בס"ד

מכון יעקב

Compliments of the Institute of Jewish Studies (founded by Yankel Rosenbaum HY"D) First Published Adar 5761 Vol 25.28
Printing in part sponsored by **NLZ Imports, Weis Printing**
(In memory of Moshe Yehuda ben Avrohom Yaakov, Mala Mindel bas Meir, Moshe Tzvi ben Yitzchok Aharon, Gittel bas Sinai, Nechemia ben Menachem Mendel, Yaakov ben Menachem Mendel)

vayikra 5786

Lullaby of Life

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

This week's Torah portion is devoted to the intricate laws associated with the various sacrifices that need to be brought on various occasions. The parsha discusses at length the many types of sin offerings that are brought when one unintentionally violated certain Torah precepts.

The juxtaposition of this chapter with the preceding parsha that details the laws governing the construction of the mishkan have an inherent logic. The purpose of the mishkan was for the Jewish people to dedicate themselves to Hashem's service through the sacrificial service in the mishkan. Upon concluding our study of the laws regarding the mishkan, we are then ready to engage in the study of the avodah, the Divine service that took place within its hallowed walls.

Interestingly, when we introduce young children to the learning of chumash, we begin not with the gripping narratives in Beraishis, but with this portion of Vayikrah. Wouldn't it be easier to interest young children in learning Chumash by having them learn the sections that deal with the inspiring and dramatic episodes in the lives of our forefathers? The Torah portions dealing with the Exodus and redemption would capture our children's interest far more than would the intricate laws of sacrifices that are so remote from our day to day reality. Why then do we follow the tradition of beginning with Vayikrah?

Perhaps we can gain an insight from the underlying theme of the Torah portion; the laws of sin offerings that one is obligated to bring for an unintentional transgression. The Torah is so stringent in this area that even if one is in doubt as to whether one actually transgressed, the obligation to bring a sacrifice still applies. For example, imagine the following scenario: a person has two servings of food before him-one that is forbidden to eat on penalty of korais, and one that is kosher. He eats one of the foods without knowing if it was the kosher one. In such a case, the person is obligated to bring a sacrifice as an atonement even though he may not have done anything wrong. Isn't this rather far fetched? How can we understand such stringency?

Perhaps in the answer to this question lies a clue as to why our Torah portion of Vayikrah serves as the foundation stone for a child's lifetime study of Torah. The commentaries explain that the Torah's laws need to become such an integral part of our daily existence that it is virtually impossible for us to lapse in their observance. The laws need to be so completely integrated into our daily routine that any lapse, no matter how slight, requires swift and immediate action.

The commentaries explain that when we leave our homes in the morning to start our day, we would never forget to first get dressed. We may forget our watch, our tie, our keys or even our blackberry. But we would never forget to put on our pants, shirts and socks. It is simply inconceivable to walk out the door without ones' clothes.

This is the level of automatic integration that we must achieve with Torah and mitzvos, to the extent that even an unintentional lapse is unthinkable, and requires an atonement. It may be true that we forgot, or that we transgressed perhaps while we were half asleep, but this doesn't diminish the unacceptability of the conduct. Certain things one simply does not forget.

Hashem's laws need to be as vital to us and as integral to our sense of well-being as the satisfying of our basic physical needs. Even a doubt as to whether we committed a sin thus triggers the need for a special sacrifice.

This is the message that we wish to impress on the young child's mind when we introduce him to the Torah. The Torah is our lifeblood and its observance must not become second nature. Its laws are not simply traditional or cultural enhancements to our everyday lives. Fulfilling Hashem's word is the very purpose of our existence.

When this message is fully absorbed, we can observe and celebrate every moment of life, fulfilling with love and devotion all the details outlined in the Torah and thereby securing eternal bliss in the world to come.

The Small Aleph

RABBI NOAH WEINBERG (Aish.com)

"Vayikra… And G-d called Moshe…" (Vayikra 1:1).

Rashi explains that the word "vayikra" is an expression of affection. G-d not only spoke to Moshe, He made direct, intimate contact with him. This was in stark contrast to how G-d spoke to the non-Jewish prophets, where the verb used to describe the communication is "vayikar." Vayikar, without the letter aleph at the end, implies a chance encounter, a lower form of communication.

The word "vayikra" at the beginning of this week's Torah portion is written with the letter aleph in smaller type. The Baal Haturim explains that Moshe wrote it this way due to his humility, for he wanted to downplay the public statement of his preciousness to G-d implied by the word "vayikra." Making the aleph small does not change the meaning of the word, yet at a quick glance the word appears to connote the inferior relationship that "vayikar" – without the aleph – entails.

Moshe was the greatest prophet in history and also the epitome of humility. He was aware of his own greatness, yet careful not to flaunt it.

The essence of humility is recognizing that all your strengths, your Torah learning, your blessings, and even your efforts, are all a gift from G-d.

WE MISTAKENLY attribute our accomplishments to our own abilities instead of recognizing that they are gifts from G-d. The Talmud (Shabbos 105b) explains that the verse, "There shall be no strange god within you" (Tehillim 81:10) refers to the yetzer hara, the evil inclination, which constantly tempts us to believe that our powers are the cause of our successes, instead of attributing these successes to G-d. As the verse says, "And you may say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth'" (Devarim 8:17) – in other words, I accomplished this. The following joke illustrates this human foible:

A multimillionaire makes a bad investment that wipes out his fortune. He takes his last $10,000, goes to the racetrack, and picks a horse called Dancer that pays 1,000 to 1. He figures that if he wins, he'll be a millionaire again, and if he loses he is already broke – so he has nothing to lose.

The race is about to begin and he starts to pray with fervor. "Almighty, the odds are 1,000 to 1. Please make this horse run!" Off they go, and sure enough his horse is running. "Almighty, please, please move him up in the pack!" The horse moves up in the pack. "Almighty, get him up in front, please, please!" Dancer is ahead by a nose. "Thank you Almighty, please, keep him in front!" The horse is ahead by a length. "Please, please keep him going!" He's ahead by five lengths and entering the final homestretch. Then

This document contains words of Torah and should be treated with respect. See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 85:2

he says, "Okay G-d, I can take over from here. Come on Dancer!"

When we are just starting out, overwhelmed by the challenges ahead of us, we naturally turn to G-d for help and guidance. But once we have succeeded, we all too easily forget G-d's role in guiding every step we took, until we mistakenly conclude that it was only our abilities and efforts that caused our success.

Nor can we take credit for our spiritual accomplishments, even when they require self-sacrifice. Whatever we accomplish is a gift from G-d; our efforts and self-sacrifice are what make it possible for G-d to bless our efforts. As the Talmud teaches, "A person's yetzer hara (evil inclination) attacks him every day, and wants to kill him... and if not for G-d's help, he would be unable to withstand him" (Kiddushin 30b). Even our power to stand up to the yetzer hara is a gift from the Almighty.

Believing in Our Own Power Actually Diminishes Us

We take credit for our accomplishments in order to feel important, but instead of empowering us, this actually diminishes us. By way of illustration, if someone were to ask you if you can recite the Shema twice a day or say Grace After Meals, you would answer, "Of course I can."

If someone were to ask you if you can know the entire Torah by heart or think about G-d every second of the day, you would probably answer that you cannot do it.

Which response is more accurate? When you say "I can recite the Shema" or when you say "I cannot know the entire Torah by heart"?

