



TORAH ACADEMY
of Bergen County

קול תורה

Parashat VaYikra

5 Nisan 5777

April 1, 2017

Vol. 22 No. 24

Who Is a Zionist?

by Dr. Elliot Prager

Who is a "Zionist"? Is the term limited to a person who makes Aliyah and commits to living in Eretz Yisrael/Medinat Yisrael? Or is it just as valid and meaningful for the Jew living outside of Israel who cares deeply about Israel and demonstrates his/her identity through Israel-oriented activities and actions, defense of Israel's *raison d'être*, and ongoing support of the State of Israel? As unlikely a source as it may seem, this week's Parashat VaYikra may offer some interesting insights into this question.

In its conclusion of the laws pertaining to the different categories of the Minchah offering, the Torah tells us: "*Kol HaMincha Asher Takrivu LaHashem Lo Te'aseh Chameitz, Ki Chol Se'or VeChol Devash Lo Taktiru Mimenu Isheh LaHashem,*" "Every meal offering that you offer to God, do not make it leavened, for no leaven or honey may be turned into smoke as an offering by fire to God" (VaYikra 2:11).

Why are leaven and honey prohibited from being added to the Minchah offering? Alternatively, as Abarbanel asks, why does the prohibition exist at all? Nowhere else in Sefer VaYikra do we find any mention of items prohibited to offer up with the Korbanot. According to the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:37), leaven and "honey" (including date honey and some other fruit juices) constituted important ingredients in offerings to pagan gods and thus are prohibited because of the Mitzvah of staying clear of heathen customs and practices. On a more symbolic level, Sefer HaChinuch points to the important educational message that the restriction on leaven imparts to one who offers a Korban: when it comes to living by Hashem's Torah, one should not spend time waiting for the leaven to act upon the dough; rather, such a person should internalize the desire to perform Mitzvot with alacrity, diligence and simplicity. Sefer HaChinuch further comments that just as leaven activates the fermentation process and causes dough to swell, so too Jews must always be on guard against the swellings of our arrogance and egos. As for the prohibition on Devash, Rav Kook suggests in Olat Re'iyah that honey conveys a sense of pleasure and material joy that runs counter to the loftier ideals of which we should be conscious when coming before Hashem with our offerings. When serving the Holy One, we shouldn't need any extra "props" or ingredients to make our Korbanot pleasing.

But as insightful as these Peirushim may be, they do not explain why our Parashah instructs us that when it comes to "Korban Reishit," understood by Rashi and many other Mefarshim as the Korban of first fruits and the two loaves of bread brought on Shavuot in the Land of Israel, Korbanot of leaven and honey are completely permissible (VaYikra 2:12)! Why this exception? What changes with the bringing of the Bikkurim?

If the Mefarshim are correct that "Korban Reishit" refers primarily to Bikkurim, we can explain the mandate to add leaven and honey to Korban Reishit based on Parashat Bikkurim. Parashat Bikkurim (Devarim 26:5-10) is a short declaration said by each farmer when he brings his first fruits to the Beit HaMikdash, and it is *the* quintessential, personal statement of the Jew expressing gratitude to Hashem for

having brought him from bondage in Egypt to the Land of Israel and having blessed him with the bounty and goodness. When the peculiar laws of Korban Reishit are viewed through the lens of the Parashat Bikkurim, they begin to make more sense. As Rav Kook explained, honey and leaven are normally restricted from Korbanot because Korbanot represent the simplicity, humility and recognition of incompleteness of the Jew as he stands before God, and should not contain any "frills." However, when bringing a Korban, Korban Reishit, that symbolizes the bounty of the Land of Israel and our gratitude to Hashem for the blessings He has given us, a measure of joy is appropriate, so Se'or and Devash may be added. Devash is especially suitable for this celebration of the Land of Israel because not only does it symbolize sweetness, joy, celebration and abundance, it is also one of the seven species of Eretz Yisrael.

