

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

Vol 5,# 23

Chabad of North Beverly Hills, 409 Foothill Rd. Beverly Hills, 90210

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This week's Torah portion is the first portion in the Book of Leviticus-Vayikra. The Book of Leviticus, which deals primarily with the laws of sacrifices, opens with the words "And He [G-d] called (Vayikra) to Moses." According to Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, this expression "is language indicating affection." G-d called out to Moses as a manifestation of His love.

Chasidut explains that the fact that the Torah does not specify by name who is calling is significant. G-d's call to Moses is derived from His Essence, which transcends all Names or descriptions. Similarly, G-d's affection for Moses also stems from His very Essence.

Every Jew possesses a "spark" of the soul of Moses; G-d's "call of affection" is thus directed to every individual Jew. In Leviticus, G-d teaches us how to offer the korbanot (sacrifices), from the root word meaning closeness. By means of the korbanot, one is able to draw closer to G-d.

This same idea is also expressed in the haftarah that is usually read after the portion of Vayikra, which begins with the words "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall proclaim My praise." Like the opening verse of Leviticus, these words describe G-d's tremendous love for His people.

The simple explanation of the verse is that the Jews proclaim G-d's praise through their actions, i.e., by observing G-d's commandments, studying His Torah and praying to Him. But on a deeper level, G-d is "praised" independent of the Jewish people's conduct and even their will. This is the natural consequence of the Jews' very existence, and nothing else.

The first half of the verse describes the Jews' fundamental nature: "This people have I formed for Myself." By mere virtue of his existence a Jew belongs to G-d, having been created specifically for that purpose.

However, the Jewish people "proclaim G-d's praise" in the collective sense as well. The simple fact that the Jews - "a sheep among 70 wolves" - have survived while other, mightier nations have disappeared off the face of the earth, is a tribute to the Alm-ghty. A Jew proclaims G-d's greatness just by being alive.

This is especially true in our generation, the generation after the Holocaust. Whenever one sees a Jew continuing the tradition and passing Judaism along to the next generation, it is a living miracle of the Holy One, blessed be He.

G-d loves every Jew with an essential love regardless of his actions. From this we learn how important it is to love our fellow Jews unconditionally, judge them favorably, and always treat others with respect. For "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall proclaim My praise!" (Adapted from Volume 1 of Sefer HaSichot, From: L'Chaim 5761 #663)

"The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar." (1:7) Even though a heavenly fire descended from on High to consume the offerings, the priests were still required to bring ordinary fire as well, to the altar. We learn from this that one may not rely solely on the "fire that descends from on high"--the natural, innate love of G-d which is present in the soul of every Jew. Each of us must also bring an "ordinary fire," kindle that innate love of G-d by taking the initiative and contemplating His greatness, to further nurture that inner spark. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

A LONG DUTCH DRIVE

Some 30 years ago, Rabbi Yitschok Vorst,* was just beginning his assignment as a Chabad representative in Amstelveen, Holland. Shortly before Passover, he received a phone call from Lubavitch Headquarters in Brooklyn. Rabbi Hadokov, the Rebbe's personal secretary, informed him that the Rebbe wants him to go to a certain small town and give shmura matza, the special matza hand-made from flour that was guarded against moisture, to the Jew that lived in that town. The young rabbi asked for the name of this Jew, whereupon he was informed that the Rebbe did not mention any names. Rabbi Hadokov assured him, though, that he would be able to locate him once he got to the town.

Rabbi Vorst attempted to explain that the town was many hours' drive from Amsterdam, that he was busy making preparations for his first communal seder in Holland and distributing matzas, and besides, he did not believe there were any Jews located in that town anyway. Rabbi Hadokov was adamant. The Rebbe said that he should leave tomorrow for this town. There was no choice.

The next morning Rabbi Vorst packed a lunch and spent the day driving to this secluded town. Once there he spent hours searching and inquiring for any Jews in the town, to no avail. He finally decided that the expedition was a total waste of time and went to fill his car with petrol for the return trip. The gas station attendant asked the rabbi what had brought him to town. Upon hearing his story the attendant replied that he believed that a worker at the local butcher shop was indeed Jewish.

With nothing to lose, Rabbi Vorst made his way to the shop. When he walked in, the man behind the counter took one look at him and fainted. When he revived he told Rabbi Vorst the following story:

His mother and he were the only survivors in his family of the Nazi horrors. They moved to this secluded part of Holland to avoid further persecution. On her deathbed, his mother made him swear never to marry a non-Jewish girl and always be true to his faith. That had been five years prior. For the last several months the local priest had frequented his shop and began proselytizing him. They would enter into long discussions, but for this man, conversion was out of the question.

Eventually, though, the priest began to make headway. One of his arguments G-d had abandoned the young man, as proved by the fact that he was the only Jew in the area. Therefore he should convert and become part of a community.

After several months of being worn down, the young Jew agreed to be baptized. But, he insisted, first he wanted three days to think it over further.