The truth is that you cannot learn the entire Torah by heart because the reality is that you cannot even lift a finger without G-d's help. But that is not the reason why we answer that we cannot do it. If that were the underlying reason then we would have answered that without G-d's help we cannot say the Shema or Birkas Hamazon either! We say that we cannot know all of Torah because we think do not have the intelligence and capabilities.

We rely only on our own prowess, believing deep down that it is our power that enables us to accomplish. If we would realize that G-d is the only power, that in truth we cannot do anything without Him – even say Shema – then we would believe that just as G-d gives us the ability to recite Shema, He will give us the ability to learn the entire Torah, if we want it badly enough. If G-d wants it to happen because it is consistent with His will, it will indeed happen– if we show him that we are doing all that is required to succeed.

Therefore, taking credit for our accomplishments does not empower us; it ultimately limits what we believe is attainable. Thinking it is all up to us consigns us to the limited and insecure realm of our own resources. But when we realize that everything that happens comes from G-d, we can transcend our shortcomings and plug ourselves into the Almighty's unlimited power.

Saying "I can't" is a form of idol worship because it implies that you are relying on your own power and not G-d's.

IN DESCRIBING THE BUILDING of the Mishkan and its vessels, the verse says, "Moshe summoned Betzalel, Oholiav, and every wise-hearted man whose heart G-d endowed with wisdom, everyone whose heart inspired him to approach the work, to do it" (Shemos 36:2).

The Chofetz Chaim (Toras Habayis, Chapter 7) points out that Betzalel's desire to fulfill G-d's will was the initial catalyst for G-d's giving him the ability to build the vessels of the Mishkan. This principle applies to all of our undertakings as well. Our job is to foster within ourselves the desire to do G-d's will. Then G-d gives us the opportunity and ability to accomplish our goal.

My great-grandfather was the Slonimer Rebbe. After I opened the first yeshiva for baalei teshuvah, I met several of my Israeli cousins, Slonimer chassidim, at a simchah and they said to me, "The great Rebbes of Europe took such pride in bringing a single Jew back to Torah that they put that accomplishment on their tombstones. Rav Noach, we remember when you first came to Eretz Yisroel and wore a light-colored suit. How is it possible that you have made scores of baalei teshuvah?"

I answered them with the following example.

When you walk the streets of Jerusalem, it is not uncommon to see large cranes lifting many tons of building materials and depositing them in the correct location. There is always one person standing at that location who places his hands under the load to make sure it comes to rest at the right spot. A fool, watching this man, thinks he is stronger than Shimshon, for he is holding tons of weight with his bare hands! But a wise man takes a step back and sees the bigger picture: It is the crane that is carrying the burden; the man below is just guiding it into place.

Similarly, the prophets teach that in the End of Days leading up to the arrival of the Mashiach, the Jewish People will do teshuvah and come back to G-d and His Torah (Amos, 8:11). G-d is moving the crane and lifting up the burden of the nation. All we need to do is lift our hands and make the slightest effort to guide to the right place those who are returning. When we do, the Almighty credits us with bringing back these souls all by ourselves, as the Mishnah says, "All who exert themselves for the community should exert themselves for the sake of Heaven, for then the merit of the community's forefathers aids them and their righteousness endures forever. Nevertheless, as for you, I [G-d] will bestow upon you as great a reward as if you had accomplished it on your own" (Avos 2:2).

When My Daughter Learned to Say No

CHAYA SHUCHAT (Chabad.org)

This week my daughter Rivka, who is two, learned to say two new words.

"MINE!" she squeals when she sees a desired toy in her brother's hand.

"NO!" she insists when it's time to get into pajamas and go to bed.

For any child, the acquisition of a new word is an event worth celebrating. For Rivka, who has Down syndrome, these moments are even more treasured. Each new word she utters is a product of weeks and weeks of hard work.

For the moment, my heart overflows with pride as I witness her burgeoning independence, her sense of self. I know that in a few months or years from now, these traits may not always seem so endearing, but for now, I kvell.

Watching her blossom into a personality of her own makes me reflect on the process of identity—how we become who we are. An infant is born fully dependent on his or her parents, and it's only during the second or third year of life that the child makes a monumental discovery—"I am my own person! I have my own wants and needs! I can even say 'NO!' and defy the powerful people around me!" Then we spend the rest of the child's formative years teaching him or her, "Yes, you are your own person, but you also need to think about other people. It's not all about you."

Isn't that a step backwards? Weren't we just celebrating the child's independence? Would it be better if the child never discovered, "I am me"?

WHEN THE TZEMACH TZEDEK, the third Chabad Rebbe, was a small child, his grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe, brought him to school for the first time. He instructed the teacher to begin teaching his grandson the first verse of Parshat Vayikra, "And G-d called to Moshe."

The child immediately noticed that the word "vayikra" was written with a small letter alef at the end, and he asked his grandfather for the reason.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman meditated for a while, and then told his grandson: "Adam was G-d's own handiwork, and G-d Himself testifies that his wisdom was greater than all the Heavenly angels. But Adam was aware of his own greatness and was impressed with himself, and thus he sinned with the Tree of Knowledge.

"Moshe, in contrast, also knew his own greatness, but not only did he not become impressed with himself, he was the humblest man on earth. He thought to himself that any other person who had been born with his gifts and privileges would certainly have achieved more than he did.

"With Adam, whose awareness of himself caused him to sin, his name is spelled with a large alef (Divraei Hayamim1:1). Moshe, whose awareness of himself led him to have the greatest humility, is represented by the small alef in 'vayikra.'"

If the Alter Rebbe merely wanted to teach his grandson a lesson in humility, why did he have to contrast Moshe with Adam? Wouldn't it have been enough simply to point out that the letter alef in "vayikra" was small, because Moshe considered himself small?

Based on the Alter Rebbe's interpretation, one may think that the large letter in Adam's name is meant to reflect negatively on him. Actually it's the reverse—the large letter testifies to his greatness, and represents his state before his sin, when he truly was the greatest of men, a level even higher than Moshe.

As descendants of Adam, all of us have a spark of his soul and have within us at least some share of his enormous gifts. And we need to be aware of this, because this awareness is the first step to actualizing our tremendous potential.

This is why the Alter Rebbe digresses into a discussion of Adam and the big alef. He wanted to first impress on his grandson the importance of recognizing his own greatness and potential. At the same time, he wanted to teach his grandson, the future Jewish leader, that even the greatest people must be cautious not to overrate themselves, not to overlook the gifts and contributions of others.

You can be a very humble person and consider yourself exceedingly small, but comfort yourself with the knowledge that there are others who are

This document contains words of Torah and should be treated with respect. See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 85:2

even smaller and less successful than you. This is not true humility. To be humble is not only to be aware of your own limitations, but to actively look for the good in other people, and to realize that if they had your qualities, perhaps they would have achieved even more than you. This was the type of humility that Moshe had—and the way he rectified the sin of Adam.

One of the challenges of being the parent of a child with special needs is filtering out the voices of those who try to limit your child's potential. The ones who remind you to "be realistic," to accept that she may never reach the milestones of her typical peers.

Instead, when I look at my daughter Rivka, I see a child of Adam, a child of unlimited strengths and capabilities. She probably will need no reminders not to consider herself so great—because the world will do that for her. It's up to me, and her teachers, and her peers, to actively look for the ways that she is exceptional. It's so easy to dismiss people with special needs, to only see the things they can't do. Moshe teaches us to do otherwise. It takes the greatest among us to perceive the value of the smallest.

Today, I celebrate Rivka coming into her own. It is my wish that from today forward she will say "mine!" to good deeds, to happiness, to acts of kindness and love. And she will say "no!" to wrongdoing, "no" to any voice that limits her or tells her that her life does not have the same meaning or value as others. She amazes and humbles me every day with her accomplishments, and it is the greatest gift and privilege to be her mother.

