

over who would be served the *helsel* (neck) in the chicken soup. Cooking with *schmaltz* was a way of life.

However, there were some fats that Jews would never eat. In the book of Leviticus we read, "All *cheilev* belongs to the "L-rd." In a kosher animal there are certain fatty deposits, referred to as *cheilen*, that we may not eat. During Temple times, these fats were burned on the altar in the Beit Hamikdash.

The *cheilev* was considered the most delicious part of the animal, and rather than indulge our own desires, we offered it to the Creator.

The Rebbe suggests that the mitzvah of surrendering the *cheilev* to G-d is a lesson in how to live. Putting on weight is generally a sign that one has been indulging too much in the pleasures of this earth—eating fatty foods makes you fat. When we say, "All *cheilev* belongs to the L-rd," we're declaring that true pleasure is spiritual pleasure. Studying Torah, praying, and performing mitzvahs—that's where the real *geshmak* is. The more corporeal indulgences can take a back seat.

Maybe my wife is right after all. Maybe it's time for me to stop pining for the *schmaltz* and *gribbenes* of my youth, and start pursuing a more refined form of gratification. Maybe it's time for me to stop asking what the world can do for me, and start asking what I can do for the world. With a slimmed-down personality and a more svelte perspective on life, maybe I could bring some pleasure to my G-d, my family and my community.

Live & Laugh

Have you ever tried to eat a clock? It's very time consuming.

Pesach Ladies Shiur
with Rebbetzin Estee Stern
A Pesach Panorama
Sunday 25 March 9am
Sydenham Community Centre

Pesach Kashering
Sunday 25 March 10:00 am - 11:00 noon
at the Bayit.
Metal utensils only and they must be perfectly clean and unused for the previous 24 hours.
Thank you Rabbi Stern.

What's Nu?!
Chosson Kallah Mazal Tov
Saul Glass & Tamsin Hill

The Barmy Boy
Daniel Kruger
Mazal Tov to Barry & Ilana and grandparents Arnie & Lynn Kruger, Sharlyn Diamond and Rhona Jacobson.

The Battie Girls
Tanna Bernitz, Alexandra Cohen, Jordi Kubelun, Ella Ohana, Lexa Pesskin, Gabriella Scott, Sienna Sharfman.

Calendar
Parshas HaChodesh
Rosh Chodesh Nissan

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ **Rebbetzin Estee's Shabbos Shmooze**
- ◆ Brocha across the street sponsored by **Saul Glass** in honour of his Oifruf.
- ◆ **Social Shabbos**
- ◆ Mincha: 5:45 pm
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 6:54 pm

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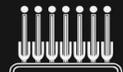
- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of I.deal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
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- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.

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Good Shabbos
SYDENHAM!

Published by the
Sydenham Highlands North
Hebrew Congregation
Johannesburg, South Africa

17 Mar 2018 Parshas Vayikra 1 Nissan 5778



Identity Crisis

by: *Rabbi Yossy Goldman*

Amnesia is a frightening illness. Imagine forgetting who you are - no family, no history, and no identity. I remember how after the horrific events in New York on 9/11, many days later they discovered a man in a hospital who was a survivor but was suffering from total amnesia. He didn't even know his name.

It can happen to an individual and it can happen to a people. There have been times in our history when we seemed to forget who we were and where we came from. And all too often, we seem uncertain about where we are going.

In the opening chapters of Leviticus, we read the expression *Nefesh ki techeta – when a person will sin*. The Torah goes on to describe the various atonement offerings necessary to absolve one from their trespasses. The famous Kabbalistic classic, the holy Zohar, renders this phrase both literally and spiritually. *Nefesh* is interpreted as not merely a *person* but a *soul*, and the verse is punctuated by a question mark. In other words, the Torah is asking *Nefesh ki techeta – shall a soul sin?* Can a Jewish soul, a *yiddishe nesbama*, a spark of divinity, really and truly stoop to commit a lowly sin? How is that possible?

Indeed, the only way it can happen is when we forget who we are, when we are no longer in touch with our true spiritual identity, when we start to suffer from spiritual amnesia.

