



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT VAYIKRA

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DVAR TORAH VAYIKRA RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Right and Wrong

There is a danger with clearly articulated consequences for actions. People can then perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine if the potential penalty is worth the crime. A clear example is seen in delivery trucks that park illegally and are prepared to accept the fine as part of the cost of doing business. Fines would deter a poor person more than they would a rich person since as a percentage of disposable income the poor person is more affected. In order to mitigate this problem, Finland instituted speeding fines that are based on a percentage of a person's income with tickets there having exceeded \$100,000 for millionaires. While better than a flat fine, this approach still doesn't instill a sense of right and wrong when considering an action but rather it instills a sense of what is expedient.

In this week's parasha, we see that the Torah has an approach to sin and consequence that encourages people to consider their actions both based upon what is expedient as well as helping them generate a sense of right and wrong. The sin offering is tiered based upon a person's wealth. The high priest would bring a bull offering, the ruler would bring a male goat, a rich individual

would bring a female goat, all the way down to a poor person who could only afford a flour offering. By creating a sliding scale the financial cost of the sacrifice is able to deter the rich as well as the poor on a more equitable scale.

However, this financial equity still doesn't solve the problem of right and wrong. The act of sacrifice itself though has the potential to instill in the sinner the awareness

Actions have serious consequences

that their actions are inherently wrong. This awareness is needed to ensure that even the rich who can afford the most expensive sacrifice would still be more careful to avoid sin. A person is required to not only pay for an animal as a sin offering but also needs to personally bring the animal and physically place their hands on the animal before it is slaughtered. The need to participate in the slaughtering of the animal in such a personal way creates the realization that actions have serious consequences and the death of the animal is a direct result of this person's carelessness

and flippant attitude toward sin. By creating a personal connection to the animal and having it die as a result of the sinner's actions, the message of wrongness moves from a financial penalty to become instead something closer to a sense of morality.

The slaughtering of an animal wasn't supposed to be something that was taken lightly and the need to have the blood splashed on the altar didn't allow the experience to be sterile. People need to be confronted with the severity of their actions and the only way to do that is to experience that consequence more viscerally. A speeding ticket can only act as a deterrent. Forcing a person who sped to go to a hospital to see and speak with people who have been maimed by speeding would convey the message that it is wrong to speed not because of the potential financial consequences but rather because it is not taking the lives of others and our own lives into proper consideration. The true reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah and the true consequence of a sin is the sin itself. May we merit the ability to strengthen our awareness that mitzvot and sins are there to guide us to live the most meaningful and impactful lives possible.



Yirmiyahu 15

Chapter 14 saw Yirmiyahu beseech Hashem to break a devastating famine with rain. He defended the Jews and appealed for Hashem to relent, for the sake of Divine honour if not for our sake.

Chapter 15 begins with a resounding Divine rejection: "Even if Moshe and Shemuel were to stand before Me, I would not desire to help this nation." It would be better for Yirmiyahu to dismiss the Jews altogether to face their punishment. They will be murdered by the sword and dragged by dogs, and consumed by birds and beasts. The blame is laid at the feet of King Menasheh, echoing Melachim II 21:10-18 which identified Menasheh as the cause for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash (15:1-4).

But Menasheh is not the sole guilty party. Hashem addresses the Jews directly, declaring that none shall mourn for them; they

abandoned Hashem and so they brought this suffering upon themselves. Instead of their numbers multiplying like the sand at the sea as Hashem promised to Avraham (Bereishit 22:17), their widows shall be like the sand at the sea. Chanah spoke of the barren woman birthing seven (Shemuel I 2:5); now the one who produced seven will

***Even Moshe and Shemuel
could not sway Me.***

be childless. Instead of Yeshayahu's promise that our sun will no longer set (Yeshayahu 60:20), our sun will set in the middle of the day (15:5-9).

Yirmiyahu halts the prophecy, objecting: Woe is me! I've become an agent of strife, cursed from all sides! But Hashem responds

that He is protecting Yirmiyahu (15:10-11).

