



10 - 16 March, 2019
3 - 9 Adar II, 5779

First Torah:

Leviticus 1:1 - 5:26

Second Torah:

Parshat Zachor

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Haftorah:

Samuel I 15:1-34

■ **CALENDARS**

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

■ **FAMILY PROGRAMS**

Do you have family on the outside who are struggling, please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

■ **GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH**

Aleph offers free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll, it is available to all prisons.

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SACRIFICIAL LAMB, ANYONE?

“Sacrifice” is not a word one hears very often these days. It seems to pretty much have fallen out of our lexicon. It has a negative ring to it, like giving up something precious or losing out on something big. Nobody is getting in line to be the “sacrificial lamb.” It simply has a bad vibe to the modern ear.

Well, this week we begin reading and studying a book of the Torah, Vayikra (Leviticus), which essentially is a book about sacrifices — specifically the variety offered on the altar of G-d in the Temple in days of old. So let’s confront some of our attitudes towards the word.

For some decades now, the pursuits of “self-fulfillment” and “self-esteem” have been taken as necessary givens in our lives. It has become self-understood that Looking Out for Number One is the overriding priority in the business of life. Although of late martyrdom has become popular in certain cultures, generally Western sophisticates are not looking to be martyrs for anyone, and sacrificial lambs are antiquated, pitiful relics of a bygone era.

Take the case of Jewish mothers. Those loving, selfless souls have long ago been tried, found guilty and convicted of smothering their children. “She demanded Medical School or else!” “She force-fed me chicken soup — intravenously!” Famous Jewish novelists have made

millions denouncing their mothers to the world.

While there may be an element of truth in the notion that Jewish parents can sometimes be overbearing or a little too pushy, I would venture to suggest that the sacrifices our parents, and especially our mothers, have made over the generations are worthy of our respect and eternal gratitude rather than our laying the blame for all our neuroses at their doorstep.

I think if we are objective we would have to admire and hold up as an icon any human being who puts the welfare and happiness of others above their own. Why is such selflessness and sacrifice admirable in the heroes of nations and freedom movements but disdainful in our mothers? Surely the successes of Jewish sons and daughters must have a lot to do with the people who bore and raised them. It is a modern miracle that a generation of penniless Jewish immigrants is directly responsible for their offspring’s smooth integration into the “new world” and their remarkable achievements in virtually every sphere of contemporary life. It simply could not have happened without major sacrifices and a total commitment by parents to their children.

But that was then. Today, we take a more enlightened approach. “I need space.” “I can’t ruin my own life for my kids’ sake — I need my own opportunities for self-expression and personal gratification.” All valid needs and worthy goals. But too often we seem to carry it a little too far. Why should

Parshat Vayikra

a woman who has decided that she wants to be the best mother for her children that she possibly can be made to feel inadequate if she gives up her career or even puts it on hold? If she derives genuine gratification from seeing her children well nurtured, independent, moral and proudly Jewish, is that a less worthy use of her time than serving some company’s success?

Once upon a time, husbands and wives did not go out every single Saturday night. But they stood by each other through thick and thin. Once upon a time, what parent did in their spare time was take their kids to extra-curricular activities. Today we have our own extra-curriculars — gym, golf, bridge, poker, the manicurist and, of course, the therapist.

In fact, it may be that the reason our therapists are getting so much business is because we’re so darn busy with ourselves and we simply think about ourselves too much. “I’m overweight, I’m unfit, I’m unfulfilled, I’m depressed...” If we spent more time thinking about others and extending ourselves, whether to our own families or the wider community, we might very well be a lot healthier emotionally.

Judaism teaches that sacrifice and selflessness are character traits to respect, admire and hopefully emulate. The Yiddishe Momma of old will be an eternal heroine to our people. Let’s stop being so obsessed with ourselves and our own satisfaction and start thinking about what we are needed for in this world. Please G-d, we will be able to

keep our social and family balances on an even keel.

May the sacrifices we make and the caring and giving we do bring us the blessing of real nachas and ultimate personal satisfaction too.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

PARSHAT ZACHOR

This being the Shabbat before Purim, on which we celebrate the foiling of Haman the Amalekite's plot to destroy the Jewish people, the weekly Parshah is supplemented with the Zachor reading (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) in which we are commanded to remember the evil of Amalek and to eradicate it from the face of the earth.

