

PARSHAT TZAV SHABBAT HAGADOL

8 - 14 Nissan 5785
6 - 14 April 2025

Torah: Leviticus 6:1 - 8:36
Haftorah: Malachi 3:4-24

PSALMS DAILY

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all
nations, laud Him, all
peoples.
2. For His kindness has
overwhelmed us, and
the truth of the Lord is
eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20
daily)

SEFER HAMITZVOT

Negative Mitzvah 230

Working on Shabbat

We are forbidden
from performing
work on Shabbat.

Positive Mitzvah 154

Resting on Shabbat

We are commanded
to rest on the Shabbat.
This commandment,
which is repeated
numerous times in the
Torah, also applies to
our livestock.

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MINDFUL EATING

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that eating mindfully has many health benefits. The Harvard Health Blog, for example, reported:

"Paying more attention to what you eat, not less, could help keep you from overeating. Multitasking—like eating while watching television or working—and distracted or hurried eating can prompt you to eat more. Slowing down and savoring your food can help you control your intake."

Jews have always understood the power of mindful eating.

Judaism teaches that eating is not only a necessity of survival, nor merely a pleasurable experience; it is also a spiritual exercise.

Much of the discussion in this week's parshah is about eating the Temple offerings. Some were eaten by the priests, while others were eaten by the person who brought the offering. In either case, the eating of the offering was part of what achieved the offering's spiritual effect.

The Talmud tells us:

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar both said: while the Temple still stood, the altar atoned for man; now that the Temple no longer stands, a man's table atones for him."

This teaching is extraordinary: how can it possibly be that when we sit down to eat a meal we are experiencing the same spiritual effect, the same atonement, as with the offerings that were brought upon the altar?

Kabbalah and Chassidic philosophy teach that every creation has a soul, a spark of G-dliness. This is true for each of the forms of life on earth: the inanimate, the plant, and the animal. Each possesses a soul that yearns for the opportunity to transcend and reconnect with its source.

All of creation can be elevated through the human being—the only creation made in the image of G-d and the only creation to possess free choice.

When man consumes the inanimate, plant, or animal, one of two things can happen. If he eats for his own personal pleasure, he is lowered to their spiritual level, which, from the soul's perspective, is a missed

opportunity for both man and food. If, however, he eats the food with a spiritual purpose—so that he will be healthy and have energy to serve his Creator and achieve his mission on earth, then he elevates the spark of holiness within the food and allows it to be reunited with its Divine source. The daily offerings, which were brought in the Temple on behalf of all the Jewish people, comprised every category of creation: each animal was brought together with an offering of grain—representing the plant kingdom, and salt—representing the inanimate. The intense holiness of the Temple meant that not only were the offerings sanctified, but all animals, plants, and minerals in the rest of the world were sanctified too.

Today, however, we don't enjoy the spiritual benefits of the Temple. As such, the responsibility of elevating the sparks within creation falls to each of us. "While the Temple still stood," says the Talmud, "the altar atoned for man; now ... man's table atones for him". Today, the atonement of the world and its spiritual elevation is in our hands and upon our tables.

So next time you eat, do so mindfully. Notice the colors, smells, flavors, and textures of your food.

But don't stop there.

Dig deeper. Be mindful of the spark of holiness within the food. Recite the appropriate blessings and consider how you will elevate the soul of the food by using its energy to fuel good deeds.

*By Rabbi Menachem Feldman
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STAYING ON TOP

Some people are bulldozers. They move mountains, conquer countries, achieve the seemingly impossible. But then when there are no more mountains to climb, they falter. Routines, maintenance, and sustainability are not their strong points. They respond to excitement and challenge, not to the uneventful, monotonous daily grind.

The title word of this week's Parshah, Tzav, means "Command." It introduces G-d's call to Moses to instruct the Kohanim (priests) about the laws of the burnt offerings in the Sanctuary. Rashi points out that the word Tzav, "Command" - rather than the more familiar and softer "Speak"

or "Tell" - is generally reserved for instructions which require a sense of zealotry. These are things which need to be performed "immediately as well as for posterity."

Would G-d have doubted the commitment of Aaron and his sons? Was there concern that they would do anything other than what they were instructed to regarding the sacred services? After all, they were the most saintly and dedicated of men. Was there really anything to worry about? Why employ a word implying such urgency?

