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The Place that G-d will Choose

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

On the heels of the laws of Yom Kippur, Parshat Acharei Mot teaches us to bring korbanot only in a location designated for this purpose. The Torah tells us, "A Jew who will slaughter an ox, sheep or goat in the camp or outside of the camp, failing to bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting... He will have spilled blood, and he will be cut off from his nation. Through this law, the Jewish people will bring their offerings... to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting..." (Vayikra 17:3-7)

Our Sages viewed this set of instructions as two separate mitzvot, a mitzvah of bringing sacrifices in the space set aside for G-d and a prohibition against serving G-d via sacrifice in any other location. [See Zevachim 107b.] But what gives the Mishkan or Beit haMikdash its status as the sole site for sacrificial service?

Communal character

The Mishkan and Beit haMikdash are communal, and so one might suspect that the prohibition arises from concern lest one separate from the community, but this would not be correct. There were periods in Jewish history when Jews used communal sites for worship [*bamah gedolah* or *bamat tzibbur*] and yet were permitted to bring offerings elsewhere.

Bamot ketanot [private altars] were prohibited once we built the Mishkan in the wilderness, but permitted when we entered Israel, despite the presence of a Mishkan in Gilgal. Construction of a Mishkan in Shiloh prohibited *bamot ketanot*, but when the Mishkan was moved to the city of Nov, and subsequently to Givon, *bamot ketanot*

were permitted again. It was only with the Beit haMikdash in Yerushalayim that these private altars were permanently outlawed. (Mishnah Zevachim 14:4-8) Further, the Talmud (Temurah 14b) states explicitly that there is no preference for a communal site over a private site, at a time when use of private sites is permitted.

Special locations

Perhaps the site of the Mishkan or Beit haMikdash has a unique character, but this seems unlikely. Even when we had a Mishkan, and *bamot ketanot* were prohibited, there were occasions when prophets licensed external sites:

- Our judge Gideon sacrificed animals outside of the Mishkan in Shiloh; as the Talmud (Temurah 28b-29a) notes, he actually broke eight separate laws in doing so. (Shoftim 6)
- The father of Shimshon, Manoach, attempted to bring an offering before a mysterious being who had told his wife and him of the imminent birth of their mighty son. The being instructed him to bring the offering before G-d, which Manoach did – but this was also outside of the Mishkan in Shiloh. The Talmud (Zevachim 119b) justifies this as a special dispensation authorized by the unidentified visitor. (Shoftim 13)
- The great prophet Elyahu brought a sacrifice upon Mount Carmel. (Melachim I 18) The Talmud (Yevamot 90b, Sanhedrin 89b) justifies this as a prophet's right; indeed, Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei haTorah 9:3) cites this as the ideal illustration of a prophet's temporary abrogation of a law.

One could point out that these cases involved only temporary exemptions, but our next suggestion will account even for these exemptions.

Divine selection

The sanctity of the Mishkan and Beit haMikdash is based on Divine selection. It is not for naught that the Rambam called it *Beit haBechirah*, "the place of Divine selection"; the special character of the site was invested in it by HaShem's identification of the location as special for Him. As recorded in Tehillim (132:14), G-d declared, "This is My place of repose forever; here I will dwell, for I have longed for it." Perhaps this is the basis for their monopoly upon the sacrificial service.

Rabbi Yehudah Gershuni (Mishpat haMeluchah pg. 19) used this concept to explain why prophets may dedicate temporary sites for service of G-d, as described above. He wrote, "When a prophet rules that one may slaughter outside, as Elyahu did at Mount Carmel, then as a special ruling, this becomes 'the site which G-d has chosen' and there is no prohibition against 'slaughtering outside'."

This lesson is crucial for citizens of a world which prizes personal liberty. One might be tempted to worship G-d in a place of one's own choosing, or in a form of one's own selection. In our parshah, the Torah reminds us that the value of worship is based upon the desire of the Worshipped. What makes our service special is not the favour it finds in our eyes, but the favour it finds in the eyes of G-d.

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**SUNDAY APRIL 21 AT SHAAREI SHOMAYIM
 TRIBUTE TO RAV SOLOVEITCHIK
 ON HIS 20TH YAHRTZEIT
 WITH RABBI AZARYA BERZON
 7:45 PM MINCHAH, 8 PM PROGRAM
 MEN AND WOMEN INVITED**




**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
 TORAH MITZION
 BEIT MIDRASH**

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שם ה"אור" המיוחד שמאיר בחדש זה. ה"זיו" הוא התפשטות מן ה"אור" (בחינת "אייר") הנמשך ויורד להאיר ולעורר את החשק בנפש היהודי לבנות בית לדי.