(Based on Likutei Sichot vol. 17, pp. 1-8.)

Where's the money?

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN (JNS.org 16-3-26)

There is no doubt that Jews are among the most charitable people on earth, and there are surveys and statistics to prove it. But if that's the case, then why are so many Jewish nonprofits, schools and other organizations struggling to balance their budgets?

Well, it's not going to become the fifth question at the Passover seder, but I'm afraid that the answer is all too obvious—and depressing. Most Jewish philanthropists give the bulk of their charity to non-Jewish causes.

While the Talmud does teach to support non-Jewish charities together with Jewish causes, there is no doubt that our first priority must surely be our own. Who else can we expect to do so? Non-Jews who support Jewish charities are few and far between. They are the rare exception, rather than the rule. If we won't, who will?

This week, we began reading the third of the Five Books of Moshe, Vayikra. The first chapters are all about sacrifices. In days of old, people would donate animals to the altar in the sanctuary for a variety of reasons—sin and guilt offerings for purposes of atonement, peace offerings for happy occasions and to express gratitude, etc.

Animals were worth a significant amount of money. As such, those offerings were substantial contributions to the House of G-d. Today, we write a check, pull out our credit card or even Venmo a contribution. Then, the people gave animals.

Charity today is what sacrifices were yesterday. So let's talk about donations and giving.

Some years ago, a well-known American Jewish billionaire lamented the fact that, despite there being more Jewish billionaires than ever before in history, less and less of their charity is going to Jewish causes.

According to various measures by Forbes, six of the world's 10 richest individuals are Jewish. Sadly, though, among mega-rich Americans, donations to Jewish causes represent but a very small percentage of their giving.

Yes, we can be proud that we are the most philanthropic people. But where does Jewish money go? The vast majority goes to non-Jewish causes.

Why? Mainly because of ignorance, as in a lack of knowledge, and assimilation.

Jewish institutional life simply doesn't feature in their diaries or anywhere near their list of priorities. It is just not an issue in their lives. Jewish day schools? No. Yeshivahs? Definitely not. Perhaps their own synagogue or temple might feature, if they belonged to one.

Various studies indicate that the overwhelming majority of Jewish philanthropists give to universal, rather than Jewish, organizations and causes. Statistically, Jewish mega-givers made fewer than 10% of their gifts to Jewish or Israeli organizations.

Some years ago, I was chatting with the head of New York's Jewish Federation, and he told me how proud he was that he had gotten a $1 million donation for Israel from a super-wealthy Jewish businessman. (Years ago, $1 million was indeed a lot of money. Less so in 2026.) Until he opened The New York Times the next morning and saw that the same man had just donated $9 million to Columbia University, which is a contemporary hotbed of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment.

There is no doubt whatsoever that if we all observed the 10% law of tithing to Jewish charities, no Jewish organization would be in the red!

In recent times, the rise of antisemitism has had a definite effect on Jewish philanthropy. Even secular Jews are feeling the onslaught against Israel and the Jewish people globally. Thankfully, Israel is now on their map. And so are local communal security needs.

When Harvard and other Ivy League universities infamously spoke in December 2023 about Jew-hatred depending on the "context"—just three months after the Hamas-led terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 20203, some hefty billionaires pulled their funding and instead redirected it to Jewish causes. Finally, a welcome realignment started to take shape.

They tell of a rich miser who died, and at the pearly gates, was told to take the elevator down. He was shocked. "Do you know who I am? I'm the richest man in my town. Surely, I deserve a place in heaven!"

"Yes, sir," said the angel. "But you never gave any charity, so I'm afraid you'll have to go downstairs."

"What? Charity? Wait! I remember a long time ago stopping on the street and giving 50 cents to a beggar asking for a handout."

The angel checks in the heavenly records and, sure enough, he did indeed once give a beggar 50 cents. The case was referred to the Almighty Himself, and the answer came ringing back, "Give the guy back his 50 cents, and let him go to hell!"

I'd like to ensure that my readers go to heaven. So please, get your priorities right. By all means, support general causes, but remember who you are and where your main responsibilities lie.

There is little less than two weeks before Passover. It is a time-honored tradition to help support the needy with the additional substantial costs involved in preparing for this beautiful but expensive festival.

May we always help each other. And may our people and our communal infrastructures be well looked after always.

Charity today is what the sacrifices were yesterday. And we need to prioritize.

Do Something Worthwhile

AVROHOM YAAKOV

Most of us are driven by a life cause, something that we are prepared to sacrifice time, effort and money to bring to fruition.

For some, it may be success in business or in our given profession. For others it may be how we are viewed by our peers or our community. For others, it may be family, or it could be our devotion to our Yiddishkeit.

The Torah starts the section of the various korbanos – sacrifices offered in the service of the Temple – with the words, "… if a man will bring from among you an offering to G-d; of animals, cattle or sheep you should bring your offering." (1:2)

R' Leibele Eiger interprets this statement to mean that if a person gives of himself – his body and soul – for a cause, make sure that it is a sacrifice to Hashem, to an appropriate cause.

Most people are not careful about what they devote their lives to. They make it their life goal to master computer games, or to visit every country in the world or collect stamps (no offence to philatelists intended) or similar pursuits.

The Torah says, that to make a life goal count, it should be something tied to Hashem.

As we are ephemeral creations, if we don't connect our life pursuits to G-d, then they too will likely be fleeting and not outlive us. Connecting to G-d ensures that our activities are not for naught.

More Elusive Than Loch Ness Monster

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

"He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf."(1:4)

More elusive than the Loch Ness monster or the Yeti is a species called the Self-Made Man.

Reports of his existence are frequent, but to date he has never been positively identified.

A typical reported sighting: Morris is one of the biggest corporate stock whizzes on Wall Street. He is the president of Engulf Inc., one of the top Fortune 500 companies. But did Fortune really give him his success? Maybe it came from elsewhere?

Morris gets up every morning at four thirty and works almost without a break till late every night.

But did Morris give himself this strength, this drive, or maybe it came from somewhere else?

Bankruptcy courts are littered with financial whizzes. And even those who make it to the top, can, in a few seconds, succumb to a heart attack, and the president of Engulf Inc. suddenly becomes a statistic in a study on heart disease.

When we're successful, it's all too easy to pat ourselves on the back and congratulate ourselves on how clever we are.

"He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf."

The act of pressing one's hand onto the sacrifice teaches us humility. As the person leans onto the animal, he recognizes that all his actions, all his successes, come only from relying on Hashem - from 'leaning' on Him. In other words, we bring ourselves, acknowledging that we are never 'self-made'.

Just as the atonement depends on Hashem accepting the sacrifice, so too, our success depends on Divine approval. Thus, even as we strive for security or victory when fighting our enemies, we place our trust not in our hand, but in Hashem who accepts our offering and guides us to victory and freedom.

Even when Israel's security seems strong, we must never forget Who it is that fights our battles.

Soulful Offerings

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

Parshas Vayikra opens with the laws of the Korban Olah, a volunteered offering with a variety of options, depending on one's financial status. The wealthier individual could bring cattle, a less wealthy person, sheep, an even poorer individual could bring a turtledove. For the most destitute individual who would like to offer something but has no money for even a turtledove, the Torah commands: "When a nefesh, a soul, offers a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; he shall pour oil upon it and place frankincense upon it" (Vayikra 2:1). Rashi adds a comment: "Nowhere is the word nefesh used in connection with free-will offerings except in connection with the meal-offering. For who is it that usually brings a meal-offering? The poor man! The Holy One, blessed be He, says, as it were, I will regard it for him as though he brought his very soul as an offering" (Menachos,104b).

