



The Chabad Online Weekly Magazine

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Inside this Week's Edition...

Comment

War

Love is the hallmark of Judaism; some of us even claim that we taught that word to the world. This Shabbat, however, we will stand in our synagogues and listen to a reading from the Torah that tells us to hate

Voices

Stormy Winds

Occasionally, we open the unused drawers in the back of my youngest son's closet to look at these relics from a distant past...

Story

The Other Purims

In Saragossa, Spain, Purim came a month early one year. In 18th century Fossano, Italy, it fell on Passover! And in 1991, "Purim Saddam" came to pass on... Purim

Seasons of the Soul

Purim Preview

The difference between the gragger and the dreidel, an angel in therapy, the three points of the hamantash, Yom Kippur as the "day like Purim", Jewish drunks...

Parsha

Vayikra/Zarchor — *Leviticus 1:1-5:26; Deuteronomy 25:17-19*

Of men and beasts, bullocks and doves, blood and fat, fire and frankincense, sacrifice and pleasure, conscience and culpability, poverty and property



Vayikra 5763 (2003)

Quote for the day

Do you think that G-d needs to eat? Does not the verse proclaim, "Should I hunger, I would not tell you, for the world, and all it contains, is Mine... Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" But it is not for My desire that you bring these offerings, [says G-d,] but for your own, as it is written (*Leviticus 19:5*), "For your own desire, you should offer it."

(*Talmud, Menachot 110a*)

Daily Thought

G-d's Question

Before He brought forth the cosmos out of nothingness, He structured in His thought how all things would be. Even then, He struggled with it, pondering, "Should it be? Or should it not?"

Then He created all things according to that thought, and out of all things of that creation He formed Adam. And within Adam He placed this struggle, and Adam became a living being.

Since then, it is in our hands: Should there be a world? Or a desolate chaos? Is G-d's creation worth His making it?

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COMMENT

War

by: Yanki Tauber

passionate to the cruel, ends up being cruel to the compassionate.”

By Yanki Tauber, ytauber@chabadonline.com
is content editor of Chabad.org

To love one's fellow as oneself, the Talmud tells us, is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. “There is no service like the service of love” declares the Zohar. “Peace” is not just a word, says another Talmudic adage — it is the very name of G-d; indeed, “the Torah was given only to make peace in the world.” To again cite the Talmud, “Three traits distinguish the people of Israel: they are compassionate, bashful and charitable”; if someone lacks these traits, we are led to doubt their Jewishness. Even when we are compelled, as a society, to punish criminals or wage wars, we do so reluctantly, without passion, certainly without hate.

Love is the hallmark of Judaism. Some of us even claim that we taught that word to the world.

This Shabbat, however, we will stand in our synagogues and listen to a reading from the Torah that tells us to hate. Once a year, on the Shabbat before Purim, we open our Torah scrolls to the special reading of *Zachor* (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). “Remember what Amalek did to you...” we read. “Eradicate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens; do not forget!”

Amalek was not the only nation to attack us; in the course of our 4,000 year history, there were many others who did the same, and worse. Yet Amalek is singled out as the very essence of evil. There was no rational reason for Amalek's attack on us, no conceivable gain in doing so. Amalek simply hates goodness and seeks to destroy it wherever it flourishes in G-d's world.

Yes, we are enjoined to love all G-d's creatures and creations, including the less loveable ones amongst them. But when pure hatred rears its head, it must be destroyed. Because if you love G-d's world, you don't feed love to the forces that would destroy it.

In the wise words of our sages: “He who is com-



VOICES

Stormy Winds

by: Chana Weisberg

Here in Toronto, we've had a long and arduous winter. In fact, I don't remember such a cold, snowy, gloomy stretch for many years.

My youngest son has only the faintest recollection of sun drenched-days spent luxuriating lazily outdoors in the park. He vaguely recalls blowing soap bubbles on our front porch, swimming in his wading pool in our backyard, or riding on his tricycle along the sidewalk in front of our home. As the dark winter days drag on, he innocently wonders whether he will ever again do these things.

His swimming trunks, t-shirts and shorts nestled in the back of his closet provide the only proof that a different climate ever existed. Occasionally, we open these unused drawers to look at these relics from a distant past.

As the dreary days drag on, my children (like almost every adult I encounter) wonder if winter will ever end.

My eleven year old daughter, forever the optimist, earnestly reassures me that she can almost "feel" spring in the air. I nod skeptically as I remind her to button the top button of her coat and tie her scarf.

Surprisingly, however — as if nature heard my daughter's optimistic pleas — the next day a warm front brought a southern breeze, melting the piles of snow along the road's edge. The streets filled with smiling faces of passersby, who, like us, shed hats, boots and gloves to embrace the outdoors. My children and I were energized by this much needed taste of spring, a small ray of hope in an endlessly bleak frigidity.

Sure enough, though, but days later came a blast of cold arctic air and a heavy, thorough blanketing of snow. Once again, the roads and sidewalks were buried in complete and utter whiteness. The streets emptied as the neighborhood hibernated, hiding indoors.

As my children and I stood gazing dreamily out our living room window, I contemplated our long and icy *galut* (exile).

I thought about the warm intersperses of spring air which sent a new energy pulsating through our veins but a few years ago, invigorating us with renewed hope. I remembered the encouraging message of the Lubavitcher Rebbe as he foretold the dawning of a new era of Redemption, signaled by the disintegration of the Russian communist regime and the astonishing display of G-d's hand protecting the Land of Israel from 39 scud missiles during the Gulf War.

But as quickly and unexpectedly as these signs appeared, they were followed by even more frigid blasts, as our hopes of a warmer tomorrow were so helplessly dashed. The Land of Israel is besieged daily by the horrors of suicide bombers wreaking pain and destruction. The tragedy of September 11th hit us hard, leaving trails of thousands of broken and devastated families. Today, the world scene seems as insecure and troubling as ever.

I stand looking out the window of our history looking at a horizon of dark desolation, as new clouds of war are being forecasted daily and uncertainty penetrates our souls.

But as February closes and March turns the corner, I realize that although I get more desperate with each chilling day, I also know with certainty that each passing day draws us one day closer to a better, brighter and warmer tomorrow.

With my children at my side, I gaze out my living room window at a world of desolate whiteness. I realize that if I try hard enough, my children's ever present faith and optimism can infect my own mood of despair. Outside, the blizzard rages as hard as ever; but when I muster enough effort, I can almost hear the sounds of my children's laughter, playing merrily on a sun-drenched porch, blowing carefree soap bubbles.

And as I do, I envision a new season on the world's horizon, ushering in a brighter future of world peace, harmony and redemption — now one day closer.

Chana Weisberg is the author of two books — on the lives of Biblical women and on the feminine soul — and is currently working on two more. She is the dean of the JRCC Institute of Torah Study in Toronto and lectures worldwide on issues relating to women, relationships and mysticism. She welcomes your comments or inquiries about her speaking tours and books, and can be contacted at cweisberg@chabad.org

STORY

The Other Purims

Purim, celebrated each year on the 14th of Adar, commemorates the miraculous salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's plot to massacre all the Jews in a single day, more than 2,300 years ago. But the Jewish calendar contains other "Purims" as well — days of celebration so called because, like the original Purim, they commemorate the salvation of the Jews from their enemies. Many a Jewish community boasted such a "Purim" on its communal calendar; there were also "Purims" that were traditional within a particular family, commemorating the miraculous salvation of an ancestor.

This collection includes the stories of three such Purims — one observed on the 17th and 18th of Shevat (about a month before the "real" Purim) by the Jewish community of Saragossa, Spain; another occurring on the fourth day of Passover in Fossano, Italy; and the story of "Purim Saddam" which actually happened on Purim of 1991...

Purim Saragossa

In Aragon (Spain) there once lived a mighty ruler. His power extended over many cities where many Jews lived happily under his fair reign.

In Saragossa, the capital city, the large Jewish community took the opportunity of showing the king their appreciation. Whenever the king celebrated some special occasion with a royal parade which passed through the Jewish quarter, the leaders of the Jewish community would go forth to meet him, carrying the beautiful cases which housed their *Sifrei Torah* (Torah Scrolls). The actual *Sifrei Torah* they would leave behind in the synagogues.

All this show of honor pleased the king mightily, and all would have been well had there not been a man in the king's court who hated the Jews and resented the

king's friendly feelings towards them. This man's name was Marcus, and he looked for a way of putting the Jews in a bad light and at the same time, gaining favor for himself.

When by chance Marcus learned that the Jews went to meet the king carrying empty cases, leaving the holy *Sifrei Torah* behind in the synagogues, he felt he had found the opportunity he was looking for, and told the king about it. The king, not a malicious but neither a very clever man, was easily convinced by the sly Marcus that the Jews meant to mock him by carrying empty cases when they went out to greet him at his parades. Seeing how angry he had managed to make the king against the Jews, Marcus quickly suggested that the king give an order to have all the Jews driven out of the land or killed.

