

THE KTM

DAF PARASHA

BRINGING A TASTE OF ISRAEL TO MONTREAL



TORAH תורה
מִצִּיּוֹן MITZION

KTM MONTREAL

PARASHAT VAYIKRA
3 NISSAN 5786
21 MARCH 2026

CANDLE LIGHTING: 6:49 P.M.
HAVDALAH: 7:53 P.M.

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THE RICH MAN'S BREAD?

BY RAV ARI FAUST (ROSH KOLLEL)

Matzah is famously known as לחם עוני. The exact meaning of this term is somewhat elusive. Does it mean, as the Maharal suggests, that the bread itself is “poor” in the sense that it is made of only two very basic ingredients—water and flour—and baked within a very short timeframe? Or perhaps it reflects a very different meaning, as the Gemara teaches (Pesachim 115b): “לחם שְׁעוֹנֵינִי לֶחֶם דְּבָרִים הַרְבֵּה” —“עָלְיוֹ דְּבָרִים הַרְבֵּה (onim) many matters.”

The common translation, of course, is “poor man’s bread.” This may refer to the idea (see Ramban) that it was the staple food fed to the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, or to the fact that its simple ingredients make it affordable even for the most impoverished.

How ironic, then, that the cost of matzah in Montreal this year can start at \$35 per pound. Perhaps a more apt explanation of לחם עוני would be that it is the bread that makes us poor!

The high cost of Jewish living is not a new phenomenon. Economists Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein have studied the economic development and demographic trends of Jewish life in the post-Temple period. They suggest that the shift from a Temple-centered Judaism to a rabbinic one in the aftermath of the destruction made mandatory education (for males) a cornerstone of Jewish communal life. The positive result was that Jews became perhaps the first mass-literate civilization in history. The negative consequence, however, was the sudden and significant cost of education - an expense not every family could afford.

Botticini and Eckstein argue that this led to a substantial, though difficult-to-quantify, loss of Jews from the community. Many converted to Christianity, and later many converted to Islam. From the first to the seventh century CE, the Jewish population declined from roughly five million to approximately 1.2 million. According to Botticini and Eckstein, this demographic shift - as well as the many Jewish migrations during the first millennium CE - was driven not only by persecution but also by economic necessity.

Research conducted in 2016 by the Berman Jewish DataBank on behalf of the Jewish Federations of North America found that many Jews were being “priced out.” A significant percentage of parents

reported not sending their children to Jewish schools or camps, and some even reported limiting synagogue attendance - all because of high costs. Similar findings have appeared in more recent Pew Research Center reports.

According to the April 2024 WEXfactor conversation, when school tuition, camp, synagogue dues, kosher food, and the cost of living in a Jewish neighborhood are taken into account, the cost of Jewish living can reach \$40,000–\$50,000 per year beyond average costs in the general population, or even higher depending on family size and location.

Granted, Jewish communities have systems in place to support those who cannot afford the heavy price tag of Jewish life. But more can - and must - be done to ensure that we are not signaling to those who need assistance that they do not belong. Moreover, we require leadership willing to take responsible steps to ensure that the “business of Judaism” does not become prohibitively expensive.

All things considered, the vast majority of Jews stretch themselves financially in order to provide a full and meaningful Jewish life for their families, despite the considerable strain this can cause.

This brings us to our parasha, which opens with three categories of korbanot: olah, mincha, and shelamim. Regarding the mincha offering, the Torah uses a unique expression (Vayikra 2:1):

וַיִּקַּח בְּיַד הַקֹּהֵן קֶרֶבַח מִמֶּנָּה לַיהוָה קֶרֶבַח

When a soul presents an offering of grain to God...

The Talmud (Menachot 104b) asks why the korban mincha is the only offering described as being brought by a “soul.” The answer given speaks volumes about the depth of our sages’ concern for the financial wellbeing of the Jewish community:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Whose practice is it to bring a meal offering? It is that of a poor individual; and I will ascribe him credit as if he offered his soul (nafsho) before Me.

The mincha offering differs from the other korbanot. While most offerings involve an

animal sacrifice, the mincha consists of flour, oil, and frankincense. It is, in essence, the poor person’s offering. In their answer, Chazal express profound sensitivity toward those for whom the cost of Jewish life can be difficult to bear.

What is true about the financial burden of an observant Jewish lifestyle is true about Jewish commitment more broadly: living a Jewish life often requires us to step outside our comfort zone. It is not always easy to leave home in the evening to learn with a chavruta, to wake up early to daven in a minyan, or to stop everything at the onset of Shabbat. The examples of Judaism demanding sacrifice are many, and each person encounters their own unique challenges to confront and work through. Commitment and dedication are necessary in any meaningful relationship, and one’s relationship with Jewish identity is no different.

But it is precisely those things that demand the greatest commitment and effort that reveal our true character. In those moments we discover who we really are and what we truly stand for. Through them we express what our נַפְשׁוֹ - our soul - is really about.