The Chasam Sofer asks both a poignant and practical question. The price of fine flour is more expensive than that of a turtledove! So why is the fine flour offering the option meted for the poorest person, and why isn't the one who brings the turtledove considered as if he gave his soul?

It was only a few days before Passover when a man entered the home of Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soleveitchik of Brisk, known as the Bais Halevi. The man had a look of constant nation on his face.

"Rabbi he pleaded. I have a very difficult question. Is one allowed to fulfill his obligation of the four cups of wine with and other liquid? Would one would be able to fulfill his obligation with four cups of milk?" The Bais Halevi looked up at the man and began to think.

"My son," he said, "that is a very difficult question. I will look into the matter. But until then I have an idea. I would like to give you some money in order for you to purchase four cups of wine for you and your family."

The Bais Halevi, then took out a large sum of money, far more than necessary for a few bottles of wine, and handed it to the man who took it with extreme gratitude and relief.

One of the attendants who helped Rabbi Soleveitchik with his chores was quite shocked at the exorbitant amount of money that his rebbe gave the man.

He gathered the nerve to ask. "I, too, understood from the man's question that he needed to buy wine for the seder and could not afford more than the milk he was able to get from his cow. But why did you give him so much money? You gave him not only enough for wine, but four an entire meal with meat!"

Rabbi Soleveitchik smiled. "That, my dear student is exactly the point! If a man asks if he can fulfill his obligation of the four cups of wine with milk, then obviously he cannot have meat at the seder. That in turn means that not only can he not afford wine, he cannot afford meat or fowl! So not only did I gave him money for wine, I gave him money for a meat as well!"

The Chasam Sofer tells us that we have to ponder the circumstances and put the episode in perspective. The poorest man he who cannot even afford a lowly bird — has a form of Torah welfare. It is called leket, shikcha and peah — the poorest and most destitute are entitle to grain left behind in field. And from that grain, which was not even bought, the man can make fine flour. When that individual decides to remove the grain from his very own table and offer that grain to the Almighty, he is considered giving his soul. True, a bird may cost less, but to the poorest man, even the bird costs more than the grain he received gratis. However, when he takes those kernels and gives from them, he is offering his very soul!

Often we try to assess contributions and commitments based on monetary value. It is an inaccurate evaluation, for a wealthy man may give time which is harder for him to given than his money. A musician may give of his skill, despite aching fingers or a splitting headache. The Torah tells us that when we assess the needs of a poor man, or anyone who gives, don't look at the wallet. Look at the whole person. And the way to do that is to look at the soul person.

Pass the Salt

RABBI JAY KELMAN (TorahinMotion.org)

Modern man finds the notion of sacrifices primitive, archaic and a form of Divine service that is no longer necessary. Yet to ancient man, nothing came more naturally than offering sacrifices to G-d. Cain and Hevel, Noach and Abraham instinctively offered sacrifices to G-d, without being commanded to do so.

A korban is a mechanism for coming closer to G-d, an idea that is alluded to in its very name, coming from the root "karev", to be close. The korban—whether offered as thanksgiving for our blessings, to revive our bond with G-d after separation caused by sin, or to mark special occasions both personal and national—always linked our physical beings to a transcendent G-d.

The essence of korbanot is the elevation and sanctification of our physical beings. Eating is transformed into a spiritual act, a way of connecting to G-d and our fellow man. A korban is a barbeque with a spiritual angle to it. Wine and bread, nesachim and menachot, were often added to the festive meal. One might celebrate a business deal with friends, good food and drink at the Temple in Jerusalem. We would thereby acknowledge G-d's guiding hand in our material success, and share our bounty with our fellow Jews. Holiday time would bring all Jews together to celebrate with such delicacies as barbequed lamb on seder night. And those parts of the korban which were not to be eaten taught us than there must be limits to our pursuit of physical pleasures.

With the destruction of the Temple, the crucial experiential aspect of celebrating at the Temple was lost. Our Sages tried to recreate the Temple experience through our shuls and our homes, representing both the communal and the private korbanot. Through such activities as the ritual washing of hands, and more importantly, hachnasat orchim, hosting needy guests, our tables are transformed into altars at which taking care of our most basic needs is a way of becoming closer to G-d.

Perhaps the most famous Temple practice that has found its way into our homes is putting salt on our bread. "And every meal offering you shall season with salt. Do not leave out the salt of your covenant with G-d, brit melech, from your meal offerings; on all your sacrifices you shall offer salt" (Vayikra 2:13). The Sefer Hachinuch explains simply that salt adds taste to food, and to offer a sacrifice lacking flavour would be inappropriate.

In addition to the above symbolic meaning of salt, there is a historical lesson regarding salt to which the Torah alludes. "And his [Lot's] wife looked behind him and she was turned into a pillar of salt" (Breisheet 19:26). Sedom was a city in which it was illegal to help others; the Torah's description of the Sedomite attack on Lot's home because he hosted strangers is indicative of a way of life that had to be destroyed. Sedom was a place where "the people were wicked and sinful to G-d very much" (Breisheet 13:13).

One cannot establish a relationship with G-d without developing one with our fellow man. It is for this reason that our prophets, time and time again, castigated the Jews for bringing meaningless sacrifices: sacrifices accompanied by continued oppression of the poor, corruption and an unwillingness to truly repent. G-d, our prophets tell us, despises such empty ritual and meaningless sacrifices (see, for example, Isaiah Chapter 1).

The salting of our korbanot reminds us of the need to create a society based on the principles of righteousness and justice, the antithesis of Sedom. It was specifically these qualities that served as the basis of G-d's choice of Abraham to establish a great nation. "I have given him special attention so that he will command his children and his household after him and they will keep G-d's ways doing righteousness and justice" (Breisheet 18:19).

Jewish law states that after partaking of a meal and before benching we must wash our hands to rid ourselves of "the salt of Sedom" (Hulin 105b). Our eating is elevated into a seudat mitzvah as we wash away the

self-centeredness and smugness of Sedom, replacing it with concern for the welfare of our neighbours.
The bringing of korbanot, paralleled nowadays in our prayers, is meant not to cause us to dwell on the past but to demonstrate our commitment towards working for a better future. As Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch notes, korbanot are described by the Torah as a reaich nichoach, a sweet aroma. Just as a pleasant aroma alerts us to something pleasant ahead, so too must the korbanot foreshadow an improved person. May we merit the bringing of such korbanot.