However angry the king was he had not intended doing anything so dreadful to the Jews by way of punishment, so he said:

"I understand they have a powerful G-d. Would He not punish me for hurting His people?"

"The Jews cannot expect mercy or consideration from their G-d. Since they live comfortably under your reign, they have drifted away from their religion and do not obey His commandments," said Marcus with conviction.

"But if we send the Jews out of our land won't our country suffer? After all, they pay taxes and are useful citizens."

"The Jews are really so scattered about the land that you wouldn't notice their absence very much," urged Marcus.

"But is it fair to punish all the Jews? What about those who are innocent?" feebly protested the king.

"Your Majesty should know that they are all the same. They all stick together in all they do, and so they are all equally to blame for the disrespect they have shown you. Besides, it is the heads of the community who come out to greet you in the procession, so surely there is no excuse for them," finished Marcus, with a smile on his face, feeling sure he had won the argument.

"Look here Marcus, I am indeed very angry with the Jews and agree that they must be severely punished, if what you say is true. But I want to be fair to them, for they have so far always shown themselves to be loyal subjects. At the next parade, when the

STORY

The Other Purims

Jews come out to meet me, I'll have you riding by my side. I give you the authority to open their holy cases and, if they are found to be empty, you may carry out your plan against them. On the other hand, if what you say is untrue, then the punishment will be turned against yourself. Are you prepared to accept that? I do not intend to be made a fool of myself by anyone."

Marcus, who was quite sure that he had the right information, readily agreed. He was already picturing himself riding beside the king, sitting beside the king, and being second to the king in everything.

The night before the royal parade, the *shamash* (beadle) of the main Jewish congregation in Saragossa could not fall asleep. He was thinking about the king's visit to the Jewish quarter, and he was worried. He tossed and turned and was weighed down by a dreadful feeling that something terrible was threatening the Jewish community. He felt an urge to run out and warn the heads of the community, but thought that they would laugh at him, for everything was so nice and peaceful for them. Finally he fell into an uneasy sleep. He dreamt that an old, gray-bearded, stately man appeared before him, saying: "Arise! Waste no time. Danger threatens the Jews. Hurry to the synagogue and quickly put the *Sifrei Torah* inside their cases. But say not a word to anyone!"

Before the *shamash* had a chance to say anything, the vision disappeared. He quickly awoke, trembling with fright. He pulled on some clothes and ran all the way to the Synagogue, stumbling in the dark. He was certain that the man in his dream must be none other than Elijah the Prophet, and that his dream was a serious warning which he must see to without delay.

What the *shamash* did not know was that he was not the only one to whom the prophet had appeared. All the other Synagogue beades in the city of Saragossa had the same dream that night. They had likewise hurried to their synagogues and secretly put the *Sifrei Torah* inside their cases, anxiously awaiting developments.

The following morning, the sound of the trumpets

was heard in the city, heralding the beginning of the royal parade. As always, the heads of the Jewish community went out to meet the king.

As the royal carriage stopped for the king to receive the greetings of the heads of the Jewish community, Marcus, who was sitting by the side of the king said:

"Your Majesty surely wishes to see what is inside these things that the Jews are carrying."

"Of course. Open the cases!" ordered the king.

The Jews were horrified at the unexpected request. What would the king say, or do? They had no choice but to obey, so, with sinking hearts they opened up the cases and, to their wonderment and relief beheld the *Sifrei Torah* inside, for all to see.

The king seemed quite surprised. As for Marcus, the look of expectancy and triumph disappeared from his face, which had now turned pale with fright. He tried to speak, but no words came. Instead, the king burst upon him in rage. "Traitor! Deceiver! This time you have outsmarted yourself and you shall suffer the penalty of your own vicious scheme! Have him hanged immediately!" the king ordered, and the scheming Marcus received the end he so richly deserved.

As for the Jews, the king declared publicly that he had every confidence in their loyalty. As a sign of his goodwill towards them, he ordered that they be freed from paying taxes for the next three years.

When the Jews learned the full story of their narrow escape, their relief and joy can better be imagined than described. They all humbly thanked G-d for His benevolence towards them and resolved to serve Him with greater devotion in the future. They also decided to observe the 17th and 18th days of Shevat as days of prayer and joyous thanks to the Almighty, so that their children and future generations would remember the story of how they had been miraculously saved from destruction at the hands of a cruel enemy.

This, then, is the story of the Purim of Saragossa.

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Purim Fossano

Fossano, in Northern Italy, lies at the foothills of the Alps, near the pass that crosses through the high mountains between France and Italy.

STORY

The Other Purims

The spring of the year 5556 (1796) was a time of unrest and war. France was in the throes of its revolution, and Italy was the scene of battle between French and Austrian armies.

At that time a young 27-year-old French general, named Napoleon Bonaparte, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the French armies in Italy. The French advance had been stalled, and it was hoped that the young, fiery general would breathe some life into the French military campaign. Indeed, this was the case, and under Napoleon's leadership the French armies began to score one victory after another.

Just before Passover the French laid siege to the town of Fossano, and began a bombardment of the little city. The bombardment came almost daily and did considerable damage to property, inflicting also a number of casualties. Yet the city did not surrender, though the situation appeared gloomy.

In the midst of the siege, Passover came. Despite all, the Jews of Fossano were resolved to celebrate their "Festival of Liberation" with joy.

Passover was a time of anxiety and danger for the Jews even in "normal" times. The hatred of their Christian neighbors often was roused to a pitch during the Easter season. Passover time was a favorite season for all sorts of wild accusations against the Jews, including the terrible "blood-libel" with its fantastic charge that Jews use Christian blood in their Matzos. Any excuse, however ridiculous, was sufficient to start a mob attack against the defenseless Jews. Small wonder, therefore, that the Jews of Fossano were filled with anxiety. Yet, when Passover came, the Jews celebrated the two Seder-nights and the first days of the festival with their usual joy. This made many of the townspeople very angry.

What could be better "evidence" that the Jews were happy about the enemy's successes? Rumors began to spread among the Christian population that the Jews were in sympathy with the besiegers . . . that they were perhaps even signaling to the enemy!

Sensing the dangerous situation, the leaders of the

Jewish community appealed to the City Elders for protection. But these were occupied with the defense of the city and could spare no soldiers to protect the ghetto.

On the fourth night of Passover, the enemy opened his usual bombardment, but with more deadly accuracy. Somehow, hardly any bombs fell in the Jewish ghetto. The ghetto was a long narrow street close to the city wall, and the bombs seemed to fly over it and fall into the rest of the city. Now the rabble-rousers found it easy to incite the mob against the "treacherous" Jews. After all, if a victory over the French seemed out of the question, a victory over the defenseless Jews was easy. . .

Armed with all sorts of weapons, the mob rushed to the Jewish quarter. There was no opposition, for the Jews had left their homes and had taken refuge in the synagogue, where, though greatly outnumbered, they were resolved to defend themselves. Knowing however that they had no chance, they could only pray for a miracle to save them from massacre.

In the meantime, the mob was hacking its way through the ghetto, breaking into homes and stores and pillaging what they could. But this did not satisfy them completely; they thirsted for Jewish blood, and they advanced ever closer to the synagogue, at the far end of the street.

The synagogue was situated on an upper floor. A narrow staircase led to a small vestibule, which led into the synagogue, where the members of the small Jewish community were huddled together awaiting the inevitable attack.

The mob, mad with rage, now reached the synagogue and began to climb the steps. Some of them already broke into the vestibule. . . .

Suddenly there was a deafening crash. A shell fired at random from a French cannon burst through the wall of the synagogue and landed in the vestibule, right in front of the attackers terror-stricken, the attackers took to their heels and beat a hasty retreat. Many of them threw away their spoil as they ran for their lives crazed with fear.

It was a wonderful miracle for the Jews of Fossano, for they were saved just at the moment when their fate seemed to have been sealed.

As it happened, the bomb that fell in the vestibule did not do much damage, as if its only purpose was to frighten away the attackers and save the Jews. Soon afterwards, the French captured the city, and the Jews

STORY

The Other Purims

now felt themselves out of danger.

The elders of the Jewish community decreed that the fourth day of Passover should be observed every year by the Jews of Fossano as a day of celebration to the Almighty for the miraculous salvation. Furthermore, it was decided that the gaping hole which the shell had made as it crashed through the wall should not be closed up. Instead, it was made a window, around which a golden inscription in Hebrew proclaimed it as evidence of the "Miracle of the Bomb."

Purim Saddam

"Hi, Mom. Got my orders today," David Zuk said. "I'm going to Saudi. I have to leave first thing tomorrow morning.

