are commanded to internalize the mindset needed to face this challenge.

We are challenged to understand our exalted position while at the same time realize its frailty. To be humble and proud at the same time. A seemingly paradoxical mindset to maintain, if at all even possible. On one hand we must realize that we were handpicked by the King of the universe for the most important job of teaching and leading mankind. On the other hand we are constantly reminded that we are nothing but flesh and blood like any other creature, and without G-d imbuing us with His wisdom we would not amount to much at all. On top of that we are constantly reminded of the sweat, tears and blood it takes to maintain our exalted position and the consequences we must face if we don’t live up to the task.

This mindset was in fact portrayed to us right from the onset. The Midrash Rabba, at the beginning of Bamidbar, explains that the Torah was given to the Jewish People with “*aish u’mayim*” — fire and water. *Mayim*, water, represents

humility, as *Chazal* explain: “Just as water leaves a higher level and goes to a lower level, so too the words of Torah are held only by one who is humble.” *Aish* which means fire, constantly ascends, representing the confidence and assuredness we are given to fulfill our mission and face any challenge along the way.

The Pesach Seder comes around yearly on our national birthday to help us with our task, and enables us to internalize this mindset. The *Si’ach Yitzchak* on the Haggadah notes that the various events of the Seder night are outright paradoxical. On one hand we are commanded to remind ourselves that we were slaves in Egypt, and on the other we must feel like free men who serve no one other than G-d. We sit and eat “poor man’s bread”, yet we are commanded to do so while reclining like kings. We are commanded to overindulge in wine like aristocrats, yet only as another reminder that it was G-d Who took us out of slavery. We eat *maror* to remind us of the ongoing bitterness we face in life, yet we dip it in excess amounts of sweet *charoset* in the manner of royalty.

The *mitzvot* of Seder night and even the contents of the Haggadah are filled with this “double message”. On one hand we are to feel like kings living with unlimited wealth, and on the other we must feel like embittered slaves with nothing of our own other than the barest of necessities. These two opposite mindsets are exactly what we need to internalize into our daily mindset needed to fulfill our year-round mission. We must never forget that we come from a very long line of leaders who have earned the honor of being part of G-d’s chosen nation. We must know that we have within us the power to follow in their footsteps and become just as great in our own right. As Jews, we have so much to be proud of and so much to strive for. However, humility means that while we embrace our mission, possessing all the greatness and uniqueness it entails, we are *not* aggrandized by the role we were given. Rather, we humbly and solemnly accept our obligation, and constantly remember that it is G-d Who has entrusted us with so much talent and potential.

To live daily as a proud Jew who can fulfill the exalted mission of being a mentor to mankind, one must always remember our humble beginnings and the source of our power. May we all merit celebrating a “*Chag Kasher v’Somayach*”!

# PRAYER Essentials

## Chol Ha'mo'ed

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

**O**ur Rabbis warn us of the serious nature of disgracing the Mo'adot, the Jewish holidays (Avot 3:15, Pesachim 118a). But what exactly constitutes disgracing a Jewish Holiday?

Let us first define what a holiday is. Though a holiday like Pesach is made up of seven days (eight in the Diaspora), not all of its days are treated the same, and for good reason. Imagine eight straight days of Yom Tov! Only the first and last day (first two and last two in the Diaspora) are considered as Yamim Tovim (full holidays); the middle days are called "Chol Ha'mo'ed". "Chol" means weekday, while "Mo'ed" means holiday. What this means is that the middle days of Pesach, though one hundred percent a part of the holiday, are treated as part weekday and part holiday.

According to Rashi and others it is to these "weekday-holiday" days that the above teaching of our Rabbis refers. Since one is permitted to do some *melachot* (weekday activities) it is possible to become overly involved in weekday activities. So the Rabbis came to remind us that disgracing these days is a disgrace to the Mo'ed.

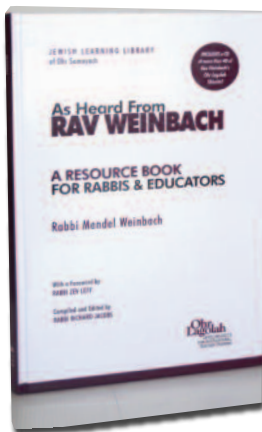
One must treat the Chol Ha'mo'ed days with proper respect and honor by having a festive meal, ideally both in the daytime and in the evening. Although, strictly speak-

ing, one is not required to eat bread at these meals, it is preferable to do so. One should also wear nicer clothing than on a weekday. In fact the Maharil wore his Shabbat clothing on Chol Ha'mo'ed (Mishnah Berurah; Kaf Ha'Chaim).