Says Rashi: it's not only the need for immediacy but also the insistence that the services carry on throughout the generations in the very same way. It is one thing to be committed and excited now when the mitzvah is still fresh and new, but what will happen in future? Will that same commitment still be there down the line, or will the enthusiasm have waned?

In the sporting arena there are athletes, and even teams, who make wonderful starts but then fade before the finish. Others go on great runs throughout a contest, but then "choke" at the very end. One cannot achieve greatness by erratic bursts of energy. Concentration and consistency are needed to carry us through until the final moment of the match.

So too in life. People in Hollywood find it pretty easy to get married to one another. But how many stay married? And it is no different in Judaism. Lots of Jews are excellent at Yom Kippur. But what happens all year round? Many have moments of inspiration, but it is allowed to become a passing phase.

A fellow came to Shul to recite Kaddish in memory of a parent, but sadly the congregation were struggling to make a Minyan (quorum of ten for prayer). He vented his anger at not being able to recite the prayer. One of the men present was less than sympathetic. "And where were you yesterday when someone else needed to say Kaddish and there wasn't a Minyan?" he retorted. Many people make the effort to attend services on the anniversary of a parent's passing but stay away on "regular" days.

King David, in Psalm 24, asks, "Who may ascend the mountain of G-d,

and who may stand in His holy place?" It is one thing to climb the mountain but quite another to be able to stay on the summit. There are outstanding trailblazers who struggle with the everyday maintenance of the very programs they themselves initiated. In an ideal world pioneers would do the initiating and ordinary folk would carry on the routine. But it doesn't always work that way. We cannot necessarily afford the luxury of focusing only on the parts of life we enjoy and are stimulated by. More often than not life is a grind. Moments of excitement and discovery are rare. Charting new courses are not everyday experiences. And our creations need long term, consistent maintenance, otherwise they collapse.

The command to the Kohanim echoes down the ages to each of us. If it is important, do it now. And if it is sacred, carry on doing it forever.

*By Rabbi Yossy Goldman
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TZAV IN A NUTSHELL

The name of the Parshah, "Tzav," means "command" and it is found in Leviticus 6:2. G-d instructs Moses to command Aaron and his sons regarding their duties and rights as Kohanim ("priests") who offer the Korbanot (animal and meal offerings) in the Sanctuary.

The fire on the altar must be kept burning at all times. In it are burned the wholly consumed ascending offering; veins of fat from the peace, sin and guilt offerings; and the "handful" separated from the meal offering.

The Kohanim eat the meat of the sin and guilt offerings, and the remainder of the meal offering. The peace offering is eaten by the one who brought it, except for specified portions given to the kohen. The holy meat of the offerings must be eaten by ritually pure persons, in their designated holy place and within their specified time.

Aaron and his sons remain within the Sanctuary compound for seven days, during which Moses initiates them into the priesthood.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, 8 Nissan 5785 - 6 April 2025

Feast Ended in Shushan (366 BCE)

The grand 180-day feast hosted by King Achashverosh came to an end on this day in 3396 (366 BCE).

Martyrs of York (1190)

The Jewish community of York, England, consisting of 150 souls, was massacred by a bloodthirsty mob on 8 Nissan 4950 (1190). Among the martyrs was the Talmudic scholar and Tosafist Rabbi Yom Tov of Joigny.

Monday, 9 Nissan 5785 - 7 April 2025

Seven Day Feast Begun (366 BCE)

Following his 180-day feast for all his international subjects, which ended a day earlier, King Achashverosh began a seven-day feast for his subjects living in Shushan, his capital. This feast ended with the death of his queen, Vashti.

Passing of Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the "Tzaddik of Jerusalem" (1969)

Rabbi Aryeh Levin, known as the "Tzaddik [saint] of Jerusalem," was legendary for his selfless dedication in assisting his fellow Jews, whether the sick, the poor, or those suffering under the British regime during the British Mandate for Palestine (5680-5708, or 1920-1948). He passed away on 9 Nissan 5729 (1969).

Tuesday, 10 Nissan 5785 - 8 April 2025

Miriam's Passing (1274 BCE)

Miriam, the sister of Moses, passed away at the age of 126 on the 10th of Nissan of the year 2487 (1274 BCE) - 39 years after the Exodus and exactly one year before the Children of Israel entered the Holy Land. It is in deference to her passing that the "Great Shabbat" is commemorated on the Shabbat before Passover rather than the calendar date of the miracle's occurrence, 10 Nissan.

