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Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayikra/HaChodesh

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in memory of Larry Roth, who was so dedicated to Torah MiTzion

On Sacrifice

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

This Shabbat, with its two facets, engages us twice with the world of the korbanot (sacrifices). First, in the weekly parshah we begin to read Vayikra, a book mainly dedicated to the Temple service in general, and the detailed laws of the korbanot in particular. Second, the annual calendar appends a special reading – *HaChodesh HaZeh* – for the start of the month of Nisan. Here, too, the main part of the reading is dedicated to a korban: the *Korban Pesach*.

It seems, then, that this Shabbat presents an opportunity to better our understanding of the central role of korbanot in the Torah. In quantity, the laws of korbanot are presented in much more detailed fashion than those of Shabbat, for example. In quality, the *Korban Pesach* is connected directly to our foundational redemption from Egypt (Shemot 12:13), and the korbanot are described as “a pleasing fragrance to Hashem.” (Vayikra 1:9) Why are the korbanot so important?

This question, of course, is not new. Early sages discussed the reasoning underlying the korbanot thoroughly, and we will bring here three of their main explanations:

- Rambam (Moreh HaNevuchim 3:32, 3:46) explains that G-d commanded us to sacrifice in order to lead us away from Avodah Zarah. The common practice was to sacrifice for the gods, and G-d commanded us to bring offerings to Him alone, as a way to reject idolatry and channel those idolatrous impulses.
- Ramban (Vayikra 1:9) finds a reason for korbanot in human psychology:

through the shedding of the animal's blood and the burning of its carcass, its owner would internalize the punishment that was his due for his sins, and advance toward repentance.

- Ramban offers a second suggestion, according to what he terms “the way of truth”, i.e. Kabbalah. The details are esoteric, but the general theory seems to be clear: the korbanot serve to bring the sacrifice, the sacrificer, and even the universe, closer to Hashem.

According to the third way, we can readily understand the immense importance of the korbanot and the connection of our national birth with the *Korban Pesach*. However, the first two approaches present a challenge. Why, within Rambam's view, do we assign such importance to an act that is merely a re-direction? And why, according to the psychological explanation offered by Ramban, is there a need for a *Korban Pesach*, which does not atone for sin? I would like to suggest an understanding which combines these two approaches, based on ideas expressed by Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik in his *Festival of Freedom* [reviewed in the *Book Review* column in last week's Toronto Torah, available at <http://bit.ly/1CrGySj>].

The sacrifices in the pagan world were intended to ‘butter up’ the gods, or even to bribe them outright. These were manipulations of the gods by man; by offering something the gods wanted – animals, fruit, etc. – man could bait the gods into helping him with his own goals. One could then contend that Ramban's approach to the korban presents it as more than an outlet;

bringing a korban at Divine command represents a reversal of roles, and a profound surrender. Shifting the destination of korbanot from idols to Hashem is not only a change of address; it requires man to abandon his illusion of control over the Divine realm, replacing it with a willing acceptance of the heavenly yoke. The *Korban Pesach* does not “appease” G-d; it fulfills His commands, differentiating between those who fulfill them and those who do not.

Abandoning one's hope of manipulating the metaphysical world might be seen as an act of weakness; we are accustomed to judging the strength and success of individuals and societies by their power and control. However, Mishlei 16:32 teaches, “One who is slow to anger is greater than the mighty man, and the ruler of his spirit is greater than a conqueror of cities.” Or in the words of our sages, “Who is mighty? He who overcomes his desires.” (Avot 4:1)

The *Korban Pesach* taught our ancestors a greater aspiration than control of the world around us. The korban is more than an outlet, or a means of learning to repent; the korban is an act of abandoning our attempt to control G-d, and instead fulfilling His commands and developing a relationship. This higher aspiration is worthy of the Torah's focus on the details of korbanot, and the *Korban Pesach*, seen in this light, is surely as basic to our Judaism as the Exodus itself.

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Haggadah shel Pesach: Olat Ra"ayah
Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook
Mossad haRav Kook, Hebrew
1948 ed. <http://hebrewbooks.org/11155>
New edition: <http://bit.ly/1HVBc0V>
Also appears in Olat Ra"ayah, Vol. 2

What is in this Haggadah?

This haggadah is composed of two parts: one part was written as a commentary to the different parts of the haggadah, and the rest is collected from Rabbi Kook's diverse oeuvre. The latter part is marked as *likutim*.

Despite coming from different sources, the two parts blend well together. The *likutim* add a key component to the haggadah, since Rabbi Kook's general approach is to explain the haggadah not as an independent text, but as part of broader Torah, expressing the themes of Judaism as a whole.