Hashem then turns to the nation, continuing the vision of destruction. Their iron will not break the stronger iron coming from the north. Their wealth will be given as spoils, and they will be taken into exile in foreign lands (15:12-14).

But Yirmiyahu's complaint is not over. He describes himself devouring Divine prophecy and rejoicing over it, even as this meant isolation and suffering. He cries out: why must I suffer forever? (15:15-18)

Hashem responds that if Yirmiyahu will succeed in bringing any Jews back in repentance, he will be greatly rewarded. That which he declares will come true, and if the nation attacks him, he will be like a reinforced wall. Hashem will save Yirmiyahu from all foes (15:19-21).



Week 9: The Acceptance of the *Ikkarim*

As we have seen, the notion of providing a list of articles of faith does not appear in Chazal. Later, lists begin to appear, but more as educational tools. Once we reach the three central thinkers we have studied, Rambam, Rabbi Yosef Albo, and Rabbi Chasdai Crescas, these lists become central to their articulation of faith. How and when were these lists accepted? Here again, I will draw from Rabbi Dr. Josh Berman's treatment in *Ani Maamin*, who in turn draws some of his analysis from Menachem Kellner's *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel* (Oxford University Press, 1986).

For the first two hundred years after Rambam wrote his list of *ikkarim*, there is virtually no discussion of it in rabbinic sources. However, its influence begins to spread through another means—that of *piyyut*. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks noted (in a lecture at YU) that Chazal did not write works of philosophy. The most important beliefs they recorded in the siddur so that the average Jew would imbibe them during prayer. He noted that the

Rambam's *ikkarim* similarly became popular when they were incorporated in the prayer book.

Two of the most famous versions of this are the liturgical song "Yigdal" and the shortened versions of the *ikkarim* that each begin with *Ani Maamin*, "I believe". "Yigdal" was written by Daniel ben Yehuda of Rome in the early fourteenth century. As for *Ani Maamin*, the condensed version in Ashkenazi Siddurim is actually a summary of an earlier, longer version that was found in an archive in Parma, Italy. Later, a further shortening was created that became the standard version in Sefardi Siddurim.

These adaptations were critical to the spread of the *ikkarim* and their acceptance. However, there are often subtle differences that emerge from the Rambam's version than the implications of these adaptations. As such, one need not only understand what the Rambam himself intended, but what version of these *ikkarim* were accepted. Only then can one understand the precise nuances of what people intend when they accept these beliefs.



Are Women Obligated in Hearing Zachor?

Question: It's Shabbat Zachor! Every year, my husband and I participate in the reading of Parashat Zachor—he goes to the early minyan and I go to the main minyan. Is it really necessary for me, as a woman, to hear the reading of Parashat Zachor?

Answer: This coming Shabbat, we will read the second portion of the four special portions read around the month of Adar. The reading of Parashat Zachor is considered more significant than others because unlike the other readings which are only rabbinically mandated, the reading of Parashat Zachor is mandated by the Torah, as stated in the *Shulchan Aruch* Orach Chayim 685-7.

Are women also obligated in this commandment? The *Sefer Hachinuch* states explicitly in Mitzvah 603 that there is a commandment to remember the deeds of Amalek, and as part of the laws of the commandment, he says that women are

exempt from this commandment. The reason is that part of the reading involves the words "You shall eradicate Amalek," which implies waging war against Amalek, and women are exempt from participating in wars.

The Minchat Chinuch challenges the words of the Sefer Hachinuch and raises two questions:

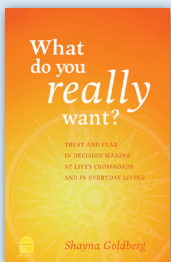
1. It seems that women are obligated to participate in warfare when necessary, as stated in the Mishnah in *Sotah* (Chapter 8, Mishnah 7): "But in a compulsory war, everyone goes out, even a bridegroom from his chamber and a bride from her canopy."
2. Who revealed to the *Sefer Hachinuch* that the reason for the commandment of remembering the deed of Amalek is solely dependent on war with Amalek. Perhaps, in the future, even without the

existence of Amalek in the world, there will still be a commandment to remember their sinful deeds? Therefore, the "Minchat Chinuch" remains in doubt.