Jews Cross the Jordan River (1273 BCE)

Three days after the two spies dispatched by Joshua scouted the city of Jericho, the Children of Israel were ready to enter the Land promised by G-d to their ancestors as their eternal heritage. As they approached the Jordan River with the Holy Ark carried by the Kohanim (priests) in their lead, the river parted for them, just as the waters of the Red Sea had split when their fathers and mothers marched out of Egypt 40 years earlier.

Wednesday, 11 Nissan 5785 - 9 April 2025

Mass Circumcision (1273 BCE)

Following the Jewish nation's crossing of the Jordan River into the land of Canaan, and in preparation for the bringing of the Passover Offering, all the men were circumcised under the guidance of Joshua.

Due to the weather conditions in the desert which were not conducive for the healing of wounds, throughout the forty year desert sojourn only the Tribe of Levi circumcised their sons.

Passing of Nachmanides (1270)

Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman, also known as Ramban or Nachmanides (4954-5030, or 1194-1270), was a prominent Torah scholar, Kabbalist, philosopher, and physician from European Jewry. He authored numerous books, including a commentary on the Torah and an account of his defense of Judaism against Christianity in a forced debate. After being forced to leave Spain due to religious persecution, he settled in the Land of Israel, where he contributed significantly to the welfare of the Jewish community. Nachmanides passed away on 11 Nissan 5030 (1270) and is buried in Haifa, northern Israel.

Passing of Shaloh (1630)

Rabbi Isaiah Halevi Horowitz was a noted Kabbalist, famous as the "Shaloh Hakodosh" (the saintly Sheloh) the acronym of his magnum opus, Shnei Luchot Habrit.

He held Rabbinical positions in various communities in Europe, before emigrating to Israel. He passed away in Tiberius, in northern Israel, in 5390 (1630) at the age of 70.

Lubavitcher Rebbe Born (1902)

The 7th Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, was born on this date in 5662 (1902).

Thursday, 12 Nissan 5785 - 10 April 2025

Ezra Departs Babylon (348 BCE)

A year following the building of the second Temple in Jerusalem (in 3413, or 347 BCE) the Prophet Ezra gathered many of the Jews who had remained in Babylon and began a journey to the Land of Israel.

On the 12th of Nissan 3414 (348 BCE), Ezra departed from the river of Ahava, the beginning of

the long journey to the land of Israel which would last for nearly five months.

Friday, 13 Nissan 5785 - 11 April 2025

Abraham's Brit (1714 BCE)

According to one account in the Midrash, on the 13th of Nissan 2048 (1714 BCE), G-d appeared to Abram, changed his name to Abraham ("father of a multitude of nations") and commanded him to circumcise himself and all members of his household - and all future descendants at the age of eight days - so that "My covenant (brit) shall be in your flesh, as an eternal covenant." Abraham was 99 years old at the time.

Passing of Rabbi Joseph Caro (1575)

13 Nissan is the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Joseph Caro (5248-5335, or 1488-1575), author of the Shulchan Aruch ("Code of Jewish Law").

Passing of Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1600)

The rabbi of the mystical city of Tzfat, in northern Israel, Rabbi Moshe Alshich, passed away in the year 5360 (1600) at a ripe old age and is buried in the ancient cemetery of Tzfat.

Passing of Tzemach Tzeddek (1866)

The 3rd Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch (5549-5626, or 1789-1866; known as the "Tzemach Tzeddek" after his Halachic work by that name), passed away on 13 Nissan.

Shabbat, 14 Nissan 5785 - 12 April 2025

War of Egyptian Firstborn (1313 BCE)

On the Shabbat before the Exodus - 10 Nissan in 2448 (1313 BCE) - the first-born of Egypt, who occupied the senior positions in the priesthood and government, fought a bloody battle with Pharaoh's troops, in an effort to secure the release of the Jews and prevent the Plague of the Firstborn. This "great miracle" is commemorated each year on the Shabbat before Passover, which is therefore called Shabbat HaGadol, "The Great Shabbat." (This is one of the rare instances in which a commemorative date in the Jewish calendar is set by the day of the week rather than the day of the month.)