Students of Rabbi Kook's thought will find many links between his haggadah commentary and ideas he discusses elsewhere. For example: Rabbi Kook is known for his belief that all that occurs is a positive part of the Divine plan. The fact that good results at the end of a process indicates that all previous steps

were also good. [See, for example, Orot haTeshuvah.] Writing on the haggadah, Rabbi Kook uses this to describe our national exile in Egypt as neither punishment nor obstacle, but part of a Divine plan and a key element of creating ultimate goodness. He uses this to explain why the haggadah begins by detailing our national disgrace; our lowly beginnings were the springboard that launched us toward our ultimate exaltation.

Rabbi Kook's popular theme of recognizing the value of all people, and his emphasis upon appreciating both the physical and spiritual, both play significant roles in his haggadah commentary. An ideal example is his commentary to Koreich, in which he discusses the union of multiple aspects of our spiritual lives as represented by matzah and marror, as well as the union of Jews whose actions demonstrate these different aspects.

Why is this Haggadah different?

Many haggadot split Maggid from the rest of the Seder, providing a running commentary on the Maggid text and then addressing the other parts of the

Seder as separate units. In contrast, Rabbi Kook's commentary portrays the entire Seder as a process of growth and elevation, beginning with the clarion call of Kadesh! ["Sanctify!"] and continuing all the way through *Nirtzah* ["accepted"], when we have achieved the lofty state in which G-d is satisfied with us. We learn how every element of the Seder, from the breaking of the middle matzah to the singing of Hallel, contributes to our personal and national elevation. [This haggadah does not offer detailed commentary on the text of Hallel and *Nirtzah*, though.]

A cautionary note

Rabbi Kook's writing can be florid, making for slow reading. Also, Rabbi Kook's haggadah commentary occasionally employs technical philosophical terminology. Therefore, study is strongly recommended; one who picks up this haggadah for the first time during the Seder will likely not find it particularly helpful.

There is an English haggadah "based on the writings of Rav Kook", but this writer has not read it. (<http://amzn.to/1ANyRzf>)

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613 Mitzvot: #431: Loving the Convert

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The Torah commands us to be careful in our treatment of people who convert to Judaism, instructing us to take special care in avoiding inflicting verbal or financial harm upon them. (Shemot 22:20 and Vayikra 19:33) *Sefer haChinuch* includes these as Mitzvah 63 and 64 in his count of our biblical commandments. Separately, Devarim 10:19 commands us, "You shall love the convert, for you were converts when you left Egypt. This presents a separate, positive mitzvah, which *Sefer haChinuch* lists as the 431st biblical mitzvah, saying, "We must be careful not to pain them in anyway; rather, we must benefit them and perform acts of generosity toward them, to the extent appropriate and possible."

Many commandments governing our relations with other human beings, but the Torah clearly regards the convert as special. Rambam (*Sefer haMitzvot*, Aseh 207) says that this is because someone who approaches Judaism on her own initiative achieves a great spiritual level; the *Sefer haChinuch* (Mitzvah 431) adds that one who converts to Judaism lacks a natural support system and needs extra assistance. Rabbi Avraham Shirman contends that according to Rambam, the mitzvot of treating a ger with special care apply even before conversion, when this person has already demonstrated spiritual greatness.

This mitzvah may explain two challenging talmudic sources:

- First, the Talmud (Shabbat 137b) states that the blessing performed when circumcising a convert blesses G-d "who sanctified us with His mitzvot, and commanded us to circumcise converts."
- Second, the Talmud (Yevamot 47b) states that once a convert has accepted mitzvot, we do not delay the rest of the conversion, because "we do not delay mitzvot".

Both of these sources indicate that there is a mitzvah of aiding conversion – but where does the Torah command us to help people convert to Judaism? Rabbi Avraham Shirman explains that given Rambam's view that we are to love converts because of their great spiritual level, perhaps the mitzvah of loving the convert begins even before the conversion. This mitzvah of loving the convert is also what requires us to aid in conversion. (For more on this point, see *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Berachot 11:7; *Zohar haRakia* to Aseh Mem; *Dvar Avraham* 25; *Mishneh Halachot* 15:92.)

One might wonder why Jews have historically discouraged conversion, given the mitzvah of loving the convert. Two primary reasons may be identified within Jewish tradition:

- The Talmud (Yevamot 47b) says to give the conversion candidate the opportunity to abandon conversion, because those who convert are "difficult for Israel". Commentators struggle to explain what this "difficulty" is, suggesting multiple explanations, including that they err due to their lack of training in Judaism, and that they make "born Jews" look bad for our lack of piety. (See Rashi and Tosafot to Yevamot 47b and Niddah 13a.)
- We are prohibited from causing others to stumble, and accepting a convert who was insincere would cause stumbling. As Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook explained (*Daat Kohen* 154), either the conversion would be invalid and cause people to erroneously think of this person as a Jew, or the conversion would be valid and the insincere convert would be liable for any sins. The same idea was expressed by Rabbi Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg (*Sridei Ish* 2:96) and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Minchat Shlomo* 1:35:3).