News & Views

Webinar led by UN staff advised boycotting Israel

MIKE WAGENHEIM (JNS.org 17-3-26)
An anti-Israel group of current and former U.N. staff members held a webinar earlier this month during regular work hours about "training on advocacy and persuasion for the human rights of Palestinians."
United Staff for Gaza, which used to be called and, in several places, is still listed as "UN Staff for Gaza," sponsored the afternoon training session on March 4.
Aleksandra Risteska, a New York-based U.N. program management officer and one of the webinar organizers, said that it "has not always been easy to walk the line between abiding by U.N. staff rules and regulations while speaking up about what should be, at its core, really grave human rights violations."
"But, of course, in reality, we all see how these issues are being politicized," Risteska added. "We know that many colleagues share this concern, which has led us to partner with Bystanders No More to help fine-tune our tools for advocacy and persuasion."
United Staff for Gaza said that about 140 people attended the webinar, which is posted on its website.
The group brought on Bystanders No More, a purported volunteer group that promotes boycotting Israel, to help webinar attendees learn to persuade what it calls the "movable middle" to take action.
Jess Blijkers, a former Amnesty International administrator, led the webinar for Bystanders No More and advised attendees to find "passive allies," who "sit close to institutional decision-makers." That, Blijkers said, includes a trustee, who "might be able to trigger the review of hundreds of millions in investments" or a procurement officer, who "might be able to shift entire supply chains just by asking the right questions or challenging in the right place."
Adam Fifield, a former deputy director at the U.N. Children's Fund, told attendees to cite Jews who agree with them when pushing back on charges of antisemitism for their anti-Israel activity.
"I often reference Israeli-American Holocaust scholar Omer Bartov," Fifield said. "He's one of at least a half dozen Israeli Holocaust scholars who's determined that what's happening in Gaza is a genocide."
Fifield also used Jewish Voice for Peace, an ardent anti-Zionist group, as an example, along with "Jews Against Genocide." The latter is apparently a Facebook page linked to a loosely-affiliated WordPress site that promotes material from antisemitic publications, such as Mondoweiss and the Hamas-linked Palestine Chronicle.
"Their voices show that criticism of the Israeli government is not antisemitism, and you can name the fact that there's a clear and troubling pattern of false accusations of antisemitism being used to silence criticism and debate," Fifiled said. "And that these false allegations also dilute and undermine the fight against real antisemitism, and in so doing, make Jewish people less safe everywhere."
Multiple speakers tried to guide attendees, who work for the United Nations, on how to avoid getting caught for running afoul of the organization's staff rules and regulations about neutrality. (JNS sought comment from António Guterres, U.N. secretary-general.)
The United Nations standards of conduct for international civil servants advise against taking sides or expressing convictions publicly on controversial matters.
Sara Chahin Agosta, a Beirut-based program manager in the U.N. International Organization for Migration, whose LinkedIn profile calls for sanctions against Israel, described an initiative "under the umbrella of what we do at IOM."
Agosta detailed a campaign asking the administration of the U.N. agency that employs her to cancel partnerships with organizations listed in a report by Francesca Albanese, U.N. special rapporteur for the Palestinians, whom Washington has sanctioned for making antisemitic remarks and, in that report, for bullying American companies and organizations with ties to Israel.
The U.N. International Organization for Migration program manager also recounted an event organized with U.N. colleagues in Rome last November, in which Albanese encouraged U.N. employees, according to Agosta, to "make sure that we do not work in silos and only focus on our mandate but understand that, especially in the context of occupied Palestinian territories, all the mandates are interlinked."
Lourdes Orlando, a Rome-based food policy officer at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, also spoke during the webinar.
She said that as a U.N. consultant or staff member, "there is no limitation" on "reaching out to your colleagues and to your friends and kind of working at this collective education."
She added that attendees should "try to find a network" for their advocacy. "There are a lot of us in the U.N., and, of course, we're acting in our technical capacity," she said.
UN Staff for Gaza was formed in August 2025. It said that it aims to "speak out against the atrocities perpetrated against the Palestinian people in Gaza."
It says that it is a "private association, neither formally affiliated with nor endorsed by the United Nations."
Among its first appointments was Maher Nasser, U.N. assistant secretary-general for global communications, who, it says, is taking part "in his private capacity" as a senior adviser to the group.
Reuters reported that U.N. staff representatives received a confidential management note on Sept. 17 asking them to stay impartial on the Gaza conflict.
Catherine Pollard, U.N. under-secretary-general for management strategy, policy and compliance, wrote that "I want to remind you that staff associations should not organize or promote activities that may be perceived as political in nature," Reuters reported.

If Jewish "progressives" had their way, scores of children would have been murdered at Temple Israel yesterday

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 13-3-26)
From all reports of the horrific terror attack at Temple Israel in Michigan yesterday, a bloodbath was averted because of the professional, armed security that the synagogue had in place.
In all likelihood this was partially funded, directly or indirectly through Jewish Federations, by the Department of Homeland Security.
But "progressive Jews" don't like synagogues to be protected by armed guards.
An April 2024 open letter to Congress signed by pseudo-Jewish organizations like the Jewish Voice for Peace, IfNotNow, Bend the Arc, Jews For Racial & Economic Justice, Synagogues Rising and others insisted that the best way to protect synagogues - which, they claim, are only threated by white supremacy - is through "Community Based, Non-Carceral Approaches."
Their "plan" is to partner with other groups and somehow that would stop Hezbollah-aligned actors or Islamist terrorists from targeting Jews.
They call it "safety through solidarity."
Really.
Oh, by the way, they hate the word "terrorist" altogether, saying
We refuse to see our family members and friends (or anyone) labeled as "terrorists" or on the "path to radicalization." We demand community-based, non-carceral safety approaches that leave no one in our communities behind, and actively challenge our society's reliance on criminalization and surveillance.
See? No one is a terrorist, they are just misunderstood well-meaning people. Including someone driving a car with bombs and guns into a synagogue and preschool.
If only the guards gave Ayman Mohamad Ghazali flowers and an invitation to an iftar meal after he crashed into the building, all would have ended up well. How dare they use guns, treating him like a criminal!
So when you see empty statements of sadness from JVP or Bend the Arc, remember - if Temple Israel had listened to them, there would have been carnage.

The Danger of 'Trump Derangement Syndrome'

MAJID RAFIZADEH (GateStoneInstitute.org 14-3-26)

If one steps back from the daily noise of partisan bickering and looks at the broader picture in the United States today, some media outlets and political figures appear so consumed by hostility toward the current president that they seem incapable of evaluating events rationally.

Their reaction to almost anything he does appears automatic and reflexive. This situation, often described as "Trump Derangement Syndrome," has reached such an extreme level that at times these voices appear to be siding — whether intentionally or not — with America's enemies such as the Chinese Communist Party, or the Iranian regime, which, since its inception in 1979, has openly been at war with the United States and for decades has been described by American officials across both political parties as the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism 39 years in a row.

The result is a political discourse that seems disconnected from what is right or wrong, but simply whether something was done by President Donald J. Trump.

This disagreement has gone far beyond normal political discord. In any healthy democracy, political leaders and policies can and should be debated and criticized. What we are witnessing now in some corners of the political and media landscape, however, appears to have crossed over into something closer to emotional obsession than rational debate. It is as if the guiding principle has become: if Trump does something, it must automatically be wrong. The logic and context behind the action become irrelevant. Instead of asking whether confronting a hostile regime might serve American interests or international security, the reaction becomes instant opposition, regardless of the circumstances or the stakes involved.

The Iranian regime, for instance, has for decades openly defined itself through hostility toward the United States and its allies. Its leaders have repeatedly chanted "Death to America" ("The Great Satan") and "Death to Israel" ("The Little Satan"), slogans that are not merely rhetorical flourishes but actual central elements of the regime's ideological identity. Iranian leaders, starting with the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, have openly called for the obliteration of Israel and have supported armed groups across the Middle East that target both Israelis and Americans.

Since 1984, the US government — under both Republican and Democrat administrations — has officially designated Iran as a State Sponsor of Terrorism for its support of terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Houthis; its involvement in attacks across the region and attempted attacks abroad, including involvement in the 9/11 attacks and at least two attempted assassinations on Trump, as well as targeting senior US officials for assasination in his first term.

Iran's regime has killed countless Americans, and continues to pursue policies designed to weaken American influence in the Middle East. It is a regime that has repeatedly demonstrated hostility toward the United States and its allies.