### Shulchan Aruch

"On Chol Hamoed one is permitted to do some *melachot*, while forbidden from doing others. Rema: *Melacha* was permitted by the Rabbis based on their assessment of need." (Orach Chaim 530)

There are five general circumstances where doing a *melacha* is permitted on Chol Ha'mo'ed. 1) When one will incur damage or a financial loss. 2) For foods ("*ochel nefesh*") that are needed for the holiday one is permitted to do *ma'aseh uman* (skilled work), and for other types of needs one is permitted to do *ma'aseh hedyot* (unskilled work). 3) Someone who does not have enough money to purchase food for the holiday is permitted to work and do *melachot*. 4) Things that are needed for the community. 5) Things that do not require a skilled professional are permitted even for an individual. (Tur; Mishnah Berurah; Kaf Hachaim)



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## Kedoshim

### How to Relate to Converts

“**W**hen a proselyte dwells among you in your land, do not scorn him. The proselyte who dwells with you shall be like a native among you, and you shall love him like yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt - I am the L-rd your G-d.” (Leviticus 19:33-34)

Through these two brief verses Abarbanel brings out a number of profound insights. Having just warned the Children of Israel to distance themselves from the abominable practices and false beliefs of the Canaanite nations that they would soon be encountering, there was a legitimate fear that they would reject converts due to their previous actions and beliefs. Therefore, G-d had to make sure that these converts would not be rejected. Each convert should be considered a full-fledged “native among you”, and he should not be made to feel ashamed of the beliefs and actions of his ancestors. He should essentially be viewed as not having any Canaanite ancestors at all.

Abarbanel then offers a unique insight into Torah’s reason for being careful with converts: “For you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” At first glance there isn’t any connection between our experience in Egypt and a Canaanite’s experience as a convert to Judaism. We were aliens in that we did *not* abandon our culture, language and beliefs. The Canaanite convert is doing exactly the opposite; he is abandoning his past. The Egyptians scorned us for what we held onto. The Children of Israel are being adjured not to scorn the convert for what he abandoned! What G-d is actually saying is that when the Children of Israel were aliens in Egypt, He was connected to them, never abandoning them; He was “The L-rd, your G-d”. This is exactly the relationship that He has with converts. To them He is also “The L-rd, your G-d.”

Finally, the verse that immediately follows states, “You shall not commit a perversion in justice, in measures of length, weight or volume.” (Leviticus 19:35) The immediate proximity of the two verses is not coincidental. Previously (Leviticus 19:15) the Torah used the exact same expression: “You shall not commit a perversion of justice.” Abarbanel says that the earlier verse is a general warning that applies to our dealings with the entire Jewish nation. Here, however, we are being warned specifically not to pervert justice generally in our dealings with converts, and specifically in terms of honest weights and measures. Every action that is considered a forbidden perversion of justice in regard to the “regular” Jew is equally a forbidden perversion of justice in regard to the convert.

## Emor

### Disqualifying Blemishes for Kohanim

“**G**-d spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to Aharon, saying: Any man of your offspring throughout their generations in whom there shall be a blemish shall not come near to offer the food of his G-d. For any man in whom there is a blemish shall not approach...” (Leviticus 21:16-18)

“The food of his G-d... he may eat. But he shall not come to the Curtain, and he shall not approach the Altar; for he has a blemish; and he shall not desecrate My sacred offerings, for I am G-d Who sanctifies them. Moshe spoke to Aharon and his sons, and to all the Children of Israel.” (Leviticus 1:22-24)

All of the commandments that specifically concern the *kohanim* are designed to uphold the honor of G-d. The Torah had previously listed the regulations regarding forbidden marriages and restrictions in terms of coming into contact with the deceased. Now the Torah focuses on insuring that only the most suitable *kohanim* be permitted to perform the sacrificial services.