"Parshat Zachor" is the second of four special readings added during or immediately before the month of Adar (the other three being "Shekalim", "Parah" and "Hachodesh").

FAST OF ESTHER & PURIM

The fast of Esther takes place on March 20, 2019 and Purim is on March 21, please make necessary arrangements with your Rabbi/Chaplain for both the bag lunch and Purim arrangements (to hear the Megillah - scroll of Esther).

PASSOVER

Please begin working with your Rabbi / Chaplain to ensure the paperwork is being processed and the necessary arrangements are being made for Passover.

SANCTIFICATION OF THE MOON

Once a month, as the moon waxes in the sky, we recite a special blessing called Kiddush Levanah, "the sanctification of the moon," praising the Creator for His wondrous work we call astronomy.

Kiddush Levanah is recited after nightfall, usually on Saturday night. The blessing is concluded with songs and dancing, because our nation is likened to the moon—as it waxes and wanes, so have we throughout history. When we bless the moon, we renew our trust that very soon, the light of G-d's presence will fill all the earth and our people will be redeemed from exile.

Though Kiddush Levanah can be recited as early as three days after the moon's rebirth, the kabbalah tells us it is best to wait a full week, till the seventh of the month. Once 15 days have passed, the moon begins to wane once more and the season for saying the blessing has passed.

In Jewish History

Sunday, 3 Adar II, 5779 - March 10, 2019

2nd Temple Completed (349 BCE)

The joyous dedication of the second Holy Temple (Beit Ha-Mikdash) on the site of the 1st Temple in Jerusalem, was celebrated on the 3rd of Adar of the year 3412 from creation (349 BCE), after four years of work.

The First Temple, built by King Solomon in 833 BCE, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 423 BCE. At that time, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied: "Thus says the L-rd: After seventy years for Babylon will I visit you... and return you to this place." In 371 the Persian emperor Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple, but the construction was halted the next year when the Samaritans persuaded Cyrus to withdraw permission. Achashverosh II (of Purim fame) upheld the moratorium. Only in 353 -- exactly 70 years after the destruction -- did the building of the Temple resume under Darius II.

Monday, 4 Adar II, 5779 - March 11, 2019

Maharam's Body Ransomed (1307)

The tragic saga of the imprisonment of Rabbi Meir ben Baruch ("Maharam") of Rothenburg came to a close when his body was ransomed, 14 years after his death, by Alexander ben Shlomo (Susskind) Wimpen.

"Maharam" (1215?-1293) was the leading Torah authority in Germany, and authored thousands of Halachic responsa as well as the Tosaphot commentary of the Talmudic tractate Yoma. In 1283 he was imprisoned in the Ensisheim fortress and held for a huge ransom, but he forbade the Jewish community to pay it (based on the Talmudic ruling that exorbitant sums should not be paid to free captives, as this would encourage the taking of hostages for ransom). For many years Maharam's disciple, R. Shimon ben Tzadok, was allowed to visit him in his cell and recorded his teachings in a work called Tashbetz.

Even after the Maharam's passing in 1293, his body was not released for burial until it was ransomed by R. Alexander, who was subsequently laid to rest at his side.

Passing of R. Leib Sarah's (1791)

Adar 4 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Leib Sarah's (1730-1791), a disciple of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. One of the "hidden tzaddikim," Rabbi Leib spent his life wandering from place to place to raise money for the ransoming of imprisoned Jews and the support of other hidden tzaddikim.

Roman Ghetto Abolished (1798)

In 1555, Pope Paul IV segregated the Jews of Rome in a walled quarter surrounded by gates that were locked at night. The ghettoed Jews were then subjected to various forms of degradation as well as restrictions on their personal freedoms.

During the French Revolution, Italy was conquered by Napoleon Bonaparte. On the 4th of Adar (Tuesday, February 20, 1798) the Ghetto was legally abolished. It was reinstated, however, as soon as the Papacy regained control.

Tuesday, 5 Adar II, 5779 - March 12, 2019

Moses' Last Day of Leadership (1273 BCE)

Moses passed away on the 7th of Adar. Following G-d's instruction that Joshua should succeed him and lead the Jewish nation into the Land of Israel, Moses transferred leadership duties to Joshua on the day before he passed away. Thus the fifth day of Adar was the last day of Moses' leadership.