Yet when Trump took a hard stance against Tehran, instead of focusing on the nature of the Iranian regime itself, some critics appeared to focus exclusively on the identity of the president who was confronting it. The issue became less about Iran and more about Trump. His actions, rather than being evaluated on their merits, were filtered through the lens of political hostility. Whatever he does must be greeted with skepticism or condemned.

The hypocrisy is difficult to overlook. Many of the same political movements and advocacy groups that strongly emphasize women's rights and human rights have historically ignored Iran's state abuse of women and dissidents. For decades, Iranian authorities have imposed severe restrictions on women's freedoms, violently suppressed protests, and imprisoned journalists, activists, and political opponents. Tens of thousands of Iranians have been arrested, tortured, or murdered for challenging the regime's authority or for demanding basic freedoms.

Yet, when Trump confronts this very regime, the focus shifts away from the Iranian regime's actions and instead centers entirely on condemning Trump himself. The atrocities committed by the regime fade into the background.

Imagine how different the reaction might be under a different administration. Media coverage might emphasize Iran's human rights abuses, its repression of women, and its support for terrorist groups. Analysts would speak about defending human rights, protecting allies, and standing up to authoritarian governments. The policy would likely be framed as a necessary response to the brutal regime developing nuclear weapons and being a dangerous global threat.

When opposition to a political figure becomes absolute, every action that person takes must be opposed. The debate ceases to be about facts or moral principles and instead becomes a contest of political identity.

Critics who once spoke passionately about human rights abuses in Iran now appear unwilling to acknowledge them when doing so might align them with a policy pursued by Trump. Advocacy for women's rights, democracy, and freedom becomes selectively applied, filtered through the lens of domestic political rivalry.

In the end, the greatest danger of this mindset is not simply unfair criticism of a president. The deeper problem is that it weakens the ability of society to confront serious threats. When political hatred becomes so intense that it overrides basic judgment, it becomes difficult to distinguish between legitimate criticism and reflexive opposition. Perception of reality itself is broken.

At a moment when the world faces overwhelming security challenges – such as from China – currently developing new deadly pathogens for biowarfare and autonomous robots programmed to kill -- and authoritarian regimes that continue to threaten both their own populations and what they regard as their enemies -- denial and blindness carry serious risks.

Democracies function best when their debates are grounded in facts and reason rather than emotional reflexes. If political discourse becomes so polarized that people can no longer recognize the nature of regimes that repress their own citizens and openly threaten the United States and the Free World, the problem is far larger than any single president. It becomes a crisis that can only be addressed when people step outside their partisan bubbles and confront reality as it truly is.

Europe Should Thank Israel for the Fall of Assad

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 13-3-26)

For years, Israel conducted a sustained campaign against Iranian military infrastructure in Syria. The stated purpose was narrow: prevent the transfer of advanced weapons to Hezbollah. That mission was largely accomplished. But the cumulative effect was broader — a systematic degradation of the military value of the real estate Iran was trying to occupy. Israel made it difficult for the IRGC to act with impunity in Syria. And Israel's rout of Hezbollah helped bring about Assad's fall.

Europe, which had little to say about any of this, was among the primary beneficiaries. And it should be thanking Israel.

In 2015, Iran announced a self-imposed 2,000 km ceiling on its ballistic missile range. Iranian officials presented this as a measured, responsible posture — 2,000 km was sufficient to cover Israel, American bases in the Gulf, and every Arab capital. There was no need, they said, for longer-range systems.

Western analysts accepted this framing with varying degrees of skepticism. European governments, in particular, found it useful. At 2,000 km from Iran, Paris is safe. Berlin is safe. Rome is safe. The limit meant that whatever Iran was doing with its missile program, it was a Middle Eastern problem, not a European one.

The problem is that the limit was fiction from the start — a diplomatic construct rather than a technical reality.

Iran already operates two systems that exceed it. The Soumar cruise missile — a reverse-engineered descendant of twelve Soviet Kh-55 missiles illegally sold to Iran by Ukraine in 2001 — has an assessed range of approximately 2,500 km. (Iran initially claimed 3,000 km for the system at its 2015 unveiling before walking that back under scrutiny.) Multiple Western assessments, including the CSIS Missile Threat Project, place the Soumar's real capability at 2,000–2,500 km, with some intelligence assessments extending that to 3,000 km depending on configuration.

The Khorramshahr ballistic missile is officially rated at 2,000 km — but only when carrying its full 1,500 kg warhead. Analysts at IISS and CSIS have long noted that reducing the payload to approximately 750 kg would extend the Khorramshahr's range to roughly 3,000 km. Iran chose the heavy warhead configuration to stay within its declared limit. The propulsion capability to exceed it was always there.

The "2,000 km limit" was not a constraint on what Iran could build. It was a constraint on what Iran chose to declare — calibrated precisely to keep Western Europe feeling safe.

Now consider what changes when you move the launch point from central Iran to Syria's northwestern Mediterranean coast — the Latakia region, heart of Assad's Alawite base. The distance from central Iran to Latakia is approximately 1,500 km. That shift, applied to Iran's real capabilities rather than its declared ones, produces a threat map that covers nearly the entire European continent.

This shows the range from northwestern Syria to Europe at 2,500 and 3,000 km, as well as the range from northwestern Iran to Europe at 2,500 km.

Iran has announced, but not publicly tested, the Soumar cruise missile family which is said to have a 2,500 km range largely invisible to radar as it hugs the ground. At 2,500 km from the Syrian coast, the threat envelope covers Athens, Sofia, Bucharest, Belgrade, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Warsaw, Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, and Rome. This is most of the European Union, including much of Germany — the continent's largest economy and the political anchor of NATO's eastern flank.

The Soumar and its variants use mobile transporter-erector-launchers — trucks that can be dispersed, hidden, and relocated between firing positions. Northwestern Syria, with its mountainous coastal range behind Latakia, is precisely the terrain suited to this kind of dispersal. This would make them harder to eliminate.

The Khorramshahr ballistic missile can reach 3,000 km with a reduced payload. At 3,000 km from the Syrian coast, the threat envelope expands to include Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Luxembourg, Bern, and Oslo — effectively the entirety of the European Union.

A ballistic missile traveling from Syria to Paris in under fifteen minutes, even with a "smaller" 750 kg warhead, is a serious threat in its own right.

Israel spent a decade ensuring that if Assad ever fell, Iran could not simply move into the resulting vacuum with a ready-to-use forward platform on the Mediterranean coast. That outcome served Israel's immediate security interests directly. It also quietly served the security interests of every European capital within the rings on this map.

European governments, across left and right, spent much of the 2013–2024 period expressing concern about Israeli military operations in Syria. These operations, they argued, risked escalation, violated sovereignty, and destabilized the region. European diplomats made statements at the UN. Human rights organizations issued reports. By 2023, some European governments were beginning to advocate for a degree of Syrian rehabilitation — a return of Assad to regional standing, a normalization of the regime's relationships with Western-aligned Arab states.

The Anti-War Argument Is Actually a Pro-War Argument

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 13-3-26)

Before the US and Israeli airstrikes, opponents of military action against Iran made a vivid and consistent case for restraint. Attack Iran, they warned, and it will close the Strait of Hormuz, unleash its proxies across the region, strike American bases, target civilian infrastructure in allied countries, and drag the entire Middle East into chaos. The retaliation would be massive, indiscriminate, and impossible to control.

They were right.