Another link between Se'or, Devash, and the Land of Israel can be found by answering the following question: why does the word "Chameitz," essentially a synonym to Se'or, appear in the Pasuk that discusses Korban Minchah (VaYikra 2:11) alongside the word "Se'or"? Why does the Torah need both words? We can answer by establishing that Chameitz, or at least the lack thereof, symbolizes Pesach and our liberation from Egypt, the first stages of our new-born redemption, when we recognize our incompleteness and the tenuousness of our freedom. Seven weeks later, Shavuot and Parashat Bikkurim, the latter of which can only be said in the Land of Israel, enable us to give full voice and thanks for the fruition of that long process of redemption by means of fully leavened loaves of bread and the addition of honey in our Korban Reishit.

While the Torah is unambiguous in its assertion that the fullest life that an observant Jew can--and should--live is in Eretz Yisrael, the symbolic meaning of the Se'or and Devash which can make their appearance only upon entry into the Land can hold great significance for how we define ourselves as "Zionists." For those of us who have not yet made the commitment of Aliyah, our Zionism is one still lacking the Se'or and Devash that can only be enjoyed in the higher stage of redemption, living in Eretz Yisrael. This is not a "Zionism" that gives lip service to expressions such as "If I could only live in Israel," or "Maybe someday I'll make Aliyah," but rather a Zionist identity that passionately embraces living in Eretz Yisrael. Our Zionism experiences on the deepest emotional levels the longing to realize one's dreams of tasting the "Se'or" and "Devash," and it is an identity that moves continually toward that ultimate direction.

SOMETHING SMELLS AMISS

by Mark Gotesman ('18)

Within the first few Pesukim of Parashat VaYikra, we are greeted with a phrase found frequently throughout this book of Korbanot, offerings: "*VeHiktir HaKohein...LeIshah Rei'ach Nicho'ach LaHashem,*" "And the Kohein shall turn burn...a fire-offering of pleasing odor to Hashem" (VaYikra 1:9). This terminology, "*Rei'ach Nicho'ach LaHashem,*" is so commonplace when discussing Korbanot that we probably pass it by without a second thought. But even a moment's

analysis raises a very obvious question: what does it mean for a Korban to create a “pleasing odor” to God? The simmering Chulent on Shabbat morning may smell intoxicating to *us*, but how could God, a being without body and above the corporeal, exhibit this trait fundamentally attached to the human body?

Apparently, Rashi was bothered enough by such a comparison as to reread the Pasuk entirely. Instead of rendering *Rei’ach Nicho’ach* simply as “a pleasing odor,” Rashi (1:9, quoting the Sifra) identifies the root “*Nachat Ru’ach*,” “contentment” in the phrase. According to Rashi, the Pasuk can then be explained as Hashem receiving contentment from the fulfilled commandment of sacrificing that specific Korban.

Though Rashi’s interpretation constitutes an adequate explanation of the Pasuk, it strays from the simple meaning of the phrase, against while the rule of Torah study “*Ein Mikra Yotzei MiDerech Peshuto*,” “a verse never leaves its simple meaning” (Yevamot 11b). To try and address a literal interpretation of *Rei’ach Nicho’ach LaHashem*, Ibn Ezra (1:9) refers us back to a comment of his on Shemot 29:25, where the similar language of *Rei’ach Nicho’ach* is employed. Ibn Ezra writes, “*HaMeivin Sod Nishmat HaAdam Yavin Zeh*,” “One who understands the secrets of the soul of man will understand this.” What exactly does this mean? Does the Ibn Ezra want us to seek out someone particularly spiritual for guidance on this Pasuk? The footnotes to the *Torat Chaim* edition of the *Mikra’ot Gedolot* attempt to rationalize this view and explain that Ibn Ezra’s comment refers to a phenomenon we all have most likely heard since first grade: because God is far beyond the scope of simple human comprehension and the Torah is made accessible to man, God is described in terms relatable to humans.¹

