



## Proper Thinking: Parshat Vayikra

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In Parshat Vayikra, the Shem Mishmuel discusses two bird offerings, the olat ha'of and the chatat ha'of, that were brought in the Beit HaMikdash. While the head of the olat ha'of was completely severed from its body before it was burned, the head of the chatat ha'of was not.

The Gemara teaches that the olat ha'of atoned for sinful thoughts, while the chatat ha'of was brought for mistaken or forgetful

thinking that ultimately led to improper action. The Shem Mishmuel explains that the primary sin is not the initial negative thought that enters the mind. Rather, the sin occurs when a person dwells on the thought and allows it to take hold, which can then lead to wrongdoing. Therefore, the head of the olat ha'of was entirely severed, symbolizing that improper thoughts must be cut off immediately. In contrast, the chatat ha'of atoned for the failure to think carefully enough. In this case,

the Torah commands that the head remain attached to the body. The message is that the sinner must become more thoughtful and mindful, ensuring that greater awareness will prevent future mistakes.

Some situations call for deeper thought, while others require us to stop overthinking. The Torah's goal is to help us achieve the proper balance, leading ultimately to purity and holiness.

## Parshat Vayikra – Sweet and Sour

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Vayikra includes laws pertaining to the meal offering, the mincha. Among these laws are two ingredients that must be excluded from the offering — leavening and honey — and one that must always be included: salt. Although the Rambam teaches that the laws of the sacrifices are chukim, decrees we obey even without fully understanding them, we can still study them and draw meaningful lessons for our lives.

Tiv HaTorah explains that leavening represents the attitude that things are lacking and must constantly be improved, while honey suggests that everything is sweet and perfect as it is. These can be compared to depression on one end and arrogance on the other. Neither extreme belongs on the altar. A person must strike a balance so as not to be paralyzed by feelings of inadequacy or, conversely, resistant to growth due to pride. Either mindset can prevent us from reaching our potential.

Rabbi Frand writes that leavening — the essence of chametz — and honey can symbolize the yetzer hara. On Pesach, there are two prohibitions regarding chametz: not to see it and not to own it. The prohibition against seeing chametz parallels our actions, while the prohibition against owning chametz parallels our thoughts. Neither our thoughts nor our actions should contain sin. Since

offerings are brought to atone for wrongdoing, it would be inappropriate to mix them with symbols of the very force that led us to sin.

Citing Rabbi Nevenzahl, Rabbi Frand explains that when yeast is added to dough, a chemical process causes it to rise. Yet the rise consists of empty air. If you press the dough, the bubbles collapse and it deflates. So too, the yetzer hara is often an illusion, appearing more powerful and appealing than it truly is. Confront it early and deflate it before it grows and overtakes you.

The Imrei Chemed develops this idea further. Yeast works when left alone. When we feel inspired to do good, the yetzer hara urges complacency. If we ignore that voice and act according to Hashem's will, we weaken it. Similarly, honey absorbs whatever falls into it. The yetzer hara tempts us to sink into comfort and avoid the effort of self-improvement. By excluding leavening and honey from the mincha offering, the Torah teaches that sluggishness and self-indulgence can undermine our spiritual growth.

The Siftei Chaim explains that laziness is especially dangerous. With traits like anger or jealousy, we recognize wrongdoing. Laziness, however, can feel normal and justified. The kohanim were constantly active in their Temple service. Likewise, the preparation of matzah for Pesach requires alacrity. We must not allow

idleness — symbolized by chametz — to infiltrate our service of Hashem.

Rabbi Scheinerman, quoting Rabbi Feinstein, writes that Judaism does not demand an ascetic life. There are many opportunities to enjoy this world, particularly on Shabbat and Yom Tov, when festive meals are a mitzvah. The question is what we define as pleasure. Is it discovering a new Torah insight or indulging in trivial distractions? The Alter of Kelm observed that children play with toys knowingly, while adults often play with their "toys" without realizing how much of life they are wasting.

Rabbi Yaakov Hillel teaches that we are permitted to enjoy life, but we must ensure that pleasure enhances our spirituality rather than distracts from it. Rabbi Z. Pliskin notes that yeast and honey are external additives that alter the natural state of food, which is why they were excluded from the altar. Salt, by contrast, enhances the inherent flavor of what is already there. Therefore, salt was always included in the sacrifices.

We should not be like yeast and honey, seeking artificial growth or superficial sweetness. Instead, we should strive to be like salt, drawing upon our innate talents and strengths to reveal our unique spiritual potential.



## The Connection Between The Month of Adar and Nissan

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

What does geulah mean to us today? The situation in Egypt appeared hopeless. The Jewish people seemed on the verge of destruction. Hashem said, "I passed by and saw you covered in blood, and I said, 'You will live through this blood.'" In Nissan, at the onset of spring when the world comes alive again, the Jewish nation was resurrected. Each year when Pesach arrives, we can tap into that same power of renewal.

Chazal teach that one who does not say "Pesach, Matzah, and Maror" at the Seder has not fulfilled the obligation. To understand the nature and potential of Yom Tov Pesach, we must focus on the meaning of these concepts. The Chatam Sofer notes that the Jews faced two great tests at the end of the exile. The first occurred during the plague of darkness. Their Egyptian masters could not see or move. In such a situation, slaves might naturally seize possessions and escape. But the Jewish people restrained themselves and waited for Hashem's command to leave.

The second test took place on the night of Pesach. While the tenth plague struck Egypt and grief and terror filled the streets, the Jews followed Hashem's directive and remained inside their homes. They sat calmly, without fear, relying completely on Hashem's promise

of redemption.

This is what Pesach signifies. It may be dark and frightening outside, yet we are at peace within. Rav Hirsch writes that on that first Pesach we gained the strength and endurance to face the challenges of exile with faith. We survived death at our birth as a nation, and we will continue to exist until creation reaches its ultimate purpose. Pesach means believing that we are not alone and that there is meaning in all that happens.

The constellation of the month of Nissan is a sheep. Sheep follow their shepherd through rough terrain, mountains, and valleys, trusting they will safely reach their destination. Often we do not see Hashem's guiding hand, yet we must remain faithful, trusting that He is leading us toward our final destiny. The history of mankind can be summed up as Hashem guiding us to our purpose. We express this in Shemoneh Esrei: "U'meivi goel... lema'an Shemo." He brings the redeemer even now, as we live. Every step we take, as a nation and as individuals, moves us closer to redemption.

Hashem granted us independence through obligation by commanding us to bring the Korban Pesach. When the Jews took the sheep — the idol of their Egyptian masters —

and slaughtered it, they demonstrated courage and obedience, preparing themselves to receive the Torah. In exile, they were united through shared suffering. Now they became unified by sharing the Korban Pesach with one another. The offering shaped us internally. We became independent by elevating the means Hashem gave us in a way that expressed justice and love.

The paschal lamb had to be tamim, completely whole and unblemished. This teaches that every dimension of our being — emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual — must be directed toward purpose. It had to be male, symbolizing strength and freedom. We are meant to be independent yet loyal to the Shepherd. Autonomy and submission may seem contradictory, but true freedom comes from accepting a Higher Authority. Without that, we become enslaved to our impulses.

The lamb had to be less than a year old. We, too, must remain youthful in spirit, enthusiastic about our mission. On the night of Pesach, Hashem recreates us, protects us, and guarantees our eternal existence. In return, we demonstrate our loyalty, allowing Him to guide us even when we cannot see the way, trusting that He is leading us to our ultimate purpose.