"Oh, no," his mother said, her "no" echoing in her 20-year old son's head.

"I was assigned to the 101st," David said with a sinking voice, as he slumped against the glass wall of the phone booth. "I almost cried when they told me."

The 101st Airborne Division, nicknamed the "Screaming Eagles," fought on the front lines during all the wars: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and Viet Nam. Only a fraction of the early ranks had ever returned alive.

David's mother tried to find encouraging words for her only son, but it was hard. She had never been able to get used to her son's unpredictable life choices. When he was 16, he had become involved with Orthodox Jews and made himself separate from the family by eating only kosher. Two years later when he joined the Army, she just about gave up. Now, upon hearing this ominous news, all she could think was, "I told you so."

The Gulf War had broken out a month earlier, on January 17, 1991. David knew he would be on the front lines, facing the open jaws of the ravenous war. "They said we'll be there at least a year," David said,

not knowing when he would see her next. "Take care, Mom. I love you," he added faintly,

David closed the door of the phone booth and ambled back to his barrack. Gazing at the snow-covered hills surrounding Fort Knox Army Base in northwestern Kentucky, he was awe-struck by their quiet beauty, as if seeing them for the first time. He wondered if he would ever see them again. He thought of the preposterous story circulating around the army base that someone had predicted the war would end by Purim, the Jewish holiday instituted to thank and praise G-d for saving the Jewish people from a decree of annihilation some 2,300 years ago.

"Purim's only a month away. No way it will be over by then!" David said to himself.

Saddam Hussein, thought David, certainly fits the character of Haman, the villain of the story of Purim. The wicked Haman got the king of Persia to issue a royal decree to command the populace to massacre all the Jews in the Persian Empire. Similarly, for a whole year Saddam Hussein had been boasting that he would "burn half of Israel" with SCUD missiles laden with deadly chemical gas. Those missiles would surely maim and kill thousands of Israelis and prove to the Arab nations that Israel was vulnerable. Then the world would clearly see that G-d had forsaken the Jews as the "Chosen People," and that instead Saddam Hussein had been chosen to rule the world. The scenario sounded preposterous... until Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

Back at the barracks, David stood beside his cot and *daavened* (prayed) the evening prayer. How ironic that he was being shipped to war to defend Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Before falling asleep, he vividly recalled news clips of the SCUD missiles fired at cities in Israel. These 40-foot Soviet-made missiles had been enhanced with a 600-pound, European-made payload of explosives. Designed to flatten buildings, the explosion of a SCUD warhead creates a frontal pressure wave that blasts away concrete and sends shattered glass flying up to 1,400 feet away in all directions, creating a torrent of lethal "knives."

As David lay in his bed, he continued to recall the news he had heard and read from Israel. The first night that SCUDS were fired at Israel, one of them made a direct hit on an apartment house in a crowded Tel Aviv neighborhood. As a result of this midnight strike, 400 apartments housing 1,200 people were either destroyed or damaged. Tel Aviv hospitals were

STORY

The Other Purims

prepared to handle mass casualties, as had been the experience in Teheran, Iran, when Iraq fired SCUDS into Teheran's neighborhoods in 1988 during the Iran-Iraq War.

The ambulances arrived at a Tel Aviv hospital. One young man had some scratches from broken glass; a woman had a sprain; the injuries were all minor. "The 'victims' could have doctored themselves," said one of the hospital staff. "Even the non-religious declared it a miracle."

During the first week of war, Iraq fired about two dozen SCUDS at Israel and damaged or destroyed thousands of apartments and other buildings. On the first Saturday of the attacks, one SCUD scored a direct hit on a bomb shelter, which was used as a makeshift synagogue on Saturday morning; two hundred worshippers were packed inside. The blast flung the people around like rag dolls. Only the shelter's eastern wall, upon which the ark housing the Torah scroll leaned against, remained standing. When Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir visited the site he asked if there were any people in the bomb shelter. "Yes," replied Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat, "Two hundred. They were saved by a miracle." No one was injured.

How long would their *mazal* (good fortune) last? To protect Israel, David was ready to risk his life. With that thought, David whispered the *Shema Yisrael* ("Hear O' Israel") prayer and fell asleep.

The next morning David and more than 300 other soldiers boarded a chartered 747 headed towards Saudi Arabia. They refueled in Rome at midnight and took off after two hours. Within minutes, David drifted into a deep sleep. In what seemed like minutes later but in reality turned out to be six hours, a blinding light flooded the cabin of the jet. David peered through the thick window next to his seat. "So this is Saudi," he mused. A harsh sun reflected off the whitest sand he had ever seen. Miles and miles of sand. For the next hour and a half, all David saw below was white sand, with an occasional darkened area which appeared to be some sort of man-made

rock formation.

The 747 jet landed in the coastal city of Dhahran. David stepped down from the plane into the 115 degree heat. He felt like he had marched into a huge solar oven. The soldiers were transported across the burning sand to a stadium-size tent. They were directed to their cots and told to go to sleep.

At 5:30 the next morning, nerve-shattering alarms blasted the dawn. In a heartbeat, David reached for his gas mask, took the required quick breath, and strapped the mask to his face. The maximum time limit for this procedure was 15 seconds; David did it in 3 seconds flat. Thousands of gas mask rehearsals had finally paid off. Like a machine gun firing into the dark, David's heart pounded uncontrollably at an invisible enemy. Three minutes later, an officer came into the tent and announced, "The Iraqis fired a SCUD, and our Patriot missile intercepted it. No gas has been detected. Keep your masks on until the signal is given."

No gas was detected and no one was injured, but Saddam won a round on the psychological battlefield. Besides the constant fear of chemical weapons, Hussein had another silent ally: the desert. The first troops sent in August had all become sick with heat strokes. Even in the "winter," the midday temperature always rose above 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The desert proved to be a harsh, foreign environment. Water had to be rationed. Showers were allowed only once a month.

Every day, just before sunset, the hot, white sun would turn bright red, and at sunset, it would appear to melt into the sand — an orangish red lava flowing off a huge ball of fire across the white sand. Then, within minutes, the temperature would drop 50 degrees. Everyone would have to wear thermal gloves and a warm jacket to keep from shivering. The temperature would be only 60 to 70 degrees, yet because of the rapid and drastic change in temperature, the soldiers would feel as if they were freezing.

Hussein was proving himself to be more cunning and his soldiers more entrenched than originally thought. Dave heard reports that Hussein could drag out the war for years.

Saddam Hussein kept firing SCUDS into Israel. Civilian targets were hit, buildings were destroyed, but the human injuries were surprisingly light. Back in the States, many Americans were concluding that the SCUDS were basically harmless, giant firecrackers.

STORY

The Other Purims

Then, on the morning of February 25, David and 100 other soldiers received orders to fly that evening to Al-Khobar. They would be staying in the nearby Army barrack, which had originally been a large, steel-framed warehouse. Later that evening, during supertime, a fragment of a SCUD blasted through the barrack's metal roof, followed by a gigantic explosion which was heard for miles around. Nothing was left of the barrack, except an eight-foot deep crater. Twenty-eight soldiers were killed in the ensuing explosion; 89 others, wounded.

"I'm supposed to be dead," David said to himself. At the last moment, the plane scheduled to transport David and 100 fellow soldiers to Al-Khobar the previous evening had malfunctioned. The "malfunction" saved their lives.

Before that attack, the American soldiers felt no anger towards the Iraqis, but now they were enraged. They wanted Saddam Hussein dead. Hussein became their Haman, the very embodiment of evil. They felt like the Jews who stamp their feet when the name of Haman is mentioned during the public reading of the *Scroll of Esther* on the Purim holiday: they wanted him stamped out, once and for all.

The Gulf War intensified and the Allied forces became more aggressive, sending countless air-raids into Iraq. The Army transferred David to the front lines, 50 miles from the village of Ur Kasdim, where the Jewish patriarch Abraham had refused to bow down to the idols of King Nimrod. The pagan king subsequently threw young Abraham into a fiery furnace, yet miraculously he was not burned.

On the quiet nights, when sorties were not taking off from the Army's makeshift runway, David often gazed at the stars. There were no lights for hundreds of miles and David could see thousands of stars in the Milky Way. Here G-d's blessing and promise to Abraham, "I will increase your seed as the stars of the heaven" (Genesis 22:17), had great meaning.

By now Saddam's army had fired more than 30 SCUDS which struck Israel. If only he could drag Israel into the war, then the other Arab nations would unite with him, and he would rule the oil-rich Middle East and the world would be at his mercy.

