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COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

This week's edition is sponsored
Lelluy Nishmat Yedidya Ben
Chorshit Z'L. Tihyeh Nishmato
Betsurat Hachaim

EMOR

12th IYAR 5776

Shabbat begins: 20:39

Shabbat ends: 21:54



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

The Choice Is Yours

The story is told about a man that didn't believe in free will. After 120 years he went up to heaven and was met with two paths in front of him. The first had a sign saying "Believers in predestination" and the second said "Believers in free will".

Needless to say, he chooses the first and goes down a long path. Finally, he arrives at a large brick wall up to the Shamayim and a small door. He knocks on the door and an angel appears asking him, 'What brings you to my door, mortal?' And the man says, 'Well, there were these two signs, and I chose the one that said predestination.' The angel says, "You chose it? You can't come in here" and slams the door. The man is heartbroken.

Finally, he trudges back to the crossroads and goes down the other road. Eventually he comes to another giant wall and a door

that says 'FREE WILL.' He knocks and another angel opens the door and says, "Why did you come this way, mortal?" And the man says, "I had no choice!"

We believe that free will lies at the essence of our existence. Hashem has placed us here with the ability to decide our actions. He has created a world of reward and punishment that is governed by our free will.



In this week's Parasha, we learn a great lesson in how much we are supposed to appreciate this free will. When a person came to the Bet Hamikdash to offer up a Korban, his (together with the Kohen's) intentions had to be clear and focused on the special mitzvah. All Korbanot were the same. Nevertheless the Torah seems to go out of its way and single out the Korban Todah (thanksgiving offering) to mention the importance of good intention when being offered up. (22:29) – it should be offered up Lirtonechem – willingly.

Every Korban had to be offered up to Hashem with good intent. Why does the Pasuk single out the Korban Todah? The Korban Todah was brought as a thanksgiving to Hashem for saving the person from one of four things. (Release from jail, getting better from serious illness, safely travelling across the sea and wilderness).

The Oneg Yom Tov explains that the word Toda – thanks comes from the word Modeh – to admit.

One can only admit something that is able to deny.

Let us take a thought for a moment.

Hashem's power is infinite and the whole world is full of His presence. How is it possible for man to sin with Hashem there at the same time? How is it possible for Hashem to be present and allow man to sin?

This is one of the greatest kindness of Hashem that in order for us to have free will, He enables us to go against His will. When something bad happens and someone survives, they have two paths in front of them. They can use their extra life to enjoy the physicalities of this world or they can focus that extra life on serving Hashem. The person that brings the Todah admits and shows his love of Hashem.

This is the meaning to our Pasuk; Lirtonechem Tizbechuhu - we are acknowledging the gift of free will. We thank



Living with Mitzvos

1. When else during the year do we read in the Torah from Parshas Emor?
2. Why are the Kohanim singled out for special additional mitzvos as well as limitations?
3. Why does the parsha of Moadim come at all in Sefer Vayikra that is focused on the Kohanim and korbonous (as the main parsha that discusses the korbonous and the moadim is in Parshas Pinchos)?
4. Some people read from Parshas Emor every Shabbos – which part and why?
5. Why are the festivals known as "moadim"?
6. Why are all the names of the festivals mentioned with the exception of Shavuot?
7. What is the theme of the parsha?

Answers On Page 3

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(Toda) Hashem for the free will that he has given us even whilst He is present.

So how should we guide our free will?

The Torah teaches that 3 types of domesticated animals were offered as Korbanot (sacrifices) in the temple – the cattle, the sheep and the goats. These 3 are mentioned in our Parasha. (22:27)

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Emor) has a fascinating insight as to why these three animals were given the merit to be offered up and stand as a merit for Am Yisrael.

The ox – Shor, was in the merit of Avraham. When the 3 angels arrived at his house as guests, he ran to the flock and chose a calf (young ox). The sheep - Kesev was in the merit of Yitschak. At the Akeida (binding of Isaac) Avraham was eventually told not to offer his son up.

Instead, he looked up and found the ram.

The Ez – goat was in merit of Yakov. Rivka commanded Yakov to get two goats so that she would cook for Yitschak tasty food and he would bless Yakov (thinking he was Eisav).

