



Daf Hashavua

Vayikra

ויקרא



A rare volume of the Chumash issued by the celebrated press of Bak in the Holy City of Safed 1833

"He called to Moshe, and God spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: 'speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When a man from among you brings an offering to God: from animals – from the cattle or from the flock shall you bring your offering'" (Vayikra 1:1-2)

Solutions in the Sidrah: Income Inequality & Health

by Rabbi Yoni Birnbaum, Hadley Wood Jewish Community



Clare Bamba is Professor of Public Health Geography at Durham University. In 2016 she published a book entitled *'Health Divides: Where You Live Can Kill You'* (Bristol, Policy Press), which looked at the relationship

between the healthiness of particular countries and their levels of income inequality.

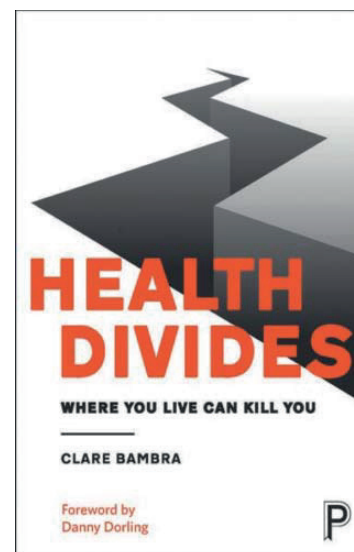
In an interview about her book, Bamba explained that her research indicated that the two healthiest countries in the world are Japan and Norway. As expected, the citizens of both countries eat healthily. In Norway, a Mediterranean-based diet is strongly encouraged, and the food culture in Japan is centred on a healthy fish diet. A more surprising factor is that both countries have very low levels of income inequality. This is a result of compressed wage levels in Japan and a redistribution of wealth through the taxation system in Norway. Based on this evidence, Bamba argues that levels of income inequality are a very strong predictor of the overall healthiness of a population.

This week's sidrah details the various types of *olah* offerings in the Beit Hamikdash (Temple), which were entirely burnt. There appears to be a remarkable amount of repetition, with the Torah devoting three entire paragraphs to this subject. The first describes the sacrificial procedure for offerings brought from a herd, the second from a flock of sheep or goats and the third from fowl. Yet many aspects of this procedure, particularly in the context of offerings from a herd or flock, are identical. Why does the Torah need to repeat the rules in full each time?

In his commentary on the Torah, Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel (d. 1508) points out that there was a preferential order of offerings. One who could afford an *olah* from the herd would bring that, one

who could afford less would bring from the flock, and for someone who could not afford even that, a bird would suffice. However, through writing out the procedure in full each time, the Torah intended to stress that as long as the contribution was made according to a person's financial means, each offering was treated equally. This concept is beautifully expressed by the Sages: "Whether one does more or less, it is the same [i.e. one gets rewarded by God], as long as one intends it for the sake of Heaven" (Talmud Menachot 101a, quoted by Rashi to Vayikra 1:17).

In light of Clare Bamba's research into the dramatic impact of income inequality on general health and wellbeing, it is notable that the Torah goes to great lengths to stress that that all contributions to the Temple should be treated equally. It was critical that the healthy Jewish society envisaged by the Torah should not be built upon stressing inequalities in wage earnings.



In memory of Devorah bat Moshe Bentzion

In memory of Faiga Ratza bat Ze'ev

Sidrah Summary: Vayikra

1st Aliya (Kohen) – Vayikra 1:1-13

The Book of Vayikra starts by detailing the *olah* (elevation) offering. One who brought an offering had to lay their hands upon it (*semicha*). The *shechita* (slaughter) of the animal could be done by anyone, but the processes thereafter (catching the blood and sprinkling it on the altar) were performed only by the Kohanim. The *olah* offering was cut up and all of the pieces were burned on the *mizbeach* (altar). The verses detail an *olah* offering brought from cattle, sheep or goats.

Point to Consider: why does the verse (1:7) state that Aharon was a Kohen if this information is obvious? (see Rashi)

2nd Aliya (Levi) – 1:14-2:6

The Torah now details the laws of an *olah* offering brought from fowl. The process of killing the fowl differed from an animal offering; notably, the Kohen used his fingernail (*melika*) instead of a knife. It was also possible to bring an offering from fine flour (*mincha*), a handful of which was mixed with oil and thrown onto the altar's fire by the Kohanim. The rest was baked and eaten by the Kohanim.

3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 2:7-16

Several voluntary meal offerings are listed, some baked, some fried. These offerings had to be unleavened. Every offering, whether animal, fowl or flour, had to have salt added to it. The Torah states the laws of the parched Omer offering, which was brought on 16 Nisan (Rashi).