However, this idea does not seem exactly appropriate in our context. The Torah might employ such reasoning to characterize God’s actions as being done with a corporeal “hand” or explain that Moshe was able only to see the “back” of God. In these instances, the phraseology allows the reader to understand, in relative terms, what is being described: he can visualize God acting as if through a hand; he can imagine God showing only a portion of Himself as if by revealing his back. But the pleasure derived from the human sense of smell is different entirely. When we benefit from smell, there is something intrinsic, hardwired into our brain, which activates the right receptors and releases the right chemicals to generate the “pleasant” feeling. Yet God does not have anything “hardwired” into his makeup; He by definition is without human limitations and above any automatic responses such as these! What, then, is the reader to understand by description of God in such terms, i.e. having an automatic response akin to human pleasure of smell?

I believe the answer is rooted in the reasoning that the *Ramchal* (*Mesilat Yesharim* 1:2) gives for God to involve himself in creation of man in *Olam HaZeh*. Essentially, the *Ramchal* explains that God, a being of pure goodness who desired to share this goodness, created man and wished that man partake in His goodness. However, before man could get an opportunity at this proximity to God in *Olam HaBa*, he was placed here, in *Olam HaZeh*, to struggle and follow God’s commandments which in turn allow him to receive his greatest reward, proximity to the Divine in

Olam HaBa. What emerges from this analysis is that God, as a being of pure, intrinsic goodness, desires to see man succeed in his tests and commandments so that God can share the maximum extent of *S’char*, reward, with man. Thus, in the description of God’s “smelling,” the “hardwired” response of us humans is being likened to God’s wish to see man succeed. When God perceives that man is taking the proper steps, such as fulfilling a commandment and bringing a Korban, we are to understand it as a “pleasant smell” to God, i.e. his inherent goodness and desire to see man succeed “automatically” generate a feeling of pleasure similar to the human experience of smell. This is, then, what the *Pesukim* mean to teach, and what the *Ibn Ezra* had in mind when explaining them.

In fact, I believe this new understanding perfectly clarifies *Ibn Ezra*’s initial vague comment, “One who understands the secrets of the soul of man will understand this.” Essentially, one who understands the profound placement of the soul within man as evidence of God’s goodness and desire to see man achieve his maximal reward will understand “this,” God’s intrinsic response of pleasure at seeing man work to attain the good He is prepared to give.

God places us here, in *Olam HaZeh*, to work at the *Mitzvot* and is filled with pleasure at our success. If we would only realize this immense capacity of our effort, we would try all the harder to fulfill His will.

VEHEISHIV ET HA GEZEILAH

by Eitan Leff ('18)

We are taught in *Parashat Vayikra* (*VaYikra* 5:23) that when someone steals something belonging to someone else, in addition to bringing a *Korban Asham*, a sin offering, “*VeHeishiv Et HaGezeilah Asher Gazal*,” “[the thief] must return what is stolen [to the owner].” This rule is simple enough in a normal case of theft, but complications can arise in special circumstances, for instance, a professional thief who does *Teshuvah* and consequently tries to return everything he had stolen. One day when leaving his home, he kisses his *Mezuzah* and remembers that the *Mezuzah* was actually stolen. After remembering this, he goes to the *Judaica* store from which he stole it and pays for it. The reformed thief now wonders whether he must take the *Mezuzah* down and put it back up again, because when he put it up, it was stolen, and he may not have fulfilled his *Mitzvah* of *Mezuzah*. This fascinating question is addressed by *Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein* in *Teshuvot VeHa’arev Na*.