במדרש נאמר שתכלית כוונת הבריאה היא מפני ש"נתאוה הקב"ה להיות לו דירה בתחתונים". לאחר יציאת מצרים, והתחדשות הכללית של חדש ניסן, מתעורר, בחדש אייר, הרצון לבנות בית - בית עולמים - לד'. מתעורר הרצון של האדם לקום ולפעול בעולמו ומהמשך את הגאולה אשר התחילה בעולמות עליונים בחודש ניסן.

חודש אייר הוא חודש שבו עם ישראל מתעורר, והקב"ה מושיט את ידו ומסכים עימו. חודש אייר הוא חודש שבו זכינו ליום עצמאותנו, שבו זכינו לשחרור ירושלים. חודש שבו היתה התעוררות על ידי עם ישראל, וסייעתא דשמיא מיוחדת על ידי הקב"ה.

דבר זה צריך להיות עבורנו בבחינת "מעשה אבות סימן לבנים", אף אנו צריכים להתחזק בימים אלו ולחדש ולהתחדש בתהליך הגאולה. אל לנו להרגיש כי כבר גאולים אנחנו ומעשינו הושלמו. בחודש אייר זה נהיה בבחינת אותם הטמאים לנפש ונאמר להקב"ה: "חפצים אנו בקרבנות, רוצים אנו בבניית המקדש". אף על פי שזכינו ליום העצמאות וליום ירושלים, אנו צופים ליום הגרולה ושלמה ומוכנים להיות אלה שייפעלו לקרובו של יום זה.

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בשבוע הקרוב יחול י"ד אייר - פסח שני. משונה יום זה בשנה שכן לא מצינו חג נוסף שאותו ניתן "להשלים". מעולם לא שמענו על יום כיפור נוסף למי שהיה חולה, או תשלומים לאדם שלא יכל לשבת בסוכה, מה גרם איפה ליצירה זו של יום בו ניתן להשלים את חג הפסח?

חידוש זה בא בעקבות בקשתם של האנשים הטמאים, שלא יכלו להקריב פסח ראשון. (במדבר ט) אותם אנשים אשר היו טמאים ולא יכלו להקריב את קרבן הפסח אך גם לא יכלו להשלים אם מציאות זו. על ידי אנשים אלו נתחדשה מצווה מן התורה, אשר נובעת מן התשוקה האנושית להיות שייך לעולם המצוות, גם כשהדבר לא מתאפשר בדרך הרגילה. יש כאן התעוררות מצד בני האדם, לקבלת מצוות ד' או בלשון הקבלה "אתערותא דלתתא".

ייתכן שיש בכך סימן גם לדורנו. חודש ניסן הוא חודש שבו היתה פעולה מוחלטת על ידי הקב"ה. היציאה ממצרים נעשתה על ידי הקב"ה ללא התערבותם של עם ישראל. בחודש אייר, על ידי בקשתם של אותם אנשים שלא יכלו להקריב את קרבן ד' במועדו, התחדשה הפעולה האנושית, הרצון להיות שותף בתהליך הגאולה, הרצון להיות שותף בקרבן פסח. הקב"ה הסכים לתהליך זה וקבע את פסח שני, בכך בעצם מסכים הקב"ה לרצונם של ישראל להיות גאולים בצורה פעילה.

מסופר בתנ"ך ששלמה המלך התחיל לבנות את בית המקדש: "בשנה הרביעית בחדש זיו הוא החדש השני למלוך שלמה על ישראל - ויבן הבית לד'". שני השמות של החדש השני, "זיו" ו"אייר", הם על

Parshat Kedoshim begins with G-d telling Moshe to "speak to the entire assembly of Israel and tell them to be holy." (Vayikra 19:2) Rashi recognizes that this is unusual, for normally Moshe taught Aharon, and then Aharon's sons, and then the elders, and finally Moshe taught the people, but here Moshe went straight to the people. Therefore, Rashi, quoting a midrash (Sifra 1:1), explains that this chapter was taught directly to the people because "most of the Torah's vital laws are found in it." The Torah Temimah (19:2) explains that this is a reference to "Love your neighbour as yourself," (Vayikra 19:18) which Rabbi Akiva teaches is a fundamental principle of the Torah (Talmud Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4), and which appears in Parshat Kedoshim.