Rabbi Yehuda Leb Eidel (Iyeh Hayam) asks we can understand why Avraham and Yitschak actions are a merit for their children, but why are Yakov's actions- which essentially were deceiving- a merit for his children? Yakov wore the goats skin as a means to deceive his father – is that a merit?

R Yehudah Leb gives a fascinating answer. When Rivka approached Yakov with the idea, he was frightened. He stated that Eisav is an Ish Sair – literally hairy, VeAnochi Ish Chalak – and I am smooth.

On a deeper level, Yakov was saying that Eisav always attributes everything to Seir – demons and idols, whereas I attribute everything to Hashem. Surely, he said to Rivka, Yitschak will realise. Rivka responded and calmed his fears and Yakov dressed in the goat's skin.

When we delve deeper, we see that Yakov had a much better option to 'deceive' his father.

When Yakov came in to his father, he was asked how come he managed to prepare the food so quick. He answered it was because Hashem had caused things to be

quick. This triggered some doubt in Yitzchak's mind. If Eisav was before him, how come he mentioned G-d's Name – something he didn't usually do?

It was only then that Yitschak asked him to draw near so that he could feel him to check it was really Eisav.

Surely Yakov could have initially responded by attributing his swiftness to the idols (seirim). If that would have been the case, perhaps Yitschak would have never had any doubt and wouldn't have needed to feel him.

Why didn't Yakov chose this path? R Yehudah Leb explains that Yakov was a man of truth. Lying was not his nature. He had to attribute all to Hashem. He would rather dress in goat's skin and be put in a predicament than to miss out mentioning Hashem's Divine providence. *This*, explains R Yehudah, is the reason that goats were offered up and stood as a merit and reminder to Yakov's testimony of Hashem's Divine providence in all.

When we guide our free will in the right direction, the effect is eternal.



SAM MILLUNCHICK

Jewish Identity

Thinking about the Holocaust this week, around Yom HaShoa, I was struck by the very nature of the destruction the world witnessed only seventy some years ago. Entire families, neighbourhoods, villages, were destroyed. Rabbinic dynasties

snuffed out, family trees torn down like so much tinder; the eternal light of Torah dimmed, our hope in humanity forever shaken.

The thing I found most fascinating was the very nature of the Jewish identity which hounded so many in Europe. No matter how they tried to hide it, distance themselves from it, or reject it outright, peoples' Jewish connections always came back to haunt them. Being a Jew is an identity that is ours forever, whether we like it or not.

When someone is murdered for being a Jew, we call that person a *kadosh*, a martyr, one who has sacrificed his life for God. He is holy by virtue of his sacrifice, elevated and set apart. Why is this so? Why would someone who is killed for an identity they could not escape be considered holy?

The answer, I think, can be found in this week's sedrah. The Torah tells us (Lev. 22:32), "You shall not desecrate My Holy Name. I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel. I am the Lord Who sanctifies you." It is from this verse that we learn the requirement of dying for the sake of Heaven, or in common parlance, dying for a *Kiddush haShem*.

But what does this mean? And why should I die for the sake of Heaven? How does that help anyone? Surely, alive I can perform more mitzvot, I can spread the name of God in the world, I can continue to serve my Creator. Indeed, this is the view taken by the Talmud (B. Sanhedrin 74a). The Talmud, however, makes a caveat – there are three certain mitzvot which, even if we are faced with death, we must not transgress – murder, sexual transgressions, and idolatry. What's behind these three commandments? Why are these the three for which we must die?

As we read in the daily Shema prayer, we are commanded to "Love the Lord your God." As many commentators note, through daily observance of the commandments, we come to love God – as with any relationship, the more that one gives, the more the connection strengthens. The three commandments singled out above signify a break with our Love, a fundamental flaw in the relationship which we have built. When we murder, we are destroying God's very creations, other

beings like us who also have a relationship with Him. When we commit sexual sins, we debase ourselves to a level where interaction with Him is impossible – as some commentators note, when the Mishna in Avot says "Who is strong (heroic)? One who conquers his will", it is referring to his sexual drive. When we commit idolatry, we sever our connection to our Lord with finality – it is no longer He who we wish to worship, but another.