Sadly, it does happen. In fact, it's not really that difficult. After all, we live in a secular society. The old ghetto walls are no longer

there to insulate us. We are exposed to the big wide world with all its seemingly tantalizing diversions and distractions. Even if we do marry within the faith, we become culturally assimilated. Slowly but surely, then, even a *nefesh* – a Jewish soul starts forgetting who she is and can thus fall into the web of sin.

Remember the "wise man" from Chelm and his "problem?" He worried that when he went to the public bathhouse where everyone is unclothed that he wouldn't know who he was. Without his own personal set of clothing to distinguish him from others, he might suffer an identity crisis. So he devised a plan. He tied a red string around his big toe so that even in the bathhouse he would stand out from everyone else. Sadly, when he was in the shower, the water and soapsuds loosened the red string, and it slipped off his big toe. To make matters worse, the red string floated along to the next cubicle and twirled around the big toe of the fellow under the next shower.

Suddenly, our *Chelmer Chochom* discovered that his string was gone. He started panicking. This really was a serious identity crisis. Then he saw that the fellow next door was sporting his red string. Whereupon, he ran over to him and shouted, "I know who **you** are, but who am **I**?"

Who are you? You are a Jew! You are a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a daughter of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. You are a member of the "kingdom of priests and holy nation." You were freed from Egypt and stood at Sinai. You have survived countless attempts on your life and your faith. You emerged from the ashes of Auschwitz only to live again. And you ask, 'who am I?'

This is a serious case of national amnesia.

So, the holy Zohar reminds us that we are not only “persons who may sin” but we are a soul and *shall a soul sin? A nesbama* is by definition part and parcel of the Divine. And for the G-dly soul within us, distancing ourselves from our very source is absolutely unthinkable.

How then can we explain the phenomenon that after 70 years of Communist atheism, Jews in the Former Soviet Union are today fervently embracing the faith of their forefathers? Or, that after decades of apathy, American Jews of all ages are desperately seeking spirituality? Or that the renaissance of Jewish life has become a reality around the globe, with our own community in the vanguard of the movement? Yes, there are good people out there igniting sparks and fanning them into a fiery faith. But the sparks would not take if there was not a burning ember inside every Jewish soul, an ember that remains inextinguishable no matter what.

So, if you ever have doubts about who you are, remember the Zohar. You are a soul. And a soul never dies.

Parsha Pointers

**Vayikra: Artscroll Chumash pg 544;
Living Torah pg 499**

G-d calls to Moses from the Tent of Meeting, and communicates to him the laws of the *korbanot*, the animal and meal offerings brought in the Sanctuary. These include:

The "ascending offering" (*olah*) that is wholly raised to G-d by the fire atop the Altar; Five varieties of "meal offering" (*minchah*) prepared with fine flour, olive oil and frankincense; The "peace offering" (*shelamim*), whose meat was eaten by the one bringing the offering, after parts are burned on the Altar and parts are given to the Kohanim (priests); The different types of "sin offering" (*chatah*) brought to atone for transgressions committed erroneously by the High Priest, the entire community, the king, or the ordinary Jew; The "guilt offering" (*asham*) brought by one who has appropriated property of the Sanctuary, who is in doubt as to whether he transgressed a divine prohibition, or who has committed a

"betrayal against G-d" by swearing falsely to defraud a fellow man.

A Great Smallness

By Chana Weisberg

An article in New York magazine entitled "How Not to Talk to Your Kids" described Thomas, a gifted fifth-grader who attended a highly competitive school. In his school, prospective kindergarteners were given an IQ test to confirm their precociousness, and only the top one percent of all applicants was accepted. Thomas scored in the top one percent of the top one percent.

Since Thomas could walk, he has always heard that he was smart. But as he progressed through school, this self-awareness didn't always translate into fearless confidence in tackling his schoolwork.

In fact, Thomas's father noticed just the opposite. "Thomas didn't want to try things he wouldn't be successful at. Some things came very quickly to him, but when they didn't, he gave up almost immediately."

The article explained that since 1969, with the publication of The Psychology of Self-Esteem, in which it was opined that self-esteem was the single most important facet of a person, the belief that one must do whatever he can to achieve positive self-esteem has become a movement.