Not everyone understands "Love your neighbour as yourself" in the broad way suggested by the Torah Temimah, though. Rabbi Mordechai Willig contends that Rabbi Akiva could not have meant that we should love each other as we love ourselves; Rabbi Akiva himself taught, "Your life takes precedence over your friend's life." (Bava Metzia 62a) It is when learning Torah that one must love his study partner as he loves himself, in order to heighten the spirituality of the relationship. In essence, Rabbi Akiva really teaches, "Love your neighbour as yourself is a fundamental precept when studying Torah."

The Talmud (Yevamot 62b) notes that twelve thousand pairs of Rabbi Akiva's students died between Pesach and Shavuot, because they did not treat each other with respect. Rabbi Willig explains that the Talmud emphasizes that the students studied in pairs because studying Torah with a friend should produce greater respect, and yet Rabbi Akiva's students failed to do this.

This insight into Rabbi Akiva's lesson compels us to seek another explanation for Rashi's reference to the "vital laws" contained in Parshat Kedoshim. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter explains that holiness is not only about spiritual matters; our parshah includes social matters, such as not to steal, oppress, or pervert justice. Perhaps the "vital laws" in Parshat Kedoshim are those that teach us to strive in all areas of our life to be holy people.

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613 Mitzvot: #253

Tattoo

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Mitzvah 253 prohibits a Jew from having his skin engraved and filled with a permanent dye, which is the method used in marking the body with a tattoo. Some commentators link this to commandments that prohibit disfiguring the body; see Rashi Devarim 14:1. Others, like Sefer haChinuch, understand this law as a measure against idolatry, because cults often use tattoo markings.

Halachic authorities debate the use of tattooing for the sake of correcting a disfigurement, such as in creating 'eyebrows' for someone who has none, and many are lenient. [See Rav Ezra

Batzri, Techumin 10, for one such discussion.] There is debate, as well, regarding the use of tattooed dots to mark a site on the body for radiation therapy.

Popular legend reports that one who receives a tattoo may not be buried in a Jewish cemetery, but this is not Jewish law. Although tattooing is prohibited, it is not an obstacle to Jewish burial.

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**Torah in Translation
The Israeli Flag**

**Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik
Chamesh Derashot, Brit Avot 2
Translated by R' Ezra Goldschmiedt**

[This is an excerpt from an address to the American Mizrahi Association:]

The existence of the State of Israel and the fact that Jews, and not the British, determine immigration policies; that Jews, and not Arabs, are the political rulers of the Land, and there is a Jewish government, police force and army – this is the greatest fulfillment of the commandment to settle the Land of Israel. Do not forget that this commandment stems from the Torah's instruction, "And you shall take possession of the Land and settle in it" (Bamidbar 33:53); this is possession and settlement. Possession is conquest, national rule. Settlement implies economic rehabilitation...

True, we are not always satisfied with specific State actions and policies. However, this does not detract from the State of Israel's importance as an instrument of actualizing possession of the Land. We know that the government is not the State; governments come and governments go, a ruler leaves, a ruler arrives, but the Land – the State – we hope to G-d – shall always stand!

Only our movement has expressed itself unequivocally in support of the State of Israel, granting it halachic validity. Other religious movements continue to analyze this as a matter of *s'feik s'feika* (doubled doubt), so to speak. First of all, is there truly a State of Israel? And second, if it exists, should it be accepted with love or not? Therefore, they become entangled in paradox from time to time. For example, they are immersed in doubt as to whether flying the blue and white flag is permitted or forbidden. After a long debate, they ruled leniently; they gave a *hechsher* (validation) to the flag in that they fly it together with additional flags, such as the British flag, that flew on the British guard ships that patrolled Israel's shores during the bitter and dark 1940's, so that the refugees of Hitler's concentration camps wouldn't "infiltrate" the land. With this flag the British ships sank the *Struma* and *Patria*.