Perhaps this case of the stolen *Mezuzah* can be compared to a case of stolen *Tzitzit* strings. The *Be’ur Halachah* (*Orach Chayim* 11:6) discusses the case of someone who steals *Tzitzit* strings, attaches them to his four cornered garment, and only afterwards pays for them. Does the person need to retie them after paying for them? The principle which guides this question is the source for *Tzitzit*: “*VeAsu LaHem Tzitzit*,” “They shall make for themselves *Tzitzit*” (*BeMidbar* 15:38). *Chazal* (*Menachot* 33a) understand this to mean that the *Tzitzit* must be *Kosher* when they are made, i.e. when they are tied to the garment. This principle is known as “*Ta’aseh VeLo Min HaAsuy*,” that *Tzitzit* must be made [from rightfully owned materials], not from that which is already made. The question is: after the stolen *Tzitzit* are paid for, are they required to be reaffixed, or does the sin gets corrected as if they were never stolen, and the *Tzitzit* can be left alone? The *Be’ur Halachah* does not answer the question; the *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Orach Chayim* 8:22), however, answers that the *Tzitzit* do not need to be re-tied, because the rule of “*Ta’aseh, VeLo Min HaAsuy*” applies only when the object involved is unfit. In this case, the *Tzitzit* themselves are fine, but there is a problem with the

¹ *Ibn Ezra* himself develops such an idea, cf. his commentary to *Shemot* 19:20.

from this principle that we are allowed to violate Shabbat in order to save a fetus⁹ or to save someone from abandoning Judaism (the spiritual equivalent of mortal danger).¹⁰ Rav Scheinberg suggests that perhaps this principle can be expanded to teach us to “Mechaleil Mitzvah Achat Kedei SheYishmor Mitzvot Harbei,” “abstain from performing one Mitzvah in order to be able to fulfill many other Mitzvot.” If performing a Mitzvah will, without a doubt, cause a person such pain as to prevent him to perform future Mitzvot Asei, he is clearly excused from the Mitzvah that will make him ill.¹¹ However, before applying this principle, one would have to weigh which Mitzvot he would be losing and which ones he would be gaining; perhaps losing a Mitzvat Asei SheYeish Bo Kareit such as fasting on Yom Kippur would trump many ordinary Mitzvot Asei.¹² It is also logical that there would be a difference between Mitzvot Asei that are DeOraita and DeRabanan.

Conclusion

We have outlined some of the parameters for situations in which a person would be excused from Mitzvot Asei that cause pain. It seems that when it comes to a Category 5 nuisance, all Poskim require such a person to perform the Mitzvat Asei (except for the individual Peturim of certain Mitzvot like Succah).

If one is faced with a Mitzvat Asei that would cause him to fall into a Category 4 type of illness (Nofeil LeMishkav), there is a dispute among the Poskim. The Binyan Shlomo and Tzitz Eliezer are lenient in applying the logic derived from Yom Kippur. Teshuvot BeTzeil HaChachmah adopts a lenient approach utilizing the logic derived from the use of twenty percent of one’s assets. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank understood the Mishnah Berurah as teaching that such a person would be excused. However, the Maharam Schick and Rav Scheinberg say that you *would* have to put yourself into a Category 4 type of illness in order to perform a Mitzvat Asei. However, even according to the strict approach, if performing a Mitzvat Asei would cause one to be Nofeil LeMishkav, perhaps he would only be obligated if he is not losing the opportunity to fulfill many Mitzvot in the future. If, however, this pain would cause him to lose out on many future Mitzvot, he would be excused. Also, those who adopt the strict approach do not obligate a sick individual to perform a Mitzvah that requires eating if he would experience pain immediately after he eats. If this is the case, he would undoubtedly be excused since the Maharam Schick states that consumption in these circumstances is not defined as “eating.”

When one is faced with a Category 2 type of danger (danger to a limb), the Avnei Nezer excuses the sick individual based on the case of one fifth of one’s assets. Of course, those who adopt the lenient approach when it comes to Category 4 would be lenient as well in regards to Category 2. Even Rav Scheinberg admits that in such a case one would be excused.