The Torah first deals with an array of physical defects that disqualify the *kohen* from performing the services, whether or not he was born with them, and whether or not they are permanent. Furthermore, the most serious of these defects are those that are found on the face. The Torah emphasizes that even though the *kohanim*, the offspring of Aharon, have a unique, elevated status in the nation, they shouldn’t think that physical blemishes are irrelevant, since allowing a *kohen* with these blemishes to serve is a desecration of the honor of the Divine Presence in the Sanctuary. The Torah here takes into account the unfortunate reality of human nature. Those who gaze upon a “blemished” *kohen* while he is performing a service could be so taken aback by his appearance that they might come to detest the very idea of performing the service. If these blemishes are patently offensive to people, all the more so to G-d. As the prophet Malachi says (1:8): “Would you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is nothing wrong? ... Present it, if you please, to your governor: Would he be pleased with you or show you favor?” Malachi is saying that if a human official would not accept such an offering, then surely G-d would scorn it as well.

A number of blemishes are listed, and the commentators are not in agreement as to the exact nature of some of them. Many of them refer to blemishes on the face, such as blindness, two types of abnormal growths on the eyes, a deformed nose and connected eyebrows. Others include broken, missing or deformed limbs, moist or dry skin eruptions, a concave chest, humpback, and swollen testicles. Abarbanel also makes it clear that the blemishes listed are often general categories; many others are subsumed under them. The Rambam (Maimonides) (Perek 8, Halacha 1, Laws of the Sanctuary) counts ninety different disqualifying blemishes. It is clear that the Torah’s listing is not an all-inclusive list since deaf-mutes and epileptics are not mentioned. They would obviously be disqualified as well. The general principle that is invoked here is that the performance of the Divine service by such an individual denigrates the honor of G-d. The general populace can only look up to, admire and respect the *kohanim* when they possess both inner and outer beauty. They need to be superior to the rest of the populace, both in terms of their physical characteristics and their moral and ethical behavior.

Finally, the last verse quoted above states that Moshe spoke not only to the sons of Aharon but to the entire nation as well. This was to insure that the rest of the people would reprimand the *kohanim* if they did not fulfill their special requirements and obligations.

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## PESACH SPECIAL - "I'll Have a Hillel Please"

*continued from page one*

delightful parable to explain the bitter herbs at the Seder table, and how they apply to us today. There was once two friends, one Jewish and the other not, who eked out their livings by begging in the streets. One day the Jew looked very happy with himself, and his friend asked him why. So he told him that in a few days it was going to be Passover and he was guaranteed a veritable feast. He waxed lyrical about the golden chicken soup and the crispy roasted chicken with spicy potato kugel that he was sure to eat on the first night of Passover. His non-Jewish friend was consumed (pun intended) with envy, and also with a desire to have such a meal. So he asked him whether there was any way that it might be possible for him to join in as well. His Jewish friend thought for a bit and told him that there might be a way to do it. He told his friend that he should come to the Synagogue with him on Passover night and stand together with all the other poor people who need a place for the Seder. At some point he would be matched up with a generous host who was looking for guests to share the festive meal with. The Jew told his friend that when he gets to the house he should just copy what everyone else does — stand when they stand, sit when they sit, eat when they eat — and everything will be okay. On that night, everything worked like clockwork. The non-Jew was sent off after the Prayer Services to the house of a wealthy man where everything looked exquisite, and the smells from the kitchen were beyond tantalizing. The beginning was just fine with a glass of wine and then some "hors d'oeuvres", but after that the food just didn't seem to materialize. First they began to read in Hebrew and Yiddish for hours, and then, just as he thought they were finally going to eat, everyone was given an enormous portion of bitter herbs to eat. As you can imagine, he dashed out of there as fast as he could, and had a very unhappy and a very hungry night! A few days later he met his friend and he spilled out his tale of woe, how he must have ended up in the wrong house since all they wanted to do was to eat bitter herbs. Instead of commiserating with him as he expected, his friend looked at him and told him, "You fool! Only *after* the bitter herbs is the delicious food served!"

The Maggid from Dubnow explained that we Jews have truly eaten a lot of "bitter herbs" in our history. And it is true that presently we are living in very bitter and unsettled times. But, hopefully, very, very soon it will be time to eat the most delicious feast of all time. The feast that will

herald in the Messianic Era. The message of Hillel resonates within us. Within the bitterness there is sweetness — truly an abundance of sweetness!