I wish to add: if you were to ask me how I, a Talmudic Jew, view the flag of the State of Israel, and whether it has any halachic value; I would answer you simply: I do not recognize at all the magical nature of a flag or of similar ceremonial symbols. Judaism rejects the worship of physical objects. However, let us not ignore the law stated in Shulchan

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-93; known to many as "The Rav") was born into a family of highly accomplished Torah scholars. Grandson of Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik (the Brisker Rav) and son of Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, the Rav spent his early years learning in the traditional Eastern European system. His great intellect, however, did not go unnoticed, and he also received private tutoring in Talmud and other subjects to supplement his studies.

In 1926, the Rav entered Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin, ultimately graduating with a doctorate in philosophy in 1932. Rabbi Soloveitchik was one of the pioneers in bridging the Eastern European world of Jewish learning and modern Western thought. Upon completing his doctorate, the newly married Rabbi Soloveitchik moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where he served as Chief Rabbi and pioneered many aspects of his community's growth.

In 1941, the Rav's succeeded his deceased father as a Rosh Yeshiva of RIETS (Yeshiva University's Rabbinical Seminary) while also retaining his Chief Rabbi position, regularly traveling between Boston and New York. In addition to those responsibilities, the Rav taught Jewish Philosophy in the Revel Graduate School and served important leadership roles in the Rabbinical Council of America and Mizrahi. His legacy as a leader of Modern Orthodoxy is marked by his meticulous dedication to halachah, as well as his passionate synthesis of religious and secular thought.

Our Beit Midrash will hold a program commemorating Rabbi Soloveitchik's 20th yahrtzeit, at 7:45 PM on Sunday, April 21st at Shaarei Shomayim (470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto).

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Aruch (Yoreh Deah 364:4): one who is murdered by non-Jews is buried in his garments. This is so that his blood will be seen and avenged, as it says 'Will I acquit them? I will not acquit them for the blood.' (Yoel 4:21) In other words, a Jew's clothes take on a certain holiness when they are stained in holy blood. These words apply all the more intensely for the blue and white flag, dipped in the blood of thousands of young Jews who fell in the War of Independence, in defence of the Land and the population (whether religious or not, for the enemy, may their names be blotted out, did not distinguish). It has a spark of holiness that stems from this

**This Week in
Israeli History
12 Iyar 1949
Israel Joins the UN
R' Baruch Weintraub**

12 Iyar is Monday

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly recommended the adoption and implementation of its "Plan of Partition with Economic Union", General Assembly Resolution 181.

On the 5th of Iyar, May 14, 1948, shortly before the British Mandate over Palestine expired, the Jewish People's Council gathered at the Tel Aviv Museum and approved a proclamation which declared the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael, to be known as the State of Israel.

The war that broke out immediately after, between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbors, raged for about a year. In its aftermath, with G-d's mercy, the Arab armies were stopped and the Jewish state was established as reality.

On May 11, 1949, in Resolution 273 (III), Israel was admitted for membership in the United Nations as a "peace-loving country".

Since that time, the relationship between Israel and the UN has known ups and [mostly] downs. One of the most memorable moments is of Israeli Ambassador to the UN Chaim Herzog tearing up the UN resolution equating Zionism with Racism, on November 10, 1975. Herzog passionately declared, "For us, the Jewish people, this resolution, based on hatred, falsehood and arrogance, is devoid of any moral or legal value". Or as David Ben Gurion was wont to say, riffing on Tehillim 115:2, "It does not matter what the *goyim* say, but what the Jews do."

Despite the above, the recognition of the world's nations is of extreme practical and ideological importance. The purpose of our state is not only to be a safe place for our people; we dream of fulfilling Yeshayau's vision (60:3), "And nations shall walk by your light, and kings by the brilliance of your radiance." As distant as this goal seems, the 12th of Iyar, 1949, was a significant step toward making this prophecy a reality.

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self-sacrifice. We are all commanded to honour the flag, and to treat it respectfully. It requires no *hechsher* from the foreign Union Jack!

Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Amos was active in one of the 'golden ages' of the kingdoms of Yehudah and Yisrael, when Uziah was the king of Yehudah in the south, and Yeravam the son of Yoash was the king of Yisrael in the north. The picture that arises from the book of Amos is one of a wealthy society, where palaces and beautiful gardens are not rare.

Writing in an uncomplicated poetic style, Amos warns repeatedly against the social gap between wealthy and indigent, and the abuse of the poor by the rich; he inveighs against the "cows of Bashan on Mount Shomron, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy." (4:1) It is possible that Amos saw some of this oppression with his own eyes, as a shepherd.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah comes from the final prophecy of the book of Amos, offering a message of exile and return.