Question: what term is used to refer to the Omer offering? (2:14) Answer on bottom of page 6.

4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 3:1-17

A voluntary peace offering (*shelamim*) could be brought from cattle, sheep or goats. Only parts of it were burned on the *mizbeach* – other parts were eaten by the Kohanim and by the owner who brought the offering (see Rashi).

5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 4:1-26

Sin offerings (*chata'ot*) were obligated for various accidental transgressions. A Kohen Gadol who accidentally contravened specific serious prohibitions had to bring a bull, parts of which were burned on the *mizbeach*, the rest were burned outside the camp. A similar process had to be done if the High Court's (*Sanhedrin*) ruling caused an accidental transgression by the common people. If a king (referred to here as *nasi*) accidentally transgressed certain mitzvot, he had to bring a male goat.

6th Aliya (Shishi) – 4:27-5:10

An ordinary citizen who committed a comparable transgression needed to bring a female goat or sheep. The variable offering (*korban oleh ve'yored*) catered to the means of the person who brought it – it could be an animal, birds or flour. This offering was brought by someone who intentionally refused to testify as a witness or who made a false oath. It was also brought by one who accidentally entered parts of the Beit Hamikdash (Temple) or touched sanctified objects when in a state of ritual impurity (see p4 article).

7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 5:11-26

An individual who unintentionally derived benefit from sanctified objects had to bring a male ram as a guilt offering (*asham*), as well as paying for the 'damage' and adding an additional fifth to the cost. An *asham* was also brought by someone who was not sure whether he or she had inadvertently committed the type of sin for which one would normally bring a *chatat*.

Haftarah

The prophet Yeshaya (Isaiah) rebukes the nation for neglecting to bring offerings to the Temple. He mocks those craftsmen who tire themselves out making false gods. However, Yeshaya's parting message is one of forgiveness and hope.

Dangerous Over-Familiarity

by David Frei, Director of External and Legal Services for the United Synagogue



Among the many sacrifices mentioned in our sidrah, the ‘variable offering’ (*korban oleh ve’yored*) is detailed. It is called ‘variable’ because someone who was obligated to bring it was supposed to bring a sheep or a goat. However, one unable to afford these animals could bring two turtledoves or young doves. If these were also beyond their budget, a tenth of an *ephah* volume of flour, brought as a bread offering, would suffice.

One of the transgressions for which this offering atoned was entering the Temple precinct in a state of ritual impurity (Vayikra 5:2-3). The Talmud explains that the offering was only brought if this transgression was done accidentally. For example, if the person knew that he was impure, but forgot that he was in the Temple, only subsequently realising what he had done.

Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Elyashiv (d. 2012) asks how a person could possibly forget being in the Temple. Everything about the Temple, its architecture and structure, its rituals and ceremonies, its sights, sounds and smells were all calculated to create a sense of sanctity and awe for the visitor. How in this atmosphere of purity and reverence could a person forget where he was?

Rabbi Elyashiv answers that it was possible for someone who was a regular visitor to the Temple to become overly familiar with the location, to the point at which the Temple seemed like a mere extension of the home.

This idea is reflected in the haftarah we read last week (for Shabbat Hachodesh), in which the prophet Yechezkel (Ezekiel) states that one was

not allowed to enter and exit the Temple vicinity through the same gate. Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (d. 1979) explains that this was

designed to ensure that no one developed a casual, familiar attitude towards the holy surroundings. Rabbi Elyashiv adds that this same danger exists nowadays with shuls. The more a person is used to frequenting places which are designed to impress and inspire, the less the person may be affected.

Rabbi Elyashiv strengthens this message further, referring to a verse in Tehilim (Psalms 27) which is recited twice daily between Rosh Chodesh Ellul and Shmini Atzeret (see green siddur, p.156), in which King David muses: “One thing I ask of God, this is all I seek, to live in the House of God all the days of my life, to gaze upon the sweetness of God and to **visit** his Temple”. King David’s noble aspiration was not only to live in perpetual, spiritual proximity to God but always to remain in awe of his surroundings, always seeing himself like a **visitor**, not a resident.

This is a noble message to strive for when we spend time in shul - not to allow our familiarity to detract from our reverence and respect for the holy surroundings.



In memory of Moshe Bentzion ben Chaim Ze’ev

Mission Fulfilled

The reflections of Naftali Lau-Lavie as his brother, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, prepared for his installation as Chief Rabbi of Israel in 1993



Naftali Lau-Lavie
b. 1926 – d. 2014

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Looking back on a process which begun half a century ago, from our state of utter vulnerability to our State of sovereignty, and looking ahead to assess the daunting obstacles still in our path, I cling to the fervent hope that we will ultimately achieve our national aspirations, our cherished goal of living in peace among nations.