Many years ago a non-Jewish family opened a fruit-and-vegetable store in our local area. My mother always felt that it was correct to support the local stores, and she started to buy her produce there. As they opened only a few weeks before Passover she told all her friends to make their Passover orders there to help the new business. So, along came a small army of Jewish clients, all placing their Passover orders, and, of course, each one asked for a generous amount of horseradish for the bitter herbs. The store owner, knowing nothing about the Jewish year and the Jewish festivals, ran out of horseradish pretty quickly, and not a few people were quite upset. A few weeks after Passover my mother went into the store to make her weekly order, and with a big smile the store owner, seeing her, asked her to come to the back of the store where he stored all the produce that wasn't out on display. The first thing that my mother saw was a small mountain of horseradish in the middle of the area. The store owner proudly told my mother that he had made some investigations and found out that there was another Jewish festival coming up, and this time there would be no mishaps, as he had literally cornered the horseradish market! My mother was at a loss as to what to do. She absolutely did not want to hurt his feelings, but, on the other hand, she couldn't let him try selling horseradish (which is an obligation to eat only on Passover) to all of his new Jewish clients, as they would think that he was completely insane! So, in the end she bought pounds and pounds of horseradish which sat around in our garden shed for months until they had to be thrown out. (Afterwards, my mother told the store owner that she would keep him informed of the Jewish festivals and customs so that he wouldn't make any more mistakes... and so that we wouldn't have to live with an "Everestial" pile of horseradish!)

There is a famous saying that when life throws lemons at you, make lemonade. Perhaps we can paraphrase that and say, "When life throws bitter herbs our way let's make them as sweet as we can!" And with G-d's help we will be able to experience the sweetest, most delicious experience of all — to join together here in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover together with the Mashiach!

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

*חג קasher ו'סומאך*

# Pesach Q&A

## Q

1. What is the holiday of Pesach called in the Torah?
2. Why did our ancestors carry dough when they left Egypt?
3. Where is there a hint in the Torah to the four cups of wine we drink at the Seder?
4. What do we do on Pesach Eve to remember the Korban Pesach?
5. What do these numbers represent – 10, 50 / 40, 200 / 50, 250?
6. How many mornings on Pesach do we say the entire Hallel?
7. How do we refer to Pesach in our *kiddush* and in our *tefillot*?
8. What are the three prohibitions regarding *chametz*?
9. When is the eating of matza obligatory according to the Torah?
10. What was the date of the crossing of Yam Suf?
11. How many days of Chol Hamo'ed are there in Eretz Israel and elsewhere?
12. Is there any limit to what may be done during Chol Hamo'ed?
13. How many times do we wash our hands during the Seder?
14. What cannot be done after eating the *afikomen*?
15. Why do we recline when drinking wine and eating matza?
16. What unusual thing do we do to stimulate children to ask questions?
17. What is the meaning of *datzach, adash, beachav*?
18. Who are the four sons alluded to in the Torah as requiring us to inform them regarding Pesach?
19. What is the meaning of *Dayenu* that we sing?
20. What is the Torah term on which the word Haggadah is based?

## A

1. *Chag Hamatzot* (The Festival of Matzot).
2. They left in such a hurry that there was no time for the dough to rise.
3. The four expressions of redemption found in *Shemot* / Exodus 6:6-7.
4. Place a shankbone or other piece of meat on the Seder plate.
5. The number of plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten in Egypt and at the Sea according to three different Sages.
6. One morning in Eretz Israel and two everywhere else.
7. *Zman Cheiruteinu* (The Season of Our Freedom).
8. To eat, to benefit from and to possess.
9. On the first night of the holiday at the Seder.
10. The seventh day of Pesach – the 21st day of the month of Nisan.
11. In Eretz Israel 5 days and elsewhere only 4.
12. Definitely! Study the laws or consult a rabbi.
13. Twice - once before dipping *karpas* into salt water and once before eating matza. (A third time is *mayim achronim* before saying *birkat hamazon* – Grace after meals.)
14. We cannot eat nor drink wine.
15. In order to express our sense of nobility as free men.
16. We dip a vegetable in salt water before saying the Haggadah.
17. These are acronyms formed by the first letters of the ten plagues.
18. The wise son, the wicked one, the simple one and the one who does not know how to ask.
19. "It would have sufficed for us" – a reference to all the stages of benevolence which G-d granted us.
20. "*Vehegadeta levincha* – And you shall relate to your child" (*Shemot* 13:8).