The Talmud quoted above goes further when describing a situation of *Kiddush haShem*. "When Rav Dimi came, he said: This applies only if there is no tyrant's decree [whose purpose is to uproot the Jewish faith]; but if there is a tyrant's decree, one must incur martyrdom rather than transgress even a minor precept. When Ravin came, he said in Rabbi Yochanan's name: Even without a tyrant's decree, it was only permitted in private; but in public one must be martyred even for a minor precept rather than violate it. What is meant by a "minor precept"? Rabbah the son of Rav Yitzchak said in Rav's name: Even to change one's shoe strap (from Jewish to Gentile custom)." In light of what we said previously, this passage is easy to understand. When the nations of the world attempt to forcibly destroy our relationship with God, when they try to rend apart the Love of which Shlomo HaMelekh said "No amount of water can put it out. Rivers can't drown it," we are commanded to stand firm,

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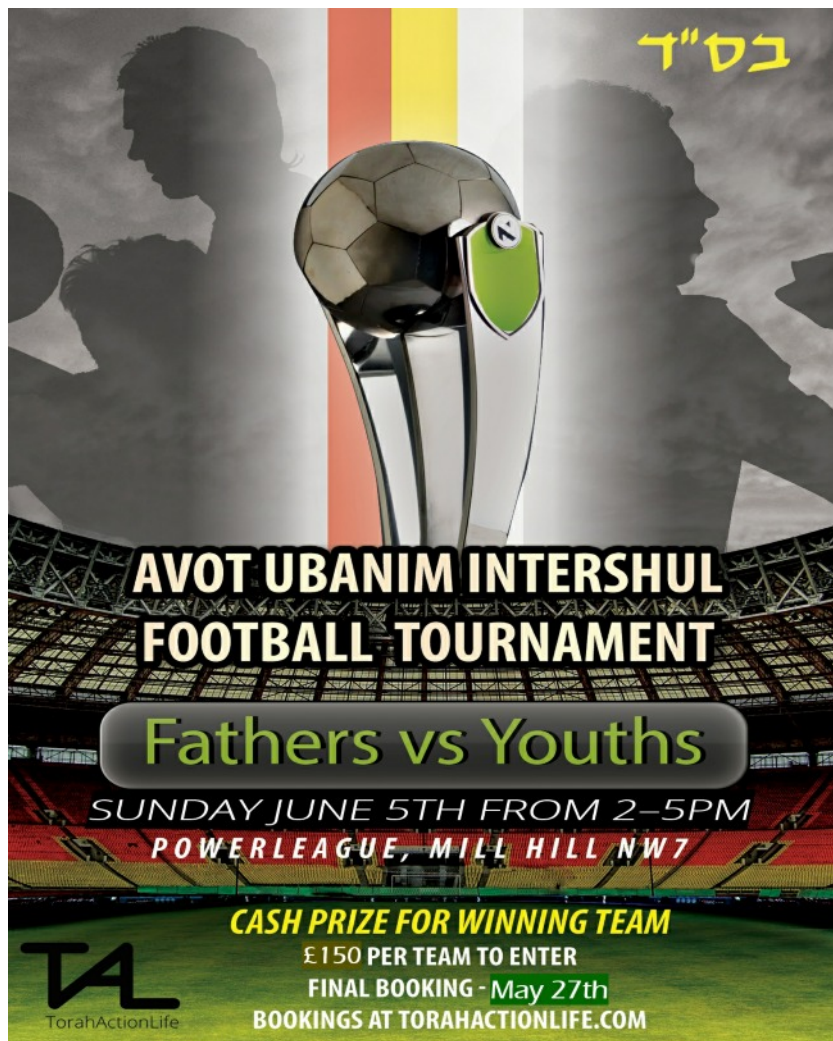
defend our love, and go out fighting, even for the most minor of principles.

How is Hashem's name glorified through our deaths? It's a tough question, and will always remain so. I think that, based on what we have seen above, an act of martyrdom – and I don't mean the kind where one sacrifices him/herself – sets an example. No matter what you do to *me*, you will not break us. There will always be more people like me, Jews, whose connection to God is just as strong as mine.

As a Jew, our identities are inextricably linked with God. No matter how much we try to shed that identity, we are and always will be *kadosh*, set apart, destined for another mission than the rest of the world. This is not to say we are *better*, just different.

