

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

### Animal Sacrifice & The Human Personality



RABBI  
DOVID  
SPETNER

Animal sacrifice is a difficult concept for the modern Western mind to appreciate. However, per our Sages, there may be a very understandable reason for this.

*Acharei Mos* introduces us to the issue of “*sh’chutei chutz*,” the prohibition of offering a sacrifice outside of the *Mishkan* or *Beis Hamikdash*.

We often assume that the predominant Torah violation that occurred during the first temple period was that of idolatry. However, throughout the books of the Prophets, we find an equal if not more prevalent occurrence of “*bamos*,” temporary altars where sacrifices were offered to Hashem, but in violation of Torah law. What drove these Jews to do this? If they were interested in serving Hashem, wouldn’t they want to do so within the laws of the Torah?

There is a fascinating Gemara in *Yoma* (69b) that helps shed light on this question. It will also explain why we can’t understand why people worshipped *avoda zara*, as well as why we don’t appreciate the idea of serving Hashem through animal sacrifice.

The Gemara describes how, upon returning to Eretz Yisroel and building the second *Beis Hamikdash*, the *Anshei K’neses Hagedola*, the leaders of the Jewish people, made a critical decision. They decided that the nation could not continue to function if the desire to worship *avoda zara* was still a part of the human personality. They asked Hashem to “hand over” this desire so that they could subdue it. A lion cub made of fire exited from the Holy of Holies and they subdued it.


We must ask ourselves: What was the desire for *avoda zara* doing in the Holy of Holies? I believe the answer becomes apparent from the next section of the Gemara.

Seeing their success, the *Anshei K’neses Hagedola* asked Hashem to give them the desire for illicit relations. It was given to them, but they were concerned that destroying it may impact the universal desire for procreation. Sure enough, they searched for a newly fertilized egg in all of Eretz Yisroel and could not find one. They


considered asking that only the negative half of the desire be subdued, but they concluded “Heaven does not hand over half.”

It seems clear from this that when the desire for idolatry was given to them and removed from the human personality, it also was not just the negative element of idolatry. Rather it was the desire to serve a deity in an immediate, subversive, and very physical way. No longer would a person yearn to worship *avoda zara*; however, the desire to worship Hashem through animal sacrifice would also be missing. This is why the lion cub of fire exited the Holy of Holies.

This helps us understand why the Jews of antiquity struggled with offering sacrifices on *bamos*. They were not ready to go through the arduous trip to Yerushalayim whenever this passion to serve was upon them. Rav Yaakov Weinberg, zt”l, used to say, “If we still had this desire, you would see *bamos* up and down Reisterstown Road (a commercial street in Baltimore)”. (He would also point out that the removal of the desire for *avoda zara* paved the way for much of the world to leave idolatry in favor of various forms of monotheism, i.e., Islam and Christianity.)

If my understanding of the Gemara is correct—that at the beginning of the Second Temple we already lost the inherent desire for animal sacrifice—it would mean that throughout that period we brought sacrifices simply because that was the law of the Torah, but not out innate desire. This would lead to an interesting question. As the *Rambam* writes, with the coming of *Mashiach* we will once again begin sacrifices. Will we once again have the innate desire for animal sacrifice, or not? May we merit to know the answer speedily in our days. 

### A RIDDLE FOR YOU

When do we purposefully feed a child food that should be forbidden? 

See reverse side for the answer

### THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME’AH SHE’ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Reuven promised a large sum of money to charity if Hashem would heal him from his malignant disease. Before he distributed his money to the poor, test results returned showing this his sickness was non-malignant.

**Q** Is Reuven obligated to fulfill his vow, or was his vow mistaken because it was made with erroneous presumptions?

**A** He should fulfill his vow and give the money to *tzedaka*. Additionally, it’s possible that he indeed had a malignant disease, and in the merit of the *tzedaka* which he vowed to give, he was cured to that extent (in line with the Talmud’s statement, “*Tzedaka tatzil mimaves*”—charity can save one [even] from death).

It is also known that it’s easier for a decree to be annulled before knowledge of it becomes widespread.

My brother-in-law, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *Shlit”a*, is of the opinion that when women come to a sage for a blessing for their pregnancy and childbirth to be successful, and they are unaware of any concerns, it’s better not to check for potential issues. Although, sometimes, checking may be beneficial, so long as there’s no knowledge of any defect in the fetus, prayers to Hashem are the most effective matter.