Since Operation Epic Fury began, Iran has attacked civilian infrastructure in Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Jordan, Turkey, and Cyprus. It struck a British military base. It hit airports and embassies and hotels across the region. It continued firing after its own president publicly declared it would stop. Nearly every catastrophic prediction the anti-war camp made has come to pass.

But follow the logic.

Even the doves knew — and their warnings made clear they believed — that Iran is not a rational actor responsive to logic and incentives. It cannot be reliably deterred, cannot be trusted to honor agreements, and will use any available instrument of coercion to cause maximum harm. Some of them will acknowledge privately what the regime states publicly: that Iran's leadership genuinely believes it is hastening a divine apocalypse, that chaos serves a theological purpose, that the Mahdi arrives when the world burns. This is an eschatological project with ballistic missiles.

If that picture is accurate — and the last two weeks have done nothing to contradict it — then it is an argument for early confrontation, not endless patience. Because every year of patience was a year Iran added to its arsenal. Iran was producing over 100 ballistic missiles per month against the six or seven interceptors the US could manufacture in the same period. That gap compounds. An irrational actor that is also becoming militarily untouchable is not a problem that diplomacy resolves; it is a crisis that diplomacy defers until the moment of maximum danger.

The anti-war logic, followed to its own conclusion, is a pro-war logic. It establishes that Iran is dangerous, unpredictable, possibly theologically motivated, and immune to the kind of rational calculation that makes deterrence work. Having established all of that, it then argues for giving such an actor more time, more missiles, more infrastructure, and eventually the conventional umbrella behind which it completes a nuclear program.

The conclusion doesn't follow from the premises. It contradicts them. If Iran is irrational, and it is getting more powerful, then the only rational choice is to stop it earlier rather than later.

Even without the theological argument, Iran's actions appear designed to cause enough economic pain and regional disruption that pressure mounts on Western governments to stop the war. Iran is threatening to crash the global economy if it doesn't get what it wants.

But think about what that means going forward. If Iran is willing to use the threat of closing the Strait of Hormuz today, it can use that same threat tomorrow. And the day after. A nuclear-armed Iran with a vastly larger missile arsenal could hold that sword over the world's head indefinitely — not as a wartime desperation measure, but as a permanent feature of the geopolitical landscape. Every Western government, every moderate Arab state, every global shipping route would live permanently under the veto of a regime that both the hawks and doves describe as irrational, apocalyptic, and unappeasable.

Why would anyone give an irrational actor the keys to a sports car he has already promised to crash if he doesn't get what he demands?

The anti-war camp warned us exactly what Iran would do. The lesson they should have drawn — and that events are now teaching — is that you don't wait for such an actor to become more powerful. You act while the cost is still bearable.

Imagine what that would have meant today. Iran is already shooting missiles in Turkish airspace. US bases in Germany and elsewhere in Europe would have been easily within range if Assad was still in power.

European governments are not going to issue statements thanking Israel for military operations they officially criticized. The diplomatic architecture does not permit it, and the domestic politics of most European countries make any such statement impossible.

But the arithmetic does not require a diplomatic statement. The map does not need a press release. It simply requires that the question be asked: where would those missiles be today, if Assad were still in power — and if Israel had not spent a decade making sure they were never safely emplaced?

Oct. 7 was the beginning of the end for Tehran

JOEL GRIFFITH & ALIS HOLCOMB (JNS.org 12-3-26)

Iran stood at the peak of its power on Oct. 7, 2023. For decades, the Islamic Republic armed, trained and funded Hamas. On this day, the terrorist organization inflicted the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Hamas gunned down young concert-goers in an open field, dragged children dragged from their beds and massacred residents in 21 communities dotting southern Israel. Hamas murdered more than 1,200 innocent men, women and children—some burned alive or beheaded—including 46 Americans. Another 251 were taken hostage, 85 never to return.

Israel, a nation that had built its security doctrine on anticipating its enemies, had been caught off-guard. It was Israel's 9/11, just larger in scale. The mullahs of Tehran were jubilant. Now Israel would be forced to fight a war with hostages held ransom on a stage with many nations and media eager to disparage the Jewish state and rooting for Israel to lose.

In the days after Oct. 7, the Iranian regime's murderous schemes appeared ascendant. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei failed to understand that Oct. 7 would mean the unraveling of his regime and a death sentence for him a little more than two years later.

Oct. 7 caused a reckoning long postponed by the West. Iran and its network of terrorist proxies—the so-called "Axis of Resistance"—could not be ignored. The Houthis, encouraged and funded by Iran, threw international shipping in the Red Sea into chaos, putting immense pressure on the U.S. Navy. Hezbollah, the most capable of Iran's proxies, made its move on Israel's northern border with Lebanon. The Gulf state Qatar cynically played both sides, negotiating with Hamas for hostages while still allowing Hamas to maintain its headquarters in Doha. The international community demanded little accountability from Qatar in return. It was as if Neville Chamberlain had arisen from his grave.

But through brutal and incessant fighting, Israel re-established itself as a nation with the resilience, resolve and wherewithal to defend itself. After dismantling Hamas's military infrastructure in Gaza through grinding urban combat, Israel pulled off one of the most surgical, targeted counterterrorism attacks in history with a meticulously coordinated strike on Hezbollah through compromised pagers and walkie-talkies. This single operation effectively—and sometimes, perhaps literally—decapitated Hezbollah's leadership.

Iran's nuclear ambitions proved to be its undoing.

Last summer, Iran was dangerously close to acquiring a nuclear weapon. It

had already enriched its uranium to a 60% threshold. This arduous process complete, the ability to reach weapons-grade enrichment could be accomplished in about a week. Within months, a nuclear bomb could have been constructed with this material. Israel struck first and decisively, starting a war that lasted 12 days, with the United States stepping in to deliver the final blow: B-2 bombers that demolished three of Iran's hardened nuclear facilities, severely setting back its weapons program.

Yet even after the major military setback, the Iranian regime remained undeterred from its mission to obtain a nuclear weapon and continue its aggressive ballistic-missile program. When hundreds of thousands Iranian people bravely took to the streets in December, the regime responded with lethal force, extinguishes the lives of tens of thousands of Iran's own people The mullah-led regime that has chanted "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!" since the 1979 Iranian Revolution will not be impeded in its mission to destroy the West, even with losses on the battlefield and mass outcries at home.

For years, successive administrations operated under a grand illusion that Tehran's aggression was transactional, that economic relief might moderate a theocratic regime whose very identity is built on defeating the West. The years-long pursuit of nuclear deals rested on this flawed assumption. Oct. 7 changed that view. The clerics who orchestrated the seizure of the American embassy in 1979 and held Americans hostage for 444 days are the ideological forebears of those who bankrolled the Hamas massacre 44 years later. The regime has not changed; only its weapons have grown more dangerous.

The record speaks for itself.

In April 1983, an Iran-backed suicide bomber destroyed the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people, including 17 Americans. Months later, Hezbollah operatives—directed and equipped by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—drove a truck bomb into the U.S. Marine barracks at Beirut International Airport, killing 241 American service members and 58 French paratroopers in a single morning.

The bombings of the Khobar Towers, the U.S. embassies in East Africa and the USS Cole followed over the next two decades, all with Iranian fingerprints. Despite more than 40 years of sustained, state-sponsored terrorism against Americans, some naively still thought diplomatic engagement might work. After Oct. 7, this gullibility toward the threat of nuclear-armed Iran began to wane. In the aftermath of this summer's limited strikes against Iran's nuclear-weapons program, it became clear that Iran would not abandon its work in seeking the destruction of Israel and America.