He felt confused and depressed. He was indeed all alone. But how could he abandon his faith? How could he renege on the vow he made to his mother? He cried bitterly.

Finally he called out to the Almighty, "I will wait for you, dear G-d, to show me a sign that you are still watching over me. If I do not see anything from you by 6:00 PM on the third day, I will convert!"

And so the man cried. For three days he became more morose. He found work impossible. The third day had arrived and still no sign. The man spent the day looking at the clock. At lunch time he took a break and again beseeched the Almighty. There was less than six hours before he would agree to convert. During his 3:00 break the man again turned and prayed. Now there was less than three hours. If he did not see some sign indicating that the G-d of the Jews still cared for him, he would be baptized.

As the minute hand passed the 5:00 mark, the man was besides himself. Perhaps the priest was right after all. Maybe it would be better for him to convert. The minutes ticked on. Each one felt like an entire hour. At 5:45, he began closing the store. At 5:55 PM Rabbi Yitschok Vorst, armed with his matza from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, walked into this man's store.

After hearing this story, Rabbi Vorst begged the man to come back with him to Amsterdam and spend Passover. The man agreed. Every step of the way was a new beginning for this man. He had never been exposed to Judaism as his mother wanted to hide him from it. After Passover, he thanked the Rabbi and left. Cont.

- Twenty-five years later, Rabbi Vorst traveled to Jerusalem for the wedding of a relative. He was praying devoutly at the Western Wall, deep in concentration, when he heard his name being called and felt a hearty slap across his back. He turned and saw a large, burly man. The man asked him in Dutch, "Rabbi, don't you recognize me, I am so and so from the town of I spent Pesach in your house one year. Now I live in Jerusalem with my family. I owe everything to you." Sometimes, it is possible to make a deal with the Almighty. [Adapted by Yrachmiel Tilles from the rendition of Rabbi Herschel Finman in his weekly email "The Torah e-Parsha" shliach613@aol.com.] - www.ascent.org

Among my father's regular Torah-study sessions: A parsha of Chumash with Rashi daily; reciting Tanach by heart - a chapter each of Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim; a chapter of Mishnayot; a regular session in profound study of Gemara - two folio pages weekly, another in rapid study of Gemara - three pages daily; a session of study of the Jerusalem Talmud; a regular period for Codes, but not daily. During the course of the year he would conclude the entire Midrash Raba, "borrowing" from the long sedrot and "repaying" on the shorter ones.
 FOOTNOTES 1. I.e. he did not necessarily conclude each weekly Midrash portion that week, but concluded the lengthier portions during another week when the portion was more brief. FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, Nissan 3).

Cultivate the soul with hope, teach it to await the break of dawn with longing eyes. Through suffering, the soul is softened to absorb the rains, but spring will only come to those that long for it. And so the sages say, "In the merit of hope, our parents were redeemed from Egypt." - From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Tzvi Freeman.

PARTICIPATE IN WEEKLY CLASSES

Sunday	8:00 AM	Gemara-Tractate Rosh Hashana (men)
Monday	8:00 PM	Chumash (men and women)
Tuesday	8:00 PM	Gemara-Tractate Sukka (men)
Wednesday	8:30 PM	Halacha and Tanya (women)
Thursday	10:00 AM	Chassidus (women)
	8:00 PM	Class for Beverly Hills Highschool Students
Daily	6:45 to 7:15 AM	Chasiddus
	Between Mincha and Maariv	Halacha

DAILY MINYONIM

Shacharis: Mon -Fri: 6:00 AM & 7:30 AM
Sunday: 9:00 AM

Mincha/Maariv: 6:00 PM

There will be no class on Thursday, March 21.

SHABBAT PARSHAS VAYIKRA
March 15, 2002 - Nissan 2, 5762

Candlelighting (Los Angeles): 5:42 PM
Friday Mincha: 5:55 PM

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA: 9:03 AM

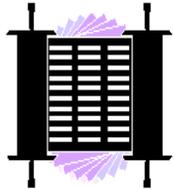
SHABBAT MORNING

- Tanya 8:45 AM
- Shacharit 9:30 AM followed by Kiddush, Cholent & Farbrengen
- Hagada 4:45 PM
- Mincha 5:30 PM followed by Seuda Shlishit
- Shabbat ends 6:42 PM

Yartzeits: Mordechai Salzberg - Nissan 8, Shraga Feit - Nissan 8.

Happy Birthday to Dr. Moshe Spira, Rochel Leah Shusterman, Lori Meisel, Chaim Mendel Chodorow and Kayla Tannenbaum.

Mazel Tov to the Einstein Family on the Bar Mitzvahs of Yitzchok, Dovid and Binyomin.



A Sefer Torah is being written in memory of the fathers of Rabbi & Mrs. Shusterman.

Anyone who is interested in participating should contact Mendel Shusterman at (310) 497-2643

GOOD SHABBOS!