Deep in my heart I still sense the stubborn resolve to survive, the injunction to “choose life” that helped us to survive then, amid the cinders, and now, surrounded by enemies who seek our destruction... This optimism is based on personal experiences. For 50 years I carried the responsibility passed on to me by my father before he went to his death in Treblinka. He placed in my care a weak child of five, who looked more like a skinny little three-year-old. For three years I served as father and mother, guardian, protector, and mentor to my young brother, Yisrael Meir, or ‘Lulek’ as we called him then. I feel it was this mission, the mission to bring this brother to safety from the abyss of despair to the gates of hope - to the Promised Land - and thereby guarantee the continuation of our Rabbinic dynasty, that kept me alive and gave me the will to fight for our lives rather than succumb to the fate that befell so many of us.

On the first day of the new month of Adar, February 21, 1993, I stood at afternoon prayers with this younger brother at the Western Wall of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. It was the same spot where we had stood 48 years earlier, upon our arrival in Jerusalem. Then, as an eight-year-

old, he had gazed at the stones of the Western Wall without any appreciation or awareness of its significance. This time he was praying for divine guidance before assuming the highest post of any Rabbi in Israel. My young brother, who had come forth from the ashes of the death camps, was shortly to be proclaimed Chief Rabbi of Israel. I looked at him with tears of pride and gratitude - and relief that my mission was at last fulfilled. (Naphtali Lau-Lavie, from his book *Balaam’s Prophecy*).



To read more of this article, as well as many more moving essays and stories about Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron, Yom Haatzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim, please look out for the new Weinstein Family Edition ‘From Exile Towards Redemption’ Machzor, produced by the US and Koren Publishers, Jerusalem. It is available from the US website, at selected communal events and in Jewish bookshops.

Insights into Jewish History Part 68: A Grim Struggle

by Rebbetzen Ilana Epstein, Cockfosters & N Southgate United Synagogue; Head of Project Development, US Living & Learning



Rav Zvi Ralbag of New York, who has inspired this series, writes in his lectures on Jewish history that the era of the Seleucid Greek rule over Judea was the first time that Jews were confronted *en masse* based on their religious practice. Many had to choose between staying faithful to God or distancing themselves from all religious practice. The former choice would lead to physical death, the latter to spiritual ruin.

Why was Antiochus, who had so many other nations and lands to deal with, so against Jewish practice? Sadly, the answer lies internally. The sectarian battles against the traditional Jews, known as the *Perushim*, had gone on for over a century. These battles came to a head with Antiochus IV Epiphanes’ ascent to power, when the administration of the Judean province came under scrutiny.

The Hellenised Jews promised Antiochus the wealth of the Temple if they would be put into power. Wary of a divisive country, Antiochus needed all the Jews practicing in the same way, as in-fighting and civil war would destabilise the Jerusalem economy.

The subsequent legislation of the Seleucid government and its enforcement by troops, paints a grim picture of the struggle to maintain Jewish life. The Talmud conveys the scene. On his return north from losing a decisive battle in Egypt against the Romans, Antiochus raided Jerusalem and the Temple. He and his troops killed thousands, emptied the Temple of its precious vessels and built a citadel overlooking the Temple called “The Acra” that would house the Temple vessels and a Greek garrison. Next to the Temple’s altars, the Greeks constructed altars to pagan gods and sacrificed swine.

The Book of the Maccabees relates that rules were enacted against the following mitzvot:

- bringing ‘kosher’ animal offerings to the Temple
- bringing libation and grain offerings
- proclaiming the first day of the month – Rosh Chodesh
- keeping Shabbat
- circumcision

Megillat Ta’anit is an Aramaic document which includes a listing of the days on which we do not say *Tachanun*, a prayer which is normally recited on weekdays in the Shacharit and Mincha services (see green siddur, p.104). It states that on 23 Cheshvan, we do not say *Tachanun* in celebration of the fact that the Hasmoneans, when they came into power, took down the fenced-off area in the courtyard of the Temple. *Megillat Ta’anit* then explains why this would be cause for celebration – this closed-off area had been put up by the Greeks and used as a brothel, all within the confines of the Temple structure.

In the next article, we will see that Greek legislation went as far as ruling how one should act, not just in public, but even in private.



Bust of Antiochus IV at the Altes Museum, Berlin.

In memory of Zlata bat Moshe Bentzion

In memory of Yaakov Zelig ben Moshe Bentzion