"Anything potentially damaging to a kid's self-esteem was axed. Soccer coaches handed out trophies to everyone, and teachers threw out their red pencils. Criticism was replaced with ubiquitous, even undeserved, praise."

Studies over the past ten years, spearheaded by psychologist Carol Dweck, however, have concluded that high self-esteem didn't improve grades or career achievement.

"When we praise children for their intelligence," Dweck wrote in her study summary, "we tell them that this is the name of the game: Look smart, don't risk making mistakes."

On the other hand, she explains, "Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control... Emphasizing natural intelligence takes it out of the child's control, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure." Offering praise, the article concluded, has become a sort of panacea for the anxieties of modern parenting.

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As parents, we obviously believe that genuine self-esteem is important to our children's psychological and spiritual development. But how can we avoid the possible negative effects in praising our children's achievements?

This week's Torah reading, the first portion of the third book of the Torah, is called Vayikra, which means "He called." It begins with G-d calling to Moses from the Sanctuary to teach him the laws that he would transmit to the Jewish people.

There is an interesting anomaly in how the word *Vayikra* is written in the Torah scroll. The last letter of the word, the letter *aleph*, is written in a small, undersized script. In contrast, the first letter of the opening word of the Book of Chronicles, "Adam"—also an *aleph*—is written with a large, oversized script.

What is the message of the small and large *alephs*? And do they perhaps hold a lesson for us as parents in how to help our children gain a positive and productive self-image?

The mystics explain that Adam was formed by G-d Himself, fashioned in the "divine image." Aware of his superior qualities as "G-d's handiwork" and the crowning glory of creation, he became somewhat proud. The large *aleph* in Adam's name indicates his self-importance, which led to his downfall in the sin of the tree of knowledge.

In contrast, Moses was also aware of his superior qualities as the greatest prophet to ever live, through whom the Torah was communicated to this world for perpetuity. But, rather than cause him conceit, this awareness brought him humility. Moses recognized that his impressive capabilities were granted to him as a gift from G-d. Accordingly, he felt no conceit, but a pressing sense of responsibility. Thus, when Moses recorded in the Torah that G-d called to him, he wrote the word *vayikra* with a small *aleph*.

Adam and Moses were both great men, aware of their greatness. But in Adam this sense of self-worth caused his disgrace, whereas in Moses it evoked humility and further greatness.

True humility and a productive self-image do not come from denying one's talents, but rather from acknowledging that they are merely a be-

quest from Above, providing a channel through which to exert the greatest effort in accomplishing His will.

The most empowering self-image that you can give your child is the knowledge that she is a part of something much greater than herself. She is a creation of G-d, who has great expectations from her. It is not the talents that she is born with that matter, but what she makes of them.

The lesson of the *aleph* is: Teach your child his greatness. Show him his infinite potential, his vast talents and his special capabilities.

But at the same time, clarify to your child that these are gifts endowed to him by G-d, who desires that he utilize his unique talents to better our world—in a way that he, and *only* he, can.

Help your child experience her largeness, but at the same time, let her feel her smallness. Realizing her responsibility and the significance of her personal attainments will cause her to continually strive to reach ever higher.

Schmaltz

By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum

No one will make *schmaltz* for me anymore.

When I was a kid, one of the highlights of the eighth day of Passover was smearing *schmaltz* and *gribbenes* on matzah. Crispy pieces of deep-fried chicken skin swimming in rendered fat and sprinkled with salt—it was instant gastronomic delight.

I don't like to *kvetch*, but even on Passover, when many people prefer fat rendered at home to factory-processed oil, my dear wife refuses to make *schmaltz*. She says it's not healthy. You would think my mother might be more of a stickler for tradition, but she gave it up, too. As for my *bubbe*, oy, better you shouldn't even ask.

I tried to explain to them that eating traditional foods strengthens and builds up the walls of your arteries, but they're not interested in listening to reason. They're prejudiced against animal fat. They trim their beef, skin their chickens and skim the soup. It's still food, of course, but it's not the same.

It wasn't always this way. Until relatively recently, fat was considered a delicacy. People would scrape the drippings out of the pan, and fight