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Biography
Rabbi Yaakov Emden
Rabbi Yair Manas

Rabbi Yaakov Emden, son of Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi (Chacham Tzvi), was born on June 4, 1697, in Altona. Altona, located in present-day Germany, was then a Danish harbour town. Jews were not permitted to live in Hamburg, Germany, and they instead settled in Altona. Rabbi Emden passed away in 1776.

Rabbi Emden studied Talmud with his father until he married, and became expert in philosophy, kabbalah, and grammar. Other than serving as Rabbi of Emden, Germany for a short period, Rabbi Emden did not work professionally as a rabbi; he dealt in jewelry, and later in life he operated a printing press.

Rabbi Emden is known for the more than thirty books he wrote and published, including the She'elat Yaavetz collection of responsa, and Mor U'Ktziah on Shulchan Aruch. Beyond his writing, though, Rabbi Emden is known for his controversies.

Among Rabbi Emden's more controversial opinions are claims that Maimonides did not write the Guide for the Perplexed - because of seemingly heretical ideas contained therein - and that the Zohar was a forgery. Also, Rabbi Emden's opponents accused him of deviating from the common text in the siddur that he published. Arguably, Rabbi Emden is best known for his conflict with Rabbi Yehonatan Eybeschutz, in which he accused Rabbi Eybeschutz of following the false messiah, Shabbtai Zvi, a charge that has been much debated without any definitive conclusion.

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Torah and Translation
Against the Kitniyot Custom
Rabbi Yaakov Emden, Mor UKetziah Orach Chaim 453
Translated by Rabbi Josh Gutenberg

Note: The following source is brought for the sake of Torah study, not practical halachah. For practical halachah, please speak to your Rabbi.

ובשעת הדחק ודאי יש להתיר גם כל הקטניות באכילה, שהרי אפילו רבינו בעל הטורים שהיה אשכנזי, ובימיו כבר התחיל מנהג חומרא זו, לא השגיח בה וכתב וחומרא יתרה היא ולא נהגו בה. מכלל שלא קבלה אבותינו האשכנזים ז"ל בימיו (לכן מה שנרשם בהגה דש"ע [סעיף א'] על מוצא דין חומרא זו, הטור, משבשתא היא), ולא נתפשטה ביניהם. וכמה פוסקים חושבים אותה לשטות ומנהג טעות, שאין צריך אפילו חרטה והתרה. וכן מוכרח מגמרא ערוכה [פסחים קיד, ב] דלית דחש לדר' יוחנן בן נורי באורז. ורבא מהדר אסילקא וארוזא לשני תבשילין. וכל חומרות דקטניות נולדו וצמחו מאורז (עפ"ד ריב"ן) וכיון שנעקר השורש ממילא יבשו הצמחים מאליהם.

ומעדיני על אבי מורי הגאון זצ"ל, כמה צער נצטער אותו צדיק על זאת, כל חג המצות היה מתרעם ואומר: אי איישר חילי אבטלינינה למנהג גרוע הלז שהיא חומרא דאתיא לידי קולא ונפק מנה חורבא ומכשול באיסור חמץ גמור, כי מתוך שאין מיני קטניות מצויים להמון לאכול ולשבו, צריכין לאפות לחם מצה הרבה, בפרטות העניים ומי שבני ביתו מרובים ולא יספיקו להם תבשילים הרבה לשבר רעבונם, מוכרחים על כרחם להספיק להם מצה די לחם לביתם וחיים לנערוותם. מתוך כך אינם נוהרים בעיסה כראוי וכחובה, עושים אותה גדולה הרבה ושוהים עליה מאד. קרוב הדבר שנכשלים באיסור כרת ר"ל. גם המצות עומדים להם ביוקר ואין יד כל אדם משגת לעשותם די הצורך לבני ביתו, ולא ימצא להם אפילו די שבעם אף בלחם חמץ כל השנה, וקטניות נמצאים בזול בלי טורח ובהתר, ואתו לאמנועי משמחת י"ט, בסבת חומרא שאין לה טעם וריח.

