



# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Vayikra

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## A Taste of Torah An Offering You Can't Refuse

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

Unlike a regular year, in which the Book of Vayikra occurs around Pesach time, this year, as a result of the extra month of Adar added for the Jewish leap year, we begin reading this book around the time of Purim. This week marks the first parsha, Vayikra, and it coincides with the additional reading of Parshas Zachor.

The commentators teach that the correspondence of the *Yamim Tovim* (Jewish Holidays) and the weekly parsha is not by chance, and even when not readily apparent, a message can always be gleaned from that connection. That being the case, let us explore the connection between the opening *parshios* of the Book of Vayikra, which deal with the laws of *korbanos* (sacrifices), and the festive holiday of Purim.

The connection between *korbanos* and Purim is further confirmed by a puzzling passage of Talmud. The Talmud (Megillah 16a) teaches that at the turning point of the Purim story, Haman came to get Mordechai to prepare him for the ride throughout Shushan, which Haman would lead. At the time, Mordechai was detailing the laws of *kemitza*, the fistful of flour which is separated from a *mincha* (flour) offering as part of the sacrificial process. Haman asked Mordechai what he was teaching, and Mordechai responded that when the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple) stood, a person could offer the *kemitza* as part of a *mincha* sacrifice and would achieve atonement. Haman responded, "Your fistful of flour has overpowered my ten thousand pieces of silver," referring to the large sum of money that he had offered King Achashveirosh for the right to destroy the Jewish Nation, an effort which Haman was beginning to realize might not be successful.

It seems that Haman, as well as the Sages of the Talmud who found this interchange worth recording, saw that the salvation of the Purim story is tied to the power of a *korban*. What is the power of a *korban*, whose study contains the power of

salvation for the Jewish People, as seen in the case of the Purim story? And what is the significance of a *korban mincha*, that it specifically is used as the example of a *korban* in the above story?

We can possibly explain this based on a beautiful insight by Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944/45-2001). Rabbi Pincus explains that in life, there are two kinds of gifts that a person can give. On the one hand, a person may give a friend something of inherent value, such as a gift of money. This kind of gift is nice, because it highlights the connection between the giver and the recipient. However, there are other kinds of gifts whose value is sentimental, and is based on a deep, multi-level and inexpressible relationship; such gifts are in a whole different league. A typical example of this is the gifts that are exchanged between a husband and wife. A twenty-dollar bouquet of flowers can far surpass the value of a generous check or an expensive but non-sentimental item, because although a value-based gift communicates friendship, the implicit message of love and commitment between husband and wife conveyed by the flowers outshines a gift of any amount of money.

The Ramban (Vayikra 1:9) explains that the purpose of a *korban* is to bring atonement to the owner who brings it. The message conveyed by a *korban* is, "In truth, it should be me losing my life due to my spiritual failures. In Hashem's kindness, He is allowing the offering of this animal to take my place." On a simple level, this means that by bringing a *korban*, the owner feels remorse and realizes his mistake, which serves as an atonement. However, Rabbi Pincus explains that the idea here is much deeper.

Bringing a *korban*, says Rabbi Pincus, is the deepest expression of love between us and Hashem, whereby we are saying to Hashem, "I realize I have done something that sours our relationship, and life without our relationship has no meaning; it is simply

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## Stories for the Soul

### An Honest Living

Based on a story in The Jewish Observer

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky (1891-1986), one of the great leaders of Torah Jewry in America for many decades until his passing in 1986, began his career in America in 1937 as a fundraiser for a yeshiva. One of his stops was the Manhattan office of a manufacturer. Reb Yaakov produced a copy of the receipt for the previous year's donation, and then took a seat in the waiting room. After an unusually long delay, the manufacturer returned with a check made out for a smaller amount than the receipt had recorded for the previous year.

"It's really the same as last year's contribution," explained the manufacturer.

"But the receipt is for a larger amount."

"Yes, I know. It was purposely done that way by your office in hope that I might duplicate that amount this year, but I knew that I had given less, so I checked my records. The amount on the check is correct."

Reb Yaakov was shocked. "I will not work for an institution that runs a dishonest office."