Suddenly, then the long-awaited land war was underway. The Allies marched into Kuwait and invaded Iraq. Then, on February 27, after a mere 100 hours of Allied fighting, the BBC announced that the Persian Gulf War was over. Not for a moment did any of the soldiers believe it. Two weeks later, on March 11, 1991, *Newsweek* published a cover story on the war and called the Persian Gulf War "a triumph of almost Biblical proportions." Only after returning to the United States, did David find out that the War had actually ended on Purim.

With David, every single soldier in the 101st Airborne Division returned home, alive! Like in the days following the miracle of Purim, joyous celebrations and prayers of thanksgiving were held in towns throughout America, and "the days of darkness were transformed to light, joy and happiness."

Thirteen months after the Gulf War ended, while stationed at Fort Campbell, David spent Shabbat at the home of Rabbi Zalman Posner in Nashville, Tennessee. "Have you seen this booklet?" his host asked. David glanced at it, and saw it was entitled, "*I Will Show You Wonders: Public Statements of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, Shlita, Before and During the Gulf Crisis.*"

David had never before heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. On that Shabbat, he learned about the Rebbe's predictions regarding the Gulf War, how the Rebbe publicly proclaimed that the Land of Israel would be safe and that nobody in Israel would need gas masks, and that it was said in the Rebbe's name that the Gulf War would end by Purim.

Following the Gulf War, David completed a two-year stint in the Army and then joined the ranks of young men studying Torah in the Yeshiva *Tiferet Bachurim* at the Rabbinical College of America, in Morristown, New Jersey.

Sources: Private First-Class David Zuk; "Missiles and Miracles: The SCUD Story" David Rothschild (Nefesh Magazine, 1992); "Why Were SCUD Casualties So Low?" S. Fetter, G. Lewis & L. Gronlund (Nature, Jan. 1993).

Excerpted from *From the Heavens to the Heart* by Tzvi Jacobs



SEASONS OF THE SOUL

Purim Preview

compiled by: Yanki Tauber

Purim celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people, in the year 3405 from Creation (356 bce), from Haman's plot "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, in a single day."

Haman was Prime Minister to the Persian emperor Achashveirosh, whose dominion extended from India to Ethiopia. Endorsed by Achashveirosh, Haman's decree boded the physical destruction of every single Jew on the face of the earth.

While the sage Mordechai rallied the Jews to prayer and repentance, his cousin, Esther, engineered Haman's downfall at a private wine-party to which she invited the king and the minister. She prevailed upon Achashveirosh to hang Haman and to issue a second decree, empowering the Jews to defend themselves against those who sought to destroy them.

On the 13th of Adar — the day selected by Haman's *pur* (lottery) — numerous battles were fought throughout the empire between the Jews and those who attempted to carry out Haman's decree (which was never actually revoked). The following day, Adar 14, became a day of feasting and rejoicing in celebration of the Jews' victory over their enemies. In the ancient walled capital, Shushan, where the battle went on for two days, the victory celebration was held on Adar 15.

Mordechai and Esther instituted that these two days be observed for posterity as the festival of Purim — Adar 15 in walled cities, and Adar 14 in unwalled towns — by public readings of the story of the miracle as recorded in the "Scroll of Esther," sending food portions to friends, giving gifts of money to the poor, and enjoying a festive meal accompanied with inebriating drink (recalling the fateful wine-party at which Esther turned Achashveirosh against Haman).

A time-honored Purim custom is for children to dress up and disguise themselves — an allusion to the fact

that the miracle of Purim was disguised in natural garments. This is also the significance behind a traditional Purim food, the hamantash — a pastry whose filling is hidden within a three-cornered-crust. The day before Purim is "The Fast of Esther," in commemoration of the fasts of Esther and her people as they prayed for G-d's salvation from Haman's decree.

Purim falls on March 19, 2003

Purim Insights

Masquerade

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39541>

The Underhand Spin

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39542>

A Momentous Year

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39543>

Think Now

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39544>

Oil and Wine

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=72442>

Funny Stuff

Purim Paparazzi

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39546>

Three Pertinent Points of the Purim Pastry

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39547>

Essays

Esther's Story

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39548>

The Pur of Purim

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39549>

The Thousand Year Difference

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39550>

The Purim Drunk

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=39551>

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Vayikra/Zachor

Leviticus 1:1-5:26, Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Torah Reading for Week of March 9-15, 2003

G-d **calls** to **Moses** from the **Tent of Meeting**, and communicates to him the laws of the **korbanot**, the **animal** and meal offerings brought in the Sanctuary. These include:

The “ascending offering” (*olah*) that is wholly raised to G-d by the **fire** atop the Altar;

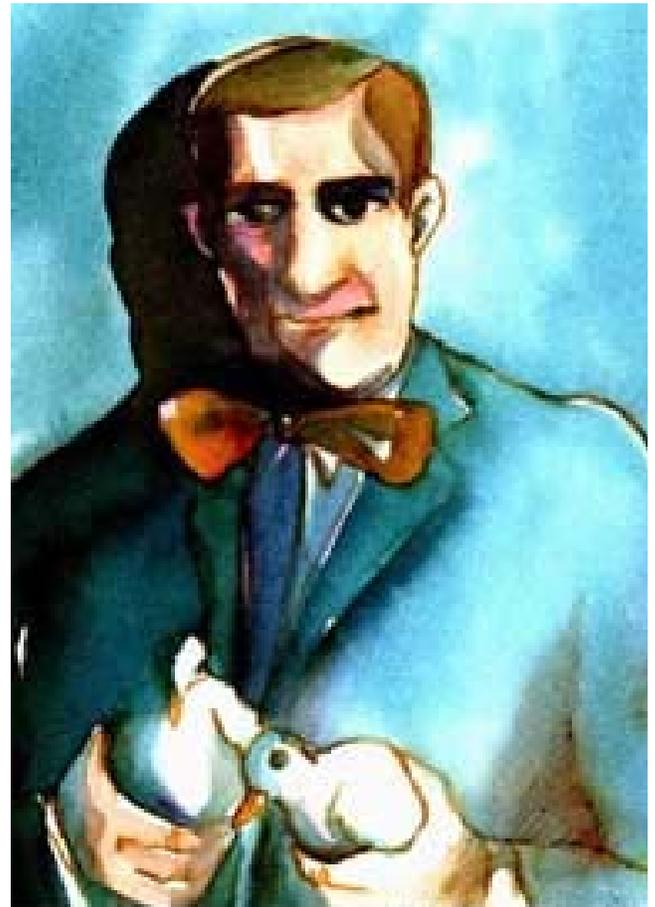
Five varieties of “meal offering” (***minchah***) prepared with fine flour, olive oil and frankincense;

The “**peace offering**” (*shelamim*), whose meat was eaten by the one bringing the offering, after parts are burned on the Altar and parts are given to the Kohanim (priests);

The different types of “sin offering” (*chatat*) brought to atone for **transgressions** committed erroneously by the High Priest, the entire community, the king, or the ordinary Jew;

The “**guilt offering**” (*asham*) brought by one who has appropriated property of the Sanctuary, who is in **doubt** as to whether he transgressed a divine prohibition, or who has committed a “betrayal against G-d” by swearing falsely to defraud a **fellow man**.

This being the Shabbat before **Purim**, on which we celebrate the foiling of Haman the **Amalekite's** plot to destroy the Jewish people, the weekly Parshah is supplemented with the Zachor reading (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) in which we are commanded to **remember** the evil of Amalek and to eradicate it from the face of the earth.



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PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra/Zachor

Leviticus 1:1-5:26, Deuteronomy 25:17-19
Torah Reading for Week of March 9-15, 2003

The second half of the Book of Exodus—whose reading we concluded last week—was taken up primarily with the details of the Sanctuary's construction; in Exodus' concluding verses, we read how the Sanctuary was erected and the Divine Presence came to dwell in it. Thus the Sanctuary commenced its function as the "Tent of Meeting" between **G-d and man**: the place that is the focus of man's endeavor to serve his Creator, and where G-d communicated to man and made His presence felt within a humanly-constructed abode.

In the Parshah of Vayikra, which opens the book of Leviticus, **G-d speaks to Moses** from the Tent of Meeting and begins His communication of the laws governing the bringing of the *korbanot*, the animal and meal **offerings** that are the central feature of the service performed in the Sanctuary.

And He called to Moses; and G-d spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying:

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: A man who shall bring near of you an offering to G-d; of the cat-

tle, of the herd and of the flock, shall you bring near your offering...

The first *korban* to be described is the *olah*, the "ascending" offering (commonly referred to as the "burnt offering"), whose distinguishing feature is that it is raised to G-d, in its entirety, by the fire atop the Altar.

If his offering be an Ascending Offering of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting shall he bring it near, that he may be accepted in goodwill before G-d.