Amos begins by saying that the nation G-d had redeemed from Egypt has now become like "sons of Kushites", or Ethiopians. This is generally understood as a rebuke, but the meaning of the comparison to Kushites is unclear. Explanations include:

- G-d tells the Jews that their ancestors stood out for their

greatness as Kushites stand out in appearance, and they deserved to be redeemed from Egypt. The implication is that later generations were less worthy. (Talmud, Moed Katan 16b)

- G-d declares that the Jews might as well be Kushites, or any other nation. All that He did for them in redeeming them from Egypt, He will also do for others. (Rashi)
- G-d tells the Jews that they were meant to serve G-d, just as the descendants of Kush became slaves, and this was why He redeemed them from Egypt. (Radak)
- G-d rebukes the Jews for failing to be loyal to Him, like the Kushites who were reputed to be polygamous, despite His having redeemed them from Egypt. (Ibn Ezra)

Amos continues to say that G-d will punish those who have failed to live up to His expectations, and then He will redeem the rest and establish them upon their land. The overall theme of exile for sin matches passages in Acharei Mot (Vayikra 18:24-30) and Kedoshim (Vayikra 20:22-26).

Is this the right haftorah?

Normally, when we read a double parshah we use the haftorah listed for the second of the two, but this week we use the haftorah listed for the first,

Acharei Mot. This is the ruling of Rama (Orach Chaim 428:8), Bach (Orach Chaim 428) and Mishneh Berurah (428:26), against the position of Levush (cited in Magen Avraham 428:10).

Rama's reasoning, as explained by the Mishneh Berurah, is that the haftorah normally listed for Kedoshim - Yechezkel 22 - speaks of the sins of Jerusalem, and we would prefer not to read of this in public. In a year when Acharei Mot and Kedoshim are separate we do read Yechezkel 22, but when they are joined we prefer the haftorah listed for Acharei Mot, the message of Amos.

One might well ask why we don't simply choose a different haftorah for Kedoshim; indeed, Sephardic communities have a different haftorah (Yechezkel 20) for Kedoshim. It appears that Ashkenazic communities chose this haftorah because the sins condemned in the text match closely the sins identified in Parshat Kedoshim, and this association overrode the sensitivity to publicly proclaiming the sins of Jerusalem.

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Highlights for April 20 – April 26 / 10 Iyar - 16 Iyar

Shabbat, April 19-20

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Reasons for mitzvot and the parshah, Or Chaim **not this week**

10:20 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park

6:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi, BAYT

7:10 PM Adam Frieberg, Pirkei Avot, Shaarei Tefillah

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Avodah Zarah: Uncovered Wine Part III, BAYT

SHABBATON at Zichron Yisroel

- **After musaf** R' Mordechai Torczyner, The Land of Israel through the Eyes of a Mystic
- **45 minutes before minchah** Hillel Horovitz, Israel: Modern & Ancient History in the Eyes of our Prophets
- **Seudah shlishit** Hillel Horovitz, Can there be a Third Exile?

Sunday, April 21

8:45 AM Adam Frieberg, Idealists or Pragmatists? Jewish Citizens and Non-Jewish Government, Forest Hill Jewish Centre, Breakfast served (8 AM Shacharit)

9:15 AM Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)

10:00 AM Midreshet Yom Rishon, BAYT, women, refreshments served

- Rebbetzin Lori Gryzman, Roots of the Amidah
- Hillel Horovitz, Hallel on Yom Herzl?

7:45 PM Tribute to Rav Soloveitchik on his 20th Yahrzeit, with Rabbi Azarya Berzon, Shaarei Shomayim, begins with minchah

Monday, April 22

8 PM Monday night Beit Midrash: Bnai Torah, Clanton Park

8 PM Hillel Horovitz, Melachim I:20-22, Bnai Torah

9 PM Hillel Horovitz, Rav Kook's Ein Ayah, Bnai Torah

Tuesday, April 23

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daniel: Darius, Daniel and the Lions' Den

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

Wednesday, April 24

10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural and Superstition II, Week 3 of 8: The Golem, BEBY

8 PM Chabura Night at BAYT

- R' Ezra Goldschmiedt: Path of the Just
- Hillel Horovitz: The Rambam's Thought
- R' Mordechai Torczyner: Medical Halachah

9 PM Chabura Night at Shaarei Shomayim

Thursday, April 25

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park