As he got up to leave, the contributor stopped him. "Here, take the check in the meantime."

"No, I am no longer the yeshiva's agent, as I resigned a minute ago. I am not authorized to accept monies on its behalf."

The manufacturer was dumbstruck. "Don't you have a family to support?" he asked.

"Yes, a wife and six children."

"Then take this," said the man, whipping out \$200 from his wallet.

Reb Yaakov shrank back. "I don't accept gifts."

"It's a loan. Until you get another job."

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## Kollel Happenings

### KOLLEL 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, INCLUDING GALA PURIM EVENT, IN THE COMING WEEK!

The Kollel will celebrate 24 years with a twist as it ties together its annual online triple crowdfunding campaign on Monday-Tuesday March 14-15 with a gala Purim Celebration on Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at the Kollel Torah Center, featuring music, dancing and refreshments. Visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org) for more details.

### SHABBOS AFTEROON AVOS UBANIM BEGINS NEXT WEEK

Shabbos afternoon Avos Ubanim begins next Shabbos, March 19, at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center 1 hour before mincha and at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center for 45 minutes starting one hour before mincha. Learning, nosh, and raffles for prizes - don't miss out!

### TALMUDO BIYADO GEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at [rnk@denverkollel.org](mailto:rnk@denverkollel.org) for further details.

## Halacha Riddles

**Last week we asked:** Three adult Jewish males who ate a meal together are obligated to have a *mezuman* even though one of them neither began nor finished his meal with the other two. How can this be?

**Answer:** If those who already finished eating remain at the table until the latecomer finishes his meal, and they would, in theory, eat more if it was offered, then they are still considered part of the

meal and are regarded as finishing together and must have a *mezuman* (Mishna Berura 193:19).

**This week's question:** Three adult males sat down together to eat a non-bread snack together. Upon seeing what the others were eating, the third man, who had not yet begun, excused himself and went to sit elsewhere. What halachic consideration led him to do this?

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XLII

Still, the need for more money to fund the construction of the yeshiva continued, and Rabbi Shapiro concluded that he had no choice but to travel to North America and fundraise there. In 1926,

Rabbi Shapiro departed on the steamship *Majestic*, arriving on the shores of New York on August 26, 1926. He was met at New York harbor by a delegation of *rabbanim* and communal leaders.

## A Taste of Torah

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not worth living! Please forgive my sin and allow our relationship to continue." That expression of love is so powerful that it contains the ability to rejuvenate the love between a person and Hashem. The power of that message is not tied to mere money, much like the aforementioned analogy of the flowers.

In this light, we can understand that a flour offering, albeit of less monetary value, carries the very same significance and power as a more expensive *korban*, and any other gesture of wealth pales in comparison. Indeed, our Sages teach that a *mincha* offering brought by a pauper is of equal value as a fattened animal brought by a wealthy person, so long as the intent is one

of full dedication to Hashem.

In the case of the Purim story, Haman was comparing the vast sum of silver that he had given toward destroying the Jews. As his downfall approached, he quickly became aware of the reality that a flour offering, the poorest of *korbanos*, has more power than any amount of money given as an effort to harm the Jews. Even in the case of the Jews at the time of the Purim story, who had incurred Hashem's wrath and had been subjected to a decree of complete annihilation, the power of the lowliest of *korbanos* and its study had the ability to convey and revive the deep and heartfelt love between Hashem and his Chosen Nation, ultimately making them worthy of His salvation.

## Stories for the Soul

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"Thank you kindly, but G-d will provide. I do not need a loan,"

Reb Yaakov returned his portfolio and lists to the yeshiva office. The following day, he bumped into an old colleague from his days as a student in the Slabodka Yeshiva in Europe, Reb Alter Poplack, who recommended him for the position of interim rabbi for the Congregation Bikur

Cholim in Seattle. Reb Yaakov took the position, and eventually grew to become one of the preeminent Torah authorities in the United States.

The Torah teaches us that one may not bring a *korban* (sacrifice) from stolen goods, because such a thing is detestable in the eyes of Hashem. Noble intentions are no excuse for dishonest conduct.