On the other hand, when something wrong is detected in the fetus through an ultrasound examination, a much bigger miracle, perhaps an overt one, will need to happen to cure the fetus, and not everyone merits that.

A story is recounted about the daughter of a respected rabbi of recent times who contracted polio and completely

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## A TIMELY HALACHA

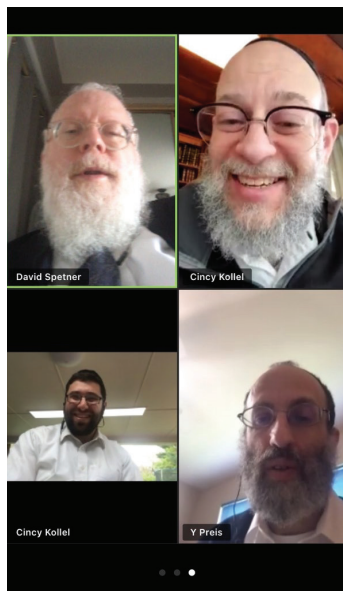
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recovered. At that time, this was considered an amazing medical miracle. The doctors presented her at a large medical convention, then sent her home. That very day, boiling water from an urn spilled over her and, unfortunately, she passed away. The Torah leaders said that perhaps, had her story not been publicized, she may have lived, because it is best for the miracle not to be exhibited with publicity, but rather in a concealed fashion.

## GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE


Young Aron Leib Bergman went to school after school in New York to ask for admission. Unfortunately, no one felt that they were able to accommodate him. A boy of thirteen who had never been to school before and would have to start with the Kindergarten class? How could it work? Aron Leib had never been to school because between the age of five and eleven he had been hiding from the Nazis. Now that he had finally made it to America, he wanted to start where his life had been interrupted but was finding that this did not seem possible. Understandably disheartened, he was going to give up on ever learning Torah. But he gave it one more try. One more time he asked to see the principal of a school to beg for admission. The principal seemed empathetic, but also told Aron Leib he didn't see how it would work. With tears rolling down his cheeks, Aron Leib made one request of the principal. "Write me a note please." "What kind of note do you need?" asked the principal. "I want a note saying that I came to your school because I wanted the chance to learn Torah and that you said it would be impossible for me to join any of your classes so that when I die I can be buried with that note and show the Master of the World that I tried my best to learn Torah but

# GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL




was denied!" The principal stared in awe at young Aron Leib, hugged him tightly and said, "I will not write that note because you are accepted into this school." Aron Leib Bergman went from sitting in a classroom with five-year-olds when already thirteen, to spending a lifetime disseminating to Torah to others. 



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## RIDDLE ANSWER


A nozraqon otw iz ton qdr bton  
A qdron foz drczocfzozqebbz  
ot tzm Chlilidn nonnnd  
eoz qdron foz bton zoz  
ew givz chlilidn nroizot oz



## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

It is often said that Torah leaders tried their best to discourage emigration to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries because of the spiritual pitfalls of the “*triefe medinah*.” One of the most vocal in voicing these opinions was Rabbi Moshe Weinberger, who had emigrated from Europe in 1880. Rabbi Weinberger held many rabbinic posts in America, mainly due to his unwillingness to bend to the relaxed norms of Jewish practice so prevalent in America at the time. In 1887, Rabbi Weinberger printed a book to be distributed throughout the communities of Europe in which he related the dire state of *halachic* practice in America. The book, *Hayehudim Vehayahadus b’New York (The Jews and Judaism of New York)*, warned that even options for work for immigrants in America were limited to working in sweatshops and factories or becoming a wandering peddler, so it was not worth the trouble of coming to America. He went on to disparage those who used their material wealth to seize power in synagogues, and the charlatans who pretended to be qualified to perform *Bris Milos* or weddings and divorces. Rabbi Weinberger shared stories to reinforce his claims. Eventually, he would give up on earning a living in the rabbinate and begin a matzah bakery. Soon afterward, he partnered with a man named Aron Streit, and their business was the founding of Streit’s Matzah Bakery. 

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. "Jews in Europe Do Not Come to America!" Jewish Press. 2016.  
Sarna, Jonathon D. *People Walk on Their Heads, Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York*.  
Holmes Meir Publishers Inc. New York. 1982.

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