And he shall lean his hand upon the head of the offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

And he shall slaughter the bullock before G-d; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring near the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the Altar that is by the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

And he shall skin the offering, and cut it into its pieces

And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the Altar, and arrange the wood upon the fire. And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall arrange the parts, the head, and the fat upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the Altar. Its inwards and its legs shall he wash in water.

Commentary

VAYIKRA (LEVITICUS 1:1)

Said Rav Assi: Why do young children begin [the study of Torah] with the book of Leviticus, and not with Genesis? Surely it is because young children are pure, and the *korbanot* are pure; so let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure.

(Midrash Rabbah)

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (who later became the third Rebbe of Chabad) entered *cheder* on the day after Yom Kippur of the year 1792, eleven days after his third birthday. The child's grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, instructed Reb Avraham the *melamed* to begin the first lesson with the opening verses of *Vayikra*.

Following the lesson, the child asked: "Why is the word *vayikra* written with a little *aleph*?"

For a long while Rabbi Schneur Zalman sat in a deep meditative trance. Then he explained:

"The first man, Adam, was 'the handiwork of G-d,' and G-d attested that his wisdom was greater than that of the angels. Adam was aware of his own greatness, and this awareness caused him to overestimate himself and led to his downfall in the sin of the Tree of Knowledge.

"Moses, who possessed a soul deriving from *chachmah* of *atzilut* (the highest manifestation of the divine wisdom), was also aware of his own greatness. But this did not lead him toward self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, it evoked in him a broken and anguished heart, and made him

extremely humble in his own eyes, thinking to himself that if someone else had been blessed with the gifts with which he, Moses, had been blessed, that other person would surely have achieved far more than himself. Thus G-d testifies in the Torah that 'Moses was the most humble man upon the face of the earth.'

"In the letters of the Torah, which G-d gave at Sinai, there are three sizes: intermediate letters, oversized letters, and miniature letters. As a rule, the Torah is written with intermediate letters, signifying that a person should strive for the level of "the intermediate man" (a concept that Rabbi Schneur Zalman puts forth in his *Tanya*). Adam's name is spelled with an oversize *aleph* (in Chronicles 1:1), because his self-awareness led to his downfall. On the other hand, Moses, through his sense of insufficiency, attained the highest level of humility, expressed by the miniature *aleph* of *Vayikra*.

(From the talks of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson)

AND HE CALLED TO MOSES (1:1)

Said Rabbi Tanchum ben Chanilai: Normally, a burden which is heavy for one is light for two, or one heavy for two is light for four; but can a burden too heavy for 600,000 be bearable for one? Now all Israel were standing before Mount Sinai, and saying: "If we hear the voice of G-d... any more, we shall die" (Deuteronomy 5:22), whilst Moses heard the voice by himself and remained alive.

(Midrash Rabbah)

A MAN WHO SHALL BRING NEAR OF YOU AN OFFERING TO G-D (1:2)

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra/Zachor

Leviticus 1:1-5:26, Deuteronomy 25:17-19
Torah Reading for Week of March 9-15, 2003

And the priest shall burn all on the Altar, an ascending offering, a fire-offering of a sweet savor to G-d.

The *olah* can also be a male sheep or goat, in which case the same procedure is followed.

A turtledove or young pigeon can also be brought as an "ascending offering." Instead of being slaughtered through *shechitah* (cutting of the throat), the bird is killed by *melikah*—nipping off the head from the back of the neck. The blood is applied to the wall of the Altar, and the bird's **crop** and its adjoining feathers are removed and discarded; then the bird's body is **burned** upon the Altar.

Meal Offerings

And a soul who shall offer a meal offering to G-d...

Meal offerings, called *menachot* ("gifts"), are prepared of fine flour, with olive oil and frankincense. The priest removes a *kometz* ("handful"—actually the amount grasped by his three middle fingers), to be burned on the Altar; the remainder is eaten by the priests.

There are **five types** of donated meal offerings: 1) the standard "meal offering" whose *kometz* is removed before it is baked; 2) the "baked meal offering," which came in two forms: loaves or 3) flat matzot; 4) the "pan-fried" meal offering; 5) the *minchat marcheset*, deep-fried in a pot.

The following rule applies to all the meal offerings (including the "loaves"):

No meal offering, which you shall bring to G-d, shall be made leavened; for you shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of G-d made by fire...

Another rule is that,

Your every meal offering shall you season with salt; never shall you suspend the salt covenant of your G-d.

This latter rule applies to all *korbanot*: "With all your offerings you shall offer salt."

Another meal offering mentioned here is the *minchat bikkurim*

Commentary

The verse does not say, "a man of you who shall bring near an offering," but, "a man who shall bring near of you an offering"—the offering must come from within the person. It is the animal within man that must be "brought near" and elevated by the divine fire upon the Altar.

(The Chassidic Masters)

A MAN (ADAM) WHO SHALL BRING NEAR OF YOU AN OFFERING TO G-D (1:2)

Why does G-d use the word *adam* for "man" (instead of the more common synonym *ish*)? To teach us that a person cannot offer to G-d what has not been honestly obtained by him. G-d is saying: "When you bring an offering to Me, be like Adam the first man, who could not have stolen from anyone, since he was alone in the world."

(Midrash Tanchuma; Rashi)

When we speak of Adam as one who "was alone in the world," we are speaking of the very first hours of his life. Thus we are speaking of Adam before he partook of the Tree of Knowledge—of man still unsullied by sin.

This is the deeper significance of the Torah's reference to the bearer of a *korban*—which has the power to obtain atonement for a transgression—as an "Adam." Every man, the Torah is saying, harbors in the pith of his soul a pristine "Adam," a primordial man untouched by sin. Even at the very moment his external self was transgressing the divine will, his inner essence remained loyal to G-d; it was only silenced and suppressed by his baser instincts. It is by accessing this core of purity, by unearthing that part of himself that did not sin in the first place and restoring it to its rightful place as the sovereign of his life, that man attains the state of *teshu-*

vah—return to his original state of perfection.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

AN ASCENDING OFFERING, A FIRE-OFFERING OF A SWEET SAVOR TO G-D (1:9)

It is pleasurable to Me that I have spoken and My will was done.

(Sifri; Rashi)

[Regarding the offerings,] it is said: "This is an ordinance for ever to Israel" (II Chronicles 2:3). Rabbi Giddal said in the name of Rav: This refers to the Altar built in heaven where Michael, the great Prince, stands and offers up thereon an offering.

Rabbi Yochanan said: It refers to the scholars who are occupied with the laws of Temple service—The Torah regards it as though the Temple were built in their days.

(Talmud, Menachot 110a)

AND HE SHALL REMOVE ITS CROP WITH ITS FEATHERS, AND CAST IT BESIDE THE ALTAR (1:16)

The bird flies about and swoops throughout the world, and eats indiscriminately; it eats food obtained by robbery and by violence. Said G-d: Since this crop is filled with the proceeds of robbery and violence, let it not be offered on the altar... On the other hand, the domestic animal is reared on the crib of its master and eats neither indiscriminately nor of that obtained by robbery or by violence; for this reason the whole of it is offered up.

(Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra/Zachor

Leviticus 1:1-5:26, Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Torah Reading for Week of March 9-15, 2003

(also called the "omer") brought on the second day of Passover from the year's very first barley harvest. In this *minchah*, the kernels are roasted by fire before they are ground into flour.

(In addition, a meal offering **accompanied** all animal offerings.)

The Peace Offering

The *shelamim*, or "**peace** offering," could be either male or female, and either from "the herd" (i.e., an ox or a cow), a sheep or a goat.

Like the *olah*, its blood was sprinkled upon the Altar; but unlike the *olah*, which "ascended" in its entirety upon the Altar, the meat of the *shelamim* was eaten by the "owner"—the one who brought the offering (two portions of the animal, the breast and the right thigh, were eaten by the priests). Only certain parts of the animal were burned on the fire atop the Altar:

The fat that covers the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on

them, which is by the flanks, and the appendage of the liver which he shall remove with the kidneys.

If the peace offering is a sheep, "the whole fat tail, up to the backbone" was added to these.

And the priest shall burn it on the Altar; it is [divine] food, a fire-offering, a sweet savor to G-d.

Because they are offered to G-d on the Altar, these specified veins of fat, which the Torah calls *cheilev*, are forbidden for consumption in all animals: "It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your habitations: all *cheilev* and all blood, you shall not eat."

The Sin Offerings

The *korbanot* discussed up to this point are "donations"—offerings pledged out of a desire to give to G-d. Now the Torah moves on to discuss obligatory offerings, such as the *chatat*, the "sin-offering" brought to **atone** for an inadvertent transgression of the divine will.

And G-d spoke to Moses, saying:

... If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of G-d, and shall do one of the things that must not be done...