אין כמו שנה בארץ

BY TALIA ASPLER MIDRESHET HAROVA

Being in Midrshet HaRova this year has been the most incredible experience!

I feel so lucky to be surrounded by amazing Rebbeim and teachers and to be able to learn Torah in the Old City. I truly couldn't have chosen a better place to spend my gap year.

Since the beginning of the year I've loved being at HaRova and being part of all the amazing things we do here. A big highlight for me was our amazing davening on Yom Kippur which was indescribable. So many alumni and staff came and we had the most uplifting and inspiring davening together. Another highlight was our trip to Poland and Lithuania at the end of January which was the most meaningful and transformative trip I've ever been on.

HaRova has helped me grow so much this year, both religiously and spiritually. I'm so lucky to have so many classes I love and teachers that are extremely knowledgeable and inspiring. I've also grown such a strong love for Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael that I never could have imagined before coming.

Experiencing Israel during this war with Iran has also been very powerful. It's been a bit scary but, baruch Hashem, the Old City is a very safe place and we haven't had so many sirens. Although sometimes it can be scary or inconvenient, I'm so grateful to be in Israel during such an important time filled with miracles. It's been really nice seeing first hand how strong Am Yisrael is and how people come together and look out for one another. Even during sirens you'll find people dancing and singing in the bomb shelters and people always trying to find ways to help

others who are struggling.

Overall, coming to Israel and specifically Midreshet HaRova was the best decision for me and I'm so grateful to my parents for giving me the opportunity to experience this amazing year in Israel!

Talia Aspler is an alumna of Hebrew Academy High School.



ENCOUNTERING THE GIANTS: RAV HAI GA'ON

BY CHAGAI SHREM

Rabbi Hai ben Sherira, known as "Rav Hai Gaon", was born in Babylon and served as the Head (Rosh) of

the Pumbedita Yeshiva for approximately forty years. He is considered the last of the Geonim - heads of Talmudic academies in the 6th-11th century - and merited the title "The Gaon of Gaonim." Rav Hai was the bridge through which the Torah of Babylon passed to all the Jewish communities. He authored more than a third of all Geonic responsa (Teshuvot) that have reached us, from the communities of Spain to Kairouan. He was renowned for a rare synthesis of extensive halachic ruling and a pure rationalist approach, while shaping the character of the world of Halacha and Jewish thought for generations to come.

Question: How should we relate to the Aggadic Midrashim of our Sages that appear baffling or contradict common sense?

Answer: One must draw a sharp distinction between Halakha and Aggadah. While Halakha is a binding tradition passed from generation to generation, Aggadah is often the personal opinion of a sage, a parable, or a sermon. The fundamental rule is that "One does not rely on Aggadah".

In places where it contradicts reason: If a particular Midrash seems far from the

intellect, there is no obligation to accept it literally; instead, one should strive to understand it as an allegory or simply set it aside. The Torah did not come to coerce us to believe in things that the intellect rejects.

Question: How can we understand God's conduct in the world when we see "the righteous who suffer," and what is the nature of the reward promised to us?

Answer: We must remember that this world is a world of labor and testing, not a world for receiving reward. The true and complete reward is not physical but spiritual, and it is reserved for the soul in the World to Come. The pleasure of the righteous is not eating or drinking, but rather the "Splendor of the Divine Presence" (Ziv HaShekhinah) - an unmediated spiritual proximity to the Divine light. As for the suffering of the righteous, these are sometimes "afflictions of love" (Yissurim Shel Ahavah) intended to cleanse the person of minor transgressions in this world, so that they may arrive at the World to Come pure and worthy of a perfect reward.

Question: Is there a Divine conduct of "reincarnation of souls" (Gilgul Neshamot)?

Answer: No. The soul is created for a specific body to stand within it for trial; and if it were to transmigrate through many bodies - how would the justice of the

law be maintained? Which of the bodies would merit resurrection and which would be punished? Our faith is that man is responsible for his actions in this life alone, and in them he acquires his world, without pinning his hopes on "rectifications" (Tikunim) in other incarnations that have no substance.

Question: Are the descriptions of "Garden of Eden" and "Gehinom" physical places with fire and fruit, as sometimes described in Midrashim?

Answer: These colorful descriptions are parables intended to make the concepts intelligible to the ear (Leshakekh Et HaOzen) and to explain abstract concepts. "Garden of Eden" is a parable for a state of maximum proximity to the Divine light, and "Gehinom" is a parable for distance from it and the accompanying spiritual sorrow. Each person builds during their life their own spiritual "receptacle" (Keli Kibbul); as one refines themselves through Torah and Mitzvot, so they enlarge their ability to contain and enjoy that eternal Divine goodness. Nevertheless, we believe that in the future to come, the "Resurrection of the Dead" (Tehiyat HaMetim) will take place as a real physical event, in which the body and soul will reunite to receive their final and complete reward.



HALACHIC Q&A

BY RABBI YOSEF ZVI RIMON - NASI, WORLD MIZRACHI

Question: May one use grape juice for the four cups at the Seder?