Someone who has Celiac disease cannot eat gluten because if gluten is consumed, the gluten destroys the villi in the intestine, which may cause permanent damage. This also may cause illness in years to come. There are also many types

of temporary reactions that different people who suffer from Celiac experience, which may be classified as either Category 4 or Category 5. Because of this more extreme case of damage to the intestines, it seems that we should classify this as Category 3. Those who permit Category 4, such as the Binyan Shlomo, Tzitz Eliezer, BeTzeil HaChochmah, and Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, would presumably rule that such a person is excused. Even Rav Scheinberg seems to say that in a case like this where the person has a chronic condition he would be excused, because this is more similar to a case of Sakanat Eiver (danger to a limb).¹³ In addition, if the Celiac patient would as a result miss fulfilling future Mitzvot, there would surely be more room to be lenient according to Rav Scheinberg’s approach. When contemporary Poskim were asked specifically about this case, whether a Celiac patient is required to eat wheat matzah, the Tzitz Eliezer,¹⁴ Nishmat Avraham,¹⁵ Rav Moshe Shternbach,¹⁶ and Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz,¹⁷ rule that he would be excused.

However, it gets a little bit trickier once we start talking about someone who is gluten intolerant. Those with gluten sensitivity who consume grain do not damage their intestines in the same manner as patients with Celiac disease. These types of people may experience headaches, fatigue, abdominal pain, or other types of temporary pain. It is difficult to make a blanket Halachic statement regarding such people. Some may fall under Category 4 and would be subject to the Machloket discussed earlier. However, it is possible that they may only fall under Category 5 and therefore would be obligated. If we switch our discussion to someone who has serious difficulty with fasting, so much so that it would cause him to be sick for a week, what exactly would be the Halachah? This Mitzvah is even more stringent than eating Matzah because this is a Mitzvat Asei SheYeish Bo Kareit. Therefore the lenient ruling of the Binyan Shlomo and Tzitz Eliezer would not apply because that was limited to a case of an ordinary Mitzvat Asei. Also, one may not be able to apply the logic of abstaining from this Mitzvah now in order to perform many more Mitzvot in the future because this is a Mitzvat Asei SheYeish Bo Kareit and may outweigh other Mitzvot. Therefore, based on the sources we have explored, it is difficult to arrive at a conclusion for this situation. It should be noted that the purpose of this article is to present the various sources and considerations when dealing with physical symptoms that hinder a person from performing Mitzvot. Needless to say, a Rav should be consulted for guidance on specific circumstances whenever one is faced with performing Mitzvot that cause pain.

Rabi Shimon Ben Menasyah’s approach; rather, it simply informs us that we cannot it to justify violation of Shabbat, a case of possible danger to life.

⁹ Ran (to Yoma 3b) quoting Ramban’s Torat HaAdam

¹⁰ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 306, Magen Avraham 306:29, Mishnah Berurah 306:47

¹¹ Rav Scheinberg Halachah U’Refu’ah Vol. 4 pp. 133

¹² Personal Conversation with Rav Yonason Sacks

¹³ Rav Scheinberg in Halachah U’Refuah Vol. 4 pp. 134-135. This is how Rav Dovid Cohen in “Celiac: A Guide to Mitzvah Observance” (published in Chicago Rabbinical Council Journal 2010) understands Rav Scheinberg’s view. However it is unclear in Rav Scheinberg’s work whether someone with an existing chronic condition would be excused; it is possible that according to Rav Scheinberg, only someone who would acquire a new chronic condition from the performance of the Mitzvah would be exempted.

¹⁴ Tzitz Eliezer 19:22 in his Teshuvah about those with Celiac.

¹⁵ Nishmat Avraham Orach Chayim Siman 273:5 states that a Celiac patient’s obligation to eat Matzah is: “if he is unable to obtain oat-flour Matzah, and knows that he cannot tolerate even the slightest amount of gluten products without aggravating his condition, he is forbidden to eat regular Matza.”

¹⁶ Halachah U’Refuah Vol. 4 pp. 147

¹⁷ Cited by Rav Dovid Cohen in “Celiac: A Guide to Mitzvah Observance,” Chicago Rabbinical Council Journal 2010