In practice: It is brought in the *Mishnah Berurah* (Dirshu edition, note 26) that there is a wide dispute among contemporary authorities whether women are obligated to hear the reading of Parashat Zachor, and therefore, it is indeed very advisable that they hear the reading of Parashat Zachor. However, since it is doubtful whether they are obligated, many authorities have said that one should not take out a Sefer Torah specifically for women's reading. I can testify that when I lived in Jerusalem, the solution proposed by Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl was to read again for women during the Mincha prayer, when a Sefer Torah is already taken out for the Mincha reading. Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at ymann@torontotorah.com.



Week 7: In God's Image



What Do You Really Want?
By Shayna Goldberg
Maggid Press, 2021

"God created each of us with the ability to make our own choices (be'hira hofshit). As such, He necessarily believes deeply in our capability to do so. He wants us to make good decisions, and He must trust that we can. If He created us as independent, autonomous beings, He must have given us the tools that we need to think about what makes the most sense for us..." (What Do You Really Want, pp. 146-147)

When humans are first created, the Torah tells us we were created "b'tzelem Elokim," in the image of God. Much ink has been spilled on the meaning of these words. What, exactly, is the image of an incorporeal God such that we are created in His image? Among the many commentators, Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, the Meshech

Chochma, suggests that the divine image is free will. To be created in God's image means that we have the ability to freely choose who we are and what we do. Absolute freedom is the essence of God, and He bestowed that upon us when He created us.

Even as decision-making can be terrifying, our tradition teaches that it is also among the most Godlike actions we can take. May we truly embody our "tzelem Elokim" and may we be successful in wielding our free will in productive and meaningful ways.

One way that I hope you will use your free will is on March 31st at 8:30 p.m. at Yeshivat Or Chaim for my shiur inspired by Shayna Goldberg's *What Do You Really Want*. Together we will be exploring good, evil, and the problem of free will. I hope to see you there!

What Do You Really Want? can be purchased from Koren Publishers at tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD. Use the code *TorontoTorah* for a 10% discount on this or any other book on their website.



TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Source: Vayikra 4:22

When a ruler sins, and unwittingly does any one of all the things which Hashem his God has commanded not to be done, and is guilty. If his sin in which he has sinned, is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish.

Seforno:

And is guilty: he realized himself that he had sinned;

Questions to Discuss

- Why are rulers prone to sin?
- Why is it hard for a ruler to notice their own sin?
- Why is it hard for a ruler to admit to sin that was pointed out by others?
- Which of these is harder?

After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at nsonenberg@torontotorah.com to enter our raffle for a \$15 voucher for Tova's Bakery!

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Shabbat	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Gutenberg
Sunday	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Will resume next week	Rabbi Shor
	Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Smachot	Clanton Park	Will resume next week	Rabbi Spitz & Rabbi Mann
	Shiur b'Ivrit	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	Will resume next week	Rabbi Mann & Rabbi Lax
	Sefer Shemot	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Will resume next week	David Koschitzky
Monday	Between Haman and the BDS	Zoom: tiny.cc/idanrak	2:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Introduction to Gemara: Learn how to learn	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
Tuesday	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach	Zoom	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Women's Gemara Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:15 PM	Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Study in Tanach	Shaarei Tefillah	8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
Thursday	Tanach: Sefer Shmuel	Zoom: tiny.cc/BMZDtanach	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	8:00 PM	R' Diena
Sun–Thu	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim Clanton Park	Sun–Mon, Wed–Thurs: 8:00–9:00 PM Tues: 8:00–9:00 PM	
	Pre-Maariv Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	New Time 8:45–9:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Good, Evil and the Problem of Free Will with Rabbi Anstandig	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Sunday, March 31	8:30 PM
Updating the Determination of the Moment of Death with Rabbi Torczyner	Zoom: tiny.cc/mtorc	Monday, April 8	8:00–9:30 PM
Haggadah Night	BAYT	Wednesday, April 10	8:00–9:00 PM
Haggadah Night	Shaarei Shomayim	Monday, April 15	8:00–9:00 PM

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

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