Answer: Wine is preferable because it is a symbol of freedom and of the joy of the festival (another preference is that the wine be red). However, grape juice may certainly be used. Therefore, if a person finds it hard to drink wine because of the taste or because he has a headache or is tired, he may drink grape juice from the start, and many of Israel's greatest scholars have done so (this is sometimes even preferable so that a person will be able to relate the story of Exodus with a clear mind and without being tired).

Question: Are all participants required to wash for urchatz?

Answer: The primary requirement applies to a person who picks up karpas with his hand, but even a person who picks it up with a fork should wash his hands. Ideally, all should wash their hands. At large seder meals, where it is extremely difficult to do so, one may rely on those who rule leniently and say that only the head of the household must wash his hands.

Question: What should a person do if they accidentally recited the blessing on urchatz?

Answer: He should eat more than a kezayit of karpas (unlike everyone else, who eats less than a kezayit).

Question: The poskim assume that food which most people use for medicinal purposes is forbidden on Shabbat, as it is considered like medicine. What about a case when food is generally used as medicine, but where I live is generally used as regular food?

Answer: Seemingly, it depends – if healthy people eat this food, then it's defined as food and not medicine and allowed even if you personally intend for its medicinal effect. We learn this from the Mishna in Shabbat, which says: All food can be eaten on Shabbat even for medicinal purposes. Rashi explains that food that healthy people eat as food can be eaten by one who intends to use it for medicinal purposes. The Chachamim's decree regarding medicine does not extend to such a case. The Shulchan Aruch rules according to this understanding in OC 328:37 and 327:1.

Question: Is one allowed to put a wedding invitation on a grave to invite them?

Answer: Many poskim dealt with this question. In practice, it is permissible to do this. We cannot daven to the deceased, however we can (k'viyachol - as it were) invite them.

Question: Now that the guidelines permit attending synagogue, would it be permitted to carry ones' cell phone in order to receive updates from homefront command, or would this be deemed unnecessary since we can hear the siren on the loudspeaker?

Answer: It appears that in every household there should be at least one phone turned on, and if someone leaves the house, it is preferable to go out with a cellphone in one's pocket, so that in case of an alert a person will know how to calculate what to do. If there is an alert, it is sufficient just to look at the phone and not press anything, since there is no need to do so (and if there is an important need, one should press in an unusual manner, using the back of the finger). Indeed, a cellphone is considered a כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור (an object whose primary

use involves prohibited activity on Shabbat), but there is room to permit carrying it in this case, since it serves a practical need (tzorech gufo).

Question: What is the proper way to serve soup with a ladle on Shabbat?

Answer: When serving soup on Shabbat, one should not use a slotted spoon, as we view this as separating with a vessel, which is forbidden. One whose custom is to use this has poskim to rely upon (Shu"t Or Letzion); however you should be careful to continue the motion of serving and not to leave the spoon in the air as the water drips down through the holes. It is permissible to use a regular ladle; however, if you want to get out vegetables you should not tilt the ladle to remove the liquid back into the soup, as this would be considered borer (selecting) psolet (what you do not want) from ochel (what you do want), which is forbidden. You definitely should not use the side of the pot to help you separate, as this may be considered using a vessel - which is an issur de'orayta (R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach). Somebody who wants just liquid can gently put the ladle on the soup's surface so that only the liquid comes in. If you want only vegetables, you can remove them with a fork or a regular spoon, and this is considered separating ochel from psolet which is permissible.

PARNESS HAYOM :: NISAN

- 6 NISAN | Norman Sternthal, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his mother, Sarah Sternthal z"l
- 8 NISAN | Rafi Faust, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his grandparents, Raphael and Adele Faust z"l
- 10 NISAN | Peter Veres, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, Andre Veres z"l
- 17 NISAN | Phil Friedman, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his mother, Lucy Friedman z"l
- 19 NISAN | Shlomo and Tova Shimon, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his mother, Miriam Leah Shimon z"l
- 23 NISAN | Ronnie Schondorf, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his uncle, Richard Wehrman z"l
- 24 NISAN | Ruth Drazin, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her sister, Pearl Fried z"l
- 28 NISAN | Ruth Drazin, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her father, Sam Fried z"l



Courageous Kids



Shira was so proud of her art project – she was going to show the teacher ...



But accidentally knocked over Liora's project!



Liora hadn't noticed, and Shira contemplated what to do...



She decided to confess to Liora, and offered to help fix the project.



The girls had fun working together.



And their teacher couldn't have been more proud!

Parashat Vayikra begins with many details about korbanot. Why does the Torah spend so much time talking about sacrifices? But one of the main korbanot described is the korban chatat — brought when a person makes a mistake. This teaches something very important: everyone makes mistakes. The Torah doesn't pretend that people are perfect. Instead, it teaches that mistakes are not the end of the story. What matters most is how we respond to them. The lesson of Parashat Vayikra is that being a good person doesn't mean never making mistakes — it means having the courage to fix them.