Unchecked, Iran will threaten civilization with ballistic missiles and one or more nuclear weapons. In sponsoring the perpetrators of Oct. 7, the Islamic Republic made clear the dangers of deferring action against them. Tehran's funding of its terrorist proxies, nuclear weapons brinkmanship and contempt for human life necessitated its own destruction.

Kosher & Halacha Korner

The following article may be at variance to local Kashrus Agencies. When in doubt, contact your local reputable Agency. In Australia, direct any questions to info@kosher.org.au or visit www.kosher.org.au

Pesach Issues

RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT (Torah.org)

Question: Is it halachically acceptable to celebrate Pesach away from home after selling one's home with all of its chametz contents to a non-Jew?

Discussion: Anyone who owns chametz is obligated to get rid of it before Pesach begins. This can be accomplished in one of two ways: By destroying it1 or by selling it [or giving it away] to a non-Jew. 2 Either way, one fulfills his basic obligation and does not transgress the Biblical injunction against owning any chametz.

But there is something else to consider: The Rabbis obligated each person to search for chametz on the night before Pesach. [If one leaves town before that time, he is still obligated to search for chametz the night before he leaves, although no blessing is recited for that search.] In the opinion of many poskim, the search for chametz is obligatory whether or not one owns his chametz by the time Pesach arrives, since once the rabbinic ordinance was enacted, it cannot be abrogated regardless of the circumstances. 3 Consequently, selling the house to a non-Jew does not free one from his personal obligation to search for chametz. A solution4 to this problem is to set aside one room in the house, even a small one, and not sell it to the non-Jew along with the rest of the house. That room should be cleaned for Pesach and thoroughly searched for chametz on the night before Pesach, with the proper blessing recited for the bedikah5. One who will have already gone out of town by the night before Pesach should follow the same procedure on the night before he leaves—but he may not recite a blessing on the bedikah.

Question: How extensive does the search for chametz have to be? How is it possible to thoroughly search a whole house in a short period of time?

Discussion: Halachically speaking, an extensive and thorough search is required in any place where chametz may have been brought during the past year. 6 Since it is almost impossible to properly check an entire house in a short period of time, some people actually spend many hours checking and searching their houses on the night of bedikas chametz, often devoting a good part of the night to the bedikah. 7 But most people cannot—or do not—spend so much time searching their homes for chametz. How, then, do they fulfill this obligation?

Several poskim find justification (limud zechus) for the laxer version of bedikas chametz, as the house has undergone many weeks of meticulous pre-Pesach cleaning and scrubbing and there is no vestige of chametz around. Once the rooms of the house have been cleaned, they may be halachically considered as "a place into which no chametz has been brought." While checking and searching is still required in order to ascertain that no spot in the house was overlooked, the search need not be as thorough and exacting as if no cleaning had been done.[8]

A better suggestion—for those who do not do a meticulous search on the night before Pesach—is to do partial searches earlier. As soon as a certain area in the house is cleaned, the area should be carefully checked for chametz—either at night using a flashlight or in the daytime by natural light. The wife or an older child can be entrusted with this search. If the house is checked in stages, then an exhaustive search need not be repeated on the night before Pesach in the areas that were already checked, provided that it is certain that no new chametz was carried into those areas. 9

Question: Is it permitted to get a haircut or do laundry on erev Pesach after midday (chatzos)?

Discussion: It is forbidden to do melachah, "work," even if it is needed for Yom Tov, on erev Pesach after chatzos. Two10 basic reasons are given for this rabbinic prohibition: 1) When the Beis ha-Mikdash stood, erev Pesach was considered a Yom Tov, since the Korban Pesach was brought on that day. It retains the status of Yom Tov today even though the Korban Pesach is no longer offered. 11 2) To give everyone a chance to properly prepare for the Seder. [12]

Certain forms of personal grooming and certain households chores that are halachically classified as "work" are forbidden to be done on erev Pesach after chatzos. Thus it is forbidden to get a haircut or a shave, 13 to sew new clothing14 or to do laundry15 on erev Pesach after chatzos. One must arrange his schedule so that these tasks are completed before midday. L'chatchilah, one should even cut his nails before chatzos. 16 If, b'diavad, one could not or did not take care of these matters before midday, some of them may still be done while others may not: sewing or completing the sewing of new clothes may not be done at all; a haircut and shave may be taken only at a non-Jewish barber; laundry may be done only by a non-Jewish maid or dry cleaner. [17] Other chores, such as ironing clothes, 18 polishing shoes, cutting nails, sewing buttons and other minor mending, [19] may be done with no restrictions.

Question: What should be done if a package containing chametz arrives at one's home or business during Pesach?

Discussion: One who knows or suspects that the package may contain actual chametz may not assume ownership of the package. If he can refuse to accept the package, he should do so. If he cannot, he should not bring it into his house or yard and should have specific halachic intent not to "acquire" the chametz. The package is considered "ownerless"—anyone who wants it is free to take it.

If the package was mistakenly brought into the home or business, one must have specific intent not to "acquire" it. One may not touch the actual chametz. 20 If the package comes on Chol ha-Moed, the chametz should be immediately discarded, either by burning it or by flushing it down the toilet. If it comes on Shabbos or Yom Tov, it should be put aside21 and covered until it can be discarded.

Sources:

1. By eating it, burning it, flushing it down the toilet, or throwing it in a river.

2. This is a complex halachic procedure which can only be administered by an experienced rabbi.

3. See O.C. 436:3 and Mishnah Berurah 27 and 32.

4. Another possible solution [for people who are away for Pesach and are staying at another person's home] is for the guest to "rent" from his host—with a valid kinyan—the room in which he is staying, and search for chametz in that room; Maharsham 3:291. But other poskim prefer not to rely on this solution; see Shevet ha-Levi 4:44.

5. Siddur Pesach K'hilchaso 12:1.

6. O.C. 333:3.

7. Several gedolim, among them the Gaon of Vilna, the Chasam Sofer and the Brisker Rav, were reported to have spent a good part of the night searching their homes for chametz.

8. Sha'arei Teshuvah 433:2; Da'as Torah 433:2; Chochmas Shelomo 433:11; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Mevakshei Torah Ohr Efrayim, pg. 532); Kinyan Torah 2:122; The basic idea is quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 432:12.

9. Siddur Pesach K'hilchaso 13:1.

10. See Pnei Yehoshua (Pesachim 50a) for a third reason for this prohibition.

11. Mishnah Berurah 468:1.

12. Beiur Halachah 468:1. According to this reason, even when erev Pesach falls on Shabbos it is forbidden to do work on Friday.

13. Mishnah Berurah 468:5.

14. Rama, O.C. 468:2.

15. Mishnah Berurah 468:7.

16. Mishnah Berurah 468:5. Although a minority view recommends that one shower/bathe and polish his shoes before chatzos as well, this was not accepted by most poskim.

17. Mishnah Berurah 468:7. Towels and children's clothing which became dirty (or were discovered to be dirty) after chatzos and are going to be needed during Yom Tov may be machine-washed even by a Jew.

18. Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 2, pg. 56, quoting an oral ruling by the Chazon Ish.

19. Rama, O.C. 468:2 and Mishnah Berurah 8. Lengthening and shortening a hem is also permitted.

20. Mishnah Berurah 446:10.

21. The chametz is severe muktzeh and may not be moved for any reason; O.C. 446:1. Some poskim add that it may not even be moved with one's body or foot, even though other types of severe muktzeh may be; L'horos Nassan 5:30.

Candles (Melb) Friday 20 March 2026, 3 Nissan 5786 7.14pm/8.09pm