Many try to rub out their Jewish ancestry and heritage, and some succeed. Less Jews today are interested in being Jewish than ever before. Yet, God's love of us, and ours of Him, remains. "I am God, the one who makes you holy", says God. As a Jew, I can set an example. I can be part of a "holy nation and a kingdom of priests".

Whilst death may be the ultimate sacrifice, and the ultimate example, it is final. We are here today, in every second living with an opportunity to spread God's name to the masses, to imbue love for our Father in all those around us. "And I will be sanctified through the Jews." We are a vehicle for God on this planet; we are the agents, the flag-bearers of His Love.



בס"ד

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Living with Mitzvos

1. Since Parshas Emor discusses in depth the festivals it is also read on Pesach and Sukkos.
2. A large part of Parshas Emor deals with Kohanim. These are the "elite" of Klal Yisroel. The greater a person is, the more is expected of them. A leader is chosen because he has qualities above the average person. He is given new higher levels of standards with additional bonuses but his movements are restricted from where he can go and exactly what he can do. The same is true of the Kohanim.
3. R' Shimshon Refoel Hirsch explains the theme of Sefer Vayikra and how the moadim comes in. The sefer deals with all aspects of kedusha. Until Parshas Emor it deals with kedusha of mokom, space and place. With the parsha of the moadim it now follows on with discussing the kedusha of zman, time. The festivals are holier than weekday. The Ramban (23:2) answers that the festivals are mentioned here since these are days of special korbonos.
4. The parsha that discusses the Lechem HaPonim, showbread, since this was taken out each Shabbos and distributed to the Kohanim.
5. The word "moadim" is related to the word "vaad" that means "an appointed time" when the Jewish people achieve extra closeness with Hashem, by the festivals as we remember the great miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish People.
6. Each festival stands by itself as a special time. However, Shavuot is linked to the korban omer and is the fiftieth day from it and therefore is not named by itself. (Rabbeinu BeChai)
7. The parsha is split into two main topics, with a few small topics following. Firstly it discusses the halochos involving the kohanim and korbonous, things that they cannot do like become tuma and moudim, blemishes. Then it goes on to list and discuss all the moadim which is followed by the Menorah, Lechem Haponim and the Jew who blasphemes. How are all these connected? I heard from R' Joseph Pearlman that the theme here is kedusha - the kohanim being holy require perfection as do the korbonos brought before Hashem. The moadim is holiness in time and then comes the Menorah that is holiness even during the weekday, as the menorah was lit every day. This is spiritual. However, kedusha must even encompass the physical seen in the bread of the Lechem Haponim. The last parsha demonstrates to us the punishment of someone who leaves kedusha and blasphemes Hashem.

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Once there was a young man who travelled through many distant countries in search of a master craftsman from whom he could learn a trade. After a while he returned home and announced to his family that he had become an expert designer of chandeliers.

"I have become so talented in my new-found trade," he explained, "that my work far surpasses even the greatest masterpieces of my teacher." Then, realizing that the family was a bit dubious about the measure of his success, he asked his father to invite the leading chandelier craftsmen in the city to view a sample of his own creation. The craftsmen came and carefully examined the young man's work. They all agreed that they had never before laid eyes on such a monstrosity. "It's a disgrace to our entire profession," said one, "though this particular piece right here is quite good." "It's absolutely hideous," said another, "but that particular piece over there is excellent." "It should be burned," said a third, "so that others need not suffer the experience. However," he added, "that piece there is perfection itself." When they had gone, the young man approached his father and said, "Now you know that I was not exaggerating at all, I am indeed the master of all master craftsmen." His father looked at him in bewilderment.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "You heard their conversation, your chandelier is a monstrosity!" "I heard," replied the young man. "However, did you notice that each of the craftsmen admired a particular piece of my work, but no two craftsmen admired the same piece. For when I was abroad I studied the work of each of these men. Then I decided to make a chandelier which combined all of their imperfections. Today you saw every craftsman recognize the imperfections of his associates, while pointing to his own mistake and seeing it as nearly perfect." Rebbe Nachman concluded this parable by stating: "If a man could know all the possible imperfections and shortcomings of a given thing, then he would also know the exact makeup and appearance of that same thing in its perfect state, though he had never seen it before."

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