Different offerings are prescribed depending on the **stature** of

Commentary

AND HE SHALL REND IT BY ITS WINGS... AND THE PRIEST SHALL BURN IT ON THE ALTAR (1:17)

The wings, with the feathers, were burned with it. An ordinary being, should he smell the odor of burning feathers, is nauseated thereby... Why then all this? Just in order that the Altar may be sated and glorified by the sacrifice of a pauper.

(Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

A SOUL WHO SHALL OFFER A MEAL OFFERING TO G-D (2:1)

Why is the meal-offering distinguished in that the expression "soul" is used? Because G-d says: "Who is it that usually brings a meal-offering? It is the poor man. I account it as though he had offered his own soul to Me."

Why is the meal-offering distinguished in that five kinds of oil dishes are stated in connection with it? This can be likened to the case of a human king for whom his friend had prepared a feast. The king knew that his friend was poor [and had only one food to offer him], so he said to him: "Prepare it for me in five kinds of dishes so that I will derive pleasure from you."

(Talmud, Menachot 104b)

It is said of a large ox, "A fire-offering, a sweet savor"; of a small bird, "A fire-offering, a sweet savor"; and of a meal-offering, "A fire-offering, a sweet savor." This is to teach you that it is the same whether a person

offers much or little, so long as he directs his heart to heaven.

(Talmud, Menachot 110a)

An ox was once being led to sacrifice, but would not budge. A poor man came along with a bundle of endive in his hand. He held it out towards the ox, which ate it... and then allowed itself to be led to sacrifice. In a dream it was revealed to the owner of the ox: "The poor man's sacrifice superceded yours."

Once a woman brought a handful of fine flour, and the priest despised her, saying: "See what she offers! What is there in this to eat? What is there in this to offer up?" It was shown to him in a dream: "**Do not despise her!** It is regarded as if she had sacrificed her own life."

(Midrash Rabbah)

NO LEAVEN... [SHALL BE PRESENT] IN ANY OFFERING OF G-D (2:11)

Leaven, which is dough that has fermented and risen, represents self-inflation and pride, and there is nothing more abhorrent to G-d. In the words of the Talmud, "G-d says of the prideful one, 'He and I cannot dwell together in the world.'"

(The Chassidic Masters)

NO LEAVEN, NOR ANY HONEY, IN ANY OFFERING OF G-D (2:11)

Ultra-sweet honey and ultra-sour leaven, are opposite extremes; G-d does not like extremes.

(The Rebbe of Kotzk)

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra/Zachor

Leviticus 1:1-5:26, Deuteronomy 25:17-19
Torah Reading for Week of March 9-15, 2003

the transgressor.

If the anointed priest does sin to the guilt of the people, he shall bring... a young bullock without blemish to G-d.

A similar offering is also brought in the case that the entire community commits a transgression as a result of an erroneous ruling by the Sanhedrin (High Court).

If the entire congregation of Israel shall sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the community, and they have done something against any of the commandments of G-d concerning things which should not be done...

When the sin which they have sinned is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lean their hands on the head of the bullock before G-d..

Both the High Priest's sin offering and that of the congregation was distinguished in that it had to be a male bullock (the ordinary sin-offering was a female sheep or goat); it had to be offered by the High Priest; its blood was sprinkled "indoors"—inside the Sanctuary on the Golden Altar and opposite the *Parochet*; after the *chalabim* were burned on the Altar, the rest of the animal was not eaten by the priests (as was the case with ordinary sin-offerings) but rather "the skin of the bullock, and all its flesh, with its head, its legs, its inwards and its dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth outside the camp to a clean place... and burn it on the wood with fire."

A **nassi** (king) who commits an inadvertent transgression brings an offering similar to the standard sin-offering, except that it must be a male goat.

Commentary

NEVER SHALL YOU SUSPEND THE SALT COVENANT OF YOUR G-D... WITH ALL YOUR OFFERINGS YOU SHALL OFFER SALT (2:13)

When G-d separated the supernal waters from the lower waters (see Genesis 1:6-8), He made a covenant with the lower waters that their salt will be offered on the Altar.

(Rashi)

The world is one part wilderness, one part settled land, and one part sea. Said the sea to G-d: "Master of the Universe! The Torah will be given in the wilderness; the Holy Temple will be built on settled land; and what about me?" Said G-d: "The people of Israel will offer your salt upon the Altar."

(Yalkut HaReuveni)

The *korban*, which was the vehicle of the elevation of the world to G-d, had to include "representatives" of all four sectors of the creation: the inanimate world, the vegetable world, the animal world, and the human world. Thus the *korban* was offered by a human being, and consisted of an animal, grain, and salt.

(Rabbi Isaac Luria)

AND IF HIS OFFERING BE A SACRIFICE OF PEACE OFFERING (3:1)

Why is it called a "peace offering"? Because everyone partakes of it. The blood and fat go to the Altar, the breast and thigh to the priest, and the hide and flesh, to the owner.

(Torat Kohanim)

AND THE PRIEST SHALL BURN IT ON THE ALTAR; IT IS FOOD... TO G-D (3:11)

Do you think that He needs to eat? Does not the verse (Psalms 50:12-13) proclaim, "Should I hunger, I would not tell you, for the world, and all it

contains, is Mine... Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" But it is not for My desire that you are offering, [says G-d,] but for your own, as it is written (Leviticus 19:5), "For your own desire, you should offer it."

(Talmud, Menachot 110a)

When the Torah refers to the *korbanot* as "G-d's bread," this is obviously a metaphor; but what is its significance? In what sense are we "feeding" G-d when we offer up to Him ourselves and our material resources in the quest to serve Him?

Our sages have said that "G-d fills the world as a soul fills a body." On the human level, food is what sustains "life," which is the assertion of the soul's powers via its physical vessel, the body. And so it is with the divine life-force that suffuses the created existence: "G-d's food" is what we would call whatever it is that asserts the divine reality as a manifest presence in our physical world.

With our every act of serving G-d, we fulfill the divine purpose of creation—that "there be for Him a dwelling in the physical realms." We thus breathe life into the world-body, asserting and manifesting its quintessence and soul.

(The Chassidic Masters)

AND THE PRIEST SHALL BURN THEM UPON THE ALTAR... ALL THE FAT IS TO G-D (3:16)

Everything that is for the sake of G-d should be of the best and most beautiful. When one builds a house of prayer, it should be more beautiful than his own dwelling. When one feeds the hungry, he should feed him of the best and sweetest of his table. When one clothes the naked, he should clothe him with the finest of his clothes. Whenever one designates something for a holy purpose, he should sanctify the finest of his possessions; as it is written, "All the fat is to G-d."

(Maimonides)

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra/Zachor

Leviticus 1:1-5:26, Deuteronomy 25:17-19
Torah Reading for Week of March 9-15, 2003

Anyone else who sins inadvertently, brings

a kid of the goats... [or] a lamb... a female without blemish.

And he shall lean his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slaughter it for a sin offering in the place where they slaughter the burnt offering.

And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering; and all the [remaining] blood he shall pour into the foundation of the Altar.

And he shall remove its fat, as the fat is removed from... the peace offering; and the priest shall burn these upon

the Altar, upon the pyres of G-d.

And the priest shall make atonement for his sin that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

With certain transgressions (such as failure to fulfill an oath to bear **witness**, or entering the Sanctuary in a state of ritual impurity), the sin-offering brought depended on the **financial ability** of the transgressor. One who could not afford a female sheep or goat, brought two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one bird to be brought as an “ascending offering” and the second bird as a sin offering. A person of even lesser means, who could not even afford two birds, brought a meal offering, on which “he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put any frankincense upon it, for it is a sin offering.”

Guilt Offerings

For certain transgressions, the offering brought in atonement is not a “sin offering” but an *asham* (“guilt offering”). An *asham* is distinguished from the standard sin offering in that it was a male sheep, and that it had to be worth at least “two shekels of silver of the shekel of the Sanctuary.”

Commentary

IF THE ANOINTED PRIEST DOES SIN TO THE GUILT OF THE PEOPLE (4:3)

When a leader sins, this becomes the excuse for everyone else’s wrongdoings.

(The Gaon of Lissa)

THAT A PRINCE SHOULD SIN... (4:22)

The Torah employs the uncommon usage *asher* (“that a...”) to say: Fortunate (*ashrei*) is the generation whose leader applies himself to atone for his errors.