In dire situations, certainly one should permit to eat all legumes, for even our master, author of the Tur, who was of Ashkenazi descent and in whose days the stringent custom had already begun, did not follow it and wrote that it is an excessive stringency which they did not observe. Implying, that our Ashkenaz ancestors did not accept [this practice] in his days (therefore, the annotation to Rama 453:1, that the Tur originated this stringency, is incorrect) and it was not widespread among them. Several authorities think it is foolish and a mistaken custom, which does not even require regret or annulment [in order to cancel it]. Such is demonstrated by an explicit talmudic passage (Pesachim 114b) that no one is concerned for Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri's [ruling that it is forbidden to eat] rice [on Pesach]. Rava would specifically seek out beets and rice for the two cooked foods [on the Seder plate]. All of the stringencies for legumes were born and grown from rice (based on Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri), and since the roots have been uprooted, the plants have dried out by themselves.

I testify regarding my father and mentor, the Gaon [Chacham Tzvi], how much that righteous one was pained by this matter. For the entire holiday of Pesach he would complain and say: If I had the strength I would nullify this deficient custom, which is a stringency that will result in a leniency and from it will come destruction and obstacle causing people to violate the prohibition of actual chametz. Since the legume species are not [permissibly] available for the masses to cook and sate themselves, they must bake more matzah. This is especially true for the poor and for those who have large households. They will not have enough dishes to satisfy their hunger, and will be forced to obtain matzah for their households and as sustenance for their adolescents. Due to this, they are not scrupulous with the dough as is necessary and required. They make it very large, and they delay a lot [before baking it]. It is probable that they will violate a prohibition whose punishment is karet, G-d forbid. The matzah is also very expensive for them and not everyone can afford to make enough for his household. They are not able to find even enough leavened bread during the year. Legumes can be found cheaper without exerting any effort, permissibly. This prevents joy on the holiday, for a stringency that has neither taste nor smell.

This Week in Israeli History: 3 Nisan, 1966

Launch of Israeli Educational Television

Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

3 Nisan is Monday

Like many Israeli cultural institutions, Israeli Educational Television [IETV] was born out of a partnership between the Israeli government and the Batsheva de Rothschild Fund. The Rothschild Fund helped provide the initial funding to launch the network, before handing it over to the Israeli Ministry of Education. The creation of IETV, which first broadcast programming on 3 Nisan (March 24) 1966, represented the beginning of television broadcasts in Israel.

In its original form, IETV was billed as a way to supplement curricular material from school in the home. As such, the vast majority of the programming was purely educational, ranging from chemistry for beginners to English language programming. In the beginning years of IETV, televisions were distributed to schools to help assess the quality of the programming. Over time, however, more entertainment-focused programming was introduced during daytime

hours, affecting the overall educational character of the network. In recent years, there has been a shift toward returning to programming that is more educational in nature.

Currently, IETV broadcasts over 200 hours of programming weekly spread across three separate channels. Until recently, it was only available through subscription. However, as of 2012, the Knesset Economics Committee made IETV available for free through the public access digital TV broadcasting system. Israel has gradually been replacing many of its conventional radio broadcast methods with satellite and terrestrial digital broadcasting.

In Spring 2015, new reforms will, among other things, create a dedicated children's channel. Many of the network's recent shows can be found on their YouTube channel. Their popular shows include *Ma Pit'om*, *Rechov Sumsum*, and *Bli Sodot*.

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Weekly Highlights: Mar. 21 – Mar. 27 / 1 Nisan – 7 Nisan

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Mar. 20-21				
9:30 AM	R' David Ely Grundland	Torah Temimah	Shaarei Shomayim	
10:30 AM	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Meshech Chochmah	Clanton Park	
Before minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	<i>Rabbi's Classroom</i>
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	<i>West Wing Library</i>
Sun. Mar. 22				
8:45 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	When Questions Matter More Than Answers	TCS (Aish Thornhill)	Breakfast
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	<i>Third floor</i>
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	with light breakfast
8:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	When Questions Matter More Than Answers	532 Arlington Ave. Toronto	with The Village Shul
8:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Gemara: Mind, Body, Soul	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>Beit Midrash</i>
Mon. Mar 23				
8:00 PM	R' David Ely Grundland * R' Josh Gutenberg * Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig Haggadah Night at Shaarei Tefillah			
Tues. Mar 24				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Job: End of Round 1	Shaarei Shomayim	
8:00 PM	R' David Ely Grundland * R' Josh Gutenberg * Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig * R' Mordechai Torczyner Haggadah Night at BAYT			
Wed. Mar. 25				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Sociology and the Synagogue	Beth Emeth	Week 5 of 5
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Ransoming Captives from ISIS	SLF 2300 Yonge St.	Lunch served RSVP to jonathan.hames@slf.ca
Thu. Mar. 26				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua: Dividing the Land	49 Michael Ct. Thornhill	For Women Only
Fri. Mar. 27				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Advanced Shemitah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	