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marrying, “*Harei at mekudeshet li*” — “Behold, you are married to me” — to which she agreed. (She understood that he meant “to himself”, because, if not, the result would not be that she is married to him.) Tosefot explains that without the Tana teaching us in the *mishna* that she is married to him, *we might have thought* that since he said “to me” after telling her that *another person* sent him to marry her to the *first person*, he actually meant “to me for the need of the person who sent me” — i.e., to fulfill the mission I was asked to do, and act as the other man’s agent and “extension” to effect marriage between her and the other man. If that’s what we would understand him to mean, she would not be married to the agent when she agrees. Therefore, it is necessary for the Tana to teach us *not* to think like this. Rather we should have no doubt, and we should clearly understand that when he says “to me” he means “to himself”, and thus the outcome is that she is married to him.

Another point to add is that the Tana of the Tosefta also states that the agent acted in a treacherous and unethical manner, a teaching which *also* appears to be obvious and unnecessary. The Rambam writes that this means that the agent is called a “*rasha*” (with the halachic ramifications of this status). I once heard from a great Rabbi in Jerusalem that the Tana is adding that the man whose trust he betrayed does not need to fulfill the mitzvah to “love your fellow person as yourself” with respect to the person who cheated him in this way.

• *Kiddushin 58b*

*Rabba bar Rav Ada said in the name of Rav, “Anyone who marries a woman for the sake of money will have children who will be ‘inappropriate’.”*

This teaching is based on a verse in the Book of the prophet Hoshea, and is cited as halacha in Shulchan Aruch Even Ha’Ezer 2:1. There the Rema writes that one who marries a woman who is forbidden to him will have inappropriate children. This is learned from the statement in our *gemara* regarding marrying a woman for the sake of money (Rashi, Rivash). In other words, he is marrying a woman forbidden to him in order to gain financially. This, says the *gemara*, will lead to problematic offspring. The Rema also states that it is permitted to marry for money if the woman is not forbidden to him.

However, the Rema addresses a case in which the man was promised money by the woman’s family, and afterwards they reneged on their promise. There the Rema writes that the man should not delay completing the marriage until he receives what was promised (and perhaps he will never receive it), and he should not fight with her parents over the money. If he refuses to marry until they eventually give him the money, he will not be successful financially, the marriage will not be “good”, and he is considered as “one who is marrying a woman for the sake of money”.

The commentaries point out that these two statements of the Rema appear to contradict one another. At first he says that marrying for money is okay as long as the woman is not forbidden to him. Afterwards, however, he writes that marrying for money is disastrous. The Vilna Gaon (Bi’ur HaGra) and the Chelkat Mechokek each give a different answer to this question. Although I fear to do so due to my great respect, honor, and love for these Torah giants, please permit me to humbly offer another possible explanation to explain the Rema, based on an idea I heard from my dear wife. While it is okay to seek a wife who also will benefit her husband financially, and it is permitted to accept money from her or her family, this is true *only* if the money is given willingly. In the first case, the Rema speaks about money given willingly. However, in the second case, the parents did not really want to give the money, despite their promise, and therefore, even if they eventually give it, it is not given willingly, and is, in the words of the Rema, “not money of *yosher*” (correctness). There is an element of coercion and impropriety on the part of the man in fighting for and taking any money that is not given to him willingly. Therefore, the Rema calls a man who does this “one who is marrying for the sake of money”, and will suffer the negative consequences of his actions.

• *Kiddushin 70a*

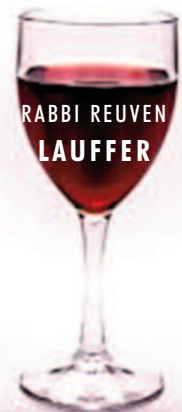
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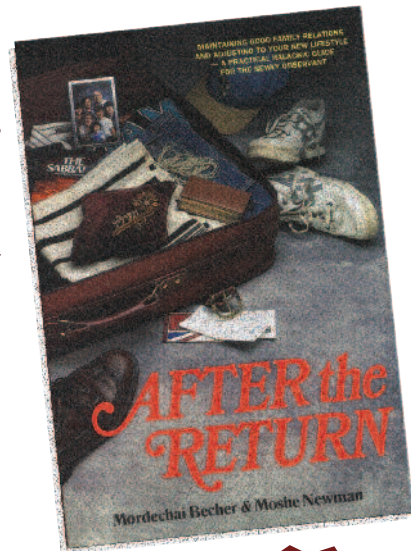
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