(Talmud; Rashi)

IF A PERSON SIN, AND HEAR THE VOICE OF ADJURATION, AND IS A WITNESS, WHETHER HE HAS SEEN OR KNOWN OF IT; IF HE DOES NOT TESTIFY, THEN HE SHALL HEAR HIS INIQUITY (5:1)

There was once a governor who used to put to death the purchasers of stolen goods and release the thieves, and all used to find fault with him, saying that he was not acting correctly. What did he do? He issued a proclamation throughout the province, saying: “Let all the people go out to the campus!” What did he do then? He brought some weasels and placed before them portions of food. The weasels took the portions, and carried them to their holes. The next day he again issued a proclamation, saying: “Let all the people go out to the campus!” Again he brought weasels and placed portions of food before them, but stopped up all holes. The weasels took the portions, and carried them to their holes, but finding these stopped up, they brought their portions back to their places. Thus he demonstrated that all the trouble is due to receivers.

This then we learn from the governor; how can we illustrate our texts by an example? Reuben stole from Simeon, and Levi knew of it. Said Reuben to Levi: “Do not testify against me, and I will give you half.” The following day people enter the synagogue, and hear the overseer announce: “Who has stolen from Simeon?” and Levi is present there.

Surely The Torah has decreed: “If he does not testify, then he shall hear his iniquity.”

(Midrash Rabbah)

IF A PERSON SIN... AND IS A WITNESS (5:1)

If a person witnesses a wrongdoing of his fellow, this is a message to him that he, too, is guilty of a similar failing.

(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)

HE SHALL RESTORE IT IN THE PRINCIPAL, AND SHALL ADD THE FIFTH PART MORE TO IT (5:16)

The addition should be a fifth of the addition and the principle together (i.e., he must add 25% of the principle); this is the opinion of Rabbi Yoshiah. Rabbi Jonathan says: a fifth of the principle.

(Talmud, Bava Metzia 54a)

AND IF A PERSON SIN... THOUGH HE KNOW IT NOT, HE IS GUILTY (5:17)

One who knows for certain that he transgressed, brings a sin offering; one who doubts if he transgressed, must atone with a guilt offering. Why does the one who has perhaps not transgressed require the more valuable offering? Because his regret is not as complete.

(Raavad)

IF A PERSON SIN, AND COMMIT A BETRAYAL AGAINST G-D, AND LIE TO HIS FELLOW (5:21)

Said Rabbi Akiva: Why does the Torah consider him to have committed “a betrayal against G-d”? ... Because in defrauding his fellow, he is also defrauding the Third Party to their dealings.

(Rashi)

How is the offender also defrauding G-d? On the most basic level, he is

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra/Zachor

Leviticus 1:1-5:26, Deuteronomy 25:17-19
Torah Reading for Week of March 9-15, 2003

Three types of *asham* are described in our Parshah. The first is brought by one who unintentionally made unauthorized use of property belonging to the Sanctuary—a crime called *me'illah* ("betrayal"). He must pay back what he had expropriated and add to that an additional **one-fifth** of its value, and also bring an *asham* to obtain atonement for his unintentional trespass.

A second type of "guilt offering" is the *asham talu*, brought by one who thinks he may have unwittingly committed a transgression, but is not sure (for example, he had two pieces of meat before him and ate one of them; later, he discovers that one of them was *cheilev*—forbidden fat—a trespass which would obligate him to bring a sin offering if he would know with certainty that he committed it).

The third and last *asham* of our Parshah is the one brought in atonement by one who swears falsely in the process of defrauding his fellow man:

If a person sin, and commit a betrayal against G-d, and lie to his fellow regarding that which was delivered him to keep, or in a loan, or in a thing taken away by violence, or withholding payment; or he found a lost object and has lied concerning it; if he swears falsely in any of all these

that a man does, sinning in that...

He shall restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs, in the day of his [atonement of his] guilt.

And he shall bring his guilt offering to G-d, a ram without blemish out of the flock, according to the value of a guilt offering, to the priest.

And the priest shall make atonement for him before G-d: and it shall be forgiven him for anything of all that he has done wherein to incur guilt.

Parshat Zachor

This being the Shabbat before Purim, on which we celebrate the foiling of Haman the Amalekite's plot to destroy the people of Israel, the weekly reading is supplemented by Parshat Zachor ("Remember") in which we are commanded to remember the evil of Amalek and to eradicate it from the face of the earth. The reading is from Deuteronomy 25:17-19):

Remember what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt. That he encountered you on the way and cut off those lagging to your rear, when you were tired and exhausted; he did not fear G-d. And it shall come to pass, when the L-rd your G-d has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the L-rd your G-d is giving you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. Do not forget.

Commentary

defying the Supernal Author of the command, "You shall not steal." Another explanation is that although it may be that not a single earthly soul knows what really happened between the litigants, G-d is the omnipresent witness to their dealings; so in addition to lying to his fellow, he is lying in face of the all-knowing "Third Party to their dealings."

A deeper understanding of the defrauder's crime against G-d can be derived from another saying by Rabbi Akiva, in which he speaks of how G-d "acquired and bequeathed His world" to man (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 31a). Chassidic teaching explains this to mean that the concept of human "property rights" over the resources of G-d's the world is divinely ordained, and is integral to the divine purpose in creation: in order for man to be able develop his environment into a "home for G-d," thereby making the world a true divine "acquisition," each individual's proprietorship over the portion of creation he is charged to develop must be defined and safeguarded. Hence G-d's "bequest of His world" to man is at the very heart of His own ownership—this is the manner in which the Creator Himself desired that His "acquisition" of creation be realized.

Thus the Torah says: "If a person... commit a betrayal against G-d, and lie to his fellow." You have not only lied to your fellow—you have betrayed the "Third Partner", depriving Him of His ownership of His world as He Himself defines it.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

REMEMBER WHAT AMALEK DID TO YOU ON THE ROAD, ON YOUR WAY OUT OF

EGYPT. THAT HE ENCOUNTERED YOU ON THE WAY (DEUTERONOMY 25:17-18)

[The Hebrew word *karcha*, "encountered you," also translates "cooled you off". Thus the Midrash says:] What is the incident (of Amalek) comparable to? To a boiling tub of water which no creature was able to enter. Along came one evil-doer and jumped into it. Although he was burned, he cooled it for the others. So, too, when Israel came out of Egypt, and G-d rent the sea before them and drowned the Egyptians within it, the fear of them fell upon all the nations. But when Amalek came and challenged them, although he received his due from them, he cooled the awe of them for the nations of the world.

(Midrash Tanchuma)

Amalek is thus the essence of chutzpa, of completely irrational challenge to truth. There are challenges to the truth that are based on rational argument. There are evasions that arise from subjective motives and desires. But then there is "Amalek," who neutralizes the most compelling evidence and chills the most inspiring experience with nothing more than his cynicism and audacity. There is only one way to defeat Amalek: to remember. Because his challenge is not rational, it cannot be rationally refuted; because it is immune to feeling, it cannot be repelled by a rousing of emotion. To counteract Amalek's poison, one must call forth the souls reserves of supra-rational faith, instilled within it when it was first formed as a spark of the divine essence--a faith which, when remembered, can meet his every moral challenge.

(The Chassidic Masters)

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra

From the Chassidic Masters

THE OFFERED BEAST

Why, if a person sinned and wished to make atonement, or he was just in a generous mood and wished to offer something to G-d, does he sacrifice an innocent animal? Why doesn't he sacrifice himself, for example?

Answer the Chassidic masters: he does.

The Torah, they explain, makes this very point in the verse that introduces the laws of the *korbanot*:

A man who shall bring near of you an offering to G-d, from the beast, from the cattle and from the sheep, you shall bring close your offering...

As Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi points out, the verse does not say, "a man of you who shall bring near an offering," but, "a man who shall bring near of you an offering"—the offering brought is "of you". The sacrificed animal is a projection, in the extra-human sphere, of a process transpiring in the intra-human sphere..

Man, says the Talmud, is a world in miniature. Which means that the world is a man in macro. Our world contains oceans and continents, forests and deserts, men and beasts; so, too, does man. The human psyche includes a subconscious "sea" and a "terrestrial" persona; it has lush forests and barren deserts; and it has a "human soul" and an "animal soul."

The human soul—also called the "G-dly soul"—embodies all that is upward-reaching and transcendent in man. It gravitates to its source in G-d, driven by an all-consuming love for G-d and the desire to lose itself within His all-pervading essence. Its modes of expression are the thought, speech and deed of Torah—the means by which man achieves closeness and attachment to his Creator.or.

The "animal soul" is the self that man shares with all living creatures: a self driven and fulfilled by its physical needs and desires. Its vehicle of expression are the endeavors of material life.

"A man who shall offer of you an offering to G-d, from the beast, from the cattle and from the sheep, you shall bring close your offering." When a person brings an animal from his paddock as a gift to G-d, the

gesture is devoid of meaning unless he also offers the animal within himself.

The Ox and the Plow

What is to be done with this animal?

The beast within man has not been placed there just so that it should be suppressed or uprooted. "Much grain is produced with the might of the ox," remarked the wisest of men, and the Chassidic masters say that this is a reference to the animal inside our hearts. An ox run amok will trample and destroy, but when dominated by a responsible human vision and harnessed to its plow, the beast's vigor translates into "much grain"—a far richer crop than what human energy alone might produce.

The same is true of the beast in man. Nothing—not even the G-dly soul's keenest yearnings—can match the intensity and vigor with which the animal soul pursues its desires. Left to its own devices, the animal soul tends toward corrupt and destructive behavior; but the proper guidance and training can eliminate the negative expressions of these potent drives and exploit them towards good and G-dly end.

The first type of *korban* described in our Parshah is the *olah*—the "ascending" offering, commonly referred to as the "burnt offering." The *olah* is unique in that it is an absolute offering: after it is slaughtered in the Temple courtyard and its blood is poured upon the Altar, it is raised up upon the Altar and is burned, in its entirety, as a "a fiery pleasure unto G-d."

The burning of something is the physical counterpart of the sublimation process described above. When a substance is burned, its outer, material form is eliminated, releasing the energy locked within. This is the inner significance of the *korban*: the animal energy within man is divested of its material forms and offered upon the altar of service to G-d.

The Eaten Offerings

After detailing the various types of *korban olah*, the Torah goes on to discuss the other two primary categories of offerings—the *korban chattat* ("sin offering") and *korban shelamim* ("peace offering").

Like that of the *olah*, the blood of these offerings was poured on the Altar. But unlike the wholly burnt offering, only certain parts of *chattat* and *shelamim* "ascended" by fire. The Torah designates certain veins of fat (called the *chalabim*) which should be removed and burned. But the meat of the *korban* was eaten under special conditions of holiness. (The meat

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra

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of the *chattat* was eaten by the priests, and that of the *shelamim* by the person who brought the offering, with certain portions given to the priests).

There are portions of our material lives which, like the burnt offering, are wholly converted to holiness: the money given to charity, the leather made into *tefillin*, the energy expended in Torah study, prayer and the performance of a mitzvah. But there is also the money we spend to feed our families, the leather we make into shoes, the energy we expend on the everyday business of physical life. But these, too, can be served as a *korban* to G-d, when they are “eaten in holiness”—when the money is honestly earned, the food is kosher, and our everyday activities are conducted in a way that is considerate of our fellows and faithful to the divine laws of life.

The “blood” of the animal soul—its fervor and passion for material things—must be poured upon the Altar; its “fat”—its excessive indulgence and pleasure-seeking—must be burned. But the gist of the animal self—its “meat”—can be sanctified even when it is not wholly converted into a holy act. As long as they are “eaten in holiness,” our material endeavors can be a means of “bringing close” (—the meaning of the word *korban*) of man to G-d.

AMALEK

The people of Israel journeyed... and they camped in Rephidim....

And [Moses] named the place “Challenge and Strife” because of the strife of the people of Israel and their challenging of G-d, saying, “Is G-d amongst us or not?”

Then came Amalek and attacked Israel in Rephidim.

Exodus 17:1-8

Remember what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt. That he encountered you on the way and cut off those lagging to your rear, when you were tired and exhausted; he did not fear G-d. Therefore... you must obliterate the memory of

Amalek from under the heavens. Do not forget.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

The Jewish people had just experienced one of the greatest manifestations of divine power in history. Ten supernatural plagues had compelled the mightiest nation on earth to free them from their servitude. The sea had split before them, and manna had rained from the heavens to nourish them. How could they possibly question “Is G-d amongst us or not?”

Yet such is the nature of doubt. There is doubt that is based on rational query. There is doubt that rises from the doubters subjective motives and desires. But then there is doubt pure and simple: irrational doubt, doubt more powerful than reason. Doubt that neutralizes the most convincing arguments and the most inspiring experiences with nothing more than a cynical shrug.

Such was the doubt that left the Jewish people susceptible to attack from Amalek. “Amalek,” in the spiritual sphere, is the essence of baseless, irrational indifference; in the words of the Midrash:

What is the incident (of Amalek) comparable to? To a boiling tub of water which no creature was able to enter. Along came one evil-doer and jumped into it. Although he was burned, he cooled it for the others. So, too, when Israel came out of Egypt, and G-d rent the sea before them and drowned the Egyptians within it, the fear of them fell upon all the nations. But when Amalek came and challenged them, although he received his due from them, he cooled the awe of them for the nations of the world (Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Teitzei 9).*

This is why Amalek and what he represents constitutes the arch enemy of the Jewish people and their mission in life; as Moses proclaimed following the war with Amalek, “G-d has sworn by His throne; G-d is at war with Amalek for all generations” (Exodus 17:16). Truth can refute the logical arguments offered against it. Truth can even prevail over man’s selfish drives and desires; for intrinsic to the nature of man is the axiom that “” —that it is within a person’s capacity to so thoroughly appreciate a truth that it is ingrained in his character and implemented in his behavior. But man’s rational faculties are powerless against the challenge of an Amalek who leaps into the boiling tub, who brazenly mocks the truth and cools man’s most inspired moments with nothing more than a dismissive “So what?”

The Bottleneck

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayikra

From the Chassidic Masters

Amalek attacked Israel “on the road, on the way out of Egypt,” as they were headed toward Mount Sinai to receive G-d’s Torah and their mandate as His people. Here, too, history mirrors the inner workings of the soul: the timing of the historical Amaleks attack describes the internal circumstances under which the pestilence of baseless doubt rears its head.

In the Passover Haggadah we say: “In every generation one must see himself as if he himself came out of *Mitzrayim*.” *Mitzrayim*, the Hebrew word for Egypt, means “narrow straits”; on the personal level, this refers to what Chassidic teaching calls the “narrowness of the neck” which intersects between the mind and the heart. Just as, physically, the head and the heart are joined by a narrow passageway the neck—so it is in the spiritual-psychological sense. Although, as mentioned above, the mind possesses an innate superiority over the heart, it is a most difficult and challenging task for a person to exercise this superiority to direct and mold his feelings and desires to conform with what he knows to be right. This is the “Exodus from *mitzrayim*” that is incumbent on each and every generation: the individual challenge to negotiate the narrow straits of his internal “neck,” to overcome the material enticements, the emotional subjectivity, the ego and self-interest which undermine the mind’s authority over the heart and impede its influence on the person’s character and behavior.

As long as a person is still imprisoned in his personal *mitzrayim*, he faces many challenges to his integrity. As long as he has not succeeded in establishing his mind as the axis on which all else revolves, his base instincts and traits such as greed, anger, the quest for power and instant gratification may get the better of him. But once he achieves his personal “Exodus” from the narrow straits of his psyche, once he establishes his knowledge and understanding of the truth as the determining force in his life, the battle is all but won. He may be confronted with negative ideas and rationalizations, but free of the distortions of self-interest, the truth will triumph. He may be tempted by negative drives and desires, but if in his life the mind rules the heart, it will curb and ultimate-

ly transform them.

But there remains one enemy which threatens also the post-Exodus individual: Amalek. Amalek “knows his Master and consciously rebels against Him.” Amalek does not challenge the truth with arguments, or even with selfish motivations — he just disregards it. To the axiom, “Do truth because it is true,” Amalek says “So what?” Armed with nothing but his *chutzpah*, Amalek jumps into the boiling tub, contests the incontestable. And in doing so he cools its impact.

Beyond Reason

How is one to respond to Amalek? How is one to deal with the apathy, the cynicism, the senseless doubt within? Amalek is irrational and totally unresponsive to reason; the answer to Amalek is likewise supra-rational.

In his Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi discusses the faith in G-d that is integral to the Jewish soul. Faith is not something that must be attained; it need only be revealed, for it is woven into the very fabric of the soul’s essence. Faith, continues Rabbi Schneur Zalman, transcends reason. Through faith one relates to the infinite truth of G-d in its totality, unlike the perception achieved by reason, which is defined and limited by the finite nature of the human mind. Thus Rabbi Schneur Zalman explains the amazing fact that, throughout Jewish history, many thousands of Jews have sacrificed their lives rather than renounce their faith and their bond with the Almighty, including many who had little conscious knowledge and appreciation of their Jewishness and did not practice it in their daily lives. At their moment of truth, when they perceived that their very identity as Jews was at stake, their intrinsic faith — a faith that knows no bounds or equivocations — came to light, and overpowered all else.

The Jew’s response to Amalek is to remember. To call forth his soul’s reserves of supra-rational faith, a faith which may lie buried and forgotten under a mass of mundane involvements and entanglements. A faith which, when remembered, can meet his every moral challenge, rational or not.

* The Hebrew word *karcha*, “he encountered you,” employed by the verse to describe Amalek’s attack on Israel, also translates as “he cooled you.”

*Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,
www.therebbe.org